

Of Men and Women

The *matriarchal* cultures are sedentary (remember that the mother stays home either as Penelope or as the princess confined in the tower), that is, agricultural, chthonian, centering around the Earth Mother. The rites are mostly nocturnal, lunar, voluptuous, and licentious. The classic image is that of the great, rich, corrupt, age-old, and oppressive city Babylon, queen of the world, metropolis, fashion center, super mall, the scarlet woman, the whore of all the earth, whose merchants and bankers are the oppressors of all people.

Though the matriarchy makes for softness and decay, beneath the gentle or beguiling or glittering exterior is the fierce toughness, cunning, and ambition of Miss Piggy. . . .

The *patriarchal* order lends itself to equally impressive abuses. It is nomadic. The hero is the wandering Odysseus or knight errant, the *miles gloriosus* [glorious soldier], the pirate, condotti-è-re, the free enterpriser—not the farmer tied to wife and soil but the hunter and soldier out for adventure, glory, and loot; not the city, but the Golden Horde, the *feralis exercitus* [deadly army] that sweeps down upon the soft and sedentary cultures of the coast and river valley.

Its gods are sky gods with the raging sun at their head. Its depredations are not by decay but by fire and sword. As predatory and greedy as the matriarchy is, it cumulates its wealth not by unquestioned immemorial custom but by sacred and self-serving laws. The perennial routine calls for the patriarchal tribes of the mountains and the steppes to overrun the wealthy and corrupt cities of the plain, only to be absorbed and corrupted by them in turn, so that what we end up with in the long run is the worst of both cultures.

“Patriarchy and Matriarchy,” *CWHN* 1:94

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The carefully kept genealogies, from pharaoh to day-laborer, and the enigmatic ordinances of sealing one’s family to one to be joyfully reunited in the next world, simply underscore the very obvious fact that the Egyptian loves nothing so much as scenes and reminders of the happy circle.

Abraham in Egypt, 129

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It is significant that the title of queen does not exist in Egypt. It is always as the mother, the sister, the wife, or the daughter of the god that the woman exercises her power, which is for that reason all the more pervasive. The king can never escape her. She is always right at his side, as his closest relative, bound by perfect ties of love. The matriarchy is there to stay.

Abraham in Egypt, 171

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Remarkably enough the Egyptian record never conveys any sense of dominan[ce] and submissi[on] between male and female, even in the stiff formality of the Old Kingdom. . . .

Though there are plenty of ambitious and scheming women in the land, the power and glory of father and mother seem to maintain an even balance, and the fabled rivalry between Hathor and Re is dissolved in a perfect love match. On the Old Kingdom monuments husband and wife are represented as absolute equals.

Abraham in Egypt, 135-36

It is the woman who sees through Satan's disguise of clever hypocrisy, identifies him, and exposes him for what he is. She discovers the principle of opposites by which the world is governed and views it with high-spirited optimism. It is not wrong that there is opposition in everything. It is a constructive principle making it possible for people to be intelligently happy. It is better to know the score than not to know it.

Finally, it is the "seed of the woman" that repels the serpent and embraces the gospel. She it is who first accepts the gospel of repentance. There is no patriarchy or matriarchy in the Garden; the two supervise each other. Adam is given no arbitrary power. Eve is to heed him only insofar as he obeys their Father—and who decides that? She must keep check on him as much as he does on her. It is, if you will, a system of checks and balances in which each party is as distinct and independent in its sphere as are the departments of government under the Constitution—and just as dependent on each other.

"Patriarchy and Matriarchy," *CWHN* 1:92-93

At God's command, Abraham humbled himself to ask Sarah as a favor to declare herself to be his sister, eligible to marry another and thus save his life. This is only part of the deference that Abraham had to make to his wife, and it left no place for his male pride. Sarah, on the other hand, with equal humility, went to Abraham confessing God's hand in her childlessness and actually begging him to have children by another woman. Can one imagine a greater test of her pride? When both sides of the equation are reduced, the remainder on both sides is only a great love.

"Patriarchy and Matriarchy," *CWHN* 1:99

In the long line of tragicomic *Odi et amo* ("I can't live with you and I can't live without you!") confrontations, man and woman stage an endless tournament of dirty events with survival as the prize, in all of which there is something very wrong, however much we have come to relish it in novels and TV programs. Can this be the purpose of the marvelous providence that brings men and women together? If we must all live together in the eternities, it can never be in such a spirit.

"Patriarchy and Matriarchy," *CWHN* 1:103