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## Finding Patterns in the Chaos: Woman as Chaos Agent in Creation Myths

*Amanda Vajskop*

**M**y Catholic upbringing emphasized that women have two choices, two role models to emulate. There is the impossible virgin mother, who is symbolic of women's "good qualities" (obedience, purity, selflessness, nurturing). Then there is Eve. She is the woman supposedly responsible for the downfall of "man" and it is to her that we attribute death – God's punishment to humanity after the fall. She becomes a chaos agent and symbolic embodiment of women's "bad" qualities – willfulness, independence, curiosity and disobedience that disrupts (creates chaos in) the supposed order of God's creation. Not only in Genesis do we find the pattern of woman as chaos agent; in fact, this theme is found in many creation myths from many different cultures. These creation stories have helped mold our current culture's views on women and the body. Because they reveal so much about the inner workings of a culture and because they tend to dictate the way society views its humanity and humanity in general, they still exert influence over how we behave toward one another. In the J account of Genesis, the Enuma Elish (Babylonian creation myth), and the Hindu Great Forest Teaching myth, women are violently subdued as a way to maintain order and women are denied their biological creative value. In general, creation myths justify desired social norms and organizations. Since Western culture is patriarchal, its creation myths would be expected to uphold a patriarchal mindset, and they do, as feminist theorist Mary Daly's interpretation makes abundantly clear.

According to Daly, in the second chapter of Genesis, a divine son (Adam) is created by a divine father (God) without the aid of a mother. This sort of "procreation" denies women their biological creative value, thereby potentially devaluing them in the eyes of a society.<sup>1</sup> Daly finds this to be a common theme in the myths of patriarchal societies that revolve around the masculine, for example, myths that are centered around the springing forth from and returning to God, the father. Daly both builds upon and challenges traditional scholarship on myths when she argues:

Myths are said to be stories that express intuitive insights and relate the activities of gods. The mythical figures are symbols. These, it is said, open up depths of reality otherwise closed to "us." It is not usually suggested that they close off depths of reality which would otherwise be open to us.<sup>2</sup>

I argue, along with Daly, that reality is being closed off by creation myths that deny women creative participation. Not recognizing women's creative contribution discredits them and society can then devalue them. My second and primary argument also relates to the Adam and Eve creation account found in Genesis 2 and 3 (more particularly, the fall in chapter 3), another of Daly's concerns. In the most common interpretation of the fall, Eve (a woman representing all women) is held responsible for the transgression of "mankind" and is punished by being made subservient to her male counterpart.<sup>3</sup> In this example, a woman (read all women) becomes the primary chaos agent. Mirriam-Webster defines chaos as the inherent unpredictability in a natural system and in the Genesis J account, a social system or order is justified by explaining how the sacred brought it into being. When a female character threatens this order or system, she becomes the chaos agent in the story. As we will see, the *Enuma Elish* presents an interesting variation on this theme.

As my two main examples, I have chosen the *Enuma Elish* and the Genesis J account. Both of these creation accounts are cosmogonies. A cosmogony is a creation myth in which not only are the origins of certain phenomena explained, but the processes by which they are created are also explained.<sup>4</sup> A cosmogony, using Genesis J as an example, will explain that God created Adam out of dirt and breathed life into his nostrils. Conversely, if Genesis were a myth of origin, it would say something like, "God created Adam," without explaining the process.

Discovery of the *Enuma Elish* has had great bearing on Christianity's understanding of itself. Historian Alexander Heidel explains its importance:

[The *Enuma Elish* has] shown that the Old Testament is not an isolated body of literature but that it has so many parallels in the literature of the nations surrounding Israel that it is impossible to write a scientific history of the Hebrews or a scientific commentary on the Old Testament without at least a fair knowledge of the history and literature of Israel's neighbors.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the Hebrew text cannot be interpreted adequately apart from the cultures that influenced it. In order to gain a better understanding of Christianity, we examine its sacred texts. These include the Hebrew Scriptures which include the Genesis J account. Since the cultural influences on the priestly authors (the

final organizers and compilers of the Pentateuch, or, first five books of the Bible) may have been influenced by Babylonian culture during the Babylonian exile, it is important to examine the Enuma Elish, though it did not directly influence the writing of the Genesis J account discussed later.

Before exploring these two main creation accounts, it is helpful to note that the themes of denying women creative power and seeing women as chaos agent tend to span most cultures, and especially those that are patriarchal; however, there certainly are exceptions which posit a Goddess creation and order. The patriarchal aspects of many creation myths can be illustrated by briefly examining three creation myths from radically different cultures: Native North American, Native Australian and Hindu.

## Various Creation Myths

In a modern Seneca folktale (Native North American), a male god creates a male human being out of dirt.<sup>6</sup> Though this myth is very short (in fact, the translation is less than a page long), it sends an important message to its readers: a female is not required for creation. In fact, creation happens without female participation and the story ends before a woman is even created. To a twenty-first century reader, this can suggest that women have no place in the process of creation and furthermore that they have a lesser place than man in what is being created.

The same message might be sent by a Northern Aranda (Native Australian) story in which a male god creates a group of lizards who eventually evolve into men.<sup>7</sup> Both the lack of a woman in creation and in what is created can be interpreted the same way as the first myth, but this story goes even further, possibly suggesting to post-Darwinian thinkers that evolution can take place without the aid or inclusion of a woman.

My third example comes from the writings of Francis X. Clooney, a Catholic priest and scholar of Hinduism. In his work, *Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children*<sup>8</sup>, he compares the Great Forest Teaching myth (taken from the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad) to the Christian Genesis. I find this example to be especially noteworthy because Clooney tries to draw comparisons between Hinduism and Christianity and parallels between these two faiths can certainly be found in their treatment of women in creation myths.

In this Hindu myth, only one being exists at the beginning of time and this being is both male and female. Eventually, the male side of the entity wishes to split and become two different beings. After spending time this way, *he* feels that this separation is upsetting the natural order and wishes to reunite with the

female side, but she feels betrayed by the original split and avoids the union by becoming different animals. He overcomes her avoidance by becoming whatever animal she is and forcing her to unite with him over and over again. This is the story of how all living creatures were created.<sup>9</sup> When the male is separate from the female, he feels as though the natural order has been upset. There is chaos. In order to overcome this chaos, he recreates order by reuniting with his female counterpart. Because she refuses their union, she becomes the chaos agent in this story and must be violently subdued by the male.

Though Clooney never uses the word “rape,” I believe that the story must be interpreted this way. The female refuses to unite (mate) with the male. She even shape-shifts, becoming different animals to avoid uniting with him. Her agency is taken away and she is raped repeatedly not only to create all living things (which, in context, could seem more like a side effect), but also to *restore the natural order through her coerced union with the male*. Though the female retains her creativity in that it is ultimately her decision *which* species will exist (she decides this through her shape shifting), the continuity of each species only becomes possible when she is violently subdued and raped. It is interesting that Clooney does not actually use the word “rape” in his analysis of the myth. It seems more than clear that rape is happening and furthermore that the act is a necessary part of the (male) creative process. Even though a female is involved in creation, *her creativity only comes to fruition when she is out of control of the situation*. She can only create when she is violated! In his analysis, Clooney does admit that there is violation. “She keeps resisting and evading his desire, but he keeps pursuing her, violating her again and again in every diverse form...”<sup>10</sup> Clooney admits that violation is happening, but later (in fact on the same page as his comparison to Genesis) he calls the event nothing more than an “account of search and conquest.”<sup>11</sup> His language makes this repeated rape sound like nothing more than a game of cat and mouse with two willing participants. This is especially significant given our history and historical context; too often, violence against women and girls has been ignored or trivialized because it has been misnamed or not recognized. This myth appears to excuse or even justify rape by seeing it as an essential aspect of the creative process. Because of this history, those of us who are interested in eliminating violence against women and girls must approach historical traditions and the myths embodied within them using a hermeneutic of suspicion, a critical interpretation that seeks to expose instances when violence against or devaluing of women has been rationalized, ignored or misnamed. A hermeneutic of suspicion is therefore required when examining the Enuma Elish, another creation account centered in the violent subduing of a female chaos agent.

## Enuma Elish

The title, “Enuma Elish,” comes from the first line of the poem, “when above.” The poem was first discovered at King Ashurbanipal’s great library at Nineveh by Austen H. Layard, Hurmuzd Rassam and George Smith between the years of 1848 and 1876. It is composed of a little over one thousand lines transcribed on seven clay tablets and is dated back to around 630 B.C.E. During the Babylonian captivity, this text may have influenced the writing and rewriting of the Hebrew creation account.

According to the myth, there is nothing but sky and water in the beginning and this is when the gods are born. Apsu, a male, is referred to as the “primeval begetter.” He begets Mummu (male, sometimes called “sweet water”) and Tiamat (female, sometimes called “salt water”). Apsu and Tiamat have two sets of children. The first are Lahmu (male) and Lahamu (female). They are only mentioned once in the story and do nothing but grow. Their second set of children surpass the first set in growth and go on to have a male child, Anu (sometimes called “rival of his fathers”). Anu begets Nudimmud (male, “Anu’s likeness” and “master of his father”) who in turn begets Ea (male). Ea and his wife, Damkina, have Marduk (male).

The older generation of gods is used to a quiet and peaceful environment, but as the gods multiply, the new generations become more like humans, feeling the need to carouse and be louder. The younger generation of gods seems to include Anu and any gods who are younger than him. The text states, “[t]he divine brothers gathered together. They disturbed Tiamat and assaulted their keeper. Yea, they disturbed the inner parts of Tiamat, moving and running about in the divine abode” (1:21-24).<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the “keeper” refers to Tiamat because in a different translation, “The divine bretheren banded together, confusing Tiamat as they moved about in their stir, roiling the vitals of Tiamat, by their uproar distressing the interior of the Divine Abode.”<sup>13</sup> This is the first place in the text that a twenty-first century eye applying a hermeneutic of suspicion might find connotations of violent assault. “They disturbed Tiamat . . . they disturbed the *inner parts* of Tiamat . . .” The fact that the divine brothers are violating Tiamat’s “inner parts” suggests at least violent assault and at the more extreme end, rape. These connotations are only furthered by the phrase “divine brothers,” which calls to mind phrases such as “boys club” or “good ol’ boys.” Both can be applied to patriarchy in modern culture.

Much like Clooney, Heidel analyzes, underplays, and thus perhaps excuses the violation of the female Tiamat. He makes the younger gods sound more like harmless, noisy youths than actual assailants. “The younger gods, being full of life and vitality, naturally enjoyed noisy, hilarious gatherings.”<sup>14</sup> Heidel’s analy-

sis makes it seem as though any group of young men “full of life and vitality” would “naturally [enjoy] noisy hilarious gatherings” such as assaulting Tiamat. Perhaps his twentieth-century eyes influence this construction, reminding him of his own “noisy” and “hilarious gatherings” in his student days. However, this is only speculation.

Regardless, Tiamat is quiet about their disturbances. Apsu, however, wants to do something to stop the younger gods. He and Mummu go to Tiamat and suggest that they kill the younger gods. Motherly Tiamat does not want to do this, recognizing this retaliation as evil. This is important because even though Tiamat has been attacked, her role as mother and creator overcome her and she does not want to kill her children’s children. It is also an important point because Apsu and Mummu, both males, need to ask Tiamat, a female, to help them destroy the younger gods. They do not have the authority to do this without Tiamat’s permission perhaps because Tiamat is the noisy youths’ creator or perhaps because of her great power. In this case, the power to create assumes the power (or authority) to destroy.

Later, in private, Mummu and Apsu try to come up with some sort of plan to kill the younger gods. Ea hears about this plan, casts a spell on Apsu to put him to sleep, kills him and takes his power. He uses these powers to create wind and land. Murder arouses Tiamat to action. Her waters are upset and, after some urging from the older gods, she wages war on the younger gods by creating a storm and giving birth to different kinds of monsters. At this point the narrator definitely constructs Tiamat as the chaos agent. First, both the monsters and the storm are representative of a state of chaos in addition to the fact that Tiamat is sometimes called ‘salt water,’ traditionally representing chaos as well. Second, the narrator sees the male gods as trying to create a new kind of order which Tiamat is upsetting. According to historian Rosemary Radford Ruether, this new order is the city-states that have replaced the earlier society. The new order can be seen as a metaphor for the rise of Babylon, perhaps under Nebuchadnezzar I.<sup>15</sup>

The younger gods then conspire to send Marduk to kill Tiamat so that they can stay alive. They assume (or maybe it is actually the case) that as long as Tiamat exists, they cannot exist, nor can the city states exist, unless the previous society is subdued. In preparation for this conflict, the younger gods get drunk and make a throne to Marduk. They exalt him and confer all of their power on him. The string of compliments and adoration ends with them urging him to kill Tiamat. He uses what I interpret as some very male weapons to kill her in a manner that I believe is the second time a twenty-first century eye reading the

text with a hermeneutic of suspicion could identify dynamics associated with sexual assault. His weapons are “fierce battle and conflict; on the left Strife that overthrows all ... Terror-inspiring splendor he wore on his head” (4:55-58).<sup>16</sup> It seems as though Marduk is using traditionally male aggression as his weapons. “Fierce battle and Conflict” and “Strife that overthrows all” can be interpreted as characteristics of the traditionally male occupation of war-making while the “Terror-inspiring splendor” can be interpreted as Marduk’s assumed patriarchal authority over Tiamat.

He kills her by driving an evil wind into her mouth that does not allow her to close her lips. Her belly becomes distended and he shoots an arrow into her mouth, tearing apart her insides (4:95-102).<sup>17</sup> Marduk then becomes the new, all-powerful god figure and he fashions the earth and the cosmos out of Tiamat’s body. He fashions human beings out of a mixture of clay and the blood of the younger gods that he vanquishes (4:128-146).<sup>18</sup> The means used to kill Tiamat could suggest sexual assault followed by murder and mutilation. This time, Heidel does admit that Tiamat must be violently subdued. Her refusal to be impressed by the (male) authority of the other gods is what warrants violent action. According to Heidel, “unlike Apsu, Tiamat could not be overcome by any amount of mere authority or any degree of mere magic power; she had to be conquered through the application of physical force.”<sup>19</sup>

When Tiamat creates the monsters and the storm, she becomes the source of chaos in the eyes of the younger gods and the narrator because her existence threatens both the younger male gods and the new dynasty the gods are trying to set up, the very Babylonian dynasty whose structure the Enema Elish legitimates. The only way for the younger gods to stay alive is to kill Tiamat because she is powerful, determined and upset. The myth also suggests that the creation of this ordered world (cosmos) requires the death of Tiamat (chaos). In fact, the body of Tiamat is used to fashion the earth and the cosmos. Order (identified as male) is being literally created out of chaos (identified as female). Ruether argues that this order involves ownership as well:

Dead matter, fashioned into artifacts, makes the cosmos the private possession of its “creators.” Even though the new lords remember that they once were gestated out of the living body of the mother, they now stand astride her dead body and take possession of it as an object of ownership and control.<sup>20</sup>

In order for a patriarchal cosmos (which is equated by the narrator with the new dynasty of younger gods) to be set up and maintained, the female chaos

agent must be subdued. As in the Hindu Great forest Teaching myth, the Enuma Elish sees this subduing as requiring deadly violence and cruel violation. A similar argument can also be found in the J account of Genesis.

## **Genesis**

Many scholars have identified four major sources in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the first of which is Genesis. The J (Jahwist) account may have been written as early as the united monarchy, perhaps when Solomon ruled in the 900's B.C.E. There is also the E (Elohist) account, believed to have been written in Judah, the Southern kingdom, before the Babylonian exile and the D (Deuteronomic) account, which is often related to the temple reform movement in Judah also before the exile. The P (Priestly) account is usually placed around 600 and 500 B.C.E., right around the time of the Babylonian exile.<sup>21</sup> Though the Enuma Elish, a Babylonian creation account, is said to have greatly influenced the P account, I will be dealing with the J account for two reasons. First, this is the most widely accepted account of Genesis in Western Christianity<sup>22</sup> and second, because it is in this account that the female character, Eve, is set up and defeated as chaos agent.

The J account (from now on, I will simply refer to it as the Genesis account) includes most of chapter two and all of chapter three of Genesis, and has traditionally been interpreted as follows: At first, only earth and heaven exist. There can be no plants because God has not yet caused it to rain (2:4-5). God shapes a man from soil and blows breath (life) into his nostrils (2:6). As with the creation myths we have discussed, a presumably male god creates another male human without a female even being present. God then plants a garden and puts the man in it, after which God creates all plant life (2:7-9). Man is to tend the garden and is told that he may eat from every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:15-17). God, in an effort to create a helper for the man so that he will not be alone, creates all animal life. Man then names each species (2:18-20). Thus, both man and God participate in creation; once again, two males create without the need for females. Since these companions are not suitable for Adam, God creates Eve by fashioning a woman from one of Adam's ribs. Now the earth creatures are called Adam and Eve (3:22). Tradition presents Eve as a derivative creation – an afterthought, a being created solely for Adam's benefit since "it is not good for the man to be alone." However, biblical scholar and rhetoric critic Phyllis Trible challenges these common interpretations by arguing that Eve is the culmination of creation itself rather than a derivative of Adam made solely for his benefit.

Yahweh God makes certain that no one shall witness it. Put into a deep sleep, the earth creature [Adam] is neither participant, spectator, nor consultant for this climactic event. Indeed, the earth creature does not even know in advance that she is coming. Her arrival is suspenseful, since God's promise of a companion did not materialize once before. This mystery and suspense yield surprise and delight ... She is unique. Unlike all the rest of creation, she does not come from the earth; rather, Yahweh God *builds* the rib into woman ... Hence, woman is no weak, dainty, ephemeral creature. No opposite sex, no second sex, no derived sex – in short, no “Adam's rib.” Instead, woman is the culmination of creation, fulfilling humanity in sexuality.<sup>23</sup>

My analysis of the fall suggests that the uniqueness that Tribble mentions becomes precisely Eve's problem; the male God and male human are unable to handle the independence of woman. As the story continues, the plot thickens.

One day, when both Adam and Eve are in the garden, a snake tempts Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (3:1-5). She refuses at first, recounting God's warning to Adam that they will surely die if they eat this fruit. The snake responds that she will not die, but rather become like God, possessing the knowledge of good and evil. Many interpreters equate this knowledge with moral agency. If the humans know the difference between good and evil, they have the ability to choose whether or not to obey God. Their new knowledge will allow them to disobey God's commands. Eventually, Eve eats the fruit and gives it to her husband, who also eats it (3:6). It is at this point that Eve becomes the chaos agent in the story. As she manifests the moral agency which makes her truly human, she also becomes disobedient – refusing to accept God's cosmic order. Eve becomes a chaos agent by not accepting God's rules. By eating the fruit, she and her husband become “like God,” since they know the difference between good and evil.

Eventually, God finds out what happened and punishes the snake, Eve and Adam. The snake is made to crawl on his belly for the rest of eternity and Adam is made to painfully toil in the earth for the rest of eternity; when he plants seeds, weeds will sprout up so that farming becomes difficult. All are punished with eventual death, but Eve's punishment has traditionally received the most attention.

To the woman he [God] said: I shall give you intense pain in childbearing, you will give birth to your children in pain. Your yearning will be for your husband, and he will dominate you (3:16).

Eve becomes a chaos agent when she actualizes her freedom by not obeying god. By eating the fruit and giving it to Adam, she creates moral agency for both

of them. Interestingly enough, her punishment is to have her moral agency taken away from her. For her act of disobedience, she is made to be forever obedient to her husband, who somehow manages to retain his moral agency. Eve must be made subservient to her husband – robbed of her agency so that she will not create additional chaos. Unlike the other punishments, Eve’s punishment has been interpreted normatively.<sup>24</sup> Whereas few Christians have criticized using medical advances to prolong life and delay death (the punishment that applies to all of humanity), in previous centuries, men argued that anesthesia should not be used on women in childbirth because “intense pain in childbearing” is Eve’s punishment. Furthermore, no one that I know of has argued that weed seed should be spread in crop fields because man’s punishment is unfruitful toiling in the earth, while many Christians have insisted that wives ought to obey husbands (Eve’s punishment). This ridiculous and false moral imperative has even been generalized to women and in general, it continues to be used by a significant number of men who abuse their female partners, an epidemic that affects 31% of women in the United States and accounts for 30% of female murders.<sup>25</sup>

## **The Enuma Elish and Genesis: Common Elements**

Though the Enuma Elish did not influence the writing of the J account<sup>26</sup>, it certainly could have influenced how it became interpreted and applied. Moreover, there are general parallels, parallels between the portrayals of Tiamat and Eve, and parallels in the theme of woman as chaos agent that can be drawn between the two myths.

### *General Parallels:*

In both creation stories, a presumably male creator creates without the aid of a female – a complete reversal of biological reality. In the Enuma Elish, Apsu (the divine begetter) creates Mummu and Tiamat and in traditional interpretations of Genesis, God creates man. In both, some kind of order is either being created or maintained. In the Enuma Elish, the older gods try to maintain order (a calm and quiet environment which may refer back to an earlier and less patriarchal society) by killing the younger gods. There is an old order in the beginning of both myths, but the difference lies in whether this old order is preferable. In the Enuma Elish, the *new, patriarchal order* is preferred over the old, possibly matriarchal order. The younger gods try to recreate order in the form of a new dynasty by killing Tiamat and the rest of the older gods. In Genesis, the old order is preferred because God creates it. God then appears to maintain this order through Adam and Eve’s unconditional obedience. This obedience can only be maintained through

their ethical ignorance – their agreement not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Finally, both myths are cosmogonies, meaning that they detail the processes by which certain phenomena are created and destroyed. The interpretations of these processes (read the killing of Tiamat and the fall) are what make them so significant in modern society because these interpretations still shape how we view gender relations.

*Parallels between Tiamat and the Traditional Interpretation of Eve:*

In both stories, woman is portrayed as a derivative creation.<sup>27</sup> Tiamat is created through the agency of the male Apsu, expressing no need for a female creator. Eve is created by God, from Adam's rib, also denying the need for a female participant in creation. The downfalls of Tiamat and Eve are also very similar. Tiamat is destroyed so that the younger gods may live and the new order, which the narrator is seeking to justify, is defended. Her power as a mother figure makes the younger gods afraid (because creation assumes the power of destruction), so they confer all of their power onto Marduk so that he may defeat her. For the new, narrator-favored cosmos to exist, Tiamat's chaos, symbolized by her ability to create storms and birth monsters, must be destroyed. Though Eve is not physically destroyed, her moral agency (that which makes her "like God") is lessened when she is made to be subservient to Adam (who continues to exercise moral agency, to be "like God", when he rules her). She and Adam gain free will by eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; each possesses the choice of whether or not to obey God. Traditional interpreters argue that the choice to disobey created chaos in God's divine order; furthermore, they implied that some order will be restored if women obey men. In other words, these interpreters identify restoring order with creating patriarchy. The man, identified with order, must rule the female, identified with chaotic disobedience; the patriarchal family becomes enshrined as God's will.

*Woman as Chaos Agent:*

Cosmogonies justify how a society orders itself and views its members. Portraying women as chaos agents who are dangerous to the social order justifies seeing women as beings to be both feared and subdued. The Great Forest Teaching myth, for example, implies that creation requires that a male violently subdue a female. In a variation of this theme, the Enuma Elish suggests that women challenge and destroy the proper social order if left to their own devices (read if not ruled and controlled by men in a patriarchal culture). Similarly, in Genesis, Eve's free will causes God's order to partially disintegrate. Throughout much of Christian history,

this has translated into fearing the free will of all women. Since women could be seen as chaotic, maintaining the social order requires men to control women; once again, patriarchy is necessary for order.

## **Where are we and how did we get here?**

Feminist scholar, Marta Weigle, argues that the fear of female creative power prompts men to write women into myths as chaos agents. She notes that the ability to create is an enviable quality. Women possess this creativity naturally in their biological ability to procreate. She reverses Freud's idea of penis envy, replacing it with the idea of womb envy. Therefore, men writing creation myths will equate creative power with males while the threat of destruction that is assumed in the power to create will be attributed to females.<sup>28</sup> This theory is in keeping with both the *Enuma Elish* and *Genesis*. In the *Enuma Elish*, Tiamat is killed because she wages war on the new patriarchal order. Her power as a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother threatens the order that the younger gods are trying to create. In *Genesis*, Eve is charged with the crime of humanity's downfall. Though she is still allowed to have her biological creative power, it does not come without a price (pain and obedience to her husband, hence without the loss of mental creativity). While Eve is blamed for the destruction of God's order, God is still responsible for God's creation of the cosmos, earth and all its inhabitants. At no point is God's creative value questioned because the series of events to follow was not in keeping with God's original plan! Finally, even though the Hindu myth has a creative role for females, it strikes a complimentary theme; the completion of the creative process requires the female to be subdued, yes even raped, by the male.

Mary Daly argues that this phenomenon may be seen as an instance of goddess murder. In her argument, Eve is the mythical parallel to the goddess, Tiamat. In both myths, the goddess is murdered either literally or by having her free will taken away. Male gods subdue goddesses, thus setting the stage for patriarchy, for men to subdue women on earth. Biblical scholar, Howard N. Wallace argues that Eve's relationship to the serpent supports the goddess theory, since goddesses have been traditionally associated with snakes.<sup>29</sup> Before the fall, Adam does not converse with the snake even though Adam is also in the garden. Eve's active conversation suggests a serpent-goddess of some sort. The *Genesis* myth might have evolved out of earlier myths (perhaps ones that were matriarchal in nature). If so, the myth would need to be transformed to justify the new patriarchal social order. It would be necessary to either kill the goddess (take away Eve's moral agency) or portray an image of the goddess as villain. Further evidence lies in the fact that both Eve and Tiamat are referred to as "mother of all living."

Finally, Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests that a matriarchal order is seen at the beginning of the Enuma Elish. Tiamat (female) had almost all male consorts (her sons and grandsons). This myth could have been replaced, after years of evolution, by a patriarchal order. Her theory argues that the story could have been passed down orally before being transcribed. Transformation of the story may have happened to justify a change in the prevailing social order. Her theory implies a past memory of a possibly matriarchal society (through the presentation of Tiamat at the beginning of the Enuma Elish) that had to be subdued through myth.<sup>30</sup>

This suppression through myth is precisely the societal problem I am trying to address. In Christianity, women are too often portrayed as non-creators and menaces to society. Our culture treats them accordingly by imposing negative attitudes on women in general, and especially their bodies. Unfortunately, the assumption that to maintain order, women must be violently subdued, though this assumption is as ancient as the myths we have discussed, has manifested itself as violence against women in our contemporary society.

## (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Mary Daly. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978). 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Biblical scholar, Phyllis Trible, provides an interesting reversal of these judgments in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas. V.1: From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951).

<sup>6</sup> Maria Leach (trans.), "Modern Seneca Folktale." *The Beginning: Creation Myths Around the World* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1956) 86-87.

<sup>7</sup> Leach (trans.), "Hello, I am a Lizard." 189-190.

<sup>8</sup> Francis X. Clooney, *Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children* (New York: Maryknoll, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Clooney, 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Heidel.

<sup>13</sup> This is Benjamin R. Roster's translation in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World v.1* ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Boston: Brill, 2003). Furthermore, in many ancient texts, the formula of writing dictates that often a character will be referred to by name such as Tiamat and then referred to by a euphemism such as "keeper" either in the same line or in a line close to the first one.

<sup>14</sup> Heidel, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992). 18.

<sup>16</sup> Heidel.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Heidel, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ruether, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Claus Westermann, *The Genesis Accounts of Creation*, trans. Norman E. Wagner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1952).

<sup>22</sup> Ruether, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Phyllis Tribble, 102.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/>. (Website for the United States Department of Justice, referenced on 24 August, 2004. 4:36PM).

<sup>26</sup> Some scholars argue that the Enuma Elish *did* influence the P account because the Babylonian exile took place before it was supposedly written.

<sup>27</sup> Obviously, Phyllis Tribble would disagree with me.

<sup>28</sup> Marta Weigle, *Creation and Procreation: Feminist Reflections on Mythologies of Cosmogony and Parturition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 1989).

<sup>29</sup> Howard N. Wallace, *The Eden Narrative* (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> Ruether, 85.

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