

The Genesis Complex
Queering the Myths of Human Sexuality

A Thesis in
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ABSTRACT

Dominant ideologies utilize mythological motifs as a means by which to construct normative behavioral patterns in large populations. The Myth of Adam, Eve and the Serpent, arguably the most influential origin myth of the Western world, has been utilized to regulate hetero-normative coupling patterns and to justify global patriarchy in response to Eve's temptation as the cause of 'Original Sin'. Occupying an ambiguous positionality between myth and socially sanctioned allegory, the Eden story has retained a gripping metaphorical pull since it was first inscribed. The Genesis Complex performs a queer excavation of this myth and its accompanying mythologies by unsettling assumptions surrounding the household narrative, whilst exposing a range of interpretations that have permeated the public and political spheres. The apparatus behind the myth is exposed and new queer readings are provided which illustrate the promiscuous nature of the myth and presents possibilities for making this damaging story accessible and meaningful to contemporary queer audiences.

ANATOMY OF THE **COMPLEX**

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INTRODUCTION PUNC [ARK]AEOLOGY

The Story of Adam, Eve and the Serpent is arguably the most influential origin myth of the Western world, setting the stage not only for the development of the three monotheistic religions, but also for patriarchy and its offspring, homophobia. Though the story is set in a time, and cultural context that is irreparably different than our own, dominant ideologies have utilized it as a mascot to reinforce patriarchal and heteronormative agendas.

THEGENESISCOMPLEX is a ritual/textual performative excavation of this myth and surrounding mythologies, seeking to unsettle assumptions surrounding the origins of human sexuality. Rooted in queer/feminist theory, the excavation utilizes a methodology of my own construction : P U N C [A R K] A E O L O G Y :

P U N C [A R K] A E O L O G Y descends from Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge and a body of reconfigurations found within Post-structural, Post-Colonial and Post-Modern enactments of Queer Theory. By abducting, dismantling and displaying dominant hetero-normative cultural artifacts, its recasts history as "perspectival, heterogenous [and] always-already fictionalized."¹

P U N C [A R K] A E O L O G Y clings not to the phantasm of *actuality*. It acknowledges the fictive nature of all Narratives and ritualizes their transformations.

P U N C [A R K] A E O L O G Y sacrifices The Narrative to liberate it from its own containment. It begs for its dismemberment. We place the construct upon the altar [and] bound in sacred cloth we slaughter the vessel and turn it into smoke. Veiled in wisps and clusters, a hydra of other narratives shoot forth and inseminate in an orgy of multiplicity.

Postmodernity initiated the lexicon of dismemberment; the undoing of the pre-packaged Meaning Industry. Rather than advocate for an over-arching "new" dimension to contain the exiles of Pandora's Box, *rhizomatic*² movements emerge, occupying their own unique placements and affirming their ability to speak in their own dialects.

P U N C [A R K] A E O L O G Y affirms the *temporary* organization of meaning in retaliation to the instinct to produce Law. As a methodology, it reaches *towards* but does not grasp. It suggests [while] dismembering, provokes [while] nurturing and destroys [while] rehabilitating.

P U N C [A R K] A E O L O G Y ingests the materiality of The Narrative then sticks its fingers down its throat.

THEGENESISCOMPLEX utilizes a series of key works in a range of media for its ritual dissection. The primary source is Genesis 1-3, with the annotation that accompanies it in the New Revised Standard Edition. At times, in order to explore the extent to which translation affects meaning, other biblical sources are introduced. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz's *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*, as well as

¹ Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical introduction to Queer Theory*. (New York: New York University Press) pp.26

² Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari, and Michel Foucault. 2009. *Anti-Oedipus :Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition. [Anti-?dipe.English]. New York: Penguin. pp.198

Francesca Stavarakapoulou's BBC miniseries *The Bible's Buried Secrets* also perform as central secondary works.

In the realm of the visual, I utilize a number of central images that I then re-mix within the field of contemporary performance, video and photography. The central image is Albert Duhrer's *Adam and Eve*³, an engraving from 1504 which is currently housed in the National Gallery of Canada. Others include Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*⁴, and Lucas Cranach the Elders' *Adam and Eve*⁵; all of which are reproduced within this publication in *Towards a New Iconography*.

As a contemporary artist and cultural engineer I utilize a series of tactics with which to introduce information to the public : including live ritual performance, photography, video, text, the publishing of 'authoritative publications' and the invention of fictive institutions. I undergo rigorous research into the mechanisms utilized by a series of Knowledge Industries to analyze how authoritative facts are produced, disseminated and enforced. I then mimick these same tactics to produce 'other' Knowledge(s). I also attempt to produce an *alternate epistemology* that is performed in a range of locations for knowledge transmission : public galleries and museums tend to be suitable public laboratories for my critical and ritual dissections.

As an artist I utilize the *authoritative publication* as form: it is media through which I can

³ Duhrer, Albrecht. Adam and Eve . Engraving 9 7/8 x 7 7/8 in. (25.1 x 20 cm),1504.

⁴ Bosch, Hieronymus, The Garden of Earthly Delights , oil on oak, 2.20m x 3.9m, 1503-1504.

⁵ Cranach, Lucas [the Elder].Adam and Eve , oil on panel, 172cm x 124cm, 1528.

manipulate textual and visual material, through strategic design to imbue the information with an aura of factuality. This is further enforced by the publication being produced by THE MUSEUM OF ARTIFICIAL HISTORIES, whose logo and placement affirms the relationship of the text within a formal institute of knowledge. This Museum is a fiction I am constructing that can houses other fictions.

The text as a publication, is itself a *performance*.

ANATOMY OF THE COMPLEX

THEOEDIPUSCOMPLEX begins the textual portion by addressing how the psychoanalytic appropriation of classical mythology has contributed to the legal process that affects the lives of queer individuals in the United States and France, juxtaposing secular and religious citation of ‘scriptural’ reference in order to disallow equal rights to homosexuals. Exposing the means by which ancient texts can be cited in the legalities of the modern age sets the stage for the Genesis Excavation.

THEGENESISCOMPLEX consists of three bodies : THE BIBLE, THE BEGINNING, and the THE TRINITY.

THE BIBLE exposes the library of biblical texts as a composite, and unearths a few contributing factors forming the narrative construction which may not be obvious to readers outside of the realms of Theology.

THE BEGINNING explores the textual implications of origin, and how the myth of *The Beginning* exists in an interstice between fact and fiction even within contemporary cultures and institutions.

THE TRINITY explores the three main characters of the Genesis Myth : Adam, Eve and the Serpent, in relation to the constructs of the Father God, of a Mother Goddess and a

potentially 'lower' God of the pagan past.

TOWARDS A NEW ICONOGRAPHY illustrates the visual re-mixing in relation to the source images with no textual interference. The surrounding texts provide a firm foundation with which to explore the visual enactments of the same methodology. A 10 minute video work, also called THEGENESISCOMPLEX accompanies this publication, and depicts the performative re-mix in time, as well as public ritual/lecture performance wherein parts of the textual portions are performed as a neo-religious service to an audience-turned congregation.

THE AHNENERBE SYNDROME closes the excavation by returning to the contemporary era and the means by which mythology gets co-opted by dominant forces in order to justify new ideology, and how entire systems of Knowledge can be constructed upon the most flammable foundations, creating their own mythologies and authorizing them within a code of 'justified' fact.

As this is the product of an Individualized research process, and due to the fact that the general knowledge of its readership is difficult to discern, the textual portions are heavily footnoted. As far as possible I have given background and introduction to key concepts within the fields of Religion, Queer Theory, Cultural Theory, Art History and Contemporary Art practice in order for my audience to be able to access and connect these disparate dimensions.

THE GARDEN OF OEDIPUS

I>RESORTING TO MYTH

In November of 1999, the French National Assembly passed the *Pacte Civil de Solidarité*, [PACS] a law which entitled same-sex couples to many but not all of the privileges that heterosexual couples enjoyed. Still in effect, the law qualifies as a form of civil union between two consenting adults that brings rights and responsibilities administered and registered by the Court, including the right to raise children.

Three years earlier, across the Atlantic, the United States passed the DOMA (Defense of Marriage Act) which “mandated that the Federal Government only recognize marriages between opposite-sex couples.”⁶ Though recently overthrown, this Act was augmented by a host of Republicans, and a variety of secular organizations largely unified within the Christian Right. Though a range of organizations lobbied on behalf of this act (such as the American College of Pediatricians⁷) the majority of organizations cited Scripture as a

⁶ Elizabeth Windsor and Robert A. Kaplan, “Is Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act Unconstitutional ?” *Supreme Court Debates, a Pro & Con® Monthly* | May 2013 (Vol. 16, No. 5) p. 21

⁷ “The American College of Pediatricians reaffirms that the intact, functional family consisting of a married (female) mother and (male) father provides the best opportunity for children. The College, therefore, disputes the American Academy of Pediatrics’ (AAP) claim that supporting same-sex unions promotes the “well-being of children.” In

basis by which to prevent the law from recognizing homosexual partnerships and family units. Since 1905, France had endorsed a law called *Laïcité*, which officially separated church and state. This gave rise to French secularism and ensured “the absence of religious involvement in government affairs as well the as absence of government involvement in religious affairs.”⁸

The inability for the French Right Wing to utilize Biblical authority to rival the PACS required an altogether different set of strategies. Numerous politicians gathered in Parliament “alluding to some of the most obscure and difficult theoretical concepts in the writings of Levi-Strauss and Lacan”⁹ appealing to parliament on the grounds of mental health, a time-honored institutionalized method of othering homosexuals and gender variants that had an enormous historical success rate.

Lacanian and Freudian ‘fundamentalists’ were ushered to the stage with a carefully constructed montage of psychological propaganda : “the homosexual’s pathological narcissism...the refusal of the difference of the sexes...the archaic and deviant character of homosexual sexuality; and...the risk at which same-sex parents would put their children in terms of their psychic equilibrium and the constitution of their

its newly released statement, “Promoting the Well-Being of Children Whose Parents Are Gay or Lesbian,” the AAP ignores important research on risks to children in favor of the wants of adults.” “Traditional Marriage Still the Best for Children”, American College of Pediatricians. accessed February 12, 2014. <http://www.acped.org/traditional-marriage-still-the-best-for-children>

⁸ Evelyn M. Acomb, *The French Laic Laws, 1879-1889: The First Anti-Clerical Campaign of the Third French Republic*, [New York : Columbia University Press] 1941

⁹ Camille Robeis. “How the Symbolic Became French: Kinship and Republicanism in the PACS Debates” Discourse. 26, No. 3 Fall. (2004) 115)

identities.”¹⁰ Whereas the American contingent of traditional family advocates had slogans such as “Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve” the French conservatives summarized their objections utilizing psychoanalysis as scripture :

“homosexuals constituting a family was contrary to the Oedipus Complex.”¹¹

II>THEOEDIPUSCOMPLEX

Oedipus the King is an Athenian tragedy by Sophocles which recounts the tale of the King of Thebes who was destined from birth to murder his father and marry his mother. In the early stages of his development of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud appropriated this mythological motif as a foundational point for the understanding of an exclusively heterosexual, monogamous and patriarchal/paternalistic ‘human condition’.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud first posited that the destiny of Oedipus “moves us...because it might have been ours – because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him.”¹²

¹⁰ Shanna T. Carlson. “In defense of queer kinships: Oedipus recast”. *Subjectivity*. (Vol. 3, 3.) pp. 263

¹¹ Ibid, 263

¹² Freud, Sigmund, Joyce Crick, and Ritchie Robertson. 1999. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 296

Contemporary methods of reading and assessing Freud begs us to carefully and critically consider, just “who” is included in “We.”

The myth pertains predominantly to a Male protagonist, who occupies the center of the Syndrome. There exists a binary counterpart in *the Electra Complex*, though it is nowhere near as developed. Though most notably in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud references non-western cultural frameworks as case studies for his theoretical foundations, in no way is his anthropological research inclusive of the vast panoply of social and psycho-sexual cultural codes.

Freud struggled all his life for Psychoanalysis to transcend the humanities and be crowned as a Science, but could not escape the unavoidable subjectivity inherent in a study of his constructions of the Unconscious. In the words of religious scholar James DiCenso, Freuds’ method of “linking discrete bits of theory and evidence into a “construct” is evocative of a narrative or mythical genre.”¹³

Freud goes on to describe the gradual realization of the protagonist, Laius, as thematically and conceptually akin to the development of his own theoretical model :

“The action of the play consists now in the gradually intensified and skillfully delayed revelation – comparable to the work of a psychoanalysis – that Oedipus himself is Laius’ murderer, but also that he is the son of the murdered King and

¹³ James J. Di Censo, “Totem and Taboo and the Constitutive Function of Symbolic Forms” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (LXIV/3) pp. 558

Jocasta. Shattered by the abomination he has in his ignorance committed, Oedipus blinds himself and leaves his homeland.”¹⁴

DiCenso continues that one “does psychoanalysis a service not by defending it as science, but by interpreting it as myth.”¹⁵ It is under this imperative that

THEGENESISCOMPLEX excavates a number of socially sanctioned myths pertaining to human sexuality in order to assess, subvert and unsettle cultural codes.

In his seminal 1979 publication *Work On Myth*, Hans Blumenberg asks why certain mythical stories (like Oedipus and The Garden of Eden) “seem so powerful and pregnant with meaning that they continue to hold our attention and, as it were, compel us to tell and re-tell these stories as a sign of the lost and superior wisdom of their primitive authors.”¹⁶ In his response he proposes that the persistence of these embedded narratives is due to the fact that “they were written down in canonical form only after hundreds of years of oral recital, during which their tellers were able to sharpen and improve them in response to the likes and interest of various audiences.”¹⁷ This implies a *collective inscription* wherein vastly different frameworks wrestle a story into their matrix by rigorously addressing and re-addressing its themes, not as a dominating narrative to which we must adhere to, but as a central point of contact that can spawn questions and

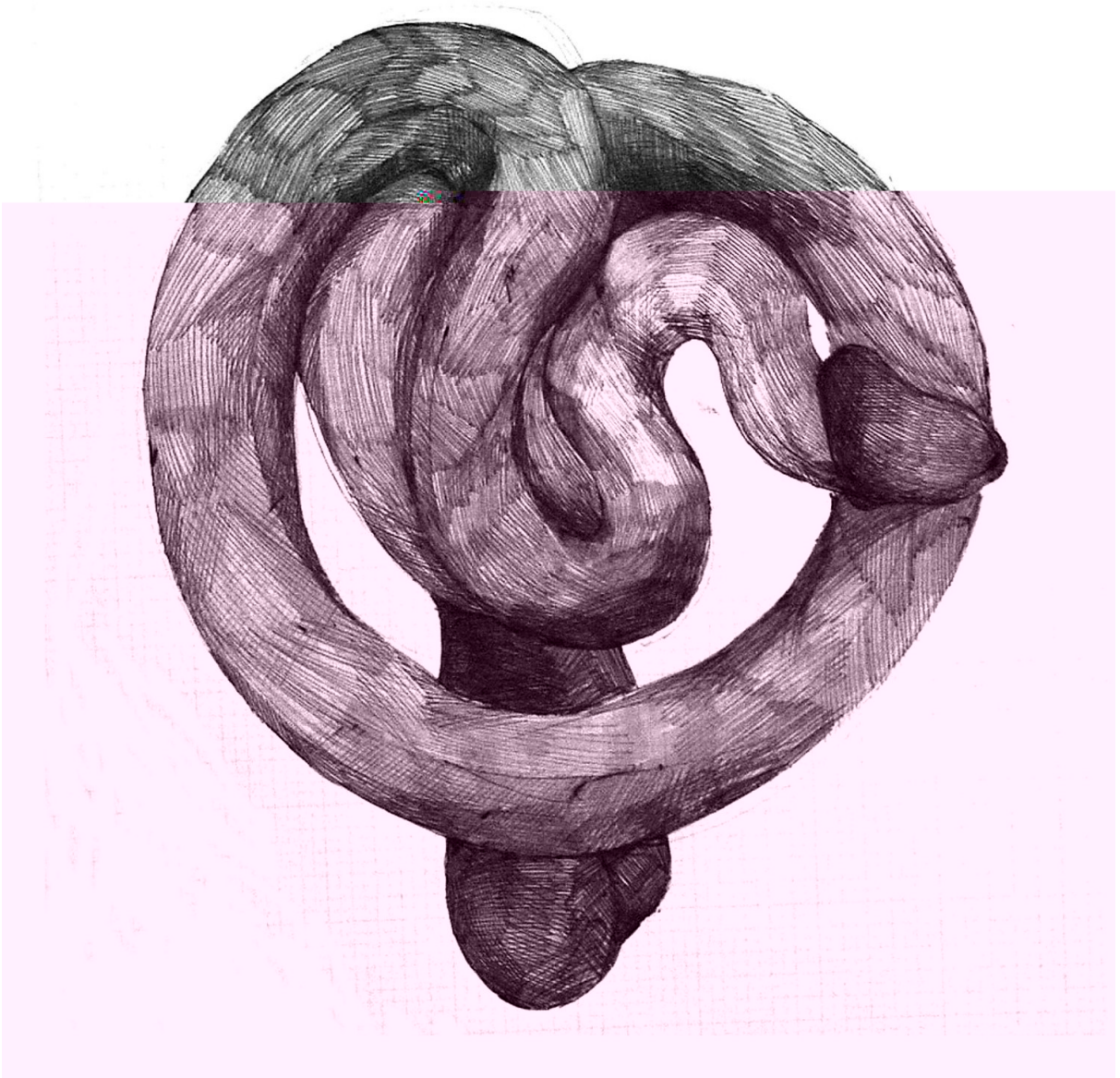
¹⁴ Freud, Sigmund, Joyce Crick, and Ritchie Robertson. 1999. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press pp. 202

¹⁵ James J. Di Censo, “Totem and Taboo and the Constitutive Function of Symbolic Forms” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (LXIV/3) pp.558

¹⁶ Blumenberg, Hans. 1985. *Work on myth*. Studies in contemporary German Social Thought. [Arbeit am Mythos.English]. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. pp.159.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 159

critical examinations of persisting archetypal themes that differ cross-culturally and across time. By queering Eden and its surrounding mythologies, THEGENESISCOMPLEX aspires to add another layer of inscription through performative rather than descriptive application: both in public ritual (performances/exhibitions) and in authoritative critical text. Instead of re-reading Eden, THEGENESISCOMPLEX re-mixes it.



THE GENESIS COMPLEX

I> THE BIBLE AS MATRIX

The Bible is an active artifact that lives in perpetual excavation.

The term *Bible* comes from the Greek τὰ βιβλία, tà biblíá, "the books" –the plural illustrating that rather than a single book, it is in fact “a library – dozens of very different books bound together.”¹⁸ Though the term *Bible* is shared between Judaism and Christianity, several faiths utilize the contents of the text as central to their construction, inferring that there is no single bible, rather “many bibles [that] exist with varying contents.”¹⁹

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, commentaries are constructed atop of commentaries forming a *hive* of interpretation: refined, dismantled, re-constructed and re-interpreted over centuries. Both literal and metaphorical excavations are *excavated*, and those excavations are then excavated in a cyclical, rhythmic archaeology of knowledge²⁰.

In postmodern terminology, the Biblical Matrix may be regarded as the quintessential *Grand Narrative*, perhaps the most fundamental codex of the Western psyche. Though some scholars may identify the Biblical metanarrative within a single rubric (i.e. “the self-

¹⁸ Gibberson, Karl. “The Bible is a Library not a Book” Huffington Post Religion Blog Posted Aug. 15, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/karl-giberson-phd/the-bible-is-a-library-no_b_923690.html access date : February 27, 2014

¹⁹ Riches, John *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction*. [Oxford: Oxford University Press. , 2000] 7–8

²⁰ Foucault, Michel. 2002. *Archaeology of knowledge*. Routledge classics. [Archéologie du savoir. English]. New York: Routledge.

revelation of God to the world through a chosen people”²¹) the sheer complexity and contradictory inhabitants of this library make any such totalizing statement immediately suspect. For our purposes *the Bible* as a construct, can be ‘read’ as a *collage* of (what we now call) myth, history, law, prophecy, allegory, cultural theory, anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, poetry and art (which was altogether occupied in ancient times within the definitive and sweeping context of ‘Religion’)

Though once its readership was targeted specifically to the literate and devout members of the faiths it encompassed, the Bible in a contemporary context is widely distributed to a vastly pluralistic populace. It is now interpreted and circulated in the secular as well as the religious spheres. It is also now (only in the last few centuries) permitted to be *interpreted* outside of scriptural sanction : it is now a text, like any other text in the libraries of human thought available for analysis with or without religious motivation.

II>THE BIBLE AS CANON

That which began as *The Five Books of Moses*, has since amassed a library of now 66 books, including the Old and New Testaments, and excluding several other apocryphal gospels and scriptures. The means by which documents are permitted or denied entry, has been ritually overseen by an ancient, dogmatic membrane called *The Canon*.

²¹ D.P Teague “The Biblical Metanarrative” <http://www.postmodernpreaching.net/the-biblical-metanarrative.html> access date : March 1, 2014

Canonicity, as a conceptual platform is “derived from ecclesiastical law and refers to the selection of certain scriptural texts held to be consistent with Christian doctrine and hence acceptable for inclusion into the orthodox Bible”²². Though the term originates and is popularized by its relationship to the New Testament, its practice long preceded its formal Roman “naming.” It continues to be used today in reference to a carefully curated selection of cross-disciplinary works, charged with illustrating the scope of human imagination. The “exclusion of dissident or different texts” alerts us that “whether ratified by church, state or some other cultural agency, [it] is not simply a designation by category but a performative act that exalts one thing over another”.²³

In 587 B.C.E Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians at the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar, who initiated the First Mass Exile of Israelites to Babylon. Surprisingly, among the Israelites living in exile, “the sense of belonging to the covenant community was intensified, rather than weakened” and the captive-Israelites “studied and searched the tradition intensively for its meaning and carefully preserved their sacred lore in writing for future generations.”²⁴ Attempting to deal with the theological problem of why God’s chosen people should be expelled from their religious homeland, these early scribes began to input a narrative where the worship of other gods (false gods) kindled the wrath of Yahweh, ultimately blaming the defeat at Jerusalem and the exile into Babylon on *impiety*.

²² Hein, Hilda. “Institutional Blessing: The Museum as Canon Maker” in *The Monist* 76:4 (1993) 556-573

²³ Hein, Hilda. *Institutional Blessing: The Museum as Canon Maker* in *The Monist* 76:4 556-573

²⁴ Anderson, Bernhard W. 1975. *Understanding the Old Testament*. 3d -- ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 408.

Archaeological excavations, alongside a host of scriptural supplements, suggest that the worship of other gods was commonplace and even sanctified in pre-Exilic Israel²⁵. Many of the texts that make up the Old Testament were oral stories passed from generation to generation, and so we can see the insertion of the nationalistic trajectory under the flag of monotheism. This functions to maintain the individual identity of the Israelite under captivity in an alien land, and to instruct behavioral difference (i.e. being circumcised) for the *New Jerusalem* being devised by the Israelite intelligentsia of the time.

II> THE BIBLE AS COMPOSITE

In the early 19th century, foreshadowing the cult of postmodernist deconstructions of the Grand Narrative, biblical scholars proposed *The Documentary Hypothesis*, which identified the Torah, or the first Five Books of Moses as “a composite of literary works or sources, instead of being the work of a single author.”²⁶ To contemporary audiences this will likely not cause alarm however, at the time of its inception this disruption of not only priestly but also scholarly unity caused significant debate which still rages. Referred to as both *The Wellhausen Theory* as well as the JEDP theory, this motion proposed that what we now recognize as *The Five Books of Moses* was in fact a composite of four altogether different texts, composed by altogether different authors separated over centuries.

²⁵ Stavrakopoulou, Francesca and John Barton. 2010. *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*. London, UK: T & T Clark.

²⁶ Stern, David. "RECENT TRENDS IN BIBLICAL SOURCE CRITICISM. (Cover story)." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (July 2008): 182-186. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 11, 2014) 182

This was determined by identifying “different writing styles, ideological assumptions [and] word choice, particularly with regard to divine names.”²⁷ JEDP refers to the following four hypothetical key authors :

- J** (ca. 950) “A Judean source, presumably written during the United Monarchy, that prefers to use the divine name YHWH” (spelled out as “Yahweh” or sometimes “Jahweh”.)
- E** (ca. 850) “An Ephraimitic or North Israelite source that favors the use of the divine name **Elohim** (“God”).
- D** (ca. 650 +later) A tradition best represented in the book of **Deuteronomy**, that reflects the literary style and theology prevalent at the time of Josiah’s reform (621 BCE).
- P** (ca. 550+later) “A literary corpus marked by the style and cultic interests of the **Priestly** circle of Jerusalem, that became prominent in the period after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE.²⁸

III>THE BIBLE AS MYTH

Whilst scholarly studies of texts and images from the ancient world tend to focus on the stories as “Myth”, the Bible enjoys a slightly different organization. This is due largely to the fact that many Universities still retain economic and philosophical relations with people who *believe* at least partial aspects of the text to be “true”.

By utilizing the *Documentary Hypothesis* as one foundational myth among other myths, we create access points whereby authorial choices and inscriptions impact our understanding of the stories within a literary and archetypal foundation. Whilst the Bible is also charged with historical uses, this queering calls into question the fictive nature of

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Anderson, Bernhard W. 1975. *Understanding the Old Testament*. 3d -- ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall., pp. 20.

history itself and, in the spirit of DiCenso, reads all sources as culturally sanctioned myth. By queering the Bible we also *shapeshift* it : disrobing it from its authority and placing it as one of many libraries in the databases of Western Myth.

“A beginning is the time for taking the most delicate care
that the balances are correct.”
-Frank Herbert, *DUNE*

GENESIS

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

1 In the beginning when God created^a the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^b swept over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. ⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything

that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make humankind^c in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,^d and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”*

²⁷ *So God created humankind^e in his image, in the image of God he created them; ^fmale and female he created them.*

²⁸ *God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” ²⁹God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

⁴ *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.²⁹*

²⁹ Gen 1-2:4

II> [IN] THE BEGINNING

In the manner in which *The Documentary Hypothesis* excavated the remains of a totalizing narrative and illuminated the composite nature of its total construction, the excavation of Genesis 1-3 reveals it to be a meta-composite of two altogether different stories, purportedly written centuries apart, sewn together to constitute the appearance of a whole.

The first account (Gen. 1:1-2:4a) is ascribed to the *Priestly* writers, characterized by a focus on God (El Shaddai) having created the entire world himself, whereas the second account (Gen. 2-3:4) is ascribed to the *Jahwist* writers, more concerned with narratives and theology of history than philosophical or cosmic theology. Though this excavation deals predominantly with Gen 2-3:4 we will briefly explore the First Account of creation for context and also to begin addressing the gendering and ordering of the Edenic framework.

The first priestly text embarks upon the canonical ordering of the Seven Days of Creation, wherein God the Father creates the cosmos, until the second last day wherein he creates ‘Man’ :

“God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created *them*;
male and female he created *them*.”

-Gen. 1:27-28

This particular verse has lent itself to many feminist, queer, and marginal interpretations, in that it exposes an *inclusive* incision into the Torah's otherwise relentless emphasis upon division and separation. This web of interrelation contained in "he created *them*" espouses the entirety of humanity within a singular construct/idiom, and as a source of scripture has infinite uses to justify inclusion and recognition to a wide array of others which multiple [later]³⁰ passages intentionally, often violently exclude.

In terms of the ordering of gender, in Genesis 1 we are told that "God made 'adam (humanity) in "the image of God," creating 'them' "male and female" implying equality of role".³¹ In the verse immediately following God refers to 'them' :

"God blessed *them*, and God said to *them*
Be fruitful and multiply."³²

Eilberg-Schwartz notes that excluding this passage, "Israelite religion regards the issue of reproduction as critical for men in particular. So important is it for a man to reproduce himself that should he die without offspring, his brother or a near kinsman bears the

³⁰ Passages that follow Gen. 1 are referred to as 'later' however, if we are to accept, at least in part the Documentary Hypothesis, we can then understand that many of these texts were written before and after this one. Dr. Francesca Stavrakapoulou, in *The Bible's Buried Secrets: The Real Garden of Eden* finds

³¹ Anderson, Bernhard W. 1975. *Understanding the Old Testament*. 3d -- ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall., p. 148

³² Genesis 1:29

responsibility of levirate marriage.”³³ Leonard Shlain infers in *The Alphabet Versus The Goddess* that patriarchy originates at a point in early primitive development wherein males began to identify their likeness in the physical features of their offspring.³⁴ The relationship between sanctity, male reproduction, and paternity is exposed in the Oxford Dictionary’s definition of the word piety : “the quality of being religious or reverent”³⁵, whose etymological origin emerges from Roman *pious* which “in its strictest sense refers the sort of love a son ought to have for his father.”³⁶

In her article “Male and Female God Created Them”, Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig reads the inscription of Male and Female as markers with which to illuminate a much larger, multi-gendered terrain:

When the Biblical text says “There was evening, there was morning, the first day” it means, of course, that there was evening, there was dawn, there was morning, there was noon time, there was afternoon, there was dusk in the first day.

“Evening and morning” are used to encompass all the times of the day, all the qualities of light that would be found over the course of one day. So, too, in the case of Genesis 1.27b, the whole diverse panoply of genders and gender identities is encompassed by only two words, “male” and “female.” Read not, therefore,

³³ Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. 1994. *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 200-201

³⁴ Shlain, Leonard. 1998. *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess :The Conflict between Word and Image*. New York: Viking. 8-17

³⁵ Stevenson, Angus. 2010. *Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

³⁶ Cicero, *Nature of the Gods*, 1. 116 and *On Rhetorical Invention*, 2. 66.

“God created every human being as either male or female” but rather “God created human kind *zachar unikevah* male and female and every combination in between.³⁷

Whilst Rabbi Moers-Wenig’s suggestion may be helpful in unsettling the “inherent” patriarchal nature of the myth, another problem emerges in the lines directly preceding the previous mention :

“Fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

-Gen 1:28-29

The order, and implication for Adam and Eve to “fill the earth and subdue it” can be read quite eerily as a prophecy written long ago that may occupy the foundation of the patriarchal and ecological catastrophe we have inherited in the contemporary era. The lengthy ordering and systematic ‘creation’ of the vastness of Nature at the hands of a Father God is illustrated in the literary choice of the origin of humanity within the construct of a ‘Garden’ : a place wherein the vast complexity of Nature is organized according to Human intention and involvement. Here an array of pleasure-inducing and medicinal plants exist within a structured human-dominated terrain. The unanimously mythical construct of the ‘wild’ Earth as inherently feminine, and often ascribed as a

³⁷ Margarwet Moers Wenig “Male and Female God Creates Them Parashat Bereshit (Genesis 1:1-6:8) in *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible*. ed. Gregg Drinkwater, Joshua Lesser and David Shneer (New York: New York University Press, 2009) 16.

Mother makes the patriarchal implications of this text terrifyingly transparent.

Another Account of the Creation

(Gen 1:26–30)

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground;⁶ but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground,^a and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches.¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush.¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”¹⁹ So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man^b there was not found a helper as his partner.²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.²³ Then the man said,

*“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,^c
for out of Man^d this one was taken.”*

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

IV>AN **OTHER** BEGINNING

After the final day of creation wherein God rests and introduces the Sabbath, we are given (in the New Revised Standard Version) a title that breaks and bridges the two sources : “*Another Account of the Creation.*” 450 years separates the two texts, and in a manner that is counter-intuitive to the semi-linear ‘history’ presented in the Old Testament, the second ‘Beginning’ (ascribed to the Jahwistic Source) predates the first.

Concerned mainly with narratives, and characterized by frequent visitations of Yahweh, the *Jahwist* source is charged with answering “essential questions about the Jewish Empire: for what purpose was this empire created? For how long will it exist? Why was the gift of the empire granted to the Jews?”³⁸

Composed supposedly in the time of David and Solomon around 950 BCE, the J source and its accompanying mythology provide another opportunity for queering if we include the findings of Harold Bloom’s infamous best-seller *The Book of J*. Here he proposes, through questionable scholarship and contemporary humor that the author of the J Source in *The Documentary Hypothesis* was in fact a single author, and a Woman.

Surveying ‘J’s literary choices, Bloom identifies that her “most striking characters are women; her males are often childish. Even her Yahweh behaves like a headstrong,

³⁸*Encyclopaedia Britannica, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information.* -- 1910. New York: Encyclopedia Britannica. “Yahwist Source”

petulant boy, and is treated with a maternal indulgence tempered by irony.”³⁹ The popularity of this text, regardless of its ability to endure academic scrutiny places it as a valuable mythological construct in a wider cultural debate.

Genesis 2-3:24 is home to the [in]famous allegorical construction involving the Serpent, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Tree of Life, Eve, Adam and the fruit which has, like all enduring, ancient myth, endlessly re-incarnated throughout the growth and development of Western Civilization. We can postulate, due to the host of themes it involves, that it was designed, at least in part to address key questions central to the lives of ancient Israel :

Why are man and woman attracted to each other ? Why does social propriety demand the wearing of clothes ? Why must there be the pain of childbirth and the misery of hard work ? Why do people fear snakes ? ... Why do man and woman, God’s creatures, refuse to acknowledge the sovereignty of their Creator, with the result that humans are tragically banished from the wholesome life for which they were intended ?⁴⁰

Christianity develops out of the body of Judaism, not unlike Eve from the rib of Adam.

As it begins to construct its own theology, Christianity deconstructs and then re-

³⁹ Kermode, Frank. 1990. *God Speaks through his Women*. New York Times Online <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/23/books/god-speaks-through-his-women.html> accessed : March 1, 2014

⁴⁰ Anderson, Bernhard W. 1975. *Understanding the Old Testament*. 3d -- ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.pp.148.

constructs the contents of the Old Testament from its new theological lens. Though the Old Testament says nothing about ‘sin’, or ‘Satan’ the New Testament re-imagines the Garden of Eden as the site of the original *fall from grace* and according to Pagels in her seminal *Adam, Eve and The Serpent* “infers a moral system”⁴¹ upon it. Christ’s resurrection is mythologized as redemption, in the mind of Father McBride, interviewed in the Bible’s Buried Secrets, “the disobedience of our first parents” [Adam and Eve] and “if humankind didn’t fall away from God in the first place [Christians] wouldn’t need a redeemer.”⁴²

Throughout the ages, commentaries and interpretations have grown around the original Genesis text like weeds untended in a garden. Within the rubric of contemporary discourse, vast ranges of interpretation still ignite popular debate and raise questions surrounding the nature of humankind, religion, myth, gender and temptation.

In the contemporary era, religious mythological themes have migrated to the precincts of Science, which has in many ways taken on the authoritative positioning religious law once occupied in the ancient world. Mark Pretorius of the South African Theological Seminary describes how mitochondrial DNA sampling by anthropologists, geneticists and geochemists have established, scientifically, that “humans descended from one woman in a single location” and “Y-chromosomal evidence confirms that humanity

⁴¹ Pagels, Elaine H. 1989; 1988. *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*. 1 Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books.pp.128.

⁴²Father Canon McBride in *The Bible’s Buried Secrets : The Real Eden*, Canon McBride, narrated by Francesca Stavrakapoulou (2011; London: BBC), Documentary.

descended from one man, from the same location”⁴³. These geneticists refer to “humanity’s mitochondrial DNA ancestors as ‘mitochondria Eve’ and to the Y-chromosomal ancestor as ‘Adam’. Further to this, scientists call the location from where they originated, the *Garden of Eden*.”⁴⁴

Emily Martin articulates the means by which Science appropriates and organizes information based upon dominant normative myth in her article *The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles*. Martin argues that Science has come to replace Religion and myth as a normative authority in the framing of humanity’s biological predisposition, as it relates to gender :

Even though each new account gives the egg a larger and more active role, taken together they bring into play another cultural stereotype: woman as a dangerous and aggressive threat. In the Johns Hopkins lab's revised model, the egg ends up as the female aggressor who "captures and tethers" the sperm with her sticky zona, rather like a spider lying in wait in her web. The Schatten lab has the egg's nucleus "interrupt" the sperm's dive with a "sudden and swift" rush by which she "clasps the sperm and guides its nucleus to the center." Wassarman's description of the surface of the egg "covered with thousands of plasma membrane-bound projections, called microvilli" that reach out and clasp the sperm adds to the spiderlike imagery. These images grant the egg an active role but at the cost of

⁴³ Pretorius, Mark. 2011. "The Creation and the Fall of Adam and Eve: Literal, Symbolic, or Myth?" *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 12, 161-184. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 11, 2014). pp.166

⁴⁴ Ibid 166-67.

appearing disturbingly aggressive. Images of woman as dangerous and aggressive, the femme fatale who victimizes men, are wide-spread in Western literature and culture.⁴⁵

While the positioning of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1-2 lends itself to be re-mixed within the dimensions of queer ambiguity, the J source Edenic text, not unlike the current Scientific reading of the binary of the Sperm and the Egg, can be read as a mascot of what Judith Butler refers to as the Heterosexual Matrix. Butler defines this terrain as a

hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality.⁴⁶

Though clearly prior to the circulation of this myth, societies in the Ancient Near East were organized in relation to a gendered matrix of male and female relations, particularly in relation to reproduction. The inscription of the narrative remains foundational in the construction of a Western Heterosexual Monarchy, which rests firmly on a foundation of patriarchal, hetero-normative, and trans/homo-phobic implications.

⁴⁵ Emily Martin “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” in *Signs* Vol. 16, No. 3 (Spring 1991) pp. 498.

⁴⁶ Butler, Judith. 1999; 1990. *Gender Trouble :Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge. pp.151

“We are stardust
We are golden
We are million year old carbon
And we’ve got to get ourselves
Back to the Garden”

-Joni Mitchell, Woodstock

V> THE REAL EDEN

The Creation Museum in Kentucky appropriates the aesthetics of the American Museum of Natural History, presenting “a combination of geological fossilized exhibits showing evidence for a 6000 year old Earth and a worldwide flood, combined with theme park style simulations of scenes from Genesis.”⁴⁷ The Museum occupies 70,000 sq. ft., and cost over \$27 million to construct. In its first year alone it was reported to have had over 400,00 visitors.

The Museum displays biblically sanctioned dioramas (including dinosaurs playing in Eden with Adam and Eve, and a life-size replica of Noah’s ark) challenging the authenticity of the Natural History Museum by the “appropriation of its popular symbols.”⁴⁸ Addressing how Natural history museums have “become central sites for public awareness and understanding of evolution”⁴⁹ the Creation Museum “provides a site where Young Earth Creationists can take their children to ‘see the dinosaurs’ without compromising their beliefs.”⁵⁰

Jean Baudrillard’s theory of *Simulation and Simulacra* posits that what is culturally referred to as ‘real’ is in most cases a replica, stylistically and with great artistry

⁴⁷ Ella Butler “God is in the Data: Epistemologies of Knowledge at the Creation Museum” in *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 2010: pp.230

⁴⁸ Butler, Ella. “God is in the Data: Epistemologies of Knowledge at the Creation Museum” in *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 2010. pp.231

⁴⁹ Casey Ryan Kelly and Kristen E. Hoerl “Genesis in Hyperreality: Legitimizing Disingenuous

Controversy at the Creation Museum” *Argument and Advocacy* 48 (2012) pp.124

⁵⁰ *Ibid* 125

composed and designed to elicit the same reactions as its referent. Baudrillard claims the loss of an authentic reality has fueled institutions to produce and manufacture seductive and alluring realities that aim to surpass the referential their mimesis is derived from. He refers to this exaggerated reality as the ‘hyper-real’.⁵¹

A didactic signs inside of the Creation Museum reads as follows:

Views about fossils have come and gone. But fossils themselves do not tell us where these creatures came from or how they died. Fortunately, we have another source of factual data – the first book of the Bible, Genesis... God’s Word holds the key to our understanding of God’s World. Most fossils are a silent testimony to God’s worldwide judgment.⁵²

In part 2 of her 3 part BBC Miniseries *The Bible’s Buried Secrets*, Dr. Francesca Stavrakapoulou creates an edu-tainment spectacle trudging through the ancient world with a camera crew in order to ‘locate’ the “REAL EDEN”. Though she takes a clever spin on the matter by proposing that the *Real Eden* is in fact Jerusalem, it nonetheless exemplifies a secular publics hunger to factualize this mythological text within the lens of contemporary Archaeology and Science.

⁵¹ Baudrillard, Jean. 1983. *Simulations*. Foreign Agents Series. New York: Semiotexte.

⁵² Butler, Ella. “God is in the Data: Epistemologies of Knowledge at the Creation Museum” in *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 2010: pp. 238

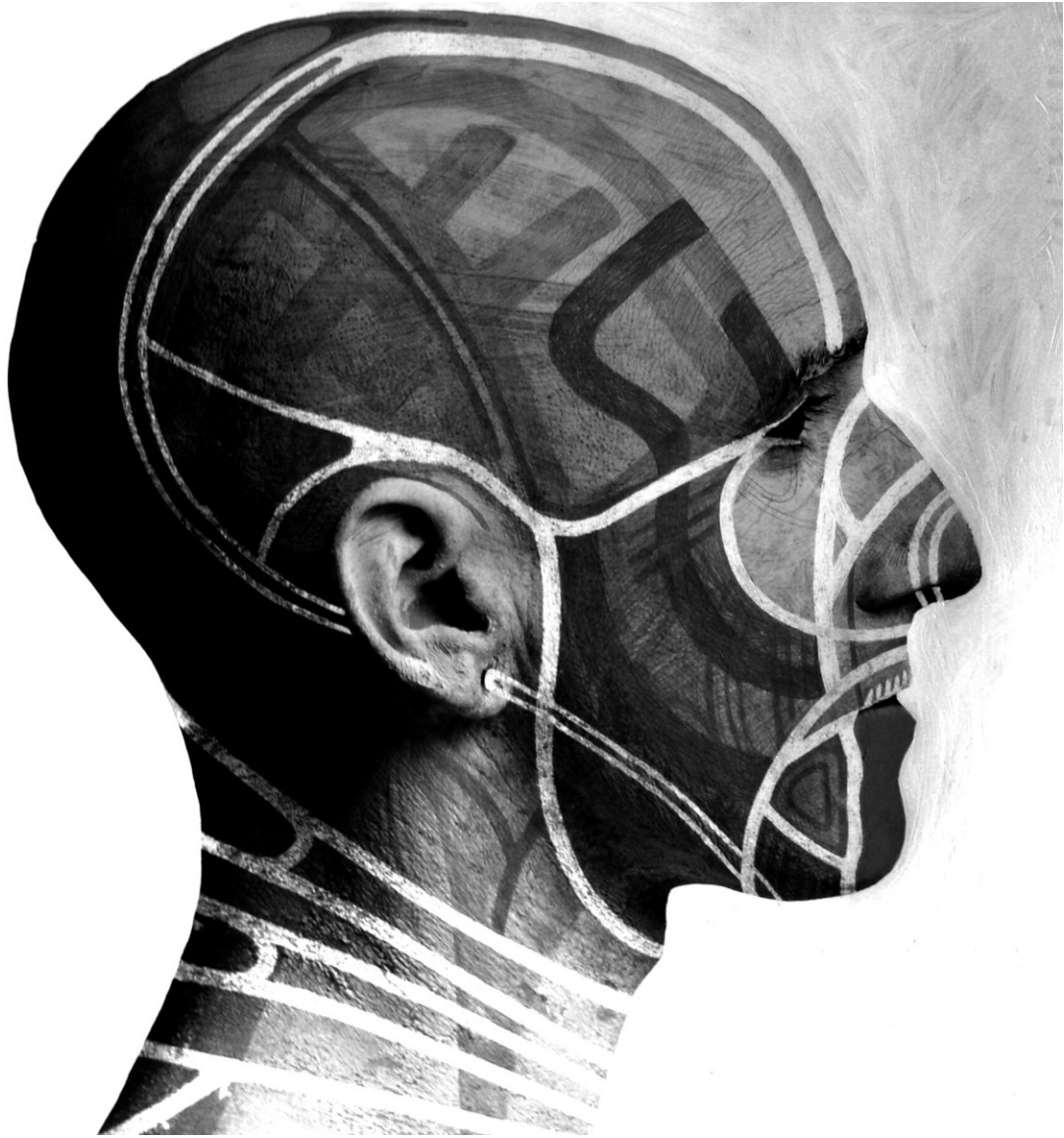
In order to *prove* that Jerusalem is in fact the REAL EDEN, Stavrakapoulou analyzes ancient Persian reliefs (housed within the British Museum) depicting Persian gardens being irrigated by four constructed water systems (in direct reference to the four rivers mentioned in Gen 3:10-30⁵³). She argues that the gardens were “manifestations of carefully controlled order” and that they “symbolize the imposition of cultivated fertility on the barren wilderness”⁵⁴. It is through this analysis that she proposes Eden as a complex, an enclosed garden, overseen by a King whom she proposes to be a semi-historical Adam. She ascribes the expulsion from Eden to be an allegorical literary device used to encode the forced exile to Babylon in 587 BCE.

Depictions and interpretations of the inherent, “real” or authoritative aspect of this myth continue to be produced in all spheres of contemporary culture and discourse. It haunts us like a ghost and stalks us like a predator, perhaps impossible in the Western World to completely shake off. It is the same impetus that fuels those whose hetero-normative ideals perpetuated the DOMA and fought against the PACS a belief in the materiality of this document as either metaphorically (in the case of psychoanalysis) or literally (in the case of the Christian Right) true.

⁵³ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates

⁵⁴ Stavrakapoulou, Francesca. *The Bible's Buried Secrets : The Real Eden*. Documentary. BBC. 2011.

Myths endure morality, and lie beyond code. Much as many would like to delete and start again, it is not possible. The persistence of Myth is the persistence of Nature. Despite our perpetual desire to think of its wilderness as that which we dominate, we continually witness how it dominates us. We have all been seduced by the Serpent, we have all been handed knowledge beyond our comprehension and even against our own individual consent. We all have known innocence that was inevitably punctured and we all have had to learn the consequences, as well as the tremendous offerings of expanding our horizons.



I Shape The New Body of Adam, inkjet print on ragpaper, 40" x 40", Michael Dudeck, 2014

>ADAM/GOD THE FATHER

Renowned Egyptologist Jan Assman suggests that “Modernity begins almost 3500 years ago with the prohibition to worship the wrong gods, or God in the wrong way. The iconoclastic impulse against false representation is the hallmark of enlightenment, rationality, and modernization.”⁵⁵ Indeed, this development initiates a radical new paradigm wherein the entirety of pluralistic religious activity becomes re-routed towards a single all-encompassing deity. This deity refuses to be depicted in human form, so as to abolish recognition and worship through mimesis. The prohibition against worshipping the graven image and the false idol “prepares the way for the kind of abstract thinking that inevitably leads to law codes, dualistic philosophy, and objective science: the signature triad of Western culture.”⁵⁶

The introduction of Yahweh, the Father God of the Israelites, initiates two distinctly radical renegotiations of divine and social order. The first is contained within the First of the Ten Commandments :

“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them

⁵⁵ Jan Assman “What’s Wrong with Images ?” in Hlavajova, Maria, Sven Lütticken, Jill Winder, and BAK, basis voor actuele kunst. 2009. *The Return of Religion and Other Myths :A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*. BAK Critical Reader Series. Utrecht the Netherlands: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst.. pp 17.

⁵⁶ Shlain, Leonard. 1998. *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess :The Conflict between Word and Image*. New York: Viking. 27

or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God”

-Gen. 20:3-5

There is complexity in how the polytheistic impulse is re-routed. As Assman observes the Biblical texts “constantly invite us to imagine God, to form mental images of God in order to love him, to fear him, to obey him. The visible images must disappear in order to make room for the word and the mental images it evokes”⁵⁷. The emergence of textual religious dominance subverting and supplanting the previous authority of the image has complex connotations as it relates to the gendering of the Ancient World. Though Yahweh refused to have a body, “he” did not refuse to have a gender, thus initiating the still prevalent model of the Invisible Male Authority who is always watching. Contemporary culture refers still to this dominant ambiguous authority as “The Man” and Orwell’s 1984 *“Big Brother is Watching You”* aligns itself precisely with this ancient trajectory.

Idols, particularly of animals (such as the Golden Calf), argues Assman, “are treated as sacred animals, not as representations, but as incarnations of the divine, not as a copy of a divine body but as a divine body themselves”⁵⁸. The cultic icon affirms the organization of an individual within a much broader ecosystem of gods, forces, powers, motivations, poisons, religions and people. It is not, as we will find, the inherent cultic relationship between the image and the worshipper that is being addressed : it is the code that the

⁵⁷ Jan Assman “What’s Wrong with Images ?” in Hlavajova, Maria, Sven Lütticken, Jill Winder, and BAK, basis voor actuele kunst. 2009. *The Return of Religion and Other Myths :A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*. BAK Critical Reader Series. Utrecht the Netherlands: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst.. pp 21.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 23

worshipper brings to the image that is being re-wired. The Yahwistic wishes to castrate the magic of all objects and redirect it to himself – to his abstraction, to his expansive, broad-sweeping totality.

The second very crucial renegotiation that textual Yahwistic monotheism introduces is the advent of a new code linking masculinity and reproduction. The *Father God* sculpts humanity out of the mud of the earth, without any female participation. If we are to export the symbolic alteration of earlier, polytheistic practices, this virgin birth without womb or vulva seeks to intentionally break any relationship between fertility and femaleness through its ordering of text and of creation by male hands.

Eilberg-Schwartz postulates that the “symbol of a father God, like many religious symbols, is as much an ideal that cannot be achieved as an affirmation of what already is. Thus the symbol of a male God is not simply a legitimation of masculinity or an object of male desire. It is also an image against which men must measure themselves and by whose standard they fall short. For how can men, who are expected to procreate and reproduce the lineage of their fathers, be made in the image of a sexless God ?”⁵⁹

During Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden, God informs Eve that, in punishment he will “greatly increase [her] pangs in childbearing; in pain [Eve, womankind] shall bring forth children”⁶⁰. Prior to this, we may expect, within this mythic dimension that childbearing may have even fallen unto Adam to perform, for he was made “from the

⁵⁹ Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. 1994. *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. Boston: Beacon Press. pp.199.

⁶⁰ Gen. 3:16-17

dust of the ground”⁶¹ and Eve was delivered via caesarian-section whilst Adam slumbered peacefully, anesthetized by his Creator. There is a strategic literary construction of male-birthing as tranquil and serene in comparison to the bloody, violent, painful process of female fertility. This is performed in one of the central vignettes of Michelangelo’s famous Sistine Chapel, where both God and Adam, [Mother/Father and Child] languidly recline (evocative of Hellenistic aristocracy being fed by slaves) while the spark of creation is passed through the gentlest touch of index finger to index finger (phallus to phallus) between them both.

The mess and blood and rips and tears and thunderous problematics of the procreative remains the sole territory of the Mother, of Eve, of the cursed. Feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray writes : “the exclusivity of his law forecloses this first body, this first home, this first love it sacrifices them so as to make them material for the rule of a language.”⁶²

⁶¹ Gen. 2:7

⁶² Irigaray, Luce and Margaret Whitford. 1991. *The Irigaray Reader* [Essays.Selections.English]. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell. pp.39

“Asherah was buried
long ago by the establishment.
Now archaeology has excavated her.”

-William H. Dever, **Did God Have a Wife?**

Mentions of Asherah in The Old Testament

- EXODUS 34:12-13 Take care not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you are going, or it will become a snare among you. You shall tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their sacred poles.
[Hebrew - *Asherim*]
- DEUTERONOMY 7:5 But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire. [Hebrew - *Asherim*]
- DEUTERONOMY 12:3 Break down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their
their
sacred poles with fire and hew down the idols of their gods, and thus blot out their name from their places.
- DEUTERONOMY 16:21 You shall not plant any tree as a sacred pole beside the altar that you make for the Lord your God; nor shall you set up a stone pillar – things that the Lord your God hates.
- JUDGES 6:25-26 That night the LORD said to him “Take your father’s bull, the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred pole that is beside it ; and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here, in proper order; then take the second bull, and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the sacred pole that you shall cut down.”
- JUDGES 6:28 When the townspeople rose early in the morning, the altar of Baal was broken down and the sacred pole beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built.
- JUDGES 6:30 Then the townspeople said to Joash, “Bring out your son, so that he may die, for he has pulled down the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred pole beside it.”
- 1 KINGS 14:15 The LORD will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water; he will root up Israel out of this good land that he gave to their ancestors, and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their sacred poles, provoking the LORD to anger.

- 1 KINGS 14:23 For they also built for themselves high places, pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree; there were also male temple prostitutes in the land. They committed the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel
- 1 KINGS 15:13 [Jeroboam] also removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother, because she had made an abominable image for Asherah; Asa cut down her image and burned it at the Wadi Kidron.
- 1 KINGS 16:31-33 And as if it had been a light thing for [Ahab] to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made a sacred pole.
- 1 KINGS 18:19 Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel with the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.”
- 2 KINGS 10:26 They brought out the pillar that was in the temple of Baal, and burned it. Then they demolished the pillar of Baal, and destroyed the temple of Baal and made it a latrine to this day.
- 2 KINGS 13:6 Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he caused Israel to sin, but walked in them; the sacred pole also remained in Samaria.
- 2 KINGS 17:9-11 The people of Israel secretly did things that were not right against the LORD their God. They built for themselves high places at all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city; they set up for themselves pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree; there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them.
- 2 KINGS 17:16 They rejected all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves cast images of two calves; they made a sacred pole, worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

- 2 KINGS 18:4 He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole.
- 2 KINGS 21:3 For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed, he erected altars for Baal, made a sacred pole, as King Ahab of Israel had done, worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.
- 2 KINGS 21:7-9 The carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever; I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land that I gave to their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them. But they did not listen;
- 2 KINGS 23:4 The King commanded the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second order, and the guardians of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. He deposed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who made offerings to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and all the host of the heavens. He brought out the image of Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to Wadi Kidron, burned it at the Wadi Kidron, beat it to dust and threw the dust of it upon the graves of the common people. He broke down the houses of the male prostitutes that were in the house of the LORD[<] where the women did weaving for Asherah.
- 2 KINGS 23:14 He broke the pillars in pieces, cut down the sacred poles, and covered the sites with human bones.
- 2 KINGS 23:15 Moreover at the altar at Bethel, the high place erected by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin – he pulled down that altar along with the high place. He burned the high place, crushing it to dust; he also burned the sacred pole.
- JEREMIAH 7.17-19 Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger

JEREMIAH 44.15- 20 Then all the men who were aware that their wives had been making offerings to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt answered Jeremiah: “As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name fo the LORD, we are not going to listen to you. Instead we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her, just as we and our ancestors, our kings and our officials used to do in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. We used to have plenty of food and prospered, and saw no misfortune. But from the time we stopped making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we have lacked everything and have perished by the sword and by famine. And the women said, “Indeed we will go on making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her; do you think that we made cakes for her, marked with her image, and poured out libations to her without our husbands’ being involved ?

HOSEA 4:12-15 My people consult a piece of wood, and their divining rod gives them oracles . For a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have played the whore, forsaking their God. They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains, and make offerings upon the hills, under oak, poplar and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with whores, and sacrifice with temple prostitutes; thus a people without understanding comes to ruin.



I Reshape the Old Body of Eve, inkjet print on ragpaper, 40" x 40", Michael Dudeck,
2014

>EVE/GOD THE MOTHER

“While Freud describes and theorizes, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, the murder of the father as founding the primal horde, he forgets a more archaic murder: that of the Mother.”

-Luce Irigaray

In 1967, archaeologist William Dever excavated two tombs in *Khiberet el Qom* (the biblical territory of the kingdom of Judah) which refer to “Yahweh and *his Asherah*.” Dever’s findings, alongside the findings of similar excavations in Kuntillet Arjud (1975 - 78)⁶³ propose that Asherah, a Canaanite Mother Goddess may have been understood in pre-exilic Israelite culture as the wife, or consort of God.

The rhythmic, polytheistic disruptions of the Covenant between the jealous singular God Yahweh and the Israelites is thoroughly documented within the biblical texts. There exists “evidence in Israelite literature of sacrifices to other gods who were understood to be subordinate members of Yahweh’s pantheon”.⁶⁴ By the 8th century BCE, however, the prophets begin their infamous attacks on the cultic promiscuity of Israelite worship,

⁶³ In 1975- 76, archaeologist Ze’ev Meshel excavated the site of Kuntillet Ajrud (Horvat Teiman). Dated to the ninth or eighth century BC and consisting of two buildings, one partially eroded, and the other completely disintegrated the site at Kuntillet Ajrud has yielded many interesting finds. Located in North Eastern Sinai within reach of north-south and east-west travelling routes, it has been suggested by archaeologists and scholars that Kuntillet Ajrud could have served as a religious cult centre or a ‘caravanserai’ Becky VandenBoom. *Yahweh and his Asherah at Kuntillet Arjud*. http://www.academia.edu/3720298/Yahweh_and_his_Asherah_at_Kuntillet_Ajrud. Accessed on March 10, 2014.

⁶⁴ Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. 1994. *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. Boston: Beacon Press. pp 105.

initiating “changes that ultimately led to the exclusive worship of one God and the radical monotheism of the fifth century.”⁶⁵

In Episode 2 of her BBC series *The Bible's Buried Secrets*, Dr. Francesca Stavrakapoulou leads audiences on another excavation into the liminal space between myth and history concerning this very radical archaeological implication. This episode, entitled *Did God Have A Wife?* popularizes Devers radical findings on a video-pilgrimage to the Promised Land, in a popular, simplified “archaeological adventure” marketed towards members of the general public.

Stavrakapoulou takes viewers into the messiest pits of archaeology where this debate is contested. Despite the questionable tactics used to make these complex excavations she addresses core questions of feminist biblical scholarship to audiences that may not have even correlated the origins of patriarchy with these texts and this region. Though she clearly oversimplifies many aspects of the argument, in an effort to adhere to the ‘hyper-real’ strategies of the BBC, she nonetheless challenges the authority of the Bible and its patriarchal connotations in both content and in the performance of an institutionally sanctioned female biblical scholar investigating the Bible from an informed perspective. Notice the vernacular in which she addresses the general public on critical feminist themes :

⁶⁵ Ibid,105.

The imagery of the Eden story has enriched our literature, our art and our music, but its also had a very big influence on the way in which we view ourselves and eachother. In particular it has had a very negative impact in the way in which women are viewed. For centuries, Eve’s actions have been used as a reason to suppress women, to be fearful of female sexuality, and Eve’s ability to lead Adam astray has led to a lot of hang-ups about sex.⁶⁶

Stavrapoulou’s scholarship however, provides a more complex analysis of the inter-relations, within the rubric of ‘popular religion’ vs. normative religion, as they pertain to what would have been referred to as ‘Asherah’ worship. She uses ‘popular religion’ to refer to “practices assumed to be unendorsed or unregulated by representatives of ‘normative’ or ‘centralized’ religion, and often sounds a pejorative tone in consequently characterizing these practices as deviant”.⁶⁷ It seems that the biblical writers, who were mostly male, have something in common with modern theologians who [were] also mostly male : both decided to sweep Asherah aside.

The actual worship of Asherah is ‘problematic’, which also means it is ambiguous and inherently *queer*. As a goddess she has been depicted as a nude woman with upraised arms, sometimes holding a lily in one hand and a serpent in the other – symbols of birth, death and new life. As a goddess of fertility, she is sometimes shown standing beneath a

⁶⁶ Stavrapoulou, Francesca. *The Bible’s Buried Secrets : Did God Have a Wife?*. Documentary. BBC. 2011.

⁶⁷ Stavrapoulou, Francesca and John Barton. 2010. *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*. London, UK: T & T Clark. pp.38

tree or holding branches of palm or papyrus.⁶⁸

Out of the 40 mentions of her in the Old Testament, the majority of them refer to an Asherah as a tree, or a “sacred pole”. It has been surmised that “Asherah was conceived as some kind of “tree-goddess” in ancient Israel, largely based on the polemical references to the asherah in the Deuteronomistic literature”.⁶⁹ The phallic nature of the object of worship, particularly as a ‘pole’ runs counter-intuitive to its association with a female goddess ascribed with the qualities of “birth, death and new life”. This runs counter to the more common, simplistically gendered semiotic reading.

It can be posited that there exists a relationship between the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat, the Tree of Life, and the Asherah pole/tree. Certainly the biblical authors would have been aware of the connotations of the tree as motif and there is evidence to suggest that Asherah, in her tree form was also referred to as *The Tree of Life*.

The names of two other major Canaanite goddesses, *Anat* and *Astarte* are used interchangeably in the Old Testament: “whatever distinctions existed between the three major Canaanite goddesses early on have broken down by the time of the deuteronomistic writers, and thus the divine names Asherah and Astarte are used

⁶⁸ Conner, Randy P. 1993. *Blossom of Bone :Reclaiming the Connections between Homoeroticism and the Sacred*. 1st ed. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco. pp. 75

⁶⁹ Wiggins, Steve A. 2007. *A Reassessment of Asherah :With further Considerations of the Goddess*. Gorgias Ugaritic Studies. 1 Gorgias Press ed. Vol. 2. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press. pp.158.

synonymously.”⁷⁰ Queer theorist and cultural engineer Randy P. Connor describes in his seminal publication *Blossom of Bone : Reclaiming the Connections between Homoeroticism and the Sacred* , that the qedesim or the sacred prostitutes of ancient Canaan (male, female, and intersex) were the gender variant priests of Athirat [a derivate of Asherah].

The Mother cults of the Ancient Near East begin with the Phrygian Mother. Her primordial range included vast territories that spread to Anatolia, Greece and eventually Rome. It is certain that within the precincts of Phrygia [now modern-day Turkey] that Kybele [Greek] or Cybele [Latin] was worshipped as the principal deity. However “outside of Phrygia, however she seems to have been only one divinity among many, and not necessarily the most important one.”⁷¹

In ancient times, “one could assure that the earth would be fruitful and people prosperous if one sacrificed one’s own capacity to procreate. Castrating an individual [which was tantamount to his death] was one way to fertilize the Earth Goddess, the giver of all life.”⁷² This possible archaic procedure “may have imitated the reaping of crops. Only stone tools could be used for ritual castration; bronze or iron was forbidden, indicating the custom’s prehistoric origin.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Olyan, Saul. 1988. *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*. Monograph Series / Society of Biblical Literature. Vol. 34. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press. pp.6

⁷¹ Roller, Lynn E. 1999. *In Search of God the Mother :The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press. pp. 64

⁷² Scholz, Piotr O. 2001. *Eunuchs and Castrati :A Cultural History* [Entmannte Eros.English]. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers. pp.ix

⁷³ Paglia, Camille. 1990. *Sexual Personae*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 44

The tradition of castrated priests of a Mother-cult extend far past Phrygia, to include the *megabysos* of the Ephysian Artemis, the *korybantēs* of the Meter, the cults of Hecate of *Lagina* in Caria [Karyai] as well as the syncretic Greco-oriental cults of Aphrodite and Astarte⁷⁴. Though significant debate surrounds the nature of the *qedeshim* of the Old Testament, (i.e whether they were simply priests, or prostitutes) it can be critically re-imagined⁷⁵ that they performed roles as sacred hierodules in relation to the Mother Goddess *Asherah* like their archetypal cousins listed above.

The removal of the phallus by a gendered male was/is an act of ritual impersonation: “in the mystery religions, which influenced Christianity, the devotee imitated and sought union with his god. The priest of the Great Mother changed sex in order to *become* her.”⁷⁶ The gender-variant, marked in antiquity by the stone-cut removal of his phallus, enacts an archaic power performed today in the ritual *transformation* of the *transsexual*.

The association of the phallus with power, particularly in the Freudian imaginary is destabilized when assessing the plurality of alternate power positions employed by the transsexual Priests of antiquity. The theme of ambiguous gender variant priesthood in relation to the Mother, in the modern era, is enacted in the West by Drag Queens emulating mediatic divas such as Cher, Barbara Streisand and Madonna, and an ancient version of it is performed in the India by the *hijra*, eunuch priests of the Hindu mother goddess Mata.

⁷⁴ Roller, Lynn E. 1999. *In Search of God the Mother :The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

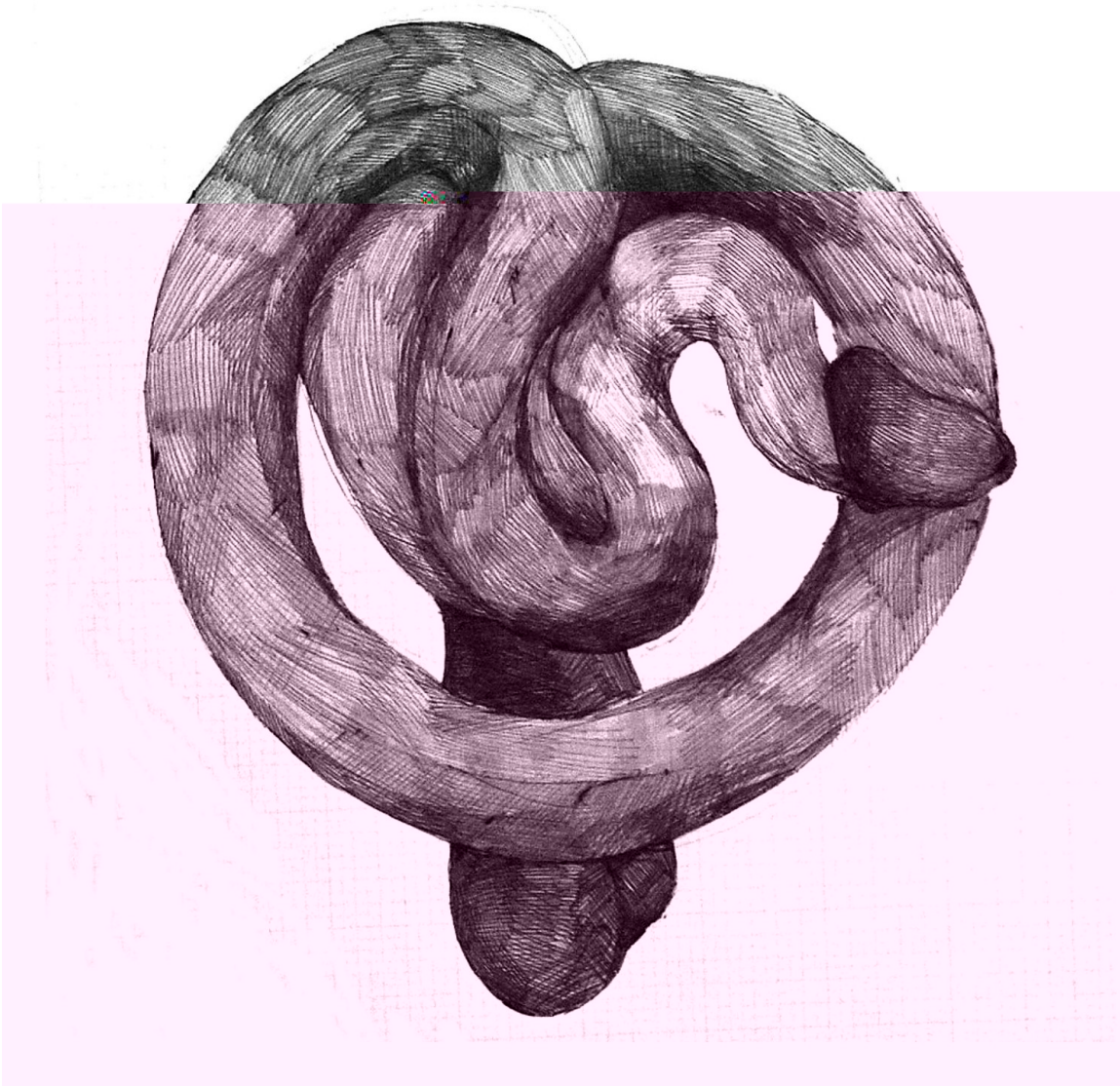
⁷⁵ Dr. Brigitte Kahl

⁷⁶ Paglia, Camille. 1990. *Sexual Personae*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 44.

Irigaray's *First Body* can never be contained, it haunts in its landscapes of myth, dream, sex, religion and art. Circumcision is the First Body ritualizing its remembrance, inscribing itself deep within the Laws of the Father, exposing the fragility and overwhelming in-stability of the worm-turned-weapon.

One beautiful evening
In the Garden of Eden
A Snake was walking in the Twilight
He was leaning on his Ivory Cane.
And he said
“Let me tell you a little secret about life
There’s a certain sharpness to a Knife
Or a diamond.
Come here. Watch it glitter...”

-Laurie Anderson



The Worm Turned Weapon, graphite and ink on paper, 40" x 40", Michael Dudeck, 2014

>SERPENT/GOD THE **OTHER**

In her analysis of Leviticus, Mary Douglas notes the view that “some of the more mysterious commands of the law had as their object to make a sharp break with heathen practices”⁷⁷, and we can see this motif playing out in all four of the hypothetical authors of the Old Testament. In the same way that Abraham’s interrupted sacrifice of Isaac can be read as an etiological myth explaining the abolition of human sacrifice, just so can the entirety of the Old Testament be understood as a critical rupture with a polytheistic pagan past.

Genesis 3 begins with the arrival of the Serpent into the Garden of Eden, breaching the alleged security of the Eden precinct, and immediately challenging the dominion Adam/Eve are said to have over the entirety of Nature by behaving in a way that neither Adam nor Eve (nor God) have pre-ordained.

At the beginning of Genesis 3, the serpent is introduced without any context. His first words spoken: “Did God say ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden ?’ (Gen 3:1). This one stanza ignites a very important question: How does the Serpent know what was discussed only with Adam, which Eve was not even privy to hear, within the sanctioned garden of Eden ? This scenario produces three possible solutions : the serpent overheard the covenant between Adam and God, it was a lucky guess, or s/he was either told by God or ate from the tree himself.

⁷⁷ Douglas, Mary. 2002; 1966. *Purity and Danger :An Analysis of Concept [Sic] of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge Classics. London; New York: Routledge. pp.48

The second option, implying a guess, is the most unlikely of all, though cannot be dismissed because we are told that he is “more crafty” [Gen 3:1] than any other wild animal. The first option has some probability, because Eve herself recites what God told Adam, despite the fact that nowhere in the story does it tell us that Adam conveyed it to her. This opens up all manner of possibilities, including the Serpent overhearing Adam telling Eve and sensing her not having a full grasp of it, initiating him to tempt her rather than Adam. However the third option, implying the Serpent has some previous experience either with God or the Tree itself, is deeply supported by the fact that he clearly now has the knowledge of good and evil, and predicts with biting clarity the exact ramifications for disobeying God’s command.

The serpent “bridges the boundaries between animals, humans, and God and effectively elicits the woman’s desire to break the boundary between humans and God” (Notes, Gen 3.1-5). By bridging this dimension, it is clear that the Serpent inhabits a liminal, intermediate space. The origins of his knowledge and wisdom are unclear and also are the reasons behind his deception.

“Now the Serpent was more **crafty** than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made” (Gen 3:1).

In the accompanying notes below the verse, we are introduced to the translation of the word ‘crafty’ in Hebrew as “*arum*, v. 1, a wordplay on *arumim* in 2.25” (Gen. 3.1 Notes).

We uncover the startling fact that the word *arumim*, used in the previous sentence [Genesis 2.24] also refers to ‘nakedness’.

These two fundamentally different connotations carry with them contradiction, confusion, and trickery [a territory that is characteristically queer]. Leon Kass argues that the root sense of *arum*, *naked* is ‘smooth’: “someone who is naked is hairless, clotheless, smooth of skin. But as the pun suggests, someone who is clever is also smooth, a facile thinker and talker whose surface speech is beguiling and flawless, hiding well his rough ulterior purposes⁷⁸.”

Where the NRSV Bible translates *arum* as ‘crafty’, the REB translates it as ‘cunning’, the RSV translates it as ‘subtle’, and the JPS translates it as ‘shrewd’. *The New Oxford American Dictionary* defines these words as follows [I have edited out secondary and tertiary definitions that do not pertain to the meaning in question] :

Crafty : Clever at achieving one’s aims by *indirect* or *deceitful* methods

Cunning: Having or showing skill in achieving one’s ends by *deceit* or evasion

Subtle : Making use of clever and *indirect* methods to achieve something

Shrewd: Having or showing sharp powers of judgement, astute.

⁷⁸ Kass, Leon. *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*, New York: Free Press, 2003. pp. 82.

[ORIGIN Middle English] (in the sense ‘*evil in nature or character*’):
 from shrew in the sense ‘*evil person or thing,*’ or as the past participle of
 obsolete *shrew* ‘*to curse.*’ The word developed the sense ‘*cunning,*’ and
 gradually gained a favorable connotation during the 17th cent.

The top three definitions bear similar connotations: all speak about achieving one’s aims and differ based upon method. However we see the notion of ‘indirect’ re-occurring in two of the three, and the notion of ‘achieving’ something in all three. They all imply that this tendency has somehow been proven: it is not a predisposition *towards*, but a capacity somehow illustrated. This elaborates further upon my queer suggestion that the Serpent may have had an experience that preceded its signature performance. For individuals in marginal positions, who are excluded from Power inside of a system they are embedded within, the only way to ‘achieve’ anything is to go about it *indirectly*.

Although all of these definitions speak to different aspects of the same totality, the final definition of *shrewd* strays the furthest. Here, we see nothing in regards to deceit, evasion or the means to achieve something. However the origin of ‘shrewd’ from Old English, implies something as ‘evil in nature or character’. The word ‘shrew’ itself, refers to a small mouse-like animal with a long-pointed snout and its symbolic definition is :

A bad-tempered or aggressively assertive woman.

[ORIGIN in Old English] *screawa*, of Germanic origin; related words in Germanic languages have sense such as ‘dwarf’, ‘devil,’ or ‘fox.’

‘Crafty’, ‘cunning’ and ‘subtle’ all refer to methods of achieving something, and two of them imply being indirect about those aims.

As we plunge into the Old English origins of ‘shrew’, in relation to the JPS translation, we find a startling definition at the root of it’s connotation : a Woman who is ‘bad-tempered or aggressively assertive.’ This triggers images of Lillith⁷⁹, Eve and of the many women throughout the bloody trajectory of patriarchy who have sought larger participation than that which was allocated to them.

In his ‘temptation’ of Eve, the Serpent introduces the possibility of indirection, which lies in contrast to the highly ordered dominion of Eden, thus fragmenting and altering permanently the course of humanity. Eve bears the burden for this, and she is punished for enacting this indirect method of ‘achieving one’s aims’ that the Serpent embodies, by having taken part, knowingly or not, in the serpentine scheme.

The Serpent performs the Patron Saint of ‘Otherness’, in particular gender variants, women, dwarves (which can represent all manner of other ‘mutations’ at the hand of nature’ and all other things which eventually fall under the dominion of ‘The Devil’.

⁷⁹ In the Talmudic period, an alternate myth surrounding Eden emerged featuring an ancient female goddess from Sumerian mythology in the 3rd millennium BC. This “she-demon” is the first and failed wife of Adam. Patai, Raphael. 1964. “Lilith” *The Journal of American Folklore*. Vol. 77, No 306, pp.295.

Unsurprisingly Freud has interpreted the snake to be symbolic of the penis, but Eilberg-Schwartz argues for a different meaning, that relates etymologically to *arumim*, and also to the preliminary ordering of Genesis:

One of the most striking features of serpents is the periodic shedding of their skins. Because it regularly sheds its covering, the serpent may be a symbol for both transformation and the lack of shame in the animal world. The serpent who periodically undresses becomes the vehicle by which Adam and Eve learn that they are naked and must clothe themselves.⁸⁰

The Serpent appears a number of other times in the Old and New Testaments with varied positionality. In Numbers 21:6, “God told Moses to make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole. In this narrative , the serpent represented deliverance from sin, for anyone that looked upon this statue ‘lived.’”⁸¹ The history of Western art continues to use the serpent as a symbol of idolatry and original sin, and it becomes appropriated as the mascot of temptation. Pagels writes :

Augustine, having denied that human beings possess any capacity whatever for free will, accepts a definition of liberty far more agreeable to the powerful and influential men with whom he himself wholeheartedly identifies. As Augustine

⁸⁰Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. 1994. *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. Boston: Beacon Press. pp. 88.

⁸¹ Pretorius, Mark. 2011. "The Creation and the Fall of Adam and Eve: Literal, Symbolic, or Myth?." *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 12, 161-184. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 11, 2014). pp.175

tells it, it is the serpent who tempts Adam with the seductive lure of liberty. The forbidden fruit symbolizes, he explains, “personal control over one’s own will.”⁸²

Yet as Stavrakapoulou continually readdresses in her 3-part miniseries, much of what we know of the bible has been read into it by later generations. In his book *God is a Verb: Kaballah and the Practice of Mystical Judaism*, Rabbi David A. Cooper recounts the words of an un-named female Rabbi :

The story of Adam and Eve is perhaps the most obvious instance in the entire Torah in which the relationship between male and female has been contaminated by absurd implications. Any assumption that Adam and Eve represent a relationship of gender as the first man and woman of creation is ludicrous. Rather, the mystics treat these – and all major biblical characters – as divine principle. Adam and Eve represent the principle of duality, each a polar opposite of the other.⁸³

Cooper goes on to explain that in the Kabbalistic schema, ‘Satan’ refers to the splintering life force or the force of fragmentation. In the Garden of Eden, “the archetype of the serpent merges with the life-force, the form and substance represented by Adam and Eve. Once the serpent is able to merge with this life-force, the mystical formula is complete

⁸² Pagels, Elaine H. 1989; 1988. *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*. 1 Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books. pp.120.

⁸³ Cooper, David A. *God is a Verb: Kaballah and the Practise of Mystical Judaism*. New York : Riverhead Books, pp.43.

for the metaphysics of creation.”⁸⁴ As affirmative as this reading may provide, Kaballah was a school of mystical Judaism centered around a hetero-normative mythology that insisted its practitioners be men, who are married, with a family. Whether or not the myth of the Garden of Eden is seen as allegory, the Word of God, or “divine principle” it nonetheless informs a system of gender distinctions that continues to police the psychology of the Western World.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

I exhilarate your phallus
I enter your every orifice
I impregnate every beginning
I effervesce I rhapsodize

You plunge into motely waters
You catch on fire when you love
You are my liquid opal
You are my burning bush

I sprout your sperm and your egg
I spawn the engodments of flesh
I shape the new body of Adam
I reshape the old body of Eve.

-excerpt from *Song of the Godbody*
James Broughton, 1978

TOWARDS A NEW ICONOGRAPHY

THE GENESIS COMPLEX [Video]

Filmmaker Kaoru Ryan Klatt created a short film called The Genesis Complex, chronicling a photoshoot for The Genesis Complex wherein two men were painted and modified to re-perform Adam and Eve from a series of art historical motifs, presented in this publication. These images depict the process of sculpting with gender, with genitals, with religious symbology and cultural codes. The final images are that of the bodies of Adam and [St]Eve [depicted in the mythological aesthetic of my RELIGIONVIRUS] projected against by art historical depictions of the original Heterosexual Monarchs.

THUS SPAKE AMMA SYNCLETICA [lecture/performance] / THE GENESIS
COMPLEX [lecture/performance]

Exploring a new performative hybrid, these images reflect two lecture/performances wherein much of the material unearthed in this publication was performed before an audience, in a contemporary mediatic ritual exploring gallery-as-temple, audience-turned-congregation, and powerpoint turned ritual.

“In an elaborate costume of a different sort, Michael Dudeck emerged from the crowd, uncharacteristically unassuming; though well known for grand gestures, here, during a casual entrance, he took the risk of being unceremonious. In the latest chapter of his evolving reconsideration of Western religion, Dudeck, in deity drag, addressed the

audience-turned-congregation. The performance/lecture hybrid underlined a new development for Dudeck, one where, in a surprising twist, the artist transgressed his own number-affected and ultra-serious persona to slyly (while also quite successfully) poke fun at the seriousness of the situation. Nowhere was this more present than in the delivery of the punchline where he announced the name of the centre of which he was the representative: The Messiah Complex. His sermon-turned-PowerPoint-presentation was ruptured on occasion through the singing and reciting of hymns, the most touching and honest of which he concluded his performance with. In these latter songs, Dudeck thanked the audience “for hearing me,” “for not leaving me,” and “for breaking my heart.”

–J.J. Kegan McFadden, *Performatorium 2014: Queering the Prairies*, Canadian Art Magazine, online edition, Feb. 5, 2014. <http://www.canadianart.ca/features/2014/02/05/performatorium/>













THE AHNENERBE SYNDROME

In an article entitled *Defending Traditional Marriage*, published March 2013, the American College of Pediatrics cites an excerpt from a ‘group of family scholars’ postulating upon the mythological platform upon which the heterosexual matrix is constructed :

“Marriage exists in virtually every known human society. . . . At least since the beginning of recorded history, in all the flourishing varieties of human cultures documented by anthropologists, marriage has been a universal human institution. As a virtually universal human idea, marriage is about regulating the reproduction of children, families, and society”⁸⁵

In the precise same manner in which Freud was able to construct elaborate theories of human sexuality based upon strategic readings of varied sources, just so does this article perpetuate the mythic status of heterosexual monarchy utilizing Scientific generalizations about the entirety of human history. Whilst equally authoritative institutions, lacking the religious agenda of the ACP have written responses that rival these blanketed statements, the problem persists that those who control myths control culture.

As the National Socialist Party gradually grew power in Germany throughout the early

⁸⁵ William J. Doherty et al., *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences* 8-9 (1st edition, Institute for American Values 2002).

20th century, “archaeology became a tool in the...party’s wish to define European prehistory as Germanic.”⁸⁶ Multiple organizations were born which began to manipulate archaeology by selectively hiring notable academics and slowly authenticating a new story. Chief among these ‘schools’ was the infamous *Ahnenerbe*, championed by Heinrich Himmler who, with significant funding from Hitler, set out on a journey of mythmaking: “Its prominent researchers devoted themselves to distorting the truth and churning out carefully tailored evidence to support the ideas of Adolf Hitler, who believed that only the Aryans -- a fictional "Nordic" race of tall, flaxen-haired men and women from northern Europe -- possessed the genius needed to create civilization.”⁸⁷

In 1835, a number of mummified bodies were discovered in a host of bogs throughout Germany and Denmark. The peat bog naturally preserves cadavers and some have been dated as far back as 9000 BCE. It was clear that many had been strangled prior to being placed in the bog, and in the early 20th century, during the rise of the *Ahnenerbe*, theories were beginning to surface surrounding the nature of their crimes. A member of the *Ahnenerbe*, SS Professor and SS *Untersturmfuhrer* Karl August Eckhardt, began to analyze the writings of Tacitus to look for answers. Through the act of strategic (and by contemporary standards – suspect) *translation*, Eckhardt published in the Waffen-SS weekly newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* that the ancient “Germans sacrificed the degenerated (traitors (proditores) renegades (transfugas), cowards (ignaros et imbelles)

⁸⁶ 010. "SS-AHNENERBE." *Acta Archaeologica* 81, no. 1: 115-116. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 12, 2014).

⁸⁷ Pringle, Heather. "Hitler's Willing Archeologists." *Archaeology* 59, no. 2 (March 2006): 44-49. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 12, 2014).

and homosexuals (corpore infames)) in the bogs in order not to anger the gods.”⁸⁸ Shortly thereafter, Himmler, with the support of other notable *Ahnenerbe* academics, persuaded Hitler to introduce “the death sentence for homosexuals in the Waffen-SS and in the police, while all other homosexuals risked being sent to concentration camps.”⁸⁹

If the Nazi party had achieved its aims the histories that were studied, in the very least in Europe would be substantially different than those studied now. We may see rather clearly with the work of the *Ahnenerbe* how systemic ideological control uses myth as a foundational point whereby to occupy the psyche of their populace. Thus, the dominant readings of myth contribute much more substantially than one might at first suppose to the broader implications of how we frame ourselves in the Western World in particular. For in both the *Gardens of Oedipus and Eden*, careful fictions have been hatched which have birthed templates that we are only beginning to disrobe.

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Ibid

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