Marxist Feminist Criticism of the Bible

Bible in the Modern World, 14

Marxist Feminist Criticism of the Bible

edited by

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Towards Marxist Feminist Biblical Criticism

Jorunn Økland and Roland Boer

This volume of Marxist feminist essays on the Bible has two major aims. It seeks to present the key issues and key Marxist feminist critics to biblical scholars who might be less familiar with them, and it wishes to show how they might prove to be interesting conversation partners for biblical texts.[1]

Most introductions like this include a few brief comments situating the essays gathered together and then quickly moving on, trying to whet the appetite of any potential reader by introducing each essay. However, given the nature of this collection, we feel that a more substantial introduction to Marxist feminist criticism is in order. In what follows, we begin by outlining the motivations for this volume. From there we move on to provide a very brief introduction to Marxist feminism, especially in terms of the interaction between politics and literary interpretation. Then we present a primer for what Marxist feminist criticism of the Bible might look like—or rather, what central questions such an approach might bring to the fore. Finally, we explore a few of the broader issues in the intersection between the two philosophical, literary and political programmes.

As far as the motivations for this collection of essays are concerned, it is an effort to make sense of the fact that while some of the major Marxist feminist theorists are frequently used by biblical critics already, they are usually understood to be feminist critics: their Marxist side seems to be less explored, not to say suppressed. Like much of the post-structuralist theory that made its way from Europe to the USA, much of the feminist theory drawn from and developed on the basis of the likes of Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva and others

1. We are deeply indebted to Matt Chrulew for his invaluable assistance with this volume. We also want to thank the Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters for providing Jorunn with that international transit space, outside of regular university structures, necessary to think about global knowledge economies, variations among feminisms, and other issues related to this volume.

became strangely anti-materialist in the United States. Yet, the deep irony is that such theory was developed in (often ambiguous) interaction with some Euro-Communist intellectual circles and presupposes the type of discussion of Marxism engendered there. Thus it is not the absence of Marxist feminist criticism of the Bible that is conspicuous, but the absence of the term 'Marxist' in spite of the heavy use of Marxist-inspired thinkers in postmodern and feminist readings of the Bible, especially in the USA. Landry and MacLean notes a similar absence in feminism more in general, and have their own explanation for it: 'The legacy of McCarthyism and Red-baiting in the US should not be underestimated, since it accounts to some extent for the many strategies of disavowal of anything Marxist we often find in US feminist work'.[2] 'A comparable effect today would be generated if someone were to argue for a 'terrorist biblical criticism'.

Another motivation is an effort to understand why, after 40 years of consistent and increasingly widespread feminist biblical scholarship, such scholarship remains an unstable entity that can be dispensed with and ignored by mainstream scholarship. This mainstream scholarship may be 'sympathetic' to feminist matters, but more often than not it acknowledges feminism in passing and then goes on with the same old task. Why is this so? We feel that one way of understanding this situation is to draw in the conceptual and terminological armoury of Marxism in order to explore if we can better make sense of the instability of feminism in biblical scholarship. At this level, Marxist concepts can be used to explore the way biblical scholarship is produced and reproduced.

Finally, this collection represents an opportunity of reflecting upon, expressing and negotiating our own complicity in global capitalism generally, and biblical studies as a global business more specifically. In Maivan Clech Lam's words, challenges to global capitalism in our times 'must be seen as something akin to Jonah's struggle from inside the belly of the whale'.[3] That is, it is not possible to live in the world today and not be complicit in its workings. Therefore, rather than taking Marxism as a stable, but isolated ground from which to criticize everyone else complicit in a capitalist knowledge economy, we find that it provides us with a toolbox that helps us address the contradictions, power issues and veiling ideologies in which we are also ourselves trapped, as scholars living and working within 'Western', Anglophone contexts. Marxism has not yet run its course as inspirational source for critical thinking

2. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, *Materialist Feminisms* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), p. 32.

3. Maivan Clech Lam, 'A Resistance Role for Marxism in the Belly of the Beast', in *Marxism Beyond Marxism* (ed. S. Makdisi, C. Casarino and R.E. Karl for the *Polygraph* collective; New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 256.

and analysis in this particular context, although we agree with Glenn Morris's important point that 'far more than Marxism will be required to redress the global imbalance brought about by a legacy of European universalizations'.[4] The latter is beyond the aims of this book.

Marxist Feminism: Politics and Literary Criticism

Marxism and feminism share a basic feature: they are both multi-faceted political movements and they designate important approaches to interpreting literary texts. On a political and economic level, Marxist feminism brings together the Marxist critique of economic exploitation and the feminist critique of exploitation in terms of gender.[5] While feminism points out that a base category of economic exploitation concerns gender, indeed that the various economic formations throughout history would hardly have been possible without the systematic exploitation and exclusion of women, Marxism for its part points out that the major concerns of feminism must be understood within an economic and social matrix.

An advantage of Marxist feminism as a compound over against Marxism and feminism in isolation[6] is that it negates the mono-causal trap, or what is sometimes called 'the ultimate determining instance'. Much has happened since the fall of the Berlin wall, both with Marxisms, feminisms, and European societies. In line with the general 'fragmentation of identities' in the post-postmodern, globalized world, the impression, at least in Britain, is that it is more common now to see forms of oppression and differences in interests as always complex phenomena, where the one can never be reduced to the other. The various components always interact. Still it is possible to find the old, futile debates as to what is the primary cause of exploitation. Class, one might assert; gender, another may reply; race, responds yet another. By bringing the two elements of economics

4. Lam, *Marxism Beyond Marxism*, p. 255. See also Alexander Jacqui and Chandra Mohanty (eds.), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

5. 'Exploitation' is a technical rather than moral or evocative term: it designates a process by which one group profits at the expense of another. The groups may be understood in terms of class, gender, race and so on. Such exploitation may take place through the paying of wages, unpaid labour, sex, reproduction and myriad other means.

6. But not over against the concept of intersectionality that has developed in the social sciences in the last decade. This analytic, but often de-politicised concept is useful for grasping exactly how multi-faceted and contradictory patterns of exploitation, power and inequality are in modern societies. See Nina Lykke, 'Nya perspektiv på intersektionalitet. Problem och möjligheter', *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidsskrift* 2-3 (2005), pp. 7-17 and Leslie McCall, 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30.3 (2005), pp. 1771-1800.

and gender together, we no longer have mono-causal explanations. And if you have two, then you have many possible sources of exploitation that interact with each other, which will not be explored in this book for reasons of focus and space. For instance, it is not for nothing that the *Radical Women Manifesto* deals with a whole range of issues related to the law, economics, biology, children, health, education, ethnicity, indigeneity, sexuality, age, disability, poverty, prisons, prostitution, violence, environment, culture, the military and self-defence.[7]

As approaches to literary criticism, Marxism and feminism are therefore not merely methods or approaches for interpreting the Bible. They have a distinct context within their respective political movements. Initially, this may seem to distinguish Marxist feminism from other approaches to the Bible, such as source, form and redaction criticisms, or indeed post-structuralist or New Historicist or narrative approaches to the text. At first sight, these approaches may seem to be a-political or perhaps pure literary approaches. However, what Marxist feminism can show is that these methods too arose from distinct historical and (church-) political agendas, and to a certain extent continue to serve such agendas.

All the same, there is a difference between direct political action and literary interpretation. Our primary interest is with literary interpretation. So we would like to introduce the distinction between action and reflection. In our minds, this distinction becomes one between direct and indirect politics. One may engage in direct political action, or one may do the work of literary interpretation, which may have political implications and inspire politics. Marxist feminist literary criticism obviously concerns itself with texts containing gender, economic and social ideologies, and not directly with the economic structures that contributed to their appearance. In Terry Eagleton's words, 'literature, one might argue, is the most revealing mode of experiential access to ideology that we possess. It is in literature, above all, that we observe in a peculiarly complex, coherent, intensive and immediate fashion the workings of ideology in the textures of lived experience of class-societies'.[8]

Marxist Feminist Biblical Studies: A Primer

While 'Marxist feminist criticism of the Bible' may sound like something new, at least within the discipline itself (i.e. disregarding the criticism and dismissal of the Bible by previous Marxist feminists), it in fact brings together and builds on existing Marxist, feminist, liberation-theological,

7. Radical Women, *The Radical Women Manifesto: Socialist Feminist Theory, Program and Organizational Structure* (revised edn; Seattle: Red Letter Press, 1996).

8. Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: New Left Books, 1976), p. 101.

materialist-historical, social reconstructionist biblical criticism, to name the most important sources of inspiration. As should be obvious from the essays, it also draws especially heavily on theoretically informed (sometimes called postmodern) readings of the Bible, but could be seen as a criticism of a tendency in some of these readings to suppress the Marxist resonances of the theorists discussed and utilized in biblical interpretation. There is no space here to give a survey of research in each of these areas, so we prefer to refer the reader to the surveys that do exist. Still, a few introductory paragraphs are in order:

To start with feminist biblical criticism, since to the audience of this book it is perhaps the best known among the areas mentioned above: As this is by now a longstanding and broad research area, there are any number of surveys of feminist criticism of the Bible, some dating back over 20 years, but the more recent ones include the multivolume set *Feminist Companion to the Bible*,[9] organized according to biblical books, and where each volume is a collection of feminist-critical essays by various scholars in the field. The volume called *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*[10] works as an introductory volume to the series, with essays on methodology. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's two-volume *Searching the Scriptures*[11] consists of one edited introductory volume on issues and methodologies, and one volume containing condensed feminist commentaries to biblical and some post-canonical writings written by specialists in the field. In German there is the *Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung* edited by Louise Schottroff and Marie-Therese Wacker.[12] In more recent years feminist biblical criticism has become so developed, and hence also so specialized (a development to which also the current volume could be seen as a testimony), that there have been fewer sustained attempts at larger, synthetic introductions.[13]

9. Published by Sheffield Academic Press, now T&T Clark. The Hebrew Bible part of the series was mainly edited by Athalya Brenner, and the main editor for the NT and early Christian part is Amy-Jill Levine.

10. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (eds.), *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

11. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures* (2 vols.; New York: Crossroad, 1994).

12. Louise Schottroff and Marie-Therese Wacker (eds.), *Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2nd edn, 1999).

13. It should, however, be mentioned that a new multi-volume series is under way, though with more emphasis on reception history and structured according to historical periods: *The Bible and Women/La Bibbia e le Donne/ Die Bibel und die Frauen/ La Biblia y las mujeres.* The series/encyclopaedia is edited by Irmtraud Fischer (German language editor), Mercedes Navarro Puerto (Spanish language), Jorunn Økland (English language), and Adriana Valerio (Italian language), and published

As for Marxist biblical criticism, it is much less well-known in biblical studies, even though it has as long a pedigree as feminist biblical criticism. Here we need to distinguish between those who explicitly advocate Marxist approaches to the Bible and those who do not identify their work as such and yet work with many Marxist categories. Marxist work on the Bible is more than a century old, going back to Friedrich Engels's *On the History of Early Christianity* (1894–95), as well as the work by Rosa Luxemburg[14] and Karl Kautsky,[15] who attempted the first Marxist reconstructions of ancient Israel and early Christianity.[16] As far as biblical criticism itself is concerned, the recent survey by Roland Boer, 'Twenty-Five Years of Marxist Biblical Criticism',[17] covers both social-scientific and literary uses of Marxism since the end of the 1970s. After discussing some of the forerunners within liberation, political and materialist interpretations,[18] this article offers a synoptic view of work in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Regarding the Hebrew Bible, it deals with the phase that began with Norman Gottwald's *Tribes of Yahweh*, which first appeared in 1979 and offered a Marxist-based reconstruction of the origins of early Israel. From there, it covers the work of Gale Yee, David Jobling (both of whom appear in this volume), Ron Simkins, Mark Sneed and others. For the New Testament, Boer discusses the work of Fernando Belo,[19] Gerd

by Kohlhammer, Verbo Divino, Pozzo di Giacoppe, and Society of Biblical Literature. The first volume on the Torah will be out in 2008/9.

14. Rosa Luxemburg, *Socialism and the Churches* (originally published by the Polish Social Democratic Party, 1905. English translation: London: Merlin, 1972. Available online at www.marxists.org, 2004 [1905]).

15. Karl Kautsky, *Der Ursprung des Christentums: Eine historische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1908); *Foundations of Christianity* (trans. H. F. Mins; original English edition: London: Russell and Russell, 1953. Available online at www.marxists.org, 2001).

16. See Roland Boer, 'A Titanic Phenomenon: Marxism, History and Biblical Society', *Historical Materialism* (in press).

17. Roland Boer, 'Twenty Five Years of Marxist Biblical Criticism', *Currents in Biblical Research* 5/3 (2007), pp. 298-321.

18. Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed* (trans. M.J. O'Connell; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982); Gustavo Guttiérrez, *Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1969); Jorge Pixley, *On Exodus: A Liberation Perspective* (trans. R.R. Barr; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987); José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression* (trans. J. Eagleson; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974); *Communism in the Bible* (trans. R.R. Barr; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982); J. Severino Croatto, *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Liberation* (trans. S. Attanasio; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981); Ernesto Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname* (trans. D.W. Walsh; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979).

19. Fernando Belo, *Lecture matérialiste de l'Évangile de Marc* (Paris: Cerf, 1974); *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (trans. M.J. O'Connell; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981).

Theissen,[20] Richard Horsley,[21] Halvor Moxnes[22] and Jorunn Økland.[23] Another survey is that by Ralph Hochschild,[24] who presents the development of the field of socio-historical exegesis from the nineteenth century, including Friedrich Engels, via Karl Kautsky and the more traditional social historians of the New Testament (such as Gerd Theissen), to the Chicago-school, Social Gospel and broader socio-scientific interpretations. His overview confirms the view taken here: that the line cannot easily be drawn between those who draw explicitly on Marxist and historical materialist methods, and those who use the historical-materialist approaches under different names.[25] None of these are what we will be attempting here.

In contrast to the feminist and Marxist studies and surveys we have mentioned briefly, there have been one or two Marxist feminist studies

20. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

21. Richard Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989); *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (Philadelphia, PA: Augsburg Fortress, 1992); *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995); *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Order* (Minneapolis, MA: Augsburg Fortress, 2002); *Religion and Empire: People, Power, and the Life of the Spirit* (Minneapolis, MA: Augsburg Fortress, 2003).

22. Halvor Moxnes, *Constructing Early Christian Families; Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997); *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003); *The Economy of the Kingdom: Social Conflict and Economic Relations in Luke's Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

23. Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004).

24. Ralph Hochschild, *Sozialgeschichtliche Exegese: Entwicklung, Geschichte und Methodik einer neutestamentlichen Forschungsrichtung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

25. See Steven Friesen, 'Prospects for a Demography of the Pauline Mission: Corinth among the Churches', in Daniel Showalter and Steven Friesen (eds.), *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). Norman Gottwald comments in an interview: 'unless I am badly mistaken, there is a lot of "shadow" or "closet" Marxism in the biblical profession. It is not always as well-informed as it might be, and part of the reason for this is that there is not much open discussion about Marxism in biblical scholarly circles. Nevertheless, some scholars are making selective appropriations of a sort of quasi-Marxist analysis, entailing a passionate involvement in the subject matter that is more than mere description'; in Roland Boer, 'Political Activism and Biblical Scholarship: An Interview with Norman Gottwald', in *idem* (ed.), *Tracking 'The Tribes of Yahweh': On the Trail of a Classic* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 170.

that should be noted. Gale Yee's work, especially her *Poor Banished Children of Eve*,[26] focuses on the Hebrew Bible. Within liberation exegesis, there is the ongoing project of Elsa Tamez, especially her study *Bible of the Oppressed*, as well as her more theological books, *Against Machismo* and *Through Her Eyes*.[27] We did invite Tamez to write for this volume, but she was unable to do so. Although most of her work is theological, Kwok Pui-Lan also brings a distinctly Marxist-inspired analysis—in terms of class and exploitation—to her feminist and postcolonial studies. Here we would mention in particular her *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*.[28] Tina Pippin[29] and David Jobling[30] have also brought together Marxist and feminist analysis in their work. These relatively few works are the immediate context for this collection of essays, although of course we seek to extend and enrich what has been done so far.

Rather than repeating those surveys and introductions we have now presented, for the remainder of this section we will outline some of the major topics facing Marxist feminist criticism of the Bible. Rather than a recipe or template that one might apply, these topics are more a collection of problems that continually need to be debated and re-assessed. Needless to say, they are important problems! But there is no guaranteed solution, no formula for easy use, as the essays in this volume testify.

Gender

Marxist feminist criticism places in the foreground the question of gender as a distinctly economic, structural and ideological problem. Over against the tendencies in other forms of feminist criticism, where gender can be studied in isolation, sometimes even as a primary cause and issue

26. Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2003).

27. Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*; *Against Machismo: Rubem Alves, Leonardo Boff, Gustavo Gutierrez, Jose Miguez Bonino, Juan Luis Segundo…and Others Talk About the Struggle of Women* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer Stone Books, 1987); *Through Her Eyes: Women's Theology from Latin America* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

28. Kwok, Pui-Lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

29. Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (London: Routledge, 1999).

30. David Jobling, 'Feminism and "Mode of Production" in Ancient Israel: Search for a Method', in D. Jobling, P.L. Day and G.T. Sheppard (eds.), *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1991), pp. 239-51; *1 Samuel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998).

from which other problems flow, Marxist feminist criticism understands gender as a central element in a wider matrix. It is interested in the way gender is produced and exploited within economics, how it is deployed in ideologies (in the areas of culture, philosophy, religion and so on), how it determines and is determined by the division of labour and by class difference, how it plays out in the construction of sexual relations, in the economies and power struggles of sex. Marxist feminist criticism is interested both in analysing texts from the ground up and in what a more just society might look like. In short, in all of the key categories of Marxist feminism that will appear below, as well as in all the essays collected in this volume, gender is inescapable but not unique or mono-causal.

From the Ground Up

The intent of doing history, and any other scholarly work, from the ground up is not unique to Marxist feminist criticism. This is an intent that showed its relevance early in the so-called 'histories of mentality' (originally a French phenomenon), and later on in the socio-historical line of research in Europe (especially Germany) and the USA. But for a Marxist feminist biblical critic an awareness of the usually unrepresented multitude of women surrounding the author as he wrote is an especially important one. Only this way is it possible to break through the hegemony at which particular patriarchal interpretations of these texts arrived centuries ago[31] and read the biblical text in question sufficiently against the grain. One result of this might be that we 'hear' better the consequences of the texts for the unmentioned women, another that we stop taking for granted that the ideological representation of women in the text is a transparent description of actual, historical women. This means that many of the essays in this volume are greatly indebted to, and dependent upon, the kind of feminist historical reconstruction work pioneered by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza[32] and followed up by many other feminist biblical scholars, especially in the USA.

Economic History

Precisely because of the uncertainties surrounding ancient history, the reconstruction of that history remains vitally important. A Marxist feminist approach is concerned with economic histories, especially in the way those histories rely on the complex patterns of the exploitation of gender difference. Many biblical scholars, trained in and still practicing the traditional approaches of historical criticism, hardly need to be told

31. On ideological hegemony, see below.

32. Above all, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

that history is important. We would remind them that history is not the end of biblical scholarship, whether that is the history of the literature of the Bible or the history behind it. And we would remind them that such histories are highly speculative affairs, heavily dependant on imagination as much as the relatively scarce data available.

However, for Marxist feminist criticism the reconstruction of history has some distinct emphases. It is concerned, firstly, with economic history. Too often economic history is confused with politics, especially in biblical studies: the interactions of armies and rulers become the stuff of what is supposed to be economic history. Or, when scholars do deal with economics, they sometimes make the mistake of assuming that the ancient economies in question were cruder, earlier versions of capitalism. So they anachronistically use terms such as 'privatization', 'rate of interest', 'trade balance', 'free market', and 'international market economy'. Rather, economic history concerns the investigation of the very different patterns of the overall models (synchronic analysis) of the economies in which the Bible came together, as well the development, change and interaction of those economies over time (diachronic analysis).

If such an emphasis on the economy is Marxist, the focus on the way gender plays a crucial role is the feminist angle. Most economic systems rely on a complex negotiation concerning gender. How is gender produced in such economies? How do they construct gender difference? What are the power imbalances along gender lines? How are women and men both exploiters and exploited (remembering that exploitation is a technical term)? Luce Irigaray answers in her own way in the essay 'Commodities among Themselves' that 'The exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another… Heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles: there are producer subjects and agents of exchange (male) on the one hand, productive earth and commodities (female) on the other'.[33]

In this volume, the historical reconstruction of economic history with a distinct interest in the production of gender is one of the foci of the essays by Gale Yee on Proverbs, Alan Cadwallader on the gospel of Mark and Jennifer Bird on the household rules of 1 Peter.

Effects

Since the Bible is not merely an ancient document, but one that has deeply influenced and continues to influence the cultures, societies and economies of the globe, Marxist feminist criticism is interested in its continuing

33. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is not One* (trans. C. Porter; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 192.

effects. In a general sense, Marxist feminist criticism is no different on this matter from other forms of biblical criticism. Where it differs is how it deals with those effects, whether they are conscious and deliberate or whether they are more unconscious and passive. It is interested in how the Bible is used to justify or condemn consumer or worker, the structuring of society in family units, wives as the private property of husbands or not, children the private property of the mother or father, and the wider economic structures. It seeks the economic dimensions in the use of the Bible in debates over abortion, unequal pay for women, the work of 'illegal' immigrant women, sweat shops and the construction of women as consumers.

For example, Marxist feminist criticism is interested in the way the Bible is used to condemn prostitution, as the essay by Avaren Ipsen shows all too well. Not only are certain texts used to condemn prostitution by the religious Right, but other texts are quietly passed over when they do speak of prostitution. Ipsen reads the story of Solomon and the Two Prostitutes in 1 Kgs 3.16-28 from a rather different perspective, that of prostitutes themselves. Ipsen has worked for many years among prostitute collectives and her interpretation comes out of reading biblical stories with the insights provided by one of those groups, namely the Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP). She makes use of the standpoint theory of Sandra Harding and Nancy Hartsock in her construction of a materialist feminist reading strategy that seeks to move beyond the Marxist tendencies to androcentrism. And the standpoint Ipsen draws upon is that of prostitute activists who seek to counter the systematic marginalization and injustice they experience at the hands of the legal system. From this perspective, the story of the two prostitutes is just that, a story of prostitutes. Rather than mothers coming face to face with the extraordinary wisdom of the legendary Solomon, it turns out that these prostitutes actually face another typical example of rough justice before an uncaring and cruel judge.

Mode of Production

For want of a better term, mode of production is here to stay as a category of Marxist feminist criticism. In its narrow sense, mode of production is an economic category, designating the distinct ways in which a social formation is structured to produce and consume the necessary (food, clothing, shelter) and luxury (whatever else) items of human existence. The risk, however, is that it can descend into mere economism: the economy explains everything, from the rise and fall of empires to the emergence of new religions. So we prefer the wider sense of the term, which designates the way a whole system is structured and operates. It is, in other words, an inclusive term that includes the distinct but related realms of the economy,

politics, society, culture, gender, sexuality, environment, religion and so on. The advantage of this inclusive sense of mode of production is that it shows that we have many, often overlapping, modes of production throughout history and that each one is different from the other. Thus, the modes of production in which the Bible arose are quite different from the one under which we live (capitalism). Further, this inclusive sense stresses that it is more the organization or structure of the parts that makes up a mode of production than any one determining feature. Thus, while in the ancient Near East we find the limited use of money and some trade, and perhaps private property (although this is not really the case until the Roman period), their relation to the whole economic system gives us a very different mode of production than capitalism. Mode of production is therefore a hermeneutical category as well: what does it mean to undertake analysis from one mode of production (capitalism) of an ancient text like the Bible that comes from one or more very different modes of production?

Mode of production remains a crucial area of debate in Hebrew Bible studies, appearing in Gale Yee's essay where she distinguishes between a foreign-tributary, domestic-tributary and household modes of production. It also turns up in Roland Boer's essay on Kristeva and Paul with the clash between what he calls the Sacred Economy and the slave-based mode of production of the Hellenistic world, as well as Alan Cadwallader's deliberations on the household in the gospel of Mark.

Division of labour

On the question of division of labour, Marxist and feminist analysis share one of their deepest connections. The feminist insistence that gender is a central issue in the division or allocation of work under an economic system is mirrored in the Marxist point that the primary division of labour is between male and female. And since class difference and conflict derives from the division of labour, gender is central to the way classes develop and run into one another. It is not the simplistic point that men and women form two opposed classes, but rather that the various classes over history—free citizens and slaves, patricians and plebeians, lord and serf, bourgeois and proletarian—cannot be understood without gender.

The function of the division of labour is to deal with the issue of surplus value, or, as we prefer, the question of who does most of the work and who lives off the work of others. In traditional Marxist terminology this relation is described as the labour theory of value, or more specifically, the question of surplus labour. The extraction of surplus value is known as exploitation. Those who do most of the work produce a value that is then appropriated by those who do little or no productive work. It takes little imagination to see that in many economic systems, the bulk of

work, especially work associated with food production and preparation, the care and socialization of children, and the organization of domestic space and domestic economies falls to women. However, the lines do not simply fall in terms of gender, for some men are in the exploited groups (for example, slaves) and some women are exploiters (as Naomi appears in the story of Ruth). In this collection, Avaren Ipsen's essay on Solomon and prostitutes engages extensively with the gendered division of labour, and Tamara Prosic's essay deals with the question through the issue of sex and sexual liberation.

However, Marx's discovery of surplus value, once released, does not stay at the level of economics and class. It also becomes a feature of the interpretation of texts, as Jorunn Økland's engagement of Paul and Simone de Beauvoir indicates. In bringing these two writers from very different contexts (modes of production) together, she finds that beyond the task of locating them within and seeking to explain them by their contexts, we find a surplus value of meaning that emerges, or surplus meaning that puts paid to any crude notion of determinism, economic or otherwise.

Household

In anthropology and biblical studies, the household has become a major focus of Marxist and feminist studies, as the essays by both Cadwallader and Bird illustrate very well. Rather than merely a domestic space removed from the major workings of economy and society, the household itself is an economic unit—some would argue the primary economic unit in some economic formations. So much so that a good number of scholars of the Hebrew Bible at least have adopted the domestic or household mode of production (derived from Marshall Sahlins[34]) as a good description of the economics of early Israel. Under the names of household, domestic or familial mode of production Gale Yee,[35] for one, has take up this position, as have Ronald Simkins[36] and David Jobling.[37]

34. Marshall Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968); *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1972).

35. Yee, *Poor Banished Children*.

36. Ronald Simkins, 'Patronage and the Political Economy of Ancient Israel', *Semeia* 87 (1999), pp. 123-44; 'Class and Gender in Early Israel', in Mark Sneed (ed.), *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 71-86; 'Family in the Political Economy of Ancient Israel', *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1.1 (2004), pp. 06-1-06-18; DOI 10:2104/bc/040006. Available at www.epress.monash.edu.au/bc.

37. Jobling, 'Feminism and "Mode of Production"', but see the criticisms of Roland Boer, 'Women First? On the Legacy of Primitive Communism', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30.1 (2005), pp. 3-28.

The essays by Jennifer Bird and Alan Cadwallader take these matters into the New Testament, deepening the analysis in the process. While for Bird the *haustafel*, or household rules, of 1 Peter, function to construct the identities of women and slaves within the not-so-new Christian order as oppressed subjects, for Cadwallader the household becomes a contested site. The struggle concerns a whole range of issues, including property relations, reproduction, children, marriage and familial socialization—all of which are inescapably economic struggles as much as they are struggles over gender.

Sex

Marxists have never been good at analysing sex as critically as other forms of human exchange, even though the generation of the counter-cultural 60s both had sexual liberation as a central platform and were deeply inspired by Marxism. Yet, as the essays by Tamara Prosic and Jorunn Økland show, sex is an inescapable element of Marxist feminist analysis. Sex is, after all, a play of power, an often unacknowledged form of economic exchange, the focus of the politics of pleasure and reproduction, and a mechanism for the exercise of the division of labour.

Prosic's essay concerns the interplay of sexual repression and expression, and thereby the control of bodies in what is now called bio-politics (following Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben), by the Church. As a counter-weight, it also focuses on the renegade Marxist and psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich, who sought to deal with the question of sexual alienation. In his search for a means of overcoming sexual alienation through complete orgasm—physically, but also emotionally and psychologically—Prosic finds much more in Reich than the common caricatures of a sex-crazed hippie before the 60s. Finding the suggestions of a comparable undercurrent of de-alienated sex, especially antagonistic sexual contradistinctions, in the Christ-myth of the early Christian movement, Prosic traces the way the Church sought to impose its own mechanisms that re-alienated sex.

While on the surface a very different paper, Jorunn Økland's exploration of the intersections and differences between Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 and Simone de Beauvoir deals with many of the same issues. Økland finds many points of overlap between the two (asceticism as ideology, preference for the unmarried state for the more noble sake of freedom, 'new-ness', authenticity, the Word and so on), indicating the dogged persistence of patterns of family life through very different social formations. However, she finds even more differences, not merely because Paul speaks to men and de Beauvoir to women, but also because what seem to be similar recommendations turn out to have very different effects.

Ideology

One term that has made it into the common lexicon of biblical studies is ideology. The term has come to mean many different things, ranging from its use as an alternative term for 'religion' (the ideology of the text is then the religious sense of a text) to a dogmatic position someone might hold (he is so 'ideological'). One need only scan the call for papers for the annual US meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature to see how often 'ideology' turns up. Marxism too, has had its fair share of debates and definitions of ideology, so we prefer to indicate that it remains a vital issue.

Without producing a binding definition, there are some crucial issues that surround the notion of ideology. It is, firstly, a connected concept. Ideology is not a mere opinion or belief that one takes for various reasons; rather, it is part of a larger collection. In particular, ideology is tied up with the Marxist problem of base and superstructure—the base designates economic structures, whereas superstructure refers to areas such as culture, religion, politics, law, and of course, ideology, and both realms relate to one another by means of social relations (class). In cruder forms of Marxism, the superstructure is merely the expression or excretion of the base. More sophisticated forms, following Louis Althusser,[38] recognize that each element has its own autonomy, relating in all manner of complex ways. Or, to give a twist to a rather Marxist phrase, it's not only the economy, stupid.

So also with ideology: it may be a consequence of the economic base, it may be intrinsically connected to that base, but it is also autonomous. Here we would distinguish between ideology as 'false consciousness'—a mistaken view of the world that one merely needs to unmask in order to begin the path to seeing how things really are—and ideology as a complex mechanism for dealing with and understanding our place in the world. At this point Althusser is important yet again, for he pointed out that ideology is neither good nor bad, and that it is always with us, providing the crucial way we can represent (in stories, texts, beliefs and ideas) how we relate to our real economic and social conditions. Ideology is not a moral category with which one denounces an opponent. Rather, ideology is a reality of human existence. Finally, as Antonio Gramsci argued, ideology is inherently unstable. Gramsci's term is 'hegemony', a term that has made its way into many areas of research. For Gramsci, hegemony is not merely the dominant ideology and system, but it also designates the ideology of those who suffer under that dominant system. Since the hegemony of those who are exploited perpetually challenges that of the ruling classes, hegemony is an unstable and shaky phenomenon.

38. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (trans. B. Brewster; New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 121-73.

Jennifer Bird's essay in particular focuses on ideology. As she shows very well, ideology may be overt or covert, conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional. Usually, the more powerful ideologies are those of which we are not aware, or perhaps only dimly aware. For these reasons, the various texts of the Bible are inescapably ideological, not because they express certain opinions or positions, but because they are part of the web of human existence.

Individual and Collective Liberation

Since both Marxism and feminism are approaches to texts that have a political base, and since they arise out of dissatisfaction with the world as it is (one in which exploitation in terms of gender and economics are rife), Marxist feminist criticism is also concerned with liberation, with regard both to the dynamics within biblical texts and their continuing effects. However, we need to be careful about the sense of liberation we are using, for there are two other senses (at least) in which the term appears: the liberation of liberal feminism, and that of liberation theology. While for Marxist feminism, liberation designates the overcoming of exploitation in terms of gender and economics, for liberation theology liberation has both structural economic and spiritual dimensions. Indeed, these realms are intrinsically connected: there is no spiritual liberation from sin without political and economic liberation from oppression, and by that is meant specifically the exploitative mechanisms of capitalism.

By contrast, it is quite clear that the 'liberation' that is characteristic of liberal feminism—understood as 'freedom' or 'liberty'—is neither what is meant by liberation in a Marxist feminist sense, nor in a liberation-theological sense. Liberty, especially in the jaded sense that it has in the US for distinct historical and political reasons, is not the same as the fundamental change in society, politics and economics that liberation signals in Marxist feminism.

The problem here is: liberation-as-liberty sounds great, but presupposes a liberal scheme. Where does the idea come from that liberation-as-liberty is what women want? Could it come from the 'Land of Freedom', the land that holds freedom as the highest value of all? Anyway, it comes from a liberal political and economic system that believes that the individual is autonomous, and that individual freedom is the highest good. And when this tradition of liberation-as-liberty characteristic of much liberal feminist biblical interpretation tries to graft itself onto feminist liberation theology, the ideas and practices of liberation become blurred, confused, and suffer as a consequence. Indeed, the danger is that Latin American suffering and bondage is turned into North American capital once again.

Within a different ideological context, such as the Norwegian (and indeed Scandinavian) one, feminists do not see liberation as the highest

goal—the term is perhaps tainted by the similarly-sounding term 'liberalism', a philosophical framework that is rare there. Cathrine Holst points out the problems with this situation: a liberal deficit, and blindness towards the significance of autonomy.[39] Instead, justice and equality are the higher-ranking values, perhaps for historical reasons: Norway went straight from pre-industrial tribal society to post-industrial tribal society, so there is an underdeveloped sense of the individual, and people still define themselves and think in terms of groups and collective identities. When Anglophone feminist exegetes thus have searched for what might be the liberating potential of the Bible, and defined the message of the Bible as profoundly liberating, Scandinavian feminist exegetes (such as Børresen, Seim, Fatum, Stenstrøm and Økland) have been very quick to point out its unmistakably androcentric bias which means that it cannot be seen as promoting gender equality (the higher value) in any real, modern sense. From within that particular social-democratic political model that is called 'state feminism',[40] it is the Bible that is in disrepute and is in need of explanation (by the help of feminist exegetes) in order to retain at least some cultural legitimacy. The Bible has a problem—not feminism nor Marxism, ideologies that are generally acceptable and less critically questioned. Although this may seem as a peculiar example in a global context, its juxtaposition with the much larger Anglophone, and largely liberal one above is meant to put in relief the span between the Bible and modern feminist values of liberation, liberty and equality (and their relative value in relation to each other) that feminist exegetes everywhere are trying to negotiate: while feminist exegetes in parts of the world where a large proportion go to church and a majority have large prejudices against feminism want to emphasize a motif of liberation in the Bible, feminists in Scandinavia could equally be seen as loyal to the system they operate within, when they have tended to tune down the Bible as a source of liberation for women, and rather used their feminist biblical interpretative skills to interrupt those contemporary patriarchal structures that still prevent justice and equality for women as a group.[41]

The crucial difference that separates liberal feminism and Marxist feminist exegesis is that liberation is primarily individual for the former and

39. Cathrine Holst, 'Feminist Critique: The Norwegian Case', in *Feminism, Epistemology & Morality* (University of Bergen: Doctor Rerum Politicarum, 2005), pp. 134-277.

40. A term coined by social scientist Helga Hernes to describe the Norwegian political system where feminism is promoted 'from above', in the form of gender equality and social policies. See Helga Hernes, *Welfare State and Woman Power. Essays in State Feminism* (Oslo: Scandinvian University Press, 1987).

41. This is part of a larger argument that Jorunn will present on a later occasion.

mainly collective for the latter. If liberal feminism focuses on individual liberty and rights, then Marxist feminists are concerned with liberation of groups. While David Jobling's essay on Brecht, the Bible and collectives is the best example in this collection of such an attempt, Julia Kristeva sums it up rather well in a distinctly Marxist feminist moment. Speaking of feminism as 'a progressive and communitarian ideology' that was modelled on Marxism, she argues that such an ideology cannot make a new society on its own. Rather, 'we can arrive at a better society not before bourgeois individualism but after… Now one realizes that one cannot just make the system of a society from the model of ideology. It is necessary to transform it. But not on this side of it, but by passing to the other side'.[42] What does this mean, especially for interpretation? It means we recognize that even the notion of the individual has its own collective history, coming out of the whole movement of the Enlightenment, the Reformation and the rise of capitalism. It means that we begin interpretation not with the individual and how she or he fits into society, but with a social collective; from there we can move to the individual as a social being. And it means that we look more for collective patterns of experience, making the shared patterns and experiences the starting point for biblical interpretation rather than the individual ones. All of this applies to ideas of textual production, authorship, texts themselves, interpreters, interpretations and the effects that a collection of texts like the Bible continues to have.

Social Scientific and Literary Approaches

The final point in this primer concerns an issue within Marxist biblical criticism, namely the split between social-scientific and literary approaches. In his *Marxist Criticism of the Bible*,[43] which is an effort to bridge the gap, Roland notes that whereas Marxist *socio-scientific* criticism was prolific in the 1970s and 80s, Marxist *literary* criticism of the Bible has been 'conspicuous by its absence'.[44] These comments came out of Roland's work in Hebrew Bible, where the influence of Norman Gottwald's Marxist-inspired social scientific work, *Tribes of Yahweh*,[45] has been very strong. By contrast, biblical scholars more interested in the literary and theoretical side of Marxist criticism, such as David Jobling and Tina Pippin, tended to gather

42. Julia Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews* (ed. R.M. Guberman; New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 45.

43. In fact, the idea for this volume first arose in discussions between the editors over Roland's book.

44. Boer Roland *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 4.

45. Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Liberated Israel 1050–1250 BCE* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999; original edition, Maryknoll, New York, 1979).

under the slogan of Ideological Criticism of the Bible. Perhaps one of the clearest indicators of such a split is the way Gale Yee's book, *Poor Banished Children of Eve*, organizes each chapter under two headings—extrinsic, or socio-historical analysis over against intrinsic or literary analysis. (A chapter from Yee's book on Proverbs is reprinted in this volume.)

As far as the New Testament was concerned, much of the historical materialist literature of the 1970s and 1980s wasn't always very alert to the fact that the New Testament is a collection of texts and not a transparent window to social reality. Hence today, their ignorance of textuality, rhetorics and poetics seems naïve, and the more subtle ways in which some of the biblical texts respond to their respective 'modes of production' seems to have been lost.[46] And this applied to both biblical critics and Marxist historians. Where they differed was in their political goals. Biblical scholars aimed at getting early Christianity out on the right side in the class struggle, i.e. among the revolutionaries! By contrast, eastern European Marxist scholarship during the Cold War period—which has its own history quite independent of New Testament scholarship—ascribed the rise of Christianity to economic, ideological and mythological developments at the time, tending to see it as secondary phenomenon.[47]

Literary-theoretical Marxist criticism of the New Testament is a bit rarer, the type of criticism that theorizes and questions the rhetorics, poetics and textuality of what for the materialist historian constitutes the historical sources. But one of the early works in this area was Fernando Belo's study *Lecture matérialiste de l'Evangile de Marc* from 1974, where he makes use of Althusser, Barthes, Kristeva, Bataille, Derrida and others. However, the iceberg of 'materialist readings' that may once have existed beneath Belo's work seems to have drowned in the stronger streams of historical-materialist (and) social-reconstructivist readings of New Testament, and then eventually in the reaction to these, the postmodern literary readings in the 1980s and 1990s. So it would seem that, in contrast to the Hebrew Bible, the application of Marxist theories to the New Testament is nothing new. In fact, in one of our conversations, Jorunn

46. Some of these works are listed in the bibliography, although there is no further need to discuss them here, since this book is after all about Marxist *feminist* biblical criticism.

47. See especially P. Kowalinski, 'The Genesis of Christianity in the Views of contemporary Marxist Specialists in Religion', *Antonianum* 47 (1972), pp. 541-75. Kowalinski divided the scholars into three categories according to what approach they took to the development of early Christianity. Some took what Kowalinski calls a 'historical approach', whereas others took a moderate or radical mythological approach. The two mythological approaches were also very historically grounded, but they held that it was the particular ideological and mythological developments that led to the spread and success of Christianity, and not just changes in the economical structures.

has made the point that her impression is that much in this area has been done already, whereas Roland perceives that less was done in Hebrew Bible. This difference is partly down to the fact that Jorunn perceives less of a split between the socio-historical and the literary approaches to the Bible than does Roland. In fact the split between social-scientific and literary approaches may well be the result of the peculiar histories of biblical scholarship. After all, was not the 'home' of the *Frankfurter Schule* the *Institut für Sozialforschung* and not a litcrit department? And they were indeed analyzing literature and cultural phenomena!

However much has or has not been done, what is needed is for literary approaches to come in and supplement materialist history, to give a better account of agency (as individual, authorial, etc.), and to ward off its tendency towards determinism, empiricism and economic positivism.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we would like to make some final comments on the intersections between the two literary, philosophical and political programmes of Marxism and feminism. These issues concern the tendency to distinguish between various elements in a spectrum of left feminisms, the view that feminism offers a corrective to Marxism, and finally the sense of alienation many feminists feel in interaction with Marxism.

We seek to avoid the common position that Marxist feminism is yet one further sub-group in the conglomeration of left feminisms. Thus, in order to splinter the left one may conveniently distinguish between radical, Marxist, socialist, anarchist and even ecological versions,[48] seeking to define each one according to certain emphases in terms of gender and politics. However, as Jorunn points out in her essay, the finer distinctions are 'problematic, elusive, and dependent on personal preference'. Our use of 'Marxist feminist' covers all radical feminisms that acknowledge some influence and inspiration from the works of Marx and Engels.

Further, we also wish to counter the idea that feminism offers a corrective to Marxism by introducing questions of gender into Marxism. Unfortunately, for both historical and geographical reasons, the narrative of Marxist feminism at times represents feminism as a corrective to a blind spot within traditional Marxist theory and practice. For example, in the heyday of the British New Left, Juliet Mitchell dropped a bomb with her 1966 article, 'Women: The Longest Revolution', in the flagship journal

48. As, for instance, the 'Feminist Planet' website does, along with existential, liberal, conservative, poststructuralist and womanist versions (www.feministplanet.com)

New Left Review.[49] The allusion is to a book by the grandfather of the British New Left, Raymond Williams's *The Long Revolution*.[50] Mitchell's article has been widely reproduced, but it is regarded as a crucial wake-up call to the boys' club of the New Left. Why, asked Mitchell, had the New Left neglected women in its agenda, especially when the liberation of women was central to nineteenth and early twentieth-century socialism? Mitchell's intervention ensured that the question would no longer be left unanswered, but it also created the sense that feminism was a late arrival for twentieth-century Marxists, that it was an overdue correction. Toril Moi even implies in a recent interview that the 'correction' was rather too quickly lost again: she points out that women theorizing the feminist cause today find themselves more marginalized than ever in critical theory contexts.[51]

However, this story is by no means universal. In the very specific situation of the United States, for example, the story is very much in the reverse. Feminism has been by far the stronger movement and Marxism seems like an afterthought, for some at least. While feminism has made the greatest gains of any political movement in the USA, it has also taken on some of the deep assumptions of the US political myth. As we mentioned earlier, the terms 'freedom' and 'equality' in the context of US feminisms are understood in a largely liberal sense. It is to this situation that Marxist sensibilities had to adjust, offering a more structural economic analysis of gender relations and exploitation. In a situation where one's worth as a feminist critic—or indeed any critic—is measured by how lucrative the latest job offer is, Marxist analysis is sorely needed.

By contrast, in continental Europe, feminism and Marxism have grown and developed side by side. In the process they have become aware of new problems, diversifying and amalgamating in all manner of ways. Or rather, as political movements they have been closely tied with one another. Marxism and feminism now, in Europe, cover such a wide range of positions and actions so that it would be better to think of them as overlapping fields than specific movements. Indeed, in a Norwegian and Swedish context, the term and the approach that 'Marxist feminism' represents might seem very odd and out of place. One might be excused for asking: isn't all feminism Marxist? This is because the 'state feminist' political model with its programme of gender equality has followed a distinctly Marxist recipe: If you change the basic material conditions,

49. Juliet Mitchell, 'Women: The Longest Revolution', *New Left Review* I/40 (1966), pp. 11-37.

50. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).

51. Toril Moi, 'Feminist Theory After Theory', in Michael Payne and John Schad (eds.), *life.after.theory* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 135.

the modes of production and where they take place, equality will follow naturally. Also, more academic feminists have probably been comfortable with a Marxist label than any other type of feminist label you could put on them. As already hinted at, in this context interest in the Bible could be been as slightly suspect. The explanation might be that the 'real' Marxist feminists probably wrote off the Bible as easily disposable historical waste before they had even engaged in any sustained critique on a historical and literary level. With the return of religion on all sorts of gender agendas, it has become adamantly clear that old, holy texts have to be taken more seriously than that, *especially* by those who want progress.

Yet, before we assume that various Marxisms and feminisms co-exist as one big happy collective, especially in Europe, we should point out that it has been and remains a troubled relationship. From a feminist point of view the danger has been the feeling of being patronized and submerged by the larger Marxist movement. In spite of the heavy debt to Marxism, feminists have found and still find it strangely alienating, not least through its authoritative—not to say authoritarian—'priesthood'.[52] As Milena Kirova's essay—tellingly titled 'The Early Fathers of Marxist Feminism and the Holy Book'—shows all too well, feminism both owes a significant debt to Marxism and yet it has given feminism plenty of trouble too. Milena's essay, coming out of the experience of communism in Bulgaria, exhibits the tensions between the Marxist heritage both as an enabling force for feminism and as one that replicates patriarchal structures all too easily.

Similarly, for Jorunn the category of 'Marxist feminist' for a long time seemed more like a category of dilemma and compromise, just like 'Christian feminist', used by those women who identified with a larger patriarchal movement but who were thereby put in an awkward position *qua* women. On the one hand they were uncomfortable with the marginalization and subordination of women's issues under the all-important issue of class struggle, on the other hand 'Marxist' feminists wanted to distinguish themselves from radical and liberal feminists 'who contend that women's oppression will end with the achievement of women's power or women's equality, respectively, within existing class societies'.[53]

We have no wish to paper over such alienations, offering a solution where feminists and Marxism can work together in the ideal society. Rather, we feel that there is a continuing need to identify what rankles

52. This is the term Julia Kristeva uses in her *Tel Quel* editorial in 1977, in a special issue on feminist theory. She presents Marxists and Freudians as compulsive figures who have replaced the priesthood and represent a totalitarian rationality.

53. Landry and MacLean, *Materialist Feminisms*, p. 22.

and generates friction between feminism and Marxism, a friction that in turn can be put to use in biblical criticism if we think of it rather as a creative tension.

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The Early Fathers of Marxist Feminism and the Holy Book

Milena Kirova

My research goes back to the time when Marxist feminism was made up mostly of Marxism and very little of feminism. As often happens with important things in life, its arrival looks like an accidental arrangement of circumstances. The leading personage is Time; it manages to gather together in one generation and in one spiritual plot vastly versatile characters such as J.J. Bachofen, Lewis Henry Morgan, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and August Bebel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with Marx, and the Word was Marx. About 1877 he happened to acquire (most probably by borrowing from an anthropologist friend, Maxim Kovalevsky) a recent book, *Ancient Society*, published in 1876 by the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. The timing of this book was spot-on in the scientific development of Marx—at that time 65. It became the grounds for summarizing and codifying the accumulated awareness for history of human society in the light of anthropology. Marx copied, paraphrased and made additions of his own to Morgan's observations and statements in a notebook, presumably with the intention of continuing to work on these issues later. Engels discovered this notebook in his friend's archive only after his death in 1883, and gradually became more and more attached to the idea of working on the accrued material. Soon—in less than three months—comes *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Although Engels pays tribute in a lavish manner to the unpublished notes of his friend, the book is to turn into one of the most significant items of his own scientific legacy, a classic of socialist feminism. The research accomplishes a succession of anthropological studies, published within a period of 23 years (between 1861 and 1884); it establishes the hypothesis of a matriarchal pre-history of human society and strongly influences the further development of Marxism, feminism and anthropology in the various combinations of their interactions. An object of investigation of the current study will be the connection between early Marxism, feminist theory of the origin of human society, and the Bible. In order to proceed with this connection, I shall first go briefly through Marx's and Engels's

attitude towards women. Was it a prerequisite for the launch of feminist anthropology?

Marx hardly wrote about women. For him, as well as for Engels, women are an object of attention as long as they are an ingredient of two other—more important—social structures: the family and the working class. Thus, when speaking of the history of the family and of the political strategy of class struggle, women only appear in their works as part of these central themes.

As often noted by those who write forewords to the works of early socialist thinkers, the solution of the 'Woman Question' coincides completely with the solution of the Social Question. Being part of the family, the woman is doomed to slavery because, as Marx puts it in his notebook, 'the modern family contains in germ not only slavery (*servitus*) but also serfdom…' Her position will change only when 'the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society'.[1] The family is clearly understood as the building block of contemporary society. This type of architectural symbolism gains further strength in the work of Bebel. His much praised book, *Woman and Socialism* (1879), deploys the metaphor of the house as prison; the woman in the modern bourgeois household has been enclosed within the walls of the house which prevents her from being a free and independent personality. The old biblical symbol of *bet av*, the house of the father, resurfaces in the public space as a 'doll's house'. Thinking of Ibsen and his very popular contemporary play, *The Doll's House* (1879), we should realize that a symbolic chain—society-(as)-house-(of)-oppression—has been created to explain the fate of women. No wonder that both Bebel and Engels speak of the necessity for a woman to leave the house and kitchen in order to gain personality and social position.

In the terminology with which the social sciences of the second half of the nineteenth century articulate the 'Woman Question' we can notice another metaphor that is rooted in the symbolism of the Hebrew Bible. As if following the prophetic practice of describing the downfall of Israel with the symbolic concept of harlotry, Marx and Engels convert (the social phenomenon of) prostitution into an allegory of the social vices characteristic of their times. What is more, they both seem to be obsessed with the idea of prostitution, going so far as to entwine it in the metaphoric imagery of their approach to political economy. In Marx's view, for instance, traditional, or sexual, prostitution, which was typical for the daily life of nineteenth-century West European society was a synecdoche of another—much more general—prostitution. It concerns the relations

1. K. Marx, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (ed. Lawrence Krader; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974), p. 119.

between the working class that is forced to sell its own labour, even itself, and the bourgeois employers, who are buying it at a shamefully low price. 'The concept that both Marx and Engels oppose to prostitution (understood as both a reality and as a metaphor of social relationships) is a very romantic one'—Love, 'the individual sex love', which, according to them, became a reason to start a family only after the Middle Ages.

Despite the typical prudishness of their epoch the masterminds of socialist feminism proclaim sexuality in a frank and positive tone. Along with Darwin, whose theory they adopt as incontestable truth, they believe in the 'animal' past of the human kind. When defining the moral characteristics of humankind in the Introduction to *Grundrisse*, Marx makes use of Aristotle's famous phrase *zoon politicon*: 'Man is in the most literal sense a *zoon politikon*'.[2] Instincts, including the sexual ones, are part of human nature. Even if they have to be suppressed and overcome in public circles, nonetheless they exist in the individual's private life, where they ought not to be rejected and renounced. Speaking of women's delightful time-to-come, when their position in society will undergo significant change, Engels pays considerable attention to the possibility of fulfilment of a woman's sexual needs, even when they have resulted in the arrival of illegitimate children: 'This removes all the anxiety about the 'consequences', which today is the most essential social-moral as well as economic factor that prevents a girl from giving herself completely to the man she loves'. And without further ado, even braver: 'Will not that suffice to bring about the gradual growth of unconstrained sexual intercourse and with it a more tolerant public opinion in regard to a maiden's honour and a woman's shame'.[3] It is very difficult to believe that these ideas, bold indeed for that time, were adopted equally—let alone praised equally—by all women. There is an aura of scandal about such ideas; middle class women must have comprehended them as appropriate only for the morals of working class women. It might be worth recalling that the early female leaders of the socialist movement avoid mentioning 'sexual' problems (Clara Zetkin is a typical example). Unlike them, Marx (while referring to Morgan in his *Ethnological Notebooks*) captures the psychological mechanism in question, which Freud will later call *identification with the aggressor*. While recounting the way in which ancient Greeks treat 'the female sex at the height of their civilization', he mentions that the inferiority 'inculcated as a principle' upon women 'came to be accepted as a fact by the women themselves'.[4]

2. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), vol. 28, p. 11.

3. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (introduction and notes by Eleanor Burke Peacock; New York: International Publishers, 1972), p. 139.

4. Marx, *Ethnological Notebooks*, p. 121.

Turning once again to the memorable year 1878, we witness the efforts of Marx (supported by Morgan's *Ancient Society*) to envelop human history in a complete over-arching anthropological system, in which women are important subjects of social progress. Women emerge in Marx's work as allegorical representatives of a long-repressed group of people; their situation epitomizes the intersection of social and historical factors, which is so important for his 'dialectical-materialistic' vision of history.

In 1879 another major book was published that put women at the thematic centre of the same line of historical generalization: August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*. Five years later Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* appears. All these efforts are preceded by another work of German research, J.J. Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), which is quoted, more or less, by everyone else. In other words, the succession of anthropological research concerning the history of society is as follows: Bachofen–Morgan–Marx–Engels–Bebel. I shall endeavour to draw up briefly a few fundamental theses that characterize the five authors and make it possible to speak of a common line of thought, in which their research overcomes the accumulated tradition of the mid-nineteenth century and continues to influence the social sciences of the twentieth century and beyond.

The family is articulated as a fundamental structural unit of society, and its progress becomes a measure of the progress of entire society. In the preface to the fourth edition of the *Origin* Engels writes: 'Before the beginning of the sixties, one cannot speak of a history of the family. In this field, the science of history was still completely under the influence of the Five Books of Moses. The patriarchal form of the family…was not only assumed without question to be the oldest form, but it was also identified—minus its polygamy—with the bourgeois family of today, as if the family had really experienced no historical development at all'.[5] All five writers historicize the family by spot-lighting different stages in its development, searching at the same time for the reasons for the rise and fading of each successive stage. According to them, these reasons have a universal character; they are valued in all forms of human societies throughout their existence: from the Iroquois Indians to the Jews, from ancient Celts and Germans to the Australian aboriginal tribes. The historicism of this theory has a globalizing character; it is bound to the belief that there is a single 'big story' about the human world. For all of the five writers history is a tale that contains truth, or rather Truth; in that sense they are post-Enlightenment thinkers, who produce the truth about society in their own discourse.

5. Engels, *Origin*, p. 75.

A major achievement of their work is to highlight the problematic of social and sexual bonds in the capitalist world and—by defining it—to launch the process of destroying that matrix. Despite what I said about the Universal Truth and its 'materialistic' interpretation, this opens the door for the idea that this matrix—any matrix, or any form of social life, seemingly global and eternal—can be problematized and therefore changed. As far as the gender structure of social relationships is concerned (after all these works had been written within less than a quarter of a century) the sacred character of the model *male supremacy – female inferiority* stopped seeming invincible and eternal; its pseudo-scientific image began to be in need of defence. The very eternity of patriarchal order was challenged, as far as it was built upon male supremacy, patrilineal descent and male heritage of property.

The five authors use different terminology when they refer to the prehistoric forms of society. Morgan, for instance, speaks of a family even in defining the obviously non- or pre-family organization of social and sexual relationships (the consanguine family, the punaluan and the pairing family). In an attempt to classify the earliest forms of sexual cohabitation, the authors reach back to the very beginning of human need for a social life, which they call 'the primal horde'. For Morgan this is the period of 'unrestricted sexual freedom', for Bebel 'the first human community', for Engels it would rather be the 'maternal horde' that is precisely the earliest unit of society.

The escape from the moralism of a 'bourgeois' definition of 'family' has led to its replacement with another, whose 'scientific' character is based upon the 'naturalistic' idea of truth. The roots of human society happen to be entwined in the primordiality of the animal world. Some years later Freud, another great anti-Victorian and opponent of the moralistic tradition in science, will return to the idea of the 'primal horde' to discover in it the psychic matrixes of social behaviour. All of the discussed authors live and work under the shadow of Darwin and his theory of natural evolution of the species. Not by chance the greatest praise that Engels finds for Morgan is a comparison with Darwin: 'This rediscovery of the primitive matriarchal gens…has the same importance for anthropology as Darwin's theory of evolution has for biology and Marx's theory of surplus value for political economy'.[6] It is not the validity of the praise but Engels's attempt to convey a feeling of simultaneity in the efforts of several scientists from his time that is really significant. This simultaneity grows into the entity of a shared discovery that is achieved in different ways, and—because of its 'polylogous' character—implies the idea of authenticity.

6. Engels, *Origin*, p. 83.

The anti-moralistic, 'naturalistic' tendency, as a new type of scientific thinking in social history, is easily detectable in the concept of sexuality. Even the earliest among our authors, Bachofen, in spite of his disposition for mythological, even mystic interpretation of the social mind, speaks of 'sexual promiscuity' as the original state of sexual relations among the earliest representatives of the human kind. There was a state, prior to monogamy, according to him, when a man could have sexual intercourse with as many women as he liked; and a woman could have sexual intercourse with as many men as she wished—'without offending against morality', Engels aptly adds in his commentary on Bachofen.[7] Morgan also arrives at the depiction of a primitive stage when 'unrestricted sexual freedom prevailed within the tribe, every woman belonging equally to every man and every man to every woman'.[8] While paraphrasing Morgan, Engels puts in another (in fact quite moralistic) remark: this 'form of family … leaves little room for jealousy'.[9]

It seems that it is more precise to speak of a *naturalism versus moralism* approach, and not of some implicit ambiguity in the attitude towards sexuality in the Bachofen-Morgan-Engels line. It is this approach which will make a post-Jungian researcher like Joseph Campbell speak of a 'scientific approach to a very tender subject' in *Mutterrecht*, while comparing, in his turn, Bachofen with Darwin. About the middle of the nineteenth century Darwin's theory, according to Campbell, had just begun 'to supplant the old Biblical doctrines of the Creation'. The ideas of Bachofen should be viewed as a correction to the rest of Genesis, especially as far as the depiction of pre-historic tribal life is concerned.[10]

Under the influence of the notion that humanity stemmed from the animal world, those who support the 'matriarchal' theory make sexuality partly coincide with sociality during the earliest historical stages of the pre-civilized world. All of them cherish high respect for the strength of the instincts, especially of the sexual ones. Bebel firmly believed that 'Of all the natural desires that are a part of human life, beside the desire for food in order to live, the sexual desire is strongest.[11] They think of these natural impulses as a primitive force, which dominates and governs the body; and if the primitive human body can hardly be separated from primitive

7. Engels, *Origin*, p. 77.

8. L.H. Morgan, *Ancient Society: Research in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (New York: Meridian Books, 1963), p. 97.

9. Engels, *Origin*, p. 100.

10. J. Campbell, 'Introduction', in J.J. Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen* (trans. Ralph Mannheim; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 26.

11. A. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism* (trans. Daniel De Leon; New York: Schocken Books, 1975), p. 79.

consciousness, it immediately makes sense that the sexual instinct should have played a great role in what might be called primitive social behaviour.

Believing in the important role of the sexual instincts, all five authors are convinced that in order to serve its purpose best, a family must be built upon the 'natural' attraction of two persons from different sexes. To satisfy the sexual instincts in the form of 'love' means to guarantee steadiness of the future family. The guaranteed authenticity of the instinct at the same time ensures a much weaker dependence of that family on the state and other social institutions. This idea gains an intriguing development in the view of a future (socialist) society, which shall be built upon the lack of private property. To live in peace and harmony, it would be sufficient that each individual is satisfied in his/her intimate needs. An instinct that is an ultimate consequence of flesh paradoxically turns into a power that controls society. In this instance the lack of private property is crucial because it is the only assurance that one sex shan't possess another (as it is according to patriarchal tradition).

All these authors regard—theoretically, at least—the woman as an independent and equal participant in public life. Meanwhile all of them ceaselessly repeat mythological clichés typical for their time, especially those which depict her 'nature'. No one imagines that some (still) natural, exclusively female feature of sexual behaviour is possible. Bebel epitomizes this tendency while trying to think of man and woman on equal social terms. While discussing the sexual habits of the people of Ancient Greece, he briefly (and not without a tint of reproach) mentions the homosexual practices among the men. It was this practice, and not the existence of some inherent drive coming from inside the women themselves, that made 'the opposite sex' react in a reproachful but mirror-like way: 'The male population of Greece having become addicted to pederasty, the female population fell into the opposite extreme: it took to the love of members of its own sex'.[12]

The only one who—at least once—makes an exception, though not referring directly to female sexuality, is Marx. In 'The Holy Family', a very early work published in 1845, he writes that 'the change in a historical epoch can always be determined by women's progress towards freedom, because here, in the relation of woman to man, of the weak to the strong, the victory of human nature over brutality is most evident. The degree of emancipation of woman is the natural measure of general emancipation'.[13] 'The focus in these remarks is now on woman's relation

12. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 35.

13. K. Marx, *The Holy Family*, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), vol. 4, p. 196.

to man, and on women on general', Lise Vogel comments.[14] This seems to be the first and the last time when the woman is not 'the other person' in relation to whom the progress of the male subject is being measured; she is neither part of the working class, nor the self-less sign of historically determined social circumstances. At the same time, even with the early Marx, two of the most characteristic features of the 'matriarchal' theory seem to be fixed. The first one is its essentialist character: it is the nature of the woman to be the weaker representative of human kind. In an even earlier work of his, a commentary on 'The leading article of N 179 of *Kölnische Zeitung*' (1842), Marx had asked the crucial question: 'Is there not a universal human nature just as there is a universal nature of plants and heavenly bodies?'[15] We can not but see the repetitive concept of nature in his words; it is the same with the other writers. Their essentialism therefore has developed in a close connection with their 'naturalism' or Darwinism. It is not only that there are universal, constant characteristics of human nature, but they are Natural, i.e. pre-social, inscribed in the essence of the species.

This position becomes very clear if we view it in the context of a specific idea—the idea of the 'natural division of labour' in relation to the two sexes. In his *Origin* Engels states unambiguously that 'the division of labour between the two sexes is determined by quite other causes than by the position of woman in society'.[16] What then might this extra-social, super-'determining cause' be? For a possible answer we may turn to *The German Ideology*, written (but not published) in 1846 by both Marx and Engels. There we can read that society develops in stages; throughout the earliest of these stages the division of labour was natural and 'rooted in the sexual act'! Almost four decades later Engels continues to think that the 'primitive natural democracy' was fundamentally different from the society based on the monogamous family—'the first form of the family to be based on economic conditions'.[17] The obsession with 'naturality' goes as far as the attempt to define even property in its terms; Engels speaks of 'primitive, *natural communal property*',[18] without even noticing that he is replacing scientific fact with a rhetorical figure—*oxymoron*. In this economy of 'naturality' the woman finds herself a naturally born domestic labourer. (Notwithstanding a tremor of curiosity before the extra-naturality of the

14. L. Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 42.

15. K Marx and F. Engels, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on Religion* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1972), p. 26.

16. Engels, *Origin*, p. 113.

17. Engels, *Origin*, p. 113.

18. Engels, *Origin*, p. 128.

exception, Bachofen had already spoken of the Amazons and the women of Lemnos.) She was in charge of the household and owner of its limited goods. 'It was the man's part to obtain food and the instruments of labour necessary for the purpose', i.e. hunting, fishing, and tilling the ground.[19] When a husband and a wife separated, the former took with him these instruments (later also the cattle and the slaves) while the latter 'retained the household goods'. That way men 'naturally' became the owners of property after which they developed a 'natural' wish to transfer it to their own progeny.[20] The initially innocent natural division of labour has gradually led to a double occurrence of private property and of patriarchal customs.

The only one who consciously resists this scheme is Bebel. In *Woman and Socialism* he tries to defend the intellectual, as well as the physical sameness of the two sexes in those times, when civilization had not yet fine-tuned their primitive equality. It is no surprise to hear that even his resistance is expressed in naturalistic terms: 'In general, the physical and intellectual differences between man and woman were vastly less in primitive days than in our society… The differences in the weight and size of the brain are slighter than among the peoples in civilization'.[21] It may be true that 'Bebel's lengthy attack on the notion of eternally fixed sex divisions of labour stands out as an important political contribution to the socialist movement', as Lise Vogel asserts.[22] Still, it is true that he reasons within the frames of a paradigm, according to which 'natural' is 'authentic' and in that way (expressed more or less clearly) superior to the social. The natural presides at the beginning as well as at the end of social progress; it begets—and at the end it shall crown—this progress: 'we have absolutely no measure today by which to gauge the fullness of mental powers and faculties that will develop among men and women so soon as they shall be able to unfold among *natural conditions*'. It is hard to comprehend in what way 'natural conditions' shall return at the finish of the road of civilization; it is however, easy to trace in his book and in pioneering anthropology in general a strong line of nostalgia for some early epoch, when human 'essence' was authentic and adequate to itself, and human character progressed according to its internal rules, without the mediation of social laws.

If we return now to the earliest forms of pre-historic community—the time when 'whole groups of men and whole groups of women mutually

19. Engels, *Origin*, p. 119.
20. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, p. 552.
21. Bebel, *Woman under Socialism*, p. 22.
22. Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, p. 101.

possess one another'[23]—we will be able to formulate the most common theses that unite the anthropological aims of the five writers. Initially, Bachofen stands up for the idea that sexual promiscuity excludes any certainty of paternity, and descent under these conditions can be reckoned only in the female line. All five authors are convinced that up to the patriarchalization of the family unit, or during the period of savagery and in the 'low stage of barbarism', only the female line was recognized; the system of descent was matrilineal. All of them use—more or less often—the term which Bachofen introduced, *Mutterrecht*, even though Engels realizes its inaccuracy; according to him it is ill-chosen 'since at this stage of society there cannot yet be any talk of "right" in the legal sense'.[24] At the onset of private property and furthermore with the accumulation of material goods, the matrilineal clan organization gradually succumbs to the principle of patrilineality and to the patriarchal structuring of society. This very inter-dependence between expansion of the material basis and the alterations in people's attitudes (the superstructure) make Engels praise Morgan for having discovered the 'materialistic conception of history' which Marx created forty years earlier.[25]

Since the new arrangement of society is motivated entirely by men's conscious desire for property—including women and children—none of the five authors doubts that men are the stronger sex. Women appear as an object of historic changes, passive participants in the social process that simply 'bypasses' their needs without even noticing their existence. Female power is linked only with that time, when wealth was still limited, and life offered mainly obstacles for a still unsophisticated human consciousness.

All of our authors share the belief that there had been a period of egalitarian social relations, named *savagery*, whose main characteristic features are collective property, natural division of labour, cooperativeness and equality in all spheres of human existence. This period of 'primitive natural democracy' (Engels) can truly be defined as 'an imaginary golden age'.[26] The Marxist researcher Evelyn Reed describes it in quite utopian terms: 'Savage society was founded upon the cardinal principles of liberty and equality for all; it was a sisterhood of women and a brotherhood of men in a tribal commune which Morgan and his co-thinkers called a system of "primitive communism" '.[27] Engels

23. Engels, *Origin*, p. 100.
24. Engels, *Origin*, p. 106.
25. Engels, *Origin*, p. 35.
26. E. Reed, 'Introduction', in F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), p. 12.
27. Reed, 'Introduction', p. 10.

seems to think in a somewhat more realistic way, connecting this kind of 'savage' social order, based on kinship groups, with lack of wealth: the more limited the wealth of the society, the more its kind of organization is dominated by kinship groups.

It is during this period of equality and scarcity of wealth that women had important functions and even played dominant roles in the organization of the syncretic home-and-public space. The communistic household is the material foundation of the supremacy of women, Engels clearly states.[28] Both he and Marx firmly believed that sexual equality had been a reality only in the forms of marriage prior to patriarchal monogamy.

It was Bachofen in fact who first introduced the idea of matriarchal society; his key term *Das Mutterrecht* was later changed to *gyneocracy* by Morgan. In the preface to his *Origin* Engels praises Bachofen for having described the kind of life in which women had a social status higher than at any other time. But the truth is that Bachofen never speaks of female political power; it is not a woman who governs his primitive 'hetaerist-aphroditic horde'. Similar to Freud's later picture, the normal head of the horde is a 'powerful male tyrant who through main strength would have been able to make use of whatever woman he chose'.[29] It is in fact Bebel to whom we owe the most eloquent description of female political power in the primitive gens: 'the woman is the real guide and leader of this family community; hence she enjoys a high degree of respect, in the house as well as in the affairs of the family community… She is judge and adjuster, and frequently performs the ceremonies of religion as priestess'.[30] This picture seems to be suspiciously derived from the biblical book of Judges. Morgan's research also is heavily influenced by what he had seen—or believed he had seen—in a limited society, the one of the Iroquois tribes of North America. For his part, Bachofen relies completely upon ancient literature as the source of historical and ethnographical data. Marx and Engels, indeed, do their best to avoid constructing scientific ideas upon literary facts, but they also never work with primary anthropological material. Engels discovered the historical 'factor' and described the economical mechanism which changed matriarchal society into patriarchal: the emergence of private property. When society started producing a surplus of wealth men developed their (apparently 'natural') inclination for power, dislodged women from their leading positions, and began providing their heirs with ownership of property: matrilineal descent changed into patrilineal. This is what Engels calls 'the world-historical defeat of the female sex'. It seems somewhat bizarre

28. Engels, *Origin*, p. 113.
29. Campbell, 'Introduction', p. xxxi.
30. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 24.

today that none of the theorists of the matriarchal world problematized or even questioned the 'naturality' of this change. The change happens, as if it is beyond dispute; men simply seize power with no resistance whatsoever on the side of women who—let us not forget—had, and continued to have for many more years, due to the slow adjustments, a dominant status. The writers' Victorian naturalism makes them regard men's strength as an authentic and indisputable warrant of the capability for seizing power; nobody seems to think 'on behalf of women', no one suspects the necessity to write history down from the point of view of the 'naturally' defeated sex.

The most intriguing moment in the theory of matriarchy is probably the way in which an idea of (a very distant) past is transformed into a model of (a very distant) future. Utopianism comes into view simultaneously in two different planes—retrospective and prospective—which complement one another by fulfilling the model of social development. The era of matriarchy had been indeed poor in public wealth and civilizing achievements; 'the horizon was narrow and small, life primitive',[31] but the human relations then were cooperative, 'peace prevailed', the society was structured in an egalitarian way, the division of labour was natural, the collective property excluded the destructive drives of jealousy and possession. If we add to all these virtues of social life a high standard of civilization and lifestyle, the sum will equal…communism. In fact Engels quite persistently uses the definition 'communistic household' to describe the archaic forms of social life. In his *Theses on Feuerbach* Marx says as early as in 1845 that the 'earthly (i.e. the patriarchal bourgeois) family must be destroyed 'in theory and practice''. This destruction of the tradition turns a full circle and becomes a return to those forms of social organization which have preceded it. *Cyclic time* is an image that—at times consciously and at other times not—dominates and rules the historicism of matriarchal theory. 'The end of social development resembles the beginning of human existence. The original equality returns. The mother-web of existence starts and rounds up the cycle of human affairs', Bachofen writes quite explicitly. The line of the mythological, often Jungian oriented, anthropology and history of religion commences from his—prominent in its time—book. 'Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights … It will be a revival, in a higher form of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes'—this is what Morgan, who is not a socialist, writes, as if to certify that resemblance between Marx and himself which is mentioned in the foreword to the fourth edition of the *Origin*. It may be true that Engels 'deliberately refrained from predicting what sort of relationships between men and women would issue from the abolition of the capitalist

31. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 24.

system', as Evelyn Reed writes.[32] But the fact is that the *Origin* ends with the same quotation from Morgan which I just cited.

Nonetheless, Bebel is the author who unfolds the project of a cloudless future-as-a-return with a most utopian flourish. The last chapter of his book, 'Woman in the future', begins with a detailed picture of the life which a woman will lead in the communist society. She is 'socially and economically independent; she is no longer subject to even a vestige of dominion and exploitation; she is free, the peer of man, mistress of her lot. Her education is the same as that of man… Living under natural conditions, she is able to unfold and exercise her mental powers and faculties…'. And so on. To leave no further doubt about the proto-model of the joyous female future, Bebel adds: 'Socialism creates in this nothing new: it merely restores, at a higher level of civilization and under new social forms that which prevailed at a more primitive social stage, and before private property began to rule society'.[33]

The evolutionism of the matriarchal theory about which so much has been written, has a mythological character. Therefore, the blend of early Marxist anthropology with the work of writers such as J.J. Bachofen was an easy act. This theory regards the progress of society as a direction forward and upwards, yet the conception of progress is rooted in the mythological vision of the Golden Era. Darwinism, on the other hand, paradoxically supplies 'naturalistic' dimensions to the ideal time, so that closeness to nature becomes a criterion of authenticity. All of this reminds us of the French Enlightenment; we could say that Marxist anthropology never loses that odd (and seductive) harmony of enlightening optimism, mythological essentialism, and critical analysis of the political reality.

And now if we focus on the comments of early Marxist anthropology about women and their position in the Hebrew Bible, we would have to reconcile ourselves with very limited material. This material, however, should be positioned in the much broader context of the problems discussed so far.

In principle, the Bible performs as an 'anthropological' source for all authors of the matriarchal theory. Nevertheless, while Morgan, Bachofen and Bebel accept this as an evident fact, Engels implicitly problematizes it and refrains from direct illustration of his theoretical views by using examples from the biblical text. We might find the reason to be epistemological but one phrase from the *Origin* proves the contrary. There Engels argues that the history of the family has so far been based exclusively on the Five Books of Moses. His approach in the *Origin* is different; the book is a purposeful endeavour to distinguish the traditional practice of

32. Reed, 'Introduction', p. 21.
33. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 342.

anthropology from the 'bourgeois' history of family. He obviously reckons that an alteration in the epistemological basis should be followed by an alteration of the specific investigative strategies. Consequently, the Bible is anthropological material but it must be explored in a different way: unchained from the old theological frame and liberated from fostering moralistic 'bourgeois' influences. Engels's first effort to write on the Bible in a new way precedes the *Origin* by only one year: *On the Book of Revelation*, 1883. Regarding the *Origin*, we would hardly find any biblical references illustrating the matriarchal theory. At the same time Engels doesn't object to this practice in Morgan and Bachofen's works; moreover, he gladly uses the assertions reached that way.

Summarizing Engels's entire work, we might say that on those seldom occasions when he does relate the historical state of women and family to the Bible, the illustration is a fragment of the Hebrew Bible, whereas, writing on the New Testament and on the history of Christianity, he hardly brings into focus the situation of women. The only case when Engels engages with the question of men's sexual relations with women is in his latest study *On the History of Early Christianity*. There, while discussing in detail the book of Revelation, the author regards John's negative attitude towards sexual relations as a specific Christian attribute. The fragment which he analyzes is the picture of the 144,000 'heavenly Jews': 'These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins' (14.4). 'In fact', Engels comments, 'in our John's heaven there is not a single woman. He therefore belongs to the trend…that considers sexual relations generally as sinful'.[34] Engels adds to this assertion the figure of the Great Whore with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication and concludes that these examples are 'an obvious indication of a phenomenon to all times of great agitation, that the traditional bonds of sexual relations, like all other fetters, are shaken off'.[35] The summary that 'the traditional bonds of sexual relations' are 'fetters' is of particular interest. It is not clear whether Engels means the family only, or whether he has reached at the end of his life the conclusion that any 'traditional', hence socially determined, bond is a constriction over the 'natural' self of the human being.

With Bebel it is quite different. He is not concerned with the question of the possible methodological discrepancies of his scientific approach. As a leader of the German Socialist Democratic Party, he was an adherent of the ideas of Marx and Engels and propagated them, even further after the Lassallean and Marxian wings of the German labour movement united at the Gotha Congress in 1875. His book belongs to the Marxist literature

34. Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, p. 332.
35. Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, p. 333.

of the period and was very popular (twenty-five editions during the first sixteen years, fifty by 1910). Written in a 'simple and earthy language',[36] it was 'more than a book, it was an event', as Clara Zetkin states, providing the socialist movement with theoretical grounds for solving the Woman Question.

In general, Bebel replicates the fundamentally negative attitude of Marx and Engels towards religion. The biblical myth of Creation as evidence of the genesis and evolution of man is denied as early as the first page of the first chapter, 'Woman in the Past'. 'Man did not', Bebel polemically states, 'upon the call of a Creator, step ready-made into existence as a higher product of civilization. It was otherwise, he had to pass through the most varied stages and flowing periods of civilization…'.[37] It seems clear with such an introduction that Bebel's intention is to construct the history 'otherwise', to fill in the gaps, referring to Bachofen, Morgan, Tylor, MacLennan… Engels appears too, in the editions published after 1884: his *Origin* is praised as a 'fundamental work', further 'substantiating and supplementing' the matriarchal theory with a 'series of historical facts, economic and political in their nature'.[38]

Reading Bebel, we can see that the theory of matriarchy has indeed been very popular and influential within the socialism of the West in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The French communist leader Paul Lafargue, for instance, far from being an anthropologist or a historian of religion, had an article published in the *Neue Zeit*, where he comments on a series of 'otherwise obscure and contradictory pages in the first Book of Moses' from the premises of the theory of the primitive gens. Among other arguments he makes the 'sagacious and felicitous point' that names such as Adam and Eve are not names of individual persons but 'the names of gentes, in which, at the time, the Jews were joined'.[39]

The main purpose of Bebel's work on the Bible is to prove that it simultaneously contains and suppresses evidence of the initial matrilineal organization of primitive Jewish society. The author unearths such evidence with the enthusiasm of a genuine detective, being very particular in these moments when the text unveils and conceals them at the same time. He quotes the discrepancy in language between Genesis 3.16 ('the woman shall leave father and mother') and Genesis 2.24 ('Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother'), and concludes that the second formulation is primary for it has sprung 'from the system of descent in

36. D. De Leon, 'Introduction', in A. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975) p. vii.

37. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 11.

38. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 11.

39. Cited in Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 20.

the female line and the exegists, at a loss what to do with it, allowed it to appear in a light that is utterly false'.[40] Jair from Numbers 32.41 makes another example; he is called 'the son of Manasseh', Manasseh being his mother's clan. And so on.

With Bebel, the 'naturalistic' passion of nineteenth-century social science resurfaces in some curious interpretations of the Bible. Jacob, the patriarch, turns out to be a primitive predecessor of Darwin! Bebel knows, after Morgan, that the gentile order made possible marriages between persons that descend from the same 'gens stock'. Therefore, he concludes, later Jewish society faced the task of avoiding 'the degenerating consequences of in-breeding'. Jacob was especially skilful in matters of breeding. He was acquainted with its laws well enough to succeed in outwitting his father-in-law, Laban, by 'knowing how to encompass the birth of eanlings that were streaked and pied, and which, according to Laban's promises, were to be his'. This story serves Bebel to state boldly that 'the old Israelites had, accordingly, long before Darwin, studied Darwinism'.[41]

Approached from the perspective of modern feminism, however, *Woman and Socialism* is the beginning of a far more fertile tendency. This may be the first expression of feminist discontent with the situation of women in early Israelite society. Not unlike much feminist biblical studies, Bebel comments on their discursive depiction as direct evidence of the social history of ancient Israel. 'As happened with all peoples where descent in male replaced descent in female line, woman among the Jews stood wholly bereft of rights', he declares and continues by drawing a list of the prohibitions and punishments which threaten the biblical woman. As everyone else in the group, Bebel is inclined to sprinkle historic facts with current observations, scientific theses with journalistic ardour. Along that way he expresses his feeling of disgrace by describing an ancient synagogue in Prague where women were confined to sit apart in a 'completely dark room', glimpsing the world of transcendent masculinity only through 'several target-like openings' in the wall.[42]

The Bible serves Bebel very frankly as a source of 'valuable illustrations'. The stories of Abraham and Sarah, and of Jacob's two wives are such illustrations of the process in which man 'forced upon woman the command of abstinence from intercourse with other men, at the same time taking unto himself, beside his own wife, or several of them, as many concubines as his condition allowed'.[43] The notorious history of the Benjaminite warriors raping the daughters of Shiloh provides a very

40. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 21.
41. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 20.
42. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 21.
43. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 28.

picturesque illustration of the idea that the old Jews not only practised the purchase of wives, 'they practiced on an extensive scale the rape of women from among the peoples that they conquered'. Above everything, Bebel is a propagandist. His approach fits historical facts into the lines of a pre-drawn thesis. He is seeking in the Bible what he wants to see and, after having found it, his discourse reaches the heights of some exuberant and poetic conclusion: 'man does not rule property, property rules him, and becomes his master'.[44]

Bebel's commentary on the Bible achieves a climax with the hypothesis that explains the particularities of ancient Israelite society as it is presented by the Torah. In the course of several centuries, until the establishment of the monarchy, all the effects—individual or collective, conscious or unconscious—aimed at one common target: to prevent the destruction of the archaic 'democratic-communistic society', to avoid the entry of private property and the state. An invention of particular importance is the selection of a place for the 'Promised Land' in a region, secluded, on one side, 'by a not very accessible mountain range', and on the other side by deserts, rendering isolation possible. 'Keeping the Jews away from the sea', 'the rigid laws concerning seclusion from other peoples', 'the severe regulations against foreign marriages'… are just other strategies for the same purpose. 'The Jewish people had to be kept in a permanent disability to become the builders of a real state', Bebel bravely concludes, 'hence it happens that the tribal organization, which rested upon the gentile order, remained in force with them till its complete dissolution and continues to affect them even now'.[45] It is intriguing that the author who otherwise values the higher status of women in pre-patriarchal society, this time does not seem to be compassionate towards the endeavours of an entire people trying to preserve the archaic form of social organization in gentes. The lack of nostalgia in this case derives probably from his conviction that even the earliest society depicted in the Bible is indisputably of well established patriarchal character; it has gone too far from the primitive order of the *Mutterrecht*.

Christianity and the New Testament appear in Bebel's book in an almost entirely negative fashion because of their hostile attitude towards women. There we observe the prototype of many deductions and examples, which will often turn up in later feminist biblical studies: critique of the saints and the Fathers of the Church who 'express themselves separately and collectively hostile to woman and to marriage'; an ironic reference to the infamous council of Macon in the sixteenth century which decided with a majority of but one vote

44. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 29.
45. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 43.

that woman had a soul; the significant and widespread idea that the cult of Mary had been established only for the purpose of popularizing Christianity, and in fact replaced earlier pagan goddesses who used to be 'in vogue among all the people over whom Christianity was then extending itself'.[46]

Woman and Socialism, as we can see, is rather a discursive mediator than any kind of anthropological or scientific work. It links the evolutionist theory of matriarchy with the communist idea of gender equality, the socialist experience in propaganda with the emerging political practice of feminism. This is how the book served various, otherwise incompatible fractions in Western society at the end of the nineteenth century; to a great extent this is also the reason for its popularity.

At the turn of the century, the theory of matriarchy abruptly fell into disrespect, mainly because its research strategy was dominated by evolutionism, its methodology by essentialism, and its assumptions by a globalizing tendency. And yet, its decline is due not to specific reasons as much as to the general transition to a new civilizational, and in particular humanitarian, paradigm at the end of the belle époque. However, after a few decades of remaining in oblivion, 'matriarchal' ideas began to revive in different areas of social knowledge. So now, we witness a paradox: even on the occasion when some researchers make use of Bachofen's, Morgan's, Engels's or Bebel's achievements, they refrain from quoting them and do not wish to refer to the sources. It is as if a feeling of pollution haunts the legacy of these writers.[47]

Let us have a glimpse at several fields of modern knowledge where the ideas of matriarchal anthropology have resurfaced in the second half of the twentieth century. The theory of an ancient, female-centred world (clad in the signs of The Great Mother, Mother right, gyneocracy and so on) became the background for Jungian anthropology. The ideas that male deities were preceded by an earlier Great Goddess, and that the Christian Virgin Mary is but a substitute for a long chain of repressed female deities, turned into obsessive epistemological signs of a post-Jungian history of mythology and religion. The most important influence in that respect is Bachofen—not only in terms of a general methodological strategy, but also through the samples provided in specific commentaries. Joseph Campbell admits that Bachofen's articles such as 'The Mystery of the Three Eggs' or 'The Lamp in the Myth of Amor and Psyche' preceded Freud's analyses of mythological images and motifs. Bachofen's interpretation of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* as the dramatic representation of the conflict

46. Bebel, *Woman Under Socialism*, p. 53.

47. See in detail R. Boer, 'Women First? On the Legacy of Primitive Communism', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30.1 (2005), pp. 3-28.

between the declining mother right and the new father right, which arose and triumphed in the heroic age, established a pattern that would reappear in a long procession of similar works. Erich Fromm's interpretation of the Oedipus cycle became an epitome of this trend.

From Bachofen again—despite being the most discredited among our authors—emerge ideas in twentieth-century British anthropology. We can detect them in the opuses of influential writers like J. Frazer and J. Harrisson who would hardly mention him while making good use of his insights.

Feminist biblical studies is another field where 'matriarchal' ideas have grown in a very fertile soil. Their 'natural' suitability led to a lack of systematic efforts to problematize the epistemological background of the idea that patriarchal society should have been 'historically' preceded by a matriarchal one. Paradoxically, this strategy of thinking subverts feminism itself by reproducing the most typical biblical (patriarchal) mechanisms of world ordering, i.e. defining the order itself as an incessant sequence of oppositions.

The matriarchal type of world is usually hypothesized in terms of the household (or communitarian) mode of production. This strategy implies (or generates comments on) the ideas of primitive (especially gender) egalitarianism, natural division of labour, kinship relations, 'personalization' of social relations, syncretism of private-and-public space… As far as feminist biblical research is concerned, it is built upon the idea that the explicit androcentricity of the canon hides and represses 'traces of that pristine balance of gender relationships that have been nearly erased'.[48]

The same set of ideas, which Roland Boer calls 'the legacy of primitive communism', may be traced in other parts of biblical studies, especially in those informed by social scientific approaches. A more specific definition of the same phenomenon would be 'an assumed background of what has become known as the domestic or household mode of production',[49] stemming from Morgan–Engels–Bachofen–Bebel's belief that the gentes-type organization characterizes the earliest forms of society. The story concerns a longish and influential succession of researchers: starting with anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, including biblical critics like Norman Gottwald, Carol Meyers, David Jobling, Ron Simkins to the latest Marxist feminist writing of Gale Yee. Notwithstanding the fact that the above-mentioned authors might feel offended to be paralleled with the matriarchal theory, the conception of the household mode of production

48. Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 189.

49. Boer, 'Women First?', p. 2.

implies an equal if not a dominant role of women in society. 'Is this not a way of speaking about matriarchy without using the term?'—Roland Boer justly exclaims.[50] This retrospective utopian thinking is based upon a specific logic which says: the earlier, the better. Much feminist biblical studies accepts this logic without recognizing the source. Life in the agricultural, pre-patriarchal world is supposed to give a better social position to women due to the coincidence of home and public space. The closer the centre of public life is to the family hearth, the more significant a role woman performs. This logic goes back to the 'natural division of labour' and reproduces a well established myth of the patriarchal world, and of biblical thinking, which makes the woman an emblem of the home.

In this succession of ideas let us mention also a possible influence on the theory and practice of contemporary gay and lesbian studies of the family. It was Engels who initiated the idea that a genuine egalitarian society will come only when 'the characteristic of the monogamous patriarchal family as the economic unit of society be abolished'.[51] Marx also made similar assertions. Their distorted reception in the 20's of the twentieth century in the Soviet Union resulted in the belief that communism would change the traditional ('bourgeois') family into 'collective family units', even into collective property over women.

At the finale of my work let us go back to the time when the evolutionist theory of matriarchy was brought into being. Regardless of whether they do or do not touch biblical themes, there is something in the discursive conduct of all the authors that relates them intimately to biblical strategies of speaking about the world. The very attempt to make a theory out of the 'nothingness' of a tradition proclaimed as scientifically useless replicates the mythic gesture of Creation in the Hebrew Bible. It is especially so when the matter is a theory that explicates the genesis and the evolution of society. The old and the unfit in this instance performs the role of primordial chaos. The fight against it—whether it is against male oppression, Christian church, or political institutions of the bourgeois order—reminds us of the sacred battles which form a world out of chaos in almost every mythology. Communist ideology colours the Marxist authors in the much-needed shade of revolutionary exaltation; progressism supplies the faith and optimism; utopianism, either retrospective or prospective, creates the image of 'historical' depth in the entire project. In the light of epistemology and methodology, a modern reader may consider the project old-fashioned. Nonetheless, it certainly continues to seduce thinkers with its aptitude to offer an accomplished, logically convincing and meaningful narrative about the history and the destiny of the human world.

50. Boer, 'Women First?' p. 11.
51. Engels, *Origin*, p. 105.

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Schizoid Coitus: Christ and the Feminine

Tamara Prosic

> Wherever the religious neurosis has appeared on the earth so far, we find it connected with three dangerous prescriptions as to regimen: solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence—but without its being possible to determine with certainty which is cause and which is effect or IF any relation at all of cause and effect exists there.—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Interest in the treatment and role of women within Christianity seems to be increasing exponentially. The scope of that interest is very diverse, ranging from serious analytical studies to those that belong more to the sphere of the popular, artistic and obscure. It is enough just to mention the recent mega-success of the popular crime novel, *The Da Vinci Code*[1] which, because of its accent on the feminine and the role women might have played in the life of Jesus, stirred up so much dust that even the Vatican found it necessary to comment on it. There is no doubt that this wide interest in the role of women in establishing one of the cornerstones of Western civilization, Christianity, owes its emergence mainly to the development of feminism and feminist thought in the twentieth century. On the other hand, if we take into consideration that feminism made its historical debut as an offshoot of Marxism, it can be stated that in its core feminist discourse revolves around two ideas: one is alienation, the process of objectification of biological sex differences and the ways that objectification reflects on the socio-cultural position of women; another concerns the methods of overcoming the consequences of that objectification.

Like *The Da Vinci Code*, this essay is also built around Jesus, women and sex, but rather than chasing blood lines it attempts to interpret the myth of Jesus from the perspective of sexual and gender emancipation. Like other feminist writings, this essay is also concerned with alienation, but unlike the majority of feminist texts which concentrate on the socio-economic sphere, its focus is mainly on biological and sexual alienation and the missed/suppressed historical potentiality of the Jesus Christ myth to become—at least in these terms—a truly liberating myth. My

1. D. Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Bantham Press, 2003).

symbolic reading of the gospels will concentrate on the story of his conception, Jesus' interaction with sick women and finally his passion as key moments in the myth which advocate a new attitude towards sexuality, especially woman's sexuality. However, before I proceed it is necessary to outline briefly the meaning of alienation—and in particular sexual alienation—which will guide my interpretation of the relationship between the Christian myth and the feminine.

Sex as Alienated Labour

Marx wrote, 'man, it is the world of man'.[2] Used to critique religion as an inverted consciousness of the world, this seemingly simple statement actually hides a maze of philosophical, socio-anthropological and psychological questions and problems. In its multivocality, this statement echoes Parmenides' 'one and all', and Protagoras's 'man is the measure of all things: of things which are, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not'. In its socio-anthropological dimension it echoes the contradictory verse from Gen. 1.27, 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'. Its immediate source, however, is in Hegel's activism of the idea, which Marx transformed into anthropocentric-materialistic activism. Instead of an abstract idealist dialectics, here we have dialectical historical materialism. Instead of an objective idea alienating itself in nature and coming back to itself in its absolute form, as self-consciousness, in Marx we have the man alienating himself through labour which only in communism comes back to him in its fullness. Labour for Marx is the essence and the engine of the human world, it is identical to 'man' as species-being and the universality of man's world. Yet, in the conditions of class society it is possible only as partialness, as multiplication and objectification of oneself, which, however, does not come back to its creator, but stays outside him, as something foreign and independent from him, as a thing for itself.

This is in a nutshell Marx's view on economic alienation, the economic split between the creator and the product of his work. However, while Marx and Marxists for that matter were always very good at explaining alienation in class societies, they somehow never answer the question whether there was any kind of alienated labour in primitive communism, that is, in societies that according to Marx and Engels precede class societies. This unanswered question leads to further one, namely, whether those societies were free of private property of any kind or antagonistic

2. K. Marx, 'Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction', in *Selected Writings* (ed. D. McLellan; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 63.

relations of dominance and subordination, the two main reasons for alienation. Unfortunately, as many feminist writers noticed in trying to work through the intricacies of male/female relations, before capitalists and workers, slaves and masters, there were men and women. And this division based on biological, bodily differences and the different role of those bodies in the labour of procreation, this rupture and objectification of the species into two biologically determined spheres, the sphere of masculine and the sphere of feminine, is perhaps one of the earliest forms of alienation, of human division into I and the other where the other is the other sex.[3]

Philosophically speaking it is this loss of the body as a *sui generis* body that marks the beginning of multiplication and tearing of the anthropological being, the biblical original sin, the realization of nakedness and consequent expulsion from the innocent harmony of Eden and its pantheistic bliss, the moment when humanity's *natura naturans* becomes *natura naturata*, a given, divided body. It is the beginning of the individuation of the species, where all consequent changes are secondary expressions of the unchangeable identities of the I and the other, of 'there are men and there are women'—or as it is better known at a popular level, 'men are from Mars, women are from Venus'. Of course, the main question is how biological differences could generate the avalanche of other divisions that actually perpetuate the same biological division, although in other forms.

The answer to this question is concealed in our own character as beings divided between the instinctual and the social, as well as in the character of sexual activity as both a natural and a socio-economic category. On the biological side, sexual differences and sexual activity are necessary in order to perpetuate the species; on the social side, the sex drive has the characteristics of labour not just because it produces children, but because there is a surplus value in that production. It also produces pleasure. And that pleasure can be alienated, it can be one-sidedly appropriated either by brutal force or by other more sophisticated, although not necessarily less brutal, means such as socially and culturally imposed gender discriminatory restrictive rules of sexual behaviour.[4] We could argue that

3. 'Now, what peculiarly signalises the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other'; S. De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* (trans. H.M. Parshley; online edition, http://gfdl.marxists.org.uk/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/debeauv.htm).

4. According to Sandra Bartky, sexual alienation functions through the 'historic suppression and distortion of the erotic requirements of women' which operate through double standards of sexual morality and popular notions of female sexual passivity. Sexual alienation is a manifestation of the larger alienation from the body.

the appropriation of the sexual act by physical force precedes its social variety, but in both cases we are dealing with rape, with alienated sex labour, which by exercising control over the integrity and autonomy of the person transforms the raped into a means of production. And it seems that from the first forceful coitus, the first alienated sex labour, which changed sexual pleasure from a cooperative *sui generis* pleasure into appropriated surplus value, men and women have been locked in antagonistic gender relations in which sex differences are objectified into restrictive social roles and positions of domination and subordination, while sex itself has become a reified commodity. And it is not hard to imagine how in societies where either men or women have absolute power over the management and distribution of sexual pleasure the appropriation, manipulation and trading with this particular surplus value can lead to its multiplication into myriads of structural and superstructural forms in which the basic inequality is further expressed.

In the majority of societies, whether highly stratified or less complex, whether ancient or modern, it is the male part of the community that enjoys the privileged position when it comes to sexual pleasure. Some cultures are more egalitarian than others, but whether there was ever a strictly matriarchal society, a kind of cultural counterpart to traditional patriarchy where women exercised absolute power, is a highly dubious question and probably just wishful thinking on behalf of some feminists.[5] Men are (unfortunately) physically stronger, which could easily be one of the reasons why the majority of cultures are patriarchal, while the other could be the simple fact that for successful procreation it is only the man's sexual pleasure, that is, man's arousal and climatic end, orgasm, that are necessary. Whether these two reasons are really behind patrifocal cultures can be further discussed, but it is an undeniable fact that the majority of traditional patriarchal societies positively sanction the use of physical force against women and could not care less about an equal distribution of the 'surplus value' of the procreative labour, that is, about woman's orgasm and her pleasure in the sexual act. However, that one-sided appropriation of pleasure in sex is indeed built into the base for domination[6] is clear from the fact that in a majority of patriarchal societies

Women's alienation from their bodies also occurs through excessive identification, in the form of sexual objectification. S.L. Bartky, 'Narcissism, Femininity and Alienation', *Social Theory and Practice* 8 (Summer 1982), pp. 129-30.

5. R. Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987); M. Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989); L. Goodison, *Moving Heaven and Earth: Sexuality, Spirituality and Social Change* (London: Women's Press, 1990); M. Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976).

6. 'The basic principle of social organization is not just who gets power—but

the punishment for adultery, which is nothing else but a free choice of sexual partner, is not the same for men and women. Women usually fare much worse than men. In a 'sex economy', that is, in the management and exploitation of sexual energy and orgasmic pleasure, woman is the first proletarian and man is the first capitalist in Marx's sense.[7]

Although in the 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' of 1844 Marx stated that from the relationship between man and a woman one can judge man's whole level of human development,[8] Marx never dealt with sexual alienation or the ways to resolve the problem of pleasure. Half a century after Marx that task was undertaken by Wilhelm Reich, the ill-fated and almost forgotten heretic of both psychoanalysis and Marxism. Often misunderstood as a theory that advocates unbridled screwing around in search for happiness,[9] Reich's theory of orgasm and its role in maintaining healthy minds and healthy societies is actually far from such a position. It is a deeply humanist theory that intuitively and in psychological terms speaks about sexual alienation and the unhappiness and partialness afflicting all the parties, both women and men, involved in reified sex. Reich's often quoted, but rarely understood statement that orgasm is the capacity to surrender to the flow of biological energy without any inhibition, the capacity to discharge built-up sexual excitement through involuntary pleasurable contractions,[10] calls to mind the images of physical orgasm. However, its intellectual message is actually about letting off the socially imposed and internalized self-control mechanisms, about freeing oneself completely in relation to another human being and the rapture of overcoming otherness, of losing I in the Other and absorbing Other into I, of becoming One. For Reich, 'joy of living and orgasmic pleasure are identical'.[11] In this he echoes Alexandra Kollontai, another misunderstood advocate of liberated sexuality, and her

who gets pleasure'. N. Wolf, 'Feminist Fatale: A Reply to Camille Paglia', *The New Republic* March 16 (1992).

7. Bartky, 'Narcissism, Femininity and Alienation', pp. 129-30.

8. K. Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Selected Writings* (ed. D. McLellan, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 88.

9. Marcuse, for example, wrote that 'sexual liberation per se becomes for Reich a panacea for individual and social ills'. H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1970), p. 191. In a similar vein Brown says 'This appearance of finding the solution to the world's problem in the genitals has done much to discredit psychoanalysis; mankind, from history and from personal experience, knows better'. N.O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (New York: Vintage, 1961), p. 29.

10. W. Reich, *The Function of Orgasm: Sex-Economic Problems of Biological Energy* (trans. T.P. Wolfe; London: Panther Book, 1968), p. 114.

11. Reich, *The Function of Orgasm*, p. 168.

statement that sexuality is a human instinct as natural as thirst, as well as her understanding of erotic love as winged Eros, a non-possessive loving based on mutual sexual attraction, emotional compatibility, spiritual closeness, equality and respect. It is a love freed from the constraints of being viewed through the lenses of biology.[12]

According to Reich, reaching physical climax during a sexual act does not necessarily entail that the act was orgasmic as well.[13] In his view it is a mere prerequisite for orgastic potency, a term he employs to make a distinction between alienated and de-alienated sex. Indeed, in cases of very potent—understood in terms of erection and ejaculation—men it can actually be a sign of orgastic impotence, since during climax they never loose control or let go of their watchfulness. Their climax releases the tension, but it is not a true orgasm because it does not involve release from socially imposed, learned roles expressing sex divisions. What Reich noticed was that very often such men viewed the sexual act in terms such as war, hunt or rape, expressions which clearly demonstrate the alienated nature of their sexual pleasure. Instead of communion and surrender, these men experienced predation and conquest. In contrast to this hunter's orgasm, Reich advocated sex in which the sexual climax would not be limited to the body, but would involve the mind and the soul as well by giving up all socially and culturally imposed restrictive roles and attitudes towards the other; in short, by relating to that other not in biological terms as woman or man, but as a human being. In this situation, Reichian orgasm, 'the sweet melting together',[14] is more an experience resembling mystical religious ecstasy than a mere bodily pleasure. However, in contrast to the mystics who searched for god and who in that search mainly tried to deny nature, that is, their bodies, Reich's sex is a search for another human being through confirmation of our nature.[15] Marx would say that it is an act in which 'natural behaviour has become human', an act 'which

12. According to Kollontai the 'love-comradeship' requires '1. Equality in relationship (an end to masculine egoism and the slavish suppression of the female personality). 2. Mutual recognition of the rights of the other, of the fact that one does not own the heart and the soul of the other (the sense of property, encouraged by bourgeois culture). 3. Comradely sensitivity, the ability to listen and understand the inner workings of the loved person (bourgeois culture demanded this only from women)'. A. Kollontai, *Selected Writings* (trans. A. Holt; London: Allison & Busby, 1977), p. 291.

13. Reich, *The Function of Orgasm*, pp. 112-14.

14. W. Reich, *The Murder of Christ* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1974), p. 30.

15. Moreover, for Reich 'clear sexual consciousness and a natural regulation of sexual life must foredoom every form of mysticism; that in other words, natural sexuality is the arch enemy of mystical religion'. W. Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (trans. V.R. Carfagno; New York: Farrar, Traus & Giroux, 1971), p. 178.

demonstrates the extent to which the human essence in him has become a natural essence—the extent to which his human nature has come to be natural to him. This relationship also reveals the extent to which man's need has become a human need; the extent to which, therefore, the other person as a person has become for him a need—the extent to which he in his individual existence is at the same time a social being'.[16]

Like Marx's classless society, Reich's de-alienated sex is also humanized nature and naturalized humanity. Like Marx's communism it is also a utopian idea that will probably never be fully realized, despite the progress Western societies made in the last century in relaxing social rules governing sexual behaviour. We are certainly physically climaxing in unprecedented quantities, women included, but we are still far from reaching the Reichian type of orgasm.[17] If anything, sex has become more reified than ever before. Reflecting the unbridled and libidinized economic interests of developed capitalism and its emphasis on individualism and entrepreneurship, it has become a Hobbesian consumerist affair, something to engage in not for its humanizing properties, but for the mere fact of possessing its surplus value, pleasure. Rather than becoming a means to an end, sexual pleasure has become an end in itself. In this respect, modern Western societies, although superficially gaining the veneer of sexually liberal societies, essentially still reflect the old patriarchal matrix of controlling the allocation of sexual pleasure. Instead of having both men and women emancipated from their respective positions and roles, what we have now is a masculinized society in which everyone, women included, has become Reich's erectile and ejaculatory men who regularly reach sexual climax but without ever knowing the other and staying forever locked up in their own selves. Feminism might have succeeded in removing the taboo from the topic of female sexuality, but has failed in preventing its transformation into a plain commodity.

Some of Reich's utopian striving for humanity freed from antagonistic sexual contradistinctions was part of the message of early Christianity. Reich was a fierce opponent of Christianity as an organized, systemic religion because of its stand towards the body, but, he intuitively felt that the myth of Christ contains elements that speak about the need to change the patriarchal attitudes towards sexuality, in particular towards women's

16. Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', p. 88.

17. 'An orgasm cannot be "had" with everyone. Fucking is possible with everyone since all it requires is enough friction of the genital organ to produce discharge of seminal fluid or a feeling of strong itching. An orgasm is more than and basically different from a strong itching…. It is there only with certain other organisms and is absent in most instances. Thus it is the foundation of true sexual morality'. Reich, *The Murder of Christ*, p. 30.

sexuality and the need to understand ourselves primarily as humans. In his last book the modern guru of sexuality wrote 'Christ knew love in the body and women as he knew so many other things natural'.[18]

The Myth of Christ and Sex

The Christ myth developed amidst the colourful multitude of Hellenistic religious traditions as a very complex myth building on important social themes, such as social justice, solidarity and love. It is an anthropomorphic and anthropocentric myth and different aspects of its humanizing character were seized by different philosophers to support their theories. For Hegel, the myth was important because god becomes human, which for him represented one of the stages in the dialectical progress of the idea through history towards its absolute, self-conscious form.[19] For Feuerbach, who wanted to translate the attributes of religious transcendence into the field of human ethics field in order to make a secular, anthropological religion of man, the ethical character of the Christian teaching, the principle of love, played an important role.[20] Marx viewed religion as a false consciousness, as a product of those in power, but he also built on Christian ideas. His activist historical materialism ends in communism which is in its eschatological hope and utopian character not very far from the kingdom of god. As Engels noted, both Christianity and the worker's movement offer salvation from bondage and misery.[21] The Communist League, for whom Marx and Engels wrote *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, itself grew out of the League of the Just, a Christian organization whose aim was the establishment of the kingdom of god on earth, based on the ideals of love of one's neighbour, equality and justice.

However, these are interpretations of Christianity which, in their reading of the myth, do not pay much attention to the role of the feminine or the elaboration of the female principle and the revolutionary character of the myth in terms of sexual and gender emancipation.[22] What is forgotten

18. Reich, *The Murder of Christ*, p. 32.

19. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Christian Religion: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.* Part III, *The Revelatory, Consummate, Absolute Religion* (ed. and trans. P.C. Hodgson; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979).

20. L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (online edition, trans. G. Eliot, www.marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/essence/index.htm).

21. F. Engels, 'On the History of Early Christianity', *Die Neue Zeit* 1 (1894–95, online edition, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_On_the_History_of_Early_Christianity.pdf).

22. There are many Christian feminist authors who wrote on this topic, but in their approach they view Christ as a historical person rather than a mythical figure and most importantly hardly pay any attention to the problem of sexuality. See L. Swidler,

is that Christianity also developed as an offshoot of Judaism, the only Hellenistic religious tradition where women were completely excluded from both religious and economic spheres. The polytheistic Hellenistic cultures, although rigidly patriarchal in terms of socio-economic relations, had nevertheless a considerable respect for female sexuality and the feminine in general—at least in the sphere of religion. Women participated in the transcendent in an equal measure to men through various goddesses and by officiating in their ceremonies. Their sexuality also found its expression in different goddesses of beauty, fertility and sexual pleasure, in rites devoted to them as well as numerous myths.

The god of the Jews, however, was unborn, male and in terms of sex relationships self-sufficient, apart from his stormy and undying love affair with Israel, his chosen bride, from which he demanded unconditional surrender and submission. Woman's position and rights in real life did not differ much from those between Yahweh and Israel. Her main role was to bear children, obey and please her husband. Sexual pleasure was reserved only for man, given that it was permissible only as a procreative act, as Reich's introverted erectile and ejaculatory pleasure, in order to fulfil Yahweh's promise to Abraham about a multitude of descendants. In sexual labour, in that most elemental of all types of work, woman had the role of an object, she was reduced to a mere receptacle of man's sperm, a one-dimensional machine whose sole purpose was procreation and satisfaction of man's sexual and social urge to dominate and possess.[23]

'Jesus Was a Feminist', *Catholic World* 212 (1971); L. Swidler, *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press 1976); L. Swidler, *Yeshua: A Modern for Moderns* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1988); E. Stag and F. Stag, *Woman in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978); E.M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament* (New York/Mahvah: Paulist Press, 1980); E. Moltman-Wendell, *Liberty, Equality, Sisterhood: On the Emancipation of Women in Church and Society* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); W. Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); B. Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

23. There are many chapters in the Old Testament which demonstrate the misogynic character of ancient Judaism. In Gen. 2.27 Adam is given the authority over Eve by naming her: '…she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man'. In ancient times, one was believed to have authority over a person or thing by naming it. Gen. 3.16 presents Adam's role to be Eve's master: '…thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee'. By implication, all of their descendents are to have the same power imbalance between spouses. The last of the ten commandments in Exod. 20.17 puts her on the same level as slaves and beasts of burden, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's'.

Woman's low status in early Judaism is best illustrated by the story of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, which on several levels reinforces the patriarchal matrix. First, it transforms the original act of man's creation as an androgynous being, as equally male and female (Gen. 1.27), by introducing another version of the same event in Gen. 2.18-23. This other version, however, has strong patriarchal underpinnings. The creation of woman is not just second in order to that of man, but is also subsidiary to it. Her function is not to be a companion, but a mere helper. Woman therefore is not an autonomous being, but a socio-economic appendage to man serving to alleviate his work load and his loneliness. In the events following this unequal creation the woman is burdened with an even bigger worry. Patriarchal cunning, disguised as suggestive religious story (Gen. 3), accuses her of being the cause of almost all the existential ills of humanity. Her submission to the overtures of the scheming snake (or is that a scheming penis?) leads to the first division of labour, that is, man's work on the land and woman's child-bearing, pain in giving birth and even death itself. The whole complexity of existential anxiety, Tillich's trauma of non-being, is placed on woman's shoulder.[24]

Hellenism challenged Judaism on many fronts, including the position of the feminine. The myth about Christ developed as a reaction to the parochial insularity of the Jewish monotheistic patriarchal religious doctrine facing the irresistible assimilative power of the religious openness of the more powerful and aggressive Greco-Roman culture. From that strange confrontation developed the mythic amalgam of Jesus Christ. Arising from the Jewish religious cultural matrix, the myth continued and supplemented that tradition, but it also refashioned and cancelled it by undermining its exclusivity and patriarchal character.[25]

24. There are many contradictory points in this story both from the logical and theological perspective which for centuries provoked intellectual acrobatics among rabbis and Christian theologians alike, but which have stayed unresolved regardless of the level of the interpretative sophistry. What the learned men searching to understand the story have failed to see or rather have avoided seeing is that the story is nothing more than an extremely clumsy and not very imaginative attempt of an exclusively monotheistic religious doctrine to accommodate and justify its own existence and its own strictly patriarchal divine make up.

25. B. Brooten, 'Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues in Method and Historical Reconstruction', in *Feminist Perspectives in Biblical Scholarship* (ed. A.Y. Collins; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 65-91; R. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessing: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); A.-J. Levine (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Mathew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); A.-J. Levine (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Mark* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); E. Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1983).

Most often the message regarding women's emancipation is assessed on the basis of Christ's relation to women who appear in the Gospels. His conduct towards them and forgiving words for women sinners are taken as signs that Christ values all people, women and men, equally. It is also pointed that many of his followers were women and that he was born of a woman. But the emancipation of the feminine actually begins much before Christ is born. In Christ, especially in his death, it gets its full form, but it actually begins with the stern Jewish god, the paradigmatic *pater familias*, and his decision to change his ways and have a son who will spread his new message to the people. There are various aspects of that message, such as love, solidarity, forgiveness, but there is one which is the condition for the establishment of the new covenant, the message of resurrection, the promise of afterlife, the emancipation from the existential anxiety inherent in the idea of death. That is the new promise to people,[26] which dramatically changes the old covenant and its concern with land and descendants,[27] a promise which also heralds a new attitude towards women.

The god of the Hebrew Bible was a harsh plenipotentiary asking for complete submission while his 'chosen people' was an object of his vagarious will. Both he and his world were a matter of very strict taboos. People, or rather men, were there to keep him happy with sacrifices and rituals. With the myth of Christ this unutterable, absolute male god of the Hebrew Bible stops to absurdly and harshly play with the world and his people. He actually wants to cooperate with the human world, to take an active creative rather than menacing role, to remove taboos surrounding him and reveal himself, to get closer to man, and show him hope. His new message is faith, love, forgiveness, solidarity and tolerance and he wants to embrace the whole of humanity. In order to make that possible, the Jewish patriarchal, harsh and exclusive god dramatically changes. He pluralizes, triplicates, he becomes the father, the son and the holy spirit. He also humanizes. His son is born of a human woman. The conception part of the myth of Jesus is not a big issue for the writers of the Gospels, but is the crucial part for a feminist interpretation of the texts, especially in terms of gender and sexual relations and their de-alienation. And the main question in that context that needs to be answered is: what does a sexual union between god and Mary mean?

26. In reply to Peter's question about the reward they will receive for following him, Jesus answers: 'And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life'. Mt. 19.29; Mk 10.30.

27. Gen. 15.18: 'On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land…" '

In polytheistic cultures diverse aspects of life were divided among different divinities, among which a considerable number were goddesses. In sharp contrast to these, in Judaism all these aspects of life were concentrated in the male principle. Given such exclusive usurpation of all life giving functions, in god's decision to conceive a son with a mortal woman, in order to spread his new message of eternal life, there is an element of conscious intention to engage with the feminine. And it is certainly not because he needs female fertility and a womb to receive his sperm. He is after all not just a fertility god,[28] but also one who can create *ex nihilo*. According to Mt. 1.18 and Lk. 1.26-38 he, however, chooses a woman to take part in this new creation. And this is not accidental. Given that woman is responsible for the mortality of man, she is also the symbolic representation of death and only she can bring into the world the contradiction that is Jesus Christ, life that is both mortal and immortal, thus transforming death that resulted from her actions into a passing stage on the way to eternal life.

But the reversal of death is not the only consequence of god's decision to have a son with a mortal woman. By choosing to unite with her he is also consciously reintroducing the feminine principle back into the sphere of the transcendent, from which the Hebrew Bible completely removed it. Putting aside remarks about parthenogenesis—because god is not an insect and because the Jewish god is very much a paradigmatic male—what the sexual encounter between god and Mary means is that before humanity as a whole begins to participate in the divine, in the eternal, it is the human feminine principle that is emancipated first. Mary's sexual encounter with god leads to feminization of the transcendent. Thus, even before humanity becomes godlike and god becomes humanlike the very nature of the transcendent is changed. Already masculine, it now becomes feminine as well. The gates towards eternity for humanity is set open through a woman's womb. And this is an important order. It shows that the feminine principle has taken its place next to the male principle as an equal. Only after this re-balancing in the sphere of the transcendent can the merger between divine and human proceed.

The most obvious practical consequence of this rebalancing act in the Gospels is that women get back the power to participate and officiate in ritual acts. Most of the ritual acts concerning Jesus, like anointing and bathing, are done by women.[29] Baptism is the only instance where the ritual is performed by a man. There is also an implied balance between the numbers of Jesus' disciples and the women who follow him. Spread

28. His fertility function with respect to people is clear from the conception stories of Sarah in Gen. 17.15-17, Rebekah in Gen. 25.21 and Hannah in 1 Sam. 1.19-20.

29. Mt. 26.6-13; Mk 14.3-9; Lk. 7.36-50; 10.38-42; Jn 11.1-46; 12.1-8.

across the Gospels, there are 12 of them, Joanna,[30] Martha of Bethany,[31] Mary of Bethany,[32] Mary Magdalena,[33] Mary, the mother of James and John,[34] Mary the mother of Jesus,[35] Mary the mother of James and Joseph,[36] Mary, the 'other Mary',[37] sister of Jesus' mother,[38] Mary, the wife of Clopas,[39] Salome,[40] and Sussana.[41] It is interesting to note that the majority of women that surround Jesus and perform the rituals are named Mary. Their name could be a reflection of its popularity among the Jewish population of the time, but it could also be a symbolic designation of the type of women that adhered to Christian beliefs. The name comes from the Hebrew roots *mrr*, meaning bitter, and *mrh*, with the sense of rebellion. The women surrounding Jesus are indeed rebels against many of the patriarchal rules. They are women who exercise free will, who dare to choose for themselves the path they will follow and who challenge the idea that woman is to be confined to private spaces.

But the divine/human coitus has other far reaching consequences. Given that its participants, male god and human woman, stand in the overall Jewish socio-religious hierarchy at both the highest and lowest step of the ladder, and given the multiple character of their otherness towards each other (male/female, divine/human, life/death), its liminality throws all the points of division between them into a limbo. It leads to their perturbation, exchanging, mixing and finally erasing. From this powerful sexual encounter completely new characters emerge into the light. God has become father of a human, Mary has become mother of god. The nature of Jesus, who is both human and divine, is a demonstration of the de-alienated nature of their sexual union through which they both fully surrender to and embrace their opposite. Christ, the ultimate human and the ultimate divine, is a testimony of the potential of sex to be a liberating act rather than an exercise reinforcing established social positions of domination and control. The new natures that Mary and god acquire through their union speak about giving up and renouncing

30. Lk. 8.3; 24.10.
31. Lk. 10.38-42; Jn 11.1-44.
32. Jn 11.1-44; 12.1-8.
33. Mk 15.40-47; 16.1-9; Mt. 27.56-61; 28.1; Lk. 8.2; 24.10; Jn 19.25; 20.1-18.
34. Mk 15.40; 16.1; Mt. 20.20; 27.56-61; 28.1; Lk. 24.10.
35. Mk 3.32; Mt. 1.18; 2.11; 12.47; 13.55; Lk. 2.34-48; 8.20; 10.28-32; 11.27-28; Jn 19.25-27.
36. Mk 15.40-47; Mt. 27.61; 28.1.
37. Mt. 27.61; 28.1.
38. Mk 15.40-47; Mt. 27.56-61; 28.1.
39. Jn 19.25.
40. Mk 15.40, 16.1; Mt. 27.56.
41. Lk. 8.3.

traditional roles and socially determined patterns of gender behaviours. God renounces his superiority and Mary her position of an obedient female. God gives up his self-sufficient masculinity and divine aloofness; she gives up being her husband's possession. In this symbolic giving up of god's and Mary's absolute otherness and their dialectical becoming one, the myth speaks about the need to change the structure of the society and its system of values, to relax the divisions and unfreeze the patriarchal rules. The god is no one else but the man of early Jewish society who needs to follow god's example and give up his privileged position as much as the Jewish woman needs to give up her submissiveness.

One might argue that Mary is an example of submissiveness, because according to Lk. 1. 29-38 it is god who initiates the encounter and Mary only delivers what he demands from her. However, her intact virginity testifies that what takes place between them is not the usual coitus in which *ius primae noctis* is exercised as an idiosyncratic, patriarchal and mercantilist rite of passage in order to verify woman's quality and value. It is precisely because her sexual/genital integrity is represented as intact that the love affair with the god is her choice as well. Mary's virginity is no one else's possession, but hers, it is not a commodity that has an exchange value and as long as she has the freedom to choose her partner she is going to remain intact. Representing her as a virgin, the Jesus myth links her with virgin goddesses of antiquity, like Artemis,[42] Athena, Inanna and Anath and their fiercely independent character. Like them, Mary is also a rebel against the patriarchal treatment of woman's sexuality as merchandise intended to satisfy males' desires; and, more than a physical condition, her virginity is actually a condition of socially, economically and sexually un-violated female integrity.

This mythical coitus in which women's integrity is not violated is a demonstration of Reichian orgastic potency, a de-alienating transformative flow and exchange of energies in which both parties abandon the limitations of their existences and make a step outside their own selves, a flow that ends in an orgasmic explosion of mythological proportions, in the conception of Jesus, the symbolic panacea for all the ills of humanity and who in himself concentrates and dialectically resolves all of them,

42. It is certainly no accident that Mary's cult as Theotokos was established at the ecumenical council held in Ephesus, the site of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Artemis, the local syncretic goddess that was, like Mary, both a virgin and a great mother. Apart from one column and the foundations, nothing is left of Artemision, the house of Artemis, but there is the House of Mary, which is according to nineteenth-century tradition based on visions of Anna Katherina Emmerich, a German nun, a place where Mary allegedly lived after she left Jerusalem with apostle John.

death and life, sorrow and joy, despair and hope, human and divine, man and woman.

His symbolic progression towards that uniting, liberating role, however, is slow and has to repeat, at least in terms of sex, the dialectical play involved in his creation. Jesus is born as a boy and during his life he remains a man. He is an ascetic, but he is not an impotent ascetic. Quite to the contrary, he is the paradigm of a potent, erectile male involved in a seemingly endless string of intercourses resulting in re-generation of lives in which his virility expresses itself through his healing powers. It is interesting to note that this point was not lost to Renaissance artists. In *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion* (1983), art critic Leo Steinberg relates his discovery of some forty paintings that show Christ with an erection, or cupping his loins. Other paintings show people around the Madonna scrutinizing and even tweaking the tiny penis of the Christ child. Steinberg asks rhetorically, 'How could he who restores human nature to sinlessness be shamed by the sexual factor in his humanity?'[43] Christ is certainly not ashamed of his sexuality, which is further demonstrated by his healings of women.

Some of them are metaphorical representations of the pariah status of women, and the healings have mostly social consequences, especially elevation or reversal of their low status. The most famous among them is that of Mary Magdalene who is healed from seven demons[44] and who becomes one of Jesus' followers[45] and the first witness of his resurrection.[46] The seven demons that Jesus drives out from her do not identify her as a sinner, as it was understood by Pope Gregory in the sixth century, thus starting a tradition of her as a penitent prostitute, but as a total social outcast, someone who is at the very bottom of the social hierarchy (seven being the symbol of completeness, demons that of otherness). The other social healing refers to the woman who cannot straighten her back in Lk. 13.10-17. Jesus heals her on the Sabbath and when he is reproached for that, in his response to the synagogue leader he quite significantly compares her with working animals, oxen and asses.[47]

However, the other healings Jesus performs on women are more sexual in nature, given that in each one of them the sexual age of the women

43. L. Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion* (London : Faber, 1983), p. 17.

44. Mk 16.9.

45. Mt. 27.55-56.

46. Mk 16.9.

47. Lk. 13.15-16: 'Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" '

is either directly or indirectly given. One is Simon's mother, an obvious representation of a woman who is already past her sexual peak and approaching the end of her sexually intense years. Jesus' touch relieves her fever.[48] Then there is the woman with the unceasing menstrual flow, a sign of her sexual maturity and a metaphor of unfulfilled sexual desire which plays with the idea of conception as the realization of that desire. After twelve years her flow stops upon touching Jesus, a sure indication of pregnancy and that the power emanating from Jesus has sexual connotations.[49] Her metaphorical sexual yearning, her blood flow, renders her impure and she can touch Jesus only in secret. However, by forgiving her for that audacity Jesus actually reverses two taboos, one regarding menstruation, the other regarding the passive sexual role assigned to women in patriarchal societies.

Finally, there are the two girls whom Jesus heals.[50] One is Israelite, one is Canaanite, both are young, but their conditions are very different. The Israelite girl is dead while the Canaanite is possessed by a demon. The dead one is a girl of twelve, her age an indication of pre-pubescence, which together with the idea of death form a metaphor for dormant sexuality. Her parents claim that she is dead, but the potent male, Jesus, claims that she is only sleeping and his touch wakes her up from the slumber.

As a counterpoint to this healing where the masculinity of Jesus initiates awakening of latent sexuality and transition to sexual maturity, the Canaanite girl[51] is very much alive and is suffering from an unclean demon. The mixture of women and unclean demons is usually an indication of rampant sexuality.[52] In Rev. 18.2, for example, we find the same association of ideas. Babylon is represented as both whore and home of demons, evil spirits and the like. In Jewish tradition also, Lilith, the original first woman and, significantly, the woman who was sexually insubordinate, becomes a demon after she leaves Adam.[53] The healing of the Canaanite girl's awoken sexuality, however, does not involve any kind of close contact. Asked by her mother for help Jesus initially refuses, saying that he is here to help only the Israelites, but then when she outwits him he commands that her wish be fulfilled. By accepting and admitting the superiority of her mother's arguments, Jesus recognizes the reality of female sexuality. The demon of unacknowledged female sexuality and

48. Mk 1.30-31; Lk. 4.38-39.

49. Mt. 9.20-22; Mk 5.25-33; Lk. 8.43-48.

50. Mt. 9.23-25; 15.22-28; Mk 5.39-42; 7.26-30.

51. Mt. 15.22-28; Mk 7.26-30.

52. R.J. Fornaro, 'Supernatural Power, Sexuality, and the Paradigm of "Women's Space" in Religion and Culture', *Sex Roles* 12.3/4, (1985), p 299.

53. A.G. Hefner, 'Lilith', in *Encyclopedia Mythica* (2004, Encyclopedia Mythica Online: http://www.pantheon.org/articles/l/lilith.html)

the social stigma a sexually proactive woman attracts are purged by Jesus' acceptance of his (male) error. The whole story can be interpreted as an allegory about the discriminatory patriarchal views on the importance of male sexuality over against the unimportance of female sexuality. Those views are symbolized in the story by Jesus' identification with the house of Israel, god's chosen people, while the irrelevance and the marginal role of women's sexuality is represented by the foreign, Canaanite origin of the mother and her daughter.

While he is alive Jesus plays the role of a man, taking upon himself the role of his father, the potent male. Only when he approaches death, through his passion, does he become also a woman, thus making the last step towards becoming a complete human, a human that measures up to the divine. His becoming a woman, however, is a gradual process, beginning with his acceptance to submit unconditionally to the will of his father and suffer the destiny he cut out for him, a decision which mirrors the disempowered position of women in Judaism. The transformation is slow and painful and it reaches its climax in crucifixion and death when 'he' truly becomes 'she' through the opening of a bleeding wound on his chest,[54] a symbolic vagina, a sexually mature, birth giving vagina. Here the myth reverses and corrects the Hebrew Bible version about the creation of Eve from Adam's side. Eve, the feminine, is placed back into the first human.[55] The passion and the wound that oozes blood and water are rites of passage into a new form, Jesus' symbolic self-re-birth as a woman. Both woman's complete social disempowering and the mythological association with death are replicated through his passion, crucifixion and dying.

Quite significantly, during this period none of the male disciples is present. They are shown to fail Jesus in many ways. They consistently fail to understand him, they lack faith in him, Judas betrays him, the other disciples fall asleep in the garden of Gethsemane instead of keeping watch with him, they leave him to his accusers, and Peter denies him. During his passion Jesus is surrounded by women, mature women, who are the sole witnesses and guardians of his transition into a new sex. On the cross and in death the son of god becomes the daughter of god. And only after 'he' becomes 'she' and after 'he' experiences the condition of 'she' could Jesus resurrect as a new transcendence, as de-alienated and

54. Jn 19.34.

55. In mythological perceptions of sexuality side or leg are often used as a euphemism for the male genitals, or for a desired 'vagina'. In the myth of the birth of Dionysus, for example, Zeus took the unborn god and hid him within his thigh, or side, until the child came to term and was born from the pseudo-vagina of the wound.

de-alienating divinity, a transformed god/dess representing humanity as a whole. Doubting Thomas's finger in the wound, in the symbolic vagina, is a confirmation of his/her unified fe-male nature.[56]

Resurrected Jesus is a sexless divinity, a paradigm of sexually de-alienated, androgynous humanity in which biological differences cannot be a base for any kind of inequality or exploitation, including the exploitation of sexual pleasure. S/he is humanity that is at peace with itself, in which the two halves of the ancient divided original androgynous human from Plato's Symposium finally find and embrace each other to re-create their original state of fullness and completeness. The Saviour/ess is a condition of perpetual Reichien orgasm, permanent and unconditional losing oneself in the other, of abandonment and negation of every division and conflict. Resurrected, s/he is not a being; s/he is the utopian ideal of a healed humanity in perfect balance with itself.

In its inception the Christ myth was fluid and like any other powerful myth generated a flurry of different versions and interpretations. And it took few centuries before the Church established the main dogmas and drew boundaries separating dogmatic and heretical interpretations of the myth, before it managed to erect a patriarchal fortress protecting the new transcendence from the intrusion of the feminine. Today all that diversity that followed the myth like a blazing trail after a comet and which the Church strived to actively suppress, especially after its unfortunate marriage with the state, are grouped together under the very elusive and imprecise category of Gnosticism. Gnostic groups were many and versatile and their response to the Christ myth was different. Many were ascetic in their views on sexuality, but for some the implicit messages of the Jesus myth regarding the social and sexual emancipation from gender and sexual roles, as well as the necessity to recognize the patriarchal ethics as a human construct that can be challenged and changed, were not lost.[57] In the *Gospel of Thomas*, for example, the need to change the social status of women is quite clearly expressed. Responding to the demand of Simon Peter to leave Mary behind because women are not worthy of eternal life, Jesus says, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so

56. Jn 20.27: 'Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing".'

57. Describing Carpocratians, for example, Irenaues says: 'So unbridled is their madness, that they declare they have in their power all things which are irreligious and impious, and are at liberty to practise them; for they maintain that things are evil or good, simply in virtue of human opinion'. Irenaues, 'Against Heresies', book I, chap. xxv, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (trans. P. Schaff; Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, reprint 2001).

that she may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven'.[58]

The sexual re-balancing of the transcendent was also intuitively rendered through the teachings of the Valentians. They believed that the primordial godhead is an androgynous father/mother source of all being from which masculine/feminine pairs of spiritual energies radiate and multiply themselves, thus creating the world. Emanation, the creative process, is in other words an almost sexual process. Among the Valentians women were regarded as equals. Some were respected as prophetesses, others were active as teachers, preachers, healers and priests that could officiate at religious rituals.[59] One of the Valentian rituals was the so called 'bridal chamber', a ritualistic sacrament in which sexual union was seen as analogous to the activities of the paired spiritual energies (syzygies) that constitute the Valentinian Pleroma, the heavenly realm. Christ's emancipatory role with respect to sexual division was also noted. According to the *Gospel of Philip* 'Christ came to repair the separation which was from the beginning and again unite the two, and to give Life to those who died as a result of the separation and unite them. But the woman is united to her husband in the bridal chamber. Indeed, those who have united in the bridal chamber will no longer be separated'.[60] In the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus also declares, 'when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female…then you will enter the kingdom of heaven'.[61]

Whether the 'bridal chamber' ritual did or did not involve sexual intercourse is hard to know, but many of the Gnostic sects were accused by the early church ideologues of licentious behaviour.[62] One cannot escape wondering whether the alleged libertinism was actually some kind of Reichian attempt to attain gnosis through orgasmic experience,[63] especially since Gnostic cosmological teachings very often use sexual

58. 'Gospel of Thomas' (II, 2.114), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper 1990).

59. E. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 60.

60. 'Gospel of Philip' (II, 3.70), *The Nag Hammadi Library*.

61. 'Gospel of Thomas' (II, 2.22), *The Nag Hammadi Library*.

62. According to Epiphanius of Salamis, Borborites had as a distinct feature of their ritual elements sexual sacramentalism, including smearing of hands with menstrual blood and semen, and consumption of the same as a variant of eucharist. *The Panarion* (trans. F. Williams; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987–94), chs. xxv, xxvi. The mentioned Carpocratians, along with many other sects, were also accused of licentious behaviour by Iranaeus and Clement of Alexandria in *Stromateis*.

63. R. Grant claims that the marriage mystery taking place in the bridal chamber was a 'literalizing' of the metaphors used by Christians. R.M. Grant, 'The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip', *Vigiliae Christianae* 15 (1961), p. 140.

metaphors. Clement of Alexandria, for example, wrote 'There are some who call Aphrodite Pandemos [i.e. physical love] a mystical communion. … These thrice wretched men treat carnal and sexual intercourse as a sacred religious mystery, and think that it will bring them to the kingdom of God'.[64]

In many discussions it is claimed that the Gnostic union between the male and the female principle was of purely spiritual character and that the accusations of sexual laxity levelled at some of the Gnostic groups were baseless attempts by the early Church fathers to discredit them. To me, however, such explanations resonate with the same negative attitude towards nurturing sexuality as that of the early Church fathers and against which some of the Gnostics in their antinomian quest might have actually fought.

However, with the ascent of Christianity to political power, the sexual message and therefore the feminine side of the Christ myth as well were gradually suppressed and for women the new universal and emancipatory religion did not bring any radical improvement. Moreover, in terms of sexuality they lost even the little freedom and respect they might have commanded in Hellenism and their position reverted to the one women had in Judaism. The sphere of the divine also, after a few centuries of fighting off different Gnostic dualistic heresies, reverted to its masculinized Judaic form. Even worse, the transcendent became not just exclusively masculine, but a three times fortified male, the father, the son and the holy spirit. The mother, the balancing feminine equation of this trinity, although accepted as *theotokos*, the one who gives birth to god, remained incurably human. The Church, the institution dominated, controlled and run by men took upon itself the 'bride of Christ' title which essentially changed the relationship between divine and human into homoerotic one, leading Christianity into a complete sexual contradiction which repressed not only female sexuality on every possible level, but also abhorred and condemned homosexuality, despite its homosexual connection with god.

Organized Christianity, in particular its Western version, also brought to the forefront the story about the expulsion from Eden, giving it its full attention. The elusive concept of original sin became one of the main subjects of theological discourse, pushing women even deeper into the darkness of biased patriarchal intellectual discussions with far-reaching consequences. Being born became equated with being sinful. The sexual act was seen to perpetuate original sin and for this the woman was the main culprit. Accordingly, sexual pleasure became a primary source of

64. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, Book III, Chap. 4, 27. (trans. J. Ferguson, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991).

evil. Many leaders of the early church followed Paul and advised that the good Christian was one who avoided sex as much as possible and, when forced to fulfil marital obligations to one's spouse, performed those sexual duties with as little pleasure as possible. It is clear that in this procreationist attitude towards sex, women's pleasure was of no importance. Enjoying the extra value of procreation, pleasure, under the guise of reproduction, continued to be reserved only for men. For women, the only avenue to express and enjoy their own sexuality became not the body and contact with another human being, but asceticism and the repressed mystical eroticism of communion with the new masculinized transcendence, Jesus Christ. St. Theresa, the most famous of female mystical visionaries, is just one example of searching for ultimate love and sexual pleasure through the piercing of a sublimated penis. Instead of becoming a symbol of the divine as a union of all divisions, including ones based on biological differences, Jesus became the alienated masculine other. The battle to overcome one of the basic divisions of humans as species beings that the myth of Christ initially promised as part of its universal message was betrayed, leaving the women and men, to paraphrase Bataille, as discontinued beings, individuals who die lonely in an incomprehensible adventure, and yet who feel the yearning for lost continuity.

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'Old and New Wisdom Mix Admirably': Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

David Jobling

1. *Introduction*

To each term in the triple intersection Marxism, feminism, Bible, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) stands in a complicated relationship. He is a major Marxist figure of the twentieth century, but a sceptical (he never joined the Party) and heterodox one.[1] As a pupil of Karl Korsch, he favoured a participatory style of Marxism, and this led him to question the Leninist central role of the Party. A long interest in China, together with disillusion with Stalin, led him, towards the end of his life, to an interest in Maoism; Willett refers to a report in the 1950s that 'Brecht is talking of Chinese exile'.[2]

Kellner remarks that 'at many stages of his life, Brecht engaged in genuinely collective work and the principles in Brecht's aesthetic practice remain consistent with a version of Korschian democratic Marxism'. It was in his writing and productions for the theatre that he most expressed Korsch's 'participatory' ideas.

When asked in an interview which book had influenced him most, he famously replied: 'You'll laugh: the Bible' (21:248).[3] Throughout his work, biblical quotations, characters and themes are prominent. The standard edition[4] has a separate biblical index of 34 pages! There has been little work on 'Brecht and the Bible'. What there has been[5] tends to get caught

1. For a brief summary of his relation to Marxism, see Douglas Kellner, 'Brecht's Marxist Aesthetic', in *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion* (ed. Siegfried Mews; Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 281-95. Quoted here from http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell3.htm.

2. John Willett, *Brecht in Context: Comparative Approaches* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 206.

3. This form of reference (mm:nn) is to the standard edition of Brecht's works (*Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*; 30 vols. and Index vol.; ed. Werner Hecht, *et al*.; Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag and Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988–2000), by volume and page.

4. Brecht, *Werke*.

5. For example, G. Ronald Murphy, S.J., *Brecht and the Bible: A Study of Religious*

up in arid discussion of whether his attitude to the Bible is sympathetic or antipathetic, and how it relates to his Marxist atheism. My interest is in how the Bible functions in his work, not with whether he *approved* of the Bible, or anything in it.

Brecht's work consistently and deliberately evokes feminist issues. In particular, his major plays feature a series of extraordinary women characters. His closest and most active collaborators included several women. But he has recently been bitterly attacked, particularly by John Fuegi,[6] over his treatment of these women (with reference to Fuegi's critique, Kellner qualifies the favourable words just quoted with 'even if Brecht himself did not realize his principles in adequate fashion').

To the triad Marxism, Bible and feminism I want to add 'postmodernism', since it characterizes the whole climate in which we now read Brecht, and my approach in particular. Fredric Jameson[7] makes an impressive argument for Brecht as one of the creators of the postmodern or post-structural scene, particularly through his anti-essentialism and 'denaturalizing' of accepted understandings of art. In French theory, Brecht's influence has been channelled particularly through Roland Barthes.

The original impulse for my choice of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (hereafter CCC) among Brecht's works was its being based on a biblical text, the Judgment of Solomon (1 Kgs 3.16-28). I quickly found that CCC has rich materials also for feminist critique, including one of the great woman characters (Grusha). I also noted the 'play within a play' structure, but did not anticipate that the prelude—about one fifteenth of the whole—would hijack my essay to the extent it has!

I began with the assumption that CCC could be 'taken as read'—that my task would be a biblical-feminist response to a known quantity. In the event, I found that fundamental issues about the play had not been adequately dealt with in existing criticism. (Examining in detail the early criticism of CCC—including Brecht's own—I have experienced very profoundly how different are our critical assumptions half a century later.) I discovered that Brecht had written an earlier version of CCC in which the frame play was very different from the one universally received now. I not only prefer the first version, but believe that it speaks better to our

Nihilism and Human Weakness in Brecht's Drama of Mortality and the City (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Naumann, Thomas, '"Wo du hingehst…": Brecht und die Bibel' (http://www.luise-berlin.de/Lesezei/Blz00_03/text03.htm, 2000).

6. John Fuegi, *The Life and Lies of Bertolt Brecht* (London: Harper Collins, 1994).
7. Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 171-73.

time; and I find indications that Brecht himself continued to be caught up in the assumptions of this 'abandoned' version.

In Part 2, I will analyse both the CCC we know and other work of Brecht which shows it in a different light. In Part 3, I will consider this analysis in relation to how the Bible functions in the play. Feminist analysis will be a major element of both these parts. In a conclusion, I will consider the value of Brecht and CCC to us in our work.

2. *The Case of the Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Analysis of the Received Version

What I call the 'received version' of CCC[8] begins with a prelude set in Soviet Georgia in 1944. In the wake of the German retreat, two collectives have met to decide which shall have use of a certain valley: one—the immemorial occupants—wants to continue its traditional goat-herding, the other hopes to turn the valley to intensive agriculture through irrigation. I shall call them 'herders' and 'cultivators'. A party Delegate referees the debate.

Though the valley traditionally belonged to the herders, the cultivators are in current possession. The herders had withdrawn before the Nazi advance, while the cultivators engaged in guerrilla resistance. So the herders come to the negotiations as visitors. The cultivators have a technological advantage. They sent one of their young women to technical school and she has returned, a trained agronomist, with scientific plans for irrigation. She shows that the cultivators can get a much greater yield from the valley, so that it makes sense for them to occupy it.

Impressed by this demonstration, the herders yield the valley. The cultivators then announce that they have arranged a performance of the traditional play *The Chalk Circle* which, they say, 'has a bearing' on the dispute (503).[9] In fact, the cultivators themselves act the play, under the direction of a traditional Singer.

The main play, *The Chalk Circle*, begins with a coup d'état in Grusinia (an old name for Georgia). A group of princes, led by Kazbeki, overthrow the regime of the Grand Duke and his regional governors. For the next two

8. This is a blanket term including various versions now available. The standard edition gives two, from 1949 and 1954 (8:7-185); they and Bentley's translation differ only in detail. These all go back to the second of two versions which Brecht wrote in 1944. The differences do not affect my analysis.

9. Otherwise unspecified single numbers or ranges (always between 498 and 587) are page references to Bentley's 1947 English translation of CCC (Bertolt Brecht, *Seven Plays by Bertolt Brecht* [ed. Eric Bentley; New York: Grove Press, 1961]). Quotes are from this unless otherwise stated.

years no party can establish dominance. During this time of upheaval the action of the play occurs. In the coup, one of the governors is executed and his wife, in her rush to escape, abandons Michael, their infant son. Michael is found and rescued by Grusha, a cook in the governor's household. She has a lover, Simon, a soldier in the governor's guard. The events separate them. Simon goes off to war, while Grusha takes Michael through many perils to her brother's home in a distant region. Michael is an embarrassment to Grusha in this conservative backwater, since she cannot reveal who he really is. To escape her predicament, she marries a man supposed to be on the point of death. However, he has been feigning illness to dodge the draft, and 'recovers' his health when fighting dies down. Simon returns from the wars, but before Grusha has time to explain, soldiers loyal to the old regime take Michael back to the capital for a trial to determine custody. The trial will be before Judge Azdak.

The play backtracks to tell how Azdak, village recorder in another remote area, became judge. After the coup, he shelters a fugitive who is none other than the Grand Duke (who thus survives). Learning too late the fugitive's identity, Azdak goes to the capital to denounce himself for his treasonous act! Having heard of an insurrection by the weavers, he expects to find a revolutionary government in charge. In fact, he finds disorder, with no one in charge. The soldiers to whom he surrenders do not take him seriously.

These soldiers have executed the sitting judge for siding with the insurrection. Impressed by Azdak's wit, and to spite Kazbeki who wants the job for his nephew, they install Azdak as the new judge! He thus begins a two-year term during which he flouts all established procedures, flaunts his openness to bribes, and yet makes decisions which embody natural justice and favour the poor.

When Grusha and the governor's widow arrive for the custody trial, Azdak's term seems to be over. He has been arrested on the denunciation of rich farmers tired of his populist justice, and is being roughed up by soldiers. But he is reinstated by a message from the Grand Duke—restored to power and thankful for his rescue—and so presides over the trial. He institutes the chalk circle test, where each woman must try to pull Michael out of the circle. Azdak judges in favour of Grusha when she declines the test to avoid hurting Michael. By a 'slip' of the pen, he also divorces Grusha! There is a happy ending for Grusha, who keeps the child and is free to marry Simon.

The main play enacts a brief revolution in Georgia's past. It suggests what the *conditions* are for revolution, and specifically for *making a correct revolutionary decision*, as Azdak does and as the collectives needed to.

In broad terms, it tells of how general unrest created room for new sectors to seek power (the weavers); of vacillation in some official sectors

(the soldiers); and of the happenstance of Azdak's saving the Grand Duke. So revolution needs a disturbed situation and some luck! But to get at more specific conditions for revolution, we must look primarily at the characters, particularly Azdak, Grusha and Simon.

A. Azdak embodies the need for revolutionary consciousness, the presence of people who can take advantage of emerging conditions. He lives out of revolution as memory and hope. He *recalls* revolutions both recent (one in Persia 'forty years ago' which lasted 'for three whole days'; 557-59) and very ancient (his 'Song of Chaos' is mostly excerpts from an Egyptian text of the third millennium BCE; 571-72[10]). He *anticipates* a revolutionary future when he establishes a children's playground as a memorial to his judgeship, to be called 'Azdak's Garden' (585-86).

He behaves in revolutionary ways. He denounces himself (556-57).[11] He opportunistically turns to advantage Kazbeki's attempt to make his nephew judge, benefiting from the soldiers' protection to condemn the princely faction in openly socialist terms (560-63). When he strays from socialist duty, he is ready to be recalled to it (see below, on Grusha's tirade against him). He does not, however, get everything right. He misreads the situation when he expects to find a revolutionary regime in place.[12] He is a coward: when the governor's wife returns to the capital he instantly capitulates (573). It should be remembered, though, that he undergoes a severe beating (576-77).[13]

Brecht called Azdak 'a thoroughly sincere [*lauter*] man, a disappointed revolutionary' and 'the disappointed one who does not disappoint' (24.345-6). I have a reservation about this. Azdak's judgments are of three kinds. There is the judgment of the Chalk Circle itself, displaying revolutionary justice and wisdom beyond the scope of any law (585). There is 'Robin Hood' justice for an old woman accused of theft: in high burlesque, Azdak accepts her claim that a rich farmer's cow came to her by a miracle and accuses the farmer of impiety for denying this (568-70). It is with a third type that I have a problem. Judgments in cases of medical malpractice, blackmail and rape seem to be mere caprice or pursuit of Azdak's own base interests (564-68). Some of this humour fails to amuse us now for feminist reasons (see below). While not denigrating Brecht's efforts to give Marxism a (reportedly sometimes lacking) sense

10. James B. Pritchard, (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2nd edn, 1955), pp. 441-44.

11. Eric Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries* (New York: Grove Press, 1980), p. 105, assumes an allusion to the then recent self-denunciations by Radek and Bukharin.

12. Theo Buck, 'Der Garten des Azdak: Von der Ästhetik gesellschaftlicher Produktivität im *Kaukasischen Kreidekreis*', in *Brechts Dramen: Neue Interpretationen* (ed. Walter Hinderer; Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1984), p. 210.

13. Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries*, p. 177.

of humour, I find here a 'surplus' of tiresome cleverness which spoils the picture of the 'sincere' revolutionary.

B. Grusha embodies individual self-sacrifice as a condition for revolution. She acts 'very much against her own best interests and personal safety' in rescuing the child.[14] Jameson makes much of the Singer's comment on her action, 'Terrible is the seductive power of goodness' (521).[15] Revolution depends on yielding to temptation to do good! The reversal of Grusha's fortunes comes through Azdak's revolutionary justice: socialist justice not merely undergirds socialist self-sacrifice, it ultimately turns it to gain (Brecht, 24: 346).

Self-sacrifice is far from passivity. Grusha becomes steadily less passive. She saves herself and Michael by knocking out a soldier, and acts with astonishing physical heroism by crossing a glacier where her pursuers dare not follow. Though she owes her eventual salvation to Azdak, her reciprocal effect on him is great. When his wit subverts his justice she turns on him ferociously, branding him a class enemy (582-83).[16] Azdak's tone clearly changes from this point.

C. Simon deserves more critical attention than he has received. He speaks half of the play's many proverbs. These expressions of folk wisdom run a gamut from the conventional to the openly subversive, with Simon more at the subversive end.[17] They culminate in a contest between him and Azdak:

> Simon: When the horse was shod, the horse-fly held out its leg, as the saying is.
> Azdak: Better a treasure in manure than a stone in a mountain stream.
> Simon: A fine day. Let's go fishing, said the angler to the worm.
> Azdak: I'm my own master, said the servant, and cut off his foot.
> Simon: I love you as a father, said the Czar to the peasants, and had the Czarevitch's head chopped off.
> Azdak: A fool's worst enemy is himself.
> Simon: However, a fart has no nose. (581-82)

Another requirement for revolution, then, is a bedrock of popular, including subversive, wisdom. CCC ends with a long speech by the Singer:

> And after that evening Azdak vanished and was never seen again.
> But the people of Grusinia did not forget him and remembered
> Long the period of his judging as a brief
> Golden age almost of justice. / But you, who have been the audience
> For the story of the Chalk Circle, take note of the opinion

14. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, p. 174.
15. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, pp. 173-74.
16. Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries*, p. 178.
17. A particularly large proportion of Simon's proverbs are *announced* as popular wisdom by some such formula as 'they say'.

> Of the people of old, that what there is shall belong
> To those who are good for it, that is:
> Children to the motherly, that they prosper,
> Carts to good drivers, that they be driven well,
> And the valley to the waterers, that it yield fruit
> (8: 185, my trans.; cf. 586-87).

Logically, the second section (from the slash) is a postlude, since it moves from the main play back into the frame: 'you, who have been the audience', i.e. members of the collectives. The first section, we may suppose, belongs to every performance of *The Chalk Circle*, while the second is specific to the given setting.

Along with the traditional play comes, therefore, a traditional interpretation: things should belong to the people who treat them best. This is a generalization from motherly Grusha's getting custody of Michael. The Singer reparticularizes it: the valley should go to the cultivators.

This is a puzzling outcome. Assuming that the last line constitutes the 'bearing' of the play on the dispute, it comes merely as a ratification of a decision already made. And what of the main play and the first section of the Singer's speech? At the end of the prelude, the Delegate[18] asked the Singer how long the play would last, since he had to get back to the capital. On the vague reply, 'A few hours', he asked, 'Can't you shorten it?' The Singer replied with a terse 'No', insisting on doing the whole play, and now he asserts that 'The people of Grusinia remembered long' Azdak's judgeship 'as a brief golden age'. This play, the whole play, is for Georgians to *remember*. Yet now this same Singer seems to reduce it to the briefest 'moral'.

Feminist reading of the received version

I begin with a long excursus. Fuegi asserts that many of the works published under Brecht's name were in fact written by women who worked closely with him. He further claims that Brecht mistreated these women financially and sexually.[19]

Brecht's personal ethics leave much to be desired. He had an extreme need, for which psychological explanations may be sought, to surround himself with women.[20] We may somewhat extenuate his conduct by the difficult conditions of much of his working life. More to the point, he and

18. In some versions, a young cultivator woman asks on his behalf.

19. Fuegi, *The Life and Lies of Bertolt Brecht*.

20. David Z. Mairowitz, 'Brecht's Women: A Synopsis/Proposal', in *Brecht Frauen und Politik/Brecht Women and Politics. Brecht Jahrbuch/The Brecht Yearbook* 12 (ed. John Fuegi, Gisela Bahr and John Willett; Detroit: Wayne State University Press and Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1983), p. 208.

his associates lived in a world very different from Fuegi's. If it had all happened fifty years later, Brecht's working relationships would surely have been very different.

Responding to Fuegi in his own terms, Kuhn makes the key point: Fuegi's views entail a 'pretty damning assessment of the women's own self-awareness'.[21] In fact, these were strong women who 'quite willingly submitted, either out of love for the man, or out of loyalty to the anti-fascist cause, or else in sober recognition of the commercial fact that the Brecht imprint would ensure a wider dissemination of their work'.

Despite Fuegi, many feminists find Brecht eminently usable. In my observation, it is male critics who tend to side with Fuegi! After the initial media attention, the debate has died down and left Brecht fairly unscathed.[22]

Marxists will get impatient with such discussion, and ask what the real issues are. Not that personal ethics are irrelevant to Marxist analysis, but they have to be linked with theory. Brecht's practice raises a number of theoretical issues.

If he 'asserted the necessity of subordinating gender relations to class relations',[23] that's important; if personal issues were a factor in his doing so, these issues are important. But nearly all Marxists contemporary with Brecht, including women, accepted this methodological subordination. Mairowitz, though he raises sharp questions about the personal issues, insists on linking them to Brecht's context. He asks how *recent* feminism 'can … shed some light on the male-dominated Marxist-Leninist tradition embraced by Brecht'.[24] But he also explores the impact of Marxism on Brecht in sexual matters. 'The early work and life are infused with a rampant eroticism which Brecht as Marxist-Leninist later strove to eliminate from his plays'.[25] His women characters become desexualized and 'motherly'.[26] This is the sort of issue that needs more study from our different feminist perspective.

21. Tom Kuhn, 'Bertolt Brecht and notions of collaboration', in *Bertolt Brecht: Centenary Essays*. *German Monitor* 41 (ed. Steve Giles and Rodney Livingstone; Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), p. 9.

22. For a good review of the controversy, see Monaghan, Peter, 'Brecht in Context', *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 51 (April 2005), p. 29 (http://chronicle.com).

23. Meg Mumford, '"Dragging" Brecht's Gestus Onward: A Feminist Challenge', in *Bertolt Brecht: Centenary Essays*. *German Monitor* 41 (ed. Steve Giles and Rodney Livingstone; Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 240-57 (245).

24. Mairowitz, 'Brecht's Women', p. 209.

25. Mairowitz, 'Brecht's Women', p. 207.

26. Mairowitz, 'Brecht's Women', pp. 208-209.

The most important theoretical issue is raised by Gitta Honegger, who brings more substantial argument against Fuegi than anyone else I have read:

> Fuegi…prevents the women he ferociously constructs as Brecht's brutalized victims from talking, afraid perhaps (and with good reason) that they might come out with something that would undermine his text's moralistic advocacy. Kebir's approach suggests what this 'something' might be, namely: the threat they pose to his global capitalist ideology. Elisabeth Hauptmann, Margaret Steffin, and Ruth Berlau were members of the Communist Party. They were drawn to *the collective* of artists, writers, and intellectuals around Brecht because it offered *a creative collaboration* that reflected, and even promised to accelerate, the socialist project of social, intellectual, and sexual emancipation.[27]

The issue, of course, is 'the Brecht Collective'. What I get from the Fuegi debate is a reminder of how radically *collective* is the whole Brechtian oeuvre, to the point that we should think of authorship by a collective 'Brecht'. Brecht worked collectively all his life, from early youth, and extensively theorized collective labour.[28] In addition to working with many co-writers, he constantly solicited and acted on the opinions of the cast and everyone else involved in theatrical productions.[29] Collective labour is a major 'utopian' moment in the sense defined by Jameson:[30] an example, often in some quite unpromising context, of what one wishes would characterize all human interaction. 'Brecht', despite the many faults of Bertolt Brecht, enacts this to a degree altogether astonishing.

According to Weil, Fuegi has shown that the 'many strong female figures' in the plays go back to his female collaborators, while the

27. Gitta Honegger, 'Hauptmann contra Fuegi', *Theater* 29 (1999), p. 157, my italics.

28. Kuhn, 'Bertolt Brecht and notions of collaboration', pp. 4-8.

29. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, p. 10, rightly convicts Fuegi of modern hyperindividualism. For a variety of positive views of the Brecht collective, including the role of women in it, see V Maarten an Dijk, (ed.), *Intersections/Schnittpunkte. The Brecht Yearbook/Brecht Jahrbuch* 21 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), especially the contributions by James Lyon, Tom Kuhn and Angelika Führich. The most important of Brecht's women collaborators, Elisabeth Hauptmann, has received a lot of attention recently. See Astrid Horst, *Prima inter pares. Elisabeth Hauptmann: Die Mitarbeiterin Bertolt Brechts* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1992); Paula Hanssen, *Elisabeth Hauptmann: Brecht's Silent Collaborator* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); John Willett, 'Bacon ohne Shakespeare?—The Problem of Mitarbeit', in *Brecht Frauen und Politik/Brecht Women and Politics. Brecht Jahrbuch/The Brecht Yearbook* 12 (ed. John Fuegi, Gisela Bahr and John Willett; Detroit: Wayne State University Press and Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1983), pp. 121-37. In my quote from Honegger, she is discussing a book on Hauptmann by Sabine Kebir.

30. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, p. 10 and *passim*.

objectionably male ones are from Brecht himself.[31] The simple answer to this is: How good, then, that he had the women collaborators! What we need is not such male feminist grandstanding, but careful feminist criticism of 'Brecht's' work.

I conclude this excursus by noting that Brecht had extensive, acknowledged collaboration on CCC from Berlau,[32] and some from Hauptmann.[33]

Grusha arouses initial misgivings in feminists. Her name is an eponym for Grusinia: at some level, her fate is its fate. This feature is duplicated in the depiction of Azdak's 'Robin Hood' justice: the old woman who 'miraculously' gets the cow is called 'Mother Grusinia', and her situation is directly paralleled with that of the country (570). We see here a widespread and dangerous convention: feminizing land as something which passively suffers occupation, fertilization, etc.

Grusha as figure for revolutionary self-sacrifice is a related problem. Despite Jameson's interesting development of this theme,[34] it seems too conventional. But this judgment needs qualification. Even if she acts on a child's, rather than her own, behalf, Grusha's physical heroism is remarkable. She becomes a stronger character as the play goes on. Brecht directed that she be played by the same actress as the agronomist in the prelude, who is a figure of power. It may also be noted that Simon is hardly less self-sacrificing than Grusha. By the end of the play she has become the more proactive of the two.

Grusha's big moment, from a feminist perspective, is her rebuke of Azdak (582-83). He has been fooling about in an objectionable way. The comment that precipitates the rebuke is that Grusha should flaunt her feminine charms if she wants a good judgment. His foolery has many sexual overtones. His arbitrary judgments turn on more than one alleged incident of rape, and once he convicts the plaintiff of raping the defendant by being so alluring.[35] Sexual innuendo that turns on the

31. Bruno Weil, 'Der autoritäre Brecht: Frauenausbeutung und kalter Zweckrationalismus', 1998. http://www.graswurzel.net/226/brecht2.shtml.

32. Brecht and Berlau were also collaborating elsewhere. On my third birthday, which occurred in 1944, Berlau gave birth prematurely to their child, who survived only a few days. Like the child in CCC, he was named Michael.

33. See the [HB] notations in Betty Nance Weber, *Brechts >Kreidekreis<, ein Revolutionsstück: Eine Interpretation* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978). More than in these early stages, Hauptmann was involved in finalizing the form of CCC in the 1950s.

34. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, pp. 173-74; see above.

35. Grusha, in her rebuke, also mentions rape (583), though again it is children she is concerned about.

victimization of women doesn't get the laughs it used to. Parts of CCC are no longer funny, and I doubt they are even playable.

Though it is perilous, I venture a correlation between this part of the play and the input of Brecht's women collaborators. I see a strong element of autobiography in Azdak. Brecht's clever patter, which Azdak exemplifies, has rarely been equalled, and often it adds spice to his Marxism. But is it always serviceable? It is interesting to look at CCC in the light of Mairowitz's observation that the Marxist Brecht exchanged an earlier 'rampant eroticism' for a desexualization of his characters.[36] Grusha is certainly such a character: she apparently has a sex-free marriage with Jussup and a sex-free courtship with Simon.[37] There is no indication that Azdak himself has a sex-life in reality, but his raunchy talk seems like a reversion to Brecht's pre-Marxist eroticism. My speculation is that Grusha's rebuke of Azdak for this talk plays out a scenario between Brecht and his female collaborators, in which they tell him how tiresome they think his 'cleverness' can sometimes become, and how unserviceable to the cause! However this may be, one can also write the allegory larger, and see in Grusha's rebuke a general feminist critique of male-centred Marxist tradition.

We may see an allegory of the Brecht collective in the prelude to CCC, where collective farmers are engaged in collective decision-making and even put on a play collectively. Women predominate in the prelude, and though the power roles of Delegate and Singer are held by men, the agronomist—a power role of a different kind—is a young woman. But this observation will require some modification later in my discussion.

Early Critical Response

Early reaction to CCC focused on two theoretic questions and a practical issue. The questions were: 'Does the prelude paint a realistic picture of the Soviet Union?' and 'Is the play merely a "parable", an example-story with a single message?' The practical issue was whether the prelude should be included in productions of the play.

In America particularly, the prelude was usually omitted on the grounds that it was crass political propaganda. Everyone read it as depicting a utopia in which issues were resolved by debate, and they didn't believe that Stalin's empire was like that (the issue was sharpened by the setting in Georgia, Stalin's homeland).[38] Even critics who defended the prelude

36. Mairowitz, 'Brecht's Women', pp. 207-209.

37. Jussup: 'You're my wife and you're not my wife' (547). Grusha: 'We didn't get that far' (580, referring to Simon).

38. Brecht may actually imply a negative comment on Stalin. The peasant who marries Grusha under false pretences is called Jussup, a form of 'Joseph', Stalin's first

accepted this argument, saying that it must be read futuristically: despite Stalin, the Soviet revolution is on the right track and is the source of hope for the world.[39]

The possibility that CCC is a 'parable' which mandates a solution also, in a more complicated way, suggests omitting the prelude. Brecht himself denied that his play was a 'parable', calling it a 'fable…which in itself proves nothing, but merely demonstrates a particular kind of wisdom, an attitude, which can serve as an example in the existing dispute' (24.342). I find this incomprehensible, perhaps because a diet of Kafka, Borges, and sophisticated study of biblical parables has taught us that parables don't have proof value. For us, 'fable' is surely a *less* open-ended term than 'parable'. At any rate, Brecht clearly claims for CCC a function different from the 'parabolic' one.

Eric Bentley, one of Brecht's earliest, most sympathetic, and most influential critics, is horrified by the parabolic idea:

> In an early draft Brecht planned to let the decision on the collective farms wait till the Chalk Circle story has been told. That, however, is politically ludicrous, if it means, as it would have to, that Soviet planners depend on folksingers…[40]

At no point did I feel so strongly as here how differently we now do our literary criticism. Aside from the fact that folksingers have become an authority for us, the idea of going to another level—asking, for example, whether any of the *characters* understand the play as parabolic—simply does not occur to the critics. The problems I identified in my analysis of the play cannot be answered at the level of these quotes from Brecht and Bentley. Omitting the prelude is a simple way of side-stepping them.

When its omission became a condition for getting the play produced, Brecht reluctantly acquiesced. But he insisted that it had been integral to the play from its first conception, and he ensured that it would be part of the standard edition (8: 462-65).

Assessment of the Received Version

My response to the received version of CCC is admiration, puzzlement and distaste. My admiration is for the main play, which I find powerful and effective. I am completely puzzled by the ending. To summarize: why insist on acting the whole play when a decision has already been reached, and why, when the play is over, reduce it to a 'moral' which

name. This is rich in suggestion—'Stalin' marries 'Grusha/Grusinia/Georgia' by a practice of deceit.

39. Buck, 'Der Garten des Azdak', p. 197; Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries*, pp. 169-70.

40. Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries*, p. 179.

merely ratifies the decision? If Brecht is playing a complicated game, I haven't fathomed it.

Stronger than either of these responses is my distaste for the prelude. I read in it a well-orchestrated and cynical dispossession of the herders by the cultivators. The latter have so many advantages. They are in possession, and have perhaps *earned* the valley through their resistance to the Germans.[41] They have technology and reason on their side: they can use the valley for the benefit of all. But where is the benefit for the herders, who will have to remain in new pasturage three days' journey away (499)? The Delegate, while making an show of even-handedness, nudges the discussion in the desired direction. Such decision-making may have seemed utopian to early readers inured to solving problems with bombs and tanks. From my perspective, I cannot find utopia here.

Brecht's stage directions insist that the debate goes off happily, but he retains expressions of the herders' resentment. They call the cultivators 'valley-thieves', and one comments, 'Comrades, your play had better be good. We're going to pay for it with a valley' (503). My favourite is an exchange which occurs when the herders are shown the cultivators' plans for irrigation:

> [HERDER]: … I won't have a revolver pointed at my chest.
> DELEGATE: But they only want to point a pencil at your chest. (*Laughter*.)
> (502)

But, as we know, 'the pen is mightier than the sword'!

The herders are presented as backward and tradition-bound. When one of them recognizes with delight a mask being brought out for the performance (504), we sense that the traditional play has deeper emotional resonance for them. This attachment to tradition is to be used against them: if technology and reason fail to move them, they will respond to a traditional play.

The cultivators know what 'bearing' the play will have on the dispute, for they have learned it in order to act it. They know it will end with 'the valley to the waterers'. (It is comical to think of the effort that the cultivators must have put into the play—not only getting the Singer, but learning the parts and rehearsing the performance. Even more comical when, in the event, the play is not necessary for their victory!)

The main play is more than its final moral, and I have shown how powerfully it evokes 'revolutionary conditions'. But what happens if we try to correlate the prelude with these conditions? 'Revolutionary consciousness' (Azdak) is better developed in the cultivators, but 'revolutionary self-sacrifice' (Grusha) is asked of the herders, and it is they who are more

41. Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries*, p. 169.

steeped in folk-tradition (Simon). In the main play, Azdak's revolutionary consciousness brings ultimate benefit to Grusha and Simon; in the frame play, benefit to the herders is left obscure. So any possible message at this level remains mixed and messy.

Finally, Brecht seems to express a preference for the cultivators by putting them on the *left* of the stage, with the herders on the right, and naming their collective 'Rosa Luxemburg'—after one of his heroes[42]—while the herders are called 'Galinsk', a neutral geographical term. Is he inviting us to see the cultivators as better communists?

The Other CCC Material

To this point, I have dealt entirely with the received version. But Brecht wrote other material for CCC which diverges from the received version, and it is vital for my case.

A. There is an earlier form of the prelude (8.186-90;[43] I shall call it *the first prelude*). It belongs with an earlier form of the main play, but, while the differences between this and the received version of the main play are slight,[44] the first prelude differs from the received one to the point of systematically contradicting it:

> 1. Most importantly, the two collectives *fail to agree*. This means that the dispute has not been resolved when the entire play ends. The reader/audience is presumably to assume that the collectives agree with the 'moral' the Singer draws in his closing speech—the valley must go to the cultivators—but nothing confirms this.
> 2. The time is 1934, not 1944. There have been no Germans, so the cultivators do not enjoy the prestige of having resisted them, and the herders are in initial possession of the valley, since they never needed to withdraw.
> 3. To find new pasturage, the herders would have to go half an hour's journey (8.187). Much less sacrifice is asked of them than in the received prelude, with its three days' journey.
> 4. The cultivators, though they secure the Singer's services, do not themselves act the play. It is possible that they are taking the Singer's word that the play bears on the dispute, without knowing how.

42. In the same year that he wrote what is essentially the received version, 1944, Brecht mentioned an 'old plan' for a 'Life and Death of Rosa Luxemburg' (Weber, *Brechts >Kreidekreis<, ein Revolutionsstück*, p. 52).

43. I have made a translation of this, which readers may see by contacting me at david.jobling@usask.ca.

44. Two have some significance for my analysis. First, the 'Jussup' character of the received version has no name in the earlier, so there is no veiled comment about Stalin. Second, and more important, Grusha is a much less powerful character in the earlier version (8.458-59).

> 5. No impression is given that the herders are more tradition-bound than the cultivators.
> 6. The collectives, judging by the number and tone of the speeches, are rhetorically well-matched. In the received prelude, the cultivators are more powerful.
> 7. The stage directions put the herders on the left, and the names of the two collectives are also reversed, the herders here being 'Rosa Luxemburg'![45]

Already in the first prelude the cultivators have their technological edge, but the herders have their own ambition—to start a stud-farm (8.188).

This prelude deserves to be called utopian! The herders, in a situation of mutuality, have to be *persuaded* that it makes more sense for the cultivators to have the valley. If they agree, their sacrifice will not be great, since they will have to move only a little way. The reversed signals of Brecht's sympathies (stage positions and collective names) suggest that, in being willing to sacrifice, the *herders* are the better communists. This makes the correlations between prelude and main play work much less abrasively. Brecht's insistence that the debate went off harmoniously is convincing in this version.

There is a snake in this Eden (I choose this expression in deliberate anticipation of a later part of my discussion), and it is the party Delegate. The first prelude, like the received one, ends with his impatience to get the performance over.[46]

In this first prelude, there is not the preponderance of women that we saw in the received one. Men's and women's voices are heard about equally in the debate. But this is due entirely to its not being wartime. Equality in this version is *more* impressive, in feminist perspective, than preponderance in the other. Women commonly fill traditionally male roles in wartime: it is interesting that one prominent character, a tractor driver, is male in this, female in the received, version. But the agronomist is female *also here*, and choosing a young woman to go to technical school on behalf of the collective surely means more in 1934 than in 1944. Brecht is making a statement about opportunity for women in the Soviet system.

45. Brecht apparently reversed the names (somewhat later than his other changes to the first prelude) when advised that admirers of Rosa Luxemburg would not appreciate the association with goats (8.463). This fails to explain the larger pattern of reversals between the preludes. A further complication is that there *was* a collective in Georgia called 'Rosa Luxemburg', made up of cultivators; Brecht may have known this by 1934 (Weber, *Brechts >Kreidekreis<, ein Revolutionsstück*, pp. 59-60).

46. Given the suggestion of tension between the Delegate—wanting a decision and impatient with debate—and the harmoniously disposed collectives, there may be a further point in calling the herders 'Rosa Luxemburg'. It was over the role of the party that Luxemburg chiefly criticized Lenin; she favoured participatory communism like the kind that Brecht learned from Korsch.

B. Brecht wrote a *postlude* to CCC:

> The circle of members of both [collectives], the audience, appears. They applaud politely.
> WOMAN [herder] ON THE RIGHT Arkadi Tsheidse [the Singer], you sly man, you ally of the valley-thieves, how can you compare us of [collective] 'Rosa Luxemburg' with people like [the governor's wife], just because we don't want to give up our valley without further ado?
> SOLDIER ON THE LEFT to the old man on the right, who has stood up: What are you looking for, comrade?
> THE OLD MAN ON THE RIGHT Let me at least look at what I am giving up. I won't be able to look at it again.
> WOMAN [cultivator] ON THE LEFT Why not? You must come and visit us.
> THE OLD MAN ON THE RIGHT Maybe I won't recognize it then.
> KATO [the agronomist] You'll see a garden.
> THE OLD MAN ON THE RIGHT begins to smile: God help you, if it isn't a garden.
> They all stand up joyfully and encircle him (8.190-91; my trans.).

The postlude is mysterious. It is the *first* prelude that covets a postlude, to tell how the decision was finally reached. The received prelude seems to preclude one, since the decision is already made. But this postlude agrees in detail better with the received than with the first prelude.[47] I shall make a suggestion about this problem in a moment.

We find here the herders, in the person of their patriarch, acquiescing in the decision. But not abjectly! The first herder to speak complains of the Singer's tactics—she gets the point! And when the patriarch seals the deal, he attaches a warning: the cultivators will have the herders to answer to if they don't make the valley 'a garden'.

C. In 1956, near the end of his life, Brecht wrote a *summary of CCC* (20.204-10). Not only does he include the equivalent of a postlude, but the collectives actually 'sleep on it': after seeing the play, they come together *next day* to make their decision. There is heavy emphasis on their desire to reach amicable agreement, and their success in doing so.

Recovering a Play

I do not know why Brecht abandoned his first concept of CCC and moved towards the received version. Perhaps he wanted, or was encouraged,

47. The herders have moved to the right of the stage; the names of the governor's wife and the agronomist agree with the received prelude; the notion of a 'visit' by herders to cultivators makes more sense if they are three days, rather than half and hour, away. On the other hand, that *both* collectives form the audience for the main play agrees with the *first* prelude, for in the received one, the cultivators are actors, not audience. For discussion, see Weber, *Brechts >Kreidekreis<, ein Revolutionsstück*, pp. 39-41.

to be 'up to the minute'. Probably he was responding to criticism of the play as 'utopian' and 'parabolic', for it is to the first version that these adjectives stick most tightly: it is more 'utopian' in that the collectives are evenly matched and the herders truly seem to be persuaded by force of argument; it is more 'parabolic' in that the issue remains undecided until the Singer speaks the moral.[48]

Though I do not underestimate Brecht's propensity to set conundrums for his audience/reader, I am unable to explain all the phenomena in terms of his intentions. Rather, I believe he was exercised by the same issues that concern me, and failed to reach a single point of view. I believe he never moved fully away from the idea behind the first version. This helps explain the mystery of the postlude, that precisely while writing the received version, which doesn't need a postlude, he decides to add one! Is he responding unconsciously to a nagging sense that the first version, to which he is still drawn, *did* need a postlude?

Having shifted to the received version, he fully embraced it. I find it hard to believe that he didn't notice at all what I so readily see in the received prelude—the cynical power-play—so I suspect this is a piece of Brecht's trickiness. The situation may be this: having tried to use the Soviet system as a vehicle for writing utopia, and having retreated or been driven from the attempt, he was content to leave a piece in which brutality is easy to read beneath the trappings of Soviet harmony ('Jussup' as a dig at Stalin fits nicely with this). But in the 1956 summary he returns to where he started. Here, he stresses the 'utopian' and 'parabolic' qualities of CCC more than ever before. This is how the aging artist *remembered* his own play!

Regardless of Brecht, I know what version *I* want! It will have the first prelude, but it will have the main play in the received version, since I want the stronger delineation of Grusha. It will have the postlude, with slight adjustments to make it answer to the *first* prelude. And I like the idea of 'sleeping on' the problem, so I will borrow that from the 1956 summary!

Such a play—created by Jobling out of Brechtian *bricolage*—'feels' more right, I believe, not just to me, but to our postmodern sensibility in general. We approve the attempt to write utopia, and we will not (with our ability to sniff out oppression where before it went unnoticed—an ability created in no small way by feminism) be fobbed off with the fake utopia of the received prelude.

What may be the distinctive *work* of my recovered play, I leave to a conclusion. First, I shall look at the various CCCs, including mine, through another lens, the Bible.

48. Bentley's complaint (*The Brecht Commentaries*, p. 179, see above), about the parabolic quality of 'an early draft', refers to the first prelude.

3. *The* Circle *and the Bible*

Solomon

The Judgment of Solomon (1 Kgs 3.16-28) is one of two sources which Brecht acknowledged for CCC (24:341). Solomon seems to have fascinated Brecht, who mentioned him often; most memorably, perhaps in his 'Solomon-song'.[49] The other source, a Chinese play of about 1300 CE, is more immediate: the Singer says that the main play 'comes from the Chinese' (504).[50] The 'chalk circle' test comes from the Chinese play; Solomon's test is quite different.

Comparing Kings with the judgment scene in CCC, the Chinese play providing a *tertium quid*, we see that in all cases a man judges between two women in a matter of motherhood and custody. Two main issues distinguish CCC from Kings. (1) Class roles. In Kings a ruler judges between two lower class women, while in CCC a lower class man[51] judges between an upper and a lower class woman. (In the Chinese play, an official judges between an upper and a lower class woman.) (2) Family ties. In Kings (as in the Chinese play), the *natural* mother of the child is determined and granted custody. In CCC, the *adoptive* mother is given preference over the natural mother. Motherhood is redefined in terms of nurture rather than nature.

Solomon stands as the main figure for the introduction into Israel of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' (AMP).[52] He is not quite the first king, but he brings in the typical AMP features of splendid capital and court, extensive bureaucracy, etc. Old China, the original setting of the

49. Found in *The Threepenny Opera*, *Mother Courage*, and elsewhere. It is based on Qohelet's 'vanity', and concludes that Solomon was too wise for his own good. The Brecht corpus pays attention to Solomon as a character in 1 Kings and as the author certainly of Qohelet and Proverbs and probably of Song of Songs.

50. Bentley prefaces his translation with the key piece of the Chinese play (498).

51. However we specify Azdak's class location, it is nearer to Grusha than to the governor's wife. I have seen no plausible explanation of Azdak's name (Weber's suggestion, *Brechts >Kreidekreis<, ein Revolutionsstück*, p. 94, seems arbitrary), but it looks extraordinarily like a formation from the Hebrew root for 'justice', *ts-d-q*, especially since the second syllable is stressed. German z is identical in sound to modern Hebrew ts. Brecht knew the Bible very well, but I have not heard that his knowledge extended to Hebrew.

52. Generally on the AMP, see Umberto Melotti, *Marx and the Third World* (London: Macmillan, 1977), on whom I rely in the following discussion. I would like to retire the controversial word 'Asiatic'. The system it denotes is not exclusively Asian, and keeping it smacks of orientalism. But I use it in the present discussion to highlight the reverse orientalism in Brecht's attitude to China.

Chalk Circle story, is the textbook example of the AMP, and the sites of revolution recalled by Azdak are also instances of it: ancient Egypt (571-72) and Persia (557-58).

One of the strategies of the AMP is to increase the importance of nuclear family ties at the expense of larger social and political groupings based on common interest; this can be observed in Israel.[53] The shift in CCC from the priority of 'natural' motherhood, as in the biblical and Chinese originals, to motherhood as personal and social achievement, in Grusha, implies a revolutionary suspension of AMP arrangements.

Under the AMP, *peasants* constitute the overwhelming majority of the productive class. Brecht is a great lover of peasant culture, which is pivotal in many of the big plays—*Galileo*, *Mother Courage*, *The Good Person of Setzuan*, as well as CCC—and a host of smaller works. In his evocation of peasants, he is not constrained by the details of mode of production theory. He certainly shares the historical consciousness underlying it, seeing both capitalism and Soviet socialism as fundamentally different from the human organizations that preceded them. But he has no theoretical interest in the differences between the ancient modes (feudal, slave-based, Asiatic),[54] and would find the differences less important than elements of continuity. Jameson notes how the 'peasant' becomes for Brecht a figure for the oppressed in general.[55] His interest is in the fundamental dynamics of class oppression, the enmities and the mediations between exploiting and exploited classes. He saw 'the peasants as quite as important as (and if anything more interesting than) the industrial proletariat'.[56] In the Chicago plays, which show capitalism at its most raw, the oppressed class is portrayed more in terms of the immemorial suffering of the peasant than of any historically aware proletariat.[57]

However, Brecht's peasants are far from being only immemorial sufferers. They know how to use their rare opportunities for beneficial change. They know how to play on differences among their 'betters'. Brecht is far from Marx's idea of peasants stuck in a changeless world,

53. Naomi Steinberg, 'The Deuteronomic Law Code and the Politics of State Centralization', in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on his 65th Birthday* (ed. David Jobling, Peggy L. Day and Gerald T. Sheppard; Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991), pp. 161-70.

54. Old Grusinia would, no doubt, be more accurately termed feudal than 'Asiatic'.

55. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, p. 138.

56. Willett, *Brecht in Context*, p. 206.

57. Jameson theorizes this in terms of different temporalities of working class and peasant (Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, pp. 139, 151).

or Lukàcs's analysis of Marxism in terms of European 'high culture'.[58] He takes us much more into the world of James Scott.[59]

Brecht's work is rich in *proverbs*, and Jameson—who entitles one of the major divisions of his Brecht book 'Proverbs'[60]—rightly sees the AMP, and the peasant world which it creates, as the major source of proverbs.[61] CCC, as we have seen, is full of proverbs. Sometimes they are related to the plot, but more often not. Their point seems to be to keep the story anchored in the wisdom generated by peasant life. Many of them express attitudes towards social relationships and change, but a variety of attitudes.

But proverbs do not belong only to the peasant. Generated from peasant life, they become the stock-in-trade of the class of *sages*. The Chinese heritage in which Brecht took such interest is the heritage of sages; they provide the originals for many of his poems, plays, and other works. He projected an opera about Confucius. Bentley suggests that he is as much Confucian as socialist—valuing life in its normality and richness.[62] The sage seems to represent for him not only another element of cultural continuity but also a possibility of mediation between classes. Sages are part of the exploiting class, but they have to be in close touch with the peasantry.

In the Bible, of course, Solomon is the prototype of the sage, and most of the wisdom literature is traditionally ascribed to him, particularly the book of Proverbs.[63] In this light, Brecht's parallel between Azdak and Solomon does not seem so antithetical, in class terms, as at first sight. Azdak's outrageous judgment alerts us to an element of outrageousness also in Solomon's. He behaves not like a judge in a stable official system, but as one who can appeal to the peasant's sense of right. Brecht directs us here to a fuller view of Solomon as a sage-king.

58. Roland Boer, *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp. 110-20.

59. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

60. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, pp. 131-63.

61. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, pp. 137-38.

62. Bentley, *The Brecht Commentaries*, p. 52. The extreme of this tendency is *Me-Ti, or the Book of Changes* (18.45-194), where Brecht contrives to present communism *as* traditional Chinese thought. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, pp. 11-13, concludes that Brecht's 'China' is often more imagined than real. It represents an alternative world-view, a parallel universe, which Brecht uses to fill a lack in the West.

63. The proverb contest between Simon and Azdak is not unique in Brecht's oeuvre: in *Galileo* there is a contest consisting entirely of quotes from the biblical ('Solomonic') Proverbs (Brecht, *Seven Plays by Bertolt Brecht*, p. 362)!

Grusha as Madonna

Grusha is obviously a Madonna figure. Simon to some extent resembles the biblical Joseph, providing selfless support for a child not his own (he continues to do so even when she has married someone else). The picture is complicated, however, by the name 'Jussup' for Grusha's husband of convenience. This is an allusion to the Bible[64] which, in later versions, Brecht lays on thick: the wedding guests, on seeing the 'dying' Jussup leap out of bed, piously exclaim, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Jussup!' (8: 144). Earlier, I connected Jussup with Stalin, but he may do double duty. If so, Brecht is perhaps showing Simon as more a husband to Grusha than her real one (just as she is more a mother to Michael than his real one).

Cain and Abel; Adam and Eve

Up to now, my biblical discussion has been concerned only with the main play; now, I turn to the frame. The reference in the prelude to the story of Cain and Abel can hardly be missed. We have a scene of conflict between herders and cultivators in which, as in the Bible, the cultivators (Cain) overcome the herders (Abel).

In the received prelude, the cultivators' cynical appropriation of the valley recalls the sin of Cain. It is inviting to recall Jameson's point about 'the seductive power of goodness': Grusha's seduction to good goes against a whole biblical (and Western) tradition in which seduction is to evil.[65] Cain is a classic biblical topos for the seductive power of evil: 'sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you' (Gen. 4.7). The cultivators invite the herders to let themselves be seduced to good, by giving up the valley. But that, surely, is not the way it should be in a socialist utopia. Socialists must (like Grusha) let *themselves* be seduced by good, not get advantage from others being so seduced! So in fact the cultivators (Cain) are seduced by evil.

But this line of thought, like much else, gets turned on its head by the *first* prelude, in a way I find truly astonishing. During the argument over whether to close debate or continue it, a young girl says: 'We have finished with Cain and Abel, but Adam and Eve haven't even been discussed' (8:186). On this, the editors comment: 'The figure of speech means: to start again from the beginning' (8:486). Even as a figure of speech, the words suggest a bit more: having got *almost* to the bottom of an issue (Cain and Abel are near the beginning), yet *not quite* to the bottom (Adam and Eve are at the *very* beginning).

64. Weber, *Brechts >Kreidekreis<, ein Revolutionsstück*, p. 87.
65. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, pp. 173-74.

One can certainly understand such a figure of speech,[66] but it is inconceivable that Brecht should have employed it without noticing the much more direct connection between the collectives and Cain and Abel. I can't imagine what Brecht thought he was doing in creating this magnificent *double entendre*; I simply extend the thought that he sets in motion. The collectives have 'finished with Cain and Abel', that is, with presenting their respective cases as herders and cultivators. But there is still something *even more basic* to do.

The postlude suggests what this is (I am reading *my* play, rather than any of Brecht's versions!) Should the herder patriarch revisit the valley, says the agronomist, 'You'll see a garden'. He responds (the last words of the postlude and of my play): 'God help you, if it isn't a garden'. But he says it smiling, and all ends in mutual joy.

This pulls everything together. The thing more basic than Cain and Abel—even than their reconciliation—is restoring the valley's Edenic state: 'Adam and Eve'. 'Cain' and 'Abel' must subject their particular concerns to this more fundamental, biblically inspired vision. The garden reference in the postlude also picks up on Azdak's Garden at the end of the main play, creating an immediate link (there are not many of them) between main play and frame. We may also make a link to a reference in the main play to Isaianic visions of universal harmony (Isa. 11.6-9, 65.25): 'The sons of the tiger/Are the horse's brothers,/The child of the snake/Brings milk to the mothers' (534). This is from a poem in which Grusha, during her flight, connects the future restoration of Michael's good fortune with harmony in nature.[67]

The figure of speech has a gender dimension. Cain and Abel constitute an archetypal male scene (the question of whom Cain married is an old Sunday School chestnut). Is there a suggestion here of getting behind a male, winner-take-all, style of decision-making to consultative process involving not only women and men, but people from both sides of any power gap (the figure of speech is introduced not only by a woman, but by a *young* woman)? This would correlate feminism with the genuinely utopian quality of the first prelude and my play.

'A brief golden age'

When I read Jameson's reference—in a discussion of CCC—to 'the paradox of a golden age that cannot last',[68] it was with a sense of familiarity, for I

66. A German whom I asked did not recognize it as a current figure of speech, but thought it might have been so understood in Brecht's time.

67. Note the theme of children: Michael, Azdak's Garden as a children's playground, and Isaiah's 'a little child shall lead them' (11.6).

68. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, p. 161.

have written two major essays which this expression perfectly summarizes, one on Eden, one on Solomon![69] First, I looked at Genesis 2–3 in relation to classical Golden Age mythology, and formulated the paradox common to both: an ideal state cannot have changed into something less than ideal except through some imperfection that precipitated the change; but if there was any imperfection, it wasn't an ideal state. Later, I took up the presentation of Solomon's reign as a golden age (1 Kings 3–10) and analysed it in the same terms.

As ideal states, golden ages of this kind are *conceived in terms of permanence*. Eden as a golden age, like the classical ones, is also *primal*. At first sight, it seems that the golden age of Solomon's reign does not share the latter feature; it had a beginning. However, the ideology of the AMP invariably constitutes the system as primal—eternal and 'natural'. It follows that a golden age cannot be posited as such until it is over; while it exists, it is the whole of reality, not a separate 'age'. Thus, of necessity, we know the Solomon traditions only through the lens of another ideology (Deuteronomic); but even through that lens we readily recognize them as having expressed a typical AMP ideology.

Azdak's 'golden age' is neither primal nor conceived in terms of permanence. To call it a golden age is to subvert the concept. It is an *interregnum*.

Despite the ideology, interregna are common (arguably systemic) in the AMP. A mere change of reign may create a power vacuum; a change of dynasty usually does. How much more a change from one empire to another. I have often speculated about the interregnum in Israel between the Babylonians and the Persians as such a time of comparative freedom, perhaps the setting for the Deuteronomic historical work. Marx seems to have regarded it as impossible for the AMP to change into a different mode by any internal process,[70] but this is to buy into the AMP's own ideology. Brecht combats this view. Peasant life does not necessarily continue in its hopeless sameness through changes of regime. In the interregnum, things may genuinely change, even for the peasant.

If we follow Brecht's subversion of the term, we will see a biblical 'golden age' not in Solomon's reign, but in the interregnum of which it marked the end: Gottwald's Israel as a society of free peasants (an interregnum which, in Gottwald's original view, lasted for some two centuries).

69. David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Studies in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), II, pp. 17-43; and David Jobling, '"Forced Labor": 1 Kings 3–10 and the Question of Literary Representation', *Semeia* 54 (1991), pp. 57-76. Some of my following remarks rely on these essays.

70. This is why he notoriously welcomed the imperialist expansion of capitalism to India as the only way of breaking up the AMP and paving the way for socialism.

In CCC and in the Bible, interregna are imagined, anticipated or greeted in song. Witness Azdak's revolution songs, one of them borrowed from ancient Egypt (actually a song of upper-class despair, not peasant triumph). In the Bible, these songs are put in the mouths of women: the Songs of Deborah (Judges 5), Hannah (1 Samuel 2), and Mary (Luke 1)—the last bringing us back to Grusha as Madonna.[71] Grusha herself has such a song: 'Your [Michael's] father is a thief,/Your mother is a whore, / And all good people / Will kneel at your door' (534). This is the first half of the song whose second half I quoted earlier, in connection with Isaiah's visions of harmony.

These women's songs prompt me to mention one more link between CCC and the Bible which must be significant, but I am not sure what to do with it. The biblical golden ages I examined are marked by a radical exclusion of sexuality. In the Genesis account of Eden, sexuality belongs to the semantic system of the fallen human state. Until his old age, when sex became his downfall, there is no suggestion of sexual activity on Solomon's part, and some suggestion that he had none. So the sexlessness of Grusha, and perhaps of Azdak, in what Brecht chooses to call a 'golden age', belongs to a pattern.

The interregnum is a double-edged time for the oppressed, and CCC gives eloquent expression to this. The same speech in which the Singer apostrophizes 'O change from age to age! Thou hope of the people!' later contains the words:

> When the house of a great one collapses
> Many little ones are slain.
> Those who have no share in the *good* fortunes of the mighty
> Often share in their *mis*fortunes (512; italics Bentley's, not Brecht's).

CCC gives ample attention to the negative side, the extra suffering borne by the poor in the interregnum. Even such hope as it brings will disappear when further change puts an end to it. Yet it is only the interregnum which gives them any hope at all. Azdak's reign is temporary, but he makes the most of it.

4. *Conclusion*

The overall *theme* of CCC is how Marxists remember and make use of the history of revolution. This is also the theme of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. Writing in response to the widespread announcement, after 1990,

71. In reference to Luke 1, something might be made of 'the seductive power of goodness' in Mary's case as in Grusha's: she succumbs to seduction by the Holy Spirit: 'let it be with me according to your word' (Lk. 1.38).

that communism is a thing of the past, Derrida reads texts in which Marx works out his attitude to revolutions that were 'past' from his perspective (e.g. the French Revolution). Derrida concludes that, in respect to the past, our situation is not different from Marx's, though the Soviet era which for him was future is past for us. For the 'day of justice' to which Marxism attests is always a memory and a possibility. Communism survives its own 'death' because it was already a ghost when it first arrived: 'A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism'. These opening words of *The Communist Manifesto* are as true in the post-Soviet age as when Marx and Engels penned them. Communism is the *revenant*, that which returns as good news for the oppressed.[72]

Some of Brecht's early critics asked how 'a brief golden age' could serve as parable for the permanent Soviet revolution. The question has become bitterly ironic. The Soviet era, conceived in terms of permanence, has proved an interregnum. We live not only after its shattering, but also with the reality of people *shattered by* it. We live in the presence of millions who found hope in the change *away from* it. 'O change from age to age! Thou hope of the people!'

Yet some of us continue to live out of the hope which that system implied. As we experience these ambiguities from *our* side of 1990, Brecht speaks to us from *his*, for he knew them too. In the received version of CCC, if I have understood him rightly, he shows a Soviet system missing its way. But even in the most utopian version, he leaves hints of subversion from within. In the prelude, it is the Delegate who puts getting home ahead of seeing 'utopian' decision-making through. In the long run, he will put the party before the people. In the postlude, it is the element of threat in the patriarch's closing words, though he speaks them smilingly: 'God have mercy on you, if it isn't a garden'. God have mercy on us all, we would have said then, if the Soviet experiment fails.

Fail it did, in a sense. But recall the words of the Singer: 'remembered long the period of his judging as a brief golden age'. When Marxists recall the history of revolution, including its twentieth-century history, they give it duration, permanence.

Brecht is the one who can keep Marxists in touch with the history of revolution, *their* history. He was a tireless recycler of old texts, from Shaw and Kipling, back through Shakespeare and Molière, to the ancient

72. *Revenant* means 'ghost' in French. For this paragraph see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (trans. Peggy Kamuf; New York: Routledge, 1994), *passim*; and David Jobling, 'Jerusalem and Memory: On a Long Parenthesis in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*', in *Derrida's Bible (Reading a Page of Scripture with a Little Help from Derrida)* (ed. Yvonne Sherwood; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 99-115 (100-104).

classics. According to Jameson, Brecht understands the dialectic itself as a certain relation of old to new.[73] When he puts in the mouth of the Singer the words of my title, 'old and new wisdom mix admirably' (504), he defines his own task.

What CCC enacts is Marxists—the two collectives—relating themselves to an instance of revolution in their own Georgian past. In his 1956 summary of CCC, Brecht makes no reference to the Singer (though he quotes words spoken in the play by the Singer). Here, he is his own Singer! Just as the Singer, not obviously a communist himself, creates a play to help communists, so Brecht, never quite at home with any Marxism, very deliberately (as a vocation) creates plays to help Marxists.

The particular point of CCC, I believe (more clearly focussed in my version than the received one) is to delineate *different* ways in which Marxists may use the history of revolution. My analysis of 'revolutionary conditions' in the main play, I hope, showed the richness for Marxists of analyzing the revolutionary past (even a fictional past!) in detail. Brecht insists on this richness—hence his impatience with 'parable' in a simplifying sense. And yet, he leaves the 'parable' option in place, not only in the first version of CCC but particularly in his 1956 summary. Though it is good to meditate broadly on history, it is *also* possible to distil it, sometimes, into a brief formulation which has power and gives direction. What the Singer's final speech offers, perhaps, is not parable (or fable) but proverb! 'What there is shall go to those who are good for it'. Who could quarrel with that? No choice need be made between these uses of history: the same Singer who requires the performance of the play 'complete and unabridged' *also* distils from it a moral. But art can be generated from the tension between them.

There is much to be written on how Brecht's practices with the past can inform us biblical scholars, whose practice is also with the past. His task of turning old texts into new ones, while giving an adequate account of their oldness, is, I take it, our task too. His very distance from Marxism helps us, for we need to interpret the Bible in solidarity with groups to which we cannot fully belong.

In recycling *him*, we will have to supply certain lacks. We will have to supply most of the feminism (not all; 'Brecht' gives us much that is serviceable). We will have to supply an ethic for collaborative labour which he usually failed to achieve. We will be more insistently postmodern than even he could be. But his now old and our new wisdom will mix admirably!

73. Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, p. 116.

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The Other Woman in Proverbs: 'My Man's Not Home… He Took His Money Bag With Him'

Gale A. Yee

Proverbs 1–9 is the first in a series of postexilic theological reflections on God's own wisdom personified as a woman. In some of the rare instances in the Hebrew Bible in which an attribute of the deity is described as female,[1] Woman Wisdom is truly an awesome figure. She was present when God created the world and is the sanctioned mediator between the divine and human (Prov. 3.19-20; 8.22-31).[2] By her, kings rule and sovereigns govern justly (Prov. 8.15-16). Her counsel is better than silver or gold (Prov. 3.14-16; 8.10). Fathers enjoin their young sons to pursue Wisdom as a lover pursues his beloved, and to cling to her once they have found her (Prov. 4.5-9, 13; 7.4; cf. Wis. 8.2; Sir. 24.19-22). She becomes the tree of life for those who embrace her (Prov. 3.18).

Woman Wisdom's powerful adversary in Proverbs 1–9 must necessarily be as mythically awesome. Like Wisdom, she is female, but those who embrace *her* charms are set on the pathways of death, never to return (Prov. 2.18-19; 5.5-6; 7.27). Fathers caution their sons to avoid her at all costs, although her seductions are irresistible. She is the '*iššâ zārâ*, which I translate as the 'Other Woman'.[3] In Proverbs 1–9, she becomes the evil

1. Some scholars trace her origins to the ancient goddesses, perhaps an ancient Hebrew goddess. See Bernhard Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: A Hebrew Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986); Judith M. Hadley, 'Wisdom and the Goddess', in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton* (ed. John Day, *et al.*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 234-43; Michael D. Coogan, 'The Goddess Wisdom-"Where Can She Be Found?" Literary Reflexes of Popular Religion', in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (ed. Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo and Lawrence H. Schiffman; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 203-209. We will see, however, that both Woman Wisdom and the Other Woman are probably elite male literary constructions of their composite perceptions of real women.

2. For an analysis, see Gale A. Yee, 'An Analysis of Prov. 8.22-31 According to Style and Structure', *ZAW* 94 (1982), pp. 58-66.

3. Writings focusing on the 'Otherness' of the '*iššâ zārâ* can be found in Athalya Brenner, 'Proverbs 1-9: An F Voice?', in *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes; Leiden: E.J.

antithesis of Woman Wisdom personified.[4] Her Otherness is embodied in a number of ways that make her a most inappropriate marriage partner for a nice upper-class boy in the province of Yehud. She is the Other Woman in an illicit affair. She is Other because she is already married and therefore off limits to any other male. She is Other because of her racial/ethnic foreignness. She is Other simply because 'she is not our kind'—'our kind' defined, of course, by strictly constructed but often arbitrary and ever-shifting boundaries.

The extrinsic analysis of this chapter depends upon the dating of Proverbs 1–9, which has been quite difficult to pin down. These chapters seem to have a timeless quality, and they lack references to historical events that would assist in dating. Nor does Proverbs 1–9 refer to theological themes of Israel's salvation history—such as God's promises to the ancestors of land, descendants and great name, the exodus and wilderness traditions, God's covenant with Israel, and so forth—that would help contextualize it. Traditionally, King Solomon (c. 950 BCE) is said to be the author of Proverbs (1.1; 10.1; 25.1), although Solomonic authorship is very unlikely.[5] Ben Sira, who often quotes, paraphrases, and explains the Book of Proverbs, offers a *terminus ante quem* in the first quarter of the second century, circa 180 BCE.[6] The reference in Prov. 25.1 to 'the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah' who copied 'other proverbs of Solomon' implies

Brill, 1993), pp. 121-26; Christl Maier, 'Conflicting Attractions: Parental Wisdom and the "Strange Woman" in Proverbs 1–9', in *Wisdom and the Psalms (A Feminist Companion to the Bible [Second Series])* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 95-105; Carol A. Newsom, 'Women and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1–9', in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. Peggy L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 149-49; L.A. Snijders, 'The Meaning of *Zar* in the Old Testament', *Oudtestamentische Studien* 10 (1954), pp. 99, 104; Harold C. Washington, 'The Strange Woman (*'shh zrh/nkryh*) of Proverbs 1–9 and Post-Exilic Judaean Society', in *Second Temple Studies.* II. *Temple and Community in the Persian Period* (ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 229-30; and Jane S. Webster, 'Sophia: Engendering Wisdom in Proverbs, Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon', *JSOT* 78 (1998), p. 67.

4. In this, I disagree with Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 18A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), p. 262, who thinks that the Strange Woman is the antithesis of one's own wife. He believes that Personified Folly is Personified Wisdom's counterpart.

5. R.N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study* (History of Biblical Interpretation, 1; Leiden, New York and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995), p. 1. The attribution of the work to Solomon is significant, however, because it signals the ideological bias of the chapter's author.

6. Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M., *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB, 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987), pp. 10, 43-45.

a *terminus a quo* in the late eighth to early seventh centuries for Proverbs 25–29, which was apparently added to the earlier Solomonic collection, Proverbs 10–22.[7] With respect to genre and language, however, Proverbs 1–9 and 31.10-31 differ considerably from these collections.[8]

Most scholars, however provisionally, date Proverbs 1–9 and 31.10-31 during the Persian period of the postexilic era, 538–333 BCE.[9] This dating has been strengthened recently in an illuminating study of the socioeconomic context of Woman Wisdom by Christine Yoder. Yoder convincingly argues for a reassessment of linguistic evidence to clarify the dating of Proverbs 1–9. On the presence of Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), certain Aramaisms, the lack of Greek features that might suggest a Hellenistic date, and later MT orthography in Proverbs 1–9, she posits a dating somewhere between the early sixth century and the late third century BCE, most probably in the Persian period.[10]

An *extrinsic analysis* of Proverbs 1–9, then, would look to the Persian period for clues to the literary production of the Other Woman. However, the precise historical dating of Proverbs 1–9 is not my critical focus. Instead, I concentrate on the particular mode of production at work during this period, with its various configurations, to construct these chapters. I discuss how imperial and economic policies during

7. , Richard J. Clifford *Proverbs: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), pp. 3-4, 219.

8. Proverbs 10–29 is composed for the most part in poetic sentences formulated in antithetic structure. Proverbs 1–9 is composed of didactic speeches of a father to his son and the speeches of Woman Wisdom.

9. Clifford, *Proverbs*, p. 6; Robert Gordis, 'The Social Background of Wisdom', in *Poets, Prophets, and Sages: Essays in Biblical Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 162; Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1990), p. 19; Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), p. 56; Leo G. Perdue, 'Wisdom Theology and Social History in Proverbs 1–9', in *Wisdom, You Are My Sister: Studies in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm. On the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (ed. Michael L. Barré, S.S.; CBQMS, 29; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1997), p. 80; Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, 'The Book of Proverbs. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections', in *New Interpreters's Bible. Vol 5* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), pp. 20-1; and Harold C. Washington, *Wealth and Poverty in the Instruction of Amenemope and the Hebrew Proverbs* (SBLDS, 142; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), p. 133. But see Claudia V. Camp, *Wise, Strange, and Holy: The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (JSOTSup, 320; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 59-71 and R.B.Y. Scott, *Proverbs. Ecclesiastes: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB, 18; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), pp. xxxvii-xxxviii, who argue for a later date at the end of the Persian period, closer to the Hellenistic period.

10. Christine Roy Yoder, *Wisdom As a Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 1–9 and 31.10-31* (BZAW, 304; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 15-38.

two centuries of Persian colonialism impinged upon the local conflicts and controversies among the populations and classes in the province of Yehud. My *intrinsic analysis* examines how Proverbs 1–9 attempts to resolve symbolically the socioeconomic conflicts and contradictions embedded in the dominant class during this period that help to produce the literary construction of the Other Woman. I investigate particularly Proverbs 7, in which the Other Woman verbalizes, herself, the dangers about which the sages warn young upper-class males.[11]

Extrinsic Analysis

Persian Imperial Politics

About fifty-eight years after the first deportation of exiles from Judah, the Persians under Cyrus emerged onto the ancient Near Eastern political scene to conquer the Babylonians and take over their vast empire (539–530 BCE). Both the Jews who remained in Palestine and those deported to Babylonia fell under Persian sovereignty. Partly because of Second Isaiah's positive portrayals of Cyrus as God's messiah and his decision to allow the deported Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Jerusalem temple (Isa. 45.1-3; cf. Ezra 1.1-4; 6.3-5; Isa. 45.13), scholars have regarded Cyrus as rising above neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian despotism to be a tolerant, benign ruler.[12] This alleged Persian humanitarianism toward conquered peoples has been carried over into some Old Testament introductory textbooks.[13]

Unfortunately, these positive estimates skew the actual historical context of Achaemenid imperialism for those living in the various provinces of the empire. According to Amélie Kuhrt, the presumption that Persian

11. This essay builds on an earlier work on Proverbs 1–9, Gale A. Yee, '"I Have Perfumed My Bed With Myrrh": The Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1–9', *JSOT* 43 (1989), pp. 53-68. In a response to a reprinting of this article, I outlined the parameters of what was developed in this essay in Gale A. Yee, 'A Socio-Literary Production of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs', in *A Feminist Companion to Wisdom Literature* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 127-30.

12. Amélie Kuhrt, 'The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy', *JSOT* 25 (1983), pp. 83-84, points out that Cyrus was also regarded favourably by both Herodotus and Xenophon, and even by historical personages in the more recent past, such as Arnold Toynbee, David Ben-Gurion, and the Shah of Iran.

13. J. Kenneth Kuntz, *The People of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Old Testament Literature, History, and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 397; Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1984), pp. 435-36; Peter C. Craigie, *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 287. See also T. Cuyler Young, Jr, 'Cyrus', ABD 1 (1992), p. 1232.

imperialism was somehow more lenient than Assyrian tyranny is based on two factors: (1) the limited experience of one influential group in a very small community that managed to profit from Persian directives; and (2) royal propaganda successfully modeled on similar texts that earlier commended Assurbanipal, a first-rate example of the much-condemned Assyrian imperialism.[14] Persian foreign policy was governed not so much by toleration and humanitarianism as by military strategy to strengthen and expand the imperial periphery, the economic taxation and exploitation of which primarily benefited the imperial center.[15] The main reason Cyrus allowed the deported Jews to return to Palestine was to ensure a sympathetic population along a strategic military supply route. These loyal residents acted as a buffer against the superpower at Persia's western front, Egypt (and, later, the Greeks).[16] They also provided for and housed Persia's armies when they entered the region. Cyrus returned the temple treasures taken by Nebuchadnezzar and supported the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple primarily because such sanctuaries were economic centers for the accumulation and dissemination of taxes and tribute for the empire.[17] Temples also performed an ideological function in stabilizing a society when their cult personnel were loyal to the empire. Norman Gottwald states the matter of Achaemenid foreign affairs succinctly: 'The survival and expansion of empires absolutely depended on their drawing from conquered regions surpluses that would at least offset the costs of their military and administrative investments and optimally would "turn a profit" '.[18] If political support of the local elite did not achieve their military and economic goals, the Persians could be as ruthless and cruel to the colonies as the Assyrians and Babylonians had been.

14. Kuhrt, 'The Cyrus Cylinder', pp. 94-95.

15. Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism From Cyrus to Hadrian. Volume One: The Persian and Greek Periods* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 23, 115; Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 26; Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup, 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 293-94; Washington, *Wealth and Poverty*, p.162.

16. Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Temple and Society in Achaemenid Judah', in *Second Temple Studies*. I. *Persian Period* (ed. Philip R. Davies; JSOTSup, 117; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), pp. 50-51.

17. Blenkinsopp, 'Temple and Society', pp. 22-40; James M. Trotter, 'Was the Second Jerusalem Temple a Primarily Persian Project?', *SJOT* 15.2 (2001), pp. 276-94; Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 304-305; Perdue, *Proverbs*, p. 57.

18. Norman K. Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel* (LAI; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), p. 224.

Yehud under Persian Colonization

According to Charles Carter, the Persian province of Yehud was actually smaller and poorer than previous estimates had calculated. It was situated in the central hill country, 'running along the Jerusalem corridor, from Bethel toward Hebron, and extending east to the Judean Desert'.[19] The economy was essentially village-based agrarian, and Jerusalem was the provincial capital.[20] As in pre-exilic times, agricultural production focused primarily on the cultivation of three lucrative cash crops: grain, wine, and oil.[21]

During Babylonian colonization, Yehud experienced a change from a native-tributary mode of production[22] to a foreign-tributary mode of production, in which taxes and tribute were handed over to an outside power. However, its configuration during Achaemenid rule had elements of a native-tributary mode of production, in that taxes extracted from the peasants first passed through the hands of Persia's agents, the Jerusalem elite.[23] After taking their cut to support the local temple and an autonomous governmental bureaucracy, this elite then submitted their quotas to the Persian imperial treasury.[24] Although Carter is correct is saying that what changed in the transition from native- to foreign-tributary mode of production was the ultimate destination of the tribute,[25] the economic situation in Yehud had an added complexity. In the foreign-tributary mode of production under the Persians, the two-tiered mode of extraction undoubtedly placed an additional burden upon Yehud's already impoverished peasantry, in that it supported the lifestyles of two sets of elites—one foreign, the other domestic.

Changes in Persian imperial policy toward its colonies over the years directly affected this mode of production in postexilic Yehud.[26] The

19. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 76, 246-47.

20. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 216-17, 249; Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. I, pp. 23, 118.

21. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 255-56.

22. During the time of the Divided Monarchy, foreign nations impinged upon this native mode of production by demanding tribute. However, most of the surplus remained with the native elite. See the extrinsic analysis of the Book of Hosea in Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), pp. 81-97.

23. Norman K. Gottwald, 'Sociology (Ancient Israel)', *ABD* 6 (1992), p. 85.

24. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 281, 309-10; Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. I, p. 115.

25. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, p. 281.

26. For a more detailed discussion of the various foreign policies of specific emperors, see Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 23-127, from which this section of the chapter is primarily drawn.

conservative maintenance of the empire by Cyrus's successor, Cambyses (530–522 BCE), allowed Yehud to become a relatively autonomous and stable province, even though taxes were steep.[27] After assassinating Gaumata, who had usurped the throne after Cambyses died in 522, Darius (522–486) set about quelling a number of revolts that erupted in most of his territories and unifying the empire. He reorganized his kingdom into twenty satrapies, setting up local governing elites whose allegiance belonged to him. He adjusted the taxation of each satrapy to capitalize on what it could provide for the imperial center. One strategy for unification was the construction of temples throughout his kingdom, which increased employment and strengthened the collection of levies and tribute for imperial purposes. Support of these temples made Darius well-liked and accepted among many in the colonies.[28] It was he who facilitated the construction of the second temple in Jerusalem through Zerubbabel, the governor that he appointed in Yehud (Ezra 3; 6). Under his administrative reorganization, imperial bureaucracy directly affected the autonomy Yehud had had under previous Persian rulers. Darius's administration demanded an increase in production and maximal taxation under the direction of loyal bureaucrats such as Zerubbabel. In addition, feeding Darius's expedition forces for his big military campaign against Egypt (519–517) contributed to a major depletion of Yehud's economic resources.

With the succession of Darius's son Xerxes to the throne (486–465), Persian priorities shifted negatively away from the colonies to the imperial center. Under Darius, local religions had enjoyed Persian support, especially in the construction and maintenance of temples throughout the empire, which enhanced local economies. Xerxes, however, not only eliminated these subsidies, but also actually destroyed sanctuaries in a shortsighted attempt to eliminate any religious nationalism that could foment rebellion in the colonies. Although the Jerusalem temple did not suffer such devastation, it is clear from the writings of the prophet Malachi that it experienced fiscal problems because of the decrease in Persian financial backing.[29] Xerxes diverted to the Persian imperial center the funds that would have gone to the local temples, while at the same time increasing the taxes of the colonies in the periphery. In contrast to

27. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 49-50.

28. Indeed, subsidizing the rebuilding of the Sais temple under Udjahorresnet in Egypt (c. 520 BCE) allowed him to take possession of that country without military conquest.

29. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 89, 92-102; Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. I, p.129.

his father, whose policies worked to intensify these outlying economies, Xerxes worked primarily to remove their surpluses.[30]

Artaxerxes I (465–423) carried on his father's program of not taxing the Persian center but increasing taxes in the Persian periphery. Nevertheless, Yehud temporarily benefited from Artaxerxes' rule, since Yehud was caught in the middle of conflicts between the Persian Empire and Egypt and Greece, which had formed an alliance on Persia's western front. In order to deal with the Egyptian and Greek threats, Artaxerxes fortified Persian outposts in Yehud, rebuilt the city walls of Jerusalem, dispatched competent and loyal governors to be in charge, and financed them with silver and gold. Ezra (c. 458–446) and Nehemiah (c. 445–432) were probably two of the functionaries whom Artaxerxes appointed.[31] Through them and through subsidies to the Jerusalem temple, Artaxerxes exploited the ideological potential of local religious leaders to influence and control the population. However, his attention to Yehud did not last during the second half of his rule: after defeating the Egypt/Greece coalition, he resumed his father's policies of colonial depletion.[32] Greece emerged as an economic factor in Yehud, as it engaged in trade for Yehud's cash crops. Unfortunately, Yehud's economy did not improve with this additional trading partner; indeed, it probably became weaker.[33] Yehud's fiscal decline was symptomatic of the increasing deterioration of the colonies throughout the Persian Empire.

Class and Conflict in Ancient Yehud

Social divisions in Yehud were directly affected by changes in imperial foreign policies. Jon Berquist distinguishes three interest groups of ethnic Jews, related in varying degrees of cooperation and conflict in Yehud during Achaemenid rule.[34] The first two consisted of immigrants from Babylon, who had probably served in the Babylonian cult or royal court and now enjoyed Persian support. Many had descended from the aristocrats, priests, upper-class landowners, and so on who had been deported to Babylonia years earlier.[35] The priestly immigrants had a vested interest

30. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 93.

31. Kenneth Hoglund, 'The Achaemenid Context', in *Second Temple Studies. 1 Persian Period* (ed. Philip R. Davies; JSOTSup, p. 117; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), pp. 54, 64; Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 110-11; D. Bodi, 'La clémence des Perses envers Néhémie et ses compatriotes: faveur ou opportunisme politique?', *Transeu* 21 (2001), pp. 69-86.

32. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 105-109.

33. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 109.

34. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 65-79.

35. Blenkinsopp, 'Temple and Society', pp. 50-61; Richard A. Horsley, 'The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars',

in the rebuilding of the temple and oversight of proper observance of holy days and ritual practice as they defined it. The political immigrants were more concerned about enhancing the economic productivity and prosperity of the region.

Supported by and in service to the Persian imperium, these two groups eventually formed an alliance as the *golah* community,[36] collaborating or clashing with the native population. Although numerically they were very much in the minority, they eventually became the wealthiest, dominant faction in Yehud, replicating the stratified, pyramidal social structure of pre-exilic times. Both groups shared an urban perspective, focusing on Jerusalem as the site of the new temple and political center. Both were allowed a certain religious and political autonomy to administer Yehud, as long they were loyal to the Persian government by collecting and rendering their quota of taxes and maintaining the socioeconomic stability in the area. They also worked to obtain special concessions from Persia for increased social, political, and religious autonomy and tax relief for the inhabitants of Yehud, although the political and economic interests of the imperium and those of Yehud were not easily harmonized in planning and carrying out their public policies.[37]

The third group was composed of those natives already living in the land when the exiles returned. When the minority elite was exiled, the bulk of Judah's population was left behind. Although the group probably included some small-holders, they were labeled the 'poorest of the land' (2 Kgs 24.14; 25.12; Jer. 39.10). However, their livelihood improved somewhat under Babylonian occupation. The Babylonians apparently allowed many of them to take possession of and work the lands of the deported landlords. While they did not achieve the high economic ranks of the exiled, some natives probably formed an 'upper class' in Yehud that was accountable to the Babylonians.[38] For their appropriation of land, they were vilified by Ezekiel—and, undoubtedly, others—in exile (Ezek. 11.15-21; 33.23-29; 36.1-7). This population would not have been thrilled

Semeia 83/84 (1998), p. 170. However, Philip R Davies., *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOTSup 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), pp. 81-82, raises the issue that the 'returnees' may not necessarily have been Judean exiles returning home.

36. *Golah*: those deported into exile, the exiles. The *golah* community refers to those ethnically Jewish families who returned to Yehud from the Babylonian exile. See Ezra 1.11; 2.1; 4.1; 6.19–20; 10.6–8, and passim. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 79; Washington, *Wealth and Poverty*, pp. 164-65; Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'The Social Context of the "Outsider Woman" in Proverbs 1-9', *Bib* 72 (1991), p. 472.

37. Gottwald, *Politics of Ancient Israel*, pp. 238-89; Perdue, *Proverbs*, pp. 56-57.

38. Daniel L. Smith, 'The Politics of Ezra: Sociological Indicators of Postexilic Judaean Society', in *Second Temple Studies*. I. *Persian Period* (ed. Philip R. Davies; JSOTSup, 117; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), pp. 95-96.

about the return of the deportees, especially if it meant reverting back to their pre-exilic lower status.[39] They had been worshipping God their way for decades, and, unlike the returning priests, saw no need to rebuild the temple and subject themselves to priestly notions of proper ritual practice. They had been cultivating their land for years, and were suspicious of the political immigrants, whose material interests seemed to tilt toward the colonizer.[40] The two-tiered extraction of surpluses in Yehud introduced by the returning deportees and the ever-increasing demand for more agricultural production and imperial taxation played a major role in the exploitation and deterioration of the natives.

Inevitably, antagonisms developed between the local inhabitants and the immigrants from Babylon who sought to reclaim their pre-exilic status and privileges in Yehud. Although clashes between the returning elite and the natives were often described in theological terms (cf. Ezra 4.3; Neh. 4.15; 6.12-14, 16), their conflicts were most likely over socioeconomic issues. Imperial policies directly polarized and exacerbated divisions in the social classes in Yehud. The peasantry shouldered most of the burden as taxes and tribute became more oppressive as the empire declined.[41] Darius's financial backing of the temple created an upper class in Yehud composed of the priestly and civic returnees, and his intensification policy also deepened the economic rift in social classes. Although he provided partial compensation for the cost of the food to feed and house his armies as they passed through the area, this payment was not distributed to those whose labors produced this food, but to the *golah* elite.[42] With the cessation under Xerxes of temple support and with his policy of colonial depletion, more surpluses were demanded of the lower classes to finance temple operations, as were more imperial taxes. This strategy preserved the income of the elites while diminishing the assets of the rest of the population, thus widening the social gap.[43]

If Nehemiah 5 is any indication,[44] economic abuses of the elite against the natives came to a head during the latter part of the fifth century under

39. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, I, pp. 117, 121.

40. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 78.

41. Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period.* II. *From the Exile to the Maccabees* (trans. John Bowden; OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), p. 448.

42. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 62.

43. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 113.

44. This assumes, with a number of scholars, the beginning of Nehemiah's governorship in Yehud in 445 BCE during the rule of Artaxerxes I. For a summary of the debate, see 'The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah', in H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (OTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), pp. 55-69.

Artaxerxes I.[45] Nehemiah himself was aware that exploitation of the peasants by their leaders had been going on for some time (Neh. 5.15). Neh. 5.2-5 describes the drastic measures farmers had to take to repay their debts to the *golah* landowners: mortgaging their land if they owned any; taking out loans at high interest to pay imperial taxes; selling their sons and daughters into slavery[46] and risking the rape of their daughters by their creditors in doing so.[47] Although Nehemiah's reforms seemed to bring temporary relief to the peasantry, they did not change the systemic roots of the exploitation: the elite monopoly of agricultural land, non-compensation for those who farmed it, stiff burdens on the peasantry to pay imperial taxes, costly tithes for the temple (Neh. 10.32-39), and the priestly elite's exemption from having to shoulder any portion of Persia's taxation (Ezra 7.24).[48] The great socioeconomic disparity in Yehud was symbolized in Nehemiah's rebuilding of the city walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2.11-20) and repopulating the city with leading families of the *golah* (Neh. 7.5-73), creating an actual physical barrier between its upper and lower classes. 'The rebuilt city exists for the urban elite and their cohorts from Persia; the outlying, unprotected countryside remains for the poorer inhabitants of the land'.[49]

Economics, Endogamy, and Ideology: The Politics of the Other Woman

Proverbs 1–9, with its condemnation of the Other Woman, is often situated during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and their interference in matters of intermarriage among the elite in Yehud. Accepting the Ezra–Nehemiah texts at face value, many think that ethnic and/or religious purity was the primary rationale for forbidding marriages to 'foreign' women.[50] However, a growing number of scholars argue for underlying

45. For an excellent class analysis of Nehemiah 5, see Norman K. Gottwald, 'The Expropriated and the Expropriators in Nehemiah 5', in *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel* (ed. Mark R. Sneed; SFSHJ, 204; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 1-19.

46. In the wider imperial context, Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 115, points out that if Yehud's inhabitants sold their children to the Greeks to pay off debts, Persia's depletion policy diminished Yehud's labor force while simultaneously strengthening that of its enemy.

47. According to H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC 16; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), p. 238, the detail of the daughters' molestation suggests that they may have been sexually abused as payment for delaying foreclosure on loans.

48. Gottwald, 'Expropriated and Expropriators', pp. 9, 12; Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, II, pp. 496-97.

49. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 114.

50. David Bossman, O.F.M., 'Ezra's Marriage Reform: Israel Redefined', *BTB* 9 (1979), pp. 36-8; F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), p. 124; Christine Hayes, 'Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources', *HTR* 92.1 (1999), pp. 3-36; Hyam Maccoby,

economic reasons for either marrying 'foreign' women or prohibiting such marriages.[51] In this section, therefore, I investigate how economics and its abuses played a role in the problems surrounding intermarriage and how they interfaced with ideologies of ethnic and religious purity, in order to see how these may have influenced the literary construction of the Other Woman.

One of the earliest economic issues facing the immigrants was land tenure and gaining control of the principal means of production in Yehud from the natives.[52] After the Babylonian Exile, the capital of Yehud was moved from Jerusalem to Mizpah, about twelve kilometers north of the former (2 Kgs 25.23; Jer. 40–41). Through Persian financial backing, the capital returned to Jerusalem and regained its status as the urban home of the elite. Carter reassesses Kenneth Hoglund's earlier claim that settlement patterns during the Persian period do not support the presumption of a class struggle between the exiles and those who remained in the land.[53] Basing his findings on more recent data, Carter observes that new settlements around Jerusalem increased significantly during the Persian period, while those in other areas of Yehud did not. He concludes that the new data 'call into question [Hoglund's] conclusion that the settlement patterns in and of themselves undermine the traditional view of intra-province struggles between returnees and those who had remained on the land'.[54] The conflict would have occurred particularly over land held by the natives that surrounded the newly reestablished capital of Jerusalem.

The immigrants' hegemony over the Jerusalem temple enabled their efforts to take possession of the land and channel its surpluses.[55] Another means by which they regained land and other resources was through

'Holiness and Purity: The Holy People in Leviticus and Ezra-Nehemiah', in *Reading Leviticus: A Conversation with Mary Douglas* (ed. John F.A. Sawyer; JSOTSup, 227; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 153-70; Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra–Nehemiah* (IBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992), p. 57; and those discussed in Daniel Smith, 'Politics of Ezra', pp. 90-93.

51. Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', pp. 457-73; Willa Mathis Johnson, 'Ethnicity in Persian Yehud: Between Anthropological Analysis and Ideological Criticism', *SBLSP* 34 (1995), pp. 177-86; Washington, 'Strange Woman', pp. 217-42; Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp.118-19; Maier, 'Conflicting Attractions', pp. 100-102; Hoglund, 'Achaemenid Context', p. 67; Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, p. 105.

52. Washington, 'Strange Woman', p. 232; Mary Douglas, 'Responding to Ezra: The Priests and the Foreign Wives', *BibInt* 10.1 (2002), p. 11; Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, pp. 104-106.

53. Hoglund, 'Achaemenid Context', p. 59.

54. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, p. 248.

55. Ezra 4.1-3; 6.6-12. Cf. Ezra 10.8. Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Did the Second Jerusalemite Temple Possess Land?', *Transeu* 21 (2001), pp. 61-68; Washington, *Wealth and Poverty*, p.160; Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, p. 292; Washington, 'Strange Woman', p. 233.

intermarriage.[56] According to Mary Douglas, 'marriage was the obvious way for the new arrivals to insert themselves into the farming economy'.[57] Initially, it was in the interests of the returning exiles to establish good relations with the natives of Yehud, even though, ideologically, the former understood themselves to be the superior. Many of the early returnees probably married into Yehud's landowning families.[58] Some of these families were ethnic Jews who formed the 'upper class' among those who had remained in the land. Others were landowning non-Jews, foreigners in and surrounding the regions of Yehud. According to social-exchange theory, people review and weigh their relationships in terms of costs and rewards.[59] Forging alliances through intermarriage, the immigrant political and cultic elites exchanged or parlayed their high status as imperial agents in order to gain access to the land as a means of production through non-coercive means.[60] The natives exchanged their land to 'marry up' into the ranks of the returning elite, their ethnic kinsfolk who had good connections with the Persian authorities.[61]

As we have seen, however, Persian support of the *golah* caused growing class divisions between the returnees and natives, which widened under the intensification and depletion policies of Darius and Xerxes. Certain ideologies buttressed these divisions, as well as the attempts on

56. Edmund Leach, *Genesis As Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), p. 57; Daniel Smith, 'Politics of Ezra', p. 96; Tamara C. Eskenazi, 'Out From the Shadows: Biblical Women in the Postexilic Era', *JSOT* 54 (1992), p. 35; Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', p. 472.

57. Douglas, 'Responding to Ezra', p. 11. See also Smith, 'Politics of Ezra', p. 96; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, 'The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of the Post-Exilic Judean Community', in *Second Temple Studies*. II. *Temple and Community in the Persian Period* (ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), p. 245.

58. Douglas, 'Responding to Ezra', p. 11; Tamara C. Eskenazi and Eleanore P. Judd, 'Marriage to a Stranger in Ezra 9–10', in *Second Temple Studies*. II. *Temple and Community in the Persian Period* (ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), p. 285. Commenting on Mal. 2.10-16, Blenkinsopp states: 'The most plausible fifth-century setting for this indictment would be the situation of those Babylonian *olim* who, on their return to the homeland, abandoned the wives they brought with them for native women, and one important motive for doing so may well have been the acquisition or reacquisition of property deeded to these women'. Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', p. 471.

59. Smith-Christopher, 'Mixed Marriage Crisis', pp. 248-49.

60. Smith-Christopher, 'Mixed Marriage Crisis', pp. 260-61. I disagree with his notion that the returnees exchanged their low status as 'exiles' for participation in the aristocratic society of Yehud. I would argue, instead, that the returnees exchanged or exploited their high status under Persian sponsorship in order to gain access to the natives' land.

61. Douglas, 'Responding to Ezra', p. 12.

the part of the immigrants to take possession of the land. The first such ideology has come to be known as the 'myth of the empty land': the land was essentially empty, because the 'people of Israel' had been taken in captivity.[62] Neither Ezra nor Nehemiah gives any indication that the exiled elite constituted a small minority and that the major portion of the Jewish population remained in Judah.[63] Second—and intimately related to the 'myth of the empty land'—was the ideological identification of those Jews who remained and their descendants as 'people(s) of the land', whom the immigrants regarded as foreigners and adversaries (Ezra 4.1-4; 9.1, 11; 10.2, 11; Neh. 9.24, 30; 10.28, 30-31).[64]

Third, lumping the natives in with their foreign neighbors (the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites) as the Other, the immigrants saw themselves as constituting the only 'true Israel'.[65] As the 'children of the *golah*' (Ezra 4.1; 6.19-20; 8.35; 10.7, 16), they were the 'holy seed' that would be sown in the new land to repopulate it (Ezra 9.2; Ezek. 36.8-12). 'Seed' also connotes the sperm necessary for the propagation of the male lineages of the elite returnees.[66] In the trope of 'seed', sexual and agricultural reproduction converge with the intent of the returnees to take possession of the land. After all, the ancestors of those exiled had owned the land before their deportation, and therefore the immigrants now had a patrimonial right to it. They envisioned its repossession as a new Exodus and conquest (Ezek. 11.14-19; 33.23-27; 36.8-12; Jer. 32.42-44; Ezra 9.10-11).[67]

The ideology of the returnees as the true Israel provided them with a sense of entitlement to the land—but they had to marry the natives in order to obtain it. This was a socioeconomic contradiction that needed

62. Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the 'Exilic' Period* (SO, 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996); Robert P. Carroll, 'The Myth of the Empty Land', *Semeia* 59 (1992), pp. 79-93.

63. Barstad, *Myth of the Empty Land*, pp. 39, 44; Lester L. Grabbe, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 136-38; Lester L. Grabbe, 'Triumph of the Pious or Failure of the Xenophobes. The Ezra–Nehemiah Reforms and Their *Nachgeschichte*', in *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self Identification* (ed. Siân Jones and Sarah Pearce; JSOTSup, 31; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 56-57.

64. Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', pp. 460; H.G.M. Williamson, 'The Concept of Israel in Transition', in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R.E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989), p. 155; Grabbe, 'Triumph of the Pious', p. 57.

65. Washington, 'Strange Woman', p. 232; Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', p. 460; Grabb, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, p. 138; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, 'Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation, and Inclusion of the "Foreigner" in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology', in *Ethnicity & the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; BibIntSer, 19; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 126.

66. H.D. Preuss, '*Zara*'; *Zera*'', *TDOT* 4 (1980), pp. 143-62.

67. Washington, 'Strange Woman', p. 232; Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, p. 311.

to be resolved. By the time of Artaxerxes I generations later, when social chasms were exacerbated, previous marriages with the 'peoples of the land' (both ethnic non-*golah* Jews and neighboring ethnic foreigners) stood condemned by Ezra.[68] Drawing an obvious parallel between the *golah* community and its Hebrew ancestors before the invasion of Canaan, Ezra proclaimed: 'The land that you are entering to possess is a land unclean with the pollutions of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations' (Ezra 9.11). He enjoined the *golah* community to separate from the 'peoples of the land…so that you may be strong and *eat the good of the land and leave it for an inheritance to your children forever*' (Ezra 9.12, emphasis added; cf. also Ezek. 36.12). Operating under a narrow ideological understanding of the true Israel, Ezra regarded marriages to non-*golah* Jewish women, like marriages to non-Jewish women, as 'foreign'.[69] Theological arguments masked the class issues involved in these marriages. The land had been consolidated into the hands of the returning elites through intermarriage; the concern now was to keep the land as an inheritance for the elites' own descendants and not to allow it to fall into the hands of those outside of the *golah* group.[70] In essence, *the elites practiced exogamy to obtain the land and endogamy to keep it.* They conveniently forgot that the land they now possessed for themselves and their children had been obtained generations before through intermarriage with these 'peoples of the land'. This socioeconomic contradiction was resolved through selective memory.

Tamara Eskenazi and Eleanore Judd illumine cross-culturally this shift in ethnic, religious and class boundaries from acceptable wife to unacceptable wife by comparing the Ezra situation to the rise of the ultra orthodox Haredim ('tremblers'; cf. Ezra 10.3) in modern day Israel. Like Yehud during Ezra's time, the modern land of Israel was ethnically, religiously, and politically diverse. Both were colonies under the superpowers of their respective times (Persia/Great Britain). Both occupied strategically important real estate that served the purposes of the empire. Both experienced tensions between the native population and the arriving immigrants. Both cases involved the shifting understanding of who is a Jew, moving from a broad definition to a narrow one. In both cases, the religious self-understanding of one group of Jews categorized

68. I focus primarily on Ezra here, because in Nehemiah's case the women were ethnically foreign, while Ezra operated under different criteria for 'foreignness'.

69. Washington, 'Strange Woman', pp. 230-32; Smith-Christopher, 'Mixed Marriage Crisis', p. 247; Smith-Christopher, 'Between Ezra and Isaiah', p. 126; Eskenazi and Judd, 'Marriage to a Stranger', p. 285.

70. Johnson, 'Ethnicity in Persian Yehud', pp. 182-83; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra–Nehemiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), pp. 176-77; Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, p. 118; Perdue, *Proverbs*, pp. 57-58.

another group of Jews as Gentiles or foreigners, regarding a marriage with this other group as 'mixed'.[71]

Although Ezra 10 seems to present the *golah* community acquiescing to Ezra's injunctions, it is quite probable that his anti-assimilationist policies were in fact resisted by husbands who did not regard their marriages as 'mixed'.[72] Apart from the personal feelings the husbands had for their wives and children,[73] they were threatened with forfeiture of the very land for which they or their ancestors had married their wives if they did not assemble in Jerusalem and consent to divorce them (Ezra 10.7-8).[74] Furthermore, Ezra's policies undoubtedly offended the leading families of the women whose marriages were in jeopardy. Such social destabilization in Yehud during a politically vulnerable time would not have pleased Artaxerxes I and his associates. Ezra was most likely summoned abruptly back to Persia.[75]

If Neh. 13.23-30 is any indication, the *golah* community continued to intermarry for socio-economic reasons, particularly into ethnically foreign families. For Nehemiah, such intermarriages meant the threat of foreign influence on Yehud's internal affairs during a time of economic depletion by the Persian Empire. Land tenure was also an issue. If women could inherit during the postexilic period,[76] land could be transferred from the Jerusalem elite into ethnically foreign hands through marriages with foreign wives.[77] Furthermore, since the temple was crucial to the economic affairs of Yehud, intermarriage with foreign women among the priestly class, in particular (Neh. 13.28-29), could permit unwelcome or detrimental influence on these affairs from the outside.[78]

Intrinsic Analysis

If women constitute the symbolic boundaries of a people's identity, they become here the vulnerable site at which the perceived 'adversaries' of

71. Eskenazi and Judd, 'Marriage to a Stranger', pp. 266-85.

72. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, p. 311; Smith-Christopher, 'Mixed Marriage Crisis', p. 247; Grabbe, 'Triumph of the Pious', p. 57; Douglas, 'Responding to Ezra', p. 5.

73. See Smith-Christopher, 'Mixed Marriage Crisis', pp. 253-55, on the factor of romance in 'mixed' marriages.

74. Blenkinsopp, 'Did the Second Jerusalemite Temple Possess Land?', pp.63-68; Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', pp. 468-69.

75. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra–Nehemia*, p. 179; Eskenazi and Judd, 'Marriage to a Stranger', p. 271.

76. Eskenazi, 'Out from the Shadows', p. 35; Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, pp. 49-58; Washington, 'Strange Woman', pp. 235-36. Cf. Num. 27.1-11; 36.1-9.

77. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, pp. 117-18.

78. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra–Nehemia*, pp. 176-77.

the *golah* could penetrate. What emerged in Yehud was an ideology of the 'correct wife' needed to preserve the 'holy seed' of the 'true Israel' in the land of promise. Although the precise setting of Proverbs 1–9 and 31.10-31 (such as families of the landed nobility, court or temple schools, or the scribal class) is a matter of dispute, scholars usually locate these framing chapters (hereafter Proverbs 1–9)[79] within the male interests of the wealthy *golah* classes living in Jerusalem.[80] Preoccupations with securing the 'correct wife' underlie the words of wisdom that the 'father' imparts to his 'son' in Proverbs 1–9. In the intrinsic analysis that follows, I deal first with the attribution of Solomonic authorship and its relationship to the ideological production of Proverbs 1–9. Second, I discuss the 'myth of the classless society' as the ideological articulation of an ideal economics found in these chapters. Third, I show how ideologies of the 'correct wife' and the Other Woman are located within the larger 'myth of a classless society', with its ideal economics. Finally, I investigate how these ideologies of gender and economics are encoded in Proverbs 7.

'The Proverbs of Solomon, Son of David, King of Israel'

It is highly significant that the superscription of the Book of Proverbs attributes authorship to King Solomon (1.1). Solomon, who strongly

79. Although I refer in the following to Proverbs 1–9, I also include Proverbs 31.10-31 and its encomium of praise for the idealized wife. Scholars have noted that these chapters comprise a later redactional frame around the sentence collections.

80. Perdue, *Proverbs*, pp. 15-27; Leo G. Perdue, 'Liminality As a Social Setting for Wisdom Instructions', *ZAW* 93 (1981), pp. 114-15; Gordis, 'The Social Background of Wisdom', pp. 162-63; Mark Sneed, 'The Class Culture of Proverbs: Eliminating Stereotypes', *SJOT* 10 (1996), pp. 296-308; Perdue, *Proverbs*, pp. 17-22; Washington, *Wealth and Poverty*, p. 166; Albertz, *History of Israelite Religion*, II, p. 511; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, p. 11; R.N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (JSOTSup, p. 99; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), pp. 99-106; James L. Crenshaw, 'Poverty and Punishment in the Book of Proverbs', in *Urgent Advice and Probing Questions: Collected Writings on Old Testament Wisdom* (ed. James L. Crenshaw; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995), pp. 398-99; Maier, 'Conflicting Attractions', pp. 103-104; G.H. Wittenberg, 'The Situational Context of Statements Concerning Poverty and Wealth in the Book of Proverbs', *Scriptura* 21 (1987), pp. 1-23; Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, pp. 103-104; J. David Pleins, 'Poverty in the Social World of the Wise', *JSOT* 37 (1987), pp. 61-78; R.N. Whybray, 'City Life in Proverbs 1–9', in *'Jedes Ding hat seine Zeit'…: Studien zur israelitischen und altorientalischen Weisheit, Diethelm Michel zum 65. Gesburtstag* (ed. Anja A. Diesel *et al.*; BZAW, 241; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 243-50. Carter, *Emergence of Yehud*, pp. 285-90 raises the question of the literary mode of production in Yehud: How could the social and religious elite of a small, impoverished province carry on the literary production ascribed to the Persian period? Based on historical and sociological parallels, he concludes that 'the level of literary creativity traditionally attributed to the Persian period need not be questioned on the grounds either of a small province or a small Jerusalem'.

centralized the state and stratified his society, was regarded as the quintessential 'wise' man (1 Kgs 3.5-14; 4.29-34). Parallels exist between the establishment of a native-tributary mode of production under Solomon and its re-establishment under a foreign-tributary mode of production during the Persian period. The returning elites wished to replicate, in the post-exilic period, a social structure endemic to the pre-exilic era. During both periods, the centralization of power in Jerusalem, the (re)building of the temple, and the formation of a hierarchical society created circumstances of socioeconomic inequity in which the elite held the monopoly on wisdom along with material resources.[81] Attributing this wisdom book to a long-dead monarch has an ideological function: its elite male author appeals to this ancient king to validate his teachings and upper-class values and to legitimate his own social-class standing in Persian Yehud.[82]

Both a 'real' and an 'ideal' economics exist in Proverbs 1–9, but the ideal economics predominates, as it does in the Solomon narrative.[83] Although real economics works by exchange or trade, with any acquisition by one party diminishing another's store, ideal economics operates under the presumption of unlimited abundance: 'Ideal economics entails a theory of "surplus value", according to which wealth can generate, of its own accord, a surplus over and above the value of anyone's labor. *Such a theory allows for one class to prosper without the necessity of interpreting their prosperity as being at anyone else's expense*'.[84]

I identify the ideal economics in Proverbs 1–9 as 'the myth of the classless society', coinciding with the 'myth of the empty land' in Ezra and Nehemiah, discussed above. Scholars have already remarked on the urban setting of Proverbs 1–9, its concerns about getting to the top, and the complete absence in it of the poor, poverty, or any hint of the ongoing socioeconomic crises described in Nehemiah 5. In the words of R.N. Whybray, 'Proverbs 1–9 thus represents the interests of the urban, wealthy, self-satisfied upper class to whom the plight of the urban poor in

81. See, Walter A. Brueggemann, 'The Social Significance of Solomon As a Patron of Wisdom', in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pp. 123-29, on the operations of this mode of production that tradents remembered of Solomon's rule.

82. Perdue, *Proverbs*, pp. 18-19, 64-65; Perdue, 'Wisdom Theology and Social History', pp. 92-93. Cf. Brueggemann, 'Social Significance of Solomon', p. 129.

83. For an analysis of these economics at work in 1 Kings 1–11, see David Jobling, 'Forced Labor: Solomon's Golden Age and the Question of Literary Representation', *Semeia* 54 (1991), pp. 57-76, reprinted with some modification in David Jobling, 'The Value of Solomon's Age for the Biblical Reader', in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship At the Turn of the Millennium* (ed. Lowell K Handy; SHCANE; Leiden, New York and Cologne: Brill, 1997), pp. 470-92.

84. Jobling, 'Forced Labor', p. 62. Emphasis added.

their midst as well as of the rural poor was of no interest whatever'.[85] In Proverbs 1–9, elite class interests are masked under the idiom of family, in which a fictional 'father' bestows words of wisdom upon a fictive 'son'. The paternal voice that speaks is not that of a rich landowner or a civic or cultic Persian functionary, but that of one's 'father': 'Families are not ideologically innocent places, but because everyone has one, they give the appearance of being so'.[86] Although Brueggemann describes the Solomonic period in the quotation below, his words are apropos for understanding the myth of a classless society in Proverbs 1–9 as a theodic settlement for its postexilic context:

> Behind every theodic crisis, there is a 'theodic settlement'—a long-standing consensus about how life works, how society functions, how a system of benefits is allocated, what suffering must be tolerable and inescapably borne, and by whom it must be borne. The theodic settlement that decides who must 'rightly' suffer is characteristically a settlement authorized and imposed by those on the top of the heap, who benefit from the present social arrangement, so that the system can be legitimated as good, wise, and right. *For those who benefit, it is very difficult to notice that the theodic settlement may be for someone else a theodic crisis.*[87]

In Proverbs 1–9, the theodic crisis among those suffering under the native/foreign-tributary mode of production in postexilic Yehud is noticeably missing. The absence of economic class in Proverbs 1–9 symbolically resolves the ideological and material contradictions in Yehud society between rich and poor, between *golah* and non-*golah*.[88]

Claudia Camp draws intertextual connections between the Book of Proverbs and the Solomon story in 1 Kings 1–11, whose final form she dates during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.[89] Although the superscription introduces Proverbs as Solomon's wisdom words, he never appears in the book. For Camp, Solomon's disembodied voice finds corporeality in Woman Wisdom and the Other Woman. Both figurations reflect the ambiguous relationships *between* Solomon's own wisdom and 'strangeness' during his rule and *with* women, wise and strange.[90]

85. Whybray, 'City Life in Proverbs 1–9', p. 249. See also Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty*, pp. 99-106.

86. Newsom, 'Women and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom', p. 144.

87. Brueggemann, 'Social Significance of Solomon', p. 130. Emphasis added.

88. See Yee, *Poor Banished Children*, p. 24, on the notion of 'absence' in the text that must marginalize other voices in order to give itself voice. This textual voice symbolically resolves the real social contradictions that produce the text itself.

89. Camp, *Wise, Strange, & Holy*, pp. 154-55, 180-86. See also Jobling, 'Value of Solomon's Age', pp. 470, 487.

90. Camp, *Wise, Strange, & Holy*, pp. 155-81. These wise and strange women in

The Other Woman in Proverbs 1–9

The *'iššâ zārâ* has been variously translated as 'foreign woman', 'strange woman', 'loose woman', 'outsider woman', and so forth. Instead of restricting the meaning of the word *zārâ* to the woman's ethnic, legal, religious, or social status, recent analyses have argued for a broader understanding of the *'iššâ zārâ*, one that encompasses a range of ethnic, social, religious, and economic Otherness.[91] Particularly in light of its postexilic context, the more inclusive definition of the Other Woman sees her not only as an ethnically foreign woman, devoted to foreign deities, but also, in an endogamous society, any woman outside the family lineage. In addition, she can be a social outsider: the 'other' woman in an adulterous affair, an adulteress herself or a prostitute. She can simply be a woman considered 'not our kind', although she may have once been 'our kind' under a different set of rules. As a composite entity, then, the Other Woman is any woman that transgresses the values and socioeconomic prerogatives defined by the shifting standards of the *golah* community.[92]

Within the 'classless' society of the *golah* exist ideologies of the 'correct' wife and of marital endogamy to keep land and property, garnered earlier through intermarriage, in the family. In Proverbs the 'correct' wife is embodied in the person of Woman Wisdom. The 'incorrect' wife becomes incarnate in the Other Woman. Although seemingly opposites, Woman Wisdom and the Other Woman are actually two sides of the same coin:[93] male elite constructions of the 'right' and 'wrong' woman as potential mates. Class interests and divisions in Yehud's native/foreign-tributary mode of production are disguised by tropes of gender and sexuality in the ostensibly classless society envisioned in Proverbs 1–9. In postexilic

1 Kings 1–11 include Abishag and Bathsheba, the two prostitute mothers, Pharaoh's daughter, the Queen of Sheba, and Solomon's innumerable foreign wives.

91. Newsom, 'Women and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom', p. 148; Brenner, 'Proverbs 1–9', pp. 121-3; Washington, 'Strange Woman', pp. 229-30; Maier, 'Conflicting Attractions', pp. 93-4; Camp, *Wise, Strange, & Holy*, pp. 40-43; Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', p. 473; Perdue, *Proverbs*, p. 87; Webster, 'Sophia', pp. 55-56. Nevertheless, interpreting the *'iššâ zârâ* as representing ethnically foreign cult or wisdom still has its adherents. See John Barclay Burns, 'Proverbs 7,6-27: Vignettes From the Cycle of Astarte and Adonis', *SJOT* 9.1 (1995), pp. 20-36, and Johann Cook, '*Ishah Zarah* (Proverbs 1–9 Septuagint): A Metaphor for Foreign Wisdom?', *ZAW* 106 (1994), pp. 458-76. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, pp. 134-41 identifies her only as another man's wife.

92. Camp, *Wise, Strange, & Holy*, p. 32 thinks that the Strange Woman is too multidimensional to be linked with one historical moment. In a sense, I agree, but for different reasons. I prefer to connect the literary construction of the Other Woman with a particular mode of production found that had particular historical configurations in postexilic Yehud, rather than a particular historical moment.

93. Claudia V. Camp, 'Wise and Strange: An Interpretation of the Female Imagery in Proverbs in Light of Trickster Mythology', *Semeia* 42 (1988), pp. 28-29.

Yehud, the Other Woman represents a financially desirable but socially unacceptable potential wife for one of its upper-class sons. She is contrasted with the Woman of Substance, a *golah* woman of financial means whom young men are encouraged to pursue (see below).[94] Proverbs 1–9 pits an economically desirable *outsider* against an economically desirable *insider*.[95] Obviously, the demand for rich *golah* daughters will be greater than the supply. Therefore, the attractions of the Other Woman (rich ethnically foreign women or wealthy non-*golah* Jewish women) as marital partners become irresistible. The father's task in Proverbs 1–9 is to depict the Other Woman in the most dreadful fashion, so that his son does not succumb to her charms.

In a broader economic reading of Proverbs 1–9, adultery—the sexual transgression of the Other Woman in the book—functions on a figurative level as well as a literal one.[96] At the literal level, adultery is consensual sexual intercourse by a married woman with a man who is not her husband. The adulteress herself is a sexually transgressive woman who disrupts a patrilineal society and brings dishonor to her husband and family.[97] At the figurative level, adultery becomes a trope for marriage with the 'wrong' woman. Because we are dealing with the problem of intermarriages during the postexilic period, Proverbs 1–9 utilizes adultery, rather than fornication or sex with prostitutes, as a trope to characterize such unacceptable marital alliances.[98] Adultery becomes multivalent, encompassing sexual intercourse with a married woman, sexual intercourse in marriage with an

94. Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', p. 467 maintains that the personification of wisdom is 'a secondary elaboration, a counter to the Outsider Woman, in the context of the exogamy-endogamy issue in the early Second Temple period'.

95. Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, pp. 105-106. I therefore disagree with Maier, 'Conflicting Attractions', p. 104, that 'the male "outsider" transgresses conventional behaviour in economic matters' and 'the female "outsider" transgresses the sexual mores'. Issues surrounding the Other Woman are also economic, and are cloaked in tropes of sexuality.

96. Cf. Perdue, *Proverbs*, pp. 92-93.

97. See Elaine Adler Goodfriend, 'Adultery', *ABD* 1 (1992), pp. 82-6; Raymond Westbrook, 'Adultery in Ancient Near Eastern Law', *RB* 97 (1990), pp. 542-80; Robert Gordis, 'On Adultery in Biblical and Babylonian Law', *Judaism* 33 (1984), pp. 210-11; Henry McKeating, 'Sanctions Against Adultery in Ancient Israelite Society, with Some Reflections on Methodology in the Study of Old Testament Ethics', *JSOT* 11 (1979), pp. 52-72; Anthony Phillips, 'Another Look At Adultery', *JSOT* 20 (1981), pp. 3-25. See also Yee, *Poor Banished Children*, pp. 47-48, in which I discuss adultery at some length.

98. See Chapters 5 and 6 of Yee, *Poor Banished Children,* in which I discuss the use of adultery as a trope to describe idolatry, an oppressive mode of production, and alliances with foreign nations in both Hosea and Ezekiel, all in the context of the deity's covenant with the nation in its depiction as a marriage.

ethnically foreign woman, and sexual intercourse in marriage with a non-*golah* Jewish woman. The Other Woman inhabits these differing connotations of marital transgression, just as Woman Wisdom symbolizes marital fidelity to one's own wife and appropriate marriages within one's own kin group and economic class.

On both literal and figurative levels, adultery is projected to have dire economic consequences, which the father is quick to point out during each of his three warnings against the Other Woman.[99] Immediately after his first warning in 2.16-19, the father exhorts his son to keep to the paths of the righteous, 'for the upright will inhabit the land, and men of integrity will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it' (2.20-22). These verses encode issues that surrounded land tenure during the time of Ezra. In both cases, those who marry the 'wrong' woman will be severed from the land as the means of production.[100] After his second warning against the seductive words of the Other Woman (5.3-8), the father relates that those foolish boys who listen to her risk losing their property to strangers and foreigners (*zārîm* and *nokrî,* 5.9-10) and utter ruin in the assembly (*qāhāl*) of the *golah* (5.14).[101] Behind this warning may be fears of the transferal of property into the hands of non-*golah* families (*zārîm*) or foreigners (*nokrî*) through the inheritance rights of their wives. The lesson: Exogamy will wreak financial ruin on the imprudent upper-class son. In his third warning, the father takes on adultery in its literal sense: he reminds his offspring that if an adulterer is caught with another man's wife (6.26-29), he must pay the cuckolded husband sevenfold, handing over all the wealth (*hôn*) of his house and suffering disgrace in the community (6.31-33). A number of scholars argue that the Other Woman is a function of the patriarchal need to control women's sexuality.[102] It

99. See Yee, '"I Have Perfumed My Bed"', p. 55, to see how these three warnings are interspersed in the chiastic structure of the speeches in Proverbs 1–6.

100. Ezra 10.8a. Blenkinsopp, 'Social Context', p. 468; Perdue, *Proverbs*, pp. 94-95. The class bias in Proverbs regarding possessing and being cut off from the land resembles that in the wisdom psalm, Psalm 37. See Walter Brueggemann, 'Theodicy in a Social Dimension', *JSOT* 33 (1985), p. 24 n. 39.

101. Cf. Ezra 10.8b.

102. Claudia V. Camp, 'What's So Strange About the Strange Woman?', in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. David Jobling, Peggy L. Day and Gerald T. Sheppard; Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1991), p. 27; Claudia V. Camp, 'The Strange Woman of Proverbs: A Study in the Feminization and Divinization of Evil in Biblical Thought', in *Women and Goddess Traditions in Antiquity and Today* (ed. Karen L. King; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), p. 321; Washington, 'Strange Woman', p. 218; Brenner, 'Proverbs 1–9', pp. 125-26.

seems more likely, however, that *male* sexuality is on the line here.[103] The father wishes to control the sexuality of his son in order to preserve his material assets and class status and that of his offspring. Within the boundaries of Persian period economics, the son's sexuality finds legitimate expression with the 'correct' wife, not the Other Woman.

The father depicts the pursuit of the 'correct' wife in economic terms. She is lauded in the acrostic poem concluding the Book of Proverbs (31.10-31). For Yoder, the *'ēšet-ḥayil* (Prov. 31.10a)—usually translated as 'a good wife', 'a capable wife', 'a good housewife', and so on—should be rendered 'a woman of substance', to foreground her socioeconomic strengths.[104] That there are not enough of these marriageable women to go around in the *golah* community is expressed by the qualifier 'Who can find?' (Prov. 31.10b). The 'Woman of Substance' is a scarce commodity. However, although the initial investment for her is costly, since 'her purchase price (*mikrâ*) is more than corals' (31.10b), she brings riches, property, and socioeconomic advantages to her spouse. He will have no lack of 'booty' (*šālāl*, 31.11): 'His "plunder" from what she brings home makes him a wealthy man. As her husband, he is able to draw upon her dowry money and property for his own purposes and he profits from her additional earnings, inheritances, bequests, or supplemental dowry gifts. In short, he can live off of her'.[105] If the son can harness his hormones and find such a woman, his status and prestige will be assured. He will be known at the city gates, sitting among the elders of the land (31.23).

Scholars have maintained that the 'Woman of Substance' in 31.10-31 and Woman Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9 are actually one and the same: one literal, the other metaphorical.[106] As with the Woman of Substance, the search for Woman Wisdom is communicated in economic terms. In Prov. 23.23, the son is instructed: 'Buy (*qĕneh*) truth, and do not sell it; (Buy) wisdom, instruction, and understanding'. With the vocabulary of purchase,

103. See Alice Ogden Bellis, 'The Gender and Motives of the Wisdom Teacher in Proverbs 7', in *Wisdom and the Psalms (A Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series)* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 82-83; Maier, 'Conflicting Attractions', p. 102; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, p. 260.

104. For a detailed socioeconomic analysis of Prov. 31.10-31, see Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, pp. 75-91.

105. Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, p. 78.

106. Thomas P. McCreesh, O.P., 'Wisdom As Wife: Proverbs 31.10-31', *RB* 92.1 (1985), pp. 25-46; Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985), pp. 90-93, 186-91; Murphy, *The Tree of Life*, p. 27; Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, pp. 102-103, 105-108; Clifford, *Proverbs*, p. 274; Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, pp. 91-101.

possession, and wealth, the father enjoins the son repeatedly to buy or acquire (*qnh*) Woman Wisdom, as one obtains a Woman of Substance:[107]

> Acquire (*qĕneh*) Wisdom! Acquire (*qĕneh*) Insight!
> Do not forget or turn away from the words of my mouth.
> Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
> Love her and she will guard you.
> The beginning of Wisdom is this: Acquire (*qĕneh*) Wisdom.
> With all your property (*bĕkol-qinyānĕkā*), acquire (*qĕneh*) Insight.
> Prize her highly, and she will exalt you.
> She will honor you if you embrace her.
> She will place on your head a fair garland.
> She will bestow on you a beautiful crown (Prov. 4.5-9).

Yoder crisply remarks: '[Woman Wisdom], *like the Woman of Substance, is regarded as both person and merchandise to be acquired*'.[108] Although, like the Woman of Substance, a man must give over all that he has (*bĕkol-qinyānĕkā*) to 'buy' Woman Wisdom, he will definitely be rewarded financially in the end. Wisdom imparts to the one who finds and acquires her a business profit (*saḥar*) better than earnings from silver,[109] and a revenue (*tĕbû'â*)[110] better than gold (Prov. 3.13-14). More precious than corals, she holds the key to long life in her right hand and to riches and honor in her left (Prov. 3.15-16).

The fictional father constructs two ideologies of women who confront the average high-born male in Yehud and compete for his attention. Encoded in both are the social conflicts and contradictions of the economics of marriage in the *golah* community. An alliance with one or the other will dramatically affect a man's financial circumstances, either positively or negatively. Both women are portrayed in dangerously comparable ways; both make perilously similar pronouncements to attract the son to their respective domains.[111] Both attempt to seduce the son through their speeches. In a previous work,[112] I contended that the speeches of the various personages in Proverbs 1–9 are divided into two chiastically ordered

107. Cf. Ruth 4.10: 'Also Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought (*qânîtî*) to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance' (RSV).

108. Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance*, p. 96. Emphasis in original.

109. Cf. Prov. 31.18, where the Woman of Substance 'perceives that her business profit is good' (*kî-ṭôb saḥrâh*).

110. Prov. 3.9-10 reveals the importance of the land and its income-generating commodities (*tĕbû'â*) in the economy of Yehud for the elite: 'Honor the Lord with your wealth (*mēhônekā*) and with the first fruits of your land's revenue/yield (*tĕbû'ātekā*); then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine'.

111. On the similarities of the two women, see J.N. Aletti, 'Séduction et parole en Proverbes I–IX', *VT* 27 (1977), pp. 129-44; Yee, '"I Have Perfumed My Bed"', pp. 53-68.

112. Yee, '"I Have Perfumed My Bed"', pp. 53-68.

groups. In the first, the structural chiasmus emphasizes the longer, weightier speeches of Woman Wisdom (B, 1.22-33) and her agent, the father's father (B′, 5.1-11, 15-23) vis-à-vis the sinners (A, 1.11-14) and the unwise son (A′, 5.12-14). Interlaced throughout this chiastic frame are the father's three warnings against the Other Woman. In the second group, the father contrasts the speeches of the Other Woman herself (A, 7.14-20; A′, 9.16-17) with those of Woman Wisdom (B, 8.1-36; B′, 9.5-6). Whereas, in the first group of speeches, the Other Woman was only a forbidding specter that the son must avoid, in this second group she actually appears and verbalizes the dangers she embodies for the son. Building upon my earlier work, I now turn my attention to a materialist reading of Proverbs 7 and the seductive speech of the Other Woman.

His Absence Makes Her Heart Go Wander: The Other Woman in Proverbs 7

Feminist scholars have raised the possibility that the speaker of Proverbs 7 is female, perhaps a mother, who addresses her son in 7.1.[113] Mothers did play an instructional role in the education of their sons (1.8; 6.20). In 31.1-9, Lemuel's mother exhorts her son to steer clear of bad women and strong wine, just as a mother would admonish her son to avoid the Other Woman, as in Proverbs 7. The image of a female looking out the window (7.6) has archaeological support in the Samaria ivories of a woman staring out a latticed window. It is possible that either a mother or a father sharing the same value system could be the son's lecturer in Proverbs 7.[114]

Nevertheless, I favor reading a father's voice in the didactic speeches of Proverbs 1–9. As I have mentioned, the superscription ascribes authorship of Proverbs 1–9 to the pre-exilic King Solomon, legitimating the male ideologies of a particular class in its conflicted postexilic context. The superscription literarily frames these chapters with a male voice. Furthermore, in Prov. 4.1-9 the speaker is clearly a son recalling his father's words.

113. Fokkelien Van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Traces of Women's Texts in the Hebrew Bible', in *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 57-62; Brenner, 'Proverbs', pp. 120; Mieke Heijerman, 'Who Would Blame Her? The "Strange" Woman of Proverbs 7', in *Reflections on Theology and Gender* (ed. Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes and Athalya Brenner; Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994), p. 21; Bellis, 'The Gender & Motives of the Wisdom Teacher in Proverbs 7', pp. 79-91. In the Septuagint, a woman does peer out the window, but it is the seductive woman, not the mother. See Michael V. Fox, 'The Strange Woman in Septuagint Proverbs', *JNSL* 22.2 (1996), pp. 36-37.

114. Both Maier, 'Conflicting Attractions', pp.104-105 and Gerlinde Baumann, 'A Figure with Many Facets: The Literary and Theological Functions of Personified Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9', in *Wisdom and the Psalms (A Feminist Companion to the Bible, Second Series)* (ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole R. Fontaine; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 51 are open to this possibility.

These verses claim that 'wisdom' was handed down by the elite class from father to son, ostensibly since the time of Solomon the wise. Newsom summarizes the ideological maneuvers of this traditioning process: 'All readers of this text, whatever their actual identities, are called upon to take up the subject position of son in relation to an authoritative father'.[115] A female voice does complement the father's speeches—namely, that of Woman Wisdom. As the father's spokeswoman , she will have much to say to the son in Proverbs 8.

It is significant that the father introduces his son to the familial and erotic dimensions of Woman Wisdom only in Prov. 7.2-5. He urges the lad to call Wisdom 'sister' (7.4). In Song 4.9, 10, 12; 5.1, a lover addresses his beloved as 'sister'. In addition, the father tells his son to call Wisdom 'kinswoman' (*mōdā'*).[116] The use of kinship language for Wisdom encodes an economics of marriage in which endogamy was encouraged for elite sons to preserve wealth. The father sets up Wisdom as the proper ideal bride, who will preserve the son 'from the Other Woman, from the alien woman with her smooth words' (7.5).

The father sets the stage for the grand entry of the Other Woman and her seductive talk. In Prov. 7.6-13, the urban elite setting of the father's narrative is readily apparent. The upper window from which the father looks out has a lattice, enabling him to observe the goings-on between the senseless boy[117] and the Other Woman without being seen.[118] The lad traverses streets (*šûq*, 7.8), roads (*derek*, 7.8), and corners (*pinnâ*, 7.8) that lie near the Other Woman's abode. The descriptors of nightfall heighten the eroticism of the proceedings (7.9). In Song 3.1 and 5.2, the lover also seeks the one she loves under the cloak of darkness.[119]

The woman comes out to meet the boy 'dressed like a harlot' (Prov. 7.10), a depiction that indicates, not her profession, but her shameless behavior. In her adultery, she is like a common prostitute, only much

115. Newsom, 'Women and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom', pp. 143-44.

116. Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 145; W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs* (Westminster Commentaries, 17; London: Methuen, 1929), p. 50. *Mōdā'* occurs otherwise only in Ruth 2.1 and 3.2, where Boaz is described as a kinsman of Naomi. Naomi exploits this relationship in order to maneuver Boaz into marrying Ruth.

117. The descriptor, 'a young man without sense (*ḥăsar lēb*)', is the same as the one the father uses to portray the adulterer in 6.32.

118. Toy, *The Book of Proverbs*, p. 146; William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1970), p. 335; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, p. 242.

119. For parallels between the Song of Songs and Proverbs 7, see Daniel Grossberg, 'Two Kinds of Sexual Relationships in the Hebrew Bible', *Hebrew Studies* 35 (1994), pp. 7-25.

worse. In 6.26, the father states that a man can hire a harlot 'for peanuts',[120] but an adulteress 'stalks a man's very life'. Since she is clothed as a harlot, the woman's real intent is hidden (*nĕṣurat lēb*, literally 'guarded of heart', 7.10).[121] We see in her deceptive speech (7.14-20) that she does not simply desire sex; she wishes the actual life of her victim. The description of her 'feet' (*rgl*) as not staying at home (7.11) could refer to the fact that she refuses to be a proper wife, settled in her husband's house under his authority.[122] It could also be a carnal euphemism for being 'on the prowl', seeking sexual quarry. In Ezek. 16.25, the faithless wife/Jerusalem spreads her 'feet' (legs or vagina, *rgl*) to anyone who passes.[123] Like the boy, the Other Woman is found in the city streets (*ḥuṣ*, 7.12), in the squares (*rĕḥōbôt*, 7.12), and in corners (*pinnâ*, 7.12). These are precisely the places in which Woman Wisdom does her business (1.20-21; cf. 8.2-3), although in contrast to Wisdom, the Other Woman lies in wait for her prey (*te'ĕrōb*, 7.12). Using language evocative of rape,[124] the father describes the woman as *seizing* the young man (*heḥĕzîqâ bô*, Prov. 7.13), and brazenly kissing him.

She then opens her mouth, articulating in her own words the perils she represents to the father's son (Prov. 7.14-20). Significantly, economic matters appear throughout her speech,[125] encoding issues surrounding money and marriage in post-exilic Yehud (7.14, 20). Her first words in 7.14 are filled with ambiguity: 'Well-being sacrifices I must make;[126] today I fulfill(ed) (*šillamtî*) my vows'. The perfect tense of *šillamtî* can be rendered as a completed action: 'I have fulfilled/paid my vows today'.[127] Or *šillamtî*

120. Lit. 'loaf of bread', or subsistence rations. Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs*, p. 47; McKane, *Proverbs*, p. 329.

121. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, p. 244.

122. Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs*, p. 149; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, p. 244.

123. Commenting on Song 5.3, 'I had bathed my feet, how could I soil them?', Carey Ellen Walsh, *Exquisite Desire: Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), pp. 110-11, argues that 'feet' can be a double entendre, referring to the vaginal lips surrounding the opening into which her lover's 'hand' will thrust (Song 5.4).

124. Cf. Deut. 22.25; Judg. 19.25; 2 Sam. 13.11, 14.

125. See Karel van der Toorn, 'Female Prostitution in Payment of Vows in Ancient Israel', *JBL* 108 (1989), pp. 193-205; Heijerman, 'Who Would Blame Her?', pp. 24, 27-28; and van Dijk-Hemmes, 'Traces of Women's Texts', pp. 60-61, who argue that the woman is in need of money to pay for her vows and resorts to prostitution to obtain it.

126. Literally, 'are upon me' (*'âlây*).

127. Thus, RSV/NRSV; Toy, The Book of Proverbs, pp. 150-1; Oesterley, The Book of Proverbs, p. 52; Jacques Berlinerblau, *The Vow and the 'Popular Religious Groups' of Ancient Israel: A Philological and Sociological Inquiry* (JSOTSup, 210; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 127 n. 5; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, pp. 245-46.

can have a modal sense:[128] 'Today I am going to fulfill/pay my vows'.[129] Both translations have their adherents, and I think that the speech intends both senses. The Other Woman's language is deliberately equivocal, disguising her true intention. The youth understands them in the first sense—that she has just paid her sacrificial vows. He hears them as an invitation to a feast, serving fresh meat from the sacrifice. Lev. 7.15-17 specifies that sacrificial meat must be consumed on the day of the offering or on the next. The foolish lad might even assume that the invitation will be a prelude to sex.[130] However, what the woman really means is, 'I am going to fulfill my vow'. In other words, she has not yet slain her offering: her 'offering' will be the boy himself.[131]

The ambiguity of her words is apparent as she addresses the youth as a true lover would speak to her beloved. Deceiving the boy into thinking she is inviting him to dinner, she proclaims: 'Therefore, I have come out to meet you; to *seek* your face, and I have *found* you' (Prov. 7.15). Throughout Proverbs 1–9, the father wishes the son to seek and find Woman Wisdom as a wife (2.4; 3.13; cf. 1.28; 8.17, 35). In Song 3.1-4, a lover seeks her beloved on their bed and continues her search until she finds him. When she does, she holds him and does not let him go until she brings him to the place where her own mother conceived her. The implication is that in her mother's bedroom, she and her man will join together in sexual union.

Prov. 7.16-18 presents a caricature of this authentic love and sexual intimacy. Here, economics, sexuality, and death intersect as the Other Woman hastens toward her seduction/destruction of the young man. The Other Woman possesses luxury items common only among the rich and prosperous. The fact that she can offer meat at her table bespeaks a wealthy household (cf. 23.20-21). She tells the boy that her love couch (*'ereś*)[132] is draped with expensive bedding,[133] colored linen imported from

128. That is, it can be an action that belongs to the near future but which is represented as being performed at the time of utterance.

129. Thus Gustav Boström, *Proverbiastudien: Die Weisheit und das fremde Weib in Spr. 1–9* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1935), pp. 105-107; McKane, *Proverbs*, p. 337; Van der Toorn, 'Female Prostitution', pp. 197-98; Clifford, *Proverbs*, pp. 88-89.

130. It is not unthinkable that the invitation to a meal could have been the female equivalent of 'Come up and see my etchings'—a perversion of 'The way to a man's heart is through his stomach'.

131. Clifford, *Proverbs*, pp. 88-89 discusses the ambiguity of meaning from the two senses of *šillamtî*.

132. See Amos 6.4 regarding the opulent couches (*'ereś*) of the elite, upon which they idle away their days.

133. Cf. the royal purple coverings (*marbad*) that the Woman of Substance makes for herself in Prov. 31.22.

Egypt (7.16). She perfumes her bed (*miškāb*) with costly spices that come from afar—myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon (7.17).[134] Behind this depiction of the Other Woman's affluence lie the financially desirable but totally unacceptable women who daily confront young men of the *golah* community. The sexuality of the scene is underscored by the fact that the lavish goods are for her *bed*. For their own amatory intimacies, the two lovers in the Song of Songs avail themselves of all the erotic items in the Other Woman's arsenal. Their love couch is the grass beneath the trees.[135] The lover depicts her sweetheart as a bag of myrrh that lies between her breasts.[136] The man portrays the object of his affections as a garden filled with 'henna with nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices'.[137]

Although fancy spices and fine linens can be found in sexual encounters, they are also used in burial rituals.[138] Linen burial cloths wrapped Jesus' body and Lazarus's corpse.[139] John 19.39 records Nicodemus bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes to be wrapped in Jesus' linen shroud.[140] Myrrh mixed with wine is offered to the dying Jesus as a painkiller (Mk 15.23). Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus' feet with an aromatic ointment of pure nard in preparation for his burial (Jn 12.3). Various spices are laid on King Asa's funeral bier, which goes up in smoke in his honor (2 Chron. 16.14; cf. Jer. 34.5). The Other Woman's seductive words thus become a murky brew of *oikonomia*, *eros*, and *thanatos* (economics, erotic love, and death), an aphrodisiac she serves up for the unsuspecting youth.

The Other Woman's sexual invitation becomes explicit in 7.18, when she beckons the lad: 'Come, let's drink our fill of love (*dôdîm*) till dawn; take our delight in making love (*'ăhābîm*)'. The word used in her invitation to 'Come! (*lĕkâ*)' is the same used in 1.10-11 by the sinners to entice the son. *Dōdîm* and *'ăhābîm* refer to the physical acts of sexual desire.[141] For the father, the proper contexts of these expressions of sexual arousal are with

134. For a discussion of these high-priced items, see Victor H. Matthews, 'Perfumes and Spices', *ABD* 56 (1992), pp. 226-28; Robert H. O'Connell, 'Proverbs VII 6-17: A Case of Fatal Deception in a "Woman and the Window" Type-Scene', *VT* 41 (1991), pp. 237-38; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, pp. 247-48. Cf. the great quantity of spices that the Queen of Sheba and other monarchs bring to Solomon's court in 1 Kgs. 10.2, 10, 25.

135. *'ereś* in Song 1.16.

136. Song 1.13. See also 3.6; 4.6; 5.1, 5, 13.

137. Song 4.13-14.

138. As noted by O'Connell, 'Proverbs VII 6-17', p. 238 and Clifford, *Proverbs*, p. 89.

139. Mt. 27.59; Mk 15.46; Lk. 23.53; Jn 11.44; 19.40; 20.6-7.

140. Mk 16.1 and Lk. 24.1 note unspecified 'spices'. Lk. 23.56 has 'spices and perfumes'.

141. *dôdîm*: Ezek. 16.8; 23.17; Song 1.2, 4; 4.10 and passim. *'ăhâbîm*: Prov. 5.19. Cf. Hos. 8.9.

one's own spouse (5.15-23). But we discover in the climax of her speech that the Other Woman is already married! Her husband,[142] evidently a prosperous merchant, is away on a business trip. She reassures the youth that they will not get caught *in flagrante delicto*, because 'hubby' will be gone until the moon is full (7.19-20).

Immediately following the words of the predator comes the fate of her prey. Prov. 7.22-23 describe how the lad is misled by her 'seductive speech and smooth talk'. He follows her like an animal led to the slaughter, caught in traps and pierced by arrows. He does not realize (*lō' yāda'*) that *he* is the woman's sacrificial offering. He thinks he has been invited to dinner; he does not know he will *become* 'dinner'. Caught up in the Other Woman's equivocal words, he does not notice that she is preparing him for burial. His folly will cost him his very life, for her perfumed bed will become his coffin.[143]

Economics, sexuality, and death resurface in the father's final words to his sons (7.24-27).[144] His warning that they should avoid 'her ways' (*dĕrākêhā*) and 'her paths' (*bintîbôtêhā*) recalls the urban setting of his lecture (7.25; cf. 7.8, 12). Wisdom herself will stand along the 'way' (*'ălê-dārek*) and on the 'paths' (*nĕtîbôt*) by the gates and portals of the city for her own long speech that follows the Other Woman's (8.2-3). The urban context reminds us that the 'myth of the classless society' presented in Proverbs is an illusion. The father informs the sons that the Other Woman has a history of bringing unsuspecting men to their demise: 'All her slain are a mighty host' (7.26). 'Her house is the way to Sheol,[145] going down to the chambers of death' (7.27). Here, the father recalls his previous warnings against the Other Woman. In 2.18-19, the Other Woman's house 'sinks down to death, and her paths to the shades. None who go to her (*bā'êhā*) come back, nor do they regain the paths of life'. 'To go to her' can be a euphemism for sexual intercourse,[146] but death is the end for the one who beds the Other Woman. In 5.3, the father depicts the lips of the Other Woman dripping honey with vivid sensuality: 'Her mouth is slicker than

142. The MT only refers to *hâ'îš*, 'the man' not in his house. For another reading that allows for the possibility that 'the man' is not the Other Woman's husband, see Brenner, 'Proverbs 1–9', p. 124, who suggests that 'the man' could be a male relative and custodian, as well as a husband.

143. Cf. 2 Chron. 16.14, where Asa's funeral bier is a bed (*miškāb*) 'which had been filled with various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumer's art'.

144. For the variation between singular and plural for 'son', see Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, p. 250.

145. Sheol is the Hebrew abode of the dead.

146. See 6.29 and Judg. 15.1. Clifford, *Proverbs*, p. 48 and Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, p. 122, see a sexual connotation in *bā'ēhâ*.

olive oil'.[147] But her 'feet' (*raglêhā*) go down to death, and her steps follow the path to Sheol (5.5). We have seen that 'feet' can be a sexual euphemism for legs or vagina. In the father's warning in 5.5, we again find the interface between Eros and Thanatos implicit in 7.24-27. Although what the Other Woman offers seems to be desirable, both financially and sexually, she can only lead to destruction. The safest course is to avoid her at all costs.

Summary

The analysis of the *'iššâ zārâ*, the Other Woman, should be placed within the wider sociopolitical context of Persian Yehud. During this time, Yehud operated under a foreign-tributary mode of production that had elements of a native-tributary mode of production. Persian imperial politics impinged upon Yehud to create a highly stratified society in which the small community of returning elites profited, even though they had to submit to foreign rule. What Persian support entailed, however, was exacerbated divisions between the returnees and the natives and increasing exploitation of the latter, especially during the later periods of Persia's depletion of the colonial periphery. The returnees married into the native population in order to secure agricultural land as a means of production. Generations later, the priestly and civic elite encouraged endogamy to keep land and property within the *golah* community. These socioeconomic concerns lay behind Ezra and Nehemiah's condemnation of intermarriage with Jewish women outside of the *golah* group and with ethnically foreign women.

Proverbs 1–9 encodes these socioeconomic contradictions of Persian Yehud. One way in which Proverbs resolves them is through the 'myth of the classless society' that permeates these chapters. Completely absent is any hint of the great economic disparities in the social order. A second way is the male construction of two symbolic women. One of these represents the 'correct' or 'acceptable' woman to marry—namely, a woman from a wealthy *golah* family. Such women are embodied in the personification of Woman Wisdom. This financially sought-after *insider* woman is juxtaposed with a financially attractive *outsider* woman, vividly brought to life in Proverbs in the figure of the Other Woman. In the father's instruction to his son, she is to be avoided at all costs. Sexually and financially desirable, she will nonetheless bring death to any man who falls under the spell of her words.

147. See Van Leeuwen, 'The Book of Proverbs', p. 66 for this rendering.

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Solomon and the Two Prostitutes[1]

Avaren E. Ipsen

> 'A major challenge for the future is to prepare a theology that takes this culture into account, that considers prostitution through the exegesis of the prostitute in the bible'. (Gabriela Leite, Brazilian prostitutes' rights activist)[2]

'Have you heard the story about King Solomon and the two prostitutes?' As I ask around about the story of Solomon's Judgment in 1 Kgs 3.16-28, framing it as a story about prostitute women, people universally claim ignorance. They tend to smile, expecting something different, a joke perhaps. However, within a few sentences of my narration people recognize the story and exclaim, 'I never knew that was a story about prostitutes!' I am referring here to the story of the two prostitute mothers who come before King Solomon to settle their dispute over who their baby belongs to. King Solomon displays his wisdom by commanding that the baby be cut in half. The 'real' mother is discerned when one of the prostitutes gives up her claim to the child thereby saving its life. This biblical story still widely circulates in popular culture and alluding to it is rhetorically effective. That this story has been parodied on the television programs *Seinfeld* and *The Simpsons* is a testament to its popular cultural currency. In the *Seinfeld* version, the disputants are not prostitutes, but instead Elaine and Kramer, Newman is Solomon, and the baby is a bicycle.[3] When stalemated, Newman threatens to cut the bike in half. Elaine shrugs off his threat as ridiculous, but Kramer gives up his claim in order to save the bicycle, revealing himself as the better bike owner. In the closing credits, Newman rides off on the bike with Elaine angrily chasing after him, a wry

1. A version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Philadelphia, PA on 20 November, 2005 in the Gender, Sexuality and the Bible Group. Many thanks to Roland Boer for his help with this article. This chapter was first published as an article in the journal The Bible and Critical Theory, vol. 3 no. 1, 2007 (Monash University ePress, www.epress.monash.edu)

2. G. Leite, 'The Prostitute Movement in Brazil: Culture and Religiosity', *International Review of Mission* (1996), pp. 425-26.

3. *Seinfeld*. Episode title: 'Seven', http.//www.sonypictures.com/tv/shows/seinfeld/tvindex.html.

insight into how the judge can profit from such peer conflict.

In popular consciousness, the occupation of the women in the Solomon judgment story is generally absent. Indeed, this is often true of biblical criticism as well. Stuart Lasine exemplifies how this elision works. He says 'far from inviting us to explain the women's behaviour in terms of their profession and low station, the fact that the women are harlots is designed to focus our attention precisely on the fact that their distinguishing characteristic is motherhood'.[4] Most readers need to be convinced that 'prostitute women' is what the biblical text really says. Even still, the prostitution aspect is usually downplayed by being portrayed as a naturalized component of ancient Israelite society[5] or effaced by emphasizing the women as mothers so that a comforting certitude of maternal nature can be discerned.[6] Another way the prostitution aspect is downplayed is by focusing upon the story as mainly about Solomon's virtuoso display of wisdom. Thus the significance of the story as one about and/or ideologically impacting prostitutes is not usually in the spotlight.

In order to foreground the story aspect of prostitution, I sought a means of getting at the distinctive consciousness from within prostitute culture asserted by Gabriela Leite in the opening quote. There are many analogies and similarities between the justice seeking prostitutes in 1 Kgs 3.16-28 and stories of modern day sex worker activists. In order to produce a reading that privileges the non-hegemonic views of prostitutes' rights activists, I have utilized the methodological approach of feminist standpoint theory in order to extend a preferential hermeneutical option to prostitutes. Such

4. S. Lasine, 'The Riddle of Solomon's Judgment', *JSOT* 45 (1989), pp. 61-86 (70).

5. 'Harlots were a regular institution of the ancient Near East, about which the Hebrews had apparently no inhibitions', according to J. Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 128. Another example: 'prostitution was not considered morally wrong', says J. Walsh in *1 Kings* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 79.

6. C. Fontaine, 'The Bearing of Wisdom on the Shape of 2 Samuel 11-12 and 1 Kings 3', in *A Feminist's Companion to Samuel and Kings* (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), p. 155: 'The zonôt of 1 Kings 3 are functional "widows" ', that is, types of poor or dispossessed mothers who had to appeal to authority figures on their own behalf. See also A. van Heijst, 'Beyond Divided Thinking: Solomon's Judgment and the Wisdom-Traditions of Women', *Louvain Studies* 19 (1994), pp. 99-117. Here the good mother's renunciation of her maternity claim is theologized as an example of women's wisdom that avoids divided thinking. The story is read from a mother's perspective, but not a prostitute mother's perspective. The contrary view of P. Bird, 'Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts', *Semeia* 46 (1989), pp. 119-39, that the negative social stereotyping of prostitutes is integral to the story, is one more helpful to my purposes of highlighting prostitution in this story.

an interpretive option for prostitutes is something not yet fully explored in liberation hermeneutics.[7] Thus, I read the story of Solomon's Judgment with activist prostitutes of the Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP) with the help of standpoint theory.

Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory is a feminist materialist method. Standpoint epistemology has been used and developed successfully by feminist theorists to get beyond the androcentric, racial and class biases embedded in many mainstream tools of social sciences. Feminist theorist Sandra Harding describes the traditional Marxist social analysis as rooted in the standpoint of the genderless, but nonetheless male proletarian.[8] In contradistinction, standpoint theorist Nancy Harstock inserts gender into this Marxist 'proletarian' standpoint to develop a specifically *feminist* historical materialism.[9] Her basis for the gender specification is that there exists in every human society a gendered division of labour and this division has 'consequences for epistemology'. Harding also characterizes three features of feminist methodology as 1. utilizing women's experiences as new empirical and theoretical sources 2. committed to doing research for the explicit benefit of women and 3. locating the researcher on the same critical plane as the overt subject matter of research rather than keeping her hidden from view.[10] Feminist standpoint theory thus adapts the Marxist materialist mode of analysis to focus on the particular experiences and viewpoints of women, which tend to be omitted in traditional methodologies. Due to this omission, the specific ways that oppression is organized for various groups of women, especially those most marginalized, never gets analysed or described. This is especially true for those who experience multiple intersecting oppressions such as African American women. Thus, feminist Patricia Hill Collins employs a standpoint approach to get at the distinctive group standpoint of African American women.[11] Collins's most

7. An attempt in this direction is chronicled by M. Guider, *Daughters of Rahab: Prostitution and the Church of Liberation in Brazil* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). However, throughout the book, tensions between the views of the prostitutes and the pastoral agents are apparent. Leite also discusses some of these conflicts in her article.

8. S. Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge: Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 120, 176.

9. N. Harstock, *Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (New York: Longman Inc, 1983), p. 232.

10. S. Harding (ed.), *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 6-9.

11. P.H. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

recent work tackles the issue of Black sexual politics and the challenges posed by getting beyond a sexually conservative 'politics of respectability' towards a more progressive African American sexual politics.[12]

Dorothy Smith, another standpoint theorist, might characterize the situation of prostitution discourse as a 'text mediated discourse' or 'T-discourse'. T-discourses are organized by a certain ideological codes which structure behaviour and thought into specific moulds and patterns. The Bible, law and commentary, not to mention volumes of social scientific text are prime examples of such T-discourse, specifically focused on prostitution. Smith discerns certain '"ideological codes" that order and organize texts across discursive sites, often having divergent audiences, and variously hooked into policy or political practice'.[13] One way to break out from their power is to begin sociological investigations from the everyday lives of those for whom the discourse is a *problem*, to utilize these subjects as primary sources and then work backward to the institutional systems and texts that find the ideological codes necessary and useful. This strategy is to do what she calls 'institutional ethnography', that is, an ethnography of oppressive institutions and their impact on poor and oppressed people.[14] Smith uses the 'Standard North American Family' or SNAF as an ideological code that is often problematic for single mothers and other deviants from its norm.[15]

I here instead utilize Marcella Althaus-Reid's concept of the binary decency/indecency as an ideological code comparable to Smith's SNAF or Collins's 'politics of respectability' in how it organizes the T-discourse of prostitution even within feminist and liberation theology.[16] Althaus-Reid argues that the dialectic of this binary is 'at the root of theological control of behaviour that is admissible for women'.[17] Indecent theology is 'a positive theology that aims to uncover, unmask and unclothe that false hermeneutics that considers itself "decent" and as such, proper and

12. P.H. Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 71-75, 305-306. For the concept of the 'politics of respectability' Collins utilizes the work of E.B. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 185-229.

13. D. Smith, *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory and Investigations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 158.

14. D. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: a Feminist Sociology* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), p. 160.

15. Smith, *Writing the Social*, p. 170.

16. M. Althaus-Reid, 'On Wearing Skirts without Underwear: "Indecent Theology Challenging the Liberation Theology of the Pueblo" Poor Women Contesting Christ', *Feminist Theology* 20 (1999), pp. 39-51 (42).

17. Althaus-Reid, 'On Wearing Skirts', p. 39.

befitting for women especially in sexual matters'. With a hermeneutic that utilizes 'indecent subjects' (prostitutes) as a methodological strategy for interpretation, I hope to flesh out some of the operations of this ideological code of theological decency from the perspective of those for whom it is a problem: prostitutes. Althaus-Reid proposes that we engage in sexual storytelling from the margins in order to 'learn from the voices of women and men how the system in which we live is organized by making the unusual usual, that is, by enforcing gender constructions considered normal by legislative means, in order to disrupt and tame the different manifestation of sexual behaviours in society'.[18]

I did biblical interpretation with a prostitutes' rights group, the Sex Worker Outreach Project (SWOP), in Berkeley, California. This group pre-existed my study and has an elaborated political position and theory of prostitution that differs from many other mainstream feminists. I sought out this group, whose views are representative of the prostitutes' rights framework internationally,[19] and offered to help with their campaign to decriminalize prostitution starting in Berkeley, California. In terms of Sandra Harding's defining characteristics of a feminist standpoint approach, I endeavoured to meet all three criteria: 1. I explicitly sought to have SWOP members apply their elaborated standpoint to biblical texts of prostitution, 2. I wanted to do this in a way that benefited their self-defined struggle, and 3. I was a participant observer in their political project, endeavouring to not objectify my friends and to maintain their status as subjects and agents of change from whom I had much to learn.

A Parody of Wisdom? An Indeterminate Economic Mode of Production

There exists scholarship concerned with the economic context of the Solomon narrative or that works in support of our prostitute activist reading,

18. Althaus-Reid, 'On Wearing Skirts', p. 49.

19. There exists a growing amount of literature since the rights movement began in 1970s that expounds the politics of prostitute or sex worker rights as opposed to the so called 'abolitionist' framework. A few representative examples are: C. Jadet (ed.), *Prostitutes–Our Life* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1980); G. Pheterson (ed.), *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1989); G. Pheterson, *The Prostitution Prism* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); J. Nagle (ed.), *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 1997); W. Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor* (New York: Routledge, 1997); K. Kempadoo and J. Doezema, (eds.), *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance and Redefinition* (New York: Routledge, 1998); F. Delacoste and P. Alexander (eds.), *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998); and International Prostitutes Collective, *Some Mother's Daughter: The Hidden Movement of Prostitute Women against Violence* (London: Crossroads Press, 1999).

that is, readings that detect hints of critique or parody of Solomon's reign. In what follows I survey what SWOP found to be useful for a pro-prostitute reading. The text of Solomon and the prostitute women is located at the beginning of the narrative that recounts the reign of Solomon in 1 Kings 3–10. Because of the numerable contradictions and indeterminacies in the account of the career of Solomon there exists no easy-to-utilize scholarly consensus regarding the text's date, author, audience or ideology. Indeed, Stuart Lasine uses this piece of narrative as a premiere example of 'textual indeterminacy'.[20] Often at stake in current scholarship is the nature of Solomon's reign and whether or not it is a positive portrait of his political economy.[21] David Jobling's very useful deconstructive reading of this narrative could be enhanced by including prostitution into his account of Solomon's political economy.[22] Other scholars wonder if perhaps there is Deuteronomistic 'lampooning' at work in the Solomon narrative.[23] Lasine reviews differing possible historical contexts for the Solomon narrative and concludes that the diverging positive and negative evaluations of Solomon's rule by biblical scholars are created by the indeterminate text itself. The exception, however, is the story of Solomon's judgment. Lasine sees a more determinate textual ideology, given the folk origins of the story, which can supposedly transcend placement or historical situation. He categorizes the story of 1 Kgs 3.16-28 as a popular folk-riddle and its ideology is seen by him to be an example of 'strain ideology' that is trying to resolve social uncertainty about deceit and truth telling in unstable times.[24] The riddle is resolved by Solomon's insight into maternal nature, characterized by either self-sacrifice or envy. He exempts this story from the overall general indeterminacy of 1 Kings 3–11 for which he argues.

Other characterizations of the folk story genre would allow for much greater plasticity of application and contextual meaning. For example, Burke Long asserts 'because it is a question of folk story, we must be open to the obscurity of origin and a multiplicity of setting and occasions on

20. S. Lasine, 'The King of Desire: Indeterminacy, Audience, and the Solomon Narrative', *Semeia* 71 (1995), pp. 85-118.

21. Examples are D. Jobling, '"Forced Labor": Solomon's Golden Age and the Question of Literary Representation', *Semeia* 54 (1991), pp. 57-76; E. Newing, 'Rhetorical Art of the Deuteronomist: Lampooning Solomon in First Kings', *Old Testament Essays* 7 (1994), pp. 247-60; K. Parker, 'Solomon as Philosopher King? The Nexus of Law and Wisdom in 1 Kings 1–11', *JSOT* 53 (1992), pp. 75-91; Lasine, 'The King of Desire'; C. Meyers, 'The Israelite Empire: In Defence of King Solomon', *Michigan Quarterly Review* 22 (1983), pp. 412-28.

22. Jobling, '"Forced Labor"'.

23. Newing, 'Rhetorical Art of the Deuteronomist'.

24. Lasine 'The King of Desire', pp. 105-106 n. 5; and also Lasine, 'The Riddle of Solomon's Judgment', p. 78.

which such a story might have been told'.[25] The modern example from *Seinfeld* certainly allows for parody. Scholars who categorize this story as popular folk tale/story/riddle usually mention its many parallels in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, none of which include prostitutes as the protagonists, but more often, widows of one husband.[26] It might be possible that the widows were transformed into prostitutes for ironic effect to make a mockery of Solomon's political economy and courtly wisdom. The prostitution aspect could be an invisible trace of a Deuteronomistic moustache drawn upon a more respectable widow petitioner story.[27] If it is possible to read the overall narrative as a negative or even simply indeterminate portrait of Solomon's rule, why exempt this aspect from consideration? Given that Solomon prays for an understanding mind to govern this 'great people' (1 Kgs 3.9) in the preceding passage, it is perhaps significant that the only narrated example of his judicial practice is done for prostitutes.

The key question, however, comes from Hugh Pyper. He asks, 'What are two prostitutes doing in the court of Israel's wisest king?'[28] This question crystallized my own emerging question regarding the role of prostitution in the overall political economy of Solomon. This role is especially interesting in light of the possibility that biblical widows needing justice, economic or otherwise, may be among the very types of women who might resort to prostitution to survive economically.

Since one of the primary undecidable sites of debate in the Solomon narrative regards the nature of his political economy, it is into this unresolved space that I can contextualize the institution of prostitution as part of a political economy and gendered division of labour. In a move away from theories of prostitution that are rooted in personal morality or pathology—such as promiscuity, nymphomania, genetics, post-traumatic

25. B.O. Long, *1 Kings: With an Introduction to Historical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 70.

26. H. Gressmann, 'Das solomonische Urteil', *Deutsche Runschau* 130 (1907), pp. 212-28. I utilised Gaster's sampling of parallels in L. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* 2 (Glouster: Peter Smith, 1981), pp. 491-94.

27. G.H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 131, outlines the issue of the date of incorporation of this folk unit as being related to varying judgments about why there seem to be no traces of Deuteronomistic elaboration in the episode. Some scholars see this as a clue to its post-Deuteronomistic, post-Chronistic date of insertion. Others see the unit as being attached to Solomonic traditions in pre-Deuteronomistic time (i.e. already in the source 'Book of the Acts of Solomon' mentioned in 1 Kings 11.41, Jones, p. 58) and escaping Deuteronomistic tampering because the story conformed to an accepted image of 'Solomon's charisma'.

28. H. Pyper, 'Judging the Wisdom of Solomon: The Two-Way Effect of Intertextuality', *JSOT* 59 (1993), pp. 25-36 (31).

stress, incest, or the uncontrollable male sex drive—recent scholarly attention has also focused on the role of prostitution within gendered economies, especially in economies of gross inequity, maldistribution, or crisis; that is, a feminist materialist analysis. Conditions or factors that are often correlated with the proliferation of prostitution are connected to changes or disruptions in economic modes of production such as land consolidation and loss, urbanization, migration, debt-bondage, colonialism, nationalism, warfare and militarism, and uneven economic development that results in great disparities of wealth.[29] In a good example of this linkage, Maria Mies, a feminist political economist, gives the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) the nickname of 'International of Pimps'.[30] This nickname is due to the role of international development agencies in the growth of sex tourism worldwide in the new International Division of Labour or IDL: 'The most blatant manifestation of the new IDL with the neo-patriarchal or sexist division of labour is sex-tourism'.[31] The activists of SWOP also urge a re-examination of the determinacy of Solomon's riddle proposed by Lasine. For SWOP prostitutes, this riddle is a parody of justice.

Sex Worker Standpoint on Solomon and the Two Prostitutes

Contemporary prostitutes frequently deal with the criminal justice system as 'criminals' and as 'unfit mothers'. When SWOP activists read this story, two levels of justice are immediately operative: first is the risky, corrupt justice system that exists and second is the desire for authentic justice and relief from the violence that motivates prostitutes, like those of SWOP, to organize politically. In the corrupt court system that exists prostitutes experience another level of violence in addition to the daily violence

29. I am boldly summarizing a number of contextual findings. A number of studies give these factors in various combinations for a wide variety of geographical locales and historical contexts; see R.N. Brock and S.B. Thistlethwaite, *Casting Stones: Prostitution and Liberation in Asia and the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); Kempadoo and Doezema (eds.), *Global Sex Workers*; Enloe, C., *Bananas, Beaches, & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); S.P. Sturdevant and B. Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: New York Press, 1992); T.D Troung., *Sex, Money, and Morality: the Political Economy of Prostitution and Tourism in Southeast Asia* (London: Zed Books, 1990); L. White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); V. Bullough and B. Bullough, *Women and Prostitution: A Social History* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1987).

30. M. Mies, *Patriarchy & Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 137-42.

31. Mies, *Patriarchy & Accumulation*, p. 137.

associated with their jobs. This violence is bolstered by the sad truth that perpetrators of crimes against sex workers generally receive immunity from prosecution. Prostitutes, as indecent subjects, are commonly seen as 'getting what they deserve' when they are assaulted, raped, murdered, coerced or blackmailed. It was very clear from the onset that this story of Solomon is a negative depiction of justice for prostitutes or even mothers in general, because Solomon uses violence to dispense justice. Scarlot Harlot[32] is emphatic about emphasizing the violence: 'Yeah, it was a bluff. It's still abusive and it's still sick…to turn around and say you wanna push the heroism of a prostitute in a story that really should be focused on this violence…I still say that the overriding situation in this is that it is ridiculous that this king is going to cut the baby in half!'

In the SWOP reading the prostitute identity was lifted up and analyzed as significant. Most of our readers agreed that the women were named as prostitutes for a reason and that we needed to explore that emphasis since popular understanding totally omitted the mothers' identity as prostitutes. Veronica Monet asserted a good explanation echoed by many:

> The reason, in my opinion, that they have to be prostitutes is really clear, because of the fact that you were either with your father or you were with your husband and if you were with your father or your husband you wouldn't even be allowed an audience with the king. You would be back at the home and your father or your husband would speak for you and put the moral quandary before the king. You'd be at home, you wouldn't get to talk anyway.

Thus, the reason the women are identified as prostitutes is to explain why they live together and why no man represents their petition to the king. For Carol Stuart, 'all women that are not invisible are whores'. Since any woman outside the family structure would be seen as a prostitute we shouldn't give this identification too much weight, argued Carol. 'So they are whores! They live together, maybe they are lesbians'. Scarlot asserted that 'we have to assume there was a specific reason that they were named as prostitutes. We have to, it is not just because there were a lot of prostitutes and there happened to be carpenters and prostitutes, factory workers, no? Not just 'cuz there were so many that it didn't matter. So what are they

32. I have written permission to use the all the quotes of the sex workers that participated in my research. The names of those listed are both real and pseudonyms: I use the names given on my signed release forms, some of which are stage names or professional names. For example, Scarlot Harlot is the stage name of Carol Leigh, a published author; see her work *Unrepentant Whore: The Collected Works of Scarlot Harlot.* (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 2004). Other participants in my study have biographies posted on the SWOP website http://www.swop-usa.org with real or pseudonymous names given.

even trying to say in the story, we have to figure that one out'. An attempt also was made to be in sympathy with the 'other mother', not just the one deemed in the story as the real mother who gave up her claim to save the child. The text is ambiguous on this point of true biological identity but very clearly wishes to show us how the most *deserving* mother must behave. The good prostitute mother is pitted against the bad prostitute mother. For this reason we were suspicious as to how they are depicted. In summary, the key themes that went into SWOP's interpretation are: prostitute mothers, their bad experiences with the judicial system, and if/how to empathize with the 'other mother'.

Our SWOP interpretation session of the Solomon story followed on a reading of the Rahab story in Joshua 2 and 6, so the situations of the prostitutes in both texts were comparable to our readers. Robyn Few exclaimed: 'Martyrs; Martyrdom! Women are martyrs. We have Rahab who gives up her whole town to save her family. And now we're talking about another woman who will give up her own fucking child. Martyrs!' Scarlot agreed that this story was, in fact, constructing how good mothers should behave, 'they want mothers to be totally selfless'. A mother who behaved in the expected manner will perhaps get what she wants but a rebellious mother would be totally shunned. This strong expectation that mothers should make sacrifices caused Sweet to wonder if perhaps the first mother knew this and played the game correctly and therefore won: 'if she is knowledgeable about how justice is being doled out up to that point, who's to say she is not being manipulative of what the likely outcome would be?' The traditional reading of this story that praises the Wisdom of Solomon simply cannot see the violence of his courtroom. Veronica summed it up aptly: 'he is allowed to even suggest murdering a baby without being a bad guy but if she calls his bluff she is an evil mother'. Since so many readers can read this story positively as an example of justice, 'even to a pair of disreputable prostitutes'[33] shows how naturalized such abuse of prostitutes is for many people.

It was puzzling that a pair of prostitutes would even go to Solomon's court, especially to a judge known for violence. This is a good reflection of the different levels of desire for justice and systemic corruption. Robyn wondered: 'they went before him with this argument, they took the argument to him. So there was that much trust. I mean, I don't know that I would take my argument to an invading conqueror that I didn't trust'. Kimberlee Cline's first response was 'why aren't they going straight to jail for reporting themselves as prostitutes?' Veronica was stunned by the fact that the prostitutes were even allowed to be mothers because in today's world prostitutes have their children taken

33. R. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), p. 39.

away: 'our government operates as the husband and takes the children away if you're a prostitute. So I actually thought this is a bit of a more progressive culture, isn't it, because the baby gets to stay with its mom, the prostitute was allowed to keep her child'. Another SWOP reader, Shemena Campbell, had experienced custody battles from the point of view of the child being fought over. Shemena's mother fought to keep custody of her children despite the court's declaration of her unfitness due to her mental heath struggles. For this reason Shemena cheered for the mother who refused to give up her claim even though such insistence on justice is often considered selfishly harmful to the child. Another real life parallel that helped everyone to frame the situation of the two mothers was the example of San Francisco rights activist Daisy Anarchy. Daisy Anarchy has been in a long custody battle to get back her child. She has unsuccessfully sued several strip club owners for illegal labour practices. She also has some controversial strategies of activism with which not all SWOP readers could agree. Nonetheless, nearly everyone had to admit that she was a sister in the struggle for sex worker rights. Robyn insisted: 'what about the Daisy Anarchy mothers? Daisy Anarchy is a resistance fighter! OK come on, there is a fight, it is a fight for justice'.

Kimberlee wondered with some feminist scholars if perhaps the text needed the mothers to be prostitutes because of common assumptions that prostitutes are immoral: 'they had to be of ill moral character to be willing to go and steal another woman's baby and replace it with [a dead one]'. Assumptions about the immorality of prostitutes are commonplace. There is a popular assumption—and the Bible is not exempt from this (see Prov. 5.3; 7.5, 21)—that a prostitute's word has questionable or no truth-value and this can have extremely negative consequences. In the case of the San Francisco woman, Erica Baldwin, who was nearly hammered to death by the serial rapist Jack Bokin, not believing the word of prostitutes can have death dealing consequences. Baldwin was attacked while Jack Bokin was out of jail on low bail for allegedly raping two other prostitute women and having a history of sexual violence.[34] His subsequent trial, which I monitored with the US Prostitutes collective (USPROS), dwelled excessively on the credibility of the victims as truth tellers. Another example is the Green River Killer, Gary Leon Ridgeway, who murdered as many as 70 prostitutes over two decades in the Seattle area. Ridgeway had actually been identified very early on by a prostitute.[35] Failure to

34. J.H. Zamora, 'Suspect's Sex Charges Date to Mid-'60s', *San Francisco Examiner* (17 October 1997); and A. Douris, 'The Sounds of Silence', *Alice Magazine* (January 2000).

35. S.D. Reichert, *Chasing the Devil: My Twenty Year Quest to Capture the Green River Killer* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004), p. 131. A pimp also identified the killer in 1983 but this wasn't followed up on by police, p. 103.

believe prostitutes has the consequence that violent criminals get away or are acquitted.

The easy use of violence is also contiguous with the commonplace of prostitutes as liars. The failure of Solomon to use other methods of inquiry to discover the truth is sometimes noted by scholars.[36] Solomon could have cross-examined the women, looked for other unknown witnesses, character witnesses, or he could have looked for physical evidence such as the babies' navels.[37] But Phyllis Bird concludes 'he does not attempt to discern the truth through interrogation—a hopeless approach with habitual liars'.[38] Claudia Camp also reads this assumption with the help of wisdom writing that characterizes harlot speech as deceitful: 'female sexuality that exists outside of male control functions as a metaphor for deceitful speech, and the character of the 'harlot' thus poses the ultimate test of kingly wisdom'.[39]

Due to this problem of being unable to solve the dilemma of one prostitute's word against the other, Solomon is rarely criticized for his violent judicial scare tactics. They are excused as or assumed to be a trick, ruse, trap, or bluff. But since Solomon is the only person in the story wielding the actual power to sever the child in two, the common criticism of the mother who says 'let him be neither mine nor hers, sever' (1 Kgs 3.26) is misplaced. Scholars who point out the violent, justice betraying behaviour of Solomon's sword, as a travesty of his life protecting role, get closest to validating the experience of today's prostitute women who seek justice.[40] According to Gina Hens Piazza, Solomon's sword 'blackmails motherhood'.[41] For sex workers currently demanding justice, such violence of the legal system is the main problem they wish to rectify. Many re-experience violence when coerced into well-meaning but ill-conceived 'rehabilitation' programs instead of jail time. The institutional threat of losing custody is frequently used to blackmail the motherhood of prostitutes, and poor women in general, to coerce certain behaviours demanded

36. G. Hens-Piazza, *Of Methods, Monarchs, and Meanings: a Sociorhetorical Approach to Exegesis* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), p. 147 and Lasine 'The Riddle of Solomon's Judgment', pp. 63-66.

37. If the babies were born several days apart, the degree of healing where the umbilical cord was severed would indicate relative age.

38. Bird, 'Harlot as Heroine', p. 183.

39. C. Camp, '1 and 2 Kings', in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C. Newsom and S. Ringe; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 96-109 (100).

40. Hens-Piazza, *Of Methods, Monarchs, and Meanings*, p. 145, 'a sword courts an ambiguous meaning' and Lasine, 'The Riddle of Solomon's Judgment', p. 66 and p. 79 n. 6, discusses the possible travesty of the sword symbolism, but forgives all because Solomon is 'just pretending'.

41. Hens-Piazza, *Of Methods, Monarchs, and Meaning*, p. 153.

by the state. The alternative professions that are urged upon arrested prostitutes are the exact same low paying jobs they had before pursuing sex work: generally in factory, private domestic work or the garment industry.

The scholarly feminist reading of biblical prostitution that presupposes that prostitutes are liars was ultimately rejected as harmful by SWOP readers. This stereotype is extremely dangerous to the health of prostitutes and needs to be avoided by feminist biblical scholars. When I raised the issue, Carol Stuart immediately reacted strongly: 'That's awful, that's awful. No, that's horseshit. Is this Melissa Farley? Horseshit!' When I immediately explain that the biblical scholars don't say this *is true* but note that the text of Proverbs does depict prostitutes as deceitful, Veronica still wants to know: 'do the feminists think that that is a true assessment of prostitutes? And do they find fault with that supposition is my question?' Melissa Farley is a San Francisco anti-prostitution feminist who does *not* find fault with that presupposition because she vehemently denies the truth value of the words of SWOP rights activists. Farley argues that all prostitution is inherently abusive and argues that SWOP activists must suffer from false consciousness or be in the employ of pimps if they deny their victim status and demand rights rather than rescue.[42] Feminist biblical scholars perhaps need to be more explicit about what theory of prostitution they operate with since it is such a controversial issue

42. Prostitutes' rights activists have also complained about Farley's research methodology which they say has often distorted the views of sex workers who participate in her studies, in other words, they claim that her research is unethical. One activist reports that 'Melissa interviewed prostitutes that our friends in South Africa—SWEAT—helped recruit and Melissa was dishonest in what she told the outreach project and when the findings came out (they were told she did participatory research and they would be able to comment on her analysis, but were not given that opportunity) they felt like she totally misstated what they had said'. See Melissa Farley's website at http://www.prostitutionresearch.com and a book she recently edited *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress* (New York: Haworth Press, 2003) for a theory of prostitution that currently is influencing lawmakers worldwide to create more stringent legal penalties for the sex industry. For example in the US, the new 'end demand' amendments of the 2005 reauthorization of TVPA or Trafficking Victims Protection Act. These amendments have created new felony penalties for prostitutes who cross interstate borders within the US because this action is now defined as 'trafficking'. For more information from a sex worker rights perspective go to: http://www.bestpracticespolicy.org/policyupdate.html. Many other countries such as Finland, UK, and South Korea are currently enacting or proposing similar increases in criminalization. Rights activists are opposed to more criminalizatition and find it harmful to prostitutes and even to the task of combating trafficking and child prostitution which are already illegal for other reasons, i.e. child abuse and slavery are different crimes.

among feminists. Many seem to operate with an implicit anti-prostitution framework without knowing how contested this stance is by sex worker activists.

A materialist reading which includes prostitution as part of the economy and gendered division of labour is favoured by SWOP readers. Thus, a reading such as that by David Jobling, analyzing the political economy of Solomon's reign should include sex work. Sex workers assert that 'prostitution is a job that a lot of women get into because they are starving, because they have to feed their families and take care of it', as Robyn puts it. Or, according to Gayle: 'What else can they do to make money and to support their family? Usually they are single mothers and they have kids and they are women of colour. So what are they gonna do except a regular job pays 'em $10 an hour 'cuz they don't have the education. That is the crime'. To be rehabilitated into the previous situation of non-living wages which so many mothers are rejecting by entering the sex industry, is, quite frankly, ridiculous. Unfortunately, it is a consequence of viewing prostitution as a moral problem and not a political economy problem. Rights activists want the economic contextualization of prostitution front and centre in all theorizing and policy making about prostitution.

Conclusion

A sex worker standpoint exposes the corrupt and violent nature of Solomon's court. This is invisible even to many liberation oriented biblical scholars. Prostitutes' lack of equal access to a justice system is also not generally apparent to most people in our own culture. Thus SWOP members uncover this institutional injustice in both contexts. Acceptance of this state of affairs hinges on common assumptions that only sexually 'decent' or 'respectable' women are worthy of justice or have a right to resist violence. What I have come to see is that prostitutes' rights activists actually have an image problem similar to the unpopular 'other mother' who won't give up her justice claim. The mother who gives in, who vacates her claim to custody for the sake of the child is much more palatable in a feminist politics that sees prostitutes as victims. Shamelessly demanding rights controverts that victim image and it is at that point that many withdraw support for the plight of prostitute mothers. Damienne sums it up this way: 'That whole thing of like, if you're a victim then we feel sorry for you, we need to get you out of this work, then you will be OK and you shouldn't be criminalized, but if you're somebody who likes it, and you're fine with it, and don't want to quit, and succumb to their idea of who they think you should be, then you're an evil, fallen, horrible person'. A conventional religious morality of sexual 'decency' feeds into this state of affairs.

Making visible the systemic economic circumstances that make prostitution a viable option for so many mothers, either in the time of Solomon or now, is also a key issue for rights activists. SWOP activists object to the implicitly 'decent' understanding of motherhood in Solomon's riddle offered by Stuart Lasine and many feminist readers. What prostitutes urge us to see is that if the exploitation is to end, sexual decency *and* the economic system it supports needs to be questioned. Viewing the riddle of Solomon as a parody of justice is a step in this direction.

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The Markan / Marxist Struggle for the Household: Juliet Mitchell and the Challenge to Patriarchal / Familial Ideology[1]

Alan H. Cadwallader

Frederick Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* provided the starting point for a major reconsideration of the role of family in the oppression of women. Juliet Mitchell has been formative in extending his Marxist critique from a feminist perspective, especially utilizing the critique of ideology by Louis Althusser. Across four decades, she has rigorously analysed the ideological continuities that dominate the conception of a woman's place in the world through various historical modes of production. The proposal of this paper is to allow a Marxist critique of the family to begin the analysis of a formative text of the second testament (Mk 10.1-31) and then to demonstrate how Juliet Mitchell's portfolio of work modifies such a critique by a greater accent on the perspective of women and the pervasiveness of the ideology/ies of patriarchy. Considerable gains can be extracted from Mark's text when such theoretical analyses are applied but there are a number of caveats that the analyses place on both the text and its interpretation.

Establishing a Susceptibility to Marxist Analysis

'The first class opposition coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex'. So wrote Frederick Engels in 1884,[2] in the first extended application of the principles of historical materialism to the questions of the family, the household and the experience of women. At least four significant recognitions were made in this primary 'Marxist' analysis:

1. I am grateful to those who commented on an early draft of this essay, especially Phillip Tolliday, Jessica and Robyn Cadwallader.

2. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972), p. 129.

1. the material reality of labour of the household
2. historical shifts in the structure and understanding of family in relation to developments in production
3. the key role of these familial structures and understandings as reinforcements of ideological supports for the oppression arising from the divisions of labour in both domestic (man and woman) and public work (controller of the means of production and the producer alienated from the product) and
4. the fundamental propensity for contradictions to arise within the structure and ideology of 'the family' and 'the household', especially in direct correlation to shifts in economic conditions of productivity and in the political organization associated with those conditions.

Even this schematized rendition of the first systematic critique of the family in Marxist thought challenges any reiteration of consent to the sentimental renditions of late Victorian England.[3] More particularly, it directly confronts the primary ideological signifier of such renditions: the writings of the second testament. The function of these writings as an ideological signifier has continued with increased potency[4] even as global capitalism and bio-technocratic interventions have witnessed and fostered a substantial reconfiguration of primary relationships between human beings.[5]

This Marxist challenge operates at all levels of the engagement with an ancient text—the historical influences spawning the text's narrative, the narrative itself, its appropriation as an ideological signifier (primarily for ecclesial purposes), and its dialectical relationship with a contemporary commentator.[6] The occasional recognition that families and households are substantially varied across a two-millennial-period[7] is nothing more

3. R.R. Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (London: SCM Press, 2001), pp. 103-105.

4. As examples from a plethora, see D. Jacobs-Malina, *Beyond Patriarchy: The Images of Family in Jesus* (NY & Malwah: Paulist Press, 1993); J.D.G. Dunn, 'The Rules in the New Testament', in *The Family in Theological Perspective* (ed. S.C. Barton; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 43-63.

5. For a critique of the Australian privileging of the traditional family in political discourse, see especially M. Maddox, *God under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005).

6. F. Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 5-6; A. Cadwallader, '"In Go(l)d We Trust": Literary and Economic Currency Exchange in the Debate over Caesar's Coin (Mark 12.13-17)', *BibInt* 14.5 (2006), pp. 486-507 (492-96).

7. J. Francis, 'Children and Childhood in the New Testament', in *The Family in Theological Perspective* (ed. S.C. Barton; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 65-85 (85);

than Marx himself curtly noted.[8] Precisely such a recognition tacitly admits that a Marxist methodology validly interrogates ancient texts for both historical and ideological analysis.[9]

An initial Marxist encounter with second testament's references to family and household is alert to evidence of conflict, whether as a result of changes in modes of production or in the multitude of tensions arising between groups (whether kinship or class-based) in society. A sympathetic or consensual reading of Mark's gospel may comply with its *narrative* strategy of opposing the household to the temple/synagogue either from a sociological[10] or a literary-structuralist perspective.[11] Another consensual reading sees references to the household in the Pauline corpus as revealing a heavily muted conflictual stance to the imperial ideology of household either by accommodation or self-definition.[12] The result in *both* instances of consensual reading is merely to reinscribe 'the illusion of that epoch',[13] given that religious competition is an acceptable scramble for and under imperial benefaction,[14] even as it betrays the existence of conflict arising in the prevailing structure of economic relations that emanate from a despotic hub.

A *non-consensual* recognition of conflict demands reference to the larger eco-political framework that generates and manages conflict through competition between various groups for control of goods, their production and the symbolics of power and through subjection of those who are restrained from the means of entering such competition. Thus, for example, it takes seriously the topographical reference in Mk 10.1—Judea and the Transjordan—as loading political significance for the passage that

M.F. Trainor, *The Quest for Home: The Household in Mark's Community* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), p. 65; but see P.T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 408.

8. K. Marx., *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling; ed. F. Engels; London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971 [1867]), I, p. 460.

9. G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (London: Duckworth, 1981); P.W. Rose, *Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

10. J.Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

11. E.S. Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

12. D. Horrell, 'Leadership Patterns and the Development of Ideology in Early Christianity', *Soc Rel* 58 (1997), pp. 323-41; O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, pp. 406-409.

13. So Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, in *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (ed. L.S. Feuer; London: Fontana, 1969), p. 300.

14. S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 126-32.

follows. The reference is a narrative clue that coincides without equating with the application of Marxist literary theory that generally refuses any atemporalizing of a text's content.[15] As Fernando Belo noted long before the theoretical development of spatial materialistic analysis, 'the *site of a reading*…is decisive in Mark'.[16] This is to be expected, given that the subjugation of place to space is a pre-eminent characteristic of imperial control.[17] As the second-century sycophant, Aristides, orated in Rome, 'You have measured out the whole earth, spanned rivers with bridges of different kinds, pierced through mountains to lay roads, established post stations in uninhabited areas and everywhere else introduced a cultivated and ordered way of life' (*Rom. Or.* 101). Herod Antipas, like his father, was only too eager to emulate and foster this imperial practice in Galilee and Peraea.[18] A 'subasiatic social formation'[19] that retained a measure of kinship structures in social organization, was becoming impressed into the service of accelerated centralization, urbanization and concentration of (absentee) land ownership. The Transjordan, as elsewhere, was swept into Antipas's mimesis of imperial practice and symbolics.

Interpretative Structures as Ideological Obfuscation

The opening of Mark 10 is regularly discounted by a structural isolation of the verse in the segmentation of Greek editions, translations and synopses, as well as regular commentary that commences with 10.2.[20] Format therefore pre-determines a reading of the subsequent passage as dominical regulation 'telling people how to behave in some of the most important decisions of their lives, to censure and to commend'.[21]

David Parker exposes the ecclesiastical stake in cultivating the mystique of a single authoritative text governing human relationships, family

15. Rose, *Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth*, pp. 28-29.

16. Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 4-5, his emphasis.

17. Cadwallader, '"In Go(l)d We Trust"', pp. 497-501.

18. See M. Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of* Jesus (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 2000), p. 117.

19. Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*, p. 5.

20. For example, R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 529, 534-35; D.C. Alison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 52; even Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 168-69; R.A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: WJKP, 2001), pp. 187-88; and K.E. Corley, 'Slaves, Servants and Prostitutes: Gender and Social Class in Mark', in *A Feminist Companion to Mark* (ed. A-J. Levine with M. Blickenstaff; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 191-221 (216).

21. D. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 91.

and household: 'The quest for a Law in the teaching of Jesus cannot be pursued in the face of the evidence'.[22] That evidence—synoptic differences and manifold variations in manuscripts—must be sidelined in order to achieve a governing edict.

Occasionally there is an effort to wallpaper over ecclesiastical legalese by situating the divorce section (10.2-12) between the tradition about the little ones (9.42-50) or the subversion of greatness (9.33-37) and the children of 10.13-16.[23] Sympathy is thereby manipulated by highlighting the cost (of divorce) to children. Ann Loades criticizes such callous use of injured children as an instrument to think with by those anxious to regulate the breadth of sexual expression amongst adults: 'how much concern about it [injured childhood] is an oblique way of expressing acute dis-ease about adult sexual relationships in our societies rather than an expression of deep and genuine concern for children?'[24] Significantly, the longest passage—confronting proprietorial issues (10.17-31)—is thereby distanced from the preceding household relationships and made secondary in importance to and distinct from a reified emotional stability of the preserved family unit.

The attempts to convert 10.2ff. into dehistoricized and transtemporal prescriptions wilfully veil the church's own Molech history of utilizing children for its own interests[25] and are only ideologically achievable by ignoring 10.1. The *kai ekeithen anastas erchetai* that opens 10.1 clearly marks a break from the previous section (as, similarly, Mk 1.35, 7.24), along with the typographical marker *eis ta oria…*[26] Verse 1 governs a section that is only finally concluded with the third passion prediction in 10.32-34.

22. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, p. 92. Parker however then moves to a consensual position by arguing that whilst Jesus bequeathed no law, he did offer 'a tradition whose meaning had to be kept alive by reflection and reinterpretation' (p. 93). Although this 'tradition' has no singular or original form according to his preceding argument, its various manifestations become hermetically sealed from each other in their development rather than testifying to on-going conflicts *within* 'the church' and *between* churches over the ordering of marriage and divorce (with its deliberately obscured implications for the control of the lives of specific men and women).

23. Jacobs-Malina, *Beyond Patriarchy*, pp. 26-28; Trainor, *The Quest for Home*, p. 149; C. Myers, *et al.*, *'Say to this Mountain': Mark's Story of Discipleship* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 116-20.

24. A. Loades, 'Dympna Revisited: Thinking About the Sexual Abuse of Children', in *The Family: In Theological Perspective* (ed. S. Barton; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 253-72 (262).

25. J. Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); M.S. Bergmann, *In the Shadow of Moloch: The Sacrifice of Children and Its Impact on Western Religions* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1992).

26. V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn, 1966),

Spatial and Temporal Limitations on Meaning

The moment that the spatial setting of the Transjordan is made the contextual determinant for what follows, the teaching of Jesus on marriage, adultery and divorce becomes *contingent* in the narrative as well as *fluid* in its subsequent transmission history. The testing question of the Pharisees (10.2) occurs *within* the geo-political space of John (Mk 1.9). This was the site of John the Baptist's challenge to the ruling class' use of marriage and divorce to promote their own hegemonic ambitions (6.17-18). The ancient conjunction of family and state structures, one the microcosm and integral sinew of the other (Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.2; Callicratidas 106.1-10; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.201-202) manifests its sinister edge in the execution of John (6.19-28). The same end was plotted for Jesus.

Because most commentaries marginalize the spatial ordering, they flounder in their efforts to explain how the Pharisees' question can be a trial (10.2). Robert Gundry exemplifies the impasse of understanding: 'Mark does not specify the difficulty which makes the question testing'.[27] Once it is recognized that 'Spatial structure is not…merely the arena within which class conflicts express themselves but also the domain within which—and, in part, through which—class relations are constituted'[28] the danger to Jesus in the light of narrative precursors about the Transjordan (Mk 1.5, 9, 14; 6.17-29) becomes clear.[29] The desire to turn Jesus' strategic contestation into a divine regulation (even Horsley pleads for a 'covenant charter'[30]) dissipates the force of the testing and anachronistically collaborates with the Pharisees' veiled efforts to secure a favourable position within the Herodian circle (cf. 3.6; 12.13). Moreover, it completely fails to admit the political significance of the institution of marriage to the state, both in terms of the restricted control of the means of production reproduced in household relations and the ideological reinforcement of subservience

p. 416; J.G. Cook, *The Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark: A Linguistic Approach* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 159-60, 237.

27. Gundry, *Mark*, p. 529 (cf. 536).

28. D. Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography* (London: Hutchison, 1978), p. 120.

29. There may be some recognition by early manuscript scribes of the Herodian connections of this passage. In some manuscripts, verses 11 and 12 are inverted, seemingly conscious, according to Birdsall, of Herodias' initiation of a divorce from her first husband (not Philip the tetrarch as Mk 6.17 states). This qualifies Parker's comments on this inversion (Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, p. 78), without going as far as suggesting this might be the 'original' reading (J. Birdsall, 'The Western Text in the Second Century', in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century* (ed. W. Peterson; Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 3-17 (15-16), following in part Burkitt).

30. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, pp. 186-87.

on which various modes of production rely to sustain and mystify that control.

Jesus' abrogation of the naturalist claims for marriage (by reference to Gen. 1.27 in combination with Gen. 2.24) provides, *given the agonistic context* (*peirazo*, v. 2), no creational endorsement of monogamy,[31] heterosexuality or infra-marital containment of sexuality. Rather it is a brilliant tactical theft of the key element of state and ecclesial control—the claim to a foundation in nature and divine providence (so also, verse 9).[32]

When Jesus swings in the Markan narrative from an *Urzeit* defence to an *Endzeit* repudiation of marriage (Mk 12.25), the temporal and specific manoeuvres necessary to, and inextricably part of, a political movement are manifest.[33] The effort to harmonize the two passages as a recapitulation of 'trinitarian' hierarchy[34] or as 'heterosexual utopianism'[35] fails to allow sufficiently (if at all) for the dialectic involved. The two passages cannot sustain an explanation based on a succession of eras given that *both* Jesus traditions address their contemporary debates (cf. the extrapolation in

31. Donahue and Harrington claim that Jewish polygamy was rare by the first century (J.R. Donahue and D.J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (*Sacra Pagina*) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 296; perhaps following P. Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, 7 vols. (Gateshead: Judaica Press, 1990), III, p. 19). This cannot be sustained in the light of the Babatha papers and their significance (J.J. Collins, 'Marriage, Divorce and Family in the Second Temple Period', in *Families in Ancient Israel* [ed. L. Perdue, J. Blenkinsopp and C. Meyer; Louisville, KY: WJKP, 1997], pp. 104-62 [107-109, 121-22]). Moreover, Jesus' use of Gen. 1.27 in Mk 10.6 is interpreted in the exposé of aristocratic marital machinations as reinforcing the strength not the membership of the union (10.9); in this application as in the context of usage, the Genesis appropriation is quite different from that in the Damascus Document, which does promote monogamy (C. Wassen, *Women in the Damascus Document* [Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2005], p. 116).

32. On the naturalist fallacy, see A. Cadwallader, 'When a Woman is a Dog: Ancient and Modern Ethology meet the Syrophoenician Women', *Bible and Critical Theory* 1.4 (2005), pp. 1-35.

33. Sean Freyne construes the Jesus' movement as part of the competition of values 'within the social world of Antipas' Galilee' (S. Freyne, 'Herodian Economics in Galilee: Searching for a suitable model', in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific studies of the New Testament in its context* (ed. P. Esler; London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 23-46 [45]). When this is turned into a challenge-riposte episode in an honour-shame society, it belies such a construction to reinscribe divine perpetuity to Jesus' response. B.J. Malina and R.L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1992), p. 240; Alison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 52, 210.

34. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, p. 408.

35. E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (NY: Crossroad, 1983), pp. 143-44; but see E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York and London: Continuum, 2000), pp. 96-97. The phrase comes from K. Soper, 'Heterosexual Utopianism', *Radical Philosophy* 69 (1995), pp. 5-15.

Lk. 20.35 of the *present* implications of non-marriage from 'that' age of resurrection). Likewise, the attempt to turn creation into eschatological redemption[36] flounders in the face of the final termination of marital contracting.

Contingent Political Pronouncements Not Dominical Absolutes

The extrapolation of the response 'in the house' (v. 10) to include divorce instigated by both *woman* and man signals a further contradiction that is crucial to both historical and ideological analysis. Generally, commentators on the gospel of Mark have sourced v. 12 (a woman initiating divorce) to a Roman legal setting. They do not recognize the internal contradiction that arises in the combined affirmation of 'the positive ideal of marriage put forward by Jesus' and Markan redaction. Regardless of whether v. 12 be regarded as a later Roman-provenanced reinforcement of Jesus' Jewish-provincial pronouncement or as a recognition of the equality of man and woman in marriage,[37] the supposed absoluteness of Jesus' supposed ruling becomes extended and, at that moment, the dominical is manifestly qualified. My point simply highlights the obvious, viz. that the gospel of Mark is inscribed later than the events the narrative surface portrays. Accordingly, if one accepts this standard line of biblical commentators, tensions have arisen at a later period as well as in the period grounding the narrative. These conflicts are not merely with forces impinging upon the church, but controversies that are heaving *inside* the church and between ecclesial communities. The *chreia* form of the saying in vv. 11-12[38] reflects a conflictual setting rather than a settled covenant replacement.[39]

Commentators who argue for the impact of a later Roman legal context both on church practice and on the redaction of Jesus traditions, do acknowledge that divorce was probably initiated by Herodias according to Roman law—recalling Mk 6.17-18 and embellishing the detail from other sources (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.136). One might understand that in the desire to generalize the application of vv. 11-12, there is some gain in claiming an extension of the prohibition on divorce to include women's instigation, so giving Christians a 'new and rigorous attitude' to be contrasted with

36. C.D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime and Punishment* (Grand Rapids, MI; London: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 17.

37. See generally E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), p. 100; Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, pp. 295-96.

38. So B. Witherington, III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 274.

39. *Contra* Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, p. 134.

'the sexually permissive world of Rome'.[40] One can also perceive here the use of the text as an ideological signifier subtly manipulated by the 'clerisy'[41] to outlaw unacceptable relativizing interpretations. Josephus's repeated comments on the Herodian women's availing themselves of divorce—'not in accordance with the laws of the Jews' (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.136), 'commingling the ways of the fathers' (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.259)[42]—is then turned to general prescriptive advantage in the interpretation of the Markan passage; that is, women are brought into explicit mention in order to advance an artificial construction of an injunction.

The failure of Herodias and Salome to follow the 'law of the father' will be expanded below in an examination of the sexual politics of the household. Here the point is more traditionally Marxist in the recognition of Jesus' political critique: this divorce was a *class*, not a gender privilege.[43] The Herodians' use of Roman law for their household arrangements quite simply particularized their acquiescence and complicity in imperial politics, with all its religio-symbolic expropriation of the household as its base unit of power.[44] As sound a scholar as C.K. Barrett has affirmed, 'Jesus had left his followers with, in the ordinary sense of the terms, no dogmatics, no code of ethics, no church order and no liturgy'.[45] What we *can* recognize is a voice outside the imperial clique who has identified the marital and familial control exercised by the Roman *paterfamilias* and the negotiation to advantage by those who endorse that law.

40. Best, *Following Jesus*, pp. 100-101.

41. E. Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 19-20, 122, 205. The term 'clerisy' is intended by Gellner to designate more than clergy, though retaining the hint of religiosity in the manufacture of literary justifications for concentrated power.

42. The language deployed by Josephus here bears striking parallels to the language given to the Pharisees in Mt. 12.2 (tightened from Mk 2.24, Lk. 6.2) and may reflect Josephus' background religious training. However, its use in his apologetic history probably has the rhetorical effect of delivering an honorific claim not only to Jewish antiquity but to conservative élite Roman ideals.

43. Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*, p. 169. The spillage of a more liberal access to divorce (Ilan, T., 'Notes and Observations on a Newly Published Divorce Bill from the Judaean Desert', *HTR* 89 (1996), pp. 195-202) does not preclude the observation—it merely confirms the advance of Roman-sponsored practice amongst classes where divorce was an economically viable/strategic choice. The stratification of marriage according to class is clear in *mKiddushin* 4.1, 3.

44. J.D. Crossan and J.L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), p. 257.

45. C.K. Barrett, *Paul: An Introduction to his Thought* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), p. 22.

Multiple Contests over the Household

Jesus' voice confronts marriage as the domestic symbol of imperial power, promulgated by numismatic propaganda, judicial pronouncement and mimetic adoption by compliant citizens. Divorce, initiated by imperial subjects, does not necessarily weaken the hold of marriage; it may in fact perpetuate the military and economic complex of the state, just as Josephus admits of Salome in her divorce of Costobarus: 'out of loyalty to Herod' the Great (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.260). Divorce, just like monogamy, was being used to preserve, even aggregate property and perpetuate national security.[46] Hence divorce and marriage are correlated instruments for the preservation of property. This is manifest in the concentration on property matters for both marriage and divorce in the Mishnah (see especially *m. Ketubot*) as also in the *Lex Julia et Poppaea*,[47] both frequently disadvantaging (while proclaiming concern for) women.[48]

Jesus' additional comment to the disciples 'in the house' displays a marked prudence—saving the most radical criticism until the group is enclosed. The tactical need for resistant space[49] stakes a claim for the local household against the vulpine accretions of Herodian accommodation to the all-consuming imperial household-state. This is frequently forgotten in the consensual analyses mentioned previously. Precisely because the house(hold) was the most fraught point in the imperial control of space, it becomes the focus of the most uncompromising claim of imperial symbolics. The metonymous 'house' is empire; the literal house becomes the point of great anxiety and great claim. This is why the continued emphasis on the house by the evangelist indicates ongoing conflicts in which the critical factor is the empire. But it also points to ongoing struggles over the negotiation of the ideology of the house within Christian communities. This evangelist provides one of the more resistant alternatives (see below).

The disciples take on the expression of a *Christian* reaction to this alternative household (v. 13); that is, those who follow Jesus are exposed as conflicting with the temporal praxis of the Markan Jesus. Their behaviour *in the house* in requiring obedient submission (*epitimao*)[50] is mimetic of

46. J. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), p. 227; cf. J. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 79, 120.

47. E.M. Lassen, 'The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor', in *Constructing Early Christian Families* (ed. H. Moxnes; London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 103-20 (107-108).

48. Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 136.

49. R.A. Horsley (ed.), *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul* (Semeia 48; Atlanta: SBL, 2004), p. 10.

50. The referents of the rebuke (*autois*) are not clear, just as those bringing (*prospherô*)

imperial conceptions. It is repudiated in the text (v. 14), but it seems clear that it was one model being promulgated by first-century Christians.

Children and the Counter-Imperial Household

At least there is a *possibility* of a space where children are not subsumed to imperial interests that wanted a labour force, a guarantee of succession of familial property and, as a key constituent of the family unit, 'a highly controllable paradigmatic form for every social institution'.[51] Horsley's metaphorical treatment of children as community members dangerously reinscribes imperial attitudes and erases the most vulnerable and least textualized members of ancient society. His assertion, that ' "Childhood" is an invention of modern Western society. Childhood had no social reality before',[52] conflicts with the evidence of social historians of the period.[53] More significantly, it deflects attention from the powerlessness and lack of secure space for actual children at the hands of power-brokers.

A further intertextual encounter with the death of John the Baptist, where a child figures prominently in the story, indicates the extent of control that the Herodian household asserted. The (step)-daughter becomes a mere pawn in the sexualized political games of both (step)-father and mother.[54] The Markan Jesus' actions of blessing and re-aligning the status of children within a vision of contra-imperial commonweal[55] thus become a praxis element in the contest over the household. The disobedience of children to parental control was one of the charges Celsus laid against Christians (*apud* Origen, *Contra Celsum* 352). Apparently the challenge over the agency of children survived for some time. It would revive later still: 'Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents?', asked Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*,[56] recognizing that children had become not merely slaves, but possessions (cf. Mk 10.29). 'To this crime, we plead guilty'.

the children are unspecified. Matthew accentuates the latter by turning the verb into the passive (Mt. 19.13).

51. D. Cooper, *The Death of the Family* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), p. 6.

52. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, p. 189.

53. T. Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); M. Golden, *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

54. All the 'evil things' exacted by Herod Antipas (Lk. 3.19) included the procuring of his step-daughter before the *protoi*, the leading *men* of Galilee, in order to secure his power ('even half my kingdom', Mk 6.23) against the threat of the Nabatean king, Aratus IV because of Herod's repudiation of his first wife, Aratus' daughter.

55. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation,* pp. 168-74.

56. Feuer (ed.), *Marx and Engels*, p. 66.

Marital and Household Morality as the Protection of Property

The radical critique reaches a climax in 10.17-31 with the exposure of the ideology that protects and justifies property accumulation and the control of production. The return to the external realm (v. 17) implies that there is a direct connection between the dispute over marriage and over property, at least in terms of the space where such debates occurred. The stock character type of a rich (young) man was often used to deliver different teachings, frequently as a wry demonstration of the link between nobility and wealth (see Athenaeus, *Deip.* 159c; Lk. 16.19-31). Here, a more sinister tone is set. The gap between rich and poor identified in v. 21 provides the barest glimpse that 'all we have now are ants and camels' (Lucian, *Sat. ep.* 1.19).[57]

More importantly in this ideology, wealth is linked *not* with the immoral life (as in Mal. 3.5)[58] but with morality. The observance of the commandments *and* the holding of many possessions are tied together as a mutually reinforcing paradigm—religion has provided the privileged with the social solution to the contradiction between wealth concentration and the expansion of the poor.[59] It delivers neither compensation for the thwarted aspirations or suffering of lower classes,[60] nor a prophetic denunciation against the rich.[61] The ideological focus that justifies and mystifies the aggregation of wealth is the decalogue—a transparent example of how readily biblical texts become ideological signifiers of eco-political privilege, indeed are alluringly susceptible to such usage. It replays the avowal of adherence to the law of Moses made by the Pharisees (v. 4).

The mystification is so powerfully achieved that the displacement of the commandment against coveting by the alien element 'defrauding' (from Sir. 4.1?) is not recognized by the rich man as qualifying in any way his self-assessment. He considers that his observance has been meticulous from the time he moved from the status of a child to that of an adult (v. 20), even as it signals that he has advanced beyond the need to covet/lust.[62]

57. Jesus' use of camel in v.25 may be drawing on a common bestial representation of the rich, rather than the cosy image of a 'beast of burden' (Gundry, *Mark*, p. 556). Lucian of Samosata explicitly identifies his camel-ant inequality as a *paroimia*.

58. In the ancient world, the type of wealth-immorality was Sardanapalus, the legendary Syrian king of Nineveh (Aristotle *Nic. Eth.* 1095b). Significantly, his immorality was frequently inlaid with intimations of effeminacy (Athenaeus *Deip.* 335f-336b, 528e-f). There are traces of this typology in the second testament (Mt. 11.8, Lk. 16.19 where, in P^{75} the rich man is named as *Neuês*=Nineveh).

59. Cf Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, pp. 330-31.

60. Cf R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 34-39.

61. *Contra* Horsley (ed.), *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 68.

62. The offence of the substitution was too great for Matthew and Luke to bear.

Whatever may be the accuracy of social-scientific commentators that the ancient world operated on the basis of 'limited good' (and I suspect this is no more than re-inscribing ancient ideology that rationalized privilege—e.g. Cicero, *Resp.* 3.37-41), those in power felt no qualms at encroaching on the lands, houses and persons of others, *as of right*. Power and position guaranteed the control of the 'limited good'. Moral observance prevented any self-critique or –examination, because it deflected from the issues of wealth accumulation and justified the rightness of policing that accumulation. Dom Crossan and Jonathon Reed have sharply carved the links between espoused morality and practiced violence/militarism in the imperial setting.[63] Here the conjunction is between morality and property (with militarism lying in the topographical background), a morality that has a familiar articulation in Judaeo-Christian cultural contexts.

The deliberate substitution of defrauding (v. 19) introduces a highly charged critique that will only activate with the call to divest (v. 21). The first-century BCE writing,[64] the *Testament of Asher*, recognized the fundamental affront of ambiguity[65] in the one who, *inter alia*, 'by power and wealth ravages many, and yet in spite of excessive evil, performs the commandments' (*Testament of Asher* 2.8).

The defrauding that the rich man denies is expressly tied to the denial of access for the lower classes, 'the poor', to the products that he controls. The same word in the epistle of James (*apostereo*) exposes something of the possible content of the charge as well as the split mentality that the ideology generates. In James 5.4-5 the economic realities are stated: a landless (land-robbed?) day labourer and skilled husbander are removed from the land of their identity and the products of their toil and further deprived of due compensatory wages.[66] A number of caustic Jesus parables about the payment of day-labourers (Mt. 20.1-16) and the distance of owners from labour (Mt. 25.24//Lk. 19.21), exposes the self-deluding internalization of moral uprightness (reinforced by judicial protection) amongst the wealthy: 'Am I not allowed to …?' (Mt. 20.15; cf. Lk. 17.8-9).

Matthew opted for a reiteration of the general love commandment in Leviticus 19.18 (Mt. 19.19 cf. 22.39). Luke demurred altogether (Lk. 18.20). Gundry's suggestion that it is 'easier to keep from defrauding than to keep from coveting' reflects Western avoidance of the tenor of the whole passage (Gundry, *Mark*, p. 553).

63. Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, pp. 257-69.

64. The date is not secure.

65. On the 'horror of ambiguity' held by Jewish sages, see J.R. Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 60-64, 107-109, 207-209, though note that there it goes to status rather than actions.

66. G. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries* CE (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 151-60.

However, the incisive critique does not establish a 'fundamental religious-ethical tenet'.[67] Rather, the Jesus words directly target the contradiction between economic realities and a moral espousal that is designed to obfuscate those realities as well as to promote the right(eous)ness of repression and deprivation. Accordingly, the supposedly life-giving commandments become participants in the eco-politics of oppression, themselves proprietorial, turning the supposed beneficiaries of the commandments into possessions to be traded (cf. Lk. 18.11-12). As Althusser wrote, 'rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, … actually mean rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of order established by class domination'.[68] Here, Jesus' words to the rich man ruptures the sedating function of ideology.

Jesus' summons to the rich man into a promiscuous letting go (v. 21) fractures the hold of morality as a defence of proprietorial domination and the exclusion of others from the fruit of their own labours. The seeming puzzle comes with the reaction of the disciples who appear to align themselves with the rich man.[69] In a society where there is a wide saturation of a rigid moral defence of property and power (largely because that moral code, even more than existing property and power configurations, is a long-standing inheritance), people themselves become products and pawns in the exchanges that are used to shore up property and power; this is not restricted to slavery. People generally were 'treated as a source of revenue to the Romans' (Josephus, *War* 2.372); the attitude permeated the empire so much that unquestioning mimesis was ubiquitous (cf. Mk 10.42). The licentious abnegation advocated by Jesus (v. 29) addresses material belongings *and* people in a composite list. The divesting of property is not merely an abdication from the system of debt and tax that had reduced the bulk of the population to variegated dependency on the Roman-Herodian economic system and disrupted kinship structures that had been coterminous with limited land-holding. It also denounced the equation of people, indeed members of one's family, with revenue. The *immorality* of such a subversive confrontation will draw the full weight of military reaction ('with persecutions', v. 30). The call to follow, not just Jesus but the gospel (v. 29), challenges the existing paterfamilial hierarchy that seeks to maximize the hold on goods and on people. But it also repudiates the substitution of one *dominus* with another.[70] The vision of

67. *Contra* T.E. Schmidt, *Hostility to Wealth in the Synoptic Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), p. 101.

68. L. Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 6.

69. Schmidt, *Hostility to Wealth in the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 112-13.

70. See T-S.B. Liew, 'Tyranny, Boundary and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark's Gospel', *JSNT* 73 (1999), pp. 7-31.

good news is larger than its principal exponent. This will become crucial for the feminist dimensions of the analysis.

Infra-Christian Conflicts over Household

Few, if any, commentators have attended to the implications of the shared time of writing of gospel and deutero-Pauline texts related to family and household.[71] The gospel of Mark is usually dated to the fall of Jerusalem, that is, around 70 CE. This is, significantly, the approximate date given to the deutero-Pauline writing, the letter to the Colossians.[72] In this latter text, the stabilization of hierarchical relationships in the three-fold pairings within the household, gathered around the *paterfamilias*, is given Christian endorsement (Col. 3.18–4.1). Once the coincidence of texts is established, the tripartite address (marriage, children, property) in Mk 10.1-31 (along with anti-familial sayings retained in the gospels) begins to bear witness to a conflict arising *within* the household not merely in the household's external relations.[73]

This structural unit marked off by the advent of the third passion prediction in 10.32-34 contains:

1. the apparent acknowledgement of the equality of husband-wife relationships (at least as regards divorce, re-marriage and adultery),
2. the inversion of socialization structures and absence of filial obedience with respect to children, and
3. the destabilization of the connection between morality and affluence along with an emphasis on dispossession.

The unit bears an uncanny resemblance to the three standard sections of the *Haustafeln* yet seriously undermines them. Here it is not necessary

71. The briefest suggestion is given in C. Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 266, though this may be directed to an extra-christian critique of the imperial culture of households, developed by W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), pp. 376-93.

72. P. Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary* (trans. S.S. Schatzmann; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), p. 18.

73. It does not matter whether the passage stems from a pre-Markan complex dealing with 'marriage, children, possessions'. Whatever changes may have been made by the evangelist, far from decreasing their coherence as Ernest Best argues (Best, *Following Jesus*, p. 99), only highlight how contentious had become the debates about and in the household. The conservative christian formulation of the *Haustafel* seem to lie behind his comments. Conversely, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's claim that the post-Pauline tradition 'had no impact on the Jesus traditions' needs revision (Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 254).

that there be an exactitude in the formulations or parallels—whether that be in Hellenistic renditions or Christian mimetics. A recognition that 'slaves' were classified, exchanged and summed up as 'possessions' (Rev. 18.12-13; Dio, *Or*. 31.58) answers one objection against the parallel being drawn. Conversely, there is the more allusive version of the code from the Roman poet Horace, rattled off without need for further demonstration: *nuptiae…genus…domos* 'marriage, offspring, property' (Horace, *Od*. 3.6). Certainly, the 'voice of the propertied class' runs through the variations on the household code.[74]

Hence, it is no longer necessary to privilege second-century reaction against the household code, as in the *Acts of Thecla* (see especially chap. 10), nor to dismiss this later repudiation of the code as extra-canonical. The second testament itself canonizes the contradictions, contradictions that attest early Christian efforts to position themselves in resistance or accommodation to the empire.

The Necessity for a Feminist Critique and Extension of Marxist Analysis

This admittedly brief argument has, I hope, made out an *a priori* case for the integrity, if not value, in subjecting the Markan text to Marxist analysis. However, the primary essay of Engels from which I launched has been faulted for its naïve utopian anthropology of a primitive matrilineal society, its failure to recognize patriarchal oppression in proletarian families as also in bourgeois families (though not identical in form and experience), its confusion of production and reproduction and its marginalization of women's experience under the category of family.[75] For some feminist writers, this has warranted the dismissal of Marxist categories from further consideration even dubbing Marx (and perhaps also Freud) as the 'father' from whom any serious feminist theorist needs to be disentangled.[76] Marxist categories become easily criticized by being frozen to (early) capitalist history. Even when Marx is brought into a dialectical relationship with other thinkers (most frequently Freud), the dubbed 'dual systems' is then criticized for a failure to reconcile the two.[77]

74. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 253, quoting E.A. Judge.

75. I. Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to 'Post-Feminism'* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p. 71.

76. R. Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 154-55.

77. E. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A feminist introduction* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), p. 195 n. 7; S. Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 96; cf. V. Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 215.

A succession of Marxist practitioners have affirmed that the self-understanding of dialectical movement is built in to Marxist theory: 'The provisional character of the Marxist explanatory model—its openness to and need for constant revision—must replace the old assertions of privileged access to a single unmediated truth'.[78] This is to be held along with specific praxis responses in light of the (ever-refined) optimum inclusive analysis that can be collectively mustered. The praxis may well be experimental, provisional, even tactical as a non-consensual response to oppression experienced at a particular historical moment and spatial location, notwithstanding that thereby it risks being hijacked by the protean oppression being resisted.[79] Juliet Mitchell has resisted the expurgation of Marx and Freud from feminist theorizing: 'We should ask the feminist questions, but try to come up with some Marxist answers'.[80]

Juliet Mitchell and the Development of Marxist Feminist Critique

Mitchell has remained at the cusp of provisionality not in flight from the apparent universality of women's oppression but as a means of seeking a consciousness that can forge both specific gains and more enduring liberation:

> Both reformists and revolutionaries have to contend with the fact of a class antagonistic society; and feminists must similarly realize that the oppressive social division between men and women, though not a class division, at the very least represents a fissure in the groundplan of human society which must be charted before it can be bridged.[81]

Mitchell's mapping had begun in 1966 with 'Women: The Longest Revolution'—the foundation for her *Woman's Estate* (1971) and *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974). She has continued to affirm the fundamental importance of a woman's relation to production. The evidence did not sustain Engels's anticipation that the move into the work force would be the font of women's liberation from oppression.[82] Rather, a woman's long-standing role in production in the domestic sphere (including biological reproduction constrained as a productive contribution to and maintenance of the hegemonic militarist-economic system) needed to be understood and challenged collectively—collectivity being the seed of liberation

78. Rose, *Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth*, p. 16.

79. J. Mitchell, 'Feminity, Narrative and Psychoanalysis', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (ed. D. Lodge and N. Wood; Harlow: Longman, 2nd edn, 2000), pp. 387-402 (392).

80. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 99.

81. A. Oakley and J. Mitchell, *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1976).

82. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, pp. 104-105.

that work in the oppressive public sphere contained.[83] The mystique of the 'private' needed to be made public.[84]

There were two fundamental breakthroughs in *Woman's Estate*. The first was to recognize that the experience of oppression by women could not be subsumed under the general class dynamics of the public sphere of production. The specifics of oppression for women had to be charted by adding reproduction, sexuality and the socialization of children *to* the mapping of production. This meant a permutation on the standard Marxist analysis. Waged work in the public sphere had to be de-centred and the varieties and amount of work performed by women in the domestic sphere recognized (whether combined with the public labour force and factoring in the class differentials). This volume of work was characteristic for women in Ancient, Oriental, Medieval and Capitalist societies; 'only its form…is in question'.[85]

Secondly, there needed to be a recognition that this labour was divided in such a way as to reinforce the dominance of men, whether by social coercion or the power of custom (which then leads us into a consideration of ideology). This has particular relevance for an understanding of ancient and oriental modes of production, which, especially in the context of kinship relationships that structured ancient family groupings, nevertheless maintained gender differences in work within and without the household. Labour-intensive work such as food preparation and textile production (cf. Lk. 12.27-28; 17.35) demands spatial containment and so a gendered division of labour became spatially signified.[86] Even upper class women who delegated much of the physical work to slaves were still portrayed as spinning the distaff—a signification of their conventional domesticity. When economic necessity required lower class women to work in the fields, even here the sexual dimorphism of labour was replicated.[87] This confirms Mitchell's assessment that the involvement of women in the public work force merely provides the preconditions of liberation; it does not 'erode her oppression in the family'.[88] This was

83. J. Mitchell, 'Juliet Mitchell responds to Nicky Hart', in *Debating Gender, Debating Sexuality* (ed. N.R. Keddie; London and New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 49-51.

84. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, pp. 58-63.

85. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 102.

86. R. Sallares, *The Ecology of the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 83.

87. A. Cadwallader, 'Swords into Ploughshares: The End of War? (Q/Lk 9.62)', in *The Earth Story in the New Testament* (ed. N. Habel and V. Balabanski; London: Sheffield University Press, 2002), pp. 57-75 (60-63).

88. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, pp. 104-106.

because an emancipatory gain in one of the four fundamental structures of women's oppression could be 'offset by a reinforcement of another'.[89]

Reproduction as Production and Ideology

In Mitchell's application of Marxist analysis, reproduction became the complement, 'a sad mimicry' of male production in society[90] and was ideologized as a universal bio-historical fact that equated society and family. The ancient conjunction of household and state is a particularly developed example of this ideology, even as the woman generally is rendered the more powerless socio-economically in effecting the reproduction of the fundamental unit of society. Reproduction fulfilled a role in the means of production by maintaining a constant labour supply.

In the ancient world this had two further extensions in that, right at the time of the gospel's written formulation, the state had flexed its muscle, firstly, to coerce the bearing of children[91] and, secondly, to absorb childbearing into imperial service as a claim to continuity with the past kinship focus where children were a means of securing the continuity of the claim to land. This fundamental contradiction left many children landless and effectively bereft of blood-kin relationships.[92] '(T)he biological product—the child—is treated as if it were a solid product'.[93] Even when the child becomes a street-kid, the formative influence of subjection to the father remains the same. Patriarchy lurks as the dominant ideology, quite capable of withstanding adjustments in the historical mode of production, even as the Marxist feminist commitment resists the notion of an ahistorical universal. At the very minimum, the dialectic means that (once comprehended) patriarchy *can* be displaced or resisted ('smashed'[94]), even without the advance of technology that might render the supposed naturalness of reproduction obsolete. Both the concern of Caesar Augustus to legislate to penalize celibacy and provide material incentives for procreation and the Mishnaic textualization of the male privilege in initiating

89. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 120. Accordingly, the recovery of women's names in 'traditionally male' occupations in the ancient world (see Tregiarri, S., 'Jobs for Women', *AJAH* 1 [1976], pp. 76-104), is no index of emancipation from patriarchy, though a necessary pre-condition for advancing that emancipation today by excepting the dominance of the appeal to a monolithic past.

90. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 108.

91. R.I. Frank, 'Augustus' Legislation on Marriage and Children', *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 8 (1976), pp. 41-52.

92. A. Van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee: Jesus as Child of God* (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 2001).

93. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 109.

94. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 377.

divorce against a growing body of evidence of the actual practice,[95] suggests that tactics of non-technological resistance may have been attempted in the early years of the principate.[96] For Mitchell, this resistance cannot succeed merely as a naturalistic option (whether through individual determination or bio-medical intervention) but must address the psychic reproduction of a patriarchal structure through an understanding of the dominant ideological inheritance.[97]

Marriage and/as Property

Inevitably, the construction of acceptable sexuality into a requisite, procreative, asymmetrical relationship was interwoven with the economic context. It provided a mimetic reinforcement of economic inequality and a dimorphic naturalism that conferred an essentialist stability transcending economic change.[98] The returns were lavish. Even where some provision was made for higher-class women's retention of property this was only a compensatory safeguard designed to preserve economic privilege. Marx's denuding observation that 'Marriage…is incontestably a form of exclusive private property'[99] is not disturbed by a claim that familial structures in first-century Palestine were primarily kinship based.[100] The possessiveness implied in early nuclear-capitalist family structures of provision and dependence simply is modulated into the system of exchange and indebtedness that marked both the economic and the kinship systems of that earlier era.[101]

Similarly, neither monogamy nor polygamy, for women, offer real emancipatory options, even if the supposed sexual equality of the former and supposed sexual freedom of the latter might generate the preconditions where genuine gains in liberation could be achieved by the intentional intervention of women into the course of their own lives.[102] If a class dimension is added to these observations both monogamy and

95. Ilan, 'Notes and Observations'.

96. The sociological explanation of a limited disconnection from patriarchy arising from an inequality in the demographic spread of the sexes remains to be tested (see Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, pp. 101-103).

97. J. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism with a new Introduction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000), p. xvii.

98. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism with a new Introduction*, pp. xviii-xix.

99. Cited in Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 110.

100. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, p. 240.

101. Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*, p. 169; cf Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 111.

102. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, pp. 112-15.

polygamy are only *legitimately* available to those with legal standing[103] and may screen any recognition of the initiative of the lower class (e.g. slaves) for transformation.

Familial socialization as the key weapon of the ideology of the household

The realization that first-century marriage was defined more by kinship exchange than individual contract enables a valuable synthesis of the earlier and later work of Mitchell. She had understood the importance of the mother in the reproduction of the value systems of patriarchy within family structures. The basic instruction of a child was in the fundamental conservative literary forms of Greece and Rome—maxims, proverbs and fables. Women were expected to teach them. Lactation and socialization were regarded as inextricably combined—nature serving culture in perpetuity, with culture demanding that nature remain unchanged,[104] so that gender divisions become inculcated from infancy. Mitchell's later exploration of the dominant socializing psychological myth—the Oedipus theory of Freud—intended to unpick the threads of the ideology that has infused women and children across changes in modes of production. For her, Freudian psychology did not yield a *determinist* mechanism for the reinforcement of the patriarchy spanning public, private and the trans-historical experiences of women. Rather, it was a powerful, indeed (till reified by later Freudians) a subversive, exposé of the ideology shaping the unconscious. Whilst variously acclaimed and defamed for sequestering Freudian analysis for feminism, Mitchell herself was concerned to pursue the possibilities of integrating Marx and Freud, primarily through a critical appropriation of Wilhelm Reich[105] and Louis Althusser's analysis of ideology. The patriarchy structuring the economic system (in various modes of production) was also recognizable as an inherited and imbibed way of living in the world independent of, though related to, that economic system.[106] Mitchell resisted any universal essentialism of patriarchy for, both in economics and ideology, patriarchy is a temporal construction malleable in its manifestations and therefore able to be challenged.[107]

More recently, she has realized that the primary ideology of patriarchy is not merely processed from parent to child but between siblings as

103. C. Osiek and D. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), p. 62; cf. Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 134.

104. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, pp. 115-20.

105. Herbert Marcuse is briefly addressed also but severely critiqued for a subjugation of Freudian psychoanalysis to Marxist economics (Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 410).

106. J. Mitchell, *Siblings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 216.

107. Mitchell, *Siblings*, p. 220.

well[108]—'laterality—one's horizontal, not one's vertical relations…both threaten and confirm one'.[109] This strongly echoes the kinship structures of the ancient world where brothers (though sometimes sisters) are crucial socializing agents of siblings (cf. Mk 6.3) and reinforcing agents of the position and reputation of mothers (cf. Mk 3.32). This has major implications for the construction of egalitarianism as a positive, early Christian, community characteristic. Egalitarianism, whether or not conceivable let alone identifiable in the first century[110] has therefore no *inherent* transformational impact even as a collective entity, but requires constant, political commitment for it to realize emancipatory hopes. It is, in Mitchell's terms, a 'pre-condition'.[111] More specifically, the accent on 'brotherhood' and even 'sisterhood' as a ready alternative to patriarchy needs to be seriously questioned,[112] lest they merely replicate the absent father (cf. Mk 13.12a; Lk. 10.38-42).

A Feminist Critique of/for the Marxist Analysis of Mark 10.1-31

A return to Mark 10, armed with Mitchell's feminist extension to Marxist analysis, raises further critical questions of the text. At the meta-level, there is a refusal to be bound by the gospel's (likely) textual origins in male scriptorial circles.[113] Just as Marx, Engels, Freud and Reich must be subjected to feminist re-appraisal of their inadequate treatment of female experience and presence, so also the question needs to be directed to the presence of women both in the narrative and in the formation of the tactics and commitments of the Christian community of 'Mark'. The jarring reminder that women have been present throughout the narrative journey of the gospel, finally admitted in 15.40-41, demands not only a recanting of a male-centred reading/hearing of the whole text to that point. It

108. Mitchell, *Siblings*.

109. J. Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effect of Sibling Relationships on the Human Condition* (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 2000), pp. 318-19.

110. J.H. Elliott, 'Jesus was not an egalitarian: A Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory', *BTB* 32 (2002), pp. 75-91. The debate constructed by Plutarch (*Mor.* 616b) over the proverb 'Myconos Equality' suggests that a form of (male) egalitarianism was at least conceivable in spite of Elliott's protest (see also Josephus, *War* 2.122, Philo, *Prob.* 76-78). This cannot be developed here, but see E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998) (*inter alia*, the target of Elliott's article).

111. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, pp. 96, 104-105; Mitchell, 'Juliet Mitchell responds to Nicky Hart', p. 49.

112. Mitchell, *Siblings*, pp. 217-18.

113. J. Dewey, 'From Storytelling to Written Text: The Loss of Early Christian Women's Voices', *BTB* 26 (1996), pp. 71-78; J.C. Anderson, 'Feminist Criticism: the Dancing Daughter', in *Mark and Method: New Directions in Biblical Studies* (ed. J.C. Anderson and S.D. Moore; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 103-34 (111).

opens a debate about whether the literary technique of suspension of the appearance of women disciples is itself an androcentric device, one that only introduces women when the situation necessitates it—an authorial decision that familiarly is made by a male (but see Mk 7.25).

I have argued for a Marxist interpretation that the teaching about marriage, divorce, and adultery is a tactical response by Jesus. It occurs within a specific conflict arising from key groups positioning themselves within a developing Asiatic mode of production. Further, the evangelist, by repetition, makes tactical use of Jesus words[114] within a specific conflict arising between competing Christian groups seeking to foster accommodation or resistance to state manipulation of marriage. Mitchell's understanding of the division of labour that occurs within marriage probes the questioner *and* the respondent in the test (10.2). The Herodian context must be exposed further. Here, it is important to note that the narrative's earlier critique of the royal household is focussed on Herod not Herodias or the Herodian set of retainers (Mk 8.15). The manuscripts that do read 'Herodians' in 8.15 may have been influenced by their spectral appearance in 3.6 and 12.13. However, this variant also exonerates Herod by omission/substitution making the flashback of 6.17-29 more pliable to an interpretation that excoriates both mother and young daughter in the story.[115][116] This long-standing interpretation preserves both (step-)father/husband and state authority from critique,[117] a highly successful mystification of patriarchy.

114. Similarly, Paul makes his own use of the Jesuanic tradition in 1 Cor. 7.10-16 (Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, p. 116).

115. The use of *korasion* for the daughter in 6.22, 28 is informed by the application of the same term to the daughter of the synagogue ruler and his wife in 5.41, 42. Based on 5.42b, the age of the dancing daughter was about twelve (5.42b). The response of Herod and the Galilean hegemony can be read as 'satisfied, appeased' (*areskô*), generating a view that the women and daughters of the house are simply there to ameliorate men in the weight of their affairs—'appropriated as sexual objects' (Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 110).

116. Anderson, 'Feminist Criticism'; Bach, A., 'Calling the Shots in Directing Salome's Dance of Death', *Semeia* 74 (1996), pp. 103-26. Ross Kraemer has recently argued that even the better textual reading indicates Mark's determination to have 'Herodias and the daughter bear the greatest responsibility for the death of John' (R.A. Kraemer, 'Implicating Herodias and Her Daughter in the Death of John the Baptizer: A [Christian] Theological Strategy', *JBL* 125 [2006], pp. 321-49 [327]). She takes no account of the Jesuanic judgment of Herod in 8.15, even though such judgment could be explained as a failure to deal with autonomous women (Kraemer, 'Implicating Herodias and Her Daughter', pp. 346-47). My reading underscores Herod's culpability not for an artifice of masculinity but for its elitist-forged deposition of women.

117. But see now A. Smith, 'Tyranny Exposed: Mark's Typological Characterisation of Herod Antipas (Mark 6.14-29)', *Bib Int* 14 (2006), pp. 259-93.

The transfiguration of Jesus' critique of upper class self-serving divorce into general dominical prescription therefore *perpetuates* patriarchal dominance, precisely because it removes from consideration the ameliorating effect of wealth on marital breakdown in the name of 'saving' the wife from destitution. 'Marriage remains a protective institution for women as long as they play no independent role in production, and this protective aspect obscures the degree to which women are exploited within it'. In such an economic framework, each partner in a monogamous marriage cannot but 'treat the other as a possession',[118] or as a 'convenience'.[119]

However, one must ask whether a whiff of Herodian putrefaction has wafted over the Markan text in verses 11 and 12, even in its manifold varieties. In most manuscripts, the offence of adultery is committed by the man *relationally*, that is, 'against her'. However in all but three old Latin manuscripts, the offence of adultery is committed by the woman *absolutely*, that is without reference to 'against him'.[120] Any claim for equality in these verses is flawed. In any case, even with apparent equal access to divorce, the woman was still defined by reference to her husband (cf. 6.17 [an inaccuracy by the evangelist]) whereas a man was defined by his position (5.22; 6.14 [another inaccuracy by the evangelist]). A 'gendered reading' of this section in the context of the division of labour recognizes that the woman who ignores the law of the fathers is condemned either by sublimation to ruling class interests or to passive acceptance of her marital fate because of the fragility of her economic subsistence.

If the quotation(s) of Scripture (vv. 6-8) is denied its function as a tactical removal of claims to the natural order, then the conflict no longer involves a critique of ruling class use of morality in general and marriage in particular to justify its power and property. It simply replaces one law of the father with another—the state is supplanted by God. For some commentators, this is perfectly acceptable: they assert that the separation of morality and marriage from property considerations is the divine intention. This is the ultimate ideological mystification—economic realities and gender divisions are deemed irrelevant. In reality, they impinge on the woman at every turn, whether as guarantor of property inheritance or of the 'honour' of the kinship groups (which ultimately will be measured in economic terms).

All this achieves is that God, through Moses, defines the role of the woman as reproduction, as is clear in the cynical appropriation of the woman's body in Mk 12.18-23. This inevitably privileges heterosexual

118. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 216.
119. Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 134.
120. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, pp. 78-79.

practices, with marriage as the regulating instrument,[121] the production of recognizable heirs as the desired outcome (hence the apocalyptic terror about adultery), and the reinforcement of asymmetrical otherness.[122] Exemplars of alternate relationships of primary meaning, such as the Syrophoenician woman and her daughter (Mk 7.29-30) or Queen Tryphaena who took Thecla 'under her protection and found comfort in her' (chap. 27),[123] are marginalized, once marriage is made dominical.

Moreover, the value of children becomes nothing other than a reproduction of conventional values based on the division of the sexes and the division of labour. Three key breakthroughs come in the section about children (10.13-16) that have the potential to break the shackles of the reproduction-production cycle and the socialization that reinforces patriarchy with women charged with prime tactile responsibility for it. For Halvor Moxnes, the section 'represents a break with the traditional role of children within the family'.[124] Firstly, the children are not defined by sex (nor in 9.36-37), unlike repeated instances elsewhere in the gospel (eg 5.23, 40-42; 6.22; 7.26; 9.17). Secondly, there is a complete absence of specificity in the amorphous subject of verse 13—the children are not defined by reference to a mother or father (cf. 10.46; 15.21; 16.1).[125] If Andries van Aarde is correct, these children have 'impaired' identities leading to their abandonment or destitution.[126] Thirdly, their acceptance *in* the house (there is no shift from the location of v. 10) is not to provide a substitute father[127] so as to reinstitute patriarchy. Rather, it allows the children to be the pinnacle expression of the resistance of Jesus to the state which, with its hold on marriage and morality, inevitably multiplies 'collateral damage' in children.

The child becomes not merely the sign of reception of the *commonweal* of God, but of Jesus and God *themselves* (9.37). The satisfaction of fatherly ambitions (cf. 6.22) is rejected; in fact, an atheism in regard to

121. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, pp. 140-42.

122. Mitchell, 'Juliet Mitchell responds to Nicky Hart', p. 51.

123. On primary meaningful relationships between women as a spectrum on a 'lesbian continuum' see M.R. d'Angelo, 'Women Partners in the New Testament', *JFSR* 6 (1990), pp. 65-86; Cadwallader, 'When a Woman is a Dog'. Both these writers apply the theoretical perspective of Adrienne Rich.

124. H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 34.

125. Imagining the 'vulnerability and helplessness of children' brought by 'peasant women' (Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, p. 243) merely reinscribes sentimental Victorian values in orientalised permutation.

126. Van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee*, pp. 139-48.

127. *Contra* van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee*, p. 148 *et al.*

the patriarchal god who transcendentalizes the state is required.[128] Jesus' 'touch', 'embrace', 'placing hands' and 'blessing' are then all about healing,[129] not the reproduction of paterfamilial hierarchy and guarantee of proprietorial succession.

Mitchell's latest work on the role of siblings in the reproduction of patriarchy[130] requires vv. 29-30 to be read carefully, precisely because it is not mere leaving of father and mother that can immunize against the reproduction of patriarchy. Rather, the release of any claim over reflexive influence from the broad range of embeddings ('object relations') that create identity and perpetuate acceptance of patriarchy means that kinship can become so diffuse that proprietorial concerns about succession (of name, goods and location) evaporate. This is precisely Mitchell's desire: that collectivity becomes virtually a new kinship.[131]

However, the whole project of reading Mark 10 from the Marxist feminist perspective of Juliet Mitchell would be completely undermined if the absence of 'father' in v. 30 is read merely as a utopian rejection of patriarchy,[132] as can surface in feminist commentary.[133] This is because, as Mitchell has so forcefully shown,[134] the Oedipus complex of the *overthrow* of the father is precisely what gives patriarchy its power to retain an ideological integrity that survives structural and economic changes. The removal of the father generates through grief and guilt a reinstatement of the absent father both in the one who replaces him (the son-brother *or a symbolic equivalent*) but also in the puritanical moral codes that are installed as compensatory debt-repayment for that removal and replacement—'bound for life to the law'.[135] In this sense, the turning of Jesus' combative and specifically contextualized words into a new covenantal charter[136] no longer challenges the christianization of the state-ideologized household code but becomes its complementary reinforcement.[137] Indeed, if God is

128. Cadwallader, '"In Go(l)d We Trust"', pp. 503-504.

129. Van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee*, pp. 137-38.

130. Mitchell, *Siblings*.

131. Mitchell, *Woman's Estate*, p. 182; Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 414.

132. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, pp. 174, 398.

133. For example, Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 147-48; E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (London: SCM Press, 1993), p. 220.

134. Sketched *Woman's Estate*, pp. 169-70; developed *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, pp. 392-95 *passim*; *Siblings*, p. 35, 51.

135. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 395.

136. For example, R.A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: TPI, 1995), p. 134.

137. So Moxnes, (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families*, p. 32.

made 'the only Father',[138] patriarchy revives, now with the universality and essentialism of divinity, the one 'ultimately capable of saying "I am who I am"'.[139]

For Juliet Mitchell, entering into such 'a revamped patriarchal society' is not a revolutionary option; but neither is a vision without analysis.[140] Mitchell's extension of the Marxist interpretation of the family opens the possibility for a reconsideration of this key passage in Mark so that it is given the potential to mount a critique against the state's control of family structure and moral imperatives (and against the church functioning as an auxiliary agent) with its concomitant oppressive and exploitative economic relations. Most importantly, Mitchell's work enables a reading of Mk 10.1-31 to occur in greater cognizance of the impact of text and context on the identity and freedom of women, and to enlist a politically aware praxis that addresses all elements of women's oppression—not economic structures alone but their complex interconnection with the ideology of patriarchy as played out in sexuality, reproduction and the socialization of children. In so doing, and only in so doing, Marxist categories might be shorn of idealist commitments, be retained as contributing to the liberation of women and be involved in the process of constructing an 'alternative symbolic universe'.[141]

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138. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, p. 127.

139. R. Tong, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 170, quoting Lacan.

140. Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, p. 416.

141. Mitchell, 'Femininity, Narrative and Psychoanalysis', pp. 390-92.

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Textual Reproduction as Surplus Value: Paul on Pleasing Christ and Spouses, in light of Simone de Beauvoir[1]

Jorunn Økland

> …to grasp history or ideology as form, genre and style, as secretly at work in the grain and texture of literary language[2]

Marxist Feminisms

In Europe, which is my academic location, the feminist and the Marxist movements have developed side by side, diversified, amalgamated and intertwined, and today cover such broad spectra of opinion and action that it is perhaps more appropriate to talk about them as 'fields' rather than as unified movements. Although Marxists would consider the absence of exploitation of women a part of a socialist society, they have often disagreed between them whether women's equality and power will follow as a natural consequence of the introduction of a socialist society, or whether women's liberation represents a struggle in itself, in other words: what is more decisive, gender or class?[3] A typical answer has been that the basic conflict of interest in society is between capital and labour. Conflicts of interest over issues of religion, colour and race, gender and sexual orientation, have often been seen as secondary and negotiable,

1. I would like to thank Prof. Kari Syreeni and his New Testament research seminar at Uppsala University for allowing me to present this essay in draft form and for providing invaluable feedback. I also want to thank the Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters for time to complete it.

2. Terry Eagleton on the Marxist literary criticism of Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (in 'Making a Break', *London Review of Books* 9 March [2006], pp. 25-26 [26]).

3. The finer distinctions between Marxist feminists properly speaking, socialist feminists, and materialist feminists, are often marked with reference to these two coordinates. But since these finer distinctions are often problematic, elusive, and dependent on personal preference, I will in this essay use 'Marxist feminist' as a very broad category including all feminisms acknowledging some inspiration from the works of Marx and Engels. Further, the finer distinctions definitely fade when compared with Paul and the ancient world!

a view that has left people committed to both Marxism and feminism in a kind of double bind, and other feminists to question the whole constellation. Thus Luce Irigaray, for example, maintains that oppression of women was a *precondition* for the development of capitalist society, not a consequence of it. She has distanced herself from central Marxist ideas, but would not have made the point in the first place if it were not for her close engagement with them.[4] In her essay 'Women on the Market' she states: 'from the very origin of private property and the patriarchal family, social exploitation occurred. In other words, all the social regimes of "History" are based upon the exploitation of one "class" of producers, namely women. Whose reproductive use value (reproductive of children and of the labor force) and whose constitution as exchange value underwrite the symbolic order as such'.[5] In the essay 'Commodities among Themselves', she shifts the perspective and sees women not as a suppressed class of producers, but as commodities: 'The exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another'.[6] The latter quote was the point of departure for this essay, but I will not concentrate on Irigaray on this occasion. Rather, among modern feminists Simone de Beauvoir will be given main attention. Her relationship to Marxism is at least slightly less ambiguous than Irigaray's, hence her place in the context of this volume is easier to argue.

Marxist theory and praxis are increasingly invoked again, as global capitalism has stifled or commodified all other forms of criticism. After the 'fall' of communist Europe, religion has re-emerged as a significant socio-political factor, and ironically has provided the value-system within which the turbo-capitalism and women trafficking of the new Europe makes sense.[7] Even Marxist theory could run the risk of commodification, as some critics warn that 'some postmodernists like to imbibe the miasmically iconoclastic aura of Marx without…necessarily engaging in radical…. politics'.[8] Having a post-traumatic relationship to

4. For her political engagement, esp. with the (ex-)Communist Party in Italy, see also Alison Martin, 'A European Initiative: Irigaray, Marx, and Citizenship', *Hypatia* 19/3 (2004), pp. 20-37.

5. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (trans. C. Porter; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 173.

6. Irigaray, *This Sex*, p. 192.

7. By this I mean that in the current context, religion as Communist Europe's 'Other' was seen as instrumental to its fall, and that thus according to basic dialectics, religion also prepared the ground for the turbo-capitalism that came to take over. Religion still serves to legitimize a strong patriarchal reaction against gender-egalitarian principles.

8. Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur, 'Reconsidering Marx in Post-Marxist

Marxism myself, I see how I could easily fit into this classification of 'some postmodernists', and probably even prefer to remain there. But writing this essay has also made me realize that my problematic and ambiguous relationship to that significant heritage is shared by many of the other feminists mentioned in this volume. I suggest that there might be some traits inherent in Marxism that constantly produce a sense of alienation among feminists.

As to the 'iconoclastic aura', I indeed see it as one of the most powerful potentials of Marxism: Like the early Jesus movement 1900 years earlier, the Marx movement's iconoclastic potential saved it from dying out with the nineteenth century in which it emerged, and enabled it to adapt to new situations as a renewable source of resistance, such as it happened for example in the European 1960s-70s (which was but one among many waves of resistance it has inspired). Therefore I still find it meaningful to engage with Marxist theory and explore its critical potential anew, for bringing out meaning and ideologies in texts, in the societies that produced them, as well as in the societies that still look to them for legitimization.

I will now proceed to carry out an experiment at the interface between the Bible, feminism, and a Marxist-materialist understanding of ideology as embedded in texts. I will juxtapose texts by Paul and Simone de Beauvoir in order to see where they converge, diverge, and where one party triggers odd responses in the other. This strategy of 'unequally yoking together' (cf. 2 Cor. 6.14) the two thinker-writers thus has as an aim to tease out 'surplus value' also at the level of ideology and meaning, in other words, what these thinker-writers produce in terms of meaning above the need to promote and adhere to their particular ideology. The 'grain and texture of literary language' (to quote the epigraph) contains ideology, but cannot be reduced to it. Ideology may be a function of a particular mode of production, but cannot be reduced to it. It is the full extent of this overspill of meaning I want to allow for in a non-reductionist way. If there is any point in revisiting Marxist positions at all after the immense social-historical attention to Paul, it must be in order to allow some more attention to textual nuance and rhetoric as the place where ideology and superstructure is (re-)produced: Thus I aim neither to present a general 'exegesis' of the biblical text,[9] nor to defend the Bible as a useful tool in the class struggle, as many interpreters tried 25–35 years ago. Nor is the aim to

Times: A Requiem for Postmodernism?', *Educational Researcher* 29/3 (2000), pp. 25-33 (27).

9. By this I mean a conventional, historical-critical analysis aimed at unlocking the original meaning of the text.

hook women's issues on to the broader, revisited Marxist reconstruction of early Christianity now emerging.[10] Given the context of this volume, one aim is to show how a clear Marxist-feminist inspiration might also contribute to biblical *scholarship*. Inevitably this means that Paul will be scrutinized more carefully before he is allowed into the conversation with the modern feminist.

1 Corinthians is selected not primarily out of old compulsive research habits, but rather for the same reasons why I find this letter so addictive in the first place: Paul is in close interaction with the recipients in a direct way—addressing *their* questions and concerns, naming some of them, and criticizing their practices. First-century Corinth, the formation of a group of Christ-worshippers, their (would-be?) spiritual director Paul—all of these streams somehow run together in the text, in Paul's attempt to construct a new ideology of sexuality and marriage for this novel social formation. Thus, ideology is not secretly, but explicitly at work in this letter, and there are clearly conflicting ideologies at work in the exchanges between Paul and the Corinthians.

In ch. 7 Paul addresses heterosexual desire, partnership and reproduction in the broader perspectives of 'the current crisis' and sanctification 'in Christ' (1 Cor. 7.14, 16, 26). Paul is responding to a previous letter from the Corinthians (cf. 7.1: 'concerning the things you wrote about'), which apparently included questions about sexuality, marriage and reproduction.[11] Since the focus is on marriage and reproduction, I give vv. 25-40 special attention, analysing aspects of its gender ideology at work in the grain and texture of literary language through *Notes* on its nomenclature, genre and structure.

Paul's view here, of the 'bodily/worldly distress' (θλῖψις τῇ σαρκὶ) of those who are married, will be brought into conversation with the highly ambiguous view of marriage, reproduction and motherhood found in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*[12] and further developed, discussed or criticized by most subsequent feminist theorists. Thus it is enough of a classic to provide a suitable sparring partner for Paul, and has a clear enough reference to Marxist historical materialism, in spite of the fact that the English translator removed the references to socialist feminism, as

10. See e.g. James Crossley, *Why Christianity Happened: A Sociohistorical Account of Christian Origins (26–50 CE)* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

11. For a convincing reading of 7.1, see Alistair Scott May, *'The Body For The Lord': Sex And Identity In 1 Corinthians 5–7* (JSNTSup; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004). May argues against the bulk of scholars that 7.1's 'it is good for a human being not to touch a woman' is Paul's own view, not a quote of the Corinthians' view. I agree, and see 7.1 as being in perfect harmony with the values Paul promotes elsewhere.

12. *The Second Sex* (trans. H.M. Parshley; New York: Vintage Books, 1953).

Toril Moi has pointed out.[13] Even more interesting, exactly at the point where Beauvoir argues that the married woman is 'vowed' or 'doomed' to immanence, she refers to Paul as the basis for this conclusion![14] Because Toril Moi is a particularly competent and sympathetic interpreter of Beauvoir, I use her reception and personal actualization of Beauvoir as a thinker-writer as an entry to Beauvoir's textual production on the topic.

1 Corinthians 7 – Notes on words and language

First, there is an odd use of the terminology concerning human beings,[15] men, women and virgins in this text. It starts in 7.1 with the statement that 'it is good for a human being (ἀνθρώπος) not to touch a woman'. In a philological perspective, it was rather conventional to use the term ἀνθρώπος to denote males in spite of the fact that ancient Greek – in contrast to English and French – had sufficiently nuanced nomenclature to speak about males (ἀνήρ) unambiguously, without any risks of confusion with the generic category. Along with previous Greek authors, with structuralists, but against a queer reading (although I clearly see the queer potential and may develop this on another occasion!), I believe that when Paul places ἀνθρώποι and women in a binary opposition, the ανθρώποι are either understood as male, or women are not understood as ἀνθρώποι, or most plausibly both. That men are human and women are not considered as fully human as men, is Beauvoir's point in her book *The Second Sex*. At the outset of 1 Corinthians 7 then, women are clearly confirmed as the second sex, as Beauvoir states in the introduction to her book: 'Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but relative to him' (p. 16). In Paul's case she is defined as something (not) to be touched by him.

Παρθένων in 7.25 is mostly taken to refer to female virgins only, although the genitive plural could *in principle* be both male and female. In fact, some scholars as well as translators believe the term to be used inclusively of men and women here, and hence translate it 'betrothed' rather than 'virgins'.[16] It is a reasonable possibility that the term is used gender-inclusively *in v. 25*,[17] although this clearly is not the case

13. Toril Moi, 'Innledende essay', in Simone de Beauvoir, *Det annet kjønn* (Oslo: Dagens Bøker, 2000), pp. ix-xxx (xxvii).

14. Beauvoir, *Second Sex,* p. 449, n. 4.

15. I consider modern English's 'human being' a linguistically awkward, but nevertheless necessary, modern invention at a point when it became just too politically problematic to continue to use the old term 'man'/'men' generically.

16. *English Standard Version* and other modern versions, such as *New Life Version* and the German Bible Society's *Hoffnung für Alle.*

17. The linguistic, Christian parallel for such a use would be the male virgins

throughout the passage. The next reference to such a person, ἀνθρώπος in 7.26, is also from the outset gender-inclusive, as we discussed above. In 7.7-8, Paul does use ἀνθρώπος in a gender-inclusive way, since it includes both Paul himself and the unmarried and the widows (v. 8). But ἀνθρώπος in 7.26 could also be interpreted in the masculine, like in 7.1, and like in the next verse again (7.27), where Paul speaks directly to the ἀνθρώπος addressing him in the 2nd person: 'If you are bound to a woman…' In the next verse (7.28), when he makes a parallel statement about ἡ Παρθένος, unambiguously feminine this time, he speaks *about* her in the 3rd person, not *to* her in the 2nd person. Thus, at best I will characterize the use of Παρθένος in 7.25 as queer.

It is further interesting to note how the ancient MSS disagree on how to understand the categorization of females, Παρθένοι and others, in 7.34. The suggestions include binary oppositions between women and virgins, between women and unmarried virgins, or (the preferred variant) between the unmarried woman and the virgin, which makes sense, and probably reflects a congregation with plenty of widows, unmarried slave women with children, etc. There might be further issues at stake here, concerning the categorization of females in ancient Greek, but I will leave those issues for now.

ἄγαμος, unmarried, is used for both males and females (7.32 and 34). Again for the married, the active form γαμήσασ/α is used for both the male and female (aorist participle in masculine and feminine respectively). This is noticeable because the middle form of the verb was conventionally used for the female, to such an extent that the active form is translated 'take to wife' in the dictionary, the middle form 'to give oneself/someone in marriage', and 1 Corinthians 7 is mentioned as one out of only two exceptions to this usage.[18] The queer vocabulary *might* mean that Paul sees the woman marrying not as a commodity, but as an *agent,* a legal subject with the opportunity to take or reject a spouse. Given this unconventional usage, which in isolation could be used to argue that Paul considers men and women equal in marriage, the question arises whether he rather makes the woman responsible for her civil status and (re-)productive capacity, in spite of the fact that both of these are beyond the control of woman-as-commodity and as non-*anthropos* according to 7.1—and according to Jewish and Roman laws of marriage. My answer to the question has to be a surprised yes.

in Revelation 14, see Jorunn Økland, 'Sex, Gender and Ancient Greek: A Study in Theoretical Misfit', *Studia Theologica* 57/2 (2003), pp. 124-42.

18. Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 337.

The whole passage then remains ambiguity-ridden with regard to its gender vocabulary, although the end result in my opinion is a picture where men are humans and women are commodities (see Irigaray above) who nevertheless are responsible for their own marital and reproductive status. I take care to point out Paul's gender-inclusive, gender-ambiguous terminology, in spite of the fact that I in other ways ignore the *conventional* interpretations of this terminology in Pauline scholarship. In my opinion, it is exactly the linguistic ambiguity that has made it possible for those scholars wishing to rescue Paul as an advocate of the family, of feminism or of conservative Christianity to lay claims on this text. By using gender-inclusive terms in a slightly male-ish way, women audiences (which I assume with Antoinette Wire constituted a strong and large part of the letter's original audience)[19] can feel included in the discourse while only keeping a secondary, instable place in its argument. The fact that they can at least to some extent mirror themselves in the text, strengthens their identification with its ideology of asceticism and non-reproduction, and thus increases the text's persuasiveness.

1 Corinthians 7 – Structure

Please find below an overview over the structure of 7.17-40, with the omission of some verses that are less significant in this context:[20]

1 Corinthians 7.17-40, highlighting structure

'Ethnicity'	**'Class'**	**'Gender'**
17 Each person should lead the life *that the Lord has assigned* to him, and to which God has called him. This I ordain in all the *ekklesiai*.	20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.	25 Now concerning the virgins … 26 I consider this to be good in view of the present necessities, that it is good for a person to remain as he is. …
18 Was anyone circumcised when he was called? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. ….	21 Were you a slave when called? Do not worry about it.	27… But those who do (i.e. marry) will have bodily distress, and I want to spare you that. 29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has been cut short.

19. Antoinette C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul´s Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 9.

20. My own translation.

From now on, even
those who have wives
must live as though
they had none, 30 and
those who mourn as
though they were not
mourning, and those
who rejoice as though
they were not rejoicing,
and those who buy as
though they did not
possess the goods, 31
and those who consume
the world as though
they did not spend it.
For the present form of
this world is passing
away.

Male	**Female**
32 I want you to be free from anxieties. 'The unmarried man	And the unmarried woman and the virgin
is anxious about the things of the Lord,	are anxious about the things of the Lord,
how (πώς) to please the Lord.	how (ἵνα)to be holy in body and spirit.
33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things,	But the married woman is anxious about worldly things,
how to please his wife,	how to please her husband.
34 and he is divided.	
35 I say this for your own benefit, not to put a snare before you, but to promote decency and uninhibited attention to the Lord. …	
38 So both *he* who marries his virgin does well,	39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.
and *he* who does not marry will do even better.	40 Yet in my opinion she is more blessed if she remains as she is.

Although Paul at times tries to integrate broader groups into his ethical discourse, such as in 1 Corinthians 7 where also slaves and women are addressed, his default setting seems to be free-male–to–free-male discourse. We note that Paul's structure in the quoted passage would appeal to modern theorists focusing on the intersectionalities of 'ethnicity, class

and gender':[21] First the question of circumcision, which has sometimes been treated as a marker of ethnicity (vv. 18-19), then the question of slave or free, which roughly corresponds to class (vv. 21-23), ending up with a discussion of men and women, which classifies as gender (vv. 25-40). But more interesting than this problematic[22] modern analogy is the fact that the structure corresponds to Gal. 3.26-29, which raises the question of whether 1 Corinthians 7 on a historical level was Paul's *Commentary* on that pre-Pauline baptismal formula,[23] which he only partially quoted in 1 Corinthians (12.13).[24]

In my lay-out of the text vv. 34-40, I have tried to preserve the malestream concern to show that Paul is actually balancing statements to men and women here. The next step for malestream scholarship is to conclude that the parallel statements demonstrate Paul's gender egalitarian ideology. Like in the Notes above on 'gender-inclusive' terminology, I have here tried to tease out a gender-equal structure. However, when we arrange the text in parallel and analyse what Paul says to the men and to the women respectively, it rather becomes clear that he is not at all making parallel statements! It is the subtle *differences* that are suddenly exposed and put in relief. As we found in our philological research above, the fact that he says *almost* the same thing to men and women in parallel statements does not mean that he says *the same* thing, it just means that the relatively small differences have larger consequences at the level of meaning.

Apart from the fact that I do not really see how gender equality existed as an option in Antiquity,[25] Antoinette Wire has especially successfully in my view exposed how the malestream reading of 1 Corinthians 7 is insensitive: 'Paul's rhetoric of equality, his laying all sexual responsibilities

21. Intersectional approaches to power imbalance or differentiation with reference to ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexuality, class, disability etc., take as their point of departure that these markers of difference do not work independently, but interrelate and shape a complex system of inequality. For an updated discussion and re-assessment of the approach, see Leslie McCall, 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30/3 (2005), pp. 1771-800.

22. Problematic, because the modern categorizations are less nuanced than the ancient ones in that the former have tended to treat religion, ethnicity and race as more or less the same thing. Up until 2007, British tensions between 'Muslims' and the 'white labour class' for example, have sorted under the UK's Commission on Racial Equality!

23. On Gal. 3.26-28 as a baptismal formula, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), p. 208.

24. I will develop this point on a later occasion.

25. See my argument for this in *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (JSNTSup; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), e.g. ch. 3, pp. 38, 40 and 234.

reciprocally on men toward women and women toward men, appeals more to women and, in this case, demands more from women. It is not difficult to see that women more than men would be attracted to an argument from reciprocal rights in a society where their rights are minimal'.[26]

Paul's Location and Marxist/Historical Materialism

A further ideological marker[27] to note before we move on to modern feminism, is Paul's concern not to *alter*[28] anything: Slaves should accept their place and not engage in any kind of class struggle to escape their condition (vv. 21-23). Likewise, women should not actively seek divorce (v. 39). This is an interesting observation in light of Kowalinski's study 'The Genesis of Christianity in the Views of Contemporary Marxist Specialists in Religion'.[29] Kowalinski presents the Marxist picture of Paul as that of a middle class Jew, emphasizing his moderating impulse (p. 565). Concerning 1 Corinthians, Kowalinski draws on Archibald Robertson, who believed that Paul's letters represented the 'second movement' of early Christianity, since they advocated spiritual messianism. *Spiritual* messianism was the response by middle class Jews and proselytes in the 40-ies to the *revolutionary* messianic movement of slaves, freedmen and the poor of Palestine around the turn of our era (incl. John the Baptist and Jesus), which was the origin of Christianity. Paul was the key leader of the second wave, and partly responsible for transforming the historical Jesus into a mystical god, and the earthly Kingdom to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Leaving chronology aside, what is interesting in our context is that those Marxists clearly saw Paul as far more of a bourgeois than do most Pauline scholars today, including gender scholars. The social location (or 'class' to use a modern, anachronistic term) of the Corinthian Christ-worshippers, as well as the possible class difference between them and Paul, are still highly contested topics in 1 Corinthians research,[30] yet there is a rather

26. Wire, *Women Prophets*, pp. 81-82.

27. Elizabeth A. Clark applies Terry Eagleton's notion of ideology markers such as naturalizing, stereotyping, and universalizing in her 'Ideology, History, and the Construction of "Woman" in Late Ancient Christianity', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2/2 (1994), pp. 155-84. With reference to the Church Fathers she emphasizes in particular how 'ideology operates to "fix" representations of the self' (p. 155).

28. Clark, 'Ideology', p. 155.

29. *Antonianum* 47 (1972), pp. 541-75. 'Contemporary' here means late 1960s, the article was published in 1972. The article gives a glimpse into a scholarly field of early Christian studies relatively independent of Western historical-critical scholarship of the period, and otherwise inaccessible for scholars unable to read Slavonic languages.

30. For an overview, see Edward Adams and David Horrell (eds.), *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), esp. pp. 26-34.

general agreement to place Paul somewhere among the lower classes. In the pre-SBL jam sessions that take place under the serious heading 'People's History of Corinth',[31] Paul tends to be seen as a representative of the poor, the gender-bender who started a revolutionary movement that the Deutero-Paulines and authors such as Luke had to give a soft landing 50–60 years later on. The old-Marxist perspective certainly puts Paul in a different relief as advocate of bourgeois social order, a Pauline *persona* that has been rather neglected in my view, although it is definitely not his only *persona*. In the case of 1 Corinthians 7, the old-Marxist input further strengthens a reading of the chapter as a *moderating and modifying commentary* on the far more radical Gal. 3.26-28. This understanding of 1 Corinthians 7 as ideology will provide the background for my further analysis of its gender issues.

A material presupposition for the following is that slaves and non-slaves, women and men, were *not* equal according to Roman Law and ancient customs,[32] but constituted different 'classes' (in Irigaray's terms) in Hellenistic-Roman society and culture. This means, for example, that gender to a much greater extent than today was also an 'economical category'.

De Beauvoir

Over to Simone de Beauvoir: Her engagement in the French Communist party is widely known, although her relation to it changed over time.[33] Toril Moi points out how Beauvoir shared the dream of Karl Marx, of the universal values of the Enlightenment finally becoming available to all.[34] The book for which she is most famous, *The Second Sex,* was written within a setting where French women had just gained the vote, among

31. A satellite under the Paul and Politics group of the SBL. Not that we are able to find the precise material basis for Pauline ideology, but we search hard and try to be honest about missing sources. Special thanks to Noelle Damico, Steve Friesen, Richard Horsley, John Lanci, Dan Showalter, and James Walters.

32. See Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

33. In *Force of Circumstance* (trans. R. Howard; New York: Putnam, 1965), she says retrospectively (p. 5): 'In our youth, we had felt close to the Communist Party insofar as its negativism agreed with our anarchism. We wanted the defeat of capitalism, but not the accession of a socialist society which, we thought, would have deprived us our liberty. It was in this sense that Sartre wrote in his notebook, on September 14, 1939: "I am now cured of socialism, if I needed to be cured of it". Yet in 1941, when he was forming a Resistance group, the two words he brought together for its baptism were: socialism and liberty. The war had effected a decisive conversion'.

34. Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: En intellektuell kvinne blir til* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1995), p. 236.

the last countries in Europe. She sees change coming, but also that old patterns are very persistent. Towards the end of the book she expresses an eschatological hope of a 'Free Woman'.

At the beginning of the book (p. 29), she lays out her discussion following a distinctly Marxist paradigm, drawing on the insights of historical materialism, biology and psychoanalysis to define how the 'réalité féminine'[35] is constituted. Next, her stated intent is to move on to the superstructural 'truly feminine' and how it has been fashioned. The last and major part, 'Woman's Life Today', is a description of the world from a woman's point of view, and explores how women can aspire to full membership in the human race. This is where she discusses separately the various stages of a woman's life, and states in the subchapter on marriage (p. 449): 'In marrying, woman gets some share in the world as her own; legal guarantees protect her against capricious action by man; but she becomes his vassal. He is the economic head of the joint enterprise, and hence he represents it (l'incarne) in the view of society. She takes his name; she belongs to his religion, his class, his circle … she gives him her person, virginity and a rigorous fidelity being required. She loses some of the rights legally belonging to the unmarried woman. Roman law placed the wife in the husband's hands *loco filiae,* in the position of a daughter…' I will place this passage in discussion with Paul below.

A few sentences down is where it comes, Beauvoir's famous view of the married woman in a nutshell: 'Since the husband is the productive worker, he is the one who goes beyond family interest to that of society…. Woman is doomed (vouée) to the continuation of the species and the care of the home—that is to say, to immanence. The fact is that every human existence involves transcendence and immanence at the same time; … These two elements—maintenance and progression—are implied in any living activity, and for *man* marriage permits precisely a happy synthesis of the two' (p. 449).

This text suggests that Beauvoir does not consider 'the continuation of the species and the care of the home' as production, this in contrast to many other earlier and later Marxists. Hers is the most negative view possible of the lot of married women. They are doomed, doomed to immanence. But there is an option out by not marrying.

There is no point in joining in the chorus of previous feminists criticizing Beauvoir for being trapped in the immanence-transcendence opposition, not when her conversation partner is Paul! I will rather turn to the recep-

35. Learning from Moi (see n. 13 above), I have checked the English translations against the French edition given in the bibliography, but still retained the English translation because of the language in which this article is written. Where I have felt a certain discrepancy, I have given the original French.

tion of Beauvoir's thoughts by one of her more sympathetic readers, a 16-year old Norwegian girl seen through the eyes of her 40-year old self. In her introduction to the Norwegian version of *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*,[36] Toril Moi emphasizes Beauvoir's views on marriage and reproduction as influential on her own life. She says of her first encounter with Beauvoir's writings as a young girl:

> A girl who grew up in the Norwegian countryside in the 1950s and 60s, never met adult women who were anything other than housewives. All the women I knew were housewives. Some worked in shops or were teachers or secretaries in addition to their work in the house. The very few who didn't have children, always tried as hard as they could to get them, it was said, and one should feel pity for them. But Simone de Beauvoir demonstrated with style, elegance and intellectual conviction that it was possible for a woman not to want to have children at all. It occurred to me even that her example proved once and for all that it was much better *not* to have children. If someone had given me the choice between Les Deux Magots on the one hand and husband and children in Bryne [a little Norwegian village] on the other, I wouldn't have hesitated even a second. Of course I never questioned the elitism implicit in this attitude; the implication was after all that only very exceptional women could ever hope to escape the slavery of motherhood and housework.[37]

This text is interesting in itself and produced by an internationally central feminist theorist who has also engaged with Marxism.[38] I quote it here because I believe its reading of Simone de Beauvoir is representative. In this paper however, Toril Moi will not be read in her own right, only as interpreter of Simone de Beauvoir. In the juxtaposition of some ideas extracted from Paul and Beauvoir then, interesting similarities emerge, and these I am now moving on to discuss.

Paul and Simone – A Conversation

Sad Marriage. Despite the radical differences between their ideologies, general outlook on the world, and modes of production within which they operated, both Paul and Beauvoir (and 16-year-old Moi) are uneasy about marriage and the production of offspring, since they tend to create too strong ties to matter and immanence. Beauvoir thinks that this is a problem for women only, so in this particular juxtaposition Paul is the more radical who thinks that exactly the same problem exists for men, too.

36. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

37. Moi, *En intellektuell kvinne*, p. 8 (my translation).

38. Her edited (jointly with Janice Radway) *Materialist Feminism: Special Issue of The South Atlantic Quarterly* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) is one result of this engagement.

What Beauvoir sees as after all a relative advantage for the married woman, namely that she 'gets some share in the world as her own' (p. 449) is what Paul sees as negative: according to him, 'the married woman is anxious about worldly things', and 'I want you to be free from anxieties'. He therefore believes she is happier unmarried, as also the men are, and wishes that all were like him (7.7), which I, like most, take to mean 'happily unmarried'. Beauvoir arrives at the same conclusion, but after having considered a broader range of arguments for and against.

Both Paul and Beauvoir further agree that the woman belongs to the man as long as he lives. She is his vassal, Beauvoir says in the quote above. For Beauvoir that is a reason for not marrying at all. Paul on the other hand uses the same insight, that 'a wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives' (7.39), in order to stop married women from even thinking of acting on what he just stated before (7.38) concerning their sad state (anxious about worldly things and not being able to give uninhibited attention to the Lord). They could otherwise be tempted to flee marriage as soon as possible.

Exit: Paul, Beauvoir and the young Moi also have a further feature in common: They believe there to be an exit route from the re-production line, from immanence: not to marry and have children. Not only is it an exit route, but they all also consider it better than being reproductive and busy with the immanent, worldly affairs of the household. In a passage in the historical materialist section, Beauvoir quotes Karl Marx concerning women in the nineteenth century: 'In a note in *Das Kapital* Marx relates the following: "The manufacturer, Mr. E., informed me that he employed women only at his power looms, that he gave preference to married women and among them to those who had families at home to support, because these were more attentive and docile than the unmarried and had to work to the very end of their strength in order to obtain the necessaries of life for their families" '.[39] This passage is key to this essay. It shows how Beauvoir draws on Marx, approves of what he says and builds on it: It shows in a nutshell how her idea that abstaining from family life is a necessary step towards women's liberation is one she inherited from Marx and Engels.[40] The quote further sounds alarmingly like an echo of 1 Cor. 7.26-28, especially Marx/Beauvoir's reference to the 'necessaries of life' and Paul's 'present necessities' (ἀνάγκη) and 'those who marry will have worldly/bodily distress, and I would spare you that'.

Paul, Marx and Beauvoir then, agree that in order to be free from anxiety and troubles, it is better not to have your own family.

39. Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, p. 145.

40. See also Friedrich Engels, *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968).

Our conversation partners further agree that abstention from marriage and children makes one free to engage in other types of erotics! But there is a minor difference over this point, as Beauvoir (and Moi) will have sexual liberation, not liberation from sex. Paul on the other hand thinks one should not only abstain from marriage and children, but ideally from physical sex altogether. In fact, as Dale Martin has pointed out in his reading of 1 Corinthians 7 in 'Paul Without Passion: On Paul's Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage',[41] a major advantage of marriage is that it can effectively kill off sexual desire (with reference to 7.1-2 and 9). In Lone Fatum's words, 'Because sexual liberation to Paul is synonymous with an eschatological affirmation of life based on the annulment of sexual differentiation, sexual liberation is in fact liberation from sexuality'.[42] However, what this Paul-Simone conversation has alerted me to, is that if narcissism is considered a form of sexuality, Paul's unmarried female is not liberated from sexuality and body *even if* she abstains from marriage. Rather she is forced to become narcissistic![43] I will therefore explore what Paul says in 7.32-34 in some more detail, in conversation with Beauvoir.

As mentioned above, ἄγαμος is used for both male and female unmarried in 7.32 and 34. But to the category of female unmarried in 7.34 is also added another category, the virgins. This added signifier denotes a sexual category superfluous in 7.32 when talking about the men, which shows that Paul takes great care here to get the social and sexual status of the women he is addressing absolutely precise.

But in the parallel, added clauses of 7.32 and 34 (see 'Structure' above), whereas the unmarried male is anxious about how to please the Lord, the unmarried female is anxious about how to remain holy in both body and spirit. The unmarried woman could be excused for taking Paul's text to mean that she, like the man, should try hard to satisfy the Lord, and for assuming that her unmarried state would secure her continued, uninhibited attention to this aim. But the text says something very different about men and women at this point, which is emphasized by the distinction in conjunctions (πῶς and ἵνα). By focusing so much on her self, including her body and its continued holiness, the text immediately returns the unmarried woman to the care of her own self, her body and spirit. Thus, if Beauvoir states that women are doomed to immanence if they marry, in Paul's text they seem to be doomed regardless, to their own

41. In Halvor Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 201-15.

42. Lone Fatum, 'Image of God and Glory of Man: Women in the Pauline Congregations', in Kari Børresen (ed.), *Image of God and Gender Models* (Oslo: Solum, 1991), pp. 56-137 (82).

43. Compare also Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, pp. 641-52.

immanent selves. Seemingly, the only way the Lord can find pleasure in the unmarried woman is by keeping her busy with her own little, narcissistic holiness regime.

Some might question whether the distinction that Paul makes between men and women isn't merely down to stylistic variation, and that I am making rather a lot out of an ideological structure that only I see at work in the grain and texture of literary language. But this reading is confirmed by a parallel statement a couple of hundred years later, in the work of Cyril of Jerusalem's *Procatechesis* 14–15:[44] This passage is highly reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 7 and 14, but with all the ambiguities and complexities of Paul's argument levelled out: Cyril likens the *ekklesia* with Noah's Ark in that its door was shut (!!): 'If the Church is shut, and you are all inside, yet let there be a separation, men with men, and women with women … Even if there be a fair pretext for sitting near each other, let passions be put away' (*Procatechesis* 14). After having admonished the women to read *quietly*, quoting 1 Cor. 14.34-35, in paragraph 15 he states: 'I shall observe each man's eagerness/zeal (σπουδὴν), each woman's reverence (εὐλαβές)'.

Thus we see that in one of Paul's earliest interpreters, the discourse of avoidance of human sexual passion is continued, and the sexual differentiation of qualities that the Lord looks for in a man and a woman is confirmed: men should be eager and zealous, women should be careful and pious (σπουδή vs. εὐλαβές). Although these characterizations are not identical with the ones Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 7, the connotations overlap significantly and are highly gendered.

The text leaves blank how exactly the Lord will find pleasure in the unmarried man, ἀρέσκω meaning everything from legally ok to sexually pleasing.[45] The latter sexual sense is clearly implied when the term is used about the married man and woman in the surrounding sentences and verses—a bit unfortunate choice of terminology if this is NOT what Paul had in mind concerning the Lord's pleasure in the man! In 1 Cor. 10.33 Paul states that he tries to ἀρέσκειν everyone, not in a sexual sense we must assume. In the context of 1 Corinthians 7 we should not, however,

44. Cyril of Jerusalem, 'Baptismal Catechesis - Prologue (The 'Procatechesis')', accessed from http://www.monachos.net/patristics/cyriljerusalem/cat_0.shtml (published online 1 June, 2005). See also *Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen* (ed. Philip Schaff; Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2.7; New York: Christian Literature Publishing, 1893). For a discussion of the text, see Annie O'Connor, *Disciples of the New Testament, Sharers in the Mysteries of Christ: Pedagogy and Mystagogy in the Jerusalem Church* (MPhil-thesis, University of Sheffield, 2005).

45. Liddell, Scott and Jones, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 238. Flavius Josephus, to mention another 1st cent. Jew, also uses the term to denote the pleasing of God, *Jewish Antiquities* (ed. Ralph Marcus; LCL; London: Heinemann, 1966), book XIII.289.

dismiss the sexual connotation from the outset, as mainstream exegetes seem to do.

As Halvor Moxnes points out in his discussion of 1 Cor. 6.12-20,[46] Paul's defence of sexuality within marriage in chapter 7 'is more in line with his position in 6.12-20 than in contrast to it'. We read further that 'Instead of the relations to prostitutes, Corinthian males are urged to keep to an exclusive relationship with Christ. This is described as a strange male-to-male relationship, where "uniting oneself" (κολλώμενος) to Christ is set up as a parallel to uniting oneself to a prostitute. Even if there are different nuances between the meaning of the term in each instance, it is intriguing that Paul uses the same terminology, and that in both instances it is a matter of "becoming one"… Was Paul a sex maniac in reverse, or a masochistic man, who, in order to preserve male supremacy, is willing to emasculate Corinthian men?'[47]

As I have pointed out before as a response to Moxnes's argument here,[48] 'even if on the textual surface level Paul makes a distinction between becoming one body with someone and becoming one spirit with someone else, the fact that these unions are mutually exclusive means that the distinction is not as easily drawn on the body as it is on paper, not even for Paul. In fact the passage is an argument that free Corinthian men …. have to submit to their Master and Lord, and thereby lose sexual control of their own body … Thus, free men become Christ's sex slaves not only because those who were called as free are now the slaves of Christ (1 Cor. 7.22), but also because their sexuality is no longer their own'.

In line with Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6 then, I think we should not exclude the sexual connotations of ἀρέσκω in 7.32 either. The consequence is the same as Moxnes points out with regard to 1 Corinthians 6: the sexual autonomy of any free males in the congregation is compromised. Beauvoir tries to level out gender differences in freedom and autonomy by increasing women's autonomy, Paul by reducing the men's autonomy. And both see sexuality as part of the issue.

The Transcendent World of the Word. I could now proceed to explain the material factors determining the slight variation between Paul and Simone's asceticism with reference to the discovery of the egg cell, contraception and other issues related to modes of (re-)production, but I will rather go down a different route to explore how they agree that a certain asceticism

46. Halvor Moxnes, 'Asceticism and Christian Identity in Antiquity: A Dialogue with Foucault and Paul', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26.1 (2003), pp. 3-29 (27).

47. Moxnes, 'Asceticism', pp. 21 and 25.

48. Jorunn Økland, 'Sex Slaves of Christ: A Response to Halvor Moxnes', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26.1 (2003), pp. 31-34 (32).

(with some differences) is necessary in order to reach the higher world, the Word, but which Paul's unmarried female cannot ever attain, busy as she is with her own body and spirit.

For Beauvoir, to exit the re-production line *and* enter into textual production instead, is the only way for a woman to be fully human. Beauvoir seems on the one hand to lament this limited choice but on the other hand to celebrate it. The 'new woman' Beauvoir describes towards the end of her book, is the intellectual writing woman, the artist, the scholar. The 'free woman' is described in a language and tone imitating the biblical creation stories and apocalypses: 'Rimbaud's prophecy will be fulfilled: "There shall be poets!" When woman's unmeasured bondage shall be broken, when she shall live for and through herself…. She, too, will be poet!… It is not sure that her "ideational worlds" will be different from those of men, since it will be through attaining the same situation as theirs that she will find emancipation'.[49] As we saw, it was exactly this powerful vision of the 'new and free' woman, embodied in Beauvoir herself, that the young Toril Moi found so empowering and transformative.[50]

Paul maintains that both married men *and* women are equally anxious to satisfy their spouse. But again the added clause is subtly different. Concerning the married man Paul says: 'and he is divided'. Clearly a problem, it is difficult to please your wife and the Lord at the same time, they must have different notions of pleasure. By making this point however, Paul disagrees with Beauvoir, who believes that for a man marriage represents a happy synthesis of maintenance and progression, immanence and transcendence. And in contrast to Beauvoir, Paul's married woman does *not* have a problem with division: A similar clause is not added concerning the married female. That makes sense, because as we saw above, even an unmarried woman is unable to please the Lord directly, only indirectly by keeping herself in good shape. In this light, Paul continues to speak to the men in 7.35, for it is only they who have a problem with division. The most *beneficial* for men then (note not the morally right), is to remain unmarried. Thus men should choose to remain unmarried because of the benefits and pleasures involved. This is similar to, but slightly less subtle than Beauvoir, who with women's abstention from marriage in addition sees the possibilities of arriving at production of art and texts.

The better option of refraining from marriage is stated again in 7.38: 'So both he who marries his virgin does well, and he who does not marry will do even better'. This statement is clearly in the masculine. So is there

49. Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, pp. 723-24. French: 'que ses "mondes d'idées" soient différents de ceux des hommes puisque c'est en s'assimilant à eux qu'elle s'affranchira'.

50. A question for discussion in extension of this is of course whether it is only those who 'have' themselves who can afford to desire the ultimate fulfilment—to live for others, to give oneself up.

an equivalent for women? No. Through its silence and lack of a parallel statement, this text both makes the issue of woman as transferable commodity invisible and yet confirms it. To the women all he can say is: 'A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord' (7.30) So first she has to function as the commodity transferred between men, from father to husband. Only later, if she ever gets a second chance, probably past her reproductive years, she has more of a choice, but 'only in the Lord'. And finally, Paul agrees with Beauvoir that if given an option she is happier if she remains unmarried (7.40).

There is an irony in exploring the issue of 'surplus value'[51] in relation to 1 Corinthians 7. By arguing that the married state is OK, but the unmarried state is better when one is a slave of Christ (1 Cor. 7.22), Paul in fact argues for the creation of surplus value in Christ-believing women and men, a surplus value that is accumulated upon their κύριος, their Master and Lord, and generating the richness and power for which the Lord is praised in turn. That Paul characterizes the unmarried state as the most blessed (μακαριωτέρα, 7.40), is a very good illustration of Marx' point that ideology shrouds or obscures the complex exchange of surplus value from its source, the slave/worker, to the Lord/Master.

I have included the term 'reproduction' in the title of this paper. The question is how appropriate this term really is for Paul. Because in his argument for why it is better for a man/woman not to marry, children do not figure, rather the argument is all about pleasing the Lord vs. the spouse. One could argue that a main way for a woman to please her husband in the ancient world was to produce his offspring, but Paul does not actually say that, which is very interesting. It is reasonable to assume however, that although children escape Paul's radar, their production and maintenance are included in τὰ τοῦ κόσμου (7.33-34). Hence, the term 'reproduction' is indeed appropriate, covering not only the production of offspring that the unmarried person escapes, but also the reproduction of the world and the world of (re-)production (τὰ τοῦ κόσμου) through the household routines more broadly understood, such as shopping and consumption (sic! Cf. 7.31-32). This is what Paul seems concerned about, and it closely corresponds to Beauvoir's notion of immanence. The textual reproduction that Paul and Beauvoir have opted for is only possible on the basis of the accumulated surplus value of the sexual reproduction of the world by others. If everyone had stopped reproducing τὰ τοῦ κόσμου it would cease to exist—which is a problem that both Paul and Beauvoir sense, and each in their unsuccessful way try to give some allowance for….

51. See Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963–68).

Conclusion

I have brought Simone de Beauvoir into conversation with Paul of Tarsus and suggested what kinds of offspring—in terms of readings, such a liaison might produce. The conversation was intended to highlight similarities (asceticism as ideology, preference for the unmarried state for the more noble sake of freedom, 'new-ness', authenticity, the Word, etc.) and question the persistence of some historical patterns of organisation of family life, in spite of many attempts to dissolve them and severe changes in material conditions.

But my hunch is that the differences have been even more exposed. What Paul says to the men (while regarding the women as not redeemable to the same level), Beauvoir says to the women (because the men have it already). As a feminist reading of Paul, the essay has also exposed more at the linguistic level how Paul by saying almost 'the same' actually says something very different to women and men.

But as I also hope to have highlighted, in each case there is a surplus of meaning, an extra element that cannot be pinned down to either Marxism or to the *determination* by material factors, spilling over into the text. This is especially clear in the case of Beauvoir, who is closer to us in time and therefore in many ways more accessible than Paul. Beauvoir and Paul are more than mere products of particular material conditions, although they may be contingent upon them. Beauvoir, Moi and even Irigaray are doing more than teasing out what Marxism might mean in a feminist context. Neither is Paul, the ancient antidote to Friedrich Engels,[52] merely a product of a guilt-laden, relatively privileged location in the hierarchy of a multi-cultural empire. The outcome of a more recent wave of Marxist literary criticism of the Bible is and should be more than merely a re-statement of how particular Bible passages are dependent on particular modes of production. Once the Marxist link is acknowledged, once the dependence on modes of production is acknowledged, it is time to explore the overspill, the options that people feel they have, and where and why they go for the unexpected.[53]

There has been a further, implicit point in this exercise, of trying to get beyond a hermeneutic-ex-egetical model of using a method to force out the true meaning of a text in today's world, and also beyond a literary-theoretical model of 'application' of a theory upon a text, more in direction

52. See the already mentioned *Origin of the Family,* and the fact that both were relatively privileged subversives within each their powerful empire.

53. See esp. the attempt to account for individual agency in Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, *Materialist Feminisms* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), chapter on 'History and Poststructuralism' pp. 125-41.

of a 'co-reading', a conversation between an ancient and modern text. The modern text should not be reduced to speak 'theory' only, and the old text should also be allowed to criticize the modern text back, not only be the victim of its inherent 'theory'-content. In my view this is a more engaging way of grappling with the possible meaning-contents of an ancient text in today's worlds, than the hermeneutic-ex-egetical model, which ends up as too much of a pretentious monologue from the ancient world via the medium of course, of the transparent, professional exegete.

Finally, from my own relatively privileged location in the hierarchy of multi-cultural global capitalism it is necessary to *question* all forms of asceticism as exit strategies from the reproduction line. The inheritance from Beauvoir has facilitated a new kind of ascetic ideology in a new age, which includes women into a humanity and work-force defined in masculine terms, and allows for her sexual gratification. But the question is if this is any more 'positive' than old asceticism, which thought it better (for men and women) not to keep any human Other who could lay claims to one's time, resources and energy (i.e. partner and children) so that the Lord could retain it all. Both ascetic ideologies require a certain asceticism of women if they are to reach the higher world of the Lords. I am not sure it is more gratifying to sacrifice your own life in the flesh in order to contribute even more to the surplus value of a greedy university or corporate business than for a greedy church or a greedy Lord….

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Julia Kristeva, Marx and the Singularity of Paul

Roland Boer

> We may need to be slightly Marxist…[1]
>
> Now one realizes that one cannot just make the system of a society from the model of ideology. It is necessary to transform it. But not on this side of it, but by passing to the other side.[2]

This Marxist version of Julia Kristeva is not very well known. If her name means anything, it is Kristeva the theoretical and practical psychoanalyst, but hardly Marxist. Indeed, Kristeva may seem like a strange addition to a collection of essays on Marxist feminism, for Kristeva has both sought to efface Marx as far as possible and distance herself from certain forms of American liberal feminism. There is, however, a Marxist Kristeva, as well as a feminist Kristeva. If the feminist is a distinctly European one, then the Marxist is hidden deeply within her writings, peering occasionally from behind the page but much more present in her earlier texts. Needless to say I am interested in this hidden Marx within Kristeva's work.

I am also interested in the Kristeva who has written on the Bible. Of all the critical theorists who have done so, Kristeva would have to stand near the head of the list. So, instead of trying to locate what elements of her work are relevant for a Marxist feminist reading of the Bible, I focus on her own readings of the Bible, especially her interpretations of Paul in the New Testament. What follows, then, begins with Kristeva's readings of Paul, outlining her main arguments concerning love and the cures for the psychological pathologies in *Tales of Love*,[3] and then Paul's invention of the collective in *Strangers to Ourselves*.[4] From there I move on to recover the repressed Marx within Kristeva's work, and then finally I return to her readings of Paul to see what they look like with the help of Marx.

1. Julia Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews* (ed. Ross Mitchell Guberman; New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 70.
2. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 45.
3. Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 139-50.
4. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 76-83.

Succinctly put, my argument is that while her psychoanalytic readings of Paul fall short, a Marxist reading is able to offer a more comprehensive assessment of what is of value in her interpretation, especially on the questions of *agape* as something that comes from completely outside the human realm, the social and historical context of the pathologies cured by Paul, and the political implications of her focus on the collective.

Other-Than-Human Love

Kristeva's preferred method, one that she has been reworking consistently for more than three decades, is psychoanalysis. She practices it in her consulting rooms and in her writings, moving from individual to global society with ease, claiming that it offers, through a chance to restart psychical life, the only viable form of human freedom, indeed that it is the vivid, fleshly realization of Christianity.[5] The problem with this work is that it is at best patchy. There is some very good and there is some absolutely dreadful Kristeva. As far as the Bible is concerned, her readings of Ruth,[6] the Song of Songs,[7] or Hebrew language[8] are ordinary and superficial, if not simply bad. Kristeva trots out conventional, even conservative positions as though they are blindingly new discoveries. The reading of the Levitical taboos in *Powers of Horror*[9] is much better and contains a distinct insight or two that have been noticed in biblical studies.[10] If we thought that Kristeva's patchiness was restricted to her biblical interpretations—stretching herself a little too far perhaps—then we would be mistaken, for her theoretical work shows a similar oscillation between the good, the bad and the frightful. Given her tendency to offer sweeping analyses of a single theme, too often her work betrays a certain thinness. Thus, we find

5. Julia Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis, Volume 2* (trans. Jeanine Herman; New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 242. See also her translation of the biblical and theological elaborations on the death of Christ in psychoanalytic terms. Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 130-35.

6. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pp. 69-76.

7. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, pp. 83-100.

8. Julia Kristeva, *Language the Unknown: An Initiation into Linguistics* (trans. Anne M. Menke; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), pp. 98-103.

9. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (trans. Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 90-112.

10. Fiona Black (ed.), *The Artifice of Love: Grotesque Bodies and the Song of Songs* (London: Continuum, 2007).

a theme like melancholia[11] or the stranger[12] or love[13] or the abject[14] traced through signal points all the way from ancient Greece, via the Bible, and into the West. I find myself wanting the tangled materialist complexity of Marxist analysis, not least of which would be to trouble the assumed classicist narrative of such efforts. And like her biblical readings, some Kristeva is cringingly awful, such as 'Love will save us',[15] as are her naïve political comments[16] or sweeping social analyses based on anecdotes and personal encounters, whether they be of France or Europe or America or Bulgaria, efforts to pinpoint a global social malaise and offer a cure. When reading these analyses or those vast sweeping books, I find myself dubbing her 'The Analyst of the West', or indeed 'Earth's Analyst'.

Happily for this essay, the readings of Paul are among the better texts. Her two Paul texts need to be read with each other, one focusing on the formation of the individual subject via the theme of love from *Tales of Love*[17] and the other concerning the question of the stranger via a much more collective agenda in *Strangers to Ourselves*.[18] If the first moves from the individual to the collective, the second focuses solidly on the collective in terms of the *ekklesia*.

In the first of her two texts on Paul, 'God is Love',[19] Kristeva argues that the 'true revolution' of Christianity was its focus on *agape* as the centre of its message. Elevated over against *eros*, *agape* becomes in Paul theocentric: rather than human love of God, the key becomes God's love for human beings (Kristeva forgets the crucial role of *philia* in all of this). In fact, God is the locus of *agape* while human beings become the place of *pistis*: 'God is the first to love; as center, source, and gift, his love comes to us without our having to deserve it—it falls, strictly speaking, from heaven and imposes itself with the requirement of faith'.[20] If Kristeva sounds more like a theologian than a biblical critic, then her reliance on the Swedish theologian Anders Nygren's *Eros og Agape*[21] plays a large role. To be frank, I am less than impressed by Kristeva's concern with love. Indeed, given the steady stream of self-help and philosophical books on love, I propose at least half a century's ban on any discussion of love.

11. Kristeva, *Black Sun*.
12. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*.
13. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*.
14. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.
15. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 121.
16. Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, pp. 255-68.
17. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, pp. 139-50.
18. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pp. 76-83.
19. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, pp. 139-50.
20. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p. 140.
21. A. Nygren, *Eros and Agape* (trans. P.S. Watson; London: 1953).

However, I am more interested in the slips of her argument. One of those slips comes at the point where she speaks of a 'gift-love', of love as a disinterested gift that breaks out of a reciprocal gift-economy. The problem here is that without naming it directly, she is actually talking about grace, not love. Indeed, we might expect Kristeva to favour texts such as 1 Corinthians 13, but it is nowhere in sight. Her preference lies with Romans and its heavy emphasis on grace. In fact, the majority of her references are to Romans—Rom. 4.6; 5.6-11, 15, 20; 6.3, 5, 14; 8.31-37. In this light, her efforts to rope the texts on grace in Romans under the banner of love are less than convincing. Is not the gift another term for grace, and is not Paul's great discovery in Romans that of grace? The key texts have been rehearsed often enough, with the canonical decision to place the epistle to the Romans first playing a significant role. Thus, Paul winds himself up in the first chapters of Romans until he gets to the final verses of chapter 3, where he distinguishes sharply between justification (*dikaiosune*) through works of the law and justification through 'grace as a gift' (Rom. 3.20-26). This distinction then becomes either the law over against grace (Rom. 6.14) or works versus grace (Rom. 11.6). It is no great surprise that Paul's key myth should resonate through the various dimensions of this position, for grace is inseparable from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who was 'put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom. 4.25; see further 5.15-17; 6.14).

Reading Kristeva on Paul, I can't help notice that she sits in an odd position in relation to Pauline scholarship. On the one hand she shares a deep assumption with much of that scholarship, if not biblical scholarship in general: the letters are either good for you, or they are not (or perhaps a rare mix of the two). On the other hand, she is about as far as one could get from the various 'new perspectives' on Paul. Now, pondering the New Testament for me is a little like peering over a low fence at the somewhat unruly yard of a neighbour. But it is striking how much of that scholarship tries to make the text good for you if you read it. And if it is not, you try to detoxify it. Feminist scholarship on Paul is a good example of this, as—to name but a few—the efforts towards a liberating potential of Romans 8.22-23,[22] or the possibilities that emerge from Paul's use of birthing metaphors,[23] or the search for an anti-hierarchical strain

22. Luzia Sutter Rehmann, 'To Turn the Groaning into Labor: Romans 1.18-2.16', in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), pp. 74-84.

23. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 'Our Mother St Paul: Toward the Recovery of a Neglected Theme', in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* (ed. Levine and Blickenstaff), pp. 95-97.

in Paul's thought,[24] show only too well. I might add the efforts to come up with an anti-colonial[25] or liberating Paul,[26] or the eradication of anti-Semitism and sexism through a recasting of Paul as one element in that 'Jewish book',[27] the New Testament. Kristeva falls into the same trap: Paul's comments on love can be good for you if you read him in the right way. The work of Økland[28] and Fatum,[29] who argue that the fundamental images and constructions of space in Paul's work are inescapably male, come as welcome corrections to this tendency to detoxify Paul. Indeed, the biblical left has been and continues to be wary of Paul. He is after all the one who is responsible for ensuring that a distinct structure of patriarchy was locked into the very ideology of Christianity, for the dangerously conservative text in Romans 13 about being obedient to one's rulers, and who denigrated and argued for the sublimation of the libidinal dimensions of human existence in his idealization of celibacy (1 Corinthians 7), to name but a few of his more stellar achievements.

However, Kristeva is a long way from another major element of Pauline criticism. Indeed, the odd Pauline scholar might be forgiven for thinking that she has a wholly unreconstructed Paul in her sights. Love? Grace? Justification? Works? Are these not the catchwords of Pauline scholarship before the old 'new perspective' in which Paul was no longer read as a singular, introspective and apolitical theologian, but in terms of his context, especially that of Judaism?[30] As for what we might call the new 'new perspective', in which Paul must now be understood in the context of the Roman Empire and its imperial cult, Kristeva's Paul

24. Faith Kirkham Hawkins, 'Does Paul Make a Difference?' in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* (ed. Levine and Blickenstaff), pp. 169-82.

25. Sze-kar Wan, 'Collection for the Saints as Anticolonial Act: Implications of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction', in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation. Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), pp. 191-215.

26. Allen Dwight Callahan, 'Paul, Ekklesia, and Emancipation in Corinth: A Coda on Liberation Theology', in *Paul and Politics* (ed. Horsley), pp. 216-23.

27. Luise Schottroff, '"Law-Free Gentile Christianity"—What About the Women? Feminist Analyses and Alternatives', in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* (ed. Levine and Blickenstaff), pp. 183-94.

28. Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005).

29. Fatum Lone, 'Image of God and Glory of Man: Women in the Pauline Congregations', in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Traditions* (ed. K.E. Børresen; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), pp. 50-133.

30. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

seems very remote indeed.[31] If one were to remain within the rarefied confines of Pauline scholarship, with its unquestioned assumption that the key to understanding Paul lies in some crucial element of his context, it would be all too easy to dismiss Kristeva. At their worst, such efforts are little more than hagiography, or 'rationalistic paraphrase' as Niels-Peter Lemche calls it in a different context.[32] They simply rewrite the narrative of Paul in a slightly different way. At their best, they do indeed shed new light on Paul in terms of his context, although I can't help the thought that Paul must have been extraordinarily astute to be in touch with all these various currents of Hellenistic thought and culture.

31. Context is the key, it seems. The new 'new perspective' has begun to overtake the old 'new perspective' in which Paul was to be understood in relation to Judaism, which was itself a response to the introspective, theological Paul. Despite the welcome correction of focusing on Paul's Hellenistic context, it is really a variation of the underlying focus on context itself. In other words, history remains the *sine qua non* of Pauline studies, and for Pauline scholarship that means going back and sorting out what Paul 'really' meant in his first century context. What one needs to do is locate an as yet neglected feature of this context, a feature that then becomes the secret passage to a new understanding of Paul. So we find one study after another immersing itself ever more deeply into, for instance, the ideological place of the androgyne as the answer to the tension between universalism and dualism in Paul's writings (Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994], Daniel Boyarin, 'Paul and Genealogy of Gender', in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* [ed. Levine and Blickenstaff], pp. 1-12), or the Stoics who provide the inescapable philosophical and social background for Paul's thought (Diana Swancutt, 'Sexy Stoics and the Reading of Romans 1.18-2.16', in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* [ed. Levine and Blickenstaff], pp. 95-97), so much so that he is a philosopher first (Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000]), or the various *encomia*, *progymnasmata*, *physiognomics* and other rhetorical treatises that provide us with a picture of collective 'Mediterranean' notions of personality that must not be confused with 'Western' individualist notions in our understanding of Paul (Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personaility* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996]), or inheritance rights throughout the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome which give some sense to Paul's theme of adoption (Kathleen E. Corley, 'Women's Inheritance Rights in Antiquity and Paul's Metaphor of Adoption', in *A Feminist Companion to Paul* [ed. Levine and Blickenstaff], pp. 98-121), or Hellenistic perceptions of sexuality and the body that become the necessary background for reading Paul (Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995]), or the *psychagogia*, the 'leading of souls' that runs through the moral philosophy of Greece and Rome which give us a sense of what Paul is on about in Philippians (James A. Smith, *Marks of an Apostle: Deconstruction, Philippians, and Problematizing Pauline Theology* [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005]).

32. Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1998), p. 163.

Kristeva's reading of Paul on love unwittingly raises a deeper problem with this Pauline scholarship in its sustained flight from the older, theological readings of Paul: such scholarship kids itself if it thinks it is free from the long theological traditions that shape not merely biblical scholarship, but also societies and cultures. A scholar from Denmark will bear indelible traces of the Danish Lutheran Church, while one from Bulgaria would be hard put to deny the long Orthodox heritage of reading Paul, and so on. Such influence may operate at a personal level (how many biblical scholars are not also believers and members of Church or Synagogue?), an institutional one (the place of biblical studies within an educational establishment) or a cultural level (in the broad framework of the societies in which such scholars work).

At this point Kristeva falls short. Through her unfashionable emphasis on love, even grace in Paul, she may share the desire to make Paul good for you, or even unwittingly reveal the theological underpinnings of the current flurry of 'new perspectives' on Paul. But where she comes up short is in the inherently political nature of the old Pauline slogans such as justification, grace, sin, the law, works and (dare I say it?) love, slogans that have once again recovered their vital contemporary importance. At this point, however, we need Marx. But he will have to wait for a moment or two.

Crucifying the Pathologies

The catch with the focus on love, indeed on God's love, is that it neatly sidesteps another of Paul's recurring themes—the wrath of God with its own delicious kick. Paul is no hippy, and love is not all there is, but just when we think his diatribes against 'unnatural' passions really wind up to a hysterical crescendo, he gives it all a twist that puts everyone in the same boat (see Romans 1.18-32 and the twist in Romans 2.1-11). In short, no-one stands above anyone else and each person is subject to God's wrath. So how does Kristeva deal with this other theme of Paul's thought? She does so through Paul's narrative of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For her the sacrifice of the body of the son is the distinctive and scandalous element of *agape*. But what intrigues me is her argument that Paul's standard narrative about Jesus Christ—the predictions in the Hebrew prophets, his death and resurrection, his designation as son of God, and the gifts of grace and faith—cuts through nearly all the psychological pathologies. As for Paul, he never fails to seize an opportunity to trot the narrative out (see, for instance Romans 1.2-6; 3.21-6; 4.24-5; 5.6-11; 6.3-11; 8.11, 32; 10.9; 14.8-9 and so on). For Kristeva, Paul's genius is that this narrative of Christ's temporary death is able to deal with narcissism, masochism, fantasy, repression, death drive and oral sadism.

I suspect there is something in this point, one that comes out of Kristeva's own interests. Let me take masochism as an example and examine it a little more closely. While *agape* goes beyond masochism, it must do so by traversing masochism. There are two steps in Kristeva's argument. To begin with, she dives into Paul's convoluted arguments to come up with nothing other than a variation of the scapegoat. Here is Kristeva: 'Sacrifice is an offering that, out of a substance, creates Meaning for the Other and, consequently, for the social group that is dependent on it'.[33] In other words, you obliterate something concrete—a red heifer, a goat, a human being—in order to produce the abstract sense of the group. The most common way in which that happens is to transfer the group's 'sins' symbolically onto the scapegoat and then cast all this evil out of the community for the wellbeing of that community. The catch here is that you create the symbolic notion of the group in the very process of identifying what is good and bad about it. The second step picks up Rom. 6.5: 'If in union with Christ we have imitated (*omoioma*) his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection'. From imitation we move via identification with the victim to the internalization of murder and thence to masochism. Kristeva does not shy away from stating that Paul's logic is masochistic—'Jubilatory suffering inflicted on one's own body by a supreme and cherished authority probably is the trait they [Paul's argument and other masochistic narratives] have in common'.[34] But Paul goes beyond it by making the masochism analogous rather than real. Just as the initial sacrifice was symbolic rather than real, so the second, masochistic sacrifice is analogous and not real. But note how Paul does it: Christ intervenes in order to overcome the pathology. Here he is the means by which masochism becomes analogous: believers die in a manner *analogous* to Christ, not *as* Christ.

What about the other pathologies? Paul's thought leads to one pathology after another, but in each case he either negates or goes beyond the pathology in question, and, just as in the case of masochism, each time he does so by means of Christ. Thus *fantasy* is neutralized by making the passion of the cross a universal narrative. This short-circuits fantasy since we can no longer identify ourselves individually as Christ. Further, *repression* is avoided by means of idealizing one's own death; that is, one's death is brought to the fore, rather than repressed, in the narrative of Christ's death and resurrection.[35] So also do we avoid the destructive

33. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, pp. 142-33.

34. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p. 143.

35. Or, as Kristeva puts it *New Maladies of the Soul*, the taboos of Leviticus 'offer a way to bypass the necessary repression of the desire for murder. Since such a desire is primarily a desire to murder the mother, by enabling a separation from the mother,

path of the *death drive* (unlike Sade or Artaud), since this narrative is a collective one that prevents us from identifying with the Father on our own, of writing ourselves into the story. If repression and the death drive are negated, *narcissism* is appropriated and then overcome. First, the appropriation: the acceptance of death, as the limit of negative narcissism, becomes the way to achieve salvation. Then the overcoming: Paul simply shifts the death onto Christ, and so it ceases to be narcissism, since it is focussed on another (Kristeva quotes Gal. 2.20 at this point). We still have the salvation, but no longer the narcissism. Since narcissism is so close to Paul's logic, Kristeva will later argue that the command to love your neighbour as yourself completes the overcoming of narcissim. Finally, *oral sadism* is conquered by the mediation of Christ: placed in between the self and its destructive hunger, Christ redirects oral sadism. Since oral sadism is primarily directed at the mother, the Son overcomes this by stepping in between and being eaten himself. Kristeva is of course referring to the Eucharist or the love-feast. There is no sadistic satisfaction in such an eating of the Son of the Father (not the mother), and so it becomes the means for identification with the Father.

The pattern is remarkably similar: fantasy, repression, the death drive, narcissism, oral sadism and even masochism are either negated or traversed by means of Christ. To some extent, Kristeva has a point concerning these crucified pathologies in Paul. But I find myself longing for some good old history, some of the better versions of those intense concerns with Paul's context that I discussed in the previous section. However, all Kristeva can manage on the historical question is that the success of the new line of thought articulated by Paul answered problems that had arisen within Paul's Hellenistic context. Much more can be said, but before I can do that we will need to recover the hidden Marx in Kristeva's work.

Collectives

Among the list of the various pathologies, there is one that Kristeva does not mention—psychosis. Or rather, she doesn't mention it in *Tales of Love*. The section on Paul in *Strangers to Ourselves* is a different story, for there we find the idea that Paul's *ekklesia* speaks to psychic distress and soothes psychosis (which is usually divided into schizophrenia and

specifically in terms of transforming sacrifice into a language and system of meaning, the Bible defuses such a desire'. Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul* (trans. Ross Mitchell Guberman; New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 120. I must confess that this focus on the maternal function does not seem particularly radical.

paranoia). To my mind, Kristeva's enthusiasm for the *ekklesia* is where the collective dimension of her feminism comes into its own.[36]

As before, I track Kristeva's argument in order to locate its shortcomings. Although she does not raise the question of psychosis in the section on Paul in *Tales of Love*, Kristeva does come around to the collective in that text, even if it is via the individual. Here she argues that the final step of Paul's reworking of *agape* is love of one's neighbour, or more specifically loving one's neighbour as oneself (Kristeva quotes Gal. 5.14,[37] but see also Rom. 13.8-10). And just in case narcissism should creep in the back door, Kristeva makes sure she points out that the self now includes neighbours, foreigners and sinners in the definition of 'Self'. The capital 'S' is important here, for it is a collective Self. This point comes out much more clearly in the passage from *Strangers to Ourselves*. The last thing we could say in this text is that Kristeva has an unreconstructed Paul in mind: over against the distinctly Protestant emphasis on an introspective and individualist Paul, or the great polemic of the Enlightenment in which the private individual is the point from which one must consider any group or society, or indeed Margaret Thatcher's chilling comment, 'there is no society', in *Strangers to Ourselves*[38] Kristeva sides firmly with the collective, specifically the *ekklesia*. This *ekklesia* is a 'community of foreigners'.[39] It is an 'ideal community', 'an original entity', a 'messianism that includes all of humankind'.[40] Note carefully Kristeva's language: although we might suspect she is getting carried away in all the eschatological excitement, what she sees here is the image of a transformed society. This sense of a new society is one of the most Marxist *and* feminist elements in Kristeva's work, as we will see in a few moments.

Indeed, Paul is not only a politician, for he is 'a psychologist, and if the institution he sets up is also political, its efficiency rests on the psychological intuition of its founder'.[41] And what marks that new community is that it speaks to people's *psychic* distress, or rather spoke to the psychic distress of Hellenistic people and does so presumably today.[42] More specifically,

36. In contrast to her reading in *New Maladies of the Soul* (pp. 122-23) where the focus on 'psychic conflicts that border on psychosis' is of a distinctly individualist focus.

37. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, p. 146.

38. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pp. 77-83.

39. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 80.

40. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 80.

41. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 82.

42. For Kristeva, this is also a feature of sacred texts more generally: 'If it is true that all texts considered "sacred" refer to borderline states of subjectivity, we have reason to reflect upon these states, especially since the biblical narrator is familiar with them'. Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, p. 117.

the *ekklesia* soothes psychosis: it answers the schizophrenic split of the foreigner, for the *ekklesia* is by its very nature a foreign collective. But Kristeva goes further, for the *ekklesia* embodies, assumes within itself this psychosis. The way this works is that instead of trying to insert foreigners into an existing social body, Paul recognizes the foreigner's split between two countries and transforms it into the passage between and negotiation of two psychic domains—between flesh and spirit, life and death, crucifixion and resurrection in a body that is simultaneously the group and Christ's body (see Rom. 12.4-5). Their external division becomes an internal one, internal to the collective's construction and the individual's psyche. The way Paul soothes such psychosis is that this split is 'experienced as a transition toward a spiritual liberation starting from and within a concrete body'.[43]

I must admit that I find Kristeva's reading appealing, although not quite for the reasons she provides. I will come back to this question in the conclusion, for at this point I need to deal with a few problems. Firstly, as I pointed out earlier, Kristeva shares with some critics, feminists among them, the idea that reading Paul can be good for you; or rather, that if we search carefully we can redeem or liberate Paul. For instance, Hawkins argues that we can locate an anti-hierarchical strain in Paul's thought.[44] Horsley agrees, for in 1 Corinthians he finds an *ekklesia* that is an egalitarian alternative society to the Roman patronage system. Texts such as 1 Cor. 5.9-13; 6.1-11 and 10.14-22 reveal exclusive, eschatological communities that draw from but do not participate in wider imperial society.[45]

The problem with such a reading lies in the language used: Paul uses exactly the same language in modelling an alternative social, political and religious *ekklesia* to those focused on the Imperial cult. Is it really an alternative, or another of the same? Kittredge, for one, is wary.[46] She argues that since political language shapes the internal organization of the *ekklesia*, it threatens to replicate the patriarchal structures of the other bodies on which it is modelled, particularly in terms of patriarchal marriage (her focus is 1 Cor. 14.34-35). Kittredge's hesitation echoes that of Økland,[47] who makes use of Marxist studies of space in conjunction

43. Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 82.

44. Hawkins, 'Does Paul Make a Difference?'

45. Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), Richard A. Horsley, 'Rhetoric and Empire—and 1 Corinthians', in *Paul and Politics* (ed. Horsley), pp. 72-102.

46. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, 'Corinthian Women Prophets and Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians', in *Paul and Politics* (ed. Horsley), pp. 103-109.

47. Økland, *Women in Their Place*.

with feminist and ritual studies to reconfigure the domestic politics of the Corinthian correspondence. Focusing on 1 Corinthians 11–14—the part that deals with ritual gatherings—Økland argues that Paul clearly demarcates the 'sanctuary space' of the *ekklesia* by means of a gender hierarchy of cosmic proportions, the model of the male body of Christ and women's dress and speech. She makes use of ancient literary texts, ritual materials, archaeological evidence on gender roles, as well as some sophisticated theoretical work in Marxism and feminist studies, to argue that such a 'sanctuary space' is distinct from the Hellenistic context of public and private space, that it is inescapably gendered, and that the Corinthian correspondence begins to mark a shift from gender segregation into a hierarchical integration in which the male was closer to the godhead. Alternative this *ekklesia* may be, but that doesn't make it any more egalitarian than the bodies it opposes.

The second problem follows from the first. For Kristeva, the *ekklesia* becomes something of a therapeutic device. Thus, if we look at Romans, we soon find Jews and Greeks, Greek and barbarian, wise and foolish, mortal and immortal, and on and on, along with a distinct narrative to account for the passage between for these splits. But what if we do a Foucauldian flip? What if, in the very act of providing therapy for psychosis, Paul's theory and practice of *ekklesia* may in fact be responsible for psychosis and other pathologies in the first place? We need to keep this question constantly in mind, since Paul's soothing *ekklesia* does not provide therapeutics for all—hierarchical and intolerant, it has a history of repressing sexual and gender difference, of denigrating the libidinal, of expelling or absorbing heretics, and of being intolerant to the foreigner.

Thirdly, Kristeva's picture of a great universal collective of happy ex-psychotics is not quite the political collective that emerges from Paul's texts. Here I would like to introduce an insight from Georgio Agamben that has a direct bearing on the collective: he argues that Paul continually introduces oppositions that undermine his earlier ones. For example, if we assume that one of Paul's great splits is between Jew and Greek (e.g. Rom. 1.16), then he has already unsettled this with the earlier one between Greeks and barbarians (Rom. 1.14). Are the Jews barbarians? Or are the Greeks split themselves? Agamben develops this much further to argue that Paul continually cuts across his binaries in new ways—flesh and spirit, grace and works, life and death, grace and law, sin and law, the law of God and the law of sin, and so on—so that we end up with a highly unstable collective. This instability intrigues me, for it provides a somewhat different image of the *ekklesia*. Not quite the same as the politico-religious gatherings on which it was modelled, different yet similar, egalitarian, segregated and hierarchical, providing an answer for and yet perpetuating pathologies, it is a curious body indeed. What is going

on here? Well, for the answer to that question we need a more Marxist Kristeva.

A Marxist Kristeva

On three occasions now I have reached a moment when my discussion of Kristeva has really required a Marxist angle, a Marxist Kristeva as I have dubbed her. There is no need, however, to add Marx to Kristeva's analysis, to bring him in as *deus ex machina* who can resolve all the difficulties of her interpretation. Rather, he lies hidden within her work, half-forgotten and buried in a dark corner of her mind. In this section I track the strategies by which Kristeva sidelines, conceals and bypasses Marx while never really being able to get rid of him.[48]

We need to work backwards to find Marx in Kristeva, a little like her native Bulgarian tongue that she claims to have all but lost.[49] Here I would like to focus on a key essay written in 1968, 'Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science',[50] an essay that is an extended engagement with Marx. At the end of the article we find a Marx who is trumped by Freud. Although Kristeva remains faithful to Marx's critical perspective, she needs to move past him, to show where he falls short.

As far as her 'Semiotics' essay is concerned, two parts of her argument interest me. Firstly, Kristeva identifies what she sees as Marx's great insight, namely the immanent method. Secondly, she argues that for all his insight, Marx falls short when he comes to discuss the key categories of production and work. At this point, according to Kristeva, Freud provides a far better analysis.

I deal with these two points in reverse. Marx falls short, argues Kristeva, by focusing on the questions of production and work. This is fine as far it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Freud's great insight was to draw attention to the realm of *pre*-production, and that is located in nothing other than the unconscious. To bring home her point, Kristeva focuses on Freud's category of the 'dream-work'. Here Freud reveals a different type of work that precedes and pre-conditions Marx's notion of work. In the dream-work, where the unconscious and scattered patterns of the dream take on a definite narrative sequence, where the unconscious and

48. Here she has much in common with Slavoj Žižek, for both of them reflect in their personal and intellectual trajectories the recent history of Eastern Europe. See Roland Boer, 'The Search for Redemption: Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek on Marx, Psychoanalysis and Religion', *Filozofija i Društvo (Philosophy and Society)* 32.1 (2007), pp. 153-76.

49. Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, pp. 242-23.

50. Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader* (ed. Toril Moi; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 74-88.

conscious intersect, semiotics takes root in the play of signs in the dream. And for Kristeva, at this point in her thought, a semiotics indebted to Freud is the way forward from Marx.

In this early essay, Kristeva trumps Marx by identifying a more original cause—the dream-work—that lies beneath Marx's categories of work and production. Now, while we might suspect that she has fallen into the trap of identifying original causes, at least with Marx she is not content to rest with such an argument. In her later work she asserts time and again that psychoanalysis outruns Marx in the final stages, providing a more comprehensive answer than he ever could. Thus, Freud achieves Marx's program of trying to unite the increasingly fragmented fields of human activity, or at least those separated fields of theory and action.[51] Further, Freudian social analyses and solutions outperform an exhausted socialism.[52] For Kristeva, then, psychoanalysis is not merely more comprehensive than Marxism, but it also provides the personal, social and political healing that socialism fails to provide.[53]

I am, however, reading Kristeva's 'Semiotics' essay backwards. Earlier in the essay she identifies Marx's great insight, what she calls his crucial 'epistemological break'.[54] And that is, quite simply, the immanent method, a method that emerges from the item or work in question rather than from outside. It also means that criticism must arise from the object under criticism. Thus, if we want to interpret the work of someone, say, like Kristeva, it means that we will use their own methods to interpret them. For Kristeva, Marx is 'the first to practise' this method.[55]

Kristeva's interest, at least at this moment in her thought, is on the implications of Marx's insight for semiotics.[56] Thus, 'No form of semiotics, therefore, can exist other than as a critique of semiotics'. Or, in the dense detail of her early writing, semiotics is the very act of producing models. Let me quote Kristeva again: it is 'a formalization or production of models. Thus, when we say semiotics, we mean the (as yet unrealized) development of *models*, that is, of formal systems whose structure is isomorphic or analogous to the structure of another system (the system under study)'.[57]

51. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, pp. 151, 98.
52. Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, pp. 209-10.
53. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, pp. 24-25.
54. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 79.
55. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 78. In her early *Revolution in Poetic Language*, she also gives Marx his due for pointing out that the signifying process lies outside the sphere of material production. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (trans. Margaret Waller; New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 105.
56. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 78.
57. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 76.

Marx, it seems, couldn't be more important, marking a fundamental break in the history of knowledge. In effect, Marx subverts 'the terms of a preceding science'[58] in the terms of that science itself. So he overturns economics by means of economics. For instance, he takes the term 'surplus value' from the mercantilists (Smith, Ricardo *et al.*) and shows how the term means not the 'addition to the value of a product' but the extraction of profit in the wage-relation of work. The key is that he does so *from within* the theories of the mercantilists. Like their own noses, they simply cannot see the proper origins of surplus value. Once this is done, we get the generation of a whole new set of terms that marks the rise of a new science.[59]

Marx is even more important for Kristeva than might at first appear. This essay on semiotics is not the only place where Kristeva must rely on Marx. Let me give a few examples where Kristeva cannot dispense with Marx, especially at a sticky spot in her argument. The first is historical, the second political and the third deals with feminism. In an effort to deal with the rise of the avant-garde in literature—the moment of modernism from the end of the nineteenth century and embodied in the work of Lautréamont, Mallarmé and Bataille—Kristeva is able to mix good Marxist social theory with the best of them. At moments like these, her efforts to depict the big picture with a few firm, rapidly drawn lines, work extremely well. Thus the avant-garde is a signal and effort to deal with the massive changes that took place with the comprehensive onset and spread of capitalism: 'A new phenomenon has arisen since the rise to power of the bourgeoisie, the onset of the free market, the inflation of capital permeating relationships of production and reproduction and dominating them, and the crisis of the patriarchal family'.[60] At this moment of crisis in state, family and religion, capitalist excess and restructuring take precedence over restraint and structure. Everything must give way! Here of course, she is paraphrasing the famous statement concerning the constant revolutionizing of capitalism in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*—'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind'.[61] Psychoanalysis then becomes one of the

58. Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 80.

59. Kristeva herself is rather well-known for a series of new terms—semanalyse, abjection, intertextuality and so on—at the emergence, or even the hint or semblance of an emergence, of a new method or idea.

60. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 96.

61. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (trans. 1888 Samuel Moore in cooperation with Frederick Engels; Marx/Engels Internet Archive [marxists.org], 2004). The full paragraph reads: 'The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations

new modes of dealing with such profound social and economic changes, especially the relationship between the unconscious and the social restrictions Freud argued were crucial for any society to function.[62]

Secondly, on a more political note, Kristeva's definition of the 'left' is a moment of sheer insight. Rather than seeing it as one side of the eternal shifting binary of left and right in our current political landscape, she sees the left as 'the locus where the question of politics, and above all of the limits of the political (from the viewpoint of symbolic formations, that is, the acquisition of culture and knowledge), can be formulated and dealt with'.[63] A psychoanalytic version, if you will, of the Marxist notion of the 'withering away of the state'. But it is also an extraordinary recognition of the Marxist point that politics is, after all, part of the domain of culture and religion and knowledge and ideology, *and* the point that this is what Lacan's notion of the Symbolic—of language and society and culture—is really on about. In the crossover, then, between Lacan's Symbolic and Marx's superstructure we find politics. But it is not only a point where political battles are fought, but where the left identifies itself by identifying the limits of politics and thinking beyond them.

Finally, and crucially for my engagement, when she faces difficulties in her dealings with feminism, Kristeva reverts occasionally to Marxism. She has, infamously, kept feminism at an arm's length, especially American liberal feminism. She teases such an audience with comments like the one concerning the phallus, which, as 'numerous scholars' have shown, is indeed the basis of signification and religion.[64] More substantially, in her trilogy, *Female Genius*, she focuses on three women who were independent from and placed themselves, like Kristeva herself, above and

of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his, real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind'.

62. For other examples, see Kristeva's argument for a different social context for gender relations in China (*Julia Kristeva Interviews*, pp. 100-101), or the analysis of the dilemmas faced by Mitterand's socialism in France (*Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 154).

63. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 174.

64. Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis, Volume 1* (trans. Jeanine Herman; New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 88.

beyond feminism as well as Marxism—Hannah Arendt, Melanie Klein and Colette.[65] From this perspective, Kristeva can then view feminism in terms of three overlapping stages: the demand for political rights by the suffragettes; the assertion of ontological equality; and, since May '68, the search for sexual difference.[66] The problem, as far as Kristeva is concerned, is that feminism is trapped between two dogmatisms,[67] either the dogmatism of 'leftism', as she tends to call it, or a conservative dogmatism of patriarchy and the right. Feminism tends either to mirror this second dogmatism, the one that it opposes, or take up communist dogmatism in its drive for liberation for all women. Caught between a rock and a hard place, it will not be long before she trots out the conventional argument that we need to avoid the two totalitarian extremes of Fascism and Stalinism—a refrain from her earliest texts[68]—by means of some mythical middle way. Otherwise, feminism finds itself slipping into either form of totalitarianism.

Her answer to this problem is as important as it is intriguing. In response to feminist agendas for social change based on gender, she states:

> …what is happening now, in Eastern countries, is that the collapse of the Marxist and socialist idea is showing something else. It shows that we can arrive at a better society not before bourgeois individualism but after. I think they ought to revise their ideas, seeing what is happening in the East now. Because many feminist ideas were unconsciously calculated and modeled on the image of communist and Marxist countries, as if a progressive and communitarian ideology could produce the economy of bourgeois society. *Now one realizes that one cannot just make the system of a society from the model of ideology. It is necessary to transform it*. But not on this side of it, but by passing to the other side.[69]

Just when I began to suspect that Kristeva was yet another liberal in disguise, or perhaps even a conservative who bemoans a supposed religious crisis generated by the deterioration of belief[70] and thereby the

65. Julia Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt* (trans. Ross Guberman; New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); *Melanie Klein* (trans. Ross Guberman; New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); *Colette* (trans. Jane Marie Todd; New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

66. Kristeva, *Colette*, p. 404.

67. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 7.

68. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 23.

69. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 45, emphasis added.

70. Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, p. 221.

end of viable revolt,[71] she produces an extraordinarily central Marxist point. Too often Kristeva invokes terms such as freedom and democracy (without any qualifiers), or 'plurality of consciences'[72] or the importance of the individual, and dismisses communism as inherently totalizing. But here she produces a statement that would have been heresy in the countries of 'actually existing socialism' such as Bulgaria, but one that is deeply faithful to Marx. Firstly, against any notion of idealism, she states bluntly that an ideology—here feminism—cannot a society make. Secondly, feminism, understood as a progressive and communitarian ideology, is incompatible with bourgeois society.[73] You cannot just take a Marxist ideology and graft it onto a capitalist one. Thirdly, the society desired by feminism *and* communism must come *after* bourgeois individualism—i.e. liberalism—and not before. This flies in the face of the argument that became increasingly common in former communist countries, namely that it was possible to bypass fully-fledged capitalism and move straight to communism.[74] Here Kristeva calls on the Marx who argues that the full run of capitalism must be experienced first before anything different may come into being. One might argue that with globalization, brought about by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, we are only beginning to glimpse what a full capitalism might be, what a fully commodified world might look like.

This is the Marxist Kristeva who interests me. There are four points that may be drawn from the quotation above: no gender without political economics; no ideological change without social and economic change; no mismatches between bourgeois ideology and feminism; a communitarian rather than an individual feminism; in short, Marxist feminism rather than bourgeois feminism, but a Marxist feminism willing to bide its time and let capitalism run its course. Given the variety of feminisms that make up a multifaceted movement, Kristeva clearly sides with a communitarian and progressive feminism rather than an individualist and liberal feminism that focuses on rights. In other words, the individual has a place but only when one begins from the collective.

71. Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*, p. 24.

72. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 51.

73. She makes a very similar point concerning the incompatibility between Mitterand's socialist agenda and France's capitalist economy in the context of the European common market. Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva Interviews*, p. 154.

74. In a further twist that echoes Chinese arguments, it is sometimes asserted in post-communist countries that there are many capitalisms and there a gentler form might grow. I am rather sceptical, especially after spending some time in a number of Eastern European countries.

Conclusion

Now that a more Marxist Kristeva has emerged, it is time to reiterate her main points on Paul. On love: although Kristeva argues that *agape* is a love that comes entirely from outside any human action or causation, and although she also evokes the traditional theological category of grace, yet she falls short on the political implications of her argument. On the pathologies: for all the insight that Paul provides a means for curing, or rather, crucifying the various pathologies, she is woefully thin on why this might have been the case for economic and historical reasons. On the collective: her welcome focus, via the *ekklesia* in Paul, on the collective as a new society comes to ground in the image of a universal collective of happy ex-psychotics who have all been able to negotiate the tension between two psychic domains, passing from a concrete body to a spiritual domain.

One might be forgiven for thinking that Kristeva is still searching for the redemption in Christianity and psychoanalysis that Marxism failed to deliver.[75] But what happens to these three points when we allow Kristeva's repressed Marxism a chance to speak? There are two answers, one relating to love and the other to the pathologies and the collective. Now, the point Kristeva almost reaches in her discussion of love is that Paul's few letters are the great site in which ecclesiastical, cultural and political battles have been and continue to be fought. I need only mention the long political struggles around the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, especially the infamous Thirty Years War (1618–48) between the various alliances of Roman Catholics and Protestants. That the Reformers stressed grace, justification and predestination, while in response the Roman Catholics took up Molinism, with its emphasis on giving human beings as much involvement as possible in ensuring their own salvation,[76] shows how deeply these theological slogans provided the language in which these cultural and political oppositions took shape.

75. See further Boer, 'The Search for Redemption', pp. 153-76.

76. Attributed to Luis de Molina (1535–1600), especially his *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis* of 1588. Over against the Reformers, Molina gave as much room as possible to human works and obedience to the divine commandments. Basically, Molina argued that freely chosen human cooperation with the gift of grace was the ultimate cause of the efficacy of grace. This effectiveness, which boils down to the ability of human beings genuinely to obey God, comes not from grace itself, but from the human decision to obey. Molinism just escapes espousing self-earned salvation by arguing that the free act of human beings to cooperate with God is itself foreknown by God. In short, we can get to the line, but we need a helping hand to get over it. I hardly need to point out its conscious opposition to the Reformers.

If we thought that these days are well and truly past, that the time when the Bible provided the language of politics belongs to a dim and distant memory, then we need to think again. While Kristeva gets to the edge of such analysis, hampered as she is by her devotion to psychoanalysis, other Marxist readers of Paul throw into relief the inescapably political nature of Paul's texts. I think here of Alain Badiou's *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*.[77] For Badiou, Paul is the first militant who outlines the structure of the event via his doctrine of grace, and who thereby establishes a political group faithful to that event. Badiou is interested firstly in the way Paul deals with the resurrection, which is in terms of the notion of grace, and secondly in the way it can be turned into a materialist, political and militant doctrine. How does he do this? Grace emphasizes what is inexplicable, unexpected, what comes from outside human experience and causality. In Italy, Georgio Agamben also responded to Badiou's interpretation with a very different take that focused on the messianic and remnant themes in Paul, themes that keep alive the possibility of political change.[78] Standing at a variance to all of these, there was the 'spiritual testament' of Jacob Taubes, his last lectures that were transcribed from an audio tape and translated as *The Political Theology of Paul*.[79] Now, none of these characters are biblical critics: they are in fact philosophers of different Marxist hues, and they show once again how Paul's tortured texts are as relevant as ever at a political level.

What, then, are we to make of Kristeva's concern with other-than-human love? Rather than her catholic-cum-hippy reading of Paul on *agape*, these themes of Paul are inescapably political. In that light her stress on the external and undeserved nature of *agape* (really a code for *charis*, grace) has some mileage. The great political insight here is that political, cultural and socio-economic change does not necessarily rely on human agency. Nearly all theories of substantial and qualitative political change rely in some form on human agency. The catch, of course, is that most such theories rely on models of past change, most notably the shift from feudalism to capitalism. What if, by contrast, the future agency for such change was to come from non-human sources? I think here of the ultimate contradiction between unlimited capitalism and a limited planet that I have argued for elsewhere.[80]

77. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (trans. Ray Brassier; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

78. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (trans. Patricia Dailey; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

79. Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul* (trans. D Hollander; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

80. Roland Boer, *Political Myth* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, in press).

As far as the pathologies and the collective are concerned, I found myself wanting a decent dose of history to make a little more sense of her argument that Paul provides a collective means for dealing with these psychic problems. On that score, I am intrigued by the recent focus on the Roman Empire as the context for Paul's thought, and indeed the New Testament as such. Richard Horsley[81] has been instrumental in this work, but he does not in the end go far enough. Horsley and those who follow him focus on the extraordinary transformations brought about in the Roman Empire by Augustus: the full-fledged development of the cult and gospel of the Emperor, the centralization of patron-client relations in the emperor, and the profound impacts of such changes in regional cities such as Ephesus and Corinth. Above all the infamous *pax Romana* turns out to be a system of violence, blood, systematic destruction and enslavement in order to expand and maintain the empire. Here is Horsley:

> During the first century BCE Roman warlords took over the eastern Mediterranean, including Judea, where Pompey's troops defiled the Jerusalem Temple in retaliation for the resistance of the priests. The massive acts of periodic reconquest of the rebellious Judean and Galilean people included *thousands enslaved* at Magdala/Tarichaea in Galilee in 52-51 BCE, *mass enslavement* in and around Sepphoris (near Nazareth) and thousands crucified at Emmaus in Judea in 4 BCE, and the systematic devastation of villages and towns, destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and *mass enslavement* in 67-70 CE. In the area of Paul's mission, the Romans ruthlessly sacked and torched Corinth, one of the most illustrious Greek cities, slaughtered its men, and *enslaved* its women and children in 146 BCE.[82]

Was it merely the Emperor, warlords and the Romans themselves who are responsible for such acts? Such a concern with their agency loses sight of the political and economic issues at stake. One of the basic signs of change in social formations is a high level of violence, social unrest and conflict as a new system imposes itself on an older established one. Such troubled transitions produce displacement, tension and violence, in demographic, economic, social, political and *psychological* terms. I have highlighted the references to enslavement in my quotation from Horsley, for the Greeks and especially the Romans brought a new economic system to their Empire, a slave-based economic system in which the slaves did all the work and the relatively few 'citizens' did not.[83] In conventional

81. Richard A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

82. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire*, pp. 10-11, emphasis added.

83. See Sheila Briggs' useful study of Paul and slavery, although a more systematic treatment indebted to Marxist analysis would have strengthened her study. Sheila Briggs, 'Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society', in *Paul and Politics* (ed. Horsley), pp. 110-23.

Marxist terms, the extraction of surplus value—what the slaves produced above their needs for subsistence—was extracted from them by those who owned them, thereby generating and maintaining their positions of wealth and power.[84]

What we have then at the most basic level is a transition from what I have elsewhere termed a Sacred Economy[85] to a slave system, a brutal shift in Marxist terms from one mode of production to another. This transition gradually transformed the Roman Empire. The imposition of a different economic and social system took place in a piecemeal fashion through systematic violence and disruption, especially in the three or four centuries at the turn of the era. So I would argue that the various pathologies that Kristeva sees answered in Paul's missives may be regarded as the manifestations at a psychic level of such a massive and brutal transition. The troubled genius of Paul, then, is that he may unwittingly have found a myth—the crucified and risen Jesus—that provided a means of dealing with these pathologies.

So also with the ambiguous and unstable *ekklesia*: it seems to me that Paul's collective is a political, religious and psychological answer to the brutal changes everywhere apparent in economic and political forms. His response, as the old socio-psychological point would have it, was to provide unwittingly the forms that would facilitate the shift into the different slave-based social formation. It is not for nothing that this answer would become the ideology and practice of the later Roman Empire.

These are the types of conclusions a more Marxist Kristeva might make. But we can see the various possibilities already within her own readings, for Kristeva does want to retrieve Paul, especially one who provides a transformative focus on *agape* and *ekklesia* and for whom the secret is the myth of the death and resurrection of Christ. Even more, she wants a Paul whose thought and collective is innovative, therapeutic and unique. Is this not what she wants when she lets her feminist and Marxist wishes come to the fore—collective, progressive and socially transformative? Yet, it seems to me that Paul is not quite up to the task. While Kristeva regards Paul's invention of the *ekklesia* as a new political and psychological body, it turns out that this body is only partially and ambiguously innovative, saturated as it is in the social, spatial, gendered and hierarchical space of the Roman Empire; or, as I would prefer, of the slave-based system violently enforced by the Romans.

84. See further Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London: New Left Books, 1974), pp. 13-103.

85. Roland Boer, 'The Sacred Economy of Ancient "Israel"', *The Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 21.1 (2007), pp. 29-48.

All the same Kristeva's collective agenda is something I would rather endorse than discard, but not in the form she presents it. Rather, given that such an *ekklesia* is gendered, hierarchical, slave-bound and politically conservative, it would be worthwhile to invoke Ernst Bloch's dialectic of utopia at this point: even the most degraded collective forms give voice to some utopian impulse.[86] The trick is to extract that impulse from its oppressive content.[87]

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86. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005).

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Rosemary Hennessy and the Circumscribed Symptomatic Symbolism of 1 Peter's *Haustafel*

Jennifer Bird

1. *Introduction*

In his introduction to a new series 'Short Circuits', Slavoj Žižek explains that in crossing a 'classic' text with a marginalized conceptual apparatus, the classic text is decentered, 'which brings to light its "unthought", its disavowed presuppositions and consequences'.[1] He is not expecting this short-circuiting to specifically teach the reader something new, but to make her or him aware of a disturbing aspect of something with which she or he is already familiar.[2] I am seeking to do something similar in this paper in relation to 1 Peter's *Haustafel*.[3] This letter has been the focus of my academic work for the past few years, and I have persisted in part hoping to find a 'new' angle on its content.[4] I hope that in applying a critical approach that is seemingly unrelated to the topic of biblical studies, namely a feminist materialist critique, I can guide the reader into 'insights which completely shatter and undermine our common perceptions'.[5]

Rosemary Hennessy is my dialogue partner for this article. I have chosen her because of her particular interest in the systems and power

1. Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003), 'Short Circuits' Series Forward.

2. Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Series Forward.

3. I use the term *Haustafel* throughout this article fully aware that it is a construction of modern scholarship. It is used to refer to certain passages of the new testament that contain variations, to greater and lesser degrees, of a general social and philosophical norm that was alive and well at the time of the writing of the new testament documents. The philosophers and authors themselves never used the label 'household code' to refer to a genre of writing or the general exhortations that we now categorize in this way.

4. On the issue of 'new'-ness, Rosemary Hennessy sounds a warning of the (im)possibility of discovering something new to say, or in producing a 'new' history. The documents with which we have to work were produced by the very culture that we seek to critique. Her warning seems appropriate to me, and is an issue that I pick up later in the paper.

5. Žižek, *Puppet and the Dwarf*, Series Forward.

relations that texts adhere to, perpetuate and set in motion. She reads 'irruptions' in texts, which are places in a text or narrative where unexpected content is interjected, as 'symptoms' of the hegemonic voice silencing the voice of others who pose a threat to its normative ideology. In her words, her symptomatic reading 'draws out the unnaturalness of the text and makes visible another logic haunting its surface'.[6] She also speaks of the way in which texts, in contributing to the social construction of subjects by perpetuating specific normative knowledge and behavior, serve to circumscribe the realms of possibility for these subjects. As Hennessy notes, 'What we do impacts what we can know; and what we know impacts what we can do'.[7] Knowing and doing intersect in the social structures and relations in which we participate, lived experiences that are significantly informed by our ideologies.

Hennessy claims that a theory of ideology helps to explain the 'complex ways social reality is shaped—through the over-determined relations among mechanisms for making sense, distributing resources, dividing labor, and sharing or wielding power'.[8] She also notes that when we interpret ideology in terms of hegemony, then the silenced voices in a text 'may be read as the irruption of counter-hegemonic discourses into the thread of narrative'.[9] The voice that will be most clearly heard is the dominant, hegemonic voice that insists on its own version of meaning. Yet the very fact that the coherence of the story is interrupted or broken, or does not fully make sense, indicates a locus of struggle with the silencing of one or more voices as the outcome. Thus, we must read our texts with an eye toward the symptoms, the irruptions in the narrative discourse, within it. These symptoms highlight another story-line or another version of the myth that taunts the careful reader with its silenced presence.

Reading from a feminist standpoint, according to Hennessy, is then 'an act of reading which intervenes in and rearranges the construction of meanings and the social arrangements they support'.[10] Hennessy applies a materialist feminist critique in order to redefine systems of value, divisions of labor, allocations of resources, and ultimately to rewrite 'master narratives'.[11] Since I am working with texts from the past, instead of those focused upon current labor and production concerns, allocation of resources and division of labor are not central to my interpretation of

6. Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 93.
7. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. 7.
8. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. xvi.
9. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. 94.
10. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. 91.
11. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. 3.

1 Peter's *Haustafel*. However, I do think that all aspects of her redefining efforts are relevant for the analysis of biblical texts and of any of the applications of their interpretations. Along these lines, I cannot help but also highlight throughout the paper some of the connections between the ancient text and current harmful ideologies. I find the emancipatory and counter-hegemonic implications of Hennessy's critique rather compelling, in particular in light of the household structure embedded within 1 Peter and its implications for the roles of women in the church as well as for the church's structure and alignment with Empire.[12]

2. *Materiality of Discourse*

Michel Foucault and others have contributed to the idea that discourses indeed have a materiality. Part of this materiality is due to the relationship between discourses or language and the social practices that they describe and engender. These social practices in turn are shaped by the narratives of society—or of sub-sections of a society or culture—since the narrative of a community is employed and created for the purpose of explaining and justifying life as we know it. In other words, the materiality of discourse is visible in the social roles and structures that the social discourse engenders.

The new testament is a significant source for the foundational narrative of the Christian faith, since it represents the early organizational moves and theological posturing that determined what would be normative for Christian communities. It is a collection of texts that represent some of the religio-political social discourse of the early church. In terms of this particular volume, I am interested in the kinds of relations and roles that the narrative of 1 Peter endorses and/or engenders regarding women. Or, as Rosemary Hennessy would ask, how does 1 Peter function in the discursive construction of the subject of woman in the early church? Though I am keenly aware of the possibility of including the slaves/house-servants in this analysis, more pointedly of the need for such an analysis, in this paper I will focus on the production and maintenance of subjectivities of the women in 1 Peter 2.18-3.7.[13]

12. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, pp. 96-97.

13. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. xiii. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, with Janet H. Tulloch, 'Female Slaves: Twice Vulnerable', in *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), point to some of the possible dynamics at work for slaves that are different from wives, which reinforces the need to treat servants/slaves separately from the wives in order to begin to do justice to their particular situation, a project for future endeavours. It is also important to note that these two particular groups are significant within this

Of Ideologies and Irruptions

In everything from Terry Eagleton's writing on ideology to John McAdams on personal myths to Joseph Davis on social movement narratives to Fredric Jameson's political unconscious, we encounter scholars defining their subject as something that is central to understanding and creating coherence within our world.[14] The place where these scholars overlap is in saying that we, as human beings, *do* create sets of elements that, when woven together, serve to make sense of the world. These sets of elements may comprise stories or myths, theological doctrines, socio-political concepts, or any other form in which a person's world view might be encapsulated. Like stories, worldviews 'have a materiality in that they help shape the formation of social subjects as well as what comes to count as the "real" or the "truth" '.[15]

The voices and worldviews that have prevailed in the new testament texts do not necessarily represent the experiences of the majority of the members of the recipient communities, but they do represent the views and needs of those with the most power within the communal discourse. Of course the issue of power is a multi-layered one, enmeshed with though separate from a person's authority. For instance the author of 1 Peter's relation to the faith communities in Asia Minor was presumably one of authority over them, which is quite different from his relationship with imperial representatives.[16]

However, there is a possibility that the author of 1 Peter was more aligned with imperial leadership than against it, making his own socio-political location and its attendant power relations that much more complicated. If we look at the attitude toward the Imperial regime found in the Apocalypse of John and in 1 Peter, it seems to me that the former is decidedly condemning the Emperor and his reign, and that the latter comes

context of a materialist critique, due to their role (being 'needed') in maintaining the structure of society as it was.

14. Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991); Dan P. McAdams, *The Stories we Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993); Joseph E. Davis, (ed.), *Stories of Change: Narrative and Social Movements* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002); Guy A.M. Widdershoven, 'The Story of Life: Hermeneutic Perspectives on the Relationship Between Narrative and Life History', in *The Narrative Study of Lives* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993), I, pp. 1-20.

15. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. 7.

16. I will refer to the author of 1 Peter as 'Peter', though this does not mean that I have a specific person in mind to whom this appellation applies. I am also operating under the assumption that the author was male, which may or may not be relevant, given that many women have been known to represent and prefer the needs and voices of 'men' to their own. Thus any conclusions I may draw or suggestions I offer are based upon the privileging of men and a kyriarchal social structure.

across as fairly accommodating toward them. Because of this accommodation, the exhortations and behavior being encouraged in 1 Peter serve to benefit the elite and those who are in collusion with the Emperor and his agendas. Scholars may note a circumstantial and contextual distinction between these two texts, namely that the former is responding to the exploitative administration and the latter to persecution, whether officially sanctioned or not. Perhaps we should not separate these two realms so quickly. More importantly, perhaps we should consider that the systems and relations that 1 Peter endorses may be in collusion with the exploitative system.

The particular irruption—which is actually a lack or a silence—that I would like to talk about here is within the discourse of 1 Peter 2–3, where the author responds to reports regarding the behavior of the house-slaves and wives. What the actual events were we will never know. But what is clear is that a mandate is given, one in which the women cannot defend themselves or their intentions, and one that serves to restrict their voices and activity within the house churches. This symptom of silencing women, or of defining their ecclesial roles in terms of a socio-political expectation, occurs several times in new testament documents. What seems unnatural in this version, in light of Paul's advocacy of women leaders,[17] is the overdetermined construction of women as silently submissive, good wives.

Though I started this paper with a nod toward the materiality of language and discourse, now we are dealing with the materiality of a negation: silenced voices. I hope the irony of the situation does not escape you, that discourse—something that implies a give-and-take by its very definition—can, at the service of ideologically driven hegemonic structures and systems, justify domination and oppressive social relations that ultimately silence the voices of the oppressed and exploited. That this silencing happens within texts addressed specifically to an oppressed people and written in response to their oppression only deepens the irony. As a rational being, I am thus forced to assume that this discourse must serve a purpose on a grander scale, above the fray of the ordinary people in their daily lives. So the question is not merely, 'What is the purpose', but also, 'For whose sake and at what cost?'

17. I hesitate to refer to Jesus and any perception that he embraced all people. While I do think that women were a significant aspect of the work Jesus did, I see the focus of his efforts as working to produce a grassroots movement more than an established worship community. In both cases women were, in my opinion, granted socially appropriate roles. Thus to compare the attitude toward women that we perceive in the stories about Jesus with what we see in 1 Peter is really more of a comparison between two different socio-political agendas than a comparison of two men's views of the role of women specifically.

3. *Discursively Constructed Identity: Of Stories, Symbols and Subjectivities*

The stories we use to give meaning to our existence in some ways resolve contradictions and in other ways fill a need for coherence. It is in the telling of a myth, a story, a narrative that we come to understand who we are, and in some cases that we bring meaning into a community that would otherwise be lacking in cohesion or a common identity. For the recipients of 1 Peter, then, the narrative we find in the beginning of the letter must hold some significance. I offer next a brief assessment of the pieces of this story, possible implications of the images it invokes, and the internal communal structure that it endorses—in other words, the materiality of this narrative.[18]

The general sense of 1.1–2.17 is that the G*d of Israel is now giving to these followers of Jesus Christ an inheritance kept in heaven for safe keeping and the salvation of their souls. These are things that the prophets of Israel spoke of and about which even angels desire to know more. In some way, according to the author, even the prophets knew at the time that they were speaking of matters that the people of Israel would not receive in full. The true recipients of the promises made to Israel are redeemed from the 'futile way of life' that they inherited from their fore-parents. Their ancestors were disobedient and foolish, not able to keep their part of the covenant, and thus were doomed (from the very beginning!) to be replaced by this new and more genuine people: the followers of Jesus the Christ.[19]

Peter writes to several communities, referring to them with various descriptive names in addition to those most often noted from this letter: 'aliens' and 'strangers'. They are also told to be holy as their G*d is holy.[20] They are called 'living stones' that are being built up into a spiritual house, intended for a 'holy priesthood'. The terminology of holy priesthood is familiar for the people of Israel, and now is a central image for these communities. This spiritual house stands immovable, as it is built upon

18. I address elsewhere more fully the narratological and material implications of the first chapter and a half of 1 Peter. Though John Elliott's dissertation and first monograph deal with the 'elect and holy' references in this text, I do have a significantly different interpretation of it which I hope will be the focus of my next endeavor.

19. I cannot help but wonder who would trust such a deceitful deity as the one portrayed in this section of 1 Peter.

20. This is 1 Peter 1.15-16: 'Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" '. This passage is drawing upon several similar references in Leviticus, a book devoted to ensuring the sanctity of Israel: 'Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" ' (19.2).

the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The Stone, rejected by those acting in ignorance, has now become the cornerstone:[21] the stone by which the rest of the building is centered and justified. The final image employed in this opening narrative is found in 2.9-10:

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This final image of their identity comes from two passages in which Israel is reminded of who they are: the first as they enter the Promised Land, and the second in returning from Persian exile. We do not have a sense of Asia Minor being the 'promised land' for the recipients of this letter, but there is a strong connection with the exile experience as indicated in the 'aliens' and 'strangers' appellations. Peter is re-appropriating the 'Israelite' inheritance and identity for these communities in Asia Minor.

We should also take note of the political aspect of the connection between the communities of 1 Peter and the theocratic Israelite community. 1 Peter reinscribes a hierarchical and political system with the ascription 'royal priesthood'. Immediately following this 'chosen nation' rhetoric, the author prescribes obedience to the state powers as one manifestation of devotion to their god (2.13-17). Israel was faithful to their G*d, who was also their ultimate King, Lord and Master. These communities of the followers of Christ are to be true to their Divine King who sits in opposition to the Emperor and Lord of this world. Religious and political realms overlap and intermingle for them in ways so constitutive of their culture that it did not need to be named explicitly. The same blending continues to take place—in fact it is so familiar that it often goes unnoticed and unquestioned—within Christian communities today.[22]

21. There is a debate as to whether the 'proper' translation of this word is that of a cornerstone or keystone. While one is a foundation piece, the other is found at the top of an arch and is the stone that holds that part of the structure together. Some have noted that the latter encourages the 'being built up into Christ' take on this passage. I would like to note the class and worldview distinction between these two images. The Christ is located in the foundation, at the 'grass roots level', if you will, or the Christ is elevated and beyond the reach of everyday people.

22. Aside from the issue of kingdom language that permeates the theological doctrine of the church and the assumed Christian nature of the United States, there are plenty of church traditions today that regularly pray for, or have direct counselors to, government officials. Many of the members of such traditions hold the president of the United States to be most important in this matter, even though 'in Christ' all people are equal. If the people can claim G*d's blessing over and presence with political leaders

The new identity 1 Peter creates is based upon an old narrative myth, represented by the *imago* of the people 'Israel'. *Imagoes* express our deepest desires and goals and personify aspects of who we used to be and would like to become in the future. *Imagoes* enter into our stories in specific scenes; they do not develop gradually over time.[23] With the stroke of a stylus, Peter affects a parable-like turn for the Jews.[24] What had been a promised inheritance for them and for their children is now interpreted as a foreshadowing of the 'true' religion intended for the followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

The sacred status as holy nation, royal priesthood, and G*d's own people now functions as a religious symbol for the followers of Christ. As Crites notes, 'A religious symbol becomes fully alive to consciousness when sacred story dramatically intersects both an explicit narrative and the course of a man's [*sic*] personal experience. The symbol is precisely that double intersection'.[25] The explicit narrative for the recipients of 1 Peter is the formation of a new movement of followers of the Christ; the course of the individuals' personal experiences is that of the daily life within the provinces of Asia Minor. The persecution of these followers of the Christ is made acceptable because of the rich tradition that these labels or images evoke. These are central images for Israel's identity, now made 'fully alive' and affective in these communities.

Joseph Davis has worked on how narratives within social movements function to control social behavior in such a way that will sustain a given identity, and the way the vocabulary employed within the movement directly reflects the urgency of the situation.[26] The images of being G*d's own people, a holy nation, and a royal priesthood must evoke behavior that is consistent with the movement's purpose and enables them to survive persecution, whether official or not.[27] Most intramovement social control efforts are ultimately directed toward specific individuals.

then unjust legislation and military action is justified as a means to the (unknown) greater ends of their Sovereign and Holy G*d.

23. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By*, pp. 122-29.

24. John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Polebridge Press, 1988).

25. Stephen D. Crites, 'The Narrative Quality of Experience', *JAAR* 39 (1971), p. 306.

26. For example, 'Prepare your minds for action' (1.13); 'I urge you…to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul' (2.11); 'for the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution…of governors, sent by [the emperor] to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right' (2.13-14); and, 'As servants of God live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil' (2.16).

27. Davis, *Stories of Change*, pp. 57-63.

Controlling the affective and cognitive states of individuals is usually required in order to control behavior or actions. If someone steps out of line, by failing to maintain her or his designated role, the person is understood to be undermining the whole system, not simply violating established norms.[28]

In this case it is the wives and house-slaves who are the focus of the social control. These are people who make up a significant proportion of the community. They are among the lowest ranks in their society and in the kyriarchal household system, and are most important for the maintenance of household production and order. By singling out these particular groups in the faith communities, their roles in the households and in the religious community are intertwined and the kyriarchal social structure is maintained as requisite within the communal structure. The behavior of these followers of the Christ ultimately needed to be understood as 'Empire-friendly', which is accomplished by this alignment of kyriarchal household structure and behavior within the religious setting.

The delineation of roles within 1 Peter is based upon the roles of the Greco-Roman household. In addition to reflecting an act of accommodation,[29] one might ask what it is that 1 Peter contributes that is innovative. I claim that it is at the convergence of faith community and *Haustafel* ordering that the Empire and the soon-to-be Church become blended together, never again to be separated. The structure of the household made sense: it was efficient, promoted material production, allowed for control to be held by the master of the house, and was an indication of a well-run home. Due to its economic role and it being the space in which future citizens were reared, it was also one reflection of being supportive of the *pax Romana*.[30] The moment this order and kyriarchal structure are not only endorsed but required by the leaders among the Christian communities is the moment that the structure itself is institutionalized, or materialized, within the Church for all time.

It is not just this accommodation I wish to highlight, but also the fact that it creates communal *requirements* of the discursively constructed subjects of the imperial and ecclesiastical order. The commands to 'honor the

28. Davis, *Stories of Change*, pp. 65-67.

29. I am in agreement with the various scholars who see, as the Christian movement develops, a progression away from an egalitarian beginning. To what extent the Jesus movement was egalitarian is of course highly debated. The point I would like to make here is that as the movement became more organized it adapted social structures that were also necessarily hierarchical and patriarchal. The acculturation/accommodation piece may be understandable, but it is nonetheless significant in its effects on the movement and its restrictions of women. See also n. 16.

30. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* discusses good household management, indicating the connection between economic endeavors with household production and activity.

emperor' (2.17) and to maintain household order (2.18-3.7) become part and parcel of the status of 'the chosen'. The royal priesthood (of men) is sustained by orderly households (managed by women, overseen by men). 'Holy nation' status is justified by the perpetuation of religious structures mingled with socio-politically correct behaviors. These people are constructed as the most favored on earth, yet under the thumb of their heavenly and earthly Rulers.

There is an authority that faith communities give to their sacred texts, myths and images that I would like to note. I agree that something that is sacred or holy to a particular person or group—a god, a text, a myth—takes on a special role in the lives of the faithful.[31] From the perspective of those who believe, there *is* a unique and irreducible element to that which is 'sacred' and this uniqueness motivates and inspires all those who grant it that capacity. The sacred realm becomes, for them, something that transcends all human discourse. Perhaps it is because the ascribed transcendent nature of the sacred resists interrogation that the church has staunchly avoided changing the vocabulary and the nature of the myths and images that give it its identity. This identity, in turn, serves to control behavior, in particular the behavior of 'the least of these', and to maintain the exploitative kyriarchal socio-political structures.

When the author of 1 Peter claimed and re-appropriated the central theme of Israel's relationship to its G*d, I would venture to say that he did not do so meekly or naïvely. The thrust of this supersession does more than simply replace Israel as inheritor of the covenant. Because the terminology used is common to both the religious and the political realms, it also defines these faith communities in relation to the Empire, which highlights for us the enmeshment of politics and religion. This movement—though grounded in the faith story of the life of Christ, their new Lord—also identifies itself with the imperial order. How then do these issues of imperial accommodation taken together with the 'royal priesthood and holy nation' rhetoric affect the women of these communities? According to the narrative of 1 Peter, how do we understand these subjects as discursively constructed?

31. 'To try to grasp the essence of such a [religious] phenomenon by means of physiology, psychology, sociology, economics, linguistics, or any other study is false; it misses the one unique and irreducible element in it—the element of the sacred'. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), p. xiii. I am not interested, at this point, in arguing with Eliade over this essentialist perspective. I use this quotation in order to indicate one perspective on the importance and deeply affective nature of 'the sacred' for some people.

4. *All that Haunts the Surface*

Aside from the most obvious and detrimental implication for the women—that they cannot be priests according to the Hebrew religion, and thus are effectively constructed as outside, or peripheral members of, the chosen people of G*d—there are two aspects of the constructed subject of the women within the *Haustafel* that I would like to address. The first is the problematic elevation of suffering and the second is the indirect establishing of marriage and motherhood as normative for women within these communities.

The valorization of suffering on the grounds that it promotes a Christ-likeness within the one suffering has been problematized by scholars highlighting feminist, African-American, Latino/a, and other specific locations. If suffering is misconstrued as salvific in itself, then there is no reason to act on behalf of someone being exploited and oppressed, and there is no reason to take action to change a social system that perpetuates such abusive relations. Much like it happens today in some segments of western society,[32] the husbands addressed in the letter have been given images of priesthoods, nations and peoples for the construction of their identity in these communities, while women are 'Christ-like' through their suffering.

The first piece of the construction of women as suffering subjects within the Christian communities simultaneously sets them up as exemplary members of the communities and renders them relatively passive subjects within it. Enduring the suffering that came at the hands of their husbands meant that the wives willingly capitulated to the Roman Empire by silently affirming the household structure. Betsy J. Bauman-Martin suggests that for many women today who have no option of escaping abusive situations this passage can be empowering and sustaining.[33] I think that this is an important and vital way of reading this passage. Bauman-Martin is not denying that this passage has significantly contributed *to* the ethos that causes or allows such terrible situations for women to develop; she is simply looking for a way for women who cherish these texts to read them for their benefit. What I am trying to address is the distinction between this passage offering hope in a hopeless situation and it being a cornerstone in the constructed identity of women within these faith communities, a

32. It is not just the ecclesial realm that is influenced by such distinctive images or standards for 'men' and 'women'. One can see these dynamics and expectations at work today within many families and social organizations as well.

33. Betsy J. Bauman-Martin, 'Feminist Theologies of Suffering and Current Interpretations of 1 Peter 2.18-3.9', in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), pp. 63-82.

construction that has carried through the centuries and that indeed does contribute to maintaining and remaining within abusive relations.

A spiritualized approach to Christianity tends to separate the torture, mockery and crucifixion that Jesus suffered from the initial context in which, or in reaction to which, Jesus was a victim. Jesus' life and death as recorded was a political statement, speaking out against the systems that enslave, subject, and oppress. There is a hint of tragedy that in removing the political implications of Jesus' death it can be interpreted to justify the very systems he protested. In other words, the example of Jesus of Nazareth has been co-opted and applied in such ways that ensure that the very systems he contested will be sustained by his own followers.

The second material reality, which is more dangerous and powerful because it is only implicit in the narrative, is an underlying issue of controlling women's sexuality and reproductivity through the *Haustafel*. Peter addresses the slaves and wives at length and the husbands ever so briefly, in contrast to the typical codes that were directed toward the *paterfamilias* alone. *Only* wives are addressed specifically, and not women in general. Regardless of the debates on Paul's stance on celibacy and marriage,[34] and the issues of whether or not passages such as the one in question were written with the very intent of normalizing a preference for the married state within the Christian communities, the fact of the matter is that male-female married relations are the only ones that are specifically acknowledged and addressed in this passage. Certainly I do not wish to condemn an ancient text for not reflecting the sensibilities of a society that post-date it by two thousand years. But I raise this issue because the socio-political expectations of the household order of that day are embedded in this text and thus become embedded within the church structure and expectations, highlighting male-female married relations as normative for its constituents.

The distance between the stated 'holy, chosen, royal priesthood'-role of the community at large and the implicit 'motherhood' role of the wives may cause one to question how these two realms are related; this distance itself highlights the problematic symbolic construction at work for women in this letter. Not only are both realms—the religious and the household—kyriarchically structured and male dominated, but they both work to support and sustain the Empire as it is. While some may see the role and contribution of motherhood as sacred in itself, it is clearly subsumed under the overall status and role of the chosen people of G*d. While the community identifies with roles all resonating with prophetic voices and

34. See also Jorunn Økland's article in this volume, 'Textual Reproduction as Surplus Value: Paul on Pleasing Christ and Spouses, in light of Simone de Beauvoir'.

power, the women are consigned to silent submission, populating the Empire and supporting it socio-economically.[35]

For these women immersed in their cultural norms, the line between household production and re-production is blurred. The acculturation of the household order implicitly affirms, and thus circumscribes, women in their (re)productive role. This claim may seem like a bit of a stretch, but their political reality was structured to some extent by laws that favored the married state and encouraged the rearing of children. There is no doubting that motherhood was an expectation of married women. So, while the advice to be subject to their husbands may have been consciously about the acceptability of the movement, the implicit messages reinscribe kyriarchal roles and possibilities for the women.

The battles that go on over women's reproductivity today are given solid grounding here in the scriptures, and the married, preferably maternal, state is therefore the most approved (ecclesiastically defined) role for women from the foundation of the ecclesiastical organization. As Hennessy notes,

> If we acknowledge, for instance, that the discursive struggles over woman's reproductive body in the US now have less to do with women's 'choice'—or even with abortion per se—than with the maintenance of a social order in which the few still benefit from the work of many, where power and resources are distributed on the basis of wealth not human worth or need, and women are generally devalued, we can begin to make sense of the contest over abortion from the standpoint of those who are already most affected by the legislation of women's bodies—the thousands of poor women who are also disproportionately women of color.[36]

We should not be surprised to see women's reproductivity so closely associated with social order; even the author of 1 Peter shows us this connection. The question of the discursively constructed subject then applies to constructions within this new testament text as well as to the ways scholars, laity and the church have heeded or sought to deny the sociopolitical implications haunting its surface.

35. There is also an interesting tension in the letter that the household members are directly addressed, but not others who may have been day laborers, which in effect elevates certain social-productive roles over others. In validating the maintenance of the household structure and production, those who are outside a household situation are marginalized, even within their worshipping community. The exploitation of the imperial system is not just overlooked, but is sustained by endorsing the household structure and relations. I address this issue more fully elsewhere.

36. Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, p. xvi.

5. *Conclusions*

> Women will starve in silence
> until new stories
> are created which confer on them the
> power of naming themselves.
>
> (Gilbert and Gubar)

What is made visible by the application of the marginalized conceptual apparatus of a feminist materialist method to this segment of 1 Peter? 1 Peter's usage of the *Haustafel* valorizes the wives for the suffering they are to endure at the hand of their husbands or the Roman authorities. At the same time, this unsought-after, subjugated and silent position limits their agency, circumscribing their activity within the household domain. The irruption of this over-determined construction of the wives indicates that the narrative of women's naturally active and prophetic leadership has been erased or denied.

I wonder if these claims sufficiently de-center this classic text and its traditional interpretations in order to allow others to consider their detrimental effects. It is not that I am hoping to overturn the social construction of various identities of people. The concern in this case is with the significantly influential role of the church and its sacred texts in the West, in particular as they inform not just the political leadership of their 'divine right' in matters now global but also the vision of what many women strive to emulate. The implicit prescription in this letter of the married status—and thus motherhood—as the epitome of faithfulness for women, since they cannot identify with the other symbols attributed to the community as a whole such as: 'royal priesthood, holy nation and G*d's own people', is unsettling at the very least. It also perpetuates ancient understandings of how social order and theocratic rule were maintained. I do not think that these are beneficial belief systems and social structures, but they are realities that I see every day.

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