

Specters of Paul

Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought

Benjamin H. Dunning



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For Bob

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This scene has never been read for what it is, for what is at once sheltered and exposed in its metaphors: its *family* metaphors. It is all about fathers and sons, about bastards unaided by any public assistance, about glorious, legitimate sons, about inheritance, sperm, sterility. Nothing is said of the mother, but this will not be held against us. And if one looks hard enough as in those pictures in which a second picture faintly can be made out, one might be able to discern her unstable form, drawn upside-down in the foliage, at the back of the garden.

—Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*
(with reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*)

There was first the strangeness of Paul.

—Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*

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Introduction

Sexual Difference and Paul's Adam-Christ Typology

One of the central games of life in most cultures is the gender game, or more specifically the multiplicity of gender games available in that time and place. The effort to understand the making and unmaking of gender, as well as what gender makes, involves understanding the workings of these games as games, with their inclusions and exclusions, multiple positions, complex rules, forms of bodily activity, structures of feeling and desire, and stakes of winning, losing, or simply playing. It involves as well the question of how gender games collide with, encompass, or are bent to the service of, other games, for gender is never, as they say, the only game in town.

—Sherry Ortner, *Making Gender*

Sexual difference is the site where a question concerning the relation of the biological to the cultural is posed and reposed, where it must and can be posed, but where it cannot, strictly speaking, be answered.

—Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*

French philosopher Alain Badiou opens a manifesto on his theory of the subject with the question, “Why Saint Paul? Why solicit this ‘apostle’ who is all the more suspect for having, it seems, proclaimed himself such and whose name is frequently tied to Christianity’s least open, most institutional aspects: the Church, moral discipline, social conservatism, suspiciousness towards Jews?”¹ Nevertheless, Badiou does solicit Paul, even going so far as to christen

him “our contemporary.” On this point Badiou is not alone; he participates in a broader resurgence of interest in the apostle among continental philosophers and critical theorists.² The figure of Paul, it appears, has emerged (or reemerged) at the forefront of critical thought regarding questions of human subjectivity and political action. Still, why Paul? Or, as Badiou asks, “What does Paul want?”³ And what does it have to do with us?

Paul’s proclamation of the Christ event has always lent itself to multiple interpretations—and the current philosophical conversation is no exception. For Badiou (and for another prominent continental philosopher, Slavoj Žižek), the apostle announces a universalizing operation whereby truth emerges by radically subtracting itself from the differences of ethnicity, culture, and sex/sexuality.⁴ In contrast, numerous historians of the New Testament have firmly maintained that Paul envisions not a universalizing subtraction, but rather a historically and culturally specific “grafting” of the non-Jewish nations of the world onto God’s chosen “tree,” the people of Israel.⁵ In this way, he does not efface Israel’s ethnic particularity or cause it to become inoperative, but instead declares a way for Gentiles to be included in God’s promise of faithfulness to Israel.

Regardless how one settles this debate, these two divergent readings of Paul are both attended by ghosts—haunting figures that are specific to the readings’ respective claims and that have proven stubbornly persistent. Surveying the contemporary intellectual field of Pauline interpretation, John Caputo elucidates this point well: “Down each road lies an ominous specter. Down the one, the *extra ecclesiam nullus salus est*, the work of the militant missionary who wants to convert everyone to the religion of Israel, now fulfilled in Christ, which requires a work of global missionary conversion, of world Christianization. Down the other, the specter of the militant revolutionary ready to spill blood on behalf of his view of what the universal is.”⁶ Neither of these specters generated by the Pauline text can be sequestered safely in the ancient past. Rather, they continue to press upon generations of the apostle’s interpreters all the way down to us—as the contemporary philosophical interest in Paul demonstrates. Caputo notes that for Badiou and Žižek “the fear of these specters [is] a fear of truth . . . the product of what they consider a timid postmodern pluralism.”⁷ For these philosophers, then, the fear in question needs to be overcome by pursuing some definitive (if as yet unarticulated) resolution to the ongoing difficulties that the specters pose. Yet I want to suggest that this dimension of Pauline “spectrality” may in fact point in another direction, reflecting some constitutive instability at the heart of Paul’s project that resists any final resolution.

At stake here is the larger problem of difference and its relation to the Pauline text. The ghosts of the militant missionary and militant revolutionary are conjured primarily by the issue of ethnocultural-religious difference in Paul's writings. But for the apostle, the cultural difference of Israel is not unrelated to another crucial form of human difference: that of the sexed, gendered, and sexualized human body.⁸ This latter mode of difference Badiou would also seek to render inoperative, reading Paul as necessarily "traversing and testifying to the difference between the sexes *in order for it* to become indifferent in the universality of the declaration."⁹

However, I will maintain in this book that in interpreting the Pauline text, the problem posed by a specifically *sexual* difference cannot be put to rest so easily—and that it too generates its own specters that have not only haunted the Christian theological past, but continue to haunt our contemporary present, thereby calling into question any easy or stable division between the two temporal registers. Consequently, the book will explore the ghosts engendered by the tensions and aporias in Paul's reflections on what it means to be an embodied human being, poised between the creation of Adam and the final resurrection (a state already proleptically anticipated in the resurrection of Christ). From the standpoint of contemporary feminist theology and other modern concerns, sexual difference does not fit neatly or easily into this puzzle. Yet, far from being only the bane of contemporary interpreters, as I will show, this anthropological conundrum was already haunting many of Paul's readers as early as the second century.

It is well known that androcentric perspectives—in both ancient and modern forms—have traditionally attended the interpretation of the Pauline text. In response, Dale Martin has proposed that the historical analysis of gender in Paul's letters can be useful not to rebut the apostle's own androcentrism but rather "to disrupt . . . a current 'common sense' of the text, and indeed one that portrays itself as the correct historical exegesis."¹⁰ Here the alterity of history may function to destabilize a modern binary model of sex/gender, one that necessarily entails "a dichotomy of and reciprocity between male and female," and that is typically taken for granted by many contemporary interpreters. As Martin sees it, historical work can undercut this binary's claims to be a transhistorical given by showing us another way of thinking operative in the ancient world. But once this destabilization has been performed, he suggests, we ought to "[free] ourselves from the hegemony of historical criticism" and instead pursue interpretive projects that open up "all sorts of new ways of being human, not just two and not just combinations of two . . . The gender

made possible by the new creation in Christ opens as yet unknowable ways of gendering human experience, combinations of which we cannot foresee as long as we retain the dualist male-female limitation.”¹¹

In making this case, Martin relies heavily on a rather sharp distinction between *ancient* (and misogynistic) understandings of gender that he sees operative in the Pauline text and the proliferation of queer variations on gender that become possible when we read differently as *contemporary* readers. By contrast, while I agree with the thrust of Martin’s ethical-theological plea, I want to argue that we need not give up on history (or even historical criticism) quite so quickly. Indeed, the concept of Pauline “spectrality” that I have in view renders a clean temporal separation untenable. And while I concur with Martin and others that both Paul’s text and much of the broader early Christian tradition are characterized by a thoroughgoing androcentrism, I will nonetheless maintain that there are conceptual resources within this ancient tradition that could facilitate, at least obliquely, a constructive project like Martin’s—without having to locate that project entirely outside the domain of history.

Accordingly, in the analysis that follows, I will seek to demonstrate that the androcentrism in question—while undeniably pervasive and deeply problematic—was not a singular phenomenon historically. Rather, the androcentric stances the earliest Christians took on the origin, meaning, and ultimate destiny of the differences between women and men display a remarkable rough-and-tumble variety. This variety, I will argue, is at least in part a response to a set of interpretive problems generated by the Pauline text. That is to say, a significant number of early Christian thinkers approached the problem of sexual difference in conversation with the vision of being human that they discovered in Paul’s letters. And the diversity of androcentric positions that they produced signals, I contend, a perduring problem at the heart of Pauline theological anthropology: the difficulty of situating sexed human subjects (female and male) within an anthropological framework bookended by two enigmatic figures—Adam, the first human, on the one hand, and Christ, the “second Adam,” on the other.

What I hope to show, then, is that the set of early Christian thought-experiments that tried to solve this problem in reasoned, consistent, and satisfying ways are, by and large, failures. Here I do not intend the term “failure” to be taken in a social or political sense. Indeed, a number of the “solutions” this study will examine lived on to become hegemonic ways of thinking about the sexed body in various trajectories of Christian thought from antiquity

forward. Instead, I have in view a failure of coherence—one that was not by any means acknowledged by the ancient thinkers in question. In other words, although these attempted solutions promise a conceptual stability to sexual difference, each actually contains the seeds of its own undoing, unraveling on terms internal to the argument itself.

If this is the case, then feminist and queer theology need not entirely abandon history in favor of the comparative instability of Martin's "gender queer" contemporary moment.¹² Rather, through a close examination of these anthropological breakdowns that necessarily litter the historical field, that field may, in fact, become a site for a different kind of transformation—one in which the Christian theological tradition's failures themselves bear witness to the insight, summarized by philosopher Judith Butler, that "The body is that which can occupy the norm in myriad ways, exceed the norm, rework the norm, and expose realities to which we thought we were confined as open to transformation."¹³ Thus the specters of Paul to be examined in this book may offer, in the failures to which they testify, a vital set of historical resources for constructive feminist and queer theological projects in the present.

A Contradictory Apostle?

Paul on Women in Galatians and 1 Corinthians

As is well known, Paul appears to contradict himself in notable ways throughout his various discussions of sexual difference and its significance.¹⁴ On the one hand, he famously maintains in Galatians that "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female (*ouk eni arsen kai thēly*); for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3.28, NRSV). But on the other hand, when he cites a similar formula in 1 Corinthians, he conspicuously drops any reference to gender: "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12.13, NRSV). Elsewhere in the letter, the apostle seems to advocate a very different vision from the one put forward in Galatians. While he may allow for a certain reciprocity to the marriage relationship in 1 Corinthians 7, other passages point to a deeply hierarchical perspective.¹⁵ The familiar directives of 1 Corinthians 14 ("women [*hai gynaikes*] should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate [*hypotassēsthōsai*], as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands [*tous idious andras*])

at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church,” 1 Cor 14.34–35, NRSV) reveal a profoundly patriarchal point of view—so much so, in fact, that some have argued that the passage must be considered a later scribal interpolation.¹⁶ And 1 Corinthians 11.2–16 (a passage whose authenticity is not in question), while not so patently dismissive of women as speaking agents in the church, nonetheless depends on a cultural logic of descending hierarchy: God—Christ—man—woman (“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man [*pantos andros*], and the husband [*ho anēr*] is the head of his wife [*gynaikos*], and God is the head of Christ,” 1 Cor 11.3, NRSV).

Interpreters of Paul are thus left with a hermeneutical conundrum when it comes to questions of women, sex, and gender. Daniel Boyarin concisely sums up the problem: “On the issue of gender . . . Paul seems to have produced a discourse which is so contradictory as to be almost incoherent. In Galatians, Paul seems indeed to be wiping out social differences and hierarchies between the genders, in addition to those that obtain between ethnic groups and socio-economic classes, while in Corinthians he seems to be reifying and reemphasizing precisely those gendered hierarchical differences.”¹⁷ Pauline scholarship has responded to this interpretive dilemma variously. Some scholars have sought to relegate the most patently problematic passages in 1 Corinthians to a secondary status, construing them as a kind of practical concession on Paul’s part to the immediate circumstances in Corinth. They then foreground the vision of Galatians 3.28 as a putatively radical “breakthrough,” thereby attempting to read an overarching egalitarian impulse (however qualified) in both Paul’s texts and Paul’s own intention lying behind those texts.¹⁸ Others, following the immensely influential lead of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, have read against the grain of the text, looking to recover this egalitarian impulse *not* in Paul’s authority or intention but in the faint textual traces (in the Pauline corpus) of other early Christian voices—voices that Paul’s letters work to render invisible in only partially successful ways.¹⁹

What the two sides of this debate seem to have in common, however, is the understanding that some sort of concrete, practical message of liberation for women and men can legitimately be read out of (or behind) Galatians 3.28.²⁰ But this shared assumption has also been called into question by scholars attempting to situate Paul in relation to what is commonly called “the myth of the primal androgyne.” In a groundbreaking article, Wayne Meeks argued that the baptismal formula underlying Galatians 3.28 has in a view a soteriological return to an androgynous state modeled on the creature of Genesis 1.27 (“So God created humankind [*haadam*] in his image, in the image

of God he created him; male and female he created them," NRSV, translation slightly modified).²¹ For Meeks, the early Christian appropriation of this myth had an emphasis on *restoration* in Christ to the primary androgynous image, and thus led to practices of gender equality, at least in Pauline churches.²² Yet scholars building on Meeks's work have increasingly asserted that ancient appeals to androgyny (whether primordial or soteriological) envision not equality between the sexes, but rather what Martin calls "a unity in masculinity."²³ Martin argues that in the sphere of early Christian soteriology, what we term "androgyny" is better understood as "the subsuming of the weaker female into the stronger male, the masculinization of the female body, the supplying of male 'presence' (heat, for instance) for the former experience of female 'absence' (cold, understood as lack of fire)."²⁴ In this view, then, the early Christian vision of returning to an androgynous state implies not sexual equality but the primacy of the male.²⁵

In an important 1998 essay, one that ties together in a small space themes developed at length in other work, Daniel Boyarin unpacks some of the ways these masculinist presuppositions regarding androgyny could function in ancient thought. According to his account, Paul and other early Christians followed the Hellenistic Jewish tradition of Philo of Alexandria. They therefore understood embodied sexual difference to be a kind of "fall" from a primal spiritual androgyny, and they looked forward to the eschatological hope of transcending this division *spiritually* (though at the same time retaining, for the most part, *fleshly* sexual hierarchies). This transcendence of sex could be accomplished through either: (1) a return to the primal androgynous state; or (2) a redemptive collapse of the female into the male.²⁶ Yet neither option leads in Boyarin's view to an unproblematically liberative vision for equality between the sexes. Rather both point to a "gender parity . . . founded on a dualist metaphysics and anthropology in which freedom and equality are for pre-gendered, presocial, disembodied souls and are predicated on a devaluing and disavowing of the body."²⁷ Thus for Boyarin, although early Christian thinkers undoubtedly deployed the myth of the primal androgyne variably, in each case the result ultimately amounts to "a reinstatement of masculinism: the androgyne in question always turns out somehow to be a male androgyne."

Returning, then, to Paul—and more specifically, to the implications of invoking the primal androgyne in order to understand the apostle's position on women and sexual difference: if Galatians 3.28 refers not to social egalitarianism but to an ancient androgyny myth, then, as Lone Fatum asserts, it cannot be regarded as a "breakthrough" of any sort.²⁸ Instead, she suggests,

the vision of Galatians 3.28 is one in which “male and female gender are both annulled as a sexual duality in favour of male/man as an entity of asexuality, according to Gen. 1.27a.”²⁹ According to this line of argument, the hierarchical directives of 1 Corinthians cannot be discarded or relativized as practical concessions to the specific Corinthian situation. Rather, contemporary interpreters of Paul must take seriously the fact that both 1 Corinthians and Galatians 3.28 are grounded in a fundamentally androcentric theology of creation that Paul in no way undercuts. If this view is correct, then Paul’s position on women, sex, and gender emerges as a fundamentally coherent one. The ringing proclamation of Galatians that in Christ there is no longer male or female proves consistent with the hierarchical vision of 1 Corinthians, insofar as both are conceptually predicated on the eventual eschatological transformation of feminine difference into a male-centered “androgyny.”³⁰

Paul’s Adam-Christ Typology

This argument regarding the masculinist presuppositions of ancient androgyny is increasingly accepted in scholarly circles. And I would concede that the scholars such as Boyarin and Fatum who have built upon it to read Paul as a coherent thinker of sexual difference in his own historical context have, on the whole, made a persuasive case.³¹ But reconciling Paul to himself is not the focus of this book. Instead, I will take as my starting point the ways these apparent contradictions in the apostle’s text continued to press on his interpreters, even in the generations immediately following Paul. For while it is possible to provide a compelling harmonization of Galatians 3.28 and 1 Corinthians that situates both on an androcentric axis, some sort of tension between the two texts (and the interpretive possibilities that each opened up) continued to be felt all the same in the developing tradition.³² This can be seen as early as the late first century in the increasing shift toward an ethos of “love-patriarchalism” in the Deutero-Pauline Epistles—and the concomitant reworking of the Galatians 3.28 trope to eradicate any reference to the erasure of gender (Col 3.11).³³ The well-known divergence in interpretation of the Pauline legacy with respect to women’s roles that can be seen in the Pastoral Epistles versus the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* reveals a similar sort of friction.³⁴

But, to take a step back from the so-called “gender passages” of the Pauline corpus, what aspects of Paul’s larger theological project worked to generate and sustain this ongoing sense of anthropological anxiety around the

proper place and significance of sexual difference? Dennis Ronald MacDonald has characterized the early second-century tradition in terms of a stark polarization on gender-related issues (and other scholars have rightly questioned the strict dualism of the conflict model he proposes³⁵). But surely MacDonald is onto something when he notes that “the most important single source of the polarization was the complexity of Paul himself.”³⁶ That is to say, there was (and is) something complicated about Paul’s texts when it comes to the issue of sexual difference—a disjointedness that resists consistent interpretation. And this complexity emerges most forcefully, I will argue, *not* at the level of the gender passages in Galatians and 1 Corinthians, but rather in terms of broader issues of theological anthropology in Paul’s thought.

Here one of my central contentions is that Paul’s theology of creation and resurrection, although not explicitly dealing with sexual difference, is in fact crucial to understanding how later generations of early Christian thinkers approached the problem.³⁷ The human body is a philosophically troubled issue in Paul’s text, generating in turn a cluster of pressing anthropological questions. What constitutes the created, material body? What relation does that body have to the resurrected, eschatological body? Will the latter body also be material, and if so, in what way? And what does Christ’s death and resurrection (as well as the various transformations operative on Christ’s body) mean for the relationship between the two bodies—created and resurrected? Paul delves into these questions primarily by appeal to an Adam-Christ typology (Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15), looking to Adam and creation through an eschatologically inflected lens as a way of thinking through not only what the human body is but also what it will be.³⁸

In Romans 5.12–21, Paul articulates a robust parallel between the figures of Adam and Christ, characterizing Adam as “a type of the one who was to come” (*Adam hos estin typos tou mellontos*) and exploring the way in which “if the many died through the one human’s trespass (*tō tou henos paraptōmati*), much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one human (*en chariti tē tou henos anthrōpou*), Jesus Christ, abounded for the many” (Rom 5.14, 15, NRSV, translation slightly modified).³⁹ In this passage, the parallel hinges primarily on the shared scope of these two paradigmatic figures, Adam and Christ, in their representative functions. That is, Paul is concerned to demonstrate the ways in which “the many”/“the all” (*hoi polloi/pantas*) participate in the respective dominions of these two paradigmatic human beings: the creation, as represented by Adam, and the eschatological resurrection to come, as represented by Christ (“just as one human’s trespass

led to condemnation for all, so one human's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all," Rom 5.18, NRSV, translation slightly modified).⁴⁰

But while Adam and Christ are alike in representing all of humanity, the emphasis of the Romans passage is actually on dissimilarity. Paul Ricoeur observes that "It was St. Paul who roused the Adamic theme from its lethargy; by means of the *contrast* between the 'old man' and the 'new man,' he set up the figure of Adam as the inverse of that of Christ, called the second Adam."⁴¹ Yet the antithesis is not so pronounced as to render the figure of Adam irrelevant for theological anthropology as it pertains to believers in Christ during Paul's present moment. On the one hand, Paul refrains from indulging in any speculation about Adam in terms of the details of the Genesis creation story (both Eve and the serpent are notably absent) or their possible typological parallels in the redemptive economy of Christ.⁴² On the other hand, however, Adam still matters—the question is precisely how. While some modern interpreters have chosen to downplay or even efface the ongoing importance of Adam for Pauline theological anthropology,⁴³ what we ought to highlight here is the centrality of a particular kind of *relationship*, one in which the human subject stands poised between creation and eschaton—Adam and Christ—and must be conceptualized in terms of both.

As for the place of the human body in this theological matrix: while consideration of the body is absent from Romans 5, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul uses the Adam-Christ typology to explore the question of the body's present state and future destiny. Here again the parallel emphasizes contrast—this time in terms of the antithesis between death and resurrection as figured in Adam and Christ respectively: "For since death came through a human being (*di' anthrōpou*), the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being (*di' anthrōpou*); for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor. 15.21–22, NRSV). Martin has drawn attention to the strongly somatic dimension of this parallel as it plays out in the passage: "The body of Adam is the location of death, and it is human participation in that body, even after baptism, that makes possible a Christian's experience of death at all. Christians, although incorporated into the body of Christ through baptism, are still burdened, at least until the resurrection or transformation of their bodies at the eschaton, by their participation in the body of Adam."⁴⁴

Later in the chapter, Paul proceeds to unpack the implications of Adam and Christ's typological relationship for the body in both the present time and the anticipated resurrection at the eschaton by means of a dense and enigmatic

statement (1 Cor 15.39–53). He argues that “What is sown is perishable (*en phthora*), what is raised is imperishable (*en aphtharsia*). . . . It is sown a physical body (*sōma psychikon*), it is raised a spiritual body (*sōma pneumatikon*)” (1 Cor 15.42, 44, NRSV). This contrast between “physical” and “spiritual” bodies allows Paul to reinterpret Adam’s created body in light of the eschatological body of Christ:

Thus it is written, “The first human, Adam, became a living being” (*Egeneto ho prōtos anthrōpos Adam eis psychēn zōsan*); the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (*ho eschatos Adam eis pneuma zōopoion*). But it is not the spiritual (*to pneumatikon*) that is first but the physical (*to psychikon*), and then the spiritual. The first human was from the earth, a human of dust (*ho prōtos anthrōpos ek gēs choikos*); the second human is from heaven (*ho deuterios anthrōpos ex ouranou*). As was the human of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the human of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the human of dust, we will also bear the image of the human of heaven. (1 Cor 15.45–49, NRSV, translation slightly modified)

Unlike Romans 5, here the various details of the Genesis creation narrative (beyond just the figure of Adam) are of paramount importance.⁴⁵ And within this larger context of speculation on creation, Paul contrasts Adam’s body—characterized in Genesis 2.7 as “from the dust of the ground” (NRSV; LXX: *choun apo tēs gēs*)—with that of Christ, the *anthrōpos* of heaven.

Consequently, on the anthropological level, believers in Christ find themselves in a complicated in-between space. Martin summarizes this situation in terms of simultaneous participation in both the pneumatic/heavenly realm and the psychic/fleshly/earthly one: “Christians currently partake of two natures: because they possess pneuma, they share something with the heavenly natures; because they are also made up of sarx and psyche, they share something with the earth, Adam, animals, birds, fish, and even dirt (15.39–40, 47–48).”⁴⁶ But Martin also rightly cautions against too easily equating Paul’s term *pneumatikos* with the colloquial sense of its common English translation “spiritual”—insofar as the latter carries with it later (modern) connotations of immateriality. Rather, as he shows through an extensive examination of the extant philosophical and medical evidence, “For most ancient theorists, pneuma is a kind of ‘stuff’ that is the agent of perception, motion, and life

itself; it pervades other forms of stuff and, together with those other forms, constitutes the self.”⁴⁷

On this reading, then, Paul does not have in view a transformation to a purely “spiritual” (immaterial) existence. On the contrary, while the apostle is unequivocal in his stance that flesh and blood have no place in this eschatological state (1 Cor 15.50), the spiritual body (*sōma pneumatikon*) is still very much *a body* in some meaningful sense. As Martin argues, “The transformation expected at the eschaton will cause the Christian body to shed the lower parts of its current nature and be left with the purer, transformed part of the pneuma. Christians will have bodies without flesh, body, or soul—composed solely of pneumatic substance—light, airy, luminous bodies.”⁴⁸ Here the logic of participation so central to the Adam-Christ typology as a whole is applied specifically to the body: “The presupposition underwriting Paul’s argument here is that the nature of any body is due to its participation in some particular sphere of existence.” Far from rendering bodily existence ultimately irrelevant, then, the Adam-Christ typology in 1 Corinthians 15 actually serves to *foreground* the theological urgency of questions about the body. But if the moves Paul makes here are accepted, then these questions must be asked and answered with a view both to “the image of the human of dust” (*tēn eikona tou choikou*) and “the image of the human of heaven” (*tēn eikona tou epouraniou*).

So, returning to the central question at hand, where does sexual difference fit? Or more precisely, where does one situate the figure of Eve—and the difference that her specifically female body represents—within a theology configured around the bodies of Adam and Christ? Paul’s version of the Adam-Christ typology does not address these questions in any systematic manner. In fact, both Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 seem utterly to ignore the issue. But for post-Pauline Christians wrestling with Paul’s texts—and doing so in a Roman imperial environment in which notions of gender were increasingly unstable—this terrain proved not so easy to navigate as it might initially seem. In terms of a general framework, the Adam-Christ typology worked well enough as a way to articulate an overarching (and sexually generic) anthropology. But in terms of the specific question of sexual difference, Paul’s typological link between creation and resurrection produced a theological ambivalence about the figure of Adam.

To put this simply, is Adam the first human in the representative sense, or the first man in the specifically male sense, or somehow both? This in turn raises a corresponding question: does Paul speak about Christ as *anthrōpos* in the broader sense or as specifically male? Here a real dilemma emerged

for early Christians as they sought to theologize the sexed body in a conceptual field already overdetermined by the Pauline text: sexual difference simply does not fit in any obvious or uncomplicated way into a theology of creation and resurrection grounded in an Adam-Christ typology. And this dilemma, I will argue, continued to exercise an indirect influence that long outlived Paul, haunting Christian discourse on the question of sexual difference into the second and third centuries and beyond.

Complexities of Sexual Difference in the Ancient World

Categories and Terms: Sex, Gender, and Sexual Difference

Throughout this book, I make recourse to the well-known categories of “sex” and “gender,” and also (most frequently) to “sexual difference”—a generally less familiar category, at least in many Anglo-American contexts. Each of these terms has a complex and contested history within feminist theory (as well as various overlapping and intersecting disciplines/discourses)—far more complex, in fact, than I can do justice to here. However, in the interests of clarifying for the reader how I am deploying these terms to analyze early Christian history and theology, some brief explanation of each and what is at stake in their differences seems appropriate.

The analytic distinction between biologically given sex and socially determined gender has undergirded many important feminist analyses of Paul's thought and of early Christian history.⁴⁹ But, as Jorunn Økland points out, scholars would do well to question the assumption that “they know what Paul means by *gynē* . . . and that the word is a relevant and innocent signification of people with female bodies (biologically and/or culturally marked).”⁵⁰ That is to say, given that the cultural assumptions operative in antiquity about anthropology, medicine, and human bodies were vastly different from our own, we cannot with any confidence assign the term *gynē* (commonly translated “woman” or “wife”) in Paul's letters to the realm of either biological material (“sex”) or the social and cultural inflections of that material (“gender”)—or even to the complicated interplay of both. So while Paul and other early Christians clearly believed that men and women were different from one another in complex and variable ways, what Økland calls into question here is the usefulness of the sex/gender distinction for analyzing this complexity—not only in Paul, but also in other ancient texts, as well as texts produced in non-Anglo-American cultural and linguistic contexts.⁵¹

The problem that the sex/gender distinction seeks to sort out is not a new one.⁵² However, as Toril Moi notes, this particular way of parsing the distinction did not enter feminist theory until the 1970s, when it came to function as a defense against an all-encompassing biological determinism: “When one pictures sex as pervasive, there can be no difference between male and masculine, female and feminine, sex and gender. . . . Historically, then, *gender* emerged as an attempt to give to biology what belongs to biology, no more and no less.”⁵³ Yet subsequent feminist theory has found reason to complicate this picture—beginning with the term “gender.”⁵⁴ Joan Wallach Scott’s seminal 1986 essay, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” argues that it is not enough for gender as an analytic category to attend to the social and cultural dimensions associated with biological sex. Rather, what must be analyzed is the interrelation of this axis with another: the *signifying* function of gender as “a primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated.”⁵⁵ In Scott’s formulation, then, the term “gender” acquires greater analytical purchase. But this move also renders any clear-cut distinction between sex and gender somewhat muddier.

Judith Butler has developed this line of critique through her now classic argument that even the category “sex” is not a fixed and foundational given, and therefore cannot be mapped onto “nature” as “gender” is mapped onto “culture.” Rather sex is produced and secured through the performance of gender.⁵⁶ While not denying the materiality of the body, Butler maintains that even the concept of matter has a genealogy—one that we need to interrogate critically for the ways in which it is “fully sedimented with discourses on sex and sexuality that prefigure and constrain the uses to which the term can be put.”⁵⁷ In this way, the sexed body must always be thought in terms of materiality, but materiality itself must be “rethought as the effect of power, as power’s most productive effect.”⁵⁸ From this genealogical perspective, bodily sex emerges as “an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize ‘sex’ and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms.”⁵⁹ We can see in this trajectory exemplified by Scott and Butler a theoretical shift away from treating “sex” and “gender” as self-evident categories that can be used unproblematically to analyze so-called “real women.” What emerges instead is an increasing emphasis on signification, discourse, and power relations—a shift, I argue, that can prove beneficial for studies of early Christian thought such as the one I pursue here.⁶⁰

A related and overlapping line of feminist critique has attacked the sex/

gender distinction and argued for the analytical primacy not of “gender” but rather of “sexual difference,” a term drawn from psychoanalytic theory.⁶¹ As Julia Kristeva defines it, “Sexual difference—which is at once biological, physiological, and relative to reproduction—is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which *is* the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language, and meaning.”⁶² What is at stake in this terminological move is the capacity for an analysis that lies somewhere between either the rigidities of the sex/gender distinction or the collapse of that distinction into a space where everything is gender.⁶³ Drawing as it does on Freudian categories such as the psyche and the unconscious—never identical or reducible to the body but at the same time always somehow implicated in it—the term “sexual difference” slides fluidly between sexually marked bodies, their psychic representations, and their constitution in historically variable cultural imaginaries. It thereby establishes the exploration of the sexed body, be it in the present or the ancient Mediterranean past, as a project that must always take place in relation to language and the field of power.

In the background of the term “sexual difference” lies an elaborate genealogy within psychoanalytic discourse—rooted conceptually in the theories of Freud and Jacques Lacan, but associated as a term primarily with the work of Luce Irigaray.⁶⁴ For Irigaray, sexual difference functions as the fundamental (and irreducible) ground from which the tradition of Western phallogocentrism must be critiqued and subjectivity rethought. This is a project with both constructive-philosophical and decidedly political dimensions.⁶⁵ But what about “sexual difference” as an analytic tool—one that (while indebted in many ways to Irigaray) is not necessarily wedded to the specific goals of Irigaray’s philosophical and political project? Is this the only term we need (as some theorists seem to suggest) for critical analysis of socially located, embodied subjectivity in both the present and the past?⁶⁶

Here Amy Hollywood cautions that resorting solely to the concept of sexual difference ultimately proves inadequate, insofar as it depends, “as does psychoanalytic theory in general, on a slide between sex difference, subjective formation as sexed/gendered, and sexuality.”⁶⁷ For in this slide we run the risk of collapsing analytic axes that, while always problematic, at the same time can also provide critical leverage necessary for unpacking the dense complexities of subjectivity. Thus Hollywood argues, while fully acknowledging what is problematic in the sex/gender distinction as classically formulated, that there is a need for an analytic vocabulary that can verbalize the seams and interstices

that inevitably emerge between anatomically distinct bodies (themselves always already culturally constructed) and the manifold cultural ideologies that operate on those bodies.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points to a further level of complexity by highlighting the third axis that the term “sexual difference” runs the risk of eliding, that of sex (in the sense of sex acts) and sexuality.⁶⁸ For Sedgwick, there remains an analytic usefulness in maintaining “that the question of gender and the question of sexuality, inextricable from one another though they are in that each can be expressed only in the terms of the other, are nonetheless not the same question.”⁶⁹ While she is not specifically analyzing the term “sexual difference” in this particular context, the importance of Sedgwick’s point remains apposite. We lose something analytically vital if we rely exclusively on a terminology so predicated on slippage that it allows no diagnostic space (a space that is admittedly always strategic, situated, and positional) for a critical exploration of the intricate confluences it performs—especially when those confluences are not politically innocent. As Hollywood points out, “The conflation of sex/gender/sexual difference and sexuality is crucial to the working of normative heterosexuality; all of these terms, then, are simultaneously necessary and deeply problematic.”⁷⁰

Given these cautions, “sexual difference” emerges as a fraught category—at once both useful (for the way in which it troubles persistent dualisms by signaling the inevitable slide between culture and bodies) and also problematic (given what that slide potentially renders invisible and/or inarticulable). Yet for the purposes of this book, I would maintain that the term, with all its problems, remains a helpful one—though not to the exclusion of other analytic categories such as “gender” (which I also make use of). Rather, I follow Judith Butler when she suggests that “the debates concerning the theoretical priority of sexual difference to gender, of gender to sexuality, of sexuality to gender, are all crosscut by another kind of problem, a problem that sexual difference poses, namely, the permanent difficulty of determining where the biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end.”⁷¹

Thus in turning to Paul and his early interpreters, I employ the category of sexual difference as a way of keeping the problem that it poses a live one. Hollywood notes that “When doing historical work on [what many modern interpreters would call] sex and gender, we need to ask how differences between men and women were understood and constituted. . . . Was there a distinction between something like sex and something like gender, or do the two continually collide? And how do we make sense of these confluences when

our own hold on the distinction between sex and gender is already so complex and tenuous?”⁷² These are questions that cannot be answered *a priori* in the study of premodern Christian history, but that instead require careful analysis on the level of specific thinkers and texts. Therefore, rather than assuming that we already know how ancient theological thinkers understood the differences between women and men in relation to bodies, culture, and desire (and that they understood these the same way we do), it is precisely this nexus of relationships that I wish to interrogate in the textual resources of early Christian thought.

The Sexed Body in Antiquity

In undertaking this project, my work builds upon scholars of the Greco-Roman world, early Judaism, and early Christianity who have increasingly emphasized the ways in which ancient Mediterranean thinking about the sexual, embodied human being fundamentally differed from modern conceptions. In terms of an analytic framework, this difference is usually articulated through the invocation (either implicitly on a conceptual level or explicitly on a terminological level) of an ancient “sex/gender system” that stands in contrast to our own. Thus Thomas Laqueur has famously argued, with reference to pre-Enlightenment texts, that “*sex*, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, while *gender*, what we take to be a cultural category, was primary or ‘real.’ . . . To be a man or a woman was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to *be* organically one of the other of two incommensurable sexes.”⁷³ For Laqueur, this amounts to what he terms a “one-sex model”—a dominant ancient viewpoint in which men and women were not fundamentally different from one another, but rather “were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose telos was male.”⁷⁴

Within New Testament studies, Stephen Moore makes a similar point, in this case with specific reference to the ancient system of sex and gender:

The [Greco-]Roman sex/gender system is best mapped as a circle or a pyramid. In the center of the circle, or at the apex of the pyramid, were adult male citizens—supremely although not exclusively, those of high social standing: rulers, upper magistrates, heads of elite households, powerful patrons, and so on. . . . Around them, or below them, were countless others who, in different ways, and to different degrees, fell into a category that the classicist Jonathan

Walters has usefully labeled *unmen*: females, boys, slaves (of either sex), sexually passive or “effeminate” males, eunuchs, “barbarians,” and so on.⁷⁵

Moore gestures here to an ancient model of the body operative in early Christian thought that fundamentally privileged the male atop a single hierarchical spectrum.⁷⁶ Along this spectrum there existed possibilities for movement, fluidity, and, as a result, vulnerability in the ancient imagination.⁷⁷ The vulnerability of any given male body’s “masculinity” is precisely what Moore reads as at issue in Paul’s apparent condemnation of same-sex relations in Romans 1.⁷⁸

While numerous other scholars of early Christianity concur with the basic contours of the model, they do not necessarily do so in terms of a strict sex/gender distinction.⁷⁹ The point of consensus, as Colleen Conway summarizes, is that “Rather than biological difference, what mattered was one’s position on the vertical continuum that structured the cosmos. The perfect man was featured at the top with other less complete or perfect versions of masculine identity falling at various lower points on the axis. In this view, woman was understood not as the biologically opposite sex of man but as an imperfect, incomplete version of man.”⁸⁰ The fundamental issue at stake here turns out to be not so much about the sex/gender distinction per se, as about a distinctly ancient logic of sexual difference—one that conceptualizes this difference not in terms of an ontological and incommensurable binary, but rather on a single sliding scale, oriented toward maleness and deeply rooted in variables of status. In this way, Virginia Burrus points out, there has emerged “widespread scholarly agreement” regarding the pervasiveness of this “dynamic spectrum or gradient of relative masculinities” in ancient thought.⁸¹

Pervasiveness should not, however, be equated with stability. Indeed, within this ancient discourse of “relative masculinities,” instabilities emerged with a particular intensity during the early Roman imperial era, intertwined with the cultural ambivalences that inevitably characterized the continually expanding empire.⁸² Burrus argues, “Empire had reshaped the city into a stage for agonistic performances of a multifaceted manhood distinguished by its power to turn vulnerability—frequently figured as a capacity for feminization—to its advantage. And yet, where vulnerability could be turned to advantage, fragility might begin to be as much a part of the habitual structure of masculine subjectivity as a reaction to external circumstances.”⁸³ Furthermore, elite Roman men were not the only ones who found themselves caught in what Eric Thurman calls “the feedback loop of imperialism . . . [that] occasioned

the implosion of masculinity, an internal collapse of male boundaries that was registered in the metropolis by both capricious emperors and compelling gladiators and on empire's margins (literally and metaphorically) by both duplicitous bandits and depraved barbarians."⁸⁴ Instead, these instabilities proved to have a certain cultural pervasiveness—one that is also reflected, not surprisingly, in the different androcentric perspectives of the early Christians (themselves positioned in a variety of attitudes toward the Roman Empire).

Thinking with Creation Stories

This was the social and intellectual situation in which a range of second- and third-century Christians sought to make sense of sexual difference in relation to Pauline theological anthropology. But Paul's text was not, of course, the only complicating factor that bore upon these Christians as they probed the enigma of sexually differentiated bodies. Also pivotal were an assortment of traditional and well-established stories about humanity's origins. The significance of such stories was central not only for early Christians, but for numerous others in the ancient world as well. In fact, throughout the Roman Mediterranean, ancient thinkers from a variety of philosophical and religious persuasions gravitated to cosmogonic narratives such as Plato's *Timaeus* and the Book of Genesis as crucial hermeneutical sites for working out their understandings of the human subject. (Indeed Paul's appropriation of the figure of Adam for his own theological anthropology is symptomatic of this wide-ranging interest.⁸⁵) And so for early Christians—just as for their non-Christian contemporaries—the project of rigorously interpreting these narratives in all their suggestive detail proved useful in multiple ways. With respect to sexual difference, Christian thinkers mobilized their readings of origin stories to offer etiologies of that difference, to articulate competing visions of embodied subjectivity, and to spell out the practical implications of these visions for gendered Christian lives.

The construction of "sex" in terms of naturalized materiality, as Butler insists, "is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. [It] not only takes place *in* time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms."⁸⁶ Part of this process of reiteration involves telling stories—especially creation stories—insofar as to articulate, think through, or otherwise interpret the origins of sexual difference is simultaneously to make a claim (at least implicitly) about its ongoing significance for the constitution of human subjects.⁸⁷

Yet stories can be told in many different ways—and here scripture's

narrative beginnings (Gen 1–3) loomed particularly large for early Christian hermeneutes, proving remarkably supple in their hands as a resource that could be cited and reiterated in ever-multiplying contexts. In this way, innovative possibilities emerged for thinking sexual difference by reading differently, even while remaining “tethered” in some sense to a familiar narrative.⁸⁸

Furthermore, tensions within the Genesis text itself intensified the need for this hermeneutical resourcefulness. As is well known, two accounts of the creation of human beings exist side by side in its opening chapters. In Genesis 1.26–27, God creates an original human being or “earth creature” (*baadam*) in his own image that somehow involves both male and female aspects of humanity.⁸⁹ By contrast, in Genesis 2, God creates the original earth-creature first (presumably as male) and then goes on to give a specific account of the origin of the woman: “And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Gen 2.22, NRSV). Boyarin summarizes the difficulty that the coexistence of these two stories poses: “In the first story it seems clear that the original creation of the human species included both sexes, while the second suggests an original male creature for whom a female was created out of his flesh. The contradiction presents a classic hermeneutic problem.”⁹⁰

Early Jews and Christians were well aware of the interpretive dilemma. Many chose to ignore it, nonetheless.⁹¹ But ancient interpretations of Genesis have also survived that navigate the tension by subsuming the details of one account to the other. For example, *2 Enoch* disregards the thorny phrase “male and female” in Genesis 1.27 and applies creation in the image of God unambiguously to the male Adam—ignoring the particularities of the first account and giving pride of place to the second.⁹² The book of *Jubilees* refuses to erase fully the claim of Genesis 1.27, but instead creatively harmonizes Genesis 1 and 2 to argue that the female was, in fact, created along with the male in 1.27—via the making of Adam’s rib.⁹³

Alternatively, other interpreters foregrounded Genesis 1, focusing on the sexual ambiguity of the human being in 1.27 to speculate that the first human was initially androgynous and then only subsequently sexually differentiated (the so-called “myth of the primal androgyne” referenced above).⁹⁴ For example, the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria reads Genesis 1.26–27 and Genesis 2 (at least in certain of his texts) as two distinct acts of creation: the first producing a heavenly human being made in the image of God and the second producing an earthly human.⁹⁵ In multiple passages, Philo emphasizes the disjunction between these two human beings in order to map them onto a

typically Platonic split between mind and body, reason and sense perception, virtue and corruptibility.⁹⁶ As for the question of primal androgyny and the advent of sexual difference, he argues that

there is a vast difference between the human being [in Gen 2.7] who has been moulded now (*tou te nyn plasthentos anthrōpou*) and the one who previously came into being after the image of God. For the human being who has been moulded as sense-perceptible object . . . is either man or woman (*anēr ē gynē*), and is by nature mortal. The human being after the image (*ho de kata tēn eikona*) is a kind of idea or genus or seal, is perceived by the intellect, incorporeal, neither male nor female (*ou' arrhen oute thēly*), and is immortal by nature.⁹⁷

Here it becomes clear that for Philo, the initial creation of Genesis 1.26–27 is not, in fact, double-gendered (as one might expect from the letter of the text) but rather pre-gendered. He has in effect read the Septuagint *arsen kai thēly* as precisely its opposite: *ou' arrhen oute thēly*.⁹⁸ Having been stamped directly with the (unembodied) image of God, the primal androgynous exists prior to sexual difference. The division of the sexes enters only later with the introduction of the second human, a result of an embodiment already a step removed from the divine image.

Within this interpretive schema, the sexual binary is one that puts woman at a decided disadvantage to man, placing her a further step removed from the image of God and the realm of reason, virtue, and incorruptibility.⁹⁹ As Philo argues elsewhere, turning to a platonizing allegory, “Observe that it is not the woman (*hē gynē*) that cleaves to the man (*tō andrī*) but conversely the man to the woman, Mind (*ho nous*) to Sense-perception (*tē aisthēsei*). For when that which is superior, namely Mind, becomes one with that which is inferior, namely Sense-perception, it resolves itself into the order of flesh which is inferior, into sense-perception, the moving cause of the passions.”¹⁰⁰ Here Philo correlates man and woman to the valued and devalued terms of the Platonic faculties, mind and sense perception respectively.¹⁰¹ Thus in this rendition of the primal androgynous, the female is figured in terms of sensuality and the inferior order of the flesh. This is by no means an entirely innovative move on Philo’s part. Rather, the platonizing impulse that drives his reflections on sexual difference is indicative of broader intellectual currents in antiquity—and as such became paradigmatic for many early Christians.

Sexual Difference and the Specter(s) of Paul

Against this broader cultural backdrop, I will focus more narrowly on a particular set of early Christian thinkers: those who read Paul and engaged his ideas regarding Adam, Christ, typology, and theological anthropology as they formulated their own theories of sexual difference and its significance within salvation history. Indeed, long before the surge of commentaries on the Pauline text in the fourth century, many Christians in the second and third centuries were wrestling with these fundamental issues that they encountered as most forcefully (though by no means uniquely) articulated in the apostle's thought. These early interpreters of Paul found his already seemingly conflicting reflections on sexual difference situated within an intricate anthropological nexus in which questions about the body, creation, and resurrection collide. They were thus left to wrestle with a problematic that, while complex in its cultural and philosophical origins, was at least in part born of the generative tensions of the Pauline text: whatever the sexually differentiated human being might be, it ought to be conceptualized not only in terms of where it had come from (Adam) but also in terms of where it was going (Christ).

This is not to claim that there were no ways out—even for early Christians deeply immersed in Pauline theological categories. The typological aspects of Paul's thought could always be disregarded. Or the typology's basic premise—the fundamental link between creation and resurrection/eschaton—could be rejected.¹⁰² But for Christian thinkers not prepared to jettison the ongoing theological significance of the creation narrative entirely (even if they chose to read the Genesis story against the grain in creative ways), the problem was not always so easily eluded. Consequently, even some early Christians who were less than favorably disposed to the Pauline legacy found themselves aligned on this point with Paul's self-styled disciples—situating their visions of what sexual difference is and how/why it matters in terms of both an original created human (in conversation with Genesis 1–3) and an eschatological human, however conceived. Insofar as sexual difference could not be straightforwardly incorporated into this form of typological thinking, any more than it could be totally excluded, the haunting power of the problematic affected a broad range of theological positions.

The concept of “haunting” is one that has received a significant amount of theoretical elaboration in contemporary critical theory and philosophy.¹⁰³ With respect to a very different context from that of the early Christians (the contemporary global social order in relation to Marx and Marxism), Jacques

Derrida has pointed to the ways in which “the forms of a certain haunting obsession” can function “to organize the *dominant* influence on discourse.”¹⁰⁴ Coining the term “hauntology” as a homophonic pun on “ontology,” Derrida figures the former as that which dislodges, disarticulates, and displaces the putative stability of the latter—“the disjointure in the very presence of the present.”¹⁰⁵ Another term Derrida uses to convey this complex dynamic is “spectrality,” elucidated by Fredric Jameson as that which

makes the present waver . . . a temporary weakness in our grip on things. . . . Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (maybe even the future they offer to prophesy) is still very much alive and at work, within the living present; all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which under exceptional circumstances might betray us.¹⁰⁶

Here Jameson points to an illusory self-sufficiency and solidity in the ideological formations that constitute any given “present” that is helpful for thinking about the complex interaction between the problem of sexual difference and the broader contours of Pauline theological anthropology in the early Christian period.¹⁰⁷ As we will see in the chapters that follow, the second- and third-century Christians under analysis positioned themselves in a variety of different attitudes to Paul and his authority, ranging from deeply deferential to overtly agonistic. But even more important than these various relations to the *figure* of Paul are the variable ways the anthropological *problematic* latent in the Pauline text (the proper placement and meaning of sexual difference within a theological anthropology whose two primary points of reference are Adam and Christ) threatened to undermine the solidity of a range of different anthropological positions—positions that all sought to shore up the stability of sexual difference in one way or another.

Building critically on some of Derrida's ideas, Slavoj Žižek argues that “Perhaps the best way of encapsulating the gist of an epoch is to focus not on the explicit features that define its social and ideological edifices but on the disavowed ghosts that haunt it, dwelling in a mysterious region of non-existent entities which none the less *persist*, continuing to exert their efficacy.”¹⁰⁸ Following Žižek's lead here, I maintain that, with respect to the early Christian epoch, this Pauline anthropological problematic functions as a kind of

disavowed ghost, operating as part of “the spectral dimension that sustains this tradition.”¹⁰⁹ In some ways, the specter becomes most evident, as we will see, in the work of those early Christian writers who have the deepest veneration for the apostle—thinkers such as Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian of Carthage. (Yet certain writers who contest Paul’s authority find themselves similarly haunted—the Pauline anthropological apparatus constraining their theologies of sexual difference differently, but in a no less generative way.) Though each of these writers makes a distinctive attempt to honor (or contest) Paul’s anthropology by navigating the question of sexual difference in relation to it, their very refusal to acknowledge the sheer intractability of the Pauline problematic offers us a fleeting glimpse of the way it haunts them.

Finally then, I should note that my use of the phrase “specter(s) of Paul” necessarily entails a certain doubleness in the objective and subjective senses of the genitive.¹¹⁰ On the one hand, the objective sense of the genitive points to the specter that haunts Paul and his text: the problem of the difference of the feminine, and the status of that difference in relation to the origin and telos of the cosmos. This specter stalks not only the apostle but ancient Greco-Roman thought more broadly, impinging on the philosophical speculations of thinkers, Christian and non-Christian alike, throughout the Mediterranean world. Yet, on the other hand, Paul leaves his mark on this ancient problematic, and his particular intervention becomes part of what haunts the later tradition. This is the subjective sense of the genitive: the specter of the Pauline anthropological problematic as it presses on later generations of Christian thinkers.

In this way, the two senses of “specters of Paul” are intimately related to one another, and both will be in view throughout this book. But Paul’s theological intervention narrows and intensifies the problem of sexual difference in a specific way—or at least it did so for some early Christians. And it is this particularly Pauline context that will be the focus of my analysis. In view then are a selection of second- and third-century Christian thinkers who endeavored to cover over the Pauline anthropological problematic in a variety of different ways, offering theological solutions that negotiate what it means to be a sexually differentiated human being situated within the poles of creation and eschaton. These are “solutions” dense in their theological finality, masquerading as solid and self-sufficient (to return to Jameson’s terminology). And yet, as I will argue in the coming chapters, the specter persists, visible in the disavowed and unacknowledged fault lines and failures that each position necessarily generates.

Furthermore, the haunting persistence in question is one that is implicated in multiple temporal registers—including both the early Christian period and the contemporary moment—and that works to render those registers not fully separable. For just as the apostle and his anthropological problematic haunt his early interpreters, throwing their second- and third-century “presents” out of joint, so too may both he and they still haunt (and thereby disjoint) our own present discourses and the place of sexual difference within them—Badiou’s and Žižek’s no less than those of feminist and queer theology.¹¹¹ In this way, sexual difference fails to materialize as a point of unquestionable conceptual stability, either within early Christian thinking or in broader historical perspective. Rather—as I will show through a close analysis of selected theological attempts to navigate this nexus of issues—this difference functioned in Christian antiquity as an instance of “a temporary weakness in [people’s] grip on things” (Jameson), a site of fissure with implications both for the intellectual history of the ancient world and the theological anthropologies of today.

Plan of the Book

The substance of my analysis is divided into two sections, each considering a different early Christian strategy, broadly construed, for navigating (and attempting to put to rest) this specter of the Pauline anthropological problematic. Part I, “The Platonic Woman,” explores second- and third-century theologies of sexual difference that are deeply indebted to the intellectual resources of Platonic philosophical speculation in this period. Here I analyze texts that place “woman” between Adam and Christ as a temporary problem to be resolved at the eschaton, including various so-called “Valentinian” texts and the writings of Clement of Alexandria (Chapters 1 and 2). I also discuss a text from Nag Hammadi, *On the Origin of the World*, that draws on Pauline typological categories to *resist* Paul, thereby offering a platonizing interpretation of the creation story in which sexual difference is not of secondary derivation (Chapter 3).

Part II, “Flesh and Virginity,” turns to a different kind of strategy for locating the difference of the female/feminine within a typologically oriented theological anthropology. (While the terms “feminine” and “female” are always to some degree implicated in one another—making slippage between the two inevitable—throughout the book I tend to use the former more broadly to point to a signifying symbolic economy and the latter more narrowly with

reference specifically to the body.) In view are early Christians who responded to the Pauline problematic by articulating a further level of typological complexity based on virginal female bodies (be they Mary's, Eve's, or the "virginal" earth from which Adam was formed). This strategy first appears in Chapter 1 (in a brief analysis of the *Gospel of Philip*), but it is treated at length in Chapters 4 and 5, dealing with Irenaeus of Lyons and Tertullian of Carthage respectively.¹¹²

Throughout the book, I do not make recourse to designations of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" that became cemented to these texts and figures in later centuries. Irenaeus, Clement, and Tertullian remain, more or less, within the traditional theological canon (though not without some suspicion in certain quarters, at least in the case of the latter two), while the "Valentinian" materials and other Nag Hammadi texts do not. But these later determinations have little bearing on the complicated and yet remarkably fluid historical situation of the second and third centuries. Rather, what especially interests me here is an anxiety that all these texts share—with respect to sexual difference and its relationship to typology—regardless where they fall on a traditional spectrum of "heterodoxy."

Probing this anxiety—and the multiple ways early Christians fail to resolve it coherently—is the project of this book. The authors under analysis lie in the shadow of a Pauline theological logic defined by desire: a desire for the drama of creation and redemption to function *as a single event of signification* in its two movements. I will unpack this claim in greater detail as the book progresses. Here I simply want to forecast that, insofar as the texts to be examined push us to consider larger questions of signification, Derrida's work will prove helpful on multiple levels—not only for the specific notion of haunting discussed above, but also for its more general attention to the impossible desire that attends the problem of meaning in the tradition of Western metaphysics.¹¹³

Therefore, as I work through the ancient texts, I will attempt to build a case that the early Christian theological anthropologies under consideration participate in variable, historically specific ways in the anxious desire (one that Derrida explores in multiple registers throughout his work) to close any possible gap—or resolve any excess—in the movement of signification.¹¹⁴ The majority of these thinkers do so by appropriating the Pauline theological logic and deploying it to new ends—though at least one (the author of *On the Origin of the World*) critically reformulates it, while remaining indebted in some sense to its terms. But within this common framework, as we will see,

sexual difference becomes a problem of signification—the stubborn trace of an otherness that needs to be deferred or domesticated, insofar as it calls into question the dream of a single, divinely ordained fullness to human meaning. *As a signifier*, then, sexual difference poses a danger to the stability of this early Christian theological logic, raising the possibility of some necessary supplement that ineluctably haunts, yet cannot be fully contained within, the semantic field of the Adam-Christ typology.

With the exception of the Bible and certain “background” materials, translations of early Christian texts under consideration throughout the book are my own. (For the Bible, I use the NRSV except when the translation obscures gendered language in ways that affect my analysis—in which case I modify the translation as needed or turn to the more literal NASB.) For additional ancient materials, I have relied on standard translations with recourse to the original languages as needed. Specific translations used are noted parenthetically; for full references, see the bibliography.

Transliterations of Greek, Hebrew, and Coptic script are rendered according to the systems in the *SBL Handbook of Style*. Quotations from modern works that use a different transliteration system have not been altered or standardized.

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Chapter 1

The Many Become One: Theological Monism and the Problem of the Female Body

What Plato *dreams* of is a memory with no sign. That is, with no supplement . . . Why is the surrogate or supplement dangerous? . . . Its slidings slip it out of the simple alternative presence/absence. *That* is the danger.

—Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy”

In this chapter and throughout this section of the book, I take up the problem of “the Platonic woman”—that is, the ways early Christians who were informed (at least in part) by the tradition of Philo and other platonizing philosophers navigated the question of sexual difference and, in some cases, sought to locate it within a typological framework inherited from Paul’s theological anthropology. As discussed in the previous chapter, the dominant ideology of sexual difference in the Greco-Roman world was one that conceptualized this difference not in terms of an ontological and incommensurable binary, but rather on a single sliding scale fundamentally oriented toward maleness. The “myth of the primal androgyne” participated in this ideological formation in the writings of Philo and Paul. But as numerous scholars have argued, the androgyne myth had a long reach, impinging on a broad swath of early Christian positions on the status and meaning of sexual difference. These were positions that shared a common eschatological goal: the eventual overcoming of anthropological differences through the triumph of unity “in Christ.” Put another way, what we see in these various theologies is an entrenched and persistent preoccupation with the (always already)

masculine One, a monistic orientation that was right at home in a broadly Platonic philosophical milieu.

This chapter attempts to chart something of that preoccupation in the historical context of the late first, second, and third centuries c.e. It thus explores a variety of interpretive tactics that monistic Christians took up in order to situate sexual difference theologically and philosophically in light of an ardent passion for cosmological unity. As we will see, Galatians 3.28 was not the only instance of an early Christian saying that imagined an eschatological return to primal androgyny. In fact, variations on a saying to this effect (attributed to Jesus) circulated in multiple contexts in the earliest movement. Evidence for this wide circulation can be found in such sources as *2 Clement*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, and the *Gospel of Thomas*, each of which inflects the saying differently to various ethical and theological ends.

Nor was the fascination with androgyny expressed only in pithy aphorisms. Other Christians elaborated the idea by developing its implications within their theological systems as a whole—most notably Clement of Alexandria (the subject of the next chapter) and various Valentinian theologians. And it is in some of these more fully articulated systems that the haunting power of the Pauline anthropological dilemma begins to become visible. Sometimes it is just a hint, a subtle spectral trace of a not fully worked out tension—as we will see in the Valentinian text, the *Tripartite Tractate*. But in other Valentinian sources—such as the *Excerpts from Theodotus* and the *Gospel of Philip*—the problem of how to locate sexual difference within an Adam-Christ typology is full-blown. Further, I will argue, the respective solutions that these two texts attempt are not themselves *sui generis*. Rather, as we will see in later chapters, they reflect two paradigmatic early Christian strategies for negotiating this “specter of Paul.”

Monism and Early Christianity

The concept of “the One” is a central but nonetheless complicated notion in ancient thought, occupying multiple cultural and philosophical registers. In the second and third centuries, Roman political hegemony over the Mediterranean generated a political environment in which questions of unity, identity, and cultural multiplicity became increasingly acute. I have argued elsewhere that the collision between imperial power and an unruly array of civic and ethnoracial differences across the growing empire worked to call into question

the symbolic stability of a unitary Roman citizen-self.¹ Rebecca Lyman characterizes this scene of cultural ambivalence in terms of “an indeterminacy of religion and culture in Roman Hellenism itself.”² She rightly maintains that the cultural possibilities that this indeterminacy yielded should not be dismissed as mere “syncretism.” Rather, the proliferation of new (or newly reinvigorated and reworked) philosophical and religious positions in the early imperial period is a sign of a wide-ranging cultural creativity—one driven in part by the “intractable problem of diversity together with the ideological claim of unity.”³ According to Lyman, “Ideologically, this context provoked searches for universalism, both in Hellenistic histories of particular peoples as well as in scholastic philosophies, each seeking to provide a compelling account of the common traditions which could become a dominant cultural narrative for the political transitions of the empire.”⁴

In this way, the difficulty posed by the relationship between “the One and the many” was a source of concern for a broad assortment of thinkers within Roman Hellenism. Among scholastic philosophers, one mode in which this concern manifested itself was through the ongoing project of interpreting and reinterpreting traditional philosophical texts.⁵ Seeking to unlock cosmological mysteries, these scholars looked to textual resources such as Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*. In the former, Plato stakes a claim to an ultimate cosmic unity: “Are we right, then, in describing the Heaven as one (*hena*), or would it be more correct to speak of heavens as many or infinite in number (*pollous kai apeirous*)? One it must be termed, if it is to be framed after its Pattern . . . its Maker made neither two Universes nor an infinite number, but there is and will continue to be this one generated Heaven, unique of its kind (*eis hode monogenēs ouranos*).”⁶ Yet at the same time, articulating the nature of this unity in philosophically sound terms was no easy matter, as the various elaborate arguments of the *Parmenides* underscore.⁷

To offer just one brief example, in the dialogue’s second hypothesis, Parmenides explores the paradoxical relationship of the One to being: “‘We say, then, that if the one exists, we must come to an agreement about the consequences, whatever they may be. . . . If one is, can it be and not partake of being?’ ‘No it cannot.’ ‘Then the being of one will exist, but will not be identical with one (*ou tauton ousa tō henī*).’”⁸ Out of this distinction between the One and its being comes the possibility of plurality—though how these two propositions are to be held together is by no means clear. Albert Keith Whitaker analyzes this dilemma as it operates in Parmenides’ monologue in the following terms: “The highest things, such as the One, defy precise representation

by or in human speech. Each time you think you have it, you are in truth leaving something out. . . . The conclusions you derive from what you imagine to be one sense of the One are therefore partial and conflict with those which you can derive from another.”⁹ Here philosophical discourse about the One necessarily runs up against a certain verbal failure—an interpretive conundrum that was both vexing and generative for ancient philosophical thinkers.¹⁰

However, by the period that John Dillon and others have referred to as “Middle Platonism” (from roughly 130 B.C.E. with the birth of Antiochus of Ascalon up to 220 C.E.), the project of speculating about the One entailed philosophical and interpretive complexities that went far beyond simply exegeting the Platonic dialogues.¹¹ Rather, thinkers synthesized concepts and doctrines drawn from Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Pythagoreans, among others. As Dillon sums up this complicated interplay, “the philosophers of Middle Platonism [oscillated] between the two poles of attraction constituted by Peripateticism and Stoicism, but adding to the mixture of these influences a strong commitment (after Antiochus, at least) to a transcendent supreme principle, and a non-material, intelligible world above and beyond this one, which stands as a paradigm for it. The influence of Pythagoras and what was believed to be his doctrine was also dominant throughout [the] period.”¹²

Early Christians by no means opted out of this conversation, but were themselves active participants, pursuing a variety of different projects that relied on the concepts and assumptions surrounding the problem of the One and the many. Some of these were primarily apologetic and/or heresiological in their aims. For example, Lyman highlights the usefulness of this intellectually hybrid milieu for a second-century Christian thinker such as Justin Martyr: “The transcendent unity of Pythagorean Platonism allowed Justin, like Numenius or Plutarch, to disassemble contemporary traditions and retrieve fresh readings, claiming, for example, monotheism in philosophy and Hebrew scripture, while criticizing the religious practices of polytheism and Hebrew law . . . [a move that is] coherent only for a Hellenist who accepts the underlying unity of truth and the hierarchy of cultures and literatures rather than their opposition.”¹³ Other Christians turned to the cosmological register, speculating on (and indeed, yearning for) the realization of an eschatological unity over and against the messy plurality of the present world.

Who were these early Christians that were consumed by a passion for cosmological oneness? Here we run into a thorny problem of classification. A number of the texts to be examined below (some from Nag Hammadi and some reconstructed from the testimony of the church fathers) fall outside the

bounds of what was later designated the orthodox canon—and, as such, have historically been labeled “Gnostic.” With this designation comes the well-known stereotyped accusation of “dualism.” Yet as Karen King has shown, such a broad-brush characterization is deeply problematic, “in part because of the fluidity and imprecision with which the term ‘dualism’ itself is used, and in part because the works from Nag Hammadi document such a wide range of attitudes toward the cosmos.”¹⁴ Therefore, King warns against a tendency to read a thoroughgoing cosmological dualism onto any text that has been branded as “Gnostic,” thereby doing a real interpretive violence to the variety of early Christian positions on this question (even just within the Nag Hammadi corpus).

As she aptly notes, there are multiple ways of being dualistic (anticosmic dualism, anthropological dualism, ascetic dualism etc.), and many of the texts from Nag Hammadi offer monistic cosmological schemes oriented toward a single ultimate principle, while still allowing for some sort of contingent or temporary dualism in the material world.¹⁵ In fact, William Schoedel has characterized the group of texts typically classified as “Valentinian”¹⁶—a label which remains, for many scholars, a sub-category of “Gnosticism”—as “fundamentally monistic,” a natural outgrowth (in Schoedel’s view) of debates about the all-encompassing nature of God.¹⁷ But Valentinians were not the only Christians who proved fascinated by a vision of ultimate unity, as we will see below and in the following chapter. Nor can this proclivity be mapped neatly onto any particular space with respect to a (constantly shifting) border of orthodoxy and heresy. Thus it seems prudent for the purposes of this analysis, following King, Michael Williams, and others, to leave aside the moniker “Gnostic” (and with it, evaluations of heterodoxy) and instead allow the textual evidence, such as it is, to testify to the different ways that early Christians envisioned the theological and anthropological significance of a cosmos longing achingly for unity.¹⁸

Variations on a Dominical Saying

Among the earliest textual traditions of the ancient Christian movement, Galatians 3.28 is not the only one that rousingly proclaims a collapse of difference into unity. Dennis Ronald MacDonald has convincingly shown that traditional elements of the famous verse reflect some awareness of a “dominical saying” that circulated in the first generations after Jesus.¹⁹ According to

MacDonald, “the Dominical Saying is an early Christian baptismal saying dramatizing the initiate’s putting off the body, putting on light, and returning to sexual oneness.”²⁰ However, because this saying circulated relatively freely across a broad geographical area, Christian thinkers were able to interpret and contextualize it in light of a variety of different and often competing theological ends.²¹

So, for example, the second-century text *2 Clement* offers its interpretation of the dominical saying in terms of ethical paraenesis for the local Christian community:

For when the Lord himself was asked about when his kingdom would come by someone, he said, “When the two are one, and the outside is as the inside, and the male with the female, neither male nor female” (*hotan estai ta duo hen, kai to exō hōs to esō, kai to arsen meta tēs thēleias, oute arsen oute thēly*). So the two are one when we speak truth to each other and when one soul is in two bodies without dissimulation. And the outside as the inside refers to the following: “the inside” means the soul and “the outside” the body, in such a way that just as your body is manifest, so your soul ought to be visible in good deeds. And the male with the female, neither male nor female, means that a brother seeing a sister should consider her femaleness (*thēlykon*) not at all, nor should she consider his maleness (*arsenikon*). “When you do these things,” he says, “the kingdom of my Father will come.”²²

Here our author effectively attempts to “demythologize” the implications of the dominical saying. Apparently the goal is to efface (at least partially) the most overt traces of the primal androgyne myth—as well as its attendant narrative of a fall into anthropological division and return to unity. In its place, the author offers a different kind of unifying narrative, one that focuses on a unity of the self, reflected in a harmony between soul and bodily deeds; and a unity of the self with the other, reflected in an idealized vision of Christian community free of hypocrisy or desire.²³

Other witnesses to the saying, however, allow the narrative of the primal androgyne to sit much closer to the surface. Clement of Alexandria quotes an otherwise no longer extant *Gospel of the Egyptians* (not to be confused with the text of the same name from Nag Hammadi): “After Salome inquired regarding when she would learn about the matters she had raised, the Lord

said, ‘When you trample upon the garment of shame and when the two become one (*hotan genētai ta duo hen*)—the male with the female, neither male nor female’” (*Strom.* 3.13.92).²⁴ While relatively little can be concluded due to the fragmentary state of the evidence, MacDonald offers a fair assessment of the text’s basic soteriology: “salvation consists of a recapitulation of Adam’s primordial state”—in other words, the undifferentiated wholeness of the *anthrōpos* in Genesis 1.27. Here another quotation by Clement from the same gospel demonstrates the masculinist impulse of this vision of unity: “For they say that the Savior himself said, ‘I have come to destroy the works of the female (*ta erga tēs thēleias*)’.”²⁵

We see a similar impulse at work in certain anthropological aphorisms of the first- or second-century *Gospel of Thomas*. Logion 22 provides another direct witness to MacDonald’s dominical saying: “Jesus said to them, ‘When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and that which is up like that which is down, and when you make the male and the female into only one, so that the male will not be male nor will the female be female . . . then you will enter the kingdom.’” Here MacDonald notes that the logion needs to be interpreted in the context of a theological vision that runs throughout *Thomas*—one in which the end is like the beginning, reflected in “the believer’s return to primordial oneness.”²⁶ Logion 18 makes the point explicitly: “The disciples said to Jesus, ‘Tell us in what way our end will come to pass.’ Jesus said, ‘Have you then uncovered the beginning such that you seek after the end? For in the place where the beginning is, that is where the end will be. Blessed is the one who will stand at the beginning. That one will know the end and will not taste death.’” As Karen King summarizes, *Thomas* “understands salvation as ‘paradise regained.’ Creation offers the pattern for salvation.”²⁷ And creation, from this perspective (and following Genesis 1.27), is fundamentally about unity, not division.²⁸

Once we situate it within this cosmology, the gospel’s infamous (and much debated) concluding logion reveals the androcentric assumptions at work: “Simon Peter said to them, ‘Let Mary go away from us, because women do not deserve life.’ Jesus said, ‘Behold, I myself will lead her in order to make her male (*jekaas eeinaas ‘nhoout*), so that she too may become a living spirit, being like you males. Thus every woman who makes herself male (*je shime nim esnaas ‘nhoout*) will enter the kingdom of heaven.’”²⁹ But how exactly does this work? In her careful treatment of logion 114, Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley points out that it does not in fact make the same claim as logion 22 with respect to the eschatological fate of sexual difference. In the case of the latter, she argues,

“it does *not* say that the female must become male (or vice versa). A totally new creation is demanded, not a reciprocal turning of something into its contrasting entity/element.”³⁰ By contrast, in logion 114, the male is presented not as one half of a complementary pair, but rather as a stage along the way to attaining the state of a “living spirit” (*oupna efonh*)—identified by Buckley with the pre-fall Adam.³¹

In this way, as stand-alone aphorisms, logia 22 and 114 seem to operate with somewhat different anthropological assumptions. But in the context of the *Gospel of Thomas* as a whole, it is likely that ancient readers found ways to interpret the two logia together. Buckley offers a possible harmonization, arguing for a hierarchical model that progresses from female to male to “living spirit.” Within this progression, the male term occupies a doubled and ambiguous position:

It is important to note, again, that the middle element [i.e., the male term in a female \Rightarrow male \Rightarrow “living spirit” schema], while referring to the male as opposed to female, *at the same time* indicates the male as a singular, autonomous term, as a stage between female and spirit. This unified, “male” (and yet *beyond* “male” and “female”) Adam will, in turn, become a “living spirit.” Males and “living spirits” resemble one another, as logion 114 states, but they are not identical. “Female” and “son of the woman” both point to the lower, female—that is, divided—stage, which must be left behind in order to achieve “maleness,” “son of man” status.³²

On this reading, the doubleness of the male position means that while post-fall maleness does not quite achieve the unified status of a “living spirit,” it is a significant step closer than femaleness. As such, the male epitomizes more directly than the female the prized ideal of oneness that is to be regained through salvation. And although this harmonizing impulse on Buckley’s part must remain hypothetical with respect to ancient readers, on the whole I find her reconstruction plausible. Thus she helpfully calls attention to an implicit masculinism that necessarily inheres in *Thomas’s* monistic anticipation of a return to androgyny.

Valentinian Christianity and the Shadow of Pauline Typology

As the above analysis makes clear, Paul did not invent the more basic theological concept on which his Adam-Christ typology relies—that is, the idea that the eschatological end had to be thought in relation to the primordial beginning.³³ In fact, Stevan Davies has pointed to the resonances (without arguing for direct dependence) between the interconnection of creation and eschatology in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Pauline typological matrix: “*Thomas* offers a view of Christian transformation not terribly different from the Pauline view. For Paul, Christ is the Image of God (cf. 2 Cor 4.4) and the ‘second Adam’ who is the man of heaven . . . Insofar as Paul believes that people can (or will soon) attain to the condition of Christ the image of God and thus replace the condition of Adam of Genesis 2 with the condition of the image of God of Genesis 1, Thomasine and Pauline ideas are similar.”³⁴

But for monistic theologies which posit that the human being is created in the image of God, sexual difference poses a problem. Within the aphoristic framework of *Thomas*, as in the fluid interpretive context of the comparatively free-floating dominical saying, that problem could be put to rest (at least putatively) by positing an eschatological return to a primal unity—a salvific movement from difference and division as figured in Eve to a reunified, androgynous, but somehow still fundamentally masculine Adam. Yet as the tradition expanded in all its diversity, many early Christians did not (and indeed could not) leave the problem situated within such a relatively underdeveloped theological framework. More specifically, as I argued in the previous chapter, the particularities of Paul’s Adam-Christ typology significantly complicated and intensified the issue. And one place that we see hints of this Pauline problematic leaving its trace is in the anthropological speculations of Valentinian Christianity.

Valentinus was a Christian teacher from Egypt who came to Rome sometime around 140 C.E. But while Valentinus’s identity is not in doubt, “Valentinianism” remains a disputed category—at least in terms of its precise limits—and scholars continue to debate how to demarcate the body of early Christian literature that ought to be considered representative of Valentinus and his school.³⁵ Karen King identifies the following texts from Nag Hammadi as most commonly associated with a Valentinian milieu: *The Gospel of Truth*, *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul*, *The Treatise on the Resurrection*, *The Tripartite Tractate*, *The Gospel of Philip*, *The Interpretation of Knowledge*, and *A Valentinian Exposition*.³⁶ Yet these texts by no means present a uniform

theological outlook. The situation is further complicated by descriptions and professed citations of Valentinian teaching (including not only Valentinus but other teachers of his circle such as Heracleon, Ptolemy, and Theodotus) that are embedded in the extant texts of early Christian opponents. While this evidence often disagrees with the theological outlook(s) that we find in the Nag Hammadi texts, it needs to be taken into account all the same (albeit not uncritically). Thus the reconstruction of Valentinian theological anthropology proves to be a somewhat thorny undertaking.

Despite the difficulties involved, however, it does seem possible to draw certain general conclusions. In line with the broad theological outlook examined in this chapter, Valentinian texts generally understand both cosmology and anthropology in terms of a single ultimate principle underlying all that exists. Interpreting the story of salvation through this lens, as Elaine Pagels notes, “the Valentinians narrate the drama of creation and redemption in three ‘acts’: first, primordial union; second, the separation and division of the two partners; third, their reconciliation and reunion in ‘perfect marriage.’”³⁷ This movement of union, separation, and reunion tends to manifest on multiple levels, forging figurative parallels between the divine and human spheres. With respect to sexual difference specifically, Peter Brown eloquently describes a theological vision in which “The spiritual principles whose confusion had brought about all that was unnecessary in the universe would regain their stability. They were the fluid female that would be given form by the dominant male. . . . The last streak of otherness implied in the notion of the female would vanish. The *Plérōma* [the realm of divine fullness] would come together again, having made the female male, absorbing it into its perfect order. Eve, the troubled soul, would sink back into the hard, sure bone of Adam, the spirit.”³⁸

The Tripartite Tractate

We see one example of the progression Brown describes in the *Tripartite Tractate*, generally dated to the third century and characterized by Ismo Dunderberg as “the fullest exposition of Valentinian theology known to us thus far.”³⁹ Here the redemptive interplay between unity and division begins with a single, transcendent first principle: “The Father is a single one, in the manner of a number. He is the first and he is himself alone.”⁴⁰ As summarized by Einar Thomassen, the Father then “thinks himself and thus produces the Son, who is his own reflection, distinguishable but not separate from the Father (54.35–57.23). From the self-thinking, self-glorifying, and self-loving unity of

the Father and the Son arise innumerable spiritual potencies, or aeons, which constitute the *ekklesia* of the Pleroma (57.23–59.38).⁴¹ One of these aeons, the male Logos (roughly parallel to the female character of Sophia in other Valentinian accounts) immoderately attempts to “take hold of the incomprehensibility . . . of the Father”⁴² and the result is a fissure in the primal unity: “Out of this came a division (*oupōše*) . . . and a perverse turning (*ourike*).”⁴³ Thus the Logos splits, his deficiency sinking down out of the divine fullness and becoming responsible for the multiplicity of the created world: “So the Logos then became the cause of those who came to be, and he continued more and more to be without resource and to be astonished. Instead of perfection, he saw a deficiency. Instead of a joining together, he saw a gap (*anti oujōk afneu aušt[a] anti oumoujč afneu a[uou]ōše*).”⁴⁴ The text goes on to relate the repentance of the Logos, the creation of human beings in three kinds (material, psychic, and spiritual) and the eventual salvation—understood as a return to unity—to be brought about for some of humanity by a Savior figure.⁴⁵

The *Tripartite Tractate* is a captivating but often opaque treatise—and exploring its many complexities falls beyond the scope of this analysis.⁴⁶ What is most important for our purposes, however, is the text’s specific treatment of sexual difference. As Thomassen points out, in his initial fall, the Logos is “overwhelmed by the ‘passion’ implied in [his] undertaking.”⁴⁷ His fracturing is therefore bogged down in desire, producing a deficiency that is then characterized in gendered terms: “He became weak in the same manner as a female nature (*ouphusis* ‘*nshime*) which has deserted its maleness (*ntesm[nē]hauout*).”⁴⁸ Later, after the Logos repents, he produces a group of spiritual offspring in “the image of the Pleroma,” equated with “the Church” and characterized as “forms of maleness, not being from the disease that is femaleness (*pišōne* . . . *ete taei te tm^{nt}shime*), but rather from this one who has already renounced the disease.”⁴⁹ Thus the otherness of the feminine, figured in terms of desire and division, has no place in the pleromatic unity. Accordingly, the text mobilizes a variation on the dominical saying in its conclusion, maintaining (from the perspective of “spiritual” humanity) that “when we confessed the kingdom that is in Christ, we came out from the many-ness that characterizes all things, as well as from the inequality and the change. For the end will receive an existence of single unity (*thaē gar naji pšōpe an* ‘*noueei* ‘*nouōt*), in the same way that there is a single unity to the beginning, where there is no male nor female (*mⁿ hoout mⁿ shime*), nor slave and free, nor circumcised and uncircumcised, neither angel nor human being, but rather Christ is all in all.”⁵⁰

Who is this Savior-Christ figure? Coming to the aid of the repentant

Logos, he represents, according to Thomassen, “the perfect unity of the Pleroma, while being at the same time the expression of its multiplicity.”⁵¹ In a complex process that Thomassen calls “the dialectics of mutual participation,” the singular and unified Savior identifies with the multiplicity of the heavenly church. Thus the church both bears salvation in and through its identification with the Savior, and simultaneously needs to be saved from its very multiplicity—as in fact, does the Savior himself, now also subject to that multiplicity. The text avers that “the Son himself, occupying the position of redeemer of all things, had a need for redemption also—this one who had become a human being, having given himself for everything that we have need of, we in the flesh who are his church.”⁵² Thomassen sums up the line of reasoning operative here: “If salvation takes place by the saving agent’s sharing the condition from which salvation is envisaged, the ensuing logic of identification entails the necessity that the saving agent as well will need salvation. . . . Because of the logic of soteriological identification, the Saviour-Son himself needs to be redeemed after having subjected himself to carnal existence: the identification works both ways.”⁵³

While unpacking the many intricacies of this redemptive process would take us too far afield, what I do want to draw attention to are the subtle hints in this soteriology of a correlation between two paradigmatic figures: “the mixed model” (*ouplasma . . . eřtēh*) of “the first human” (*piřar’p . . . ‘nrōme*)⁵⁴ and the Savior—characterized by the text as “the perfect human” (*prōme etjēk abal*), hastening to return from his own (voluntarily assumed) mixed and multiple condition to “his state of single unity, to the place out of which he came.”⁵⁵ Though the text does not by any means elaborate an explicit Adam-Christ typology, it echoes Romans 5.12 in its claim that “on account of the transgression of the first human (*piřar’p ‘nrō[m]e*), death ruled.”⁵⁶ Indeed the contrast between this “first human” and “the perfect human” resonates with the Pauline formulation—even if Paul’s framework is never specifically invoked. It may be then that this understated whisper of typology works within the *Tripartite Tractate’s* larger narrative arc to exacerbate subtly an anxiety regarding sexual difference that seems to characterize so much monistic thinking. In this case, the text’s solution is to yoke “the female” to the sphere of desire, division, and heterogeneity—a move that allows it to be subsumed in the inexorable movement of the cosmos toward masculine unity. We will see related attempts to manage the problematic difference of the feminine in two Valentinian sources that *do* overtly rely on Paul’s typological legacy to articulate their respective theological anthropologies.

The Excerpts from Theodotus and the Gospel of Philip

Contrary to an older scholarly tendency to contrast Paul to his “Gnostic opponents,” Elaine Pagels has convincingly shown the degree to which Valentinian Christians in particular laid claim to the authority of the Apostle and his textual legacy in elaborating their own theological projects.⁵⁷ Through the careful exegesis of an assortment of Valentinian texts, she showcases the variety of ways that these sources “read Genesis through Paul’s eyes.”⁵⁸ Building on Pagels’ work, then, I want to conclude this chapter with a brief examination of two more Valentinian sources. These are sources that read Genesis not only through “Paul’s eyes” broadly construed, but very specifically through the refracting lens of the Pauline Adam-Christ typology: the *Excerpts from Theodotus* (a notebook of fragmentary teachings from the Valentinian teacher Theodotus preserved by Clement of Alexandria)⁵⁹ and the *Gospel of Philip* (a Nag Hammadi text usually dated to the third century).⁶⁰

The viewpoint described by Clement in *Excerpts from Theodotus* is unequivocal in its admiration for the Apostle: “Valentinus’s followers say that . . . in the type of the Paraclete, Paul became the Apostle of the Resurrection (*ho Paulos anastaseōs Apostolos gegonen*).”⁶¹ And this admiration translates into a basic dependence on Pauline typological categories for theological anthropology: “According to this, our father Adam, ‘the first human is from the earth, an earthy human’ (*patēr hēmōn ho Adam, ho prōtos [d] anthrōpos ek gēs choikos*). And if he had also sown from the psychic and the spiritual, just as from the material, all would have come to be equal and righteous and the teaching would have been in everyone.”⁶² But while this hypothetical scenario is unfortunately not to be, there is hope for some through that other paradigmatic figure, Christ: “For the one whom Christ regenerates is translated (*metatithetai*) into life within the Ogdoad. And while they die to the world, they live to God, in order that death may be set free by death, and corruption by resurrection. For the one who has been sealed through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is not able to be attacked by every other power, and has been delivered from the entire triad of corruption through the three Names. ‘Having borne the image of the earthy human, [this one] will then bear the image of the heavenly human’ (*phoresas tēn eikona tou choikou, tote phorei tēn eikona tou epouraniou*).”⁶³ Here the author deploys 1 Corinthians 15.49 in order to offer readers the prospect of redemption and deliverance from hostile powers through a transformation from the image of Adam to the image of Christ.

Likewise, in the *Gospel of Philip*, a similar parallel is operative between

Adam and Christ. Similar to the *Tripartite Tractate*, the Savior-Christ figure is identified as “the perfect human” (*ptelios ‘rrōme*)⁶⁴—and the text uses this designation to contrast Christ to Adam: “The heavenly human (*pr‘m‘mpe*) has more children than the earthly human (*pr‘m‘nkab*). If the children of Adam are numerous, and yet they die, how much more the children of the perfect human (*pteleios ‘rrōme*), these ones who do not die.”⁶⁵ What is more, *Philip* develops the comparison further, moving in a different direction than what we see in the *Excerpts*: “Adam came to be from two virgins—that is, from the spirit and from the virgin earth. On account of this, Christ was born from a virgin in order that the stumbling which happened at the beginning might be set right by him.”⁶⁶ Here, rather than alluding to the distinction between earth and heaven as articulated in 1 Corinthians 15, the text draws the contrast between two types of virginal births.⁶⁷ Yet as Dunderberg points out, *Philip*’s correlation of Adam and Christ in this passage is still thoroughly enmeshed in a Pauline theological logic, especially insofar as the text connects the significance of the anthropological parallel to creation and the fall.⁶⁸ The argument of Romans 5 seems to be in view: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one human, and death came through sin . . . much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one human, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many” (Rom 5.12, 15, NRSV, translation slightly modified).

But despite having this orientation in common (and also sharing in the typically “Valentinian” concern with union, division, and reunion), the two texts treat the issue of sexual difference—and the particular kind of problem that it poses—rather differently. On the one hand, similar to the *Gospel of Thomas* and other texts examined above, the *Excerpts* seems to envision a general transformative movement from female into male—one that, in its case, operates in multiple symbolic registers, divine and human.⁶⁹ Here again the female is associated with desire, multiplicity, and lack of form: “And when the Savior says to Salome, ‘So then there will be death as long as women give birth,’ he is not saying that birth is blameworthy. . . . But rather he is speaking in riddles about the Female above (*tēs anō Theleias*) [i.e., Sophia], whose passions (*ta pathē*) brought about creation, and who brought forth the amorphous substances (*tas amorphous ousias*), and on account of whom the Savior descended in order to drag us away from the passions and adopt us to himself.”⁷⁰ Buckley argues that this unifying movement (extending from Sophia all the way down the cosmic chain to Adam and Eve) does not have in view the conjoining of complementary opposites (or “syzygies”), male and female. Rather, she maintains, “a truly pneumatic union is between male and male,

between compatible entities . . . thus, the Syzygy in *Exc. Thdot.* is not one of male and female, but of two males.”⁷¹

If this is the case, then before the fullness of this union can take place on all its relevant levels, the problematic female element must be dealt with throughout the cosmic hierarchy. The text thus diagnoses the problem—“For as long as we were children of only the Female . . . [we were] imperfect, childish, senseless, weak, and amorphous, having been brought forth like abortions (*atelē kai nēpia kai aphrona kai asthenē kai amorpha, hoion ektrōmata pro[s]-enechthenta*): we were children of the Woman (*tēs Gynaikos*)”⁷²—and offers a solution: “So they say, as long as the seed is amorphous, it is the child of the Female. But having been formed, it has been translated into a man (*metetethē eis andra*) and becomes the son of the Bridegroom. No longer is it weak and subjected to cosmic powers, both visible and invisible. Rather, having been masculinized (*andrōtheis*), it becomes a male fruit (*arrhēn ginetai karpos*).”⁷³ As Buckley sums this up, “the solution implies that femaleness must be overcome in order for maleness to be fully restored, to become itself . . . The merging of female and male into a male syzygy, which results in an angelic entity, is *Exc. Thdot.*’s way of contemplating the return to the origin, in which the divided becomes restored to unity.”⁷⁴

In the *Gospel of Philip*, on the other hand, a different logic of sexual difference is at work in the text’s vision of a cosmos populated by threatening spirits:

The forms of unclean spirits are both male and female. The males are ones who defile (*ῥκοινōνει*) the souls that conduct themselves in a female form. And the females are ones who are conjoined with those in a male form . . . When the lawless women see a male dwelling alone, they rush down upon him and sport with him and defile him. In the same way the lawless men, when they see a woman who is beautiful dwelling alone, they persuade her and force her, desiring to defile her. But if they see the man and his woman dwelling with each other (*phoout mēn tefhime euhmoos bat^en nouerēu*), the female [spirits] cannot enter into the man nor can the male ones enter into the woman. In this way, if the image and the angel are joined with each other, none will dare to enter into the man or the woman.⁷⁵

Here we get a clear picture of the danger posed by distinctly *gendered* (rather than androgynous) spirits. In *Philip*’s cosmological outlook—premised

on the logic of heterosexual intercourse—a human man or woman is an aphrodisiacal beacon for evil spirits of the opposite “sex.” The only defense is for human souls to receive the appropriate counterpart: “a male power or a female power (*oučom ʿnhoout mʿnnoushime*), who are the bridegroom and the bride”—a union that is to take place in the bridal chamber (*pnumphōn*).⁷⁶ While such enigmatic references to the bridal chamber in *Philip* and other Valentinian texts have been much debated,⁷⁷ Michael Williams clarifies the issue that is relevant for my purposes: “Whatever else it involved, this bridal chamber ritual was understood to balance the ‘gender-charge’ that any human possesses by virtue of being man or woman and thus to eliminate vulnerability to defiling assaults from highly gender-charged unclean spirits. . . . The undefiled marriage praised in the *Gospel of Philip* is primarily a matter of neutralizing otherwise dangerous polarities.”⁷⁸ As he elaborates the point elsewhere, “Outside the marital pairing, a woman is incomplete in exactly the same way that a man is”⁷⁹—a very different perspective on sexual difference from that of the *Excerpts from Theodotus*.

Yet *Philip* remains basically monistic in its orientation. Accordingly, the text’s emphasis on a certain kind of heterosexual complementarity does not mean that it refuses such common concepts as androgyny, problematic separation, and salvific reunion. Buckley points out that on both the divine and human levels, the gospel envisions “two interdependent integrations: that of the human being, male with female, and of the split female entity, Holy Spirit-Sophia-Mary, who rejoins her lower to her upper self. In the enactment of the bridal chamber ‘the world has become the aeon’ [*Gos. Phil.* 86.10–15] . . . that is, the world with its divisions has been abolished.”⁸⁰ Thus we find in *Philip* yet another rendition of the familiar primal androgyny myth:

On the day when Eve was in Adam, death did not yet exist. When she was separated from him (*ʿntarespōrj [er]of*), death came to be. When he enters again and attains to his [full] self, then death will no longer exist.⁸¹

If the woman had not separated from the man, she would not die with the man. His division itself became the beginning of death. On account of this, Christ came in order to remove the division that had come to be from the beginning, and again join the two, and give life to the ones who died from the division, and join them together. But the woman is joined together with her husband

(*peshaei*) in the bridal chamber (*ppastos*). So the ones who have been joined together in the bridal chamber will be separated no more.

For this reason Eve separated from Adam—because it was not in the bridal chamber that she was joined to him.⁸²

In both these passages, the problem still clearly hinges on separation. But the second citation's reference to this separation of Eve from Adam taking place outside the context of the bridal chamber makes clear that *Philip* understands the dilemma not in terms of Eve/woman *as such* (i.e., the specific “otherness of the feminine” discussed above), but rather in terms of the improper way that the female figure comes to stand alone.⁸³ In this way, the feminine does seem to have its own proper and enduring place within *Philip's* cosmology. According to Buckley, “The interpretation of Eve in *Gos. Phil.* is intimately linked to the text's central interest in the female Holy Spirit [cf. *Gos. Phil.* 55.23–26]. One could say that the Spirit is Adam's mother, spouse, and daughter. Such a solution closes two generation gaps: Adam is created—and is creative in relationship to—the same female. Originating from the Spirit, Adam internalizes it before he becomes separated from it.”⁸⁴

It is this perspective, I would argue, that renders legible the distinct way in which *Philip* navigates the question of sexual difference in relation to the Pauline typology. For the *Excerpts from Theodotus*, the female is *nothing but* a figure of formlessness and division—a cosmological aberration having no legitimate standing of its own. As such, it can be situated between the earthly Adam and the heavenly Christ as a site of problematic (but temporary) rupture. Associated with lack in the form of desire, the female can have no place in that divine fullness in which those who “bear the image of the heavenly human” will participate.⁸⁵ Rather, the *Excerpts* argue, the movement from Adam to Christ necessarily entails the eradication of the female—its transformation, “having been masculinized,” into a “male fruit.”⁸⁶

For *Philip*, however, because the sphere of the female/feminine has a legitimate place in both the divine and human realms (as mediated through the mysterious bridal chamber), it has to be situated differently within the Pauline anthropological framework. *Philip* “solves” this problem by turning to the trope of virginity. Thus we are told that the bridal chamber “exists not for beasts nor for slaves nor for defiled women (*enshime effohm*). Rather it exists for free men and virgins (*enhn nrōme neleutheros mēn hnparthenos*).”⁸⁷ This principle of locating legitimate union in the joining of “free men” and “virgins” is reflected even in the origins of Christ himself. In fact, Christ (representing

the eschatological and redemptive pole of the typology) is the result of “the father of all things [who] joined together with the virgin who came down . . . and was revealed in the great bridal chamber.”⁸⁸ As Williams summarizes, “the separation of male and female, which led to defilement, began to be reversed when Christ was born from an undefiled union of male (the Father) and female (the virgin).”⁸⁹

In this way, the image of the undefiled virgin becomes the means by which the *Gospel of Philip* places the female/feminine within its cosmology. And insofar as the Pauline typology casts a shadow over that cosmology, the text compensates by making virginity—in its representative function as a kind of idealized feminine—an essential (but note: still only subsidiary) element of its typological framework. Thus the female has its place: as Adam was born from two virgins, the [female] Spirit and the virginal earth, so Christ too “was born from a virgin in order that the stumbling which happened at the beginning might be set right by him.”⁹⁰ Hans Martin Schenke points out that in order for the parallelism to work fully, we ought to conclude that Christ also has two virgin mothers—Sophia and Mary. (The reference to the Father’s union with “the virgin who came down” in *Gos. Phil.* 71.5 would also seem to point to this conclusion.)⁹¹ But be that as it may, the important point here for my analysis is that through this interpretive move, both male and female have their proper typological function and location. Eve’s specific separation—such as it happened—still remains a problem for the monistic impulse of the system. Yet *Philip* attempts all the same to invest the sphere of the feminine with a certain metaphysical legitimacy by grafting a space for it—in the figure of the virgin as mother—onto the Adam-Christ parallel.

Conclusion

On the face of things, then, these two texts would seem to offer solutions to the problem posed by the Platonic woman for early Christian theology at the intersection of philosophical monism and Pauline typology. The *Excerpts from Theodotus* navigates this terrain by linking the female/feminine to formlessness and desire, a condition to be ultimately expunged from the cosmos in the eschatological unity that is to come. Meanwhile the *Gospel of Philip* marks out a legitimate place for the female/feminine, but one in which it functions as an anthropological supplement. “Woman” emerges in *Philip*’s typology as a secondary support to the central paradigm of Adam and Christ, predicated

on the logic of the heterosexual sex act—even as the sex act itself is refused through the paradoxical trope of the reproductive female virgin.⁹² Both of these “solutions,” however, different as they are, appear to participate in what Judith Butler has called the “magical relations of reciprocity whereby the female sex becomes restricted to its body, and the male body, fully disavowed, becomes, paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom.”⁹³ In this way, both approaches apparently prove able to uphold *in an internally consistent manner* (albeit in different symbolic registers and by way of different strategies) the drive toward what Daniel Boyarin calls “a reinstatement of masculinism” that we have observed throughout this chapter.⁹⁴

Yet in the case of both the *Excerpts* and *Philip*, the respective strategies used to achieve this reinstatement of masculinism are presented in brief—and their larger theological and anthropological implications are not worked out in any thoroughgoing way. Throughout the rest of this book, we will now turn to early Christian thinkers who develop these two strategies (and others) much more fully, thereby drawing out their implications more explicitly. What emerges, as I hope to show in the chapters that follow, is that the consistency, coherence, and solidity of these early Christian solutions to the problem of sexual difference were not as secure as it might seem from the foregoing analysis. The specter of the Pauline anthropological problematic could not be put so easily to rest. As Derrida compellingly argues, “The perpetual threat, that is, the shadow of haunting (and haunting is . . . neither present nor absent, neither positive nor negative, neither inside nor outside), does not challenge only one thing or another; it threatens the logic that distinguishes between one thing and another, the very logic of exclusion or foreclosure, as well as the history that is founded upon this logic and its alternatives. What is excluded is, of course, never simply excluded.”⁹⁵ Following Derrida, then, the remaining chapters will explore the ways in which the gendered exclusions of early Christian theological anthropology that we have considered here were never, in fact, simple. What we will see instead, I maintain, is that such exclusions prove inadequate for providing the kind of stable place for sexual difference within typology that their authors seek (and indeed promise).

In Part II, I will examine in greater depth the project of attempting to neutralize the specter by situating the figure of the virginal female body within the Pauline typology (i.e., the basic strategy undergirding *Philip's* solution)—as well as the intractable problems that such attempts generate. First, however, I turn to an early Christian anthropology that, while labeling Theodotus and other Valentinians heretical, nonetheless makes a move in common with the

Excerpts, situating the feminine in an Adam-Christ typology as an aberration—the site of lack and desire. But whereas the extant text of the *Excerpts* leaves numerous ramifications of this connection unexplored, Clement of Alexandria addresses the link between desire and the feminine (and its attendant implications) throughout his anthropological speculations. For this early Christian thinker, as for so many of the monistic Christians we have just investigated, the female body is (to quote Boyarin again) “a site of difference, and thus a threat to univocity.”⁹⁶ Yet as we will see, Clement’s attempt to meet this threat within the terms of typology renders visible a fissure that “threatens the logic that distinguishes between one thing and another, the very logic of exclusion or foreclosure” on which his theology of sexual difference relies.

Chapter 2

Desire and the Feminine: Clement of Alexandria's Displacement of Eve

Woman, reduplicate of what man has staked on desire.

—Luce Irigaray, “The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry”

In articulating his theological anthropology, Clement of Alexandria makes clear that the difference between male and female is a temporary element of human existence to be shed at the eschaton: “For in this world only is the female distinguished from the male, ‘but in that world, no more.’ There the rewards . . . are held in store not for male and female but for the human person.”¹ Elsewhere, however, he offers a seemingly divergent take on anthropology at the eschaton—one that equally envisions the eradication of sexual difference, but this time through a final transformation of the female into the male: “And in this way, is not woman translated into man, having become equally unwomanish and masculine and perfect?”² While consciously opting not to explore the tension inherent in this aspect of Clement’s theological speculations, John Behr sums up the problem well: “Clement [states] that, despite the fact that souls are neither male nor female, and that sexual difference is removed in the resurrection, the woman, when perfected in virtue, becomes a man.”³

This chapter explores this apparent contradiction in Clement’s thought as another instance of the problem posed by “the Platonic woman” in the context of a Pauline anthropological typology. Feminist scholarship on Clement has rightly pointed to the platonizing lens (similar to authors examined in the previous chapter) through which he reads key scriptural passages related

to sexual difference—texts such as Genesis 1.26–27 and Galatians 3.28.⁴ As Kari Børresen shows, this hermeneutical lens relies on a traditional association between the rational intellect of all human beings and the realm of divinity, one that excludes the messy particularities of embodiment (including bodily sexual difference). Accordingly, she elaborates, “Clement underlines that all human kind is capable of attaining wisdom in Christ. The same human nature and virtuous power are to be found in barbarians, Greeks, slaves, children and women. . . . From an androcentric perspective, woman shares man’s spiritual and moral nature by being God-like human being, *anthropos*, in her rational soul, although she differs from exemplary maleness in her female corporality and sexual function, as *gyne*.”⁵

Following Børresen, then, Clement’s move to bracket off the soul’s rational faculty from the rest of the human being helps to explain the aforementioned inconsistency. On the level of the rational intellect, Galatians 3.28 heralds an eschaton in which an asexual spiritual unity will be regained in Christ—“not man or woman as such.” Meanwhile, the particularities of female sexual difference remain problematic—excluded from the divine image—and must therefore experience a redemptive translation into the male. Furthermore, given the predominant notion of “asexuality” (or androgyny) operative in the ancient context, it may be that inconsistency in question is, in fact, not so inconsistent after all.⁶ Denise Buell, for example, characterizes Clement’s position not in terms of inconsistency, but rather dissonance. However, she locates this dissonance within the context of the androcentric assumptions that generally undergird ancient notions of “androgyny,” thereby mitigating its intensity: “[Clement’s] model for Christian perfection presupposes an androcentric ideal . . . both males and females must transform themselves through the eradication of the passions, but Clement describes this process as ‘becoming male’ specifically with reference to female perfection.”⁷ Thus insofar as this version of eschatological androgyny has in view Genesis 1.27 and the restoration of the image of God, Buell notes that “Clement links female attainment of *imago Dei* with the trope of ‘becoming male’ . . . which exposes the definition of *imago Dei* as not entirely ‘asexual.’”⁸

Accordingly, the implication would seem to be that the inconsistency I have identified in Clement’s theology of sexual difference is more apparent than real. On this reading (one that reflects the emerging consensus in early Christian studies described in the Introduction), Clement’s seeming appeal to the erasure of sexual difference in both its female and male aspects is, in fact, always already implicated in the eschatological translation of the female into

the male.⁹ If this is the case, then is there no real inconsistency in Clement's theological anthropology? Is there only the final transformation/eradication of the disavowed feminine and the valorization of the (male) rational soul created in (and ultimately restored to) the image of God?

On one level, the answer clearly seems to be yes. That is to say, Børresen, Buell, and others have, to my mind, correctly situated Clement's anthropological project in its ancient intellectual context and compellingly unpacked what is at stake in its final eschatological vision. Yet in this chapter, I hope to build on their work by bringing the conceptual centerpiece of this book—that is, the specter of the Pauline anthropological problematic—to bear on the analysis of this important early Christian thinker. Clement shows his hand most explicitly with respect to the problematic in a crucial (but understudied) passage in the *Protrepticus*, chapter 11. Here he lays out a narrative of creation and redemption that follows a broadly Pauline contour, correlating Adam's fall to Christ's redemptive work. Other than in its redemptive conclusion—a loose restatement of Galatians 3.28 that proclaims the eschatological eradication of multiple modes of human diversity—the passage does not actually mention sexual difference explicitly. And this may (understandably) account for the sparse attention that *Protrepticus* 11 has received in discussions of Clement on sex, gender, and sexuality.¹⁰

I will argue, however, that this brief salvation narrative helps us make further sense of the apparent inconsistency described above, insofar as it showcases multiple (gendered) anthropological tensions that surface throughout Clement's writings—tensions that are not entirely resolvable within a straightforward framework of androcentrism, but instead work to constitute and simultaneously destabilize the place of sexual difference in his theological anthropology. More specifically, I will argue that these tensions emerge around the link that Clement attempts to draw between desire (*epithymia*) and the feminine. Associating the feminine with desire is a move that he makes more than once in his various writings. And in *Protrepticus* 11, the full significance of this identification for his theology of sexual difference becomes visible in Clement's treatment of the fall of the first human being. Here he figures desire as the problem that drives the narrative forward. As such, it must ultimately be eradicated at the eschaton. But insofar as he forges a correspondence between this desire and *one* hierarchically marked term of sexual difference (the female), Clement generates a theological anthropology in which that difference occupies a difficult and ambiguous space.

On the one hand, then, *Protrepticus* 11 and other texts establish that

Clement sees sexual difference as existing prior to the fall. Staking this anthropological position buttresses his argument that marriage, procreation, and men's and women's respective social roles are "natural" parts of God's creative plan. It also provides him with theological grounds for imposing a regime of gendered practices on his Christian readers—all part of a broad pedagogical program of redemptive self-cultivation. But, on the other hand, this in no way implies that sexual difference is entirely straightforward or untroubled for Clement. In *Protrepticus* II, I will argue, his association between desire and the feminine in fact allows desire to *displace* Eve from the retelling of Genesis 1–3. In this way, while Eve is nowhere to be found, "desire" takes her place as a character in the story, occupying the site of the woman as temptress who actively leads the first human being astray. Accordingly, it seems correct to locate Clement within a stream of platonizing early Christian thought in which sexual difference is marked by a femininity that is itself problematic. Here that problematic status is a result of Clement's attempt to externalize the noxious desire by linking it specifically to the feminine—and thus outside of the prototypical (male) human. From this, the conclusion follows logically that, at the eschaton, the female must be eradicated by transformation into the male.

Yet I will argue that we move too fast—at least in Clement's case—if we conclude that the androgyny that he sometimes evokes (i.e., the erasure of *all* sexual difference) is therefore entirely subsumable within an eschatological vision of the primacy of the male. What this step passes over too quickly are the implications of the *relational* structure of desire for this theological anthropology. This will become clear through a close analysis of *Protrepticus* II: while Clement associates desire with the otherwise absent female character as a way of projecting desire outward onto an Other who can subsequently be dispensed with (i.e., the translation of the female into the male), his own understanding of the structure of desire resists this move, thereby ensuring a certain necessary failure to Clement's project.

That is to say, while Eve can be displaced by desire, desire cannot in fact be entirely contained by the space of the absent Eve. Rather, the desire in question also remains Adam's desire: if Eve is desire as object, Adam is still its subject. In other words, Clement casts desire's role in the drama of the fall as simultaneously external and internal to the original *anthrōpos*. The result (whether intended or not) is that desire in *Protrepticus* II infects the very structure of sexually differentiated humanity. From this perspective, the masculine cannot be constructed as a pure, Platonic universal entirely outside sexual difference (i.e., the difference of the feminine), because it is itself inevitably

implicated in a feminizing desire internal to it. Here the masculine—every bit as much as the feminine—emerges as problematic, pertaining only to humanity under sin. If sexual difference fundamentally entails the potential for embroilment in the complications of desire, then what is masculinity? How can Clement maintain an autonomous masculine in an eschatological economy in which desire has been eradicated? The solution he offers to this dilemma is the eradication of sexual difference in all its aspects (female *and* male) at the resurrection.

In this way, Clement's link between desire and the feminine creates a fissure in his anthropological saga of creation, fall, and redemption—a fissure that cannot be straightforwardly closed up. And while the scholars discussed above are surely right to draw attention to the androcentrism (and even misogyny) that undergirds Clement's texts, I will argue that the androcentrism in question is a theologically complex one, not reducible in all of its particulars to an eschatological collapse of the female into the male. Instead, I hope to show the ways in which Clement's theological and philosophical commitments render necessary both poles of the aforementioned tension simultaneously—the eschatological effacement of sexual difference and the transformation of the female into the male. Given that he figures desire as problematic, relational, *and* linked to the feminine, the result is a theological anthropology in which the place of sexual difference will necessarily be fraught and shifting. It sits on a fault line constituted by the indeterminate placement of desire. Thus the projection of desire outside of the prototypical human being onto the female Other requires the eventual eschatological collapse of the female into the male. But at the same time, desire's entanglement within that (male) human being means that to eradicate it, both male and female must be overcome.

Typology and Sexual Difference in *Protrepticus* II

In *Protrepticus* II, Clement offers a narrative of creation and redemption that follows the tracks laid down by Paul, drawing a contrastive parallel between the fall of Adam and the redemptive work of Christ:

So then, if you will, consider briefly the divine kindness from the beginning. The first human being (*ho prōtos*), when he was in paradise, played like a child who was free. For he was still a child of God. But when he fell before pleasure (the serpent is an allegory for

pleasure, crawling on its belly—an evil of the earth attached to matter) and was misled by desire (*epithymiais*), the child was ashamed before God, growing into manhood by means of his disobedience, having disregarded the Father. In such a way did pleasure prevail: the human being who had been free on account of his simplicity was found to be bound by sins. Moreover, the Lord then willed to free this one from his bonds, and so, becoming bound to flesh (this is a divine mystery), he overpowered the serpent and enslaved the tyrant—that is, death. And a most incredible thing: he showed forth that human being—who had strayed by means of pleasure and been bound by corruption—freed through [the Lord’s] outstretched hands. O wondrous mystery! The Lord has declined, but humanity rose up. And the one who fell out of paradise receives a greater prize for obedience, that is, heaven. . . . So then, all of Christ, so to speak, is not divided. There is neither barbarian nor Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female—but a new human being, remodeled by the holy spirit of God.¹¹

Here the first human being (*ho prōtos*) falls from childlike freedom into the bondage of sin. But that freedom is then regained through the work of Christ, allowing Clement to conclude: “The Lord has declined, but humanity (*anthrōpos*) rose up.” Throughout the bulk of the passage—as in Paul’s typology—sexual difference is not actually discussed. While the redemptive conclusion of the passage (reminiscent of Galatians 3.28) touches on its eradication in passing, the text’s creation narrative does not refer explicitly to the first woman or to the origins of the difference being eliminated. Clement’s primary concern here is the first human (*ho prōtos/ho anthrōpos*) and that human’s correlation with the Lord (*ho kyrios*).

What implications, then, does this correlation have (if any) for the question of sexual difference? As Børresen notes, *anthrōpos* can function as a sexually inclusive term for Clement. Indeed he says explicitly in *Paedagogus* 1.4.11, “The name ‘human being’ is common to men and to women.”¹² Elsewhere in the same text, Clement argues that “[God] has said, ‘Multiply,’ and it is necessary to obey. And in this way, the human being comes to be an image of God, insofar as humanity works together for the birth of another human.”¹³ Børresen points out that “the term *anthropos* is here deliberately inclusive, since Clement underlines that both male and female generative functions participate in divine creativity.”¹⁴ In *Protrepticus* 11, however, the question of whether

the *anthrōpos* is sexually inclusive does not yield a simple yes or no answer. Rather, Clement participates in the general ambivalence around the figure of Adam that I have argued is generated (at least in part) by the aporias of the Pauline typological framework.

On the one hand, then, the passage speaks of “the child . . . growing into manhood by means of his disobedience” (*ho pais andrizomenos apeitheia*), thus implying that the “Adam” in view is a male human being. On the other hand, however, the theological logic in play necessitates that the “first human” be inclusive in some sense. Constrained by the logic of the Pauline problematic, Clement posits two paradigmatic *anthrōpoi*: a primal human and an eschatological human. The primal human, Adam, comes to bondage and premature adulthood in the garden. But, as Eric Osborn sums up, “at the centre of this economy is recapitulation in Christ, which includes correction and perfection of sinful humanity, inauguration and consummation of a new humanity in Christ.”¹⁵ And insofar as this sinful humanity includes both men and women (the precise sense in which this is the case remains an open question), then both are included under the redemptive work of Christ and the eschatological hope proffered here: “neither male nor female—but a new human being, remodeled by the holy spirit of God.”

Pleasure, Desire, and the Feminine

In this way, Clement’s interpretation of Genesis 1–3 in *Protrepticus* II raises an inevitable question: what about Eve? As we have seen, she is missing entirely from Paul’s Adam-Christ typology. And Clement seems, on the face of things, to follow this lead, failing ever to mention her directly in the passage. However, at the same time, the question of the feminine casts a shadow across this rendition of the creation narrative, rendering the absent Eve “present” in some indirect sense. She is never referred to overtly—and indeed *cannot* be—to preserve the inclusivity of the “first human” in his representative function.¹⁶ Yet as I will argue, this displacement of Eve from the story does not erase the question of sexual difference, but in fact foregrounds it—insofar as it is a displacement made possible by Clement’s association of the feminine with desire (*epithymia*).

Gendering Desire

Thus, while neither Eve nor the feminine is mentioned in the creation narrative of *Protrepticus* II, two other concepts (characters?) fill the gap in the story: pleasure (*hēdonē*) and desire (*epithymiais*). In this account of the garden, the first human falls victim to pleasure and is led astray by desire. Here Clement makes quite clear the allegorical connection between *hēdonē* and the narrative details of Genesis: “the serpent is an allegory for pleasure, crawling on its belly—an evil of the earth attached to matter.” But while the snake is clearly identified with pleasure, the allegorical correspondence between *epithymia* and the narrative of Genesis 3 remains cloudy. What does seem evident is that *hēdonē* and *epithymia* have a close and (in Clement’s mind) problematic relationship to one another. David Hunter has argued, “Under the influence of Middle Platonic philosophy and in harmony with much of earlier Christian tradition, Clement was deeply aware of the dangers of desire; that is, he was concerned about the tendency for physical pleasure to become an end in itself. This accounts for the way in which he constantly links *epithymia* with *hēdonē* in line with much of traditional Greco-Roman philosophy.”¹⁷

Desire is a complex and multifaceted concept for Clement. Hunter maintains that we need to pay attention to the subtle differences between the various Greek terms too often collapsed into the single term “desire” in some English translations of Clement:

we have three terms which describe human desire, and human sexual desire in particular, under three different aspects. If *epithymia* refers to “desire” in its irrational and unrestrained dimension, and if *orexis* refers primarily to the rationally ordered expression of desire, *hormē* functions as a kind of neutral, middle ground between the two. It refers to the basic fact of human desire or capacity for movement which can be turned either towards a natural and rational desire (*orexis*) or towards an excessive, disordered and irrational use (*epithymia*).¹⁸

Of these three, the term that appears in *Protrepticus* II is a form of *epithymia*, convincingly characterized by Hunter as “an excessive or inappropriate desire, what could properly be called ‘lust.’”¹⁹ What is important for my purposes, however, is the connection that Clement forges elsewhere in his work between this irrational, unrestrained desire and a particular aspect of sexual difference—the specific difference of the feminine.²⁰

In Book Three of the *Stromateis*, Clement argues against his Enkratite opponents and their denigration of marriage and birth. Citing the noncanonical *Gospel of the Egyptians*, he tells us, “For they say that the Savior himself said, ‘I have come to destroy the works of the female.’ (*ēlthon katalysai ta erga tēs thēleias*) So here ‘the female’ is desire (*thēleias . . . epithymias*) and its works are birth and corruption.”²¹ Later he zeroes in on a particular opponent, Julius Cassian, and his use of another saying from the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (a saying we have already examined on its own terms in Chapter 1): “When you trample upon the garment of shame and when the two become one—the male with the female, neither male nor female.”²² As Clement ironically characterizes the situation, “this high-minded one [i.e., Cassian] holds a more Platonic position than the soul, being divine and from above, comes here into birth and corruption, having been feminized by desire (*epithymia thēlyntheisan*).”²³ Thus for Cassian (according to Clement), human birth is a kind of “fall” into the material world as a result of the feminizing operation of *epithymia* upon the soul.

In seeking to refute these ideas, Clement’s first line of attack is to note that the saying in question is not found in “our four traditional Gospels.”²⁴ But then, rather than rejecting its authenticity, the next step in his argument seems implicitly to *accept* the truth of the saying, connecting it to the authority of Galatians 3.28 and arguing for an alternate interpretation to Cassian’s:

Next then, he seems not to understand that the male impulse refers to anger (*thymon men arrhena hormēn*) and the female impulse refers to desire (*thēleian de tēn epithymian ainittetai*)—whose workings repentance and shame attend to. So whenever someone who does not gratify either anger or desire—which grow out of evil habit and upbringing to overshadow and veil reason—but who instead strips away the mist that comes from these, having been made ashamed through repentance—whenever that one unites spirit and soul according to obedience to the word, then, as Paul also says, “there is no male or female among you.” For having withdrawn from this form, by which it is differentiated male or female, the soul is changed into unity (*psychē metatithetai eis henōsin*), being neither of the two.

Here Clement redirects the sense of “no male or female” to refer to the impulses of temper (*thymos*) and desire (*epithymia*).²⁵ But crucially, he agrees

with his “heretical” opponents that the female stands for *epithymia*—thereby aligning himself with the implication that *epithymia* has a feminizing force. As Hunter sums up, “Jesus did come ‘to abolish the works of the female,’ as Clement sees it, and ‘female’ does refer to ‘desire.’”²⁶

Displacing Eve

This link between desire and the female/feminine has significant implications for interpreting Eve’s “absence” in the creation narrative of *Protrepticus* II. Returning now to that passage, we can ask the following question: what exactly goes wrong (thus introducing the bondage of sin) in this treatment of humanity’s fall? Clement knows of other creation accounts in which “the snake took the practice of sexual intercourse from the irrational animals and by chance persuaded Adam to assent to intercourse with Eve—so that the first-formed ones did not behave in this way by nature.”²⁷ This line of interpretation he unequivocally rejects. Instead, he argues that the transgression in the garden is inextricably linked to the question of timing: “But if it was nature that led them, just as the irrational animals, to begetting children and they were aroused sooner than was fitting, while still young when they were misled by deceit, then the judgment of God was just upon those who did not wait upon his will. But also, birth is holy.”²⁸

In this way, Clement’s explanation of the fall in Book Three of the *Stromateis* helps to fill in one of the ambiguous gaps we see in *Protrepticus* II. In the *Protrepticus*, paradise is characterized by the playful freedom of childhood, while bondage is a matter of the child “growing into manhood by means of his disobedience” (*andrizomenos apeitheia*).²⁹ *Stromateis* 3.17 makes clear that for Clement, this is a matter of humanity growing up too soon: Adam’s “growing into manhood” (and with it the experience of sexual relations) takes place under incorrectly timed circumstances.³⁰ As Peter Bouteneff summarizes (also reading these two passages together), “The transgression, sexual in nature, lay in partaking too soon, not waiting for God’s will.”³¹ Thus Clement can lament, “In such a way did pleasure prevail.”³²

According to this line of argument, Eve must be present in the garden prior to the fall. But at the same time, she is necessarily absent from the narrative to preserve the Pauline correspondence between the two representatives of humanity, Adam and Christ. It is the link between desire/*epithymia* and the female that allows Clement to maintain this precarious balancing act. More specifically, Clement’s retelling of Genesis 1–3 in *Protrepticus* II renders Eve invisible, filling her traditional position in the Genesis story with a semi-

personified *epithymia*—one that can function as Eve’s metonymic stand-in because of Clement’s conceptual link between desire and the female/feminine.³³ The narrative refigures Eve’s specifically female difference as the *epithymia* that led Adam astray into premature manhood. She is thus displaced by a feminized desire—one that acts as a stain on the perfect goodness of creation, and that therefore must ultimately be eradicated through eschatological transformation: “a new human being” without difference or divisions.

Theologizing a Pre-Fall Sexual Difference

In this way, sexual difference emerges for Clement as a primary component of created human existence in the garden. It is precisely this difference—existing between the displaced Eve and the childlike (but soon to be prematurely virile) Adam—that provides the occasion for humanity’s desire. Therefore, sexual difference is necessarily present in the paradise that *Protrepticus* II portrays, even if Eve in some sense is not. And this placement of sexual difference prior to the fall has a number of important implications for Clement’s theological anthropology. On the one hand, it provides support for his commitment to the notion that both procreation and certain gendered social roles are divinely ordained and rooted in the natural order of this world. Yet on the other hand, these will have no place in the world to come—and neither will the problematic desire that attends them. In an effort to navigate this delicately balanced state of affairs, Clement situates his Christian Gnostic in an in-between space, still sexually differentiated but moving toward an ideal condition of existence without desire.³⁴ To this end, he offers a practical system of self-cultivation—tailored specifically (and differently) to women and men—in an effort to transform bodies steeped in problematic desire into the image and likeness of God. The end result will be an eradication of desire—and insofar as that desire is equivalent with the feminine, a necessary translation of the female into the male.

The Meaning(s) of Sexual Difference

In various places throughout his corpus, Clement expands on the nature and significance of sexual difference as a phenomenon rooted in God’s created order prior to the fall. For example, in the *Paedagogus*, he builds his argument out of the account of human creation in Genesis 2 (conspicuously absent from the *Protrepticus* II narrative):

For God willed that the woman be smooth, exulting in her natural hair alone just as a horse does in its mane. But he adorned the man just as the lions with their beards and made him manly with a hairy chest. This is the proof of strength and power . . . The beard then is the sign of the man, through which the man is made visible. It is older than Eve and a symbol of the man's stronger nature. God has desired to make hairiness manifest for this one, and has spread the hair around the man's entire body. But whatever smoothness or softness he had was taken from him when God made the gentle Eve from his rib as a receptacle of his seed—a woman to be a helper in childbearing and housekeeping (*gynaika boëthon ousan genesēōs kai oikourias*). So the man remained—for the smoothness was taken away—and he was shown to be a man. Being active has been granted to him, as being passive has to her (*to dran autō synkechōrētai, hōs ekeinē to paschein*). For that which is hairy is drier and hotter by nature than that which is bare. Therefore the male is drier and hotter than the female, and the uncastrated than the castrated and the complete than the incomplete. So then it is profane to transgress against the symbol of the nature of manliness, that is, hairiness.³⁵

Here Clement uses Adam's primacy and the story of Eve being fashioned from his rib in Genesis 2 to explain *what kind of difference* sexual difference in fact is. His initial emphasis is on the bodily: Adam's hairy chest and beard point to his status as a man. By contrast, Eve's smoothness testifies to her difference—a difference rooted for both sexes in creation insofar as “whatever smoothness or softness [Adam] had was taken from him when God made the gentle Eve from his rib.” Thus men have no excuse not to conform to the norms of bodily self-presentation that Clement advocates (to be discussed more thoroughly below). Indeed they fail to do so at their own peril: “So adorning oneself through smoothness . . . is effeminacy (*thēlydriou*) if done by men.”³⁶

If the man's leonine beard is a sign of his strength, primacy, and active nature, the woman's “natural hair” and smooth skin complement her passive and receptive role: she is the “receptacle of his seed . . . a helper in childbearing and housekeeping.” In Book Four of the *Stromateis*, Clement makes a similar point without direct recourse to the story of creation:

Therefore then, we do not say that the nature of the female is the same as that of the male, insofar as it is female. For at any rate,

it is fitting that there be some distinction between each of them, through which one of them is female and the other male. So then, we say that pregnancy and childbearing belong to the woman as she happens to be female, not as human (*to goun kyphorein kai to tiktein tē gynaiki proseinai phamen, katho thēleia tynchanei, ou katho anthrōpos*). But if there were no distinction between man and woman, each of them would actively do and passively undergo the same things. So then, as she is the same with respect to the soul, through this she will arrive at the same virtue. But as she is different according to the particularity of the body (*kata tēn tou sōmatos idiotēta*), so she is consigned to childbearing and housekeeping. “For I want you to know,” says the apostle, “that the head of every man is Christ and the head of woman is the man. For man is not out of woman, but woman out of man. But neither is woman without man nor man without woman in the Lord.”³⁷

Here men and women are equally human with respect to their souls but different with respect to “the particularity of the body.” As Denise Buell has pointed out, Clement links these peculiarities “to perceived facts of procreation—not merely any bodily differences, but particular bodily differences having to do with procreation: ‘pregnancy and parturition.’”³⁸ But the implications of these differences go beyond the body. Buell notes that they “have specific social consequences: women are destined for childbearing and *housekeeping*. While childbearing seems to follow logically from the belief that pregnancy and parturition constitute the defining characteristics of the category ‘female,’ there is no obvious or necessary link between pregnancy/parturition and housekeeping. Clement’s inclusion of housekeeping as a sex-linked characteristic suggests that sexual differentiation is also a matter of social differentiation and order.”³⁹

Clement underscores this point by a selective appeal to the Pauline text, collapsing I Corinthians 11.3, 8, and 11. Thus, while he does not in fact *explicitly* interpret the Genesis text here, he relies on a section of the apostle’s text that foregrounds Genesis 2: “for man is not out of woman but woman out of man.” This allows Clement—under the authority of the apostle—to put forward a vision of mutual interdependence between the sexes (“But neither is woman without man nor man without woman in the Lord”) that is nevertheless defined by male headship. In this way, the distinction that Buell rightly highlights between the female body and the role of women in the ancient

social order collapses. From Clement's point of view (as for many, if not most, ancient thinkers), the bodily implications and the social implications of sexual difference are entailed in one another. Indeed, he has no analytical need for a distinction insofar as both childbearing and housekeeping can be interpreted under the umbrella of the creational mandate (more specifically, God's command to procreate in Genesis 1.28 and his designation of Eve as a "helper" to the man in Genesis 2.18). In this way, the pre-fall status of sexual difference allows Clement to ground his androcentric conclusions—not only about women's biological destiny as mothers but also their "natural" fitness to be housekeepers—in the authority of the created order, as interpreted by Paul.

The Goodness of Birth and Marriage

In addition, by placing sexual difference in the pre-fall, created order, Clement can position human sexuality as part of the divinely ordained plan—albeit within carefully controlled parameters.⁴⁰ This becomes clear when we turn to a passage cited earlier from the *Paedagogus* in its larger context:

Begetting children is the aim of those who have married, and fruitfulness is its fulfillment—just as the reason to sow seed for a farmer is consideration for food, but his fulfillment is the harvesting of the crop's fruits. But the farmer who sows in living earth [i.e., procreative intercourse] is far superior. For the one tills to aim at food in its season, but the other tills to provide for the continuance of all humanity. The one cultivates for himself, but the other for God. For He has said, "Multiply," and it is necessary to obey. And in this way, the human being becomes the image of God, insofar as humanity works together for the birth of another human.⁴¹

A bit farther on in the same discussion, Clement argues, "But marriage should be approved and esteemed, for the Lord wished humanity 'to multiply.' He did not say, 'Behave licentiously,' nor did he want them to surrender themselves to pleasure as if born just for breeding."⁴² In both of these quotations, we see Clement rooting his argument for the valorization of both sexually active marriage and procreation in the command of Genesis 1.28: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it'" (NRSV).

He is clear, however, that the role of active sexual expression in marriage must be strictly tied to the procreative mandate. As he sums this up in Book Two

of the *Stromateis*, “Marriage is a joining of man and woman (*synodos andros kai gynaikos*), the first lawful union for the begetting of legitimate children.”⁴³ But the act must never exceed its purpose: “For nature, just as in the case of eating, has permitted to us that which is proper and useful and fitting for lawful marriages, and thus has permitted us to yearn for procreation. But those who pursue excess sin against nature, hurting themselves through lawless intercourse.”⁴⁴

These laws extend for Clement not just to extramarital and same-sex sexual acts but to the rigorous regulation of the marriage bed itself. He therefore notes, “It is necessary that the married man practice self-control in procreation, so that he does not desire (*epithymein*) his wife, whom he ought to love, as he begets children by a holy and temperate will.”⁴⁵ Following this logic, Clement envisions the cessation of sexual expression within marriage once the command to procreate has been fulfilled. Peter Brown sums up this position: “Intercourse was not a matter for old men. Clement was robustly insensitive to the emphasis placed by many of his contemporaries on the permanent, menacing ache of sexual desire.”⁴⁶ Accordingly, for Clement’s ideal husband, “his wife, after begetting children, is a sister and is considered as of the same father, only being reminded of her husband when she looks at their children.”⁴⁷ As John Behr observes, by making this argument that spouses should live as brother and sister after bearing children, Clement highlights “the proleptic character of Christian existence.”⁴⁸ Subsequent to procreation, the lives of married Christians are meant to anticipate the full reality—devoid of sexuality—of life at the resurrection. In this way, Clement maintains the goodness of marriage and procreation as phenomena grounded in a sexual difference that is prior to the fall. But he tempers the implications of this position by looking ahead to an eschaton without sex acts—thereby situating his exemplary Christian Gnostic somewhere in the middle, called both to live out the creational mandate to multiply *and eventually* to grow into a celibate holiness that reflects the age to come.

Gendered Self-Fashioning and the Dangers of Desire

Clement’s vision of married Gnostics gradually progressing into celibate holiness is just one piece within a larger program of bodily practices meant to shape and transform these high achieving Christians to a state beyond the dangers of desire. As Harry Maier sums this up,

For Clement, gnostic *apatheia* represents the full flowering of the properly cared for self. While this is ideally attainable by all,

Clement is clear that not everyone will achieve it; for many care of the self will remain at the level of *metriopatheia*, a life where passions and desires are kept in check. For the diligent Christian, however, who progresses by careful self-training beyond this stage to the gnostic life, self-cultivation will blossom into a life where he or she no longer battles with passion, but lives a life so like the passionless perfection of God that the snares and traps of *epithumia* are no longer the danger they represent in the lower levels of progress.⁴⁹

In an effort to differentiate himself from his (non-Christian) philosophical interlocutors, Clement himself puts it this way: “Our notion of self-control is not to desire (*to mē epithymein*) at all—not that one should hold up against desire, but rather that one should be master over it. It is not possible to take hold of this self-control other than by the grace of God.”⁵⁰

To this end, Clement offers what Michel Desjardins has aptly characterized as “a finely crafted rhetoric intended to form the character and soul of [his] audience . . . [offering] a thousand and one pieces of advice concerning the body, no doubt because he believes that others might not be able to tap into the apprehending parts of their soul often enough or deeply enough to do it themselves.”⁵¹ Many of these “thousand and one pieces” of bodily advice (found primarily in the *Paedagogus*) have their application along gendered lines. With respect to women, he instructs that “their clothes should be woven smooth and soft to the touch, but should not be colorfully adorned as pictures are in order to delight the eye.”⁵² They must especially avoid wearing purple and make sure that every part of their bodies is concealed from public male view (including covering the head and veiling the face).⁵³ Clement also mandates a host of other bodily directives in order to regulate women’s table manners, footwear, jewelry, cosmetics, and hair color.⁵⁴ A side comment in *Paedagogus* 2 (focused specifically on women wearing purple) makes clear what is at issue in this obsessive management of female comportment: the dangerous possibility of the myriad ways in which women’s bodies may function to inflame desire.⁵⁵

When it comes to men, we have already observed Clement’s disapproval of male bodies that are hairless in *Paedagogus* 3. But here I wish to underscore that this censure occurs in the context of an extended invective aimed at shaping and controlling multiple aspects of male bodily practice:

For it is not ever right to pluck the beard, which is a natural beauty and a noble one. . . . [Men who pluck] should be called lispers and womanish rather than men. Their voices are affected and their clothing feminine in texture and dye. Such men are clear in their external manner, put to shame by their fine shawl, their shoes, their bearing, their gait, their haircut, and their glances. “For a man will be recognized by his appearance,” Scripture says, “and from meeting a person, that person will be known. The dress of a man and the step of his foot and the laugh of his teeth proclaim things about him” [Sir 19.29].⁵⁶

As Maud Gleason argues, “[Clement] shares with pagan moralists the assumption that ‘feminine’ grooming habits will alter more than the surface appearance of the man who indulges in them. Like an illness, these habits will infect his essential masculinity.”⁵⁷ Men’s facial hair functions, then, as a sign of their God-ordained primacy in the sexual binary.⁵⁸ It is therefore never allowable for a man to pluck his body hair or to dress or carry himself in ways that would call his masculinity into question. Instead Clement argues, “If a man wishes to be beautiful, let him adorn the most beautiful thing in a human being: his intellect (*to kalliston en anthrōpō tēn dianoian kosmēteon*)—which he ought to show forth each day as more seemly. He should not pluck his hair, but his desires (*epithymias*).”⁵⁹ Male self-transformation involves not effeminate preening but attending to the active pursuit of rationality and the gradual eradication of that feminizing desire that sexual difference has introduced in the first place.

Eradicating Desire and the Feminine

Therefore, Clement’s Christian Gnostic exists “on the border between an immortal and a mortal nature (*athanatou kai thnētēs physēs methorios*). Though having needs on account of both the body and birth itself, that one has been taught to need little through rational self-control.”⁶⁰ And in this liminal situation, the goal is to be formed in the image and likeness of God as fully as possible.⁶¹ This is linked for Clement to the primacy of mind and reason—those aspects of existence by which human beings partake of the divine and which will characterize the world to come: “For in the phrase ‘after the image and likeness’ [Gen 1.26], as we have said before, bodily things (*to kata sōma*) are not indicated (for it is not right to compare mortal to immortal), but rather

that which is according to intellect and reason (*kata noun kai logismon*), by which the Lord suitably stamps the likeness with regard to his kindness and his authority.”⁶²

Here Clement has in view a relationship between body and soul in which the body has the potential to support the soul rather than being necessarily opposed to it.⁶³ In Clement’s conception, the soul is not a unity but rather tripartite: “So there are three parts to the soul: the intellectual part (*to noeron*), which is called reason, is the inner human, that which rules over the perceptible human. But another—that is, God—leads that one. The part of anger (*to thymikon*), which is beastlike, dwells near to madness. And the third part, desire (*to epithymētikon*), is polymorphic, more varied than the sea god Proteus, changing form in different ways and at different times, making offerings to adultery and lust and depravity.”⁶⁴ The goal, then, is for the body to assist the highest part of the soul in its quest to rule over the whole human person (and conquer the soul’s lower part) through the pursuit of bodily virtue: “It is not then the appearance of the outer human that should be beautified but rather the soul by the ornament of noble character. It also ought to be said that the flesh is beautified by the ornament of self control.”⁶⁵

This cultivation of virtue through the body has eschatological implications. As Desjardins notes, “At death, Clement states, the body disintegrates, but, if a soul has been properly adjusted, the body can be transformed into a spiritual body and preserved. It can become beautiful through the immortality that it gains . . . Clement sees the body as having the potential to be transformed by God into something grander.”⁶⁶ But this transformation seems to involve leaving the sexually differentiated flesh behind.⁶⁷ Thus when Clement argues for celibacy in marriage after childbearing (discussed above), he makes a proleptic appeal to this transformed state: “So [a wife] will also be a sister in reality after putting aside the flesh which separates and delimits the knowledge of the spiritual ones through the particularity of their forms (*tē idiotēti tōn schēmatōn*) [i.e., the two sexes].”⁶⁸

Because of this emphasis on eschatological transformation (rather than continuity in the flesh), Clement is therefore able to envision a sexually generic quality to human virtue, one that is unhampered by the bodily differences that obtain between men and women in this life. As he sums this up in the *Paedagogus*, “Let us take note that the same virtue (*tēn autēn aretēn*) is characteristic of both man and woman. For if there is one God for both of them, then there is also one pedagogue for both.”⁶⁹ He expands on this point

further in a discussion of whether women as well as men can become martyrs in Book Four of the *Stromateis*:

Therefore, with respect to human nature, it is apparent that the woman does not have one nature and the man another. But rather, as she has the same nature, so also is it with virtue (*All' ē tēn autēn [physin], hōste kai tēn aretēn*). Is it not so that if self-control and righteousness and whatever follows from them are thought to be the virtue of man, then it is fitting for only man to be virtuous, but woman to be intemperate and unrighteous? But even to say this is unseemly. So then self-control and righteousness and every other virtue should be cultivated by woman, and likewise by man, both free and slave, since it follows that those of the same nature have one and the same virtue.⁷⁰

Here Clement is unequivocal that virtue is not the possession of one sex over and against the other—a position that follows from his understanding of the supporting role that bodies play in the virtuous formation of souls. As he avers later on in Book Six of the *Stromateis*, “For souls, themselves in themselves, are equal” (*Autai gar kath' autas ep' isēs eisi psychai*).⁷¹

Yet this is not as optimistic a picture of sexual equality as it might initially seem. As we have already seen, the problematic desire that virtue works to overcome is not a sexually neutral term for Clement. Rather it remains conceptually linked in some fundamental way to the difference of the feminine. Thus its ultimate eradication entails within it the erasure of woman as such—her necessary transformation into the realm of the rational masculine. Clement allows these implications to become visible in the very passages in which he extols men and women's putative equality in virtue. The conclusion of the passage cited above from Book Four of the *Stromateis* offers a hint: “Women then should philosophize similarly to men, even if males happen to be better, foremost in everything, except if they have become effeminate.”⁷² But Book Six makes the point explicit: “And in this way, is not woman translated into man, having become equally unwomanish and masculine and perfect?” (*kai mē ti houtōs metatithetai eis ton andra hē gynē, athēlyntos ep' isēs kai andrikē kai teleia genomenē*)⁷³

The Indeterminacy of Desire

Returning finally, then, to the *Protrepticus* II narrative, we can see more clearly how Clement's move to displace Eve fits within his theological anthropology as a whole. Haunted as he is by lingering problems that the Pauline Adam-Christ typology has generated, here he renders Eve invisible as a means of preserving a straightforward correlation between his two prototypical humans. As I have argued, it is Clement's association between desire (*epithymia*) and the feminine that allows him to conjure up this absence. Thus in *Protrepticus* II, the first human falls by succumbing to desire—a desire that displaces Eve's female body from any explicit presence in the story. By filling this hole in the narrative with the sexually charged term *epithymia*, Clement sets up Adam to figure (somewhat uneasily) as both first human in his Pauline representative function and the first man in his sexual function.

In addition, the link between desire and the feminine also allows Clement to exploit the gap where the reader might expect the absent Eve as a site on which to project the problem that drives the story forward.⁷⁴ By associating pleasure with the snake and desire with the absent woman, Clement *externalizes* the role of both. Thus he can ascribe concrete—almost personal—external agency to pleasure and desire, explaining how Adam “fell before” the former and “was misled” by the latter.⁷⁵ Here Clement projects the problem outward: first onto the snake whom he allegorizes out of independent existence; and then, by extension, onto the woman as Other—an Other putatively unimplicated in and unnecessary to the wholeness of the first human being and thus eschatologically disposable. The result, as we have seen, is an eschatological conclusion in which woman must be transformed into man.

Yet at the same time, what my analysis up to this point has not addressed is the *indeterminacy* of desire's placement in the *Protrepticus* II narrative.⁷⁶ On the one hand, Clement tells the story in such a way that “pleasure” and “desire” (functioning as near synonyms) stand external to the original *anthrōpos*. But on the other hand, this desire cannot be entirely externalized. As we have seen, throughout Clement's own texts, he treats *epithymia* as a troubling force internal to soul, one which can render the human being passive (and which therefore must be countered through active techniques of self-control and mastery), while still inhering within that human being. Furthermore, the very way in which he retells the creation story in *Protrepticus* II forces the issue. Given that (1) Clement's notion of *epithymia* requires a subject; and (2) his own account has pushed Eve out of any explicit role in the narrative as a

present subject in her own right, then the desire by which Adam is made passive (“he was misled by desire”) must in some sense still be Adam’s desire—internal to him, even as the narrative projects it outward to the place of the woman both absent and present. Desire may be embodied *in* Eve, but only insofar as it Adam’s desire *for* Eve.

In this way, though the surface of Clement’s *Protrepticus* II narrative figures desire as fully externalized, the complexities entailed in both his larger argument and his anthropological commitments call into question the viability of any total externalization in this way. Rather, there is a slipperiness to the concept of *epithymia* that Clement relies on here: desire as simultaneously outside and inside—always available to function as an external figure of blame and reproach, but at the same time a constant threat that inhabits the very structure of the (unredeemed) human subject. Consequently, in *Protrepticus* II, Eve is both (implicitly) the passive object of a desire that Adam possesses *and*—from a different angle—a sexual temptress: the embodiment of a desire that renders Adam passive, actively leading him astray. The result, then, is to foreground the necessarily relational structure of this desire—it is at one and the same time both internal to Adam and situated in the place of the Other: the displaced but sexually differentiated Eve.

This being the case, Clement’s vision of a final eradication of desire in which the female is transformed into the male is more problematic than it initially appears—problematic, that is, on grounds internal to Clement’s own text. What the relational structure of desire points toward is the impossibility of containing that desire entirely within a feminine positioned as external to an idealized, rational masculine. Instead, insofar as Clement has linked desire not only objectively to Eve, but also subjectively to Adam, then Adam, his ideal prototype of masculinity, must contend with femininity not only as an external threat but also as one internal to himself. Thus a feminized and feminizing desire plagues Clement’s very concept of sexual difference, not just through displacing the absent woman but also through contaminating the masculinity that the various facets of his theological anthropology examined above work so hard to protect.

In this way, desire cannot be relegated to (or contained by) just one term of the sexual binary, the female. In its role of driving the narrative forward, this desire functions paradoxically in *Protrepticus* II as both the cause and the symptom of the fall. As we have seen, desire as cause of the fall implies a pre-fall sexual difference as part of God’s created order in the garden. But desire as symptom of the fall puts the status of sexual difference in a much

more tenuous position—insofar as both terms of the binary, male and female, are always already implicated in the dangerous potential of desire. From this perspective, one might even go so far as to suggest that desire is actually the (problematic) *cause* of sexual difference. And in fact, Clement makes exactly this claim in the *Paedagogus*, arguing that with respect to humanity, either male or female, “[it is] desire (*epithymias*) which divides it in two.”⁷⁷

Thus we see in *Protrepticus* II that Clement’s project to construct an autonomous masculinity outside of sexual difference (i.e., femininity) founders on the relational structure of desire. The desire that plagues Adam is both external and internal, projected outward to the feminine as Other but also tainting Adam’s masculinity itself. And since the eschatological eradication of this desire in all its facets is a theological non-negotiable for Clement, his solution must take account of this predicament—insofar as it lurks within the very configuration of sexual difference. If some aspect of *epithymia* resists externalization, but is in fact necessarily internal to the fallen Adam—not only as prototypical generic human but also as prototype of masculinity—then to overcome that desire, God must ultimately eradicate both male and female. That is to say, sexual difference itself must be done away with.

This is, in fact, the conclusion that Clement reaches in the passage from the *Paedagogus* cited above: “‘For in this world,’ [Scripture] says, ‘they marry and are given in marriage,’ for in this world only is the female distinguished from the male (*en hō dē monō to thēly tou arrhenos diakrinetai*), ‘but in that world, no more’ [cf. Luke 20.34–35]. There the rewards of this common and holy life of union are held in store not for male and female but for the human person (*anthrōpō*).”⁷⁸ Or, as *Protrepticus* II concludes on a similar note, “So then, all of Christ, so to speak, is not divided. There is neither barbarian nor Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female—but a new human being, remodeled by the holy spirit of God.”⁷⁹

Conclusion

Michel Desjardins has noted that “a world-view like Clement’s is directed at removing uncertainty in life.”⁸⁰ While this may well have been Clement’s intention, this chapter has sought to show how the narrative of creation, fall, and redemption found in *Protrepticus* II renders visible an uncertainty that persists at the heart of Clement’s theological anthropology—that is, an irresolvable tension that revolves around the problem of sexual difference and

its relationship to desire. Here I have not attempted to straightforwardly “recover” Clement as a proto-feminist Christian thinker nor have I called into question the profoundly androcentric orientation of his perspective. However, I have sought to demonstrate that Clement’s particular variety of platonizing androcentrism entails complexities that resist being reduced to an ideal, disembodied, masculinist androgyny. While Clement’s anthropological project is indeed masculinist through and through, that masculinism, I have argued, is one shot through with its own necessary failure.

Like the authors of the *Excerpts from Theodotus* and the *Gospel of Philip*, Clement too is haunted by a problematic inherited from Paul—one in which sexual difference must somehow be situated within a framework of representative human prototypes (Adam and Christ) that has no obvious place for it. In the face of this hermeneutical predicament, Clement unequivocally maintains the presence of sexual difference prior to the fall (thereby adducing evidence from creation to reinforce the proper place of marriage, procreation, and gendered bodily practices for Christians growing in holiness). But the Pauline anthropological dilemma remains, and Clement seeks to maneuver through it by associating the feminine with desire—a move he shares in common with the *Excerpts*. As we have seen, however, Clement develops this link much more fully than what can be found in the extant text of Theodotus. The development of this connection between desire and the feminine allows him to: (1) displace Eve from the *Protrepticus* II creation narrative; (2) preserve a clear-cut Adam-Christ correlation; and (3) implicitly figure femininity as a threat to be eradicated/transformed at the eschaton. At the same time, however, this displacement of Eve by *epithymia* has implications not just for the absent Eve but also for the very present Adam: insofar as desire works relationally—and can therefore never be entirely externalized—it introduces a problematic feminization into the core of Clement’s prototypical human being. Accordingly, in a post-fall situation in which desire must be done away with, Adam’s tainted masculinity becomes as much of a problem as Eve’s displaced femininity.

Therefore, the specific moves that Clement makes to treat desire as problematic, to associate it with femininity, *and* to situate it relationally as both internal and external to the first human being significantly complicate the position of sexual difference in his thought. In a sense, Clement may be trying to bring the creation narrative of Genesis and the theological anthropology of Paul together within a Platonic framework that does not fully have room for such a partnership. The paradoxical result is a fault line within his theology such that sexual difference is simultaneously created prior to the fall *and*

brought about by (or instantiated in) desire. On the one hand then, desire can be projected outward to a problematic feminine that must ultimately be eradicated by translation into the masculine—the pristine realm of rational *nous*. But on the other hand, Clement's conception of masculinity is itself infected (through the events of the fall) by a feminizing desire internal to it. As such, this masculinity cannot stand on its own at the resurrection, signaling the necessary erasure of *all* sexual difference, male and female. Neither pole of this tension can be easily collapsed or resolved. Instead, they both remain in play, pointing to a certain unavoidable instability in the placement of sexual difference within a theology that treats the feminine as the site of desire.

Chapter 3

What Sort of Thing Is This Luminous Woman? Sexual Dimorphism in *On the Origin of the World*

Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written, . . . can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion.

—Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context”

Whereas numerous platonizing Christian texts locate the difference of the feminine in terms of desire, lack, and derivativeness, in this chapter I turn to another kind of attempted solution to the early Christian problem of “the Platonic woman”—as seen in Tractate II, 5 from Nag Hammadi (known as *On the Origin of the World*). Like Clement of Alexandria and certain of the Valentinian materials we have examined, *On the Origin of the World* cites the Pauline typological framework and relies on its conceptual apparatus. And like these other texts, it does so in a cosmological framework largely informed by the intellectual resources of the Platonic tradition. Thus one might expect *On the Origin of the World* to stake similar anthropological ground to that which we have covered in the previous two chapters.

Instead, *On the Origin of the World* significantly complicates the picture, thereby foregrounding the rich fluidity of the Platonic legacy—itsself already complex and multiple—that early Christian thinkers engaged and reworked to their own ends. As such, this text raises questions that are not only relevant for the analysis of this chapter, but will also segue into the questions that drive the final section of the book. That is to say, it points toward the conclusion

that the “true self” was not, in fact, always pre-gendered in early Christian platonizing anthropologies (or early Christian theological reflection more generally). Nor was the dualism between mind/soul and body (and by association, male and female) always so tidy as to necessitate an erasure of sexual difference as the single mode of eschatological hope. Rather, as my analysis will show, *On the Origin of the World* offers an alternative conception of embodiment to those discussed thus far—and with it, by necessity, an alternative account of what sexual difference is all about.

It is my contention that a text such as *On the Origin of the World* very much belongs in this conversation. As already noted briefly, scholars of the Nag Hammadi texts have shown that this literature should not be artificially contained to discussions of “Gnosticism” but needs to be integrated into the larger landscape of early Christian history.¹ In the second, third, and even fourth centuries, the boundaries of what could count as “Christian” were under debate. Therefore, as Karen King argues, we will reconstruct a richer, more historically nuanced picture if we evaluate these texts not in terms of a supposed purity of Christian origins from which they deviate, but rather with an eye to “the variety of discourses, material and intellectual resources, processes, and practices by which people make sense of their lives in contexts of ancient pluralism.”² Thus I propose to treat *On the Origin of the World* not as exterior to the discourse and practices of early Christian identity formation (equating “Gnostic” with non-Christian), but as one option in formative Christian thinking.³ This option stakes its own particular theological and anthropological ground, resisting easy categorization in terms of standard taxonomies such as “Valentinian” or “Sethian” as it narrates the origins of sexually differentiated human beings.

Furthermore, as we will see, the text’s etiology of sexual difference does not map neatly onto the dominant ancient model we have been working with up to this point—a single hierarchical spectrum oriented toward the ideal male. The anthropogony of *On the Origin of the World* does share ground with this model in that it both appeals to a figure of primal androgyny and does not valorize the material female body. But it charts a strikingly different course from Clement or the *Excerpts from Theodotus*—one that needs to be understood, I maintain, as a particularly pointed riposte to the looming shadow of the Pauline anthropological problematic.

While remaining in some sense dependent on the conceptual terms of Paul’s framework (and the problems for sexual difference it generates), the text responds to the specter by *resisting* the framework’s traditional (Pauline) form,

instead creatively refiguring its typological categories to new ends. (Indeed, the text retains the notion of multiple Adams but relegates the figure of Jesus Christ to a minor role in the narrative.⁴) In the process, it articulates a theology of sexual difference—still thoroughly Platonic in orientation—that nonetheless does not conceive of sexual dimorphism or the creation of the first female human being as ontologically secondary, derivative, or otherwise a figure of lack. Yet the function of this “solution,” I will argue, is not so much to put the specter definitively to rest as to underscore the necessary instability at the heart of the Pauline anthropological project (and, by extension, its early Christian heirs). In speaking back to Paul’s typology, *On the Origin of the World* breaks apart the typological drama of creation and redemption as a unified and singular movement of signification, entirely contained between its two poles, the first and second Adams. Instead, the text introduces a fundamental dimension of alterity into the origins of sexually differentiated humanity, rendering the separation between the sexes a marker of an inassimilable difference.

Preliminary Considerations

On the Origin of the World provides a mythopoetic account of the cosmos, stretching from the primal chaos and the creation of divine and human realms up to the eschatological hope for the consummation of the age.⁵ This sweeping cosmic drama is structured largely as a retelling of Genesis 1–3—and pays considerable attention to the origins of a sexually differentiated humanity through its creative interpretation of the Adam and Eve narrative. Thus the question of the relationship between the Genesis text and *On the Origin of the World* emerges as an important one. But at the same time, it is also crucial to view the latter as a narrative of creation in its own right. Judith Butler points out that “Origin stories are not just variable tales but ways of building a sensical notion of the human.”⁶ Accordingly, while *On the Origin of the World’s* anthropology appropriates motifs and logic that are shared with Genesis, it should not be read solely in terms of deviation from a norm. I will therefore attend in my analysis both to how the text functions as a reinterpretation of the Genesis narrative, and to the way in which, in that act of reinterpretation, it simultaneously stakes a claim to building a particular “sensical notion of the human.”

On the Origin of the World has often been characterized primarily as a work of syncretism⁷ and variously dated from the second to early fourth centuries C.E.⁸ The basic problem, as summarized by Louis Painchaud, is that

the text is “full of unevenness and contradictions, so that many parts of it seem barely intelligible,” while at the same time conveying a sense of being a “well planned literary composition.”¹⁰ It bears narrative affinities to other Nag Hammadi texts such as the *Apocryphon of John* and especially the *Hypostasis of the Archons* but does not seem to have a direct literary relationship to them.¹¹ Not conforming to the standard contours of Sethian or Valentinian Christianity (though exhibiting features commonly associated with each), *On the Origin of the World*, in Hans-Gebhard Bethge’s estimation, “offers no closed system of its own, nor does it represent one of the known Gnostic systems.”¹² Scholars have sought to explain this puzzling situation through appealing to interpolations or levels of redaction, the most thorough and convincing attempt being Painchaud’s hypothesis of a double redaction.¹³

Redactional hypotheses, however, no matter how persuasive, do little to illuminate the function and meaning of the “curious feeling of coherence and incoherence at the same time” which characterizes the text as we currently have it.¹⁴ If Bethge is correct that *On the Origin of the World* is “an apologetic essay intended for public dissemination,”¹⁵ seeking to maintain its worldview “or perhaps at times even win the field,”¹⁶ then we need to read the text as a literary and theological whole, even in its tensions and inconsistencies. These tensions become particularly apparent in the second half of the text, the anthropogonic narrative. Here the complex drama of the first half of the text—a story of androgyny, sexual division, desire, and generation in the divine realm—serves to pave the way for an account of the creation of different kinds of human beings.

The Cosmogonic Narrative: A Summary

Because various narrative elements of the anthropogonic storyline rely so heavily on the earlier cosmogonic drama, a brief recap of its basic storyline is in order. The text opens with an apologetic discussion that outlines the origins of the primal chaos. Within this, the emanation of the divine beings out of the infinite (a topic given much attention in the *Apocryphon of John*) is largely assumed but not discussed. The divine hierarchy is already in place when Pistis Sophia (also simply called Pistis) exercises her will to create the demiurge Ialdabaoth. He, in turn, brings forth six rulers, one of whom defects back to the realm of light and is subsequently replaced. The rulers are androgynous: each has a masculine and a feminine name (*‘mpouran ‘nhoout m’n pouran ‘nshime*).¹⁷ However, as the narrative progresses, it seems clear that the masculine manifestation of each ruler is the primary actor.¹⁸

Ialdabaoth creates the heavens and the earth, differentiating levels of heaven for his offspring, the archons. Upon completion of this project, he revels in what he perceives to be his solitary rule, rashly boasting, “I have no need of anybody . . . I am the one who is God. There is no other who exists outside of me.”¹⁹ Though Pistis Sophia responds to this brash arrogance by revealing her likeness in the primal waters (a move that leads to the defection of Ialdabaoth’s son Sabaoth), this does not stop the demiurge from issuing a reckless and uninformed challenge to any potential rivals: “If something was in existence before me, let it appear, in order that we might see its light.”²⁰ As soon as Ialdabaoth throws down the gauntlet, light shines forth from the eighth heaven, and another likeness becomes visible. This time it is not the likeness of Pistis Sophia in the waters but a human likeness (*aeine e’rōme*)²¹ appearing in the light, visible only to Ialdabaoth and his consort Pronoia.²²

This human likeness is called the Adam of Light—later specified as the first Adam (see 117.28), though the typological implications of this move do not immediately become clear. This Adam’s reflection elicits different reactions from his two observers. The consort Pronoia falls into a deep amorous passion for him and desires to cling to him.²³ While at first she is rebuffed, eventually some sort of union follows—though the text is strangely reticent in offering any details.²⁴ As Patricia Cox Miller has noted, at this point “the text itself becomes a swirl of liquid metaphors”²⁵ in which the flows of water, blood, and light blur together, bringing about the birth of Eros. Following a complicated detour through a retelling of the Psyche and Eros myth,²⁶ the main storyline resumes in 111.29 with the Adam of Light leaving Pronoia behind to reascend to the eighth heaven. However, due to the poverty that has mixed with his light as a result of their union, he cannot fully complete the ascent and must settle for an aeon at a lower level.²⁷ This is the last we hear of Ialdabaoth’s consort Pronoia.²⁸

But where Pronoia desires the Adam of Light, Ialdabaoth’s reaction to the luminous human reflection is of a different order. He is both “amazed and very much ashamed,”²⁹ finding himself caught on the horns of a demiurgical dilemma: how to save face with the other powers after his imprudent boast *and* to reconfigure the cosmic playing field to retain his position of power and domination in the face of this unforeseen challenge. An earlier portion of the text provides an anticipatory summation: “And when he had truly understood that there was an immortal human of light (*ourōme e’natmou e’rr’ mouoein*) who existed before he did, he was exceedingly troubled. For he had already said to all the gods and their angels, ‘I am the one who is God. There is no other who

exists outside of me.’ For he had been fearful that they might know that there was another who had existed before he did—and so they might condemn him.”³⁰

Yet Ialdabaoth is not able to keep the existence of the Adam of Light a secret from his progeny. When the authorities see Adam, they laugh at the demiurge, realizing that his bold claim to supreme divinity has been revealed as a lie. Thus Ialdabaoth faces humiliation before his cronies. Furthermore, he must answer their nervous but legitimate query: “Isn’t this the god who has destroyed our work?”³¹ Much is at stake here. Not only must Ialdabaoth take action against the threat posed by this Adam, but he must also reassert and consolidate his power before the archons so as to maintain his position of preeminence.

In this way, the stage is now set for the creation of human beings—and their differentiation as male and female—in the terrestrial realm. The topic is not an entirely new one insofar as issues of androgyny, gender, and division have been in play throughout the cosmogonic drama. But with the turn to anthropogony, they will come to the fore through the text’s discussion of two very different kinds of human bodies.

Creating Humans in the Image and the Likeness

Ialdabaoth’s Plot

Faced with the threat of the Adam of Light, Ialdabaoth hatches a plan. Acknowledging that this luminous figure does have the potential to bring the rulers’ designs to naught, he tells his archons: “Come let us create a human being out of earth (*ourōme ebol h’m pkah*) according to the image of our body (*kata thikōn ‘mp ‘nsōma*) and according to the likeness of that one (*kata peine ‘mpē*) [the Adam of Light], so that he serves us. Thus when he sees his likeness and loves it, he will no longer destroy our work. Instead the ones who shall be born from the light we will make into servants for us for the entire time of this aeon.”³² Here Ialdabaoth articulates a blueprint for the creation of a human being as the cornerstone of his strategy of resistance to the Adam of Light. While sexual differentiation is not directly in view at this juncture, the demiurge’s proposal will nonetheless prove crucial to the way that the text goes on to navigate the issue in the human realm.

For *On the Origin of the World*, the anthropology of human sexual difference finds its primary articulation not in the markings of sexual anatomy, but

in a set of complex hermeneutical negotiations based on Genesis 1.26–27: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness. . . . So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (NRSV). Here the “us” of the LXX first person plural verb *poiēsōmen* (a perennial problem for early Jewish and Christian exegetes) is understood as referring to Ialdabaoth and his cohort of archons. But the potential ambiguity of the phrase “in our image, according to our likeness” (LXX: *kat’ eikona hēmeteran kai kath’ homoiōsin*) opens up a further hermeneutical opportunity: are the image and the likeness synonymous, or do they refer to two different things?

On the Origin of the World responds by driving an interpretive wedge between the two phrases, correlating the image to the body of Ialdabaoth and the archons and the likeness to the Adam of Light. The human being that they intend to form will be in the image of one and the likeness of the other. Precisely what these terms refer to or how they will relate to this terrestrial Adam’s bodily sex is not clarified. However, insofar as the archons use their own bodily image as a template for their creation, their androgyny (100.8, 101.11, 101.24–25, 102.2–7) does not prove determinative for the creature’s own sexual constitution.³³ In whatever way the archons’ image and the likeness of the (male) Adam of Light may meld together, the result is a male human being.

Reading “Image” and “Likeness” Disjunctively

On a more general hermeneutical level, this move to read image (*eikōn*) and likeness (*homoiōsis*) in some sort of disjunction is not unique among early Jewish or Christian texts.³⁴ The disjunction could be slight, linking the two terms with two more or less complementary concepts. For example, Philo reads Genesis 1.26 such that “image” refers to the *nous*—here the director of the individual soul, based on the archetype of the universal *nous* (the debt to Plato’s *Timaeus* is clear). He then interprets “likeness” as “an extra indication . . . to emphasize that [the image] is an accurate and clearly marked casting” since not all images adequately resemble their archetypes.³⁵ This line of interpretation is picked up by Clement of Alexandria, for whom image and likeness in Genesis 1.26 refer to mind and reason respectively—two closely related but not completely synonymous concepts.³⁶

Yet the wedge between image and likeness could also push the two notions further apart. Thus Irenaeus of Lyons maintains that all people are created in God’s image but the likeness is reserved for those spiritual ones who attain to it:

But when the spirit here blended with the soul is united to [God's] handiwork, the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God. But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image [of God] in his formation, but not receiving the similitude through the Spirit; and thus is this being imperfect.³⁷

While this is Irenaeus's own view, he also cites (disapprovingly) the interpretation of Genesis 1.26 by so-called Valentinian Christians, whereby "the material element [of the human being] is after the image, by which it comes near to God, though it is not of the same substance as he; the ensouled element is after the likeness."³⁸ In this interpretation, Genesis 1.26 is fused together with a critically revisionist reading of Genesis 2.7:³⁹ "After the world had been created, Demiurge in turn made the earthly element of man. He made him not from this dry earth [contra Genesis 2.7], but from the invisible substance, the fusible and fluid matter; then, they decree, into this part he breathed the ensouled element."⁴⁰

Turning now to the Nag Hammadi texts, we find readings in which image and likeness are set in even greater disjunction. For example, *A Valentinian Exposition* makes a move parallel to that in Ialdabaoth's plot in *On the Origin of the World*: "Moreover this Demiurge began to create a man according to his image on the one hand and on the other according to the likeness of those who exist from the first."⁴¹ Here the archons are not mentioned explicitly and the reference to the higher realm is to the divine emanations of the pleroma, not to a single celestial figure like the Adam of Light. Yet the text's reading of Genesis 1.26 is comparable to *On the Origin of the World* in that the demiurgical ingredient in the creation of a human being corresponds to the image, while the likeness denotes the higher divine element.

The longer recension of the *Apocryphon of John* reverses the correspondence that we see in these two texts between image/demiurge and likeness/heavenly being(s): "And he said to the authorities who dwell with him, 'Come, let us create a human according to the image of God and according to our likeness so that his image might illuminate us.'⁴² *Hypostasis of the Archons* imagines a similar split but does not resort explicitly to the language of "likeness," substituting the term "body" instead: "They had taken [some soil] from

the earth and modeled their [man], after their body and [after the image] of God that had appeared [to them] in the waters.”⁴³

“Image,” “Likeness,” and Anthropology in On the Origin of the World

Thus it is clear that interpreting Genesis 1.26 in terms of a split between image and likeness was a relatively common move among early Christian exegetes. But where *On the Origin of the World* proves particularly distinctive is in what follows. The text builds off its disjunctive reading of Genesis 1.26 (which refers to the creation of Adam) and turns next to the creation of Eve, his female counterpart. Here it proceeds to conceptualize the origin of human sexual difference through a *counternarrative* of creation,⁴⁴ one in which Sophia negotiates image and likeness differently from Ialdabaoth and the archons, so as to create a sexually differentiated human being as part of her active resistance to the demiurge’s project.

In response, then, to the archons’ anthropogonic plot, Sophia laughs. She discerns in advance that their ill-advised machinations will in fact lead only to their own downfall (see 113.14–15) and sets into motion her own creational counterplot: “On account of this, she preceded them. She created first her own human being (*astamio ʿnšorp ʿmpesrōme*) so that it might instruct their molded figure to despise them and so to be saved from them.”⁴⁵ In other words, Sophia seeks to beat Ialdabaoth and the archons at their own game, creating a human being on her terms who will subsequently teach the archons’ human to turn against its makers.⁴⁶ She therefore lets fall a drop of light onto the primal waters and “immediately a human being appeared, who was androgynous” (*ʿnteunou aprōme ouōnh ebol efo ʿnhout shime*).⁴⁷

Sophia’s luminous human is at first an androgyne. As we have seen in previous chapters, interpreting the first human of Genesis 1.27 as an androgynous, noncorporeal being was an extremely common, platonizing move in early Christian anthropological reflection—and one that tended to signal not an originary, pristine sexual equality, but rather the primacy of the male. What I wish to highlight here, however, is that in *On the Origin of the World* we have a text that does not fit the model—at least not in a straightforward way. Sophia takes her luminous androgyne and shapes it into a *female* body (*ousōma ʿnshime*).⁴⁸ I will return to this issue and its relationship to the text’s vision of (human) androgyny below. But for the moment I wish to stay focused on Genesis 1.26, to argue that Sophia forms this female body in a way that keeps the image/likeness distinction in view (at least implicitly) as she proceeds with her work.

Thus the hermeneutical wedge between image and likeness is not limited to Ialdabaoth's plot. The text reports that Sophia's next step in forming this human being, after shaping a female body out of the androgynous light-human, is to mold it in "the *likeness* of the mother (*εμπεινε εντμμμαι*) who had appeared."⁴⁹ This seems to refer to an earlier point in the narrative: Pistis is the mother of Sophia (in an emanative sense; see 98.13–14) and in the prior confrontation with Ialdabaoth, she (Pistis) had revealed "her likeness of her greatness" (*εμπεσεινε εντεςμντνοε*) on the waters.⁵⁰ So her daughter Sophia is now able to pattern her human being after the likeness of the mother Pistis seen in the primal waters.

What about the image (*thikōn*)? Unlike the likeness, it is not explicitly mentioned. However, the text refers to a female *body*—molded from the luminous drop whose source is Sophia herself. The specific wording used to outline the archons' plot offers us a clue: the image that they plan to use has a corporeal dimension—the image of their *body* (*thikōn εμψνσōμα*).⁵¹ There seems, then—at least at this point in the text—to be a certain functional equivalence between the two terms, image and body. This is further supported in 114.29–32 when the archons put their plan into action. Here the narrative reiterates the plot's contours with a slight variation in phrasing: "From that day, the seven archons have formed the human being such that his body is like their body, but his likeness is like that of the human who had appeared to them." Note that the allusion to Genesis 1.26 continues to be explicit but with a key difference. The phrase "his body is like their body" (*epefsōma men eine εμψousōma*) now serves the same function that "according to the image of our body" (*kata thikōn εμψνσōμα*) did in 112.34–35. Given this, it seems plausible to maintain that "image" and "body" correspond to one another, at least insofar as they function in Ialdabaoth's narrative and Sophia's counternarrative of human creation.

Consequently, Sophia creates her female human being according to a body or image derived from her own luminosity—and according to the likeness of her mother Pistis in the waters. When she has completed her work,⁵² the result is a female instructor, Eve of Life (see 113.30–35).⁵³ While the precise sense of the passage is difficult to determine, here I follow Michel Tardieu in recognizing that for all intents and purposes, at this point in the text, three names or titles seem to be in play for this figure: (1) "instructor," (2) "androgyne," and (3) "Eve."⁵⁴ Yet Tardieu's overall emphasis is on the *ambivalence* of this figure, which he reads in terms of the Eve's sexual doubleness or hermaphroditism: "Her likeness (*homoiōma*) is light, male, mother; her ontological reality (*eikōn*)

is bodily, female, moist.”⁵⁵ In support of this reading, Tardieu points to a tradition of ambiguity around the figure of Eve in Jewish tradition: “On the outside she is splendid and beautiful, the young wife prepared by God and feted by the angels; but on the inside, she is nothing but deceitful, twisted like the serpent, who passed on to her his venom, and she had sexual relations with the angel Samael or Satan.”⁵⁶ He correlates this ambiguity with the interplay of gift and deceit present in the primordial Greek female, Pandora.⁵⁷

I would argue, however, that Tardieu overplays the role of ambivalence in the text’s portrayal of the Eve figure. His treatment of Eve as an androgyne seems to presuppose a relatively monolithic notion of ancient androgyny, collapsing (1) hermaphroditism or sexual doubleness; (2) the refusal of sexuality through a primal unity; and (3) the concept of syzygies (or divine twins) into a single composite, the “androgyne.”⁵⁸ In a 1998 article, Mary Rose D’Angelo critiques this analytical trend, which she calls “the synthetic image of the androgyne,” one in which complicated and diverse materials have been used to produce an image of an “underlying, unifying reality.”⁵⁹ Against this trend, D’Angelo argues convincingly that “antique religions did not employ variations on a single image of androgyne” but mobilized a variety of pictures of sexual ambiguity and/or doubleness to differing political ends.⁶⁰

Thus I maintain that a more narrowly circumscribed model of how androgyny functions in this particular case will do better justice to the textual evidence. Sophia’s creation narrative does not characterize the created human Eve as either a syzygy or a sexually doubled creature. There is no indication that any male element in the original androgyne must be removed or separated, as in other hermaphroditic creation myths.⁶¹ Neither does the text emphasize an *ongoing* quality to Eve’s androgynous status (an assumption that is crucial to Tardieu’s reading). In fact, every time Eve’s sex is mentioned after 113.30, she is explicitly designated in female terms. I would therefore argue that we can read the statement of 113.30 (“An androgynous human being was produced”) as an extra (and somewhat redundant) recapitulation of the earlier statement in 113.24 (“immediately a human being appeared, who was androgynous”). On this reading, Sophia’s human being appears first as an androgyne born from her drop of light. Second, she molds that drop into a female body (which I correlate with creation in her own image). Third, she forms the body in the likeness of the mother Pistis.

Given this sequence, I contend that the most appropriate ancient cultural cognate to read the narrative next to is Philo’s vision of the originally pre-gendered (not double-gendered) human examined in the Introduction: “there

is a vast difference between the human being [in Genesis 2.7] who has been moulded now and the one who previously came into being after the image of God. For the human being who has been moulded as sense-perceptible object . . . is either man or woman, and is by nature mortal. The human being after the image is a kind of idea or genus or seal, is perceived by the intellect, incorporeal, neither male nor female.”⁶² Here Philo is working with a clearly dualistic divide between sense-perception and noetic incorporeality that differs from the physical categories of light and water used in *On the Origin of the World*. Yet the progression from a primal absence of bodily sex to a later creation that introduces sexual difference resonates with what we see in the Nag Hammadi text. However, in *On the Origin of the World*, the reinterpretation of Genesis in terms of creation narrative and counternarrative means that Eve’s female body is not twice removed from an original androgyne.⁶³ Rather her body—like Adam’s—takes shape through an interactive patterning of an image and a likeness drawn from two different sources.

Tripartite Humanity and Pauline Typology

But what sort of “bodies” are in view here? We can only explore this question with reference to an added layer of complexity: the text’s use of a tripartite anthropology—material (also called “choic”—literally, “earthy”), psychic, pneumatic—commonly identified as “Valentinian.” (We have previously encountered references to a similar division in the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts from Theodotus*.) Each of these three terms can be found already in 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul makes a distinction between the “psychic body” (*sōma psychikon*, often—if somewhat misleadingly—translated “physical body” or “natural body”) and the “spiritual body” (*sōma pneumatikon*), and contrasts the first human’s choic origins (*choikos*) to the second human’s heavenly provenance (1 Cor 15.42–49). But the apostle does not clarify the precise relationship between these various bodily states, nor does he explicitly triangulate them. On the contrary, the logic of the 1 Corinthians passage seems driven by binary contrasts: psychic versus spiritual, choic versus heavenly, first human versus second.⁶⁴

In so-called Valentinian myth, however, the terms “choic,” “psychic,” and “pneumatic” come to function as a threefold set of anthropological categories. The idea of some sort of tripartite division to the human subject is at least as old as Plato himself,⁶⁵ and similar divisions can be seen in the writings of

later Platonists such as Plutarch and Philo.⁶⁶ But in Valentian reflection, we find discussion of three *specific kinds* of human beings: material/hylic/choic humans, ensouled/psychic humans, and spiritual/pneumatic humans.⁶⁷ While the implications of these divisions for Valentinian understandings of human nature and salvation have been much debated, the basic tripartite framework appears in both patristic sources and Nag Hammadi texts.⁶⁸

In *On the Origin of the World*, these categories are most clearly articulated in what Painchaud terms “the anthropogonical summary”⁶⁹—a passage that (not incidentally) also lays out the text’s typological framework: “So the first Adam of Light is pneumatic (*pšorp če ‘nadam ‘nte pouoein oupneumatikos*) and appeared on the first day. The second Adam is psychic (*pmašnau ‘nadam oupsukhikos*) and appeared on the sixth day, which is called Aphrodite. The third Adam is choic (*pmašomt ‘nadam oukhoikos*), that one who is the person of law, and he appeared on the eighth day [after the] rest of poverty, which is called Sunday.”⁷⁰ Painchaud sees here a thorough and multi-level redaction of a primitive tradition—and his reconstruction has much to recommend it, insofar as it makes sense of many of the tensions and contradictions that appear in the text.⁷¹ What is most relevant for my purposes, however, is Painchaud’s convincing suggestion that part of what is at stake in this redactional process is a move to polemicize against Paul’s construal of the first and last Adams in 1 Corinthians 15.

As Painchaud argues, this “radical reorientation” seeks to attack Paul’s position that the first Adam is psychic and the last Adam (Christ) is pneumatic (see 1 Cor 15.45–47). To counter this point, *On the Origin of the World* maintains that the first Adam (the Adam of Light) is not psychic but pneumatic. It is the second Adam who is psychic. And who is this “second Adam” in the drama of creation and redemption? Not Christ, as in the Pauline framework. Instead, it is none other than the “luminous earthly manifestation” of Sophia whose creation we have just examined—that is, *the Eve figure*.⁷² On top of this, the text then adds a third Adam—that is, the Adam created by Ialdabaoth and the archons—who is only choic. Painchaud contends that “In our redactor’s Christology, the last Adam is merely terrestrial and has no salvific value.”⁷³ The Pauline Christ is thus effectively displaced from his soteriological position as “last Adam.” In place of this framework, the redactor has put the narrative of the second psychic Adam and demoted the archons’ Adam (now the third Adam) to “this one who has no soul” (*adam paei ete m’ēn psukhē ‘mmof*).⁷⁴

According to this reconstruction, “[the redactor’s] main concern is none other than to challenge the teaching of Paul on resurrection and, therefore,

on salvation by turning his Adam-Christ typology upside down.”⁷⁵ What does this mean for *On the Origin of the World's* theology of human sexual difference in relation to typology?⁷⁶ As I will argue in the remainder of this chapter, this refiguration of Paul's typological categories offers an answer of sorts to the Pauline anthropological problematic, whereby sexual difference cannot be reduced to a problematic aberration or afterthought disrupting the Platonic unity of the whole. Instead, Eve's role as “second Adam” and the introduction of a third Adam allow the text to offer a genealogy of sexual difference in which Adam and Eve's respective creations each have their own proper typological position. One important implication of this, as we will see, is that the tripartite anthropological categories (choic, psychic, pneumatic) function differently with respect to each term of the sexual binary.⁷⁷

The Archons' Adam

To turn first, then, to Adam (the archons' creature or “third Adam”): the body of this figure is molded by the seven archons to resemble their body/image, understood as a modeling or *plasma*. The archons put the body's parts in place one at a time, leaving the most crucial elements, the brain and the nervous system, for Ialdabaoth to fashion. A similar seven-part creation process takes place in the *Apocryphon of John*, albeit spelled out in greater detail. Here each of the seven powers supplies a portion of the body: bone, sinew, flesh, marrow, blood, skin, and hair.⁷⁸ But crucially, in the apocryphon this is a psychic body—made out of soul substance.

What about in *On The Origin of the World*? Here there is a significant difference. For the *Apocryphon of John*, the psychic body is formed first. Only later when the archons realize that the psychic human is superior to them will they mix fire, earth, water, and wind together to enclose the human in the terrestrial: “the tomb of the molding of the body.”⁷⁹ By contrast, in *On The Origin of the World* the modeling of the human has choic dimensions from the outset. The archons cast their sperm “into the middle of the navel of the earth” as their initial creative act.⁸⁰ But this exercise in choic sculpting is not an entirely negative undertaking. As Michael Williams has argued, it is a space of material ambivalence, insofar as the terrestrial plasma of Adam's body reflects both the bestial form of the archons (see 119.17–18) and the likeness of the divine Adam of Light.⁸¹ Insofar as the Adam of Light is the first Adam and the true pneuma-endowed Human Being (see 117.28–29), the third (choic) Adam's creation in the first Adam's likeness involves some kind of connection to the pneumatic, however faint or submerged.

As for the middle level of the tripartite anthropology, is Adam's choic body also a psychic one? Here the text seems to tie itself in a knot of contradiction. How can Adam become a psychic human in 114.36–115.1 (*afšōpe 'nourōme 'mpsukhikos*), only to be characterized a few lines later as a "plasma without soul" (*pefplasma . . . khōris psukhē*)?⁸² One solution is to posit levels of redaction that have produced the contradiction—and indeed this has merit in terms of recovering the history of the text's development.⁸³ But when it comes to interpreting *On the Origin of the World* as it now stands, I would argue for another possibility. Rather than reading 114.36–115.1 ("He—i.e., Adam—became a psychic human") as an incoherent contradiction, we can also understand it as an anticipatory summation of what follows. In other words, 114.36 lays out for us the narrative conclusion that the paragraphs which follow will explain in more detail.

On this reading, the archons' creation of Adam is entirely choic. When the work is completed, Ialdabaoth deserts him as an empty vessel, devoid of spirit (*em'n pneuma 'nhētf*).⁸⁴ For forty days, Adam languishes "without soul" (*khōris psukhē*).⁸⁵ At the end of this period, Sophia Zoe sends her breath into Adam and he begins to writhe upon the ground. However, he cannot stand up. It will take the instruction of Eve, Sophia Zoe's daughter, to fulfill the forecast of 114.36–115.1 so that Adam can become psychic.

The Difference of the Luminous Eve

As for Eve (the second Adam), her constitution in terms of the choic, the psychic, and the pneumatic is significantly different from (the third) Adam's. In contrast to that Adam's creation, the text makes no direct mention of Eve's choic aspect. The female body Sophia Zoe molds is a luminous one, formed in its bodily image out of her own drop of light and patterned on the likeness of her mother Pistis Sophia. While nothing about this Eve seems particularly terrestrial, she is clearly psychic from the start.⁸⁶ In fact, she glows with the radiance of Sophia Zoe's divine light. Furthermore, the implication of this origin is that Eve's link to the pneumatic is different from Adam's. She is not created in the likeness of the Adam of Light. Her counter-creation in the likeness of Pistis Sophia seems to point to its own kind of pneumatic potential that may in fact exceed Adam's.

Thus while he languishes helplessly on the ground, Eve appears powerful and in control, having pity upon her (male) "counterpart" (*pesšbreine*)⁸⁷ and calling out to him, "Adam, live. Rise up upon the earth!"⁸⁸ The command is immediately effective: Adam rises up and opens his eyes. What precisely

takes place in this interchange is not totally clear. Is Eve imparting *psyche* or soul-substance to Adam? Or do her words simply render efficacious the breath Sophia Zoe has already breathed into the soulless Adam? The text does not tell us explicitly.⁸⁹ But whatever the nature of the exchange, Adam gratefully credits her with his newly experienced psychic status, telling Eve, “You are the one who has given me life.”⁹⁰ In any event, this story of human origins (and with it sexual difference) clearly conceives of the respective bodies of the male and female differently. While Adam is immured in the complications of the choic, even as he comes to possess a psychical dimension, the body of Eve—the second Adam—seems to be a different sort of thing.

In fact, the archons make precisely this point when they see her talking to their human who has unexpectedly risen to his feet: “What sort of thing is this luminous woman? (*ouou te teeir mouoein*) For she is like the likeness which appeared to us in the light.”⁹¹ This is a threat: a human being of unknown origins whom the archons are unable to map onto any known schema of derivation. The best they can do is to assign her luminosity to the very template that they have used to create Adam. They tell each other that she resembles the likeness that figured so prominently in their creative machinations—that of the Adam of Light. And indeed, Eve’s luminous body does not belie this connection. But as the reader knows, this is not Eve’s true origin. She is patterned on a different likeness—that of Pistis herself—and her light-body is formed from a shimmering drop derived directly from Sophia.

Here, then, the archons are confronted with a difference that proves inassimilable to the categories with which they understand, organize, and seek to dominate the created order. The haunting resonances of Ialdabaoth’s earlier boasts hang in the background, ironically underscoring the archons’ ongoing ignorance of the actors and movements that populate the highest levels of the heavens. Clearly Eve’s alterity exposes their limited and incomplete vision. The archons have no choice but to grope and fumble for an explanation (in this case a false one) and ultimately respond to this difference with violence: “Now come, let us possess her and thrust our seed into her, in order that when she is defiled, she will not be able to go up to her light.”⁹²

While the archons’ rape of Eve is familiar from the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, its function here is different.⁹³ Although the archons of the *Hypostasis* also seek to possess Eve (“Come, let us sow our seed in her”),⁹⁴ there is no mention of blocking her ascent through defilement. The motivation for the rape is lust: the archons desire her and become “agitated with a great agitation.”⁹⁵ But in *On the Origin of the World* what engenders violence is not primarily desire

but the encounter with Eve's difference. The luminous woman is not the sort of thing that fits into the archons' understanding of the created cosmos—or of human anthropology within it. Rape becomes an attempt to subdue this difference and shore up the boundaries of a creation that has begun to leak.

But before carrying out their premeditated sexual violence against Eve, the archons must deal with Adam. The text carries this out through a creative re-reading of Genesis 2.21. The archons cause a deep sleep to come over Adam—a move paralleled in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and to a lesser degree in the *Apocryphon of John*.⁹⁶ Yet the distinct move that *On the Origin of the World* makes here is significant. In both the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, Eve is formed in this moment: in the former, Ialdabaoth molds her in an attempt to grasp the ungraspable Epinoia of Light hidden within Adam,⁹⁷ while in the latter, the archons open Adam's side “like a living woman” and the result is the pneumatic Eve.⁹⁸ In contrast to both these accounts, in *On the Origin of the World* the Genesis reference to the rib is nothing more than the archons' ruse. No creation actually happens in this moment. Rather the archons tell each other, “Let us teach him in his sleep as if (*hōs ešje*) she came from his rib, so that his wife may submit and he may be her master.”⁹⁹

Thus the text distances itself (perhaps consciously) from readings of Genesis that interpret Genesis 1.27 and 5.2 in terms of a primal androgynous creation, later divided into two sexually differentiated beings through the events of Genesis 2. On the contrary, in this reading, sexual difference is woven into the very fabric of human creation itself. In light of the text's polemical reworking of the Pauline anthropological categories, the terrestrial Adam of Genesis is not primary but rather the third Adam/human being, and Eve is herself the second Adam in this sequence. The powers of the divine realm have created her according to a different blueprint—and as such, she occupies her own specific place in the refigured typological framework.

As for Eve's choic dimensions, the text never addresses directly how (or even if) they come to be. After the duping of Adam by means of the rib explanation, the archons get back to the primary business at hand: the rape of Eve. As in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the true Eve becomes a tree (in this case entering into the tree of gnosis), leaving only her likeness (*peseine*) with Adam.¹⁰⁰ The text makes clear that this likeness is not the true Eve.¹⁰¹ Thus, when the archons and their angels forcibly defile what they take to be Eve, they end up defiling only their own bodies and the *doppelgänger* Eve has left behind to trick them. The result of this violent sexual assault is the birth of

Abel and other offspring as well—all of which seems to point to the conclusion that this murky double is in some sense terrestrial or choic, though where these terrestrial elements have come from has not been explained.

Yet there is some slippage in the way the text portrays the two Eves (the *doppelgänger* and the true one). On the one hand, the text's generally encratic perspective associates the sexual activities of the earthly Adam and his female companion with animal-like ignorance.¹⁰² But at the same time, this likeness of Eve is not entirely negative or defiled. Later in the text, she functions as the hero insofar as she listens to the serpent instructor and eats from the tree of knowledge (here an act that is valorized and leads to the opening of Adam and Eve's minds). Furthermore, the luminous psychic Eve is not forgotten. Though the archons have soiled her likeness, they are forced to face the fact that this woman still needs to be feared. As they admit to one another, perhaps this Eve is in fact "the true human being" (*prōme 'nalētheinos*).¹⁰³

While the text will go on to narrate a complicated account of salvation history through a reinterpretation of Genesis 3, Egyptian mythological materials, apocalyptic traditions, and New Testament texts, its basic anthropological commitments are now set in place. Hope for salvation lies in Sophia's foreordained plan (*auoikonomia*) for Eve. By means of this counterplot—inflected as it is through an alternate typology—the divine luminosity that is in play differently in the male and the female (due to their different modes of creation) will lead to human beings becoming "containers of the light" (*'njolf' l 'mpouoein*). The ultimate result will be the condemnation of the archons.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that *On the Origin of the World* negotiates the issue of human sexual difference and its origins through a narrative of creation and counter-creation, rooted in the interpretation of Genesis 1.26. While Ialdabaoth and the archons create the terrestrial Adam in the image of their body and the likeness of the Adam of Light, Sophia responds with her own creational maneuver, also based on a disjunctive reading of Genesis 1.26. In response to the archons, she creates Eve in the image of her own divine light (via a radiant drop) and in the likeness of the mother Pistis Sophia who has appeared in the primal waters.

The text then situates these two prototypical humans typologically, responding to the Pauline problematic by resisting Paul's traditional formulation.

It argues instead for an anthropological model of not two but three “Adams”—the purely spiritual “Adam of Light,” the second Adam (Eve), and the third Adam (the archons’ human creation). Within this framework, the bodies of Eve and Adam receive further specificity in their differing configurations of a tripartite anthropology.¹⁰⁵ Adam begins as the archon’s modeled form, fundamentally choic, yet bearing a pneumatic imprint insofar as he is created in the likeness of the true pneumatic human, the Adam of Light. However, it is only through the breath of Sophia and Adam’s further interactions with Eve that he is able to assume psychic dimensions. Eve, on the other hand, is psychic from the beginning (and presumably also connected to the pneumatic in view of her creation in Pistis’ likeness), while her choic dimensions only come into view via her shadowy double.

In this way, then, the sexual difference of Eve points to an alternate model of human anthropology. She comes from a different genealogy of image and likeness than her male counterpart, and as a result, her choic, psychic, and pneumatic dimensions map out differently than Adam’s. It is this specific origin (and the anthropological configuration that follows from it) which allows Eve to play her crucial role in the text’s soteriological drama. Not only does she help Adam come to full psychic status, but as a figure of difference, this luminous Eve poses a challenge to the archons—an alterity that defies their violent attempts at domination and that ultimately proves a conduit for the text’s eschatological hope.

It is important to note, in conclusion, that this alterity of Eve is not total—at least with respect to her counterpart, Adam, insofar as both of them have a connection to the divine light woven into their beings. But it is still a condition that runs deep, manifest in different processes of creation, different roles in the story of redemption, and thus, necessarily, different typological positions. Therefore, I would argue, this is an alterity that is profoundly significant for *On the Origin of the World’s* theological anthropology. It is, in fact, on the basis of this fundamental and irreducible otherness that the text presents a distinctive early Christian option for conceptualizing the origins and meaning of sexual difference—one that does not figure sexual dimorphism as a result of a secondary “fall” in which the female is two steps removed from the primal androgyne.¹⁰⁶

Yet we are still within the purview of the Platonic intellectual tradition and the problem of the “Platonic woman.” Thus I do not mean to claim that the text valorizes female choic bodies either—or *any* choic bodies, for that matter. Rather, as Michael Williams has shown for Nag Hammadi sources

more generally, “on the one hand, the human self is quite completely distinguished from the physical body, and ultimately must be rescued from it; but on the other hand . . . precisely in the human body is to be found the best *visible* trace of the divine in the material world.”¹⁰⁷ *On the Origin of the World* participates in this perspective but with a difference: the duality of the sexes is primary, rooted in two processes of creation, each of which has its own integrity (even as the text values them differently).

In this way, then, an early Christian platonizing interpretation of Genesis 1–3 offers a genealogy of embodiment in which sexual difference is not, in fact, a derivative afterthought, mapping easily onto the dualism of flesh and spirit. Instead, it is the fundamental place in which the trace of the divine materializes, interwoven in different and inassimilable ways in Adam and Eve’s respective bodies. Does this, in the end, “solve” the problem posed by the specter of the Pauline anthropological problematic? Perhaps so . . . but only at a cost: the relinquishing of a certain pretension to unified wholeness through the introduction of an irreducible (and, in some ways, illegible) third term into the typological framework. Here this third term, the difference of the feminine, emerges as an inassimilable *presence* in the story of a humanity still perched precariously between only *two* poles—creation and redemption/resurrection. As such, we could construe *On the Origin of the World’s* strategy of resistance as yet another attempt to domesticate difference in a way that is not entirely tenable (its refigured typology notwithstanding)—insofar as the text seeks to put explicitly into narrative (and thus pin down definitively) the recalcitrant kernel of a sexed and sexualized difference that has no proper “place” in an Adam-Christ typology, even one that has been “turned upside down.”¹⁰⁸

Chapter 4

Virgin Earth, Virgin Birth: Irenaeus of Lyons and the Predicaments of Recapitulation

There is no such system, however elaborated or elevated it may be, in which there is not some point of impossibility, its other face which it endlessly seeks to refuse—what could be called the vanishing-point of its attempt to construct itself as a system. And in so far as the system closes over the moment of difference or impossibility, what gets set up in its place is essentially an image of the woman. . . . Set up as the guarantee of the system she comes to represent two things—what the man is not, that is, difference, and what he has to give up, that is excess.

—Jacqueline Rose, “Woman as Symptom”

In this section of the book, I turn to a second paradigmatic early Christian strategy for situating sexual difference in relation to Pauline typological categories: the move to build a more complicated framework than that which we see in Paul—one that includes not only Adam and Christ, but also Eve and Mary as typological representatives of sexually differentiated humanity.

We have already seen a variant on this strategy in Chapter 1 in the *Gospel of Philip*. Here *Philip* deploys the trope of the undefiled, virginal female body (with reference to four different “virgins”: Mary, Sophia, the female Holy Spirit, and the pristine earth of the primordial creation) in order to invest the difference of the female/feminine with a typological legitimacy within the terms of the system as a whole. In this chapter and the one that follows, I will examine two related projects—each much more fully articulated

than *Philip's*—as seen in the thought of Irenaeus of Lyons and Tertullian of Carthage.

Both Irenaeus and Tertullian mobilize the trope of virginity in relation to female and male flesh as the conceptual lynchpin to their respective theological anthropologies. Through this shared focus on the enduring value and significance of flesh, the authors examined in Part II thereby anticipate in important ways the shift that Patricia Cox Miller has identified as a “material turn” in late ancient Christianity (a turn she locates primarily in the fourth century).¹ But their foregrounding of a material/fleshly register also underscores the inevitable slippage between the bodily and the discursive, a “conjunction of discourse, materiality, and meaning” in which these various registers are necessarily implicated in one another in complex and not fully separable ways.² And it is from within this slippery conceptual space that each of these prominent early Christian thinkers makes a concerted attempt (but one, I will argue, that is only partially successful) to locate and domesticate sexual difference within typological terms.

Irenaeus of Lyons is one of the earliest Christian writers to forge a typological connection between the figures of the Virgin Mary and Eve,³ and the first to develop a theology of recapitulation that makes significant use of the Eve-Mary parallel. As such, he has received considerable attention from scholars of Mariology.⁴ But as M. C. Steenberg has pointed out, scholarly discussions of Irenaeus on this point tend to begin with assertions of the contrast between the two figures in the Irenaean corpus with little attention to the question of why the contrast is being asserted in the first place.⁵ In fact the question of “why” seems a crucial starting point, not only for working out the intricacies of the Eve-Mary typology itself, but also for locating it in relation to Irenaeus’s theology as a whole.

Within this theology, the concept of recapitulation (Greek: *anakephalaiōsis* / Latin: *recapitulatio*) stands as a central tenet. Irenaeus faces Valentinian opponents who (at least in his estimation) assert a soteriological vision in which, within the heavenly pleroma, “the Savior, having come forth out of all things, is the All”⁶—and they draw on the words of Ephesians 1.10 to do so (“in the economy of the fullness [pleroma] of time, all things are recapitulated in Christ” / *eis oikonomian tou plērōmatos tōn kairōn anakephalaiōsasthai ta panta en tō Christō*). In this Valentinian exegesis, according to J. T. Nielsen, “the word *oikonomia* [functions] with reference to the internal processes within the Pleroma, particularly the preserving of order which results in the coming of Christ.”⁷

In response, Irenaeus argues for a different interpretation of this crucial verse, grounded in an alternative scheme of salvation that accords tremendous theological significance to the events of human history.⁸ He therefore foregrounds not the divine order of a cosmological pleroma but rather the operation of *anakephalaiōsis*. Eric Osborn defines this understanding of recapitulation as the principle that “all finds meaning in the person and work of Jesus Christ . . . [whose] work involves joining the end to the beginning and changing reality in a radical way.”⁹ As Nielsen elaborates, “That which in an earlier phase of the history of salvation had the negative sign . . . through the recapitulation of Christ comes under the positive sign. . . . Salvation corresponds to the history that went before: a positive sign replaces the negative. The new in Christ absorbs the old.”¹⁰ Here then the pleroma of Ephesians 1.10 functions not as a divine sphere (as Irenaeus’s Valentinians would have it) but rather as the “fullness” of historical time, the perfectly timed era in which Christ accomplished his work.¹¹

In this way, we can see in the Irenaean principle of recapitulation an explicit articulation (and extension) of what I have called a “Pauline theological logic”—a hermeneutic driven by the desire for the two movements of creation and redemption to yield a single field of meaning, defined in terms of its unified fullness through the redemptive work of Christ. And within this recapitulative economy—as in Paul’s own theological anthropology—the relationship between Adam and Christ is of paramount importance: “When Irenaeus speaks of the creation of Adam, then the relation to Christ is also present.”¹² Yet Irenaeus also modifies and extends the Pauline project in significant ways—though always placing his own reflections fully under the aegis of Paul’s authority (unlike a text such as *On the Origin of the World*). Thus, Nielsen concludes, where Paul was concerned primarily with Christ as “the *second Adam*,” Irenaeus develops his recapitulative theology so as to focus on Christ as “the *second Adam*.”¹³ The inseverable connection between these two seminal human beings provides the foundation for a consummation of all things in which every element of the end is linked to its corresponding component at the beginning through the work of Christ.

If this is the case, then what about sexual difference? It would seem that extending the theological, anthropological, and hermeneutical purchase of the Adam-Christ connection only intensifies the conundrum posed by the Pauline anthropological problematic. So how does Irenaeus deal with this? And what connection is there here (if indeed there is one at all) to the role that the typological link between Eve and Mary plays in his thought? Given the

foundational place of Adam and Christ as the two paradigmatic human beings (who also happen to be male), what significance do these two *women* have for Irenaeus's theological anthropology? If the end is to be like the beginning in a specifically Christocentric way, where does this leave Eve, Mary, and the relationship between them?

Leaving the Pauline problematic aside for a moment, one possible solution to the question of Eve and Mary's function rests on the assumption that what drives Irenaeus is the aesthetic appeal of symmetry: "The disobedience of Adam and Eve was corrected by the obedience of Jesus and Mary."¹⁴ Yet the problem with this solution, as Steenberg reminds us, is that it makes "Irenaeus' claims of the necessity of Eve's recapitulation in Mary and the latter's status as *advocata* and source of freedom stand on questionable theological ground, if they do not in fact contradict outright his own claims of salvation as offered uniquely in and by Christ."¹⁵ In other words, if an aesthetic penchant for symmetry is all that lies behind the parallel between Eve and Mary, then why does Irenaeus insist that Mary actually accomplished something theologically indispensable with respect to Eve? Steenberg poses the question as follows: "either Irenaeus' belief in the necessity of Eve's recapitulation in Mary is an over-extension of his aesthetic ideal, or there must exist some kind of distinction in the human roles of Adam and Eve that warrants a co-ordinate recapitulation of each."¹⁶

In response to this dilemma, Steenberg offers a solution focused on the inherently social role of Eve as the second human being. He develops the notion of Eve as "helper" (in the sense of egalitarian companionship) in order to argue that while Adam initially exists as an individual all alone, "Eve was, from her inception, a social creature, symbolically embodying not so much human *nature* . . . as the human *society* formed by God in light of the fact that 'it is not good for man to be alone.'¹⁷ In this way, the social dimension of human existence becomes, for Steenberg, the key to understanding the meaning of Mary's recapitulation of Eve: "as the antitype of Eve, Mary is also in the unique position of being herself recapitulatory, not in the same sense as Christ whose recapitulation is of human nature, but as one whose role in the recapitulative economy is to restore the proper character of human inter-relatedness that this nature requires."¹⁸

But this solution, while logically coherent, cannot exhaust the function of the typology insofar as it pays no attention to the role of Eve's material specificity. By focusing only on nongendered sociality and ignoring questions of sexual difference, Steenberg effectively neuters this crucial aspect of

Irenaeus's theological anthropology. To return, then, to the problem posed by the Pauline anthropological problematic: it seems necessary to wrestle with the fact that Eve's flesh is not just a flesh that is fundamentally identical to Adam's, mattering theologically only insofar as it is socialized in relation to him. Rather, Eve's flesh is different—and for a thinker as preoccupied with materiality as Irenaeus, this difference matters. The sexual particularities of Adam and Eve's respective bodies are not simply epiphenomenal. They are an integral and complex part of the larger recapitulative framework that drives Irenaeus's theology as a whole.¹⁹

This point has not been lost on feminist theologians. Of particular interest is the work of Tina Beattie, who argues (in conversation with Luce Irigaray) for critical readings of Irenaeus and other patristic authors as a resource for feminist theology: "If, following Irenaeus, we untie the knots of sin all the way back to Eve, we must begin by liberating woman's desire and sexuality from its denigration in Eve, through celebrating its restoration in Mary."²⁰ More specifically (and in a way that might seem to run counter to Beattie's point), Irenaeus draws a parallel not just between Eve and Mary but between their *virginal* bodies—a somewhat surprising move with respect to Eve given the tendency of later patristic writers to figure her primarily in terms of her role as a sexual temptress.²¹ While this consistent emphasis on virginity throughout Irenaeus's treatment of both Mary and Eve might seem to render Beattie's argument about the emancipation of women's desire problematic, she maintains that we need not read this as a rejection of female sexuality. Rather, while it may run against the grain of Irenaeus's authorial intent, for Beattie the valorization of virginity "can be interpreted positively as an affirmation of the integrity of women's desire before God, in a way that is not dependent upon the phallus and is not reducible to genitality alone. Mary's *fiat* is surely an orgasmic cry of *jouissance*, and to refuse to recognize it as such is to deny the totality of her joy and her bodily self-giving before God."²²

Yet virginity remains an issue, and Beattie admits as much elsewhere, conceding that "if that maternal body of Mary is a potential resource for feminist philosophy, her virginity is a more problematic proposition, having become a potent symbol of men's fear of female sexuality, and representing as it does an impossible double bind for women who are confronted with an ideal of virginal motherhood as the ultimate model of holiness."²³ With respect to Irenaeus specifically, this is further complicated by the fact that the function of virginity in his argument is not entirely straightforward, leaving Beattie to pose a question very similar to Steenberg's: "Is this simply another example of

the convoluted typology of patristic writings, so that the virginity of the two women offers a satisfying symmetry between the story of Eve's temptation and Mary's annunciation?"²⁴

A very good question. In response, this chapter will argue that the relationship that Irenaeus forges between virginity and typology cannot *only* be characterized as "convoluted" (though it may indeed be that). Rather, this relationship—or, more precisely, network of relationships—functions as a pivotal vehicle in his unswerving quest to articulate a fully coherent theological anthropology. (The "coherence" in view here revolves around the degree to which this anthropology successfully embodies the recapitulative hermeneutic described above.) Furthermore, I maintain, a careful reading of Irenaeus's texts will show that "virginity" is, in fact, a multivalent term for him, one whose multiple uses cannot be reduced to an appeal to a "satisfying symmetry."²⁵ While Beattie moves quickly to conclude that the typological virginity in question is "the defining motif of what it means to be a woman created in the image of God in the order of creation and redemption,"²⁶ I would like to suggest that the precise function of virginity in Irenaeus's thought calls for further analysis. More specifically, I contend that this analysis needs to be pursued with reference to the larger theological puzzle that both Beattie and Steenberg gesture toward: why does Irenaeus see Mary's recapitulation of Eve as theologically *necessary*—especially in the context of a broadly Pauline recapitulative framework in which the figures of Adam and Christ purportedly define a unified field of meaning without remainder?

The Multivalence of Virginity

As we will see below, Irenaeus's treatment of virginity proves to be enmeshed in a dense and intricate complex of interpretive connections—a hermeneutical knot with no fewer than three separate but interrelated strands. At different moments and to different ends, Irenaeus figures the trope in terms of childhood innocence, of the unpenetrated body, and of a paradoxical state of fertility. What is more, while these three figures are undeniably interconnected, they do not relate to Irenaeus's logic of sexual difference in identical ways. For example, when he represents virginity as a childlike state of innocence equally applicable to both female and male bodies, he presumes the possibility of a state of sexual difference not bound up in the problematics of desire or procreation—and not reducible to either. Following his governing principle

that the end will be like the beginning,²⁷ this is a state characteristic not only of Adam and Eve's protological bodies but also of eschatological human bodies to come. The flesh will find its fulfillment in a resurrected condition parallel to that of the garden: a virginal state of innocence in which sexually differentiated bodies perdure but in a condition free of desire or reproductive purpose.

Yet this deployment of virginity proves to contain within itself a certain conceptual impossibility. While it can serve well enough as both the mythic origin and the ultimate goal of the human condition, in both positions "virginity" as a concept remains relatively empty of content. But, as I will show, in order for Irenaeus to advance crucial portions of his argument regarding the incarnation and the resurrection of the flesh, he must invest virginity with a further theological significance than simply what is implied by a state of childhood innocence. To do so, he has to turn to other notions of virginity (intactness and fertility) that *are* dependent for their meaning on the specific difference of the female body. I will argue that these remain conceptually im-mured in the very dynamics of desire and procreation that Irenaeus wishes to eradicate in his final eschatological vision of virginity and sexual difference.

The difference of the feminine therefore emerges as a kind of excess in Irenaeus's theological project—a remainder in his recapitulative equation. This difference is on the one hand absolutely necessary for the work it performs with respect to his incarnational theology and his doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. But on the other hand, it is deeply problematic insofar as it leaves an imbalance in his final register of recapitulation. Thus the specter persists, this time in a particularly Irenaean form. For the end truly to be like the beginning—a state of virginal sexual difference in which desire and procreation play no part—the excess must be resolved through a recapitulative maneuver. It is this problem, I will argue, that Irenaeus attempts to solve with the Eve-Mary typology. By locating the excessive difference in the figure of Eve, he can then appeal to the typological connection with Mary such that her intact yet fertile female body situates the remainder solidly within the terms of God's redemptive project. Her virginal womb ("that pure womb which regenerates people to God"²⁸) becomes the site where Irenaeus seeks to resolve the unruly interplay of desire, procreation, and sexual difference.

Yet, as we will see, in the final analysis the project only partially succeeds. While the Mary-Eve typology is Irenaeus's best attempt to resolve and contain this feminine excess, the basic premises of his anthropology encode a gendering of matter and the flesh in and of themselves that is related to—but not entirely containable by—the female bodies of Mary and Eve. As a result, Eve as

the figure of feminine difference cannot contain the entire excess that Irenaeus needs, insofar as the notion of the feminine proves operative in his theology on more levels than that of literal female human bodies. Despite Irenaeus's best efforts, there remains in his theological vision a certain surplus that proves irresolvable within the logic of anthropological recapitulation.

Virginity as Childhood Innocence

Scholars have long taken note of Irenaeus's peculiar characterization of Adam and Eve in the garden as "children" and its parallels with a similar motif in Theophilus of Antioch.²⁹ The question of what precisely Irenaeus means by this designation is a complex and difficult one: does he intend us to understand Adam and Eve at their creation as little children/infants in a physical (bodily) sense or does he have something else in mind?³⁰ As Steenberg points out, "It remains impossible, even after a full examination of his usage, to say with any certainty whether the 'children' that Irenaeus considered Adam and Eve to be were physically equivalent to infants, prepubescent youths, or humans of some other physiological formation."³¹

Yet despite the difficulty of clarifying Irenaeus's precise sense here, what is important for this analysis is the connection that he draws between Adam and Eve's *infans* condition and the state of virginity. The link becomes clear in his discussion of how Eve can be simultaneously both a wife to Adam and a virgin: "Just as she who indeed had a husband, Adam, but nevertheless was still a virgin (*uirgo tamen adhuc existens*)—"for they were both naked" in Paradise "and were not ashamed," seeing that they did not have an understanding of the generation of children, having been created just a little bit before. For it was necessary that they first grow up and then accordingly multiply."³² Here Irenaeus justifies and explains Eve's virginal status exegetically by appealing to Genesis 2.25. As children who have not yet grown up, Adam and Eve's failure to feel shame at their own nakedness is due to virginal innocence—a lack of understanding regarding procreation.

Irenaeus offers a further articulation of this connection in *Epideixis* 14 (hereafter *Epid.*), highlighting the first humans' childlike (and, by extension, virginal) disposition:

"And Adam and Eve"—for this is the name of the woman—"were naked, and were not ashamed." For there was in them an innocent

and infantile disposition (*innocens enim et infantilis sensus erat in eis*), and they thought and imagined nothing whatsoever of those things that are born perversely in the soul through inordinate desires and shameful lusts. For they were at that time keeping their nature intact (*integram*), since that which had been breathed into the formation was the breath of life. Therefore, while persisting in its order and power, the breath has no thought or imagining of evil things. On account of this therefore, they were not ashamed, kissing and embracing one another in holiness after the manner of children.³³

In this way, virginity emerges for Irenaeus as a state of protological innocence, associated with the holiness of childhood. As in *AH* 3.22.4, this is primarily an *epistemological* state: Adam and Eve have no comprehension or experience of problematic desire (here synonymous with evil) insofar as the breath of life remains in them “in its order and power.”

This state is not an asexual bodily situation. Adam and Eve exist as sexually differentiated beings and relate to each other as such, “kissing and embracing one another in holiness.”³⁴ Yet in making this claim Irenaeus marks out an ambiguous and difficult terrain. The kisses and embraces of the protological human beings are interpersonal bodily expressions. But these expressions, given their childlike quality, must necessarily be free of problematic “adult” characteristics such as desire and any overt teleological purpose toward procreation. Here Irenaeus’s move is less straightforward than it might initially seem. Presenting virginity in this way—a state of childhood innocence that includes sexed, bodily expression—entails a conception of sexual difference that can exist without the possibility of desire or procreation. This, we will see, becomes increasingly difficult for Irenaeus to maintain as he develops the terms of his larger recapitulative argument.

More immediately, however, Adam and Eve lose this condition of childhood innocence after the fall. Having violated God’s command, Adam covers himself with fig leaves, a scratchy and uncomfortable garment “deserving of his disobedience,” thereby attempting to dull the newly acquired “lustful impulse of his flesh, since he had lost his nature and childlike disposition (*quoniam indolem et puerilem amiserat sensum*) and had come to a reflective awareness of evil.”³⁵ Yet, as John Behr shows, while the lust of the flesh is clearly problematic and related to the fall, Irenaeus does not figure procreation itself (and with it the loss of virginity) as a direct result of human disobedience. Rather,

as we saw above, “it was necessary that they first grow up and then accordingly multiply.” Behr argues convincingly, “It seems that Irenaeus understood the blessing of God in Genesis 1:28, ‘increase and multiply’ in a sequential manner: grow/increase and (then) multiply. The procreation of children is part of God’s economy for the human race, which would come into effect when the newly created ‘children’ have reached a suitable age and maturity.”³⁶

Overall, then, virginity as a state of childhood innocence will pass away at the appropriate time in human development within God’s redemptive economy. While the sexual intercourse that leads to procreation remains a necessary and proper part of that economy, this is not to imply that it lacks concessionary dimensions. According to Behr:

For Irenaeus, Christ’s words, “He who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh’” (Matt. 19:4–6), expresses a truth about human existence, which actual human beings, because of their weakness and incontinence, are still being prepared to attain by salvific concessions. However, the fullness of the liberty of the sons of God is not characterized by such concessions, but, I have suggested, by Irenaeus’s portrayal of Adam and Eve “kissing and embracing each other in holiness” (Dem 14), taken not as a mythical picture of protological innocence, but as a description of true, eschatological, human existence.³⁷

In this way, humanity begins and ends with both virginity (understood as epistemological innocence or holiness) and sexual difference. Yet the latter does not prove determinative for this way of understanding the former. In the garden, insofar as Adam and Eve are recently created, innocent, and without lustful desires, they are both “virgins” in this sense.³⁸ Though their bodies are sexually differentiated from the start, their respective virginities are understood without difference—a state defined by a mutual freedom from the vagaries of eros rather than by the material specificities of bodily sex.

Likewise, at the resurrection sexual difference will not fall away, nor will it be refigured as a redemptive collapse of the female into the male. Here we are no longer in a sphere overdetermined by the dilemma(s) of “the Platonic woman.” Indeed, there is something unthinkable for Irenaeus about an eschaton that elides or erases sexual difference, insofar as he sees it as a primary

marker of the flesh and thus necessarily entailed in the resurrection of that flesh. As Behr maintains, “for Irenaeus, sexuality is a fundamental characteristic of human existence as a fleshly being, a permanent part of the framework within which men and women grow toward God.”³⁹ Yet this difference, fundamental as it is, similarly fails to define the eschatological “virginity” that human beings will attain. Rather Irenaeus’s connection between virginity, childhood, and holiness lacks sexual specificity, applying equally to male and female bodies on a plane outside of desire and outside of procreation—a virginity experienced both in the created state in the garden and in the transformation at the eschaton.⁴⁰

Virginity as the Unpenetrated Body

Valorizing Virgin Earth

But for Irenaeus, virginity is not just about childhood innocence. In seeking to invest the concept with further specificity (thereby multiplying its possible uses for his theological anthropology), Irenaeus invokes the related (but not entirely identical) idea of the virgin as an unpenetrated body. In fact, I will argue, it is this figure of virginity—the virgin as a pristine, intact, and necessarily *female* body—that allows him to move his larger recapitulative argument forward. In drawing crucial hermeneutical links between this vision of the virginal body and the text of Genesis, he is able to pull off what, on the surface of things, appears to be a theological *tour de force*. By means of the unpenetrated body and the metaphorical connections it suggests, Irenaeus makes a significant move beyond Paul’s original framework, articulating an analogy between Adam and Christ whereby both partake of a single mode of embodiment (unique to them as first and second Adam), in spite of the differing circumstances of their respective births.

Yet the trajectory of this complicated argument begins for Irenaeus with a relatively simple question about materiality: how can human flesh and blood inherit the kingdom of God? This is a difficult problem in a second-century philosophical context not given to valuing the flesh (as illustrated in previous chapters),⁴¹ and Paul’s seemingly straightforward sense in 1 Corinthians 15.50 makes it all the harder: “What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (NRSV). Elsewhere Irenaeus will engage this knotty passage head-on, challenging his Valentinian opponents

who claim that the verse clearly renders bodily resurrection in the flesh impossible.⁴² But in his reflections on creation, he also tackles the issue, offering a subtle, exegetically driven response that works out of the opening chapters of Genesis. His strategy is to explore the material dimension of anthropology within the created order: what exactly is the composition of the stuff that God used to create the first human beings? According to *Epid.* 11, God “formed the man with his own hands, obtaining the purest and finest and most delicate (*purissimum . . . et tenuissimum-et-delicatissimum*) stuff of the earth, mixing his own power together with the earth according to measure.”⁴³ In this way, human flesh and blood is formed from a mixture of God’s power and rarefied dirt.⁴⁴

Antonio Orbe has characterized this emphasis on flesh and dirt in terms of the contrast between the “sarcological” dimensions of Irenaeus’s anthropology and the pneumatological anthropology of his opponents, “the Gnostics.”⁴⁵ While this contrast certainly holds on some level, it should be noted that more is at work for Irenaeus in his protological considerations than a dualistic divide between flesh/matter and spirit.⁴⁶ In his extensive discussion of his opponents in Book 1 of *Adversus haereses* (hereafter *AH*), Irenaeus argues that, according to the Valentinians, “When the world had been created, he [the Demiurge] then made the choic component of the man (*hominem choicum*), taking him, however, not out of this dry earth, but from the invisible substance, from the fusible and fluid matter (*non autem ab hac arida terra, sed ab inuisibili substantia et ab effusibili et fluida materia*). And into this, they determine that he breathed the psychic component.”⁴⁷ Here Irenaeus’s presentation of his Valentinian opponents does not portray their anthropology as predicated on the immaterial, but rather as based on another sort of matter—invisible, fusible, and fluid. The issue seems to be not so much materiality per se as it is the respective valuations of different kinds of matter in competing narratives of humanity’s creation. As he summarizes elsewhere:

Accordingly the followers of Valentinus forfeit their position when they say that man was not formed out of this earth but from a fluid and dispersed matter (*fluida materia et effusa*). For out of that earth from which the Lord shaped eyes for that man, it is clear that man also was formed at the beginning. For indeed it would not follow logically that the eyes be formed from one place but the rest of the body from another, just as it would not follow that one formed the body and another in fact formed the eyes.⁴⁸

Thus the conflict comes not between matter and its lack, but rather between earth and fluid—the question of whether the first human being was created out of dirt or out of the primal waters.⁴⁹ Irenaeus makes the case for earth by invoking an intertextual connection: the mud used by Jesus to heal the blind man in John 9.6. If the gospel teaches that earth was the material used to form new eyes, then surely it follows that the initial creation of the body itself was similar in kind.⁵⁰

Accordingly, the logic of the argument appeals not to the problem of “immateriality,” but rather to the appropriateness of one particular type of matter. Dale Martin has compellingly shown that Cartesian dichotomies of material versus immaterial prove generally unhelpful for thinking about ancient materials: “*all* the Cartesian oppositions—matter versus nonmatter, physical versus spiritual, corporeal (or physical) versus psychological, nature versus supernature—are misleading when retrojected into ancient language. A ‘one world’ model is much closer to the ancient conception, and, instead of an ontological dualism, we should think of a hierarchy of essence.”⁵¹ Furthermore, he points out, “The reason why the normal human body cannot experience immortality is that it occupies a relatively low place on the spectrum of stuff, which ranges from fine, thin, rarified stuff down to gross, thick, heavy stuff.”⁵²

It is against this ancient conceptual backdrop that we need to understand Irenaeus’s appeal to the quality of the dirt from which Adam was produced. Therefore, *Epid.* 11 is not an attempt to value matter over nonmatter, but an effort to valorize the primal earth (over water and other possible creative elements) as a material building block refined enough to be capable of participating in God’s anthropological project as Irenaeus understands it. Against the common ancient view (as articulated by Plutarch) that “to mix heaven with earth is foolish,”⁵³ Irenaeus argues for an original earth so pure, fine, and delicate that it proves an appropriate vehicle for direct mixing with the power of God, and yielding (in the Creator’s adept hands) a “flesh” capable of being inherited in the kingdom of God, thereby overcoming the apparent sense of 1 Corinthians 15.50.⁵⁴

But why dirt over and against other possible forms of matter? What is it about dirt that makes it *the* necessary material component for Irenaeus’s anthropology? On the most basic level, I would argue, exegesis drives the issue: against the diffuse and watery substance of his opponents, Irenaeus sticks to the letter of the Septuagint text, which speaks only of *choun apo tēs gēs* (Gen 2.7). Yet, exegetically, the appeal to “dust of the earth” opens up a further

hermeneutical opportunity—one, we will see, with a decisive theological payoff. For drawing on the Genesis text allows Irenaeus to characterize the earth in question not just in terms of its quality (“the purest and finest and most delicate”) but also in terms of its unbroken condition. Genesis 2.5 makes this second point clear: “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” (NRSV). If this is the case, then the dirt is not only pure and delicate in terms of the quality of its substance but is in fact pure in another sense: it is untilled, unpenetrated by either rain or agriculture, and therefore unadulterated. On secure exegetical grounds then, this particular kind of matter can lay claim to a status that other sorts cannot: it is, in fact, *virgin* earth: “From where then was the substance of the first-formed? Out of the will and wisdom of God and out of virgin earth (*ex virgine terra*): ‘for God did not bring about rain,’ says Scripture, before man had been created, ‘and there was no man to work the earth.’ Therefore out of this earth, while it was still virgin (*Igitur ex hac, dum virgo erat adhuc*), ‘God took dirt from the earth and formed a man,’ the beginning of humanity.”⁵⁵

The same point is also made in *AH* 3.21.10: “the first-formed himself, Adam, had his substance from untilled earth that was still virgin (*de rudi terra et de adhuc uirgine*)—‘for God had not yet brought about rain and man had not worked the earth.’ And he was formed by the hand of God, that is, by the Word of God—for ‘all things were made through him,’ and ‘the Lord took dirt from the earth and formed a man.’”

In this way, Irenaeus valorizes the primal earth on two levels: its material quality (on a relative ontological spectrum) and its intact state. It is therefore a material worthy of honor over and above other modes or states of matter (the immaterial as such is not in view). On a relative scale of materiality, this virgin earth is an appropriate substance to yield a flesh capable of inheriting God’s salvation. But whereas Irenaeus’s figuration of virginity as childhood innocence proved ultimately to be sexually nonspecific, his usage here, by contrast, emerges thoroughly enmeshed in the distinctives of sexual difference. In his typology, the appeal to “virgin earth” functions not merely to connote a generic pristine state but more specifically to invoke a metaphor of the body. As such, it draws its sense from the material specificity of the virginal *female* body—the body unpenetrated by the male member.

Female Intactness in Antiquity

The precise nature of the intactness in question was a matter of debate in Greco-Roman antiquity. Interested professionals, including doctors, philosophers, and midwives, entertained a range of different ideas concerning (in Giulia Sissa's apt phrase) "the specific physical correlate of maidenhood."⁵⁶ In Hippocratic gynecology, the emphasis seems to have been on the womb as an inverted jar. Insofar as this jar was thought to have neck, mouth, and lips, this led, as Helen King points out, to popular ideas about the "sympathetic relationship with the corresponding parts of the upper female body, so that the loss of virginity changed the timbre of a girl's voice."⁵⁷ In other words, defloration could lead to a woman's voice becoming deeper through a change in the shape of her throat and neck. But in terms of the physical attributes of virginity specific to a woman's lower body, Mary Foskett reminds us that "the exact images that the [Hippocratic] medical writers intended to convey remain cloudy"⁵⁸—particularly when it comes to the question of how or in what way the "jar" of the womb was sealed.⁵⁹

Several centuries later, the question remained a live one. Thus a physician as prominent as Galen (second century C.E.) managed to conduct a thorough anatomical study of human membranes with no mention of a "virginal membrane"—a specifically vaginal hymen.⁶⁰ A bit earlier in the second century, Soranus actually polemicizes against the hymen's existence, arguing that doctors are mistaken when they "assume that a thin membrane grows across the vagina, dividing it, and that this membrane causes pain when it bursts in defloration or if menstruation occurs too quickly. . . . [I]f this membrane, bursting in defloration, were the cause of pain, then in virgins before defloration excessive pain ought necessarily to follow upon the appearance of menstruation and no more in defloration."⁶¹ In Soranus's thinking, the clearly observable fact of menstruation without pain prior to a woman's loss of virginity necessitates the conclusion that no protective membrane exists—or ever has existed.⁶²

Of course, as Gillian Clark points out, the highbrow reflections of a male physician, however prominent, by no means settled the matter: "midwives who had not read their Soranus went on doing tests for virginity."⁶³ Yet even Soranus's anti-hymen view does not entail the conclusion that female virginity has no physical specificity. On the contrary, he maintains, "In virgins the vagina is flattened and comparatively narrow, since it possesses furrows held together by vessels which take their origin from the uterus. And when the

furrows are spread apart in defloration, these vessels burst and cause pain and the blood which is usually excreted follows.”⁶⁴ There may be no membrane to break in the initial act of sexual penetration, but a bodily change takes place all the same: the intrusion of the penis causes a physical spreading of the vagina’s initial narrowness, and with that expansion, a painful flow of blood. Here, even without a hymen, the boundary line remains the same: in Sissa’s summation, “penetration by a male organ deflowered a virgin.”⁶⁵

Recapitulating the Unpenetrated Virgin

We can therefore conclude—whatever various ideas may have existed regarding the physical dimensions of intactness—that Irenaeus’s invocation of the metaphor “virgin earth” depends on a valence of virginity quite different from what Peter Brown has called “the primal state of humankind, that could, and should, be recaptured by men quite as much as women.”⁶⁶ Rather it is conceptually rooted in and dependent on the female body. It is in fact precisely this material specificity—the bodily and sexed nature of the metaphor—that allows Irenaeus to formulate the payoff for his theological anthropology with precision and rhetorical power: “Therefore the Lord, recapitulating (*recapitulans* [Gk. *anakephalaioomai*]) this man [Adam], was the recipient of the same arrangement of fleshiness as him (*eandem ipsi carnationis* [Gk. *sarkōsis*] *acceptio dispositionem* [Gk. *oikonomia*]), being born from the Virgin by the will and wisdom of God, in order that he himself might manifest a likeness of fleshiness to Adam and might become that man who was written about in the beginning, according to the image and likeness of God.”⁶⁷ In other words, it is particular qualities of virginity that cannot be separated from sexual difference that allow Irenaeus to draw such a tight recapitulative connection between Adam and Christ. While not contradicting Paul’s assertion that “the first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven” (1 Cor 15.47, NRSV), he is able all the same to forge a link between Christ and the earthy origins of the first Adam that is about *sameness*, not contrast. Thus the analogy between the virgin birth and the unpenetrated, intact primal dust allows Irenaeus to make the audacious (but theologically useful) claim that Christ recapitulates Adam “in the same arrangement of fleshiness.”

The parallel passage in *AH* 3.21.10 elaborates the point further:

So recapitulating Adam in himself, that One who is the Word rightly received, from Mary who was still a virgin, a begetting of recapitulation to Adam. If therefore the first Adam had a man as his

father and was born from the semen of a man, then justly it might also be said that the second Adam was begotten from Joseph. But if that one [i.e., the first Adam] was in fact taken from the earth and was formed by the Word of God, then it was necessary that this very Word, making a recapitulation of Adam in himself, have a likeness in his begetting to that one. Why therefore did God not take dirt a second time, but in fact produced a formation that was made from Mary? [He did so] in order that another formation (*alia plasmatio*) might not come about, and so that there would not be another formation which would be saved, but that the very same formation would be recapitulated, the likeness having been preserved (*sed eadem ipsa recapitularetur, seruatâ similitudine*).

Here Irenaeus unpacks farther what is at stake in this typological appeal to two different “virgin” births. The dilemma before him is this: how is the likeness between Adam and Christ to be preserved? If Adam was not born from another human but formed by God out of the dirt, does not analogical logic demand that Christ also be formed from the dirt?⁶⁸ No, Irenaeus responds, for while this strategy would preserve the analogy, it would at the same time sacrifice a crucial human connection between the first and second Adam. A Christ formed from the dirt would not be a human being in quite the same way as the first Adam, but rather a figure of alterity. As “another formation” coming from a different lineage than Adam, such a Christ might even require saving of his own.⁶⁹

But a Christ born of the Virgin Mary (just as Adam was formed from the virgin earth) solves the problem: the likeness between the two is preserved and a bodily link between them is maintained via Mary’s place in Adam’s line. Every piece of this formulation is crucial to Irenaeus’s argument as he guards his position on multiple fronts, maneuvering against the putative claims of various opponents.⁷⁰ Against the Ebionites—who assert that Christ was only a man, begotten by Joseph—he argues vigorously for the virginity of Mary, making a case from numerous biblical texts (see *AH* 3.19–21). Against the Valentinians and others—who claim that Christ took nothing from Mary but passed through her like water in a tube—Irenaeus maintains that such a position renders the virgin birth superfluous and absurd (see *AH* 3.22.1–2; 1.7.2). Rather, it is absolutely crucial that Christ took “fleshiness” from the process of gestating in Mary’s body, because only in this way does he receive a physical connection to Adam. As Mary Ann Donovan summarizes this somewhat

complicated argument, “In the case of the first Adam it is the mud of the virgin earth that is utilized; in the case of the second Adam it is the flesh of a descendent of the first Adam that is utilized (so there is continuity) but that flesh is virginal (so there is parallelism).”⁷¹

Thus the parallel between virgin earth and virgin birth allows Irenaeus to make a bold and compelling correlation between the two Adams. However, in making this argument, he also takes a crucial step away from the theological vision analyzed in the previous section of this chapter. For the analogy is preserved at a price: the introduction of the sexually unpenetrated female body as an image/concept on which the logic of recapitulation hinges. In this way, Irenaeus creates a problem even as he solves one. His final eschatological vision of sexual difference is one in which the end is like the beginning—a state in which men and women retain their difference but are no longer implicated in the complications of sexual desire or child-bearing specific to their different bodies. Yet, here in the middle, he makes the figure of a specifically female intactness crucial to the entire enterprise.

This is a vision of the virginal body that by definition cannot apply equally to men and women (Irenaeus’s final eschatological goal). Furthermore, virginity defined as an unpenetrated body entails the conceptual possibility of penetration—a physical threshold marking both the triumph of erotic desire and the prospect of procreation. These are, for Irenaeus, the concomitant specters of feminine difference, and ultimately, they must be done away with or, more precisely, redeemed—i.e., rendered inoperative by a recapitulatory maneuver. However, as his argument has been articulated thus far, no such mechanism is in place. Far from disappearing easily or straightforwardly in the inexorable onward movement of redemption, the problematic difference of the feminine remains unresolved.

Virginité and Fertility

The third valence of virginity on which Irenaeus’s typology draws is the paradoxical trope of the virgin who is somehow fertile, fecund, or otherwise productive. In early Christianity, this association was commonly made in spiritual terms. As Elizabeth Castelli writes (with reference to Gregory of Nyssa): “[female] virgins possess a special spiritual fecundity and, as imitators of Mary, become themselves mothers of Christ. There is, in addition, a special and practical advantage to this spiritual fertility: it is the one way in which

women can conceive without being dependent upon the will of men.⁷² The fecundity of the properly oriented soul was a well-trodden theme in antiquity and one not limited to Christians (being at least as old as Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*). A specifically virginal fecundity had Greek precursors as well—particularly in the model of virgin priestesses such as the Pythia who “give birth” to prophecy.⁷³ Even within a more delimited Christian trajectory, Castelli notes, “The image is an old one, found in Philo's description of the Therapeutrides, then in early writers on the fertility of the church and finally, fertility becomes a characteristic of virginity itself.”⁷⁴

However, Irenaeus pursues a different project in his use of the fertile virgin trope. Insofar as his starting point is the physical fertility of the Virgin Mary, he has little interest in spiritualizing.⁷⁵ Rather the figure of the fertile virgin becomes the starting point for drawing the typological connection between Mary and Eve. Indeed for Irenaeus, Eve is primarily a virgin. While Orbe and others have drawn a link (or even an equivalence) between Eve's disobedience and the loss of her virginity, Irenaeus's text does not in fact make any such connection explicit.⁷⁶ Instead he emphasizes just the opposite: Eve's virginal state at the moment of her disobedience. Though she goes on to lose this status in the course of God's procreative purposes for humanity, in the garden, Eve's virginity was not in question. This is, in fact, the bodily situation in which she sinned and fell: “But Eve was disobedient. For she did not obey while she was still a virgin (*non obaudiuit enim adhuc cum esset uirgo*).”⁷⁷

As Irenaeus goes on to elaborate, “Just as she who indeed had a husband, Adam, but nevertheless was still a virgin (*Quemadmodum illa uirum quidem habens Adam, uirgo tamen adhuc existens*) ... having become disobedient, came to be the cause of death both for herself and for the entire human race, so Mary, having a husband already designated but nevertheless a virgin (*sic et Maria habens praedestinatum uirum, et tamen Virgo*), was obedient, and came to be the cause of salvation both for herself and for the entire human race.”⁷⁸ Accordingly, Eve is herself a “fertile” virgin but her fertility produces only death. In the course of God's plan, she will eventually trade in that virginity for fertility of a different sort, that is, procreation. Mary, on the other hand, remains a virgin but is fertile nonetheless (in the literal sense of giving birth to another human being).⁷⁹ By assuming her position as the virgin mother of Christ, she plays a causal role in bringing about humanity's salvation. Furthermore, as *Epid.* 33 makes clear (reiterating a point made earlier), she becomes the means of transmission whereby Christ inherits humanity's likeness in continuity with Adam: “For the Lord came to search for the lost sheep.

But humanity was lost. And on account of this he did not become another formation, but being born from that one who was from the race of Adam, he preserved the likeness of the formation (*similitudinem plasmationis servavit*).⁸⁰ The parallel between the virgin bodies of Mary and Eve thus allows Irenaeus to fill out and invest with further content the typological relationship that he sees between the situation in the garden and the events surrounding Christ's birth. Yet because the virginal Eve metaphorically "gives birth" to death while the Virgin Mary quite literally gives birth to a human being, the parallel also allows him to highlight again the direct and thoroughly human connection between Christ and the line of Adam.

However, like the appeal to Adam's birth from virgin soil, this typological connection also relies on a metaphor of the specifically female body—in this case the body capable of carrying and giving birth to a child, while paradoxically remaining virginal.⁸¹ Not content to let his readers simply assume that such an appeal to fertility is primarily a matter of the female body, Irenaeus actually makes the point explicit by turning to the letter of the scriptural text regarding David's offspring.⁸² He argues in *Epid.* 36:

And this king is Christ, Son of God become Son of man, that is, become a fruit born from that Virgin who was of the race descended from David. And on account of this, the promise was made "from the fruit of the womb," which is proper to conception and birthing from a woman (*quod est singularis-proprium* [Gk. *idios*] *mulieris conceptionis-partus* [Gk. *kyēma*]), but not "from the fruit of the loins" nor "from the fruit of the kidneys," which is proper to that which is produced from a man (*quod est singulare-proprium* [Gk. *idios*] *<vir> genimen* [Gk. *gennēma*]), in order that the proper fruit-bearing from the virgin womb which was from [the line of] David might be made known.⁸³

Here he shows his awareness of multiple rhetorical figures for articulating genealogical connections between parents and offspring. But where phrases that refer to the loins or kidneys signal patrilineal reckoning, so he argues, the expression "fruit of the womb" (*fructu ventris*) is unambiguous. For Irenaeus, this phrase can indicate only one thing; it is that which is "proper to conception and birthing from a woman," thereby rooting Christ's nativity firmly in the sexual specificities of the virginal female body.

Yet this move exacerbates the problem introduced by the Adam-Christ

analogy. Appeal to the virginal body as a procreative body—like the appeal to the virginal body as an unpenetrated body—only grounds Irenaeus’s argument more deeply in a logic predicated on the difference of the feminine. For Christ to be incarnate (thus born of a woman), the procreative (female) body takes on a necessary theological significance. But for the sexual difference of the end to be like that of the beginning (a virginal innocence that retains bodily difference but exists free of procreation or desire), then the procreative difference of that body—while essential in God’s plan to both the human race and the incarnation—must nonetheless find its recapitulatory resolution. By using the figure of the procreative body to articulate his typological project more fully (a successful move in that it cements an additional parallel—that between Mary and Eve), Irenaeus further entangles the dynamics of feminine difference in his theological schema, thereby intensifying his need for a mechanism to resolve the imbalance.

“Thinking with Virgins”: Recapitulation and Sexual Difference

It is in the context of this complex argument that Irenaeus turns to Mary’s recapitulation of Eve not simply as an aesthetically pleasing parallel but also as a theologically necessary intervention⁸⁴:

And just as through a disobedient virgin, humanity was thrown down and, falling, died, so also, through a virgin who obeyed the word of God, humanity, having been rekindled anew, received life. . . . For it was necessary and appropriate that Adam be recapitulated in Christ (*oportebat-et-conveniebat enim recapitulari* [Gk. *anakephalaioomai*] *Adam in Christum*) in order that “mortality might be swallowed up by immortality,” and Eve in Mary in order that a virgin might be made an advocate of a virgin and might absolve and cancel out virginal disobedience through virginal obedience (*et Evam in Mariam, ut Virgo virginis advocata facta solveret-et-evacuaret* [Gk. *eklyō*] *virginalem inobaudientiam per virginalem obaudientiam*).⁸⁵

signifying the circular course which is from Mary to Eve; because what was bound together could not otherwise be undone unless the binding connections themselves were turned backward, so that the

first ties are undone by the second and the second ties liberate the first anew. . . . So thus also the knot of Eve's disobedience received its unloosing through the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve bound through disbelief, this the Virgin Mary undid through faith (*Quod enim adligavit uirgo Eua per incredulitatem, hoc Virgo Maria soluit per fidem*).⁸⁶

And just as that one [Eve] was led astray so that she was disobedient to God, so also this one [Mary] was persuaded to be obedient to God, in order that the virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve (*uti virginis Euae virgo Maria feret advocata*). And just as the human race was bound to death through a virgin, it was set free through a virgin, the disobedience of a virgin having been balanced by an equal scale through virginal obedience (*aequa lance disposita virginali inobaudientia per virginalem obaudientiam*).⁸⁷

As all these passages make clear, in some way, Mary *has* to recapitulate Eve. But the question remains: if all are implicated in Adam (see *Epid.* 31), then why is Christ's recapitulative work not enough?⁸⁸

Here José Antonio de Aldama has emphasized the consonance of Mary's mission with the reparative work of Christ: they both labor to undo the ruin brought upon the world by Eve and Adam respectively. Just as the cross undoes the transgression of the tree, so the obedience of one virgin undoes the disobedience of another. In de Aldama's reading, Irenaeus's emphasis is firmly on Mary's obedience. By moving in the opposite direction from Eve through her obedience, she unties the knot that Eve tied initially.⁸⁹ While not necessarily disagreeing with the general thrust of this conclusion, I wish to argue, however, that more is at stake here for Irenaeus than the question of obedience. Building on our analysis thus far, it is significant that in all three of the above passages, Irenaeus's particular interest is with Mary and Eve not simply as women or mothers but as virgins. Thus the contrast he draws between virginal obedience and virginal disobedience is not only about (dis)obedience but also about virginity. Mary and Eve's virginal states—and all that they entail—are not incidental to the argument, nor are they simply aesthetic window-dressing to enhance the parallel.

Rather, Irenaeus treats the virginities of these two figures as a theologically significant point precisely because of the way he has rendered virginity problematic (whether inadvertently or not) by the complex dynamics of his

own argument. As I have already argued, in his final vision of redemption, Irenaeus wants to conceive of a fleshly sexual difference without desire and without procreation. Virginity is a crucial concept for this project—that is, virginity understood as the childlike innocence that characterized Adam and Eve equally (irrespective of sexual difference) in the garden. Yet virginity is also a difficulty, insofar as each time Irenaeus speaks about it with content or specificity, he slides into associating it with specifically feminine attributes situated around the unpenetrated and/or procreative female body.

Why the seeming inevitability of this slide? In fact, were Irenaeus to resist it, he would lose the resources for articulating a robust, tightly connected recapitulatory anthropology grounded in the exegesis of Genesis and Paul. It is the logic of penetration and procreation that allows him to make his most decisive moves in the typological argument: (1) the shared “likeness of fleshiness” between Adam and Christ via their respective births from “virgins”; (2) the parallel between Eve and Mary via their experiences of “giving birth” as virgins; and (3) the physical genealogical connection from Christ back to Adam via Mary’s fertile but still virginal body.

At the same time, going down this path creates a problem: a virginity conceived in terms specific to the female body (as opposed to terms that obtain equally to all bodies) remains haunted by conceptual possibilities both penetrative and procreative. These are the very possibilities Irenaeus seeks to banish from the eschatological interrelation of virginity and sexual difference. Thus the penetrable, procreative feminine emerges as a site of excess in his theology, entirely essential to the recapitulative argument, but at the same time left as a remainder, in no way resolved by Christ’s recapitulation of Adam.

To be clear, this idea of a “remainder” is not one that Irenaeus himself acknowledges or uses explicitly. But nevertheless, I would argue, the way his theological project works entails such a concept all the same.⁹⁰ As Eric Osborn argues, Irenaeus’s notion of recapitulation/*anakephalaïōsis* is one in which “the whole history of salvation is resumed, so that beginning, middle and end are brought together.” But it is also one in which “all things are recreated, restored, renewed and set free.”⁹¹ Thus, every theologically and anthropologically significant element in the drama of human creation and ongoing life must necessarily find final fulfillment through its redemptive and restorative counterpart. And when it comes to the eschatological destiny of humanity understood generically (i.e., irrespective of sexual difference), as Steenberg notes, “Jesus Christ, as ‘new Adam,’ recapitulates in Himself the human nature of which Adam was the primal exemplar, namely the very essence and being of *anthrōpos*

which had been the fabric of Adam's existence and which had been corrupted by his fall."⁹² But it is precisely because Irenaeus's rendition of creation and redemption cannot be reduced to the image of a generic human nature that the concept of a remainder comes into play. Because Irenaeus has in fact relied on the distinctives of feminine sexual difference in ways that *are* theologically and anthropologically significant, these elements remain outstanding. As a result, Christ's recapitulation of generic humanity in Adam cannot do quite enough to balance all the complexities of this equation in their entirety.

Consequently, Irenaeus turns to Mary's recapitulation of Eve to solve the problem. As the virgin who both brings forth death and then yields her virginity to penetration, desire, and (literal) procreation, Eve easily lends herself to being figured as the typological site of problematic feminine difference. Mary, on the other hand, he designates as "the advocate" of Eve, "the cause of salvation," and most strongly, "that pure womb which regenerates people to God."⁹³ While acknowledging throughout Christ's redemptive and recapitulative work for *all* humanity in Adam (including Mary herself),⁹⁴ Irenaeus maintains that Mary also has a direct salvific function of some sort. She becomes for him the redemptive site in which one virgin body can attempt to recapitulate all that is problematic about another virgin body—indeed all that is problematic for Irenaeus in his conception of feminine difference itself.

The function of Mary's recapitulation, then, is specific and delimited. While Christ performs a general redemptive work for all people, Mary and her virginal womb have a narrower task which differs in form and scope: to resolve the problematic excess of feminine sexual difference in the recapitulative economy. It is well documented (as we have seen in previous chapters) that ancient thought overwhelmingly took the male to be the canonical form of the human being, differentiating the female primarily in terms of (receptive) sexual function and reproduction.⁹⁵ On this point, Irenaeus is no exception. As I have already argued, the dual images of the intact body free from penile penetration and the fecund, procreative body are for him the two sites where virginity finds its grounding in distinctively female aspects of sexual difference. So it is not surprising that Mary's work to resolve the excess of this difference can be seen to operate on both of these levels, penetrative and procreative.

To begin with the latter, Mary both recapitulates and regenerates human fertility as figured in Eve, and by extension the rest of humanity. This is not to imply (as already discussed) that Irenaeus sees Eve's loss of virginity as a tragic mistake or otherwise somehow associated with the fall.⁹⁶ To reiterate John Behr's persuasive argument, procreation has its place for him in God's

economy at the appropriate time. But it must also cease at the appropriate time, having no part in the final eschatological reality of sexual difference.⁹⁷ In the meantime, Eve's procreative fertility remains implicated nonetheless in the general impurity associated with the fall—if only because it first takes place subsequent to her disobedience while still a virgin.⁹⁸ However, in Christ's virgin birth, God reveals a pure mode of fertility ("that pure womb")—one that in Mary recapitulates the figure of Eve as the fertile mother of humanity but simultaneously regenerates fertility in terms of its full potential as a human process.⁹⁹ Whereas all human procreation up to this point has taken place subsequent to the fall, the fertility of Mary's pure womb introduces something new onto the stage of human history: the possibility of a regenerate fertility *still* in Adam's line and thus capable of transmitting Adam's likeness to Mary's offspring Christ without implicating him in Adam and Eve's sin.

Second, the "pure womb" is one undefiled by sexual penetration—both in the events surrounding the birth of Christ and eternally.¹⁰⁰ For Irenaeus, this too has a recapitulative dimension. Mary recapitulates Eve in retaining an intactness that Eve loses. Admittedly, Eve's loss was part of God's plan. Irenaeus seems to imply that, even in an unfallen state, procreation would have led to the loss of Eve's virginity—though whether this would have necessarily entailed sexual penetration in the normal sense remains ambiguous.¹⁰¹ But insofar as Eve comes to function as the figure of problematic feminine difference, her no longer virginal body brings the issue of penetrability to the fore; and this is an imbalance that Irenaeus cannot allow to stand in the recapitulative equation.

His eschaton is one that will recapture the state of protological innocence—a virginity that applies in equal terms to male and female bodies no longer caught up in desire or reproduction, not a virginity signified by a (female) state of intactness. Thus the recapitulatory dimension of Mary's intactness is the means by which Irenaeus attempts to resolve the problem of penetration as figured in Eve. Through Mary's pure womb, in both its procreative and unpenetrated dimensions, he seeks to put the specters of feminine difference to rest. Yet at the same time, Mary's body (eternally defined by its permanently intact state) retains a trace of the very logic Irenaeus seeks to forgo. Here we see a crucial fissure in his project—one that hints at what I will argue is a partial but necessary failure to resolve fully the remainder in question.

Conclusion: Feminine Difference and the Failure of Recapitulation

The work of Mary with respect to Eve becomes for Irenaeus the means by which he endeavors to work out the difficulties of feminine difference on solid theological grounds. By figuring the body of Eve as the site of this problematic difference, he tries to use the body of Mary to balance out what would otherwise remain as an imbalance or surplus in the recapitulative register. If this is the case, then “following Irenaeus [to] untie the knots of sin all the way back to Eve”¹⁰² becomes a substantially thornier (and arguably untenable) position for feminist theology. Though Irenaeus’s typology has been appraised by one feminist theologian (a little less optimistically) as “androcentric innocence,”¹⁰³ in light of this analysis we might question whether his project (while undeniably androcentric) is in fact so innocent after all.

At the same time, however, it is crucial to note in conclusion that the project does not actually succeed in full. In order for Mary’s virgin womb to function as the effective resolution that Irenaeus needs it to be, it is necessary that her counterpart, Eve, be successfully figured as a typological female body symbolically containing all that is problematic about sexual difference (penetrability, procreation, and desire). But it is precisely this figuration that can never be entirely successful, because the notion of the feminine is operative in Irenaeus’s theology on more levels than just that of literal female human bodies. As we have seen, Adam’s flesh—the flesh Irenaeus is so concerned to preserve at the final resurrection—is a flesh formed out of unpenetrated, virgin soil. Thus the very matter Irenaeus seeks to valorize (the flesh that composes human bodies) is itself already implicated in the conceptual specifics of the female body, insofar as its origin in virgin soil depends on the logic of penetration. In this way, the typological parallel between Christ and Adam by means of their births from “virgins”—a parallel critical to the larger recapitulative theology—functions to encode some notion of the feminine in human flesh.¹⁰⁴

Consequently, Irenaeus relies on an analogical connection whose attendant consequence is the gendering of the flesh, while he also singlemindedly pursues the resurrection of that flesh as his fundamental theological goal. The result is to ensure, in the very terms of his argument, that the problematic notions of the feminine he seeks to resolve must necessarily remain. We can see this most clearly in terms of the intricate maneuvers that Irenaeus finds it necessary to make in laying out the larger edifice of his typology. That is to say, whatever may be aesthetically pleasing about the Eve-Mary typology, it is

not in fact straightforwardly symmetrical to the Adam-Christ one. While the virgin Mary gives birth to Christ, the virgin Eve “gives birth” only to death. This is a useful theological point for several purposes (namely, strengthening the overall typological structure through an additional parallel and building toward Mary’s recapitulation of Eve). But it does nothing to further the crucial anthropological connection on which Christ’s recapitulative work will be predicated. To ground this parallel, Irenaeus has to look elsewhere—to the virgin earth that gives birth to Adam, not to any possible parallel within the Eve-Mary typology. Thus, I would argue, rather than being a simple and elegant symmetry, there is actually a breakdown in the Eve-Mary typology when viewed within the terms of Irenaeus’s argument as a whole. It is this breakdown that shows us most visibly where the excess lies, an excess that must necessarily remain irresolvable within Irenaeus’s recapitulative schema.

Virgin earth, then, has a disruptive function within a logic of anthropological recapitulation that would seek to leave none of the specifics of sexual difference ultimately unresolved. By encoding a metaphor of the feminine in both the origins of the flesh and, by extension, the flesh’s fulfillment in incarnation and resurrection, the intact, unpenetrated soil of Genesis points us to feminine sexual difference as a site of excess that resists Irenaeus’s best efforts to contain it. His theological edifice does much to elaborate and complexify Paul’s much simpler typology and address anthropological aporias in the original Pauline formulation. But some fundamental intractability remains: the partial yet necessary failure of a theological economy that attempts to retain sexual difference in the flesh while resolving its distinctives without remainder—a failure that may point in salient ways to the conceptual limits of recapitulation for theological anthropology.

Chapter 5

“The Contrary Operation”: Resignifying the Unpenetrated Body in Tertullian of Carthage

For incarnation nudges us toward the deciphering of the function of that virgin-mother. . . . The word made flesh in Mary might mean—might it not?—the advent of a divine one who does not burst in violently, like the god of Greek desire, does not simply rule the world from a heaven of dreams, and does not remain closed in a text of law either . . . This aspect of Christ is still to be discovered.

—Luce Irigaray, “When the Gods Are Born”

Scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the question of whether the North African theologian Tertullian of Carthage was a misogynist. And there would seem to be ample textual support for an affirmative answer—most notably the notorious opening chapter from *De cultu feminarum* (*The Apparel of Women*) where Tertullian vigorously attacks female practices of adornment by appeal to creation, comparing the women of his Carthaginian ecclesial community to the odious and sinful figure of Eve:

And do you not know that you are an Eve? The judgment of God upon your sex (*sexum istum*) lives into this age—and the guilt must necessarily live also. You are the doorway of the devil. You are the unsealer of that tree. You are the first deserter of the divine law. You are the one who persuaded him whom the devil did not have the strength to attack. You destroyed God’s image, man, (*imaginem Dei, hominem*) so easily. On account of your demerit, that is death, the

son of God actually had to die! And yet is it in your mind to adorn yourself on top of your tunics of skins?¹

Furthermore, Tertullian elsewhere argues forcefully against the right of Christian women to baptize and teach in the church, following what he takes to be Paul's lead (while maintaining an allusive nod to the creation narrative):

But the effrontery of the woman who usurped the activity of teaching—certainly she is not also going to seize for herself the right to baptize?—unless some new beast should appear, similar to the original one (*pristinæ*), so that just as that one destroyed baptism, so another should confer it through her own authority. . . . For how believable does it seem that he [Paul] would give to a female the power to teach and baptize [i.e., a reference to Thecla]—he who did not even permit for a woman to learn consistently? “Let them be silent,” he says, “and consult their husbands at home.” [cf. 1 Cor 14.34–35]²

From the standpoint of feminist scholarship then, as Mary Rose D'Angelo has noted, “On many levels, the rhetorical excesses, the overwrought moral rigor, and the ultimate schismatic bitterness of Tertullian make him an easy mark.”³

Yet complexities abound in Tertullian's many treatises, preventing a simple answer to the question of his putative misogyny—or (to raise another complicated question) its relationship to his theology of sexual difference. For example, as is well known, Tertullian cites female prophecy approvingly in numerous places throughout his work.⁴ One explanation that has been offered for this apparent contradiction is that Tertullian's tirades about women should be understood not as a generalized misogyny, but rather in terms of a contextualized agenda to consign women in the church to the private rather than the public sphere.⁵ Another possible solution is to locate Tertullian's rhetoric in relation to his putative conversion to “Montanism” (or the New Prophecy) and his subsequent polemics against “Catholic Christianity” in Carthage. Along these lines, D'Angelo argues (with respect to Tertullian's insistence that virgins—and indeed all women—be veiled), “The paraclete is now revealing a stricter and more all-encompassing discipline which the New Prophecy puts into practice. Virgins are not to be exempt from the veil, but to recognize that they can escape from the disabilities of being women only by submitting fully

to them. . . . If some women are to be heard, then all women, including and especially virgins, are not to be seen.”⁶

As numerous scholars have noted, the problem with this argument (and others like it) is that it relies on too strict a bifurcation of early Christian Carthage into two discrete camps—Catholic orthodoxy and Montanism. Laura Nasrallah summarizes the point: “It is clear that Tertullian considered himself to be aligned with the ‘new prophets’ . . . This does not mean . . . that he converted or that he understood himself or that others understood him to be anything other than a true Christian, attentive to God’s revelation. Rather, the New Prophecy was one of many forms of Christianity available in Carthage at his time.”⁷ Furthermore, when it comes to theological anthropology (the broader domain under which early Christian speculations about sexual difference necessarily fall), as M. C. Steenberg argues, “the anthropological convictions of Tertullian’s later works in fact bear little categorical difference to those of his earliest writings.”⁸ That is to say, although Tertullian’s views undoubtedly shifted in certain ways during the course of his literary career, important lines of continuity can be charted throughout.⁹ Consequently, it seems necessary to situate his understanding of sexual difference within the arc of his theological anthropology as a whole (and across the full spectrum of his extant writings), rather than relying too heavily on a division between the pre- and post-Montanist Tertullian.

In seeking to do just this, a number of studies have questioned whether Tertullian, in fact, ought to be considered a misogynist.¹⁰ For instance, Barbara Finlay argues that “The current clichéd assertions about Tertullian’s misogyny are based on a superficial reading of his works, and a closer reading raises questions about the validity of the accusations.”¹¹ After surveying relevant passages across his corpus, she concludes (more optimistically) that “[Tertullian] does not see any final distinction in the basic worthiness of men and women before God.”¹² But on the whole, in readings such as Finlay’s, there is a tendency to downplay the significance of *De cultu feminarum*’s vitriolic rhetoric. So, for example, Tina Beattie argues that “to dismiss Tertullian on the evidence of this one text is to lose a rich resource for the reconstruction of an incarnational theology that confronts the fear and loathing associated with the female body.”¹³

Beattie’s point is well worth wrestling with. At the same time, the passages (and others like them) with which this chapter opens should not be ignored or set aside. Consequently, feminist theology encounters in the writings of Tertullian a tension that appears to run throughout his theological

anthropology. Karen King sums up the dilemma well: “Although Tertullian linked sexual differentiation inseparably to a system of hierarchical patriarchal gender roles that contemporary feminism rejects, his theology placed a high value on the body and gave marriage and childbearing positive significance, as some forms of contemporary feminism would like to do.”¹⁴ But while King’s formulation aptly articulates the issue, her summation raises as many questions as it answers. More specifically, *how* does Tertullian’s theological anthropology hold these different commitments in some sort of tensive unity? And what are the implications of this delicate balancing act for his vision of sexually differentiated subjectivity—a subjectivity constituted through a complicated interweaving of theology and gendered bodily practice?

Flesh, Soul, and Pauline Typology

Carly Daniel-Hughes has explored an important aspect of this problem in her work on the theologizing of men’s and women’s dress in Tertullian’s writings.¹⁵ Arguing against scholarly tendencies to separate the “practical” treatises of his corpus from the “doctrinal” ones, she compellingly demonstrates that Tertullian’s directives about dress need to be understood as an embodied manifestation of his soteriology. In this vision of salvation, she maintains, soul and fleshly body are bound to one another into eternity, moving together (in what, I would note, is a broadly Pauline arc) from creation to resurrection. As a result, Tertullian will allow no separation (at least not one of any theological significance) between flesh and soul. Rather, as Daniel-Hughes shows, the two exist in a relationship of “profound interconnection”: “the fleshly body is worthy of salvation and deeply in need of it,” while functioning at the same time as “an index of the disposition of the soul.”¹⁶

Due to this close-knit relationship, flesh and soul are equally marked by sexual difference—but this is, for Tertullian, a necessarily *hierarchical* vision of difference (male over female) that begins with Genesis 2 and persistently endures, continuing to impinge even upon resurrected bodies into eternity. In this way, while all human flesh is precariously poised between creation and resurrection, the secondary status of Tertullian’s Christian woman links her that much more closely to the flesh’s attendant shamefulness (thus intensifying the sartorial stakes). So, Daniel-Hughes concludes, “In [Tertullian’s] soteriological scheme, the processes and properties of a woman’s fleshly body come to exemplify human sordidness. Her flesh . . . is in fact the profound marker

of human deficiency.”¹⁷ In the face of this perilous situation, modest dress becomes one means by which this sordidness can be “contained”—and thus a means of performing this (gendered) notion of salvation in the present.¹⁸

In this chapter, I build on Daniel-Hughes’s reading by exploring a related facet of Tertullian’s theological anthropology: the significance of Pauline typological categories—Adam and Christ (as well as their non-Pauline extension to Eve and Mary)—to his theology of sexual difference. We have already examined in Chapter 4 the ways in which an economy of balance and exchange drives Irenaeus’s treatment of sexual difference within a framework populated by paradigmatic representatives of gendered humanity: Adam and Christ, Eve and Mary. But Eric Osborn draws attention to a salient theological difference between the two early Christian thinkers: “With Irenaeus, the idea of balance, exchange, symmetry or fitness is used to argue the necessity of the incarnation . . . Tertullian goes further when he insists that the two sides of a balance must be opposite if a just balance is to be achieved.”¹⁹

Accordingly, if Osborn is correct that Tertullian’s understanding of incarnation (and with it, theological anthropology) moves in a different direction—one that emphasizes the balance achieved through opposition or contrast—then what does this imply for his treatment of sexual difference in relation to the Pauline anthropological problematic? Following the lead of scholars such as Daniel-Hughes and Virginia Burrus, I maintain that an exploration of this question must necessarily begin with Tertullian’s singleminded focus on the flesh (and its possible range of significations), situated as it is between the two poles of creation and resurrection. According to Burrus, Tertullian “boldly [places] *flesh* at the center of his theological construction, thereby offering himself as a defiant witness to a truth that others find disgraceful. Flesh thus becomes the site of a deliberately offensive, explicitly countercultural faith articulated in the exotically alien language of scripture.”²⁰ And it is precisely the placement of this flesh within Pauline typological categories—flesh, that is, in all its sexually differentiated messiness and variety—that Tertullian’s project attempts to work out.

Therefore, as a self-proclaimed devoted disciple of Paul, Tertullian, like Irenaeus, faces certain hard questions: how to figure typology in terms of the centrality of human flesh—especially in light of Paul’s seemingly lukewarm appraisal of that flesh in 1 Corinthians 15,50?²¹ And even more difficult—the stubborn yet haunting question of the Pauline problematic: where to situate sexual difference within these hermeneutical constraints? Similar to Irenaeus, Tertullian turns to the trope of virginity as a vehicle to navigate the complexities

involved in his endeavor to gender typology. His starting point for the project is the same: Adam and Christ's respective births from "virgins," which he develops in *De carne Christi* (*The Flesh of Christ*). Yet Osborn's general point about the different approaches of the two thinkers is also apposite. As will become clear, unlike Irenaeus, Tertullian ultimately builds a typology around Adam, Christ, Eve, and Mary that seeks to achieve its "balance" through an emphasis on contrast rather than similarity or symmetry. And in order to generate this contrast, I will argue, he relies on a particular concept of virginity (so useful to Irenaeus as well)—the figure of the unpenetrated female body.²²

The analysis that follows will therefore examine the ways that the question of bodily penetration looms large in Tertullian's typological interpretation of both Adam/Christ and Eve/Mary—an interpretation, I will argue, that emphasizes the contrast between the two pairs in relation to penetration. In the former case, Tertullian foregrounds the *intactness* of the "bodies" from which Adam and Christ—the two Pauline paradigmatic human beings—are formed and from which they derive their own virginities. But in the latter case, the focus is exactly the opposite: here Tertullian's carefully crafted rhetoric highlights the *penetrability* of Eve's and Mary's tenuously intact bodies. The result is a sly insinuation that even the virgin mother's maidenhood may ultimately be at risk, thereby foreshadowing Tertullian's eventual conclusion that Mary was, in fact, deflowered—by none other than her own virginal son. As we will see then, the only representative of humanity that emerges out of the typological edifice with virginity intact is Christ. The "contrary operation" (*Carn. Chr.* 17.4) effected by Eve and Mary allows Tertullian to locate the valorized site of virginity on the male body of Christ.

In this way, I will contend, Tertullian's logic works to restrict the possible typological significations of female flesh, attempting to guarantee that the unpenetrated female body is not able to assume a representative function that might upset or endanger his gender hierarchy. Indeed the contrast between the operations of Adam/Christ and Eve/Mary lets Tertullian locate sexual difference within typology in such a way that it *shores up* hierarchy rather than threatening to subvert it. For him, the representative power of virginity needs to be severed from the state of unpenetrated intactness—and its necessary conceptual connection to the female body. In Tertullian's final balancing of the typological equation, virginity's ability to signify cannot be shared with an unpenetrated Mary but must belong only to the male Christ—"the more perfect Adam" (*perfectior Adam, id est Christus*) and the ideal "voluntary eunuch" (*uolenti . . . spado*).²³

But as I will ultimately argue, just as Irenaeus's project generated its own

necessary failure, so too does Tertullian's prove vulnerable (or perhaps even unsuccessful) on terms internal to its somewhat convoluted argument. For Tertullian attempts to shore up his naturalized gender hierarchy by ensuring that of the representative individuals within his typology, only Christ remains an exemplary virgin. And the viability of this move relies on the conceptual ambiguity of virginity—the easy slippage between virginity figured as an unpenetrated (and thereby necessarily female) body and virginity as a state achievable just as much by men as by women (and therefore not dependent on the logic of physical intactness). Yet the project also founders on the inevitable implications of this ambiguity. That is to say, we will see in what follows that Tertullian's maneuvers to wrench perpetual virginity's typological significance out of a distinctively feminine symbolic register actually end up putting *Christ's* cherished virginity at risk—thus threatening the coherence of his operation in unacknowledged or disavowed ways.

From Creation to Resurrection: Gendering the Body and the Soul

In *De anima (The Soul)*, Tertullian famously argues that “life begins from conception” (*vitam a conceptu*).²⁴ But this claim needs to be understood in the context of the broader anthropology he outlines in the treatise—a meticulously argued case for the unity of body and soul.²⁵ Here not only the body but also the soul is corporeal, such that “the soul suffers with the body and feels its pain when it has been wounded by blows and injuries and sores. . . . Therefore the soul is embodied (*Igitur corpus anima*), for if it were not corporeal (*corporalis*), it would not be able to leave the body behind.”²⁶ What does it mean to claim that the soul is corporeal (a far-reaching assertion that “[bends] other issues towards its gravity,” as Nasrallah insightfully notes)?²⁷ One important implication is that the soul is *visible*—and Tertullian cites the evidence of a female prophet in his church who has seen the soul “in bodily form” (*corporaliter*) and can testify that it is “delicate and translucent and of an airy color” (*tenera et lucida et aerii coloris*)²⁸—thereby “[mixing] the Platonic binary of visible-invisible and corporeal-incorporeal.”²⁹

But Nasrallah also argues that, perhaps even more important, Tertullian's primary concern seems to be “supporting the Stoic idea that the soul is simple and uncompounded over and against the more widespread Platonizing scheme of a tripartite soul.”³⁰ And this fundamental simplicity or unity of the soul reflects, in turn, its inextricable connection to the unified fleshly body.

As Daniel-Hughes points out, “This move has radical implications for [Tertullian’s] epistemology, which privileges the bodily senses as the potent medium in the act of cognition . . . What is striking for considering Tertullian’s understanding of the fleshly body in regard to this epistemology is that he grants the bodily senses a privileged access to the soul, by indicating that the senses deliver information directly to it. In other words, given his insistence on the unified and simple nature of the soul, sensory data from the body is processed in the soul itself, and not in some separate or lower faculty.”³¹

This being the case, Tertullian is at pains to present the soul and the body as intimately connected from the moment of conception: “Life, being the opposite of death, is to be defined no other way than as the uniting of body and soul (*coniunctio corporis animaeque*) . . . we claim that the soul begins from conception (*animam a conceptu*), for accordingly, as with life, so the soul.”³² He then offers a physiological theory for how this union occurs in the context of procreation:

Therefore, in this regular function of the sexes which joins male and female in their shared sexual union, we know that the soul and the flesh are discharged at the same time, the soul by desire, the flesh by exertion, the soul by impulse, the flesh by driving. Therefore when the entire man (*toto homine*) is aroused at once by the onrush of both [soul and flesh], his semen is deposited, having a fluid component from the bodily substance and a vital heat from the soul (*habens ex corporali substantia humorem, ex animali calorem*). . . . This is the soul-producing seed, directly out of the distillation of the soul, just as also that slimy liquid is the body-producing seed out of the refining of the flesh.³³

In this way, Tertullian maintains that the male orgasm discharges both an element of body (*humorem*) and an element of soul (*calorem*) that conjoin in the female womb to produce new human life, simultaneously enfleshed and ensouled.³⁴

Of even greater concern to Tertullian than ordinary human birth, however, is the union of body and soul at the moment of Adam’s creation as a living being.³⁵ Turning to the Genesis narrative, he asserts that

The flesh of Adam was formed from clay. And what is clay, other than a rich fluidity (*Quid aliud limus quam liquor opimus*) from

which would come the generative liquid? The soul came from the breath of God. And what is the breath of God, other than the vapor of the spirit (*Quid aliud afflatus dei quam vapor spiritus*) from which would come that which we blow out through the liquid? Therefore, seeing as in the beginning these two different and separate elements, the clay and the breath, coalesced in an individual man (*unum hominem*), so also both substances, having been mixed up, intermingled in one seminal material, and from then on handed down the form of propagation for the race—so that, even now, the two, although different, still flow together, equally united and working their way into their furrow and field. And so they produce the human being (*hominem*) equally out of each substance.³⁶

Here, in an interpretive *tour de force*, Tertullian links the wet quality (*liquor opimus*) of clay (*limus*) to the sticky fluidity of semen's bodily substance and the force of God's breath (*afflatus*) to its soul-endowed heat. So Daniel-Hughes notes, "These substances, *limus* and *afflatus*, are the prototype for the *humor* and *calor* located in male sperm, and by means of procreation, ever after communicate the same essence of souls and bodies to every person."³⁷ Thus Tertullian asserts, "Therefore out of the one man (*uno homine*) comes all this overflowing of souls, nature evidently observing God's edict, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'"³⁸

Against the backdrop of these anthropological commitments, Tertullian then sets out to articulate a theory of the origins of sexual difference. Here he builds on his previous arguments in *De anima*, making the claim that

The soul, having been sown in the womb at the same time as the flesh, itself also equally receives its sex (*sexum*)—and at the same time, so that neither substance may be held to be the cause of sex. For if in the seeds of each substance, some interval between their conceptions were to be admitted, so that either flesh or soul was begotten first, then one might also ascribe the property of sex to one of the substances. . . . But the undivided seeds of each substance and their united outpouring undergo a common event of classification (*genus*).³⁹

Since soul and body coexist from the moment of conception, Tertullian reasons that sexual difference cannot belong to the particular province of one or

the other. Rather, both flesh and soul are intrinsically gendered from the very beginning.

Furthermore, this conception of sexual difference obtains not only to ordinary human birth but also to the exceptional situation described in Genesis 2: “Of course this is also testified to in the formation of the primordial humans: while the male was fashioned in a more timely way (for Adam was first), the woman came somewhat later (for Eve came after).”⁴⁰ But if this is the case—and, as Genesis 2 attests, Eve was formed from Adam’s rib—does this mean that the first woman existed temporarily as a kind of bodily substance without soul? No, Tertullian assures his readers, for “[Eve] herself was even then a living being [cf. Gen 2.7] . . . otherwise the breath of God (*dei afflatus*) would have animated her also, if there had not been a transfusion from Adam into the woman of soul as well as flesh.”⁴¹ Accordingly, Eve’s soul is every bit as integral to her being as is Adam’s. But at the same time, Daniel-Hughes correctly points out (against scholars who see in this passage a declaration of “spiritual equality” between the sexes) that “Eve’s secondary appearance in creation becomes the means by which Tertullian articulates as natural and given a hierarchical ordering of male over female . . . Eve’s soul, and so too her fleshly body, is less complete than Adam’s as a result of her secondary position in the order of creation.”⁴²

This hierarchical soldering of sexual difference to both the body and the soul applies not only to the created order but also to the coming resurrection. Indeed no question about the resurrected state can be explored without equal reference to these two thoroughly imbricated components of the human being. As Carolyn Walker Bynum shows, for Tertullian, “The whole person must be rewarded or punished . . . because it was the whole person (soul and body intermingled) that sinned or behaved with virtue.”⁴³ Here Tertullian’s operative principle, as he articulates it in *De resurrectione carnis* (*The Resurrection of the Flesh*), is that “if God does not raise human beings complete, he does not raise the dead” (*si non integros deus suscitatur, non suscitatur mortuos*).⁴⁴ In its immediate context, this pithy phrase refers to the restoration of mutilated bodies to their “natural condition” of completeness—any bodily loss or injury being viewed by Tertullian as accidental (in the Aristotelian sense) to the self. But seen in the larger context of Tertullian’s anthropology as whole, this claim implies a broader conclusion: the closely knit interconnection of body and soul (as well as its attendant implications) will carry through from the creation of Adam to the final redemption of human beings in Christ.

Here the most important of these implications for our purposes relates

to the fate of sexual difference. Tertullian insists that while there will be no marriage at the resurrection (following the clear testimony of the gospels; cf. Matt 22.30, Mark 12.25, Luke 20.35–36), spouses will still be bound to one another through a mutual recognition—one that implicitly entails the eschatological endurance of sexual difference, though without desire or carnal relations.⁴⁵ Elsewhere, he explicitly acknowledges that sexually differentiated genitals will not disappear (though he hedges on what purpose they will serve in the coming kingdom).⁴⁶ Rather, they will participate in what Bynum terms “the change to changelessness,” a philosophical paradox so confounding “as to necessitate a rejection of the standard Aristotelian definition: ‘a thing that has changed ceases to be what it is and becomes something else.’ Rather, Tertullian argues, ‘to be changed is to exist in a different form’; exactly the flesh that sinned must be rewarded.”⁴⁷

Thus whatever the angelic life that the gospels speak of may entail, it does not involve the disappearance of sexual difference into a sexless (or male-centered) androgyny: “therefore they will not cease to endure in the flesh just because they no longer endure in the practices of the flesh. . . . Moreover, Christ did not say ‘They will be angels’ in order not to deny their humanity (*homines*), but ‘like angels’ in order to preserve their humanity.”⁴⁸ And this notion of full humanity must necessarily include the preservation of sexual difference, body and soul.⁴⁹ But this is not such an optimistic picture of gendered embodiment as some contemporary scholars might like to have it.⁵⁰ For insofar as Tertullian maintains a robust connection between the resurrected state and the particularities of creation, his redemptive vision necessarily preserves the creational hierarchy of male over female into all eternity.

This deep-seated link between the created order and the world to come is crucial to understanding Tertullian’s anthropology as a whole. In fact, possibly to a greater depth than any other thinker we have examined so far, Tertullian situates his conception of the human person in terms of creation and resurrection, Adam and Christ. *De resurrectione carnis* renders explicit the relational principle that undergirds the anthropological reflections throughout his corpus:

For in whatever way the clay [Adam] was modeled, Christ was being thought about [by God]—Christ who was to become man (that which was also clay), and the Word who was to become flesh (that which was also at that time earth). . . . For the Word is also God, who having been established in the likeness of God, “did not

consider it robbery to be equal to God” [cf. Phil 2.6]. So then that clay—which was even then putting on the image of Christ who was to come in the flesh—was not only the work of God but also the pledge of God.⁵¹

Here Tertullian makes his point by recourse to the language of the creation narrative, elucidating the way in which Adam, formed from clay in the image of God, prefigures Christ, become (in a sense) both clay and flesh. Through this intimate typological link, then, the first human serves as a representative pledge of God’s redemptive promise to all of humanity.

Later in the same treatise, Tertullian develops the implications of this connection between Adam and Christ for the embodied existence of his Christian contemporaries, poised with him between creation and resurrection. He does so not by turning primarily to the Genesis story, but rather through an extended reflection on the Pauline language of typology in 1 Corinthians 15: “For as we have borne the image of the choic man (*imaginem choici*), let us also bear the image of the man who is above the heavens (*imaginem supercaelestis*) [cf. 1 Cor 15.49]. . . . Although the image of Adam is worn here in the flesh, we are not instructed to put off the flesh. . . . And indeed he arranges all this for discipline, seeing that he says that the image of Christ must be born here—in this flesh and in this time of discipline.”⁵² But what does it mean to bear the image of Adam or of Christ (two male representatives of humanity) in light of the stumbling block that sexual difference necessarily generates in the smooth functioning of this typological mechanism? Here Tertullian proves no different than the other early Christian thinkers we have examined throughout this book: the specter of Paul haunted his theological imagination in ways that were not easily resolved. Like Irenaeus before him, he seeks to navigate the problem by adding to the existing characters of the Pauline typology, positioning specifically *female* paradigmatic figures in relation to Adam and Christ. And it is to this strategic appropriation of Eve and Mary that we now turn.

The Contrary Operation

Tertullian undertakes the task of gendering his anthropological typology in Chapter 17 of *De carne Christi*—a treatise devoted to arguing that Christ’s flesh was in fact fully human.⁵³ The chapter begins by restricting the inquiry (at least rhetorically) to a single point: did Christ receive flesh from the

virgin?⁵⁴ Tertullian argues that “The founder of a new birth had to be born in a new way.”⁵⁵ Thus it is especially fitting that Scripture itself testifies to this new mode of birth in the book of Isaiah: “Behold a virgin will conceive in her womb (*in utero*) and give birth to a son.”⁵⁶ But this is not all. In fact, Tertullian tells us, this new birth—a dispensation in which “the Lord was born as a man by means of a virgin”—was actually prefigured.⁵⁷ He then proceeds to lay out the lines of a typological argument almost identical to Irenaeus’s:

The earth was still virginal (*Virgo erat adhuc terra*), not yet pressed down by labor or subdued by sowing seed. We accept that out of that virgin earth, a man was made by God into a living soul (*animam uiuam*). Therefore, just as the first Adam is presented, so it follows that the last Adam, as the apostle has said, was brought forth by God to be a life-giving spirit from the earth—that is, flesh—not yet unsealed by generation (*Igitur si primus Adam ita traditur, merito sequens uel nouissimus Adam, ut apostolus dixit, proinde de terra, id est carne, nondum generationi resignata in spiritum uiuificantem a deo est prolatus*). And indeed, lest my effort regarding Adam’s name prove useless, why is Christ called “Adam” by the apostle, if his humanity was not derived from the earth?⁵⁸

Here Tertullian is at greater pains than Irenaeus to offer explicit justification from the Pauline text for the typological connection between the two births. But while he couches the parallel in the language of 1 Corinthians 15, the basic structure of the exegetical argument is the same: as God formed the first Adam out of virgin earth to be a “living soul” (*animam uiuam*; cf. Gen 2.7/1 Cor 15.45), so he formed the second Adam out of Mary’s virgin flesh to be a “life-giving spirit” (*spiritum uiuificantem*; cf. 1 Cor 15.45). Note, however, that in this initial foray into typology, Mary is never named. Tertullian’s rhetorical emphasis is entirely on the link between Adam and Christ.

It is at this point—again similar to Irenaeus—that Tertullian introduces the Eve-Mary parallel. But unlike Irenaeus, Tertullian is not nearly so worried about maintaining a principle of recapitulation predicated on a set of parallels in which the end is like the beginning. As Osborn sums up, “Recapitulation is, for Irenaeus, the joining of the end to the beginning, the joining of man to God. . . . [Whereas for Tertullian,] Alpha is not Omega and Omega is not Alpha.”⁵⁹ Therefore, while both thinkers’ theological anthropologies require the eschatological preservation of sexual difference along with the cessation of

desire and procreation, Tertullian does not have the same need to balance each element of the human drama in terms of a symmetrical redemptive counterpart. As a result, the difference of the feminine does not emerge for him as a problematic excess that demands resolution through a recapitulative maneuver. Consequently, Tertullian's invocation of Eve and Mary does not need to do the same kind of theological heavy lifting that Irenaeus's does. There is no hint in *De carne Christi* that Mary functions as any sort of advocate or has a directly soteriological function somehow corresponding to that of Christ.

Yet if this is the case, then why appeal to the connection between the two women at all? The Eve-Mary typology shows up in an argument that is fundamentally about Adam and Christ—or, more specifically, about demonstrating the reality of Christ's flesh through the analogy between virginal human flesh and virgin earth. In this context, Tertullian introduces Eve and Mary not as a recapitulative *parallel* to Christ's salvific work with respect to Adam (cf. Irenaeus, *Epid.* 33) but rather as an *opposite*: "But even reason defends this: because God recovered his own image and likeness, which had been captured by the devil, by means of a contrary operation (*aemula operatione*)."⁶⁰ Having set the stage for his readers to understand what follows in terms of contrast, he then narrates, "For while Eve was still a virgin, the word that establishes death had crept in. In the same manner, the word of God that brings about life had to enter into a virgin, so that that which fell into perdition due to this sex (*sexum*) by that same sex (*eumdem sexum*) might be brought back to salvation. As Eve had believed the serpent, so Mary believed Gabriel. That wrong which the one woman brought about by believing, the other woman corrected by believing."⁶¹ As Burrus summarizes, whereas earlier Tertullian "has noted the pleasing symmetry between an original creation of humanity from the virginal earth and the new birth of 'the most recent Adam' from Mary's virginal womb," here he highlights "the neat reversal of Eve's diabolical misconception brought about by Mary's divine conception."⁶²

But what contrast is in view in this "neat reversal"? What exactly is contrary about "the contrary operation"? Burrus and others locate the opposition primarily in terms of the respective actions of Eve and Mary.⁶³ Yet while this antithesis is undeniably operative, I would argue that a further contrast is also at work. Here we need to pay attention to the actions of God in both examples under discussion. In the initial operation, God forms the prototypical human (Adam) out of pristine, unpenetrated virgin earth. Moreover, there is no indication that God's creative action in any way disturbs or deflowers that earth. Instead, Tertullian avers, "The earth was still virginal, not yet pressed down by

labor or subdued by sowing seed.⁶⁴ Since God's handiwork involves neither human labor nor seeding the soil, it presumably does nothing to disrupt this situation. God does not penetrate but rather shapes and forms—and the result is “a living soul,” the first Adam.⁶⁵ This action then finds its typological parallel in the situation of Mary and Christ. In both cases, God works with respect to a virginal, unpenetrated “body” (earth/Mary) to yield a prototypical (male) human being (Adam/Christ).

When we turn to the second operation, however, the role of penetration is equally important but now inverted. Where Tertullian stressed the lack of penetration with respect to the formation of Adam and Christ, here he emphasizes the *penetrative* parallel that binds Eve and Mary. Tina Beattie notes that “in suggestively sexual imagery . . . Tertullian gives graphic expression to ideas that are widespread in patristic texts, with his emphasis on the word as the impregnating source, and the ear as the site of penetration.”⁶⁶ As he rather luridly paints this picture, the ensnaring word of the serpent creeps *into* Eve (*irreperat*) whereas “in the same manner” (*aeque*) the word of God enters into the virgin Mary (*in uirginem . . . introducendum erat*). In view here is not only a metaphor for hearing or the penetration of the ear; rather, hearing is intimately connected to the penetrable cavity of Mary's body, as Tertullian makes clear in a revealing conflation a few lines later: “Therefore God delivered his word/Word *into the womb*” (*In uulvam ergo deus uerbum suum detulit*).⁶⁷ Once again then, a parallel structure obtains in both cases: a word (of the serpent/God) penetrates a prototypical (female) body (Eve/Mary) to yield a result of cosmic significance (death/salvation in Christ). In this way, in the context of the typology as a whole, Tertullian contrasts not only the actions of Mary and Eve, but also (and more fundamentally) the two typological operations in view (Christ/Adam, Eve/Mary).

As will be readily apparent, this presentation of Adam, Christ, Eve, and Mary entails a certain lack of coherence with respect to the rhetorical emphases in play. Jennifer Glancy has argued (in a different context) that “Tertullian's tendency toward inconsistency is compatible with the paradoxes that characterize his theology and the contrary statements that inflect his rhetoric.”⁶⁸ And something like a tolerance for inconsistency does seem to undergird the various typological maneuvers that Tertullian makes in *De carne Christi* 17, particularly in terms of how he portrays Mary. In the first operation, she is a paradigmatic example of the unpenetrated body—whereas the logic of the second operation relies on penetrative imagery that applies to Mary no less than Eve. Here Tertullian walks a fine line in his figuration of the virgin mother. On

the one hand, the first operation testifies to the fact that she clearly remains a virgin in his mind, even after her impregnating “penetration” by the Word of God. But on the other hand, the second operation works to align Mary closely with Eve (even as it contrasts them in terms of proper versus improper belief).

This alignment is important insofar as the survival of Eve’s virginity throughout the events that the passage narrates turns out to be somewhat questionable. Indeed as Tertullian develops the argument, he proves rather cagey about the precise impact of Eve’s aural penetration on the intactness of her maidenhood. Anticipating a potential objection, he argues:

“But Eve conceived nothing at that time in her womb from the word of the devil.” [So it could be objected.] On the contrary, she did conceive. For from that time, the word of the devil became semen within her (*uerbum diaboli semen illi fuit*) such that she conceived in abjection and gave birth in pain. Finally she forced out a fratricidal devil. On the other hand, Mary gave birth to him who would someday be responsible for the salvation of Israel, his fleshly brother and his murderer . . . [Christ being] the good brother so that the memory of the evil brother might pass away.⁶⁹

Here Tertullian is determined to maintain that Eve did in fact “conceive” through the events that he narrates here. Relying heavily on procreative metaphors, he recounts how the devil’s word acts as a kind of sperm, gestating and bringing to birth a situation in which Eve’s literal conceptions will now take place in circumstances of abjection and pain (cf. Gen 3.16). But the coyly worded passage works to facilitate a certain (intentional?) slippage between Eve’s conception of sin from the devil’s word and her physical conception of the “fratricidal devil,” Cain. Although elsewhere Tertullian understands Adam to be Cain’s biological father,⁷⁰ his failure to mention Adam here only heightens the ambiguity—insofar as it works rhetorically to elide the distinction between the two conceptions.⁷¹ Thus, while Tertullian never quite says that the penetration of the devil’s word deflowered Eve physically, he leaves the possibility ambiguously open. And because of Eve’s intimate typological connection to Mary, this in turn puts Mary’s own intactness in a somewhat tenuous position—even as Tertullian unequivocally maintains (both here and elsewhere) her virginal status at this point in the narrative of salvation.

Consequently, the rhetorical inconsistency is clear. Whereas the Adam-

Christ parallel highlights Mary's intactness, the parallel with Eve brings her penetrability to the fore. On its surface, the rhetoric of penetration applies to a distinct bodily register (the ear), leaving Mary's virginity unsullied. But at the same time, Mary's association with Eve and the passage's sexualized rhetoric throughout imply suggestive links to a different kind of penetration. How ought we to understand the incongruity? While agreeing with Glancy and others regarding Tertullian's tolerance (and even penchant) for contradiction, I would argue that more is at work here than just a willingness to accept inconsistency in the interest of making a point. Rather, what drives Tertullian is a particular kind of typological logic based (as noted by Osborn above) on balance achieved through opposition.

Thus what matters most to him at this juncture is not the rhetorical discrepancy between the dual descriptions of Mary but the contrast between the two operations (Adam/Christ, Eve/Mary) as a whole. Intactness versus penetration is the conceptual hinge on which this contrast turns. And as we will see, the divergent character of the "contrary operation" has important theological payoffs for Tertullian in terms of his broader theological anthropology—thereby rendering a bit of rhetorical inconsistency worth the risk. But there is more: the second operation's contrasting emphasis on penetrability (and with it the subtle insinuation that not only Eve's virginity but even Mary's may not prove entirely secure) also foreshadows where Tertullian is heading. As I will argue in the next section, his typological edifice (and especially the gendered contrast that structures it) functions as part of a larger argument—an attempt to redefine the meaning and significance of virginity in relation to sexual difference.

Virginity and the Disciplining of Sexual Difference

Virginity's Dangers and Possibilities

The characterization of Eve and Mary's bodies as *virginal* matters just as much in Tertullian's anthropological typology as in the typology of Irenaeus—but for different reasons and to a different end. The virginal state is one that Tertullian valorizes highly on a scale of relative human goods.⁷² So for example, in the treatise *De exhortatione castitatis* (*Exhortation to Chastity*), he appeals to 1 Corinthians 7.1 (which he takes as coming from the mouth of Paul rather than his Corinthian interlocutors) to argue, "Therefore, 'it is best for a man not to touch a woman,' and accordingly, the original sanctity is that of the

virgin (*uirginis principalis est sanctitas*), because it is without an affinity to fornication.⁷³ A few lines later he effusively characterizes this state as “that uppermost station of immaculate virginity” (*summo illo immaculatae uirginitatis gradu*).⁷⁴

But this does not mean that Tertullian’s notion of virginity is without its potential dangers—at least from his point of view. Dyan Elliott has explored the complex ways in which virginity could in fact take on a “liminal capacity” in Tertullian’s thought.⁷⁵ Thus in *De uirginibus uelendis* (*The Veiling of Virgins*), he makes an extended case that the female virgins of Carthage be understood not as some androgynous *tertium quid*—what Tertullian refers to as “a third order [of humanity], some sort of monstrosity with its own origin” (*tertium genus est monstruosum aliquod sui capitis*)⁷⁶—but unambiguously as *women*.⁷⁷ And if virgins are women, then they too ought to don the veil, the Pauline “sign of authority” (1 Cor 11.10) over their heads.⁷⁸ According to Elliott, “Tertullian attempted to squelch the androgynous pretensions of virgins by asserting their ineradicable womanhood, a cause that was symbolically advanced by the imposition of the veil.”⁷⁹ We see this agenda at work in Tertullian’s response to his opponents who point out that Paul’s reflections on veiling in 1 Corinthians 11 refer explicitly only to “the woman” rather than the virgin. Against this position, he argues hotly that in “not making a distinction, [Paul] reveals their common condition. Otherwise he would have been able here also to establish a difference between a virgin and a woman (*constituere differentiam inter uirginem et mulierem*), just as he says somewhere else, ‘The woman and the virgin are divided.’”⁸⁰

Tertullian supports this argument by maintaining that the term “woman” is the genus—the broader category—covering various subspecies such as “virgin” or “married woman” or “widow.” As he sums up the general principle, “Therefore, the individual is subject to the general [category], because the general is first; and that which is subsequent is subject to its antecedent, and that which is a portion is subject to the universal.”⁸¹ He then further buttresses his case by laying out a spectrum of arguments—including carefully explicated illustrations demonstrating that scripture refers to both Eve and Mary (among other biblical examples) as women while still virgins and vice versa.⁸² Satisfied that he has proven his point (that female virgins are in fact a kind of woman), he concludes the treatise with an impassioned plea addressed directly to the women of the Carthaginian church in light of the dangers of (male) desire: “I plead with you, if you are a mother or a sister or a daughter, that is, a virgin—for I will speak to you according to the names of your years—veil your head!

If you are a mother, for the sake of your sons; if you are a sister, for the sake of your brothers; if you are a daughter, for the sake of your fathers. All ages are put into danger through you (*omnes in te aetates periclitantur*).⁸³

In fact, the threat that virginal female bodies posed went far beyond just the scope of the Carthaginian church. Tertullian had only to look to the testimony of scripture to see how much havoc these bodies could wreak. Here the story of the rebellious Watcher Angels from Genesis 6 (and its traditional development in Enochic literature) captured his imagination: “When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose” (Gen 6.1–2, NRSV).⁸⁴ Tertullian argues that the sense of the passage necessarily indicates that that the women in view are virgins: “Therefore, when [the text] says ‘the daughters of men’ (*filias hominum*), clearly this indicates virgins, who hitherto were reckoned in view of their parents—for wives are called by the name of their husbands; and it could have said ‘the wives of men’ (*uxores hominum*).”⁸⁵

This conclusion in turn helps him to situate his argument for veiling in a web of interrelatedness that links the everyday encounters between the sexes in the Carthaginian ecclesia to a sphere of celestial significance: “Therefore, so dangerous a face (*facies tam periculosa*)—that which has hurled scandals up to heaven—ought to be in shadow; so that, taking a stand with God, before whom it is accused of bringing about the expulsion of the angels, it may blush with shame before the other angels also, and may suppress that evil freedom of its own head from previously, one which now ought not to be offered to the eyes of men.”⁸⁶ Elliott aptly sums up what is at stake for Tertullian in this interpretation of the virgins and the Watcher Angels: “By elevating human nature, virginity created a zone in which angels and humans were permitted to mingle—a propinquity that Tertullian clearly deemed deleterious to both. Although virginity could not raise women to angelic heights, the virgins themselves clearly had the capacity to draw angels down to subhuman depths. And the falling angels would, in turn, do all in their power to drag humanity along with them.”⁸⁷

Thus virginity could be dangerous. But at the same time, it could also function as a redemptive sign—a testimony to (and prefiguration of) the mysterious hope to be realized in resurrected fleshly bodies. So in *De resurrectione carnis*, Tertullian appeals to the virginal state as an example of how sexed bodies may perdure in the coming kingdom even once their sexual and excretory functions have ceased:

Besides even today it can be allowed for the intestines and the genitals to be idle. . . . So even we, as we are able, excuse the mouth from food and also withdraw bodily sex (*sexum*) from union. How many voluntary eunuchs there are, how many virgins married to Christ (*quot spadones voluntarii, quot virgines Christi maritae*), how many of both sexes who are sterile, provided with fruitless genitals! For if even in the present it is possible for the functions and the labors of our members to be idle with a temporary freedom, as in a temporary dispensation—and yet a person nevertheless remains sound—consequently, when a person is sound, as is true to an even greater degree in an eternal dispensation, all the more will we no longer desire those things which in the present we have gotten in the habit of not desiring.⁸⁸

Here Tertullian has in view a range of conditions and practices (including fasting and sterility) of which virginity is only one. But it is clear that the virginal body occupies a privileged space in his thinking, testifying to the glorious mystery whereby Christian bodies in all their particularities retain some (unspecified) purpose even as their earthly functions and desires cease: “If then something exists, it will also be possible for it not to be idle. For in the presence of God, nothing will be idle.”⁸⁹ In the face of this mystery, as Elliott convincingly argues, “Although virginity did not solve the conundrum of the body’s continued existence, it nevertheless re-posed the question in striking terms by offering a compelling *figura* for how incomprehensible anomalies are nevertheless consistent with God’s plan for humanity.”⁹⁰

The Problem of the Paradigmatic Virgin

In this way, virginity emerges for Tertullian as the site where both the dangers and opportunities of sexual difference in the flesh are most palpably manifest. But here—just as we saw with Irenaeus—he runs up against a set of gendered complexities entailed in the very ambiguity of virginity *as a concept*. That is to say, how are the possibilities of virginity (both positive and perilous) to be understood in relation to the physical specificities of sexually differentiated bodies? In particular, how do these possibilities map onto virginity understood in terms of an unpenetrated (female) body versus virginity as a state of purity attainable by both men and women? Tertullian was well aware of the difficulties involved in connecting virginity to sexual difference—and the conceptual ambiguity is sometimes even reflected in his terminological choices. Thus,

while he often chooses to contrast unpenetrated female virgins to male “eunuchs for Christ,” there are also places in his corpus where he clearly uses the term *virgo* to refer to male bodies in addition to female ones.⁹¹

Confronted then with this ambiguity, Tertullian seeks to shut down its disruptive possibilities—possibilities that might call his anthropological commitments into question. One strategy (as we have seen) is to subject the fuzziness of the category to a strict sexually differentiated bifurcation: whatever “virgins married to Christ” (*virgines Christi maritae*) may be, they are women first, whereas “voluntary eunuchs” (*spadones voluntarii*) are men.⁹² In this way, female virgins (like all women) fall under the hierarchical vision outlined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11—and symbolized in bodily practice through the wearing of the veil. As Tertullian states in *De virginibus velandis*, “Behold the two different names, man and woman, both entailing every [male or female person respectively], and in turn obliged to two laws—one of veiling and the other of being uncovered.”⁹³ But this is not the only card Tertullian plays in his attempt to ensure that the unpenetrated body *cannot signify* in ways that might upset the fundamental anthropological hierarchy of his cosmos. And it is here, I will argue, that the true theological usefulness of the Eve-Mary typology comes into play.

To unpack this claim, we must examine the specific ways that the valorized condition of virginity applies to the different figures in the two typological operations of *De carne Christi*. In the first operation, Tertullian begins with virginal “bodies” (earth/Mary) that yield virginal human beings (Adam/Christ). Though he does not follow out the Genesis narrative in any detail, implicit in this construction is that both the earth and Adam will eventually lose their “virginities”—through the tilling of the ground and the consummation of Adam’s marriage to Eve respectively. The second operation starts on a similar note with virgin bodies, Eve and Mary: the first will lose her virginity while the second remains (for the time being) a virgin, destined to give birth to another virgin—“Christ, also himself a virgin, even in the flesh, in that he was born from the flesh of a virgin” (*Christum, uirginem et ipsum etiam carnaliter, ut ex uirginis carne*).⁹⁴ Thus, as Tertullian’s account of the two operations in *De carne Christi* 17 concludes, out of the various figures who begin (at least implicitly) as virgins (earth, Adam, Eve, Christ, Mary), only two virginities seem as if they will remain intact: Christ’s and Mary’s.

But this is in fact not the case. Of these two, Christ’s virginity is safe enough, as *De carne Christi* makes clear. Born of virgin flesh, he remains a virgin into eternity. Elsewhere, Tertullian offers further elucidation on this

point, correlating Christ's virginity to Adam's primal purity: "Accordingly, the last Adam, that is, Christ, was totally unmarried, even as the first Adam was prior to his exile (*quando nouissimus Adam, id est Christus, innuptus in totum, quod etiam primus Adam ante exilium*). But . . . the more perfect Adam, that is Christ, more perfect by virtue of his being so untainted, meets you who are willing to be a eunuch in the flesh."⁹⁵ Just as Adam was initially unmarried, living in virginal purity, so too was Christ—with the key difference being that Christ never loses his virginity, thereby rendering him an ideal model of the virginal life to be emulated by "eunuchs in the flesh."⁹⁶

What about Mary? Elliott argues for a complementary significance to the parallel between the virgin mother and Eve's initial intactness in the garden, claiming that the latter's virginity "sets the stage for the remedial intervention of that exemplary virgin (and woman) par excellence, Mary."⁹⁷ But while this parallel is undoubtedly operative in such a way as to cast Mary in an extremely positive light, at the same time it is crucial to note that Mary is actually *not* "the exemplary virgin par excellence" for Tertullian. This honor belongs to Christ alone. Meanwhile, Tertullian goes to great lengths to ensure that Mary's virginity is not equally or eternally valorized (at least not the way it is for a thinker like Irenaeus). The paradigmatic site of valorized virginity cannot be occupied by a female body defined by its lack of penetration; rather, what belongs here for Tertullian is the unambiguously male body of the risen Christ. Thus Mary's virginal body ultimately belongs not in a position of near-parallel salvific significance (recapitulating Eve as Christ recapitulates Adam), but instead as part of the *contrary* operation that foregrounds penetrability rather than intactness.

We have already examined the ways in which Tertullian subtly hints at the possibility of Mary's eventual penetration through her association with Eve, even as he upholds her virginity throughout the events associated with Christ's conception and gestation. However, it is not until his treatment of Christ's birth that these intimations come fully to fruition. Continuing to build his case in *De carne Christi*, Tertullian offers the following remarkable statement regarding Mary:

And if she conceived as a virgin, she became a bride through giving birth. For she became a bride by that same law of the opened body—such that it did not matter whether the violence was of the male let in or let out: the same sex did the unsealing (*Nam nupsit ipsa patefacti corporis lege: in quo nihil interfuit de ui masculi admissi*

an emissi; idem illud sexus resignavit). This then is the womb (*uulua*) on account of which it is written concerning other wombs also: “Every male who throws open the womb will be called holy to the Lord” [cf. Luke 2.23]. Truly who is really as holy as the son of God? Who properly has thrown open a womb, other than he who has opened what was closed? Otherwise nuptials do the opening in all cases. Therefore, that which was all the more opened is that which was all the more closed. All the more then that she ought to be called ‘not a virgin’ rather than a virgin, becoming a mother before a bride (*mater antequam nupta*) by a sort of leap. And what more must be considered concerning this? When, for this reason, the apostle proclaimed that the son of God was born not from a virgin but from a woman (*non ex uirgine sed ex muliere*), he recognized the nuptial phenomenon of the opened womb (*adapertae uuluae nuptialem passionem*).⁹⁸

Tertullian thus posits that Mary *actually loses her virginity* in giving birth to Christ. In his conception of human flesh, it does not matter whether the intact female body is penetrated on the way in or on the way out. So the “law of the opened body” decrees. A breach in either direction constitutes a defloration—and even more than that, an explicitly sexual encounter. As Glancy convincingly argues, Tertullian concludes that “by being born Jesus becomes, none too gently, his mother’s lover, a conclusion that implies that all childbirth necessitates a sexual moment between child (or, at least, male child) and mother.”⁹⁹ In this way, Tertullian reveals the full implications of Christ’s birth via the “contrary operation”: Mary’s body will forever bear the marks of rupture, while only Christ remains the paradigmatic virgin.

Shoring Up the Hierarchy

How then are we to understand Tertullian’s “contrary operation” in terms of the larger theological problem in view in this book—the challenge of situating sexual difference within a theology of creation and resurrection overdetermined by a Pauline Adam-Christ typology? Or to put this another way: given that Tertullian’s concerns are so different from those of Irenaeus, what specific work does the Eve-Mary parallel do for him in articulating his distinct theology of sexual difference? In light of the analysis we have just pursued, I contend that Tertullian turns to the virginal bodies of Eve and Mary in an attempt to integrate sexual difference into a broadly Pauline typological schema.

But his goal is to do so in such a way that he can still uphold that difference in terms of a gendered hierarchy rooted in the garden and stretching to the eschaton.

Yet writing difference into the created order in this manner leaves certain questions outstanding, most notably how to maintain that—in a theological economy in which Adam and Christ are the paradigmatic representatives of *all* humanity—this difference will somehow endure as both essential to what it means to be human (that is, not collapsing eschatologically into a “male-inflected androgyny”¹⁰⁰) and nonetheless *still hierarchical*. The trope of virginity is the vehicle Tertullian uses to respond to the seeming intractability at the heart of this anthropological conundrum. By figuring Eve-Mary (and the redemption worked in Mary) as a contrary operation to the Adam-Christ parallel (i.e., an operation with the subordinating gesture of *penetration* at its heart), Tertullian seeks to shore up his anthropological vision of two given, indispensable, but fundamentally hierarchical sexes, male over female. He has no need to resolve or recapitulate the difference of the feminine—being, as it is, an eternal, essential part of the souls and bodies of half the human race. But this difference also needs to be eternally subordinate. And insofar as penetration necessarily signified subordination in ancient Roman thinking,¹⁰¹ a paradigmatic unpenetrated female body cannot be allowed to stand. Thus Tertullian categorically rejects the prospect of a representative human being specific to the symbolic register of the feminine that might compete, even in some small way, with the redemptive primacy of the male Christ.

To head off this specter (generated, at least in part, by the lacuna that sexual difference constitutes with respect to the Pauline typology in the first place), he therefore in effect attempts to hijack the theologically fecund possibilities of the unpenetrated body. Thus virginity’s paradigm cannot be Mary but must necessarily be Christ. The virgins of Carthage will have no specifically female archetype or exemplar out of which to theologize the disruptive significance of their unpenetrated status. By deflowering his mother, the Son of God ensures that his virginal preeminence emerges without parallel in the representative economy. It is perhaps then only mildly anachronistic to claim that on some level, Tertullian recognizes—even as he attempts to suppress—the subversive potential of a theological anthropology in which (to quote Beattie in her capacity as a contemporary feminist theologian), “Mary’s virginity becomes a symbol of freedom and grace that resists phallic domination. The unruptured hymen is not a symbol of man’s possession of woman but of God’s power and woman’s redemption from the patriarchal order of domination.”¹⁰²

It is this potential, I would argue, that Tertullian's deployment of the Eve-Mary parallel seeks to shut down. On the whole then, his treatment of Eve and Mary allows him to place sexual difference in an Adam-Christ typology in a way that firmly subordinates the typology's anthropological implications to the hierarchy of 1 Corinthians 11: God, Christ, man, woman. As Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 11.3, "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (NASB). Refigured in terms of Tertullian's typological logic, this becomes: Adam and the male human beings "in" him stand over Eve and the female human beings "in" her. The male virginal Christ stands over both—but with an intimate typological connection to Adam by way of their male bodies and their respective births from "virgins." And God stands over the whole structure, guaranteeing the stability of its descending order for all eternity.

Conclusion: The Virgin Who Deflowers?

Tertullian therefore excludes (or at least seeks to exclude) any threat to this particular order of things that a parallel virginal figure from the representative register of Eve might pose. Allowing Mary to remain a perpetually unpenetrated body—and thus a paradigm of redemption for *women*—would upset the 1 Corinthians 11 hierarchy, perhaps beyond recovery. So Mary must be penetrated. But her penetration cannot be the work of any ordinary man such as Joseph—though Tertullian understands Joseph and Mary to have indulged in ordinary sexual relations after the birth of Jesus.¹⁰³ However, he eschews casting Joseph in this role, which would have been a simpler solution than the one he opts for, as well as easily argued from scripture.¹⁰⁴ Presumably this is because to yield Mary's maidenhood to her husband *after* Christ's birth leaves open the dangerous possibility that this rupture—so necessary to Tertullian's theological anthropology—might actually never have happened. (As is well known, it is precisely this position that emerges among Christian thinkers in some quarters by at least as early as the fourth century.¹⁰⁵) Instead, the law of the opened body must stand, and Mary's penetration must therefore come at the hands of none other than her son, thereby guaranteeing through the very miracle of the virgin birth that "she ought to be called 'not a virgin' rather than a virgin."¹⁰⁶

At the same time, however, it is precisely this move that renders visible a lingering vulnerability in Tertullian's effort to shore up his naturalized gender

hierarchy. For virginity—in its various sexually differentiated manifestations—proves, perhaps, to be a bit too slippery a concept to provide a fully secure platform for Tertullian’s argument. Accordingly, with respect to Mary’s “nuptial deflowering,” Glancy notes that “while Tertullian does not represent childbirth as an obviously erotic moment, a moment when desire is expressed, he does imply that the erotic encounter of intercourse, at the very least a woman’s first intercourse, is a moment of intimate violence when a man forces his entry to the *uulua*.”¹⁰⁷ Yet what about *the man* in this scenario—whether that man is a lover forcing his way into a virginal body, or more to the point, a son forcing his way out? What are the stakes in this encounter of “intimate violence” for male virginity?

At issue here is the very question of what virginity is and how it works (i.e., how it is kept and how it is lost). If virginity were to be understood *only* in terms of the unpenetrated body, then nothing would be at stake for either the son or the male lover. Rather, by logical extension to a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*, men would not actually be able to “lose” their virginities at all (except possibly by submitting to penetration by another man). However, this position is not an option for Tertullian. In fact, the “hijacking” of virginity’s theological and anthropological possibilities that we have examined relies entirely on a more ambiguous notion of the trope: one that slides conceptually between the logic of unpenetrated intactness and an ungendered sexual purity available to both men and women.

But a closer look at this slippage reveals the challenge—indeed the impossibility—of maintaining a consistent and impregnable position. In Christ’s natal “encounter” with his mother, Tertullian wants to maintain that *only* Mary loses her virginity when she is penetrated by her male child. Still what about Christ’s virginity—a virginity presumably predicated not on bodily intactness but on a lack of penetrative sexual experience (an experience attended, under normal circumstances, by sexual desire)? As Glancy shows, the encounter in view is a sexual one of sorts—though not an overt manifestation of sexual desire. On the one hand then, this requires that defloration not be necessarily tied to ordinary sex acts and the desires that accompany them. On the other hand though, if the loss of virginity can be dissociated from the expression of sexual desire in this way, then how is Christ’s virginity to be protected in the course of penetrating his mother? Tertullian’s own argument has attempted to establish a total equivalence between penetration from without (an action on the part of a man that normally brings about the loss of male virginity) and penetration from within.¹⁰⁸ But in light of this equivalence, Christ’s perpetual

virginity is shown to be on exceedingly precarious footing. Playing off Tertullian's reference to the umbilical cord as a mechanism of mutual "joining" (Latin *coitus*) between mother and child, Burrus notes (both caustically and rightly), "A 'mutual *coitus*' indeed!"¹⁰⁹

In the end, the risk to Christ's virginity—and with it, his status as "the perfect (hu)man" in the God-Christ-Adam-Eve hierarchy—is not a possibility Tertullian acknowledges. Yet whether he simply passes it by or deliberately disavows it, the vulnerability remains, stubbornly visible in the interstices of his own argument. Consequently, Tertullian's attempted solution to the problem of typology and sexual difference proves—to return (a bit catachrestically) to a citation from Jameson—"scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; [and] we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which under exceptional circumstances might betray us."¹¹⁰ And perhaps even under not such exceptional circumstances. Though we can have no direct access to their thoughts or actions, it is possible that the female virgins of Carthage, in removing their veils, could leverage this vulnerability, thereby generating (or buttressing) their own claims for a gender-specific typological significance to their unpenetrated bodies—despite Tertullian's best efforts to argue to the contrary.¹¹¹ For if the virgin mother is in fact "to be called 'not a virgin,'" then Christ's virginity is in question. Yet if Christ's virginity is to be secure in the typological apparatus, then how can Mary be penetrated by him? Either way, Tertullian's interlacing of virginity and sexual difference within a Pauline Adam-Christ typology proves to be a fraught endeavor, exposing the spectral instability that persists at the heart of his anthropological project.

Conclusion

Specters of Paul

It is impossible to predict what will become of sexual difference—in another time (in two or three hundred years?). But we must make no mistake: men and women are caught up in a web of age-old cultural determinations that are almost unanalyzable in their complexity. One can no more speak of “woman” than of “man” without being trapped within an ideological theater where the proliferation of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications, transform, deform, constantly change everyone’s Imaginary and invalidate in advance any conceptualization.

—Hélène Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*

By confining itself to “the way it really was,” by conceiving history as a closed, homogenous, rectilinear, continuous course of events, the traditional historiographical gaze . . . leaves out of consideration what *failed* in history, what has to be denied so that the continuity of “what really happened” could establish itself.

—Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*

In a 2009 *New Yorker* article, Joan Acocella identifies what she sees as being at stake in the current flurry of academic interest in “rehabilitating” the figure of Judas Iscariot that has accompanied the discovery of the *Gospel of Judas*: “Cumulatively, the commentaries on the Judas gospel are amazing in their insistence on its upbeat character. Jesus ridicules his disciples, denounces the world, and says that most of us will pass away into nothingness. Hearing this, Judas asks why he and his like were born—a good question. The fact that liberal theologians have managed to find hope in all this is an indication of

how desperately, in the face of the evangelical movement, they are looking for some crack in the wall of doctrinaire Christianity—some area of surprise, uncertainty, that might then lead to thought.”¹ Whether Acocella offers a fair appraisal of the scholarly conversation surrounding the *Gospel of Judas* is not an issue I wish to take up here. However, I find her characterization of a certain desire within early Christian scholarship helpful for how clearly it illuminates a common (if flawed) assumption: the notion that whatever “cracks in the wall” of the Christian tradition are to be found—spaces of surprise and uncertainty (as well as the need for thought that they generate)—will only be found in theological “recovery projects,” foraging at the margins of ancient history for forgotten heroes.

Feminist theology has been no stranger to these sorts of rescue missions in the textual evidence of early Christianity—and with many valuable results, pace Acocella’s somewhat disdainful insinuation (not limited just to Judas Iscariot in its scope) that such projects are fruitless. But in this book, I have taken a different approach, seeking to ferret out not contrapuntal “lost voices” that the mainstream tradition has forgotten, but rather a different kind of space for thought—one generated by the tendency of the early Christian texts we have examined to unravel on terms internal to their own arguments. In this unraveling, I have contended, we can glimpse the trace of a particular anthropological specter that haunts the formative period of Christianity: the intractable problem, at least partially inherited from the generative silences in Paul’s theology of creation and resurrection, of assigning a stable and theologically coherent significance to the sexually differentiated body.

These difficulties were by no means unique to the context of early Christianities that were influenced by Pauline theology. As we have seen, in Greco-Roman thought more broadly, the difference of the feminine persistently posed a set of discursive problems with respect to its provenance, ongoing significance, and ultimate destiny. This problematic, broadly construed, haunted Paul just as it did so many of his intellectual predecessors, contemporaries, and heirs throughout the ancient and late ancient world. But I have argued that the apostle’s typological intervention changed the game for a particular set of early Christian thinkers in the opening moments of late antiquity (that is, the second and early third centuries)—a shift that had important and long-ranging consequences for the history of Christian theological anthropology. Insofar as these early Christians appropriated, engaged, and reworked Paul’s typological categories in various ways to articulate their own frameworks of salvation history, their anthropological speculations proved to be haunted by

a particularly *Pauline* version of the problematic. And in their texts, the recalcitrant distinctiveness of the female/feminine consistently emerges as a philosophical and theological irritant within a range of positions that seek to situate the human typologically between Adam and Christ—"the other different and deferred in the economy of the same."²

My analysis has identified two basic paradigmatic strategies that second- and third-century Christians deployed in an effort to manage or contain this "irritant." The first, monistic in orientation and indebted to platonizing philosophical traditions, finds a place for "woman" in an Adam-Christ framework by figuring her as the site of desire, division, and lack. According to this strategy, as seen in the *Excerpts from Theodotus* and the writings of Clement of Alexandria (as well as the *Tripartite Tractate*, albeit in a less overtly typological form), the difference of the feminine functions as a problematic aberration, a temporary difficulty to be resolved at the eschaton. We also observed, in *On the Origin of the World*, another sort of platonizing "solution" to the Pauline anthropological problematic—one that provides the first woman with her own non-derivative genealogy of embodiment, but that must break the seamless unity of Paul's Adam-Christ correlation in order to do so.

The second basic strategy in view treats the feminine not as an anomaly in need of eradication, but rather as a legitimate—if always secondary—supplement to the masculine. Such an approach is not necessarily mutually exclusive with platonizing and monistic cosmological commitments, as evidenced by its use in a Valentinian context (the *Gospel of Philip*). My focus, however, has centered on two early Christian thinkers, Irenaeus of Lyons and Tertullian of Carthage, who do not envision the fate of the sexually differentiated flesh at the eschaton in terms of elimination or radical discontinuity. Instead, each concentrates in different ways on the ongoing theological significance of that flesh, beginning at creation and carrying through to resurrection. Here virginal flesh, both female and male, serves as the means by which Irenaeus and Tertullian are able to append an additional layer of meaning (and bodies) onto Paul's framework—thereby affording a subsidiary typological significance to the figures of Eve and Mary within an anthropological system still fundamentally determined by Adam and Christ. In this way, these thinkers mobilize the particularities of fleshy embodiment within discourse (a strategy that renders more easily visible the slippage between bodies and discourse, language and materiality) in an effort to give sexual difference a coherent place within typology.

What all of these approaches have in common, I have argued, is that

none of them entirely succeed in delivering the coherence that they strive for. Rather, the textual analyses throughout this book have attempted to show that these multiple early Christian thought-experiments together constitute a large-scale discursive failure.³ Whether the ancient authors in question figure “the woman” as a temporary aberration, a specific site of the divine in the world inassimilable to the Pauline “two man” paradigm, or a secondary support to that paradigm, the specter, in each case, is never fully neutralized. The dream of an absolute resolution to the movement of signification—a fullness captured without remainder through the fulfillment of type in antitype, creation in eschaton—stumbles over sexual difference.

What might the implications of this analysis be for feminist and/or queer theology? In her recent work, Judith Butler has begun to consider how “the question of ethics emerges precisely at the limits of our schemes of intelligibility”—that is, at those sites of rupture where the horizons of the normative and/or the natural begin to break down on us.⁴ A direct confrontation with some form of this breakdown (though inflected differently in an ancient intellectual context) is exactly what the early Christian thinkers considered in this book have sought to avoid. Yet I want to propose that the rich and variegated failures of discourse that they have left behind may point toward new possibilities for theological recognition of what it means to be an embodied, sexed, and sexualized human being. As Butler observes, “Sometimes the very unrecognizability of the other brings about a crisis in the norms that govern recognition . . . sometimes calling into question the regime of truth by which my own truth is established is motivated by the desire to recognize another or be recognized by one.”⁵

I suggest, then, that what has persisted in these early Christian attempts to locate sexual difference satisfactorily between Adam and Christ is, in fact, despite the authors’ best efforts, “the very unrecognizability of the other,” as figured in the difference of the feminine. But I would further argue that this unrecognizability signals not a total and inassimilable alterity (making recognition across embodied human differences a theological impossibility—a position to which *On the Origin of the World* admittedly draws close), but rather a necessary instability in the very categories that constitute theological anthropology. And herein lie resources for feminist and queer theology that should not be overlooked. Within an Adam-Christ typology such as that deployed by the early Christians, the figure of the paradigmatic woman cannot be grasped, located, pinned down (or eradicated) in any totally stable way—but at the same time, she is not *absolutely* other (and hence not totally unrecognizable).

Rather, to return to this book's opening epigraph from Derrida, "if one looks hard enough as in those pictures in which a second picture faintly can be made out, one might be able to discern her unstable form, drawn upside-down in the foliage, at the back of the garden."⁶ And it is in this unstable form that the paradigmatic woman haunts the Pauline discourse of identity and sameness as the difference that can neither be fully assimilated nor fully ejected.

Thus the efforts of second- and third-century Christian thinkers to put the specter of the Pauline anthropological problematic to rest offer us not fully coherent and stable solutions, but rather a version of Acocella's "cracks in the wall"—cracks that traverse the tradition without resolution, touching both its disavowed margins and its traditional "orthodox" center. But following Butler, I contend that these cracks need not be construed as an *ethical* failure—nor (to move in a different direction than Butler's project) a theological dead end. Instead, these early Christian texts offer us a vivid illustration of one way in which "[any] account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story."⁷ Precisely the failure to produce a *definitive* story for sexually differentiated theological anthropology has the potential to force open the space for other kinds of stories. As Butler goes on to note,

If I find that despite my best efforts, a certain opacity persists . . . is this ethical failure? Or is it a failure that gives rise to another ethical disposition in the place of a full and satisfying notion of narrative accountability? Is there in this affirmation of partial transparency a possibility for acknowledging a relationality that binds me more deeply to language and to you than I previously knew? And is the relationality that conditions and blinds this "self" not, precisely, an indispensable resource for ethics?

With respect to feminist and queer theology specifically, the point Butler makes here might push us toward taking the collective (if disavowed) impasse that we have observed in the early Christian tradition as a starting point for rethinking the movement between creation and eschaton in constructive terms. In view is an eschatological vision of the human that could still admit of fragmentation, partialness, and undomesticated difference—that is, an eschatology not about closing gaps, but about inhabiting (and being inhabited by) them.

Along these lines, Catherine Keller argues for what she calls a "feminist apophasis," that is, an approach to feminist theology characterized by "the break up of language into a knowing ignorance, an unknowing that opens

into a beyond that I cannot every fully construct, author, or control.”⁸ Also building on Butler’s inquiries into ethics, Keller maintains the value of “a philosophical negativity emerging out of the experience of the negation of gender itself, [making possible] new affirmations of our creaturely embodiment, of our sexuality . . . of gender as well.”⁹ This is not, for her, a plunge “from totalism to relativism”; instead, she contends, “A subtler sociality, a relationality in which we at once undo and embrace each other, becomes dimly visible. But it appears *only in contrast to the margins of avowed opacity* . . . where I give an account of myself without the delirious presumption that I could give an exhaustive account, that I would ever exist in full self-transparency.”¹⁰ At the very least, then, the specters of Paul that we have examined here push toward an avowal of the opacity that inheres in sexual difference as a *historical* problem of Pauline theological anthropology. Furthermore, on the contemporary plane, this avowal may work to render this difference not only a theological problem, but also an opportunity—in the hope that the “subtler sociality” of which Keller speaks might become a little less dim in its visibility.

But on the historical level as well, there is—or at least may be—more. In this vein, Slavoj Žižek argues for what he calls a “proper *historical* stance,” one that relativizes “not the past (always distorted by our present point of view) but, paradoxically, *the present itself*.”¹¹ As he unpacks this enigmatic claim, “it is not only . . . that we always perceive our past within the horizon of our present preoccupations, that in dealing with the past we are in effect dealing with the ghosts of the past whose resuscitation enables us to confront our present dilemmas. It is also that we, the ‘actual’ present historical agents, have to conceive of *ourselves* as the materialization of the ghosts of past generations, as the stage in which these past generations retroactively resolve their deadlocks.”¹² For those of us who stand explicitly within the Christian theological tradition (or even for those—a much larger group—whose thought is indebted to and/or formed in some way by its intellectual resources), it may be that we ourselves do indeed “materialize” the specter of the Pauline anthropological problematic—throwing into a particular theological light Irigaray’s claim that “Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time that could be our ‘salvation’ if we thought it through.”¹³

Yet here I would step away from the historical teleology implicit in Žižek’s language of “resolving” the past’s deadlocks (at least in any final, fixed, or definitive sense). Instead, I want to assert that there is an insight about sexed and sexualized embodied subjectivity to which these early Christian texts testify in their *failure to resolve* their own anthropological deadlocks. This

is an insight (pace Žižek) that points not to the desirability of a still-to-be-discovered final resolution, but rather to the analytic necessity of a kind of continually spiraling motion to our anthropological formulations—one that, as Foucault clearly saw, resists reduction of the messy and variously instantiated duality of power and pleasure entailed in human embodiment to a single unifying principle of signification, theological or otherwise.¹⁴ With respect to the early Christian discourse we have examined, my argument has been that sexual difference functions as the spectral goad, the impossible kernel, that cannot be fully captured in the space between creation and resurrection, thereby softly but stubbornly heralding—from within these ancient Christian texts themselves—what Derrida calls “*the spirit of this spiral* that keeps one in suspense, holding one’s breath—and, thus, keeps one alive.”¹⁵

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Abbreviations

ANCIENT TEXTS

<i>Agr.</i>	Philo, <i>De agricultura</i>
<i>AH</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>An.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De anima</i>
<i>Ap. John</i>	<i>Apocryphon of John</i>
<i>Bapt.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De baptismo</i>
BG	Berlin Codex (Berolinensis Gnosticus)
<i>Carn. Chr.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De carne Christi</i>
<i>2 Clem.</i>	<i>2 Clement</i>
Col	Colossians
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
<i>Cult. fem.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De cultu feminarum</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>
<i>2. En.</i>	<i>2 Enoch</i>
Eph	Ephesians
<i>Epid.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Epideixis tou apostolikou kërygmatos</i>
<i>Exc.</i>	<i>Excerpts from Theodotus</i>
<i>Exh. cast.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De exhortatione castitatis</i>
<i>Exp. Luc.</i>	Ambrose, <i>Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam</i>
<i>Fac.</i>	Plutarch, <i>De facie in orbe lunae</i>
Gal	Galatians
Gen	Genesis
<i>Gig.</i>	Philo, <i>De gigantibus</i>
<i>Gos. Phil.</i>	<i>Gospel of Philip</i>
<i>Gos. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
Heb	Hebrews

<i>Helv.</i>	Jerome, <i>Adversus Helvidium de Mariae virginitate</i>
<i>Hyp. Arch.</i>	<i>Hypostasis of the Archons</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
2 Kgs	2 Kings
<i>Leg.</i>	Philo, <i>Legum allegoriae</i>
LXX	Septuagint
<i>Marc.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Adversus Marcionem</i>
<i>Mon.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De monogamia</i>
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosi</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Or.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De oratione</i>
<i>Orig. World</i>	<i>On the Origin of the World</i>
<i>Paed.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Paedagogus</i>
<i>Parm.</i>	Plato, <i>Parmenides</i>
Phil	Philippians
<i>Prot. Jas.</i>	<i>Protevangelium of James</i>
<i>Protr.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Protrepticus</i>
Ps	Psalms
<i>Res.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De resurrectione carnis</i>
Rom	Romans
<i>Rom.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Romulus</i>
2 Sam	2 Samuel
<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
Sir	Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromateis</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>
1 Tim	1 Timothy
<i>Tri. Trac.</i>	<i>Tripartite Tractate</i>
<i>Ux.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Ad uxorem</i>
<i>Val.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Adversus Valentinianos</i>
<i>Val. Exp.</i>	<i>A Valentinian Exposition</i>
<i>Virg.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De virginibus velandis</i>

SCHOLARLY JOURNALS, SERIES, AND OTHER SECONDARY SOURCES

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>

<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>Aug</i>	<i>Augustinianum</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>FS</i>	<i>Franciscan Studies</i>
<i>Greg</i>	<i>Gregorianum</i>
<i>Hen</i>	<i>Henoch</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JFSR</i>	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
<i>JHC</i>	<i>Journal of Higher Criticism</i>
<i>JHistSoc</i>	<i>Journal of the Historical Society</i>
<i>JHP</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Philosophy</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i>
<i>JOR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSPSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>LTQ</i>	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>NHC</i>	<i>Nag Hammadi Codices</i>
<i>NHL</i>	<i>Nag Hammadi Library in English</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NRSV</i>	<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>
<i>RevScRel</i>	<i>Revue des sciences religieuses</i>
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Sources chrétiennes</i>
<i>SecCent</i>	<i>Second Century</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
<i>StPatr</i>	<i>Studia patristica</i>
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>

<i>Tem</i>	<i>Temenos</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
<i>VitLat</i>	<i>Vita Latina</i>
<i>ZAC</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity</i>

Notes

INTRODUCTION: SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND PAUL'S ADAM-CHRIST TYPOLOGY

Epigraphs: Sherry B. Ortner, *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 19; Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 186.

1. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 4.

2. In addition to Badiou, see as representative Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005); Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999); Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000); Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

3. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 13.

4. Badiou maintains, "For if it is true that every truth erupts as singular, its singularity is immediately universalizable. Universalizable singularity necessarily breaks with identitarian singularity." Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 11. See also Žižek, *Puppet and Dwarf*, 130.

5. Cf. Rom 11.13–27. For this position as articulated specifically in response to Badiou and Žižek, see Dale B. Martin, "The Promise of Teleology, the Constraints of Epistemology, and Universal Vision in Paul," in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martín Alcoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 91–108.

6. John D. Caputo, "Introduction: Postcards from Paul: Subtraction Versus Grafting," in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. Caputo and Alcoff, 3. See also Denise Kimber Buell, "God's Own People: Specters of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Christian Studies," in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*, ed. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 181n71.

7. Caputo, "Introduction," 3.

8. For a more thorough discussion of these two modes of difference as related problematics in Paul, see Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 201–27.

9. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 105, emphasis original to translation.

10. Dale B. Martin, “The Queer History of Galatians 3:28,” in *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 88.

11. Martin, “Queer History,” 88, 89.

12. Note that numerous feminist and queer theologians continue to do important historical work with respect to both biblical texts and the history of Christianity—as does Martin himself. My point here is in no way intended to imply otherwise, but rather to highlight a theoretical contrast between the stance toward history and historicism that Martin takes in the particular essay under discussion and the methodological orientation that informs me here. For the quickly growing discipline of queer theology in both its constructive and historical dimensions, see as representative Marcella Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God* (London: SCM Press, 2004), Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003); Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Gerard Loughlin, *Alien Sex: The Body and Desire in Cinema and Theology* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004); Loughlin, ed., *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).

13. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004), 217. Here I sit lightly on the term “norm,” given the anachronism necessarily entailed in applying this category (at least in the sense used by Butler) directly to premodern Christian thinking. See Amy Hollywood’s cautionary remarks to this effect in Hollywood, “The Normal, the Queer, and the Middle Ages,” *JHS* 10 (2001): 173–79.

14. For an excellent overview of the issues, see Elizabeth Castelli, “Paul on Women and Gender,” in *Women & Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D’Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 221–35.

15. According to 1 Cor 7.3–4, “the husband (*ho anēr*) should give to his wife (*tē gyn-aike*) her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does” (NRSV). While on the face of things, this might seem to be an unproblematic expression of an egalitarian marital relationship, Castelli calls this interpretation into question, recontextualizing a point made by Sheila Briggs: “In a patriarchal society the call for self-sacrifice toward others can take on gender-specific forms in which mutual giving way to one another is transformed into women’s subordination to men.” Castelli, “Paul on Women and Gender,” 228. See also Sheila Briggs, “Galatians,” in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 230.

16. For the standard treatment of these verses as an interpolation, see as representative Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 246, Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 85–89. Others consider the passage authentic (if deeply problematic from a contemporary

standpoint) and seek to locate it within Paul's larger project in 1 Corinthians and his theology of sexual difference as a whole. See, for example, Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 149–58; Lone Fatum, "Image of God and Glory of Man: Women in the Pauline Congregations," in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 109–10n77.

Jorunn Økland summarizes and critically assesses the five reasons most often adduced by scholars to support the interpolation theory: "first, that [the passage] is not regarded as fitting in the context because it disturbs the straight line of argument—as this is reconstructed in a way that fits the interpolation hypothesis. . . . Second, the verses are in disharmony with what Paul says elsewhere about women and which is evaluated as closer to Paul's deeply held opinion. Third, the use of the authority argument in 11.16 and 14.33 does not fit Paul's egalitarian agenda and reflects a later stage in church development. Fourth, the structure, and partly also language, is quite close to the pseudepigraph 1 Tim. 2.11–15. . . . Fifth, some scholars also draw on text critical evidence as support for their views." With respect to this final piece of evidence, Økland notes that while there is manuscript evidence for the variable placement of vv. 34–35 within chapter 14, at the same time "not a single one of the Greek witnesses nor the Latin versions have omitted the verses in question." Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 149–50. For her part, Økland calls for a greater self-reflexivity on the part of scholars regarding "the significance of the reader's ideological context for his/her understanding of what is fitting in a text." *Women in Their Place*, 149. Note also Dale Martin's related point regarding the way in which the interpolation theory can be used by "moderate conservatives" to "save" Paul on selected issues only—i.e., preserving some notion of gender egalitarianism in his letters while still condemning homosexuality. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior*, 24.

17. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, 183.

18. As early as 1958 (translated into English in 1966), Krister Stendahl offered a version of this argument; see *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). For more recent examples that develop this general line of thinking, see Brigitte Kahl, "Der Brief an die Gemeinden in Galatien: Vom Unbehagen der Geschlechter und anderen Problemen des Andersseins," in *Kompendium feministischer Bibelauslegung*, ed. Luise Schottruff and Marie-Therese Wacker (Gütersloh: Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 603–11; Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "Male and Female in Creation and New Creation: Interpretations of Galatians 3:28C in 1 Corinthians 7," in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 95–121.

19. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1995). Against Stendahl and others, Schüssler Fiorenza maintains on form critical grounds that Gal 3.28 does not represent a statement original to Paul himself but is a pre-Pauline baptismal formula—one that Paul appropriates and seeks to domesticate to what she dubs "kyriarchal" ends in the context of his letters as a

whole. She thus maintains that Gal 3.28 must be read not univocally but as a site of hermeneutical (and practical) struggle containing the *potential* for egalitarian ideology and praxis, yet in a way not necessarily identified with Paul himself. Given that Jews, Greeks, slaves, and free persons are all also men or women, Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that the pair “male and female” (*arsen kai thēly*) in its allusion to Gen 1.27 refers specifically to procreative marriage. In this way, she argues that the *ekklesia*’s use of the baptismal formula “envisioned and attempted to practice [a] marriage-free ethos”—one that Paul attempted to modify and subvert by “the reaffirmation of maternity and paternity as the identity-producing metaphors in the discussion on the offspring of Abraham . . . [using] the deployment of ‘woman’ as a figure of speech at the expense of historical wo/men as members of the community.” Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 167, 165. For related arguments, see also as representative Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*; Briggs, “Galatians.” Here the difference between Stendahl’s and Schüssler Fiorenza’s positions is illustrative of a larger split within feminist biblical scholarship. As Schüssler Fiorenza sums up this division, “Whereas a feminist deconstructive reading of Gal. 3.28 seeks to recover and bring to the fore the voices of wo/men who were silenced, feminist empathic reading appears to want to save the liberating voice of Paul.” *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 165.

20. Note that this broad characterization needs to be qualified to a certain extent with respect to some newer work in Pauline studies. I have in view scholarship that seeks to locate Paul with increasingly greater complexity in terms of the multiple intersections of gendered, sexualized, racialized, and imperialistic ideologies in play in the ancient world, and that also calls for greater self-reflexivity on the part of biblical scholarship regarding the social location of scholars and the political and theological stakes operative in their work. See, for example, Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul’s Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), especially 149–52. See also Joseph A. Marchal’s programmatic call for a methodological shift in Pauline studies (though without reference to Gal 3.28 and offering a reading of Paul that moves in a very different direction from that of Lopez). Joseph A. Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven: Women, Gender, and Empire in the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

21. Wayne A. Meeks, “The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” *HR* 13 (1974): 185.

22. Meeks, “Image of the Androgyne,” 200. In holding this position, Meeks makes sense of 1 Cor 11 by arguing for an “eschatological tension” in Paul’s thought: “Paul insists on the preservation of the *symbols* of the present, differentiated order. Women remain women and men remain men and dress accordingly, even though ‘the end of the ages has come upon them.’ Yet these symbols have lost their ultimate significance, for ‘the form of this world is passing away’” (208, emphasis original).

23. Martin, “Queer History,” 86.

24. Martin, “Queer History,” 84. See also Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 229–32.

25. See also Elizabeth Castelli, “‘I Will Make Mary Male’: Pieties of the Body and

Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity,” in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Ambiguity*, ed. Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 29–49, Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, “Male and Female Symbolism in the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John*,” *Tem* 19 (1983): 33–43, Dennis Ronald MacDonald, “Corinthian Veils and Gnostic Androgynes,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1988), 276–92.

26. Daniel Boyarin, “Gender,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 120–25.

27. Boyarin, “Gender,” 126.

28. Fatum, “Image of God,” 61–65. Fatum elaborates her argument in terms of Paul’s cultural background which she characterizes in terms of “the Jewish androcentric limitation” (64). Martin rightly critiques her on this point, noting that “There were plenty of negative attitudes toward the ‘female’ to go around in the ancient male-dominated world without blaming early Christianity’s attitudes or Paul’s on Judaism in particular.” Martin, “Queer History,” 218n29.

29. Fatum, “Image of God,” 63. See also the related discussion in Kari Vogt, “‘Becoming Male’: A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor,” in *The Image of God*, ed. Børresen, 170–86.

30. Boyarin comes to a similar conclusion in his own full-length study of Paul, focused on Paul’s hermeneutical distinction between flesh and spirit. Here he reads the phrase “in the Lord” of 1 Cor 11.11–12 together with the “in Christ” of Gal 3.28 to interpret “both passages as a representation of an androgyny that exists on the level of the spirit, however much hierarchy subsists and needs to subsist in the flesh, in the life of society even in Christian communities.” Thus both of the Genesis creation accounts remain live and useful for Paul: Gal 3.28 hearkens back to the primal “spiritual” androgyne of Gen 1 while 1 Cor 11 evokes the “fleshly” differences of Gen 2. Citing Karen King, Boyarin suggests that “the two myths of gender ‘are quite compatible in that both imagine the ideal to be a unitary self, whether male or androgynous, whose nature is grounded in an ontology of transcendence and an epistemology of origins’” (*Radical Jew*, 194, 195). For a concise overview of this position, see Daniel Boyarin, “Paul and the Genealogy of Gender,” in *A Feminist Companion to Paul*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 13–41.

31. But note Schüssler Fiorenza’s critique of Boyarin and Fatum, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 167–70.

32. Here I am not interested in driving a strong analytical wedge between Paul’s authorial intent and his early reception history. Rather, I wish to explore the tensions in Paul’s texts as they functioned as a resource (and indeed a hermeneutical imperative) within early Christian thought for reading, re-reading, and reading differently. As Michel de Certeau has argued, “The reader takes neither the position of the author nor an author’s position. He [sic] invents in texts something different from what they ‘intended.’ He detaches them from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of

meanings.” De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 169. Yet this space of “indefinite plurality” need not imply an infinite and endless play of possible interpretations—particularly when one moves from the level of literary-theoretical abstraction to the concrete social and historical realities of the late first and second centuries. On the contrary, the tensions of the Pauline text proved both productive and *at the same time* constraining for a spectrum of historically and hermeneutically situated early Christian readers as they grappled with the question of sexual difference—even positioned as they were in a range of different attitudes toward Paul and his authority. On this theoretical point, see Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 224.

33. The notion of “love-patriarchalism” as especially characteristic of these letters comes from Margaret MacDonald, following Gerd Theissen. See Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 43–44. On Colossians and Ephesians as Deutero-Pauline (the position accepted by a majority of New Testament scholars), see 86–91. As is well known, the theology of Colossians relies heavily on the cultural logic of the Greco-Roman household code—and its rewriting of Gal 3.28 must be understood in that light. Schüssler Fiorenza notes, “In taking over the Greco-Roman ethic of the patriarchal household code, Colossians not only ‘spiritualizes’ and moralizes the baptismal community understanding expressed in Gal 3.28 but also makes this Greco-Roman household ethic a part of ‘Christian’ social ethic.” Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 253. Situated within this household ethic, the author of Colossians draws the following hierarchical conclusion regarding gendered social roles: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly” (Col 3.18–19, NRSV). The Ephesians household code shares a similar understanding of patriarchal marriage, one it elaborates by comparison to the relationship of Christ and the church (Eph 5.21–33). Note, however, that the “love-patriarchalism” both letters exhibit cannot be entirely divorced from the Pauline text itself. MacDonald points out, “Despite the existence of more conservative tendencies embodied in the household codes, it is important to note the degree of continuity between these exhortations and Paul’s teaching. There is clearly some relation between Paul’s instructions concerning women in 1 Cor 11 and 1 Cor 14 and the plea that wives be subject to their husbands” (105).

34. Compare the figure of Thecla and other ascetic early Christian women in the *Acts of Paul* to 1 Tim 2.8–15, 5.14–15. Dennis MacDonald has sought to situate this difference in perspectives in terms of an ancient debate about the “authentic” legacy of the Pauline text. On his reading, “the Pauline corpus as we know it represents the work of only one line of the Pauline legacy, a line characterized by literate men, ecumenically aware, aligned with the developing episcopacy, and in some cases opposed to prophetesses and to storytelling women who remembered Paul as a fanatical, marginal social type.” On the other side of this battle line were celibate women pursuing autonomy from the traditional Greco-Roman social order within alternate communities modeled on Gal 3.28. So, he argues, “the Pastorals

did not develop linearly from Paul's ministry but dialectically; that is, they were written to oppose another strand of Pauline tradition whose legends depicted him as a social radical. There was indeed a battle for Paul's memory." MacDonald, *Legend and Apostle*, 89, 97. On this developing tension in early Christianity, see also Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: Women in the Stories of the Apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1987); Stevan L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980).

Note, however, that the thesis of Fatum, Boyarin, and others (regarding the masculinist implications of the ancient androgyne myth in connection to Gal 3.28) also poses problems for "egalitarian" readings of subsequent early Christian texts. If these scholars are correct, then even the putative radicalism of a text such as the *Acts of Paul* must still be understood within an overarching framework of androcentrism (note, for example, that Thecla asserts her authority to preach and teach by cropping her hair and donning men's clothes). Indeed, on this reading, *no* aspect of the tensions in play in the Pauline text *or its legacy* can be straightforwardly and unproblematically designated as "egalitarian" or "liberative" in a contemporary sense. Fatum acknowledges that lines of thematic resonance can be traced from Gal 3.28 to 1 Tim 5.11–15 and Thecla on the one hand and from 1 Cor 11 to Col 3, Eph 5, and 1 Tim 2 on the other. But she insists that to whatever degree early Christian women experienced a certain freedom in their ascetic withdrawal from Roman society, "it was always a freedom on androcentrically dualistic terms, which basically serves to emphasize to what a far-reaching extent Christian women's lives were from the very first organized as a denial of their female gender and their own selves and thus theologically institutionalized as the suppression of women." Fatum, "Image of God," 81.

35. Margaret MacDonald points out that "It is useful to think in terms of several trajectories of the Pauline tradition emanating from the teaching and leadership of the apostle that would have had varying consequences for the lives of early Christian women." Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Rereading Paul: Early Interpreters of Paul on Women and Gender," in *Women & Christian Origins*, ed. Kraemer and D'Angelo, 238. On a similar note, while acknowledging a historical plausibility to Dennis MacDonald's suggestions, James Aageson critiques the dualism of his reconstruction, proposing instead "a multiplex or multilayered approach to the development of early Christianity in general and Paul's legacy in particular . . . [in which] lines of development, conflicts, and ideas of Christian authority are not isolated from each other in the early church. They intersect in complex ways, sometimes in conflict with one another, at other times through adaptation or reinterpretation." James W. Aageson, "The Pastoral Epistles and the Acts of Paul: A Multiplex Approach to Authority in Paul's Legacy," *LTQ* 40 (2005): 238. See also Richard Bauckham, "The Acts of Paul as Sequel to Acts," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 1, *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 105–52; Sandra Hack Polaski, "'Let No One Despise Your Youth': The Deconstruction of Traditional Authority in the Pastoral Epistles," *LTQ* 40 (2005): 249–63. On rethinking Thecla, see Virginia Burrus, "Mimicking Virgins: Colonial Ambivalence and the Ancient Romance," *Arethusa* 38 (2005): 49–88; Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd

Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (London: T&T Clark, 2009). On multiplicity with respect to Paul and his legacy (as well as how this may complicate our understanding of what is “authentically Paul”) see Gail P. C. Streete, “Authority and Authorship: The Acts of Paul and Thecla as a Disputed Pauline Text,” *LTQ* 40 (2005): 265–76; Darrell J. Doughy, “Pauline Paradigms and Pauline Authenticity,” *JHC* 1 (1994): 95–128.

36. MacDonald, *Legend and Apostle*, 97. For a discussion of a similarly vexed (and productive) ambiguity in Paul regarding the question of Jewish identity and otherness vis-à-vis followers of Christ, see Andrew S. Jacobs, “A Jew’s Jew: Paul and the Early Christian Problem of Jewish Origins,” *JOR* 86 (2006): 258–86.

37. On the broader importance of the interplay between creation and resurrection in early Christian thought, see Robert L. Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 136–61.

38. In a history-of-religions mode, scholars have offered a variety of different explanations for the origin of Paul’s doctrine of Christ as second Adam—the primary contenders being apocalyptic streams of early Judaism, Philo, “Gnosticism,” and (proto-) rabbinic literature (often overlapping to varying degrees in different scholarly reconstructions). For an example that brings the first three options under the umbrella of a heterodox Jewish-Gnosticism, see Egon Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus: Exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Röm 5 12–21 (1. Kor. 15)* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962). For an argument for the relevance of rabbinic parallels, see Stephen Hultgren, “The Origin of Paul’s Doctrine of the Two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15.45–49,” *JSNT* 25 (2003): 359–70. Settling this question is not necessary for the analysis I am pursuing here. However, for an overview of the scholarly conversation, see Hultgren, 343–59; John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch*, *JSPSup* 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 14–23. On the prevalence of this “Adam Christology” in Paul’s thought (especially in terms of ways it is implicit beyond the two passages discussed below), see James D. G. Dunn, “Pauline Christology: Shaping the Fundamental Structures,” in *Christology in Dialogue*, ed. Robert F. Berkey and Sarah A. Edwards (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993), 98–101; Morna D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Note also that other non-Pauline or pre-Pauline New Testament texts may be hinting at some sort of theological connection between Adam and Christ—cf. Heb 2.5–18 and the (probably) pre-Pauline hymn, Phil 2.6–11. For the Philippians text, see Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 89–90. For the correlation between creation and resurrection in (non-Pauline) early Jesus traditions, see François Bovon, “The First Christologies: Exaltation and Incarnation or, From Easter to Christmas,” in *Jesus Christ Today: Studies of Christology in Various Contexts*, ed. Stuart George Hall (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 39–42.

39. Though written later than 1 Cor 15, I begin with Rom 5 because its use of the Adam-Paul typology is, in fact, less directly relevant to the issues in view in this study.

40. Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007), 380. See also Otfried

Hofius, “Die Adam-Christus-Antithese und das Gesetz. Erwägungen zu Röm 5, 12–21,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 180.

41. Paul Ricouer, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 238, emphasis original.

42. Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus*, 159. On the diverse speculations surrounding the figure of Adam in early Judaism, see Levison, *Portraits of Adam*.

43. See Scroggs, *Last Adam*, 101. Cf. also Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (New York: Harper, 1956). Note that Scroggs acknowledges potential problems with Barth’s exegesis of Rom 5 but maintains that his general conclusions are correct. In both readings, Adam’s humanity remains relevant to the Pauline anthropological project but only indirectly—always in a way fundamentally determined by the humanity of Christ.

44. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 132.

45. This attentiveness to the details of the creation narrative characterizes the passage as a whole, not just the excerpts reproduced here. N. T. Wright notes that throughout 1 Cor 15, “[Paul] draws on several parts of Genesis, about the seed and the plant and the different types of created physicality, that of stars and fish and animals, objects in the sky and objects on the earth.” N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 28.

46. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 132.

47. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 21.

48. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 132.

49. For the sex/gender distinction as initially articulated by feminist thinkers, see Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 26–33, Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 15–19, Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 27–62. For important critiques, see Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1996), 3–20; Toril Moi, *Sex, Gender and the Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3–120.

50. Økland, *Women in Their Place*, 12.

51. As Økland points out (following Moi), Scandinavian languages and French do not make a simple linguistic distinction equivalent to English “sex” and “gender.” She points to the Scandinavian “kjønn/kön” as one that blurs the distinction, and argues that scholars of early Christianity need to pay closer attention to linguistic differences and the ways language may subtly shape conceptual apparatuses—particularly when studying ancient texts originally written in Greek or other languages. Jorunn Økland, “Sex, Gender, and Ancient Greek: A Case-Study in Theoretical Misfit,” *ST* 57 (2003): 124–42.

52. As far back as the early twentieth century, Sigmund Freud wrestled with how to unpack the thorny concepts of “masculinity” and “femininity” in their relation to both culture and bodies: “It is essential to understand that the concepts of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’ whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are among the most confused that occur in science. It is possible to distinguish at least three uses. ‘Masculine’

and ‘feminine’ as sometimes used in the sense of activity and passivity, sometimes in a biological, and sometimes, again, in a sociological sense.” Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1915; New York: Basic Books, 2000), 85n. Though aware of Freud, anthropologist Margaret Mead drew primarily on her own fieldwork to argue (as early as the 1920s and 1930s) for a conceptual division between the anatomical differences of human bodies and the sex-linked behaviors and traits (what she called “sex roles”) that are shaped by culture. See discussion in Mary Jo Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 107–11, Shira Tarrant, *When Sex Became Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 73–106. Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir’s famous claim that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” has been read by many as reflecting (on a conceptual level) an incipient sex/gender distinction. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1989), 267. On Beauvoir’s contribution to the development of the category that would become “gender,” see Tarrant, *When Sex Became Gender*, 165–94. On sex and gender as a conceptual distinction in de Beauvoir, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 141–43. For counterarguments, see Sara Heinämaa, “What Is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of Sexual Difference,” *Hypatia* 12 (1997): 20–39, Moi, *Sex, Gender, and the Body*, 80–83.

53. Moi, *Sex, Gender, and the Body*, 14–15, emphasis original. Moi and others have offered critical genealogies of how so-called second wave feminists picked up the term “gender” from clinical work on transsexuality and intersexuality. Historically, “gender” had functioned as a grammatical designation. But in this clinical context its usage shifted to cover non-anatomical (social, cultural, psychological) aspects of sex difference (Moi, 21–23). Also Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 5–7; Amy Hollywood, “Strategies for the Study of Women’s Experience” (paper presented at annual meeting of the SBL, Washington, D.C., November 2006), 8–20. For more detailed accounts of the discursive development of intersexuality and transsexuality as medically treatable conditions through new medical technologies—as well as the relation of these emerging technologies to the terminology of gender—see Bernice L. Hausman, *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, Calif.: Seal Press, 2008), David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

54. For a critical genealogy of the term and its increasingly complicated position in feminist theory, see Donna Haraway, “‘Gender’ for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word,” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), 127–48.

55. Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 45, originally published as “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *AHR* 91 (1986): 1053–75. As Scott lays this out, “The core of the definition [of gender] rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive

element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” By foregrounding questions of power and signification, she thus calls for a recognition that “‘man’ and ‘woman’ are at once empty and overflowing categories. Empty because they have no ultimate, transcendent meaning. Overflowing because even when they appear to be fixed, they still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions” (42, 49).

56. Butler argues, “Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established . . . the discursive/cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘a natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘prediscursive,’ prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts.” Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 11, emphasis original.

57. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 29.

58. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 2.

59. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 2.

60. Here I align myself with Elizabeth Clark, who has explored the implications of this shift in feminist theory (which she classifies in terms of a move from women’s studies to gender studies) for the study of religion. Clark correlates “women’s studies in religion” with social history and “gender studies in religion” with hermeneutics. But while she wants to keep both models live for the purposes of historical study, she draws attention to the fact that many subfields in the study of religion (including much of early Christian studies) focus primarily on literary texts as a kind of intellectual history, rather than documentary or archaeological evidence. In these contexts, she argues, the turn to gender studies is particularly appropriate. See Clark, “Engendering the Study of Religion,” in *The Future of the Study of Religion: Proceedings of Congress 2000*, ed. Slaviva Jakelic and Lori Pearson (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 217; Clark, “The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian After the ‘Linguistic Turn,’” *CH* 67 (1998): 1–31; Clark, “Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History,” *CH* 70 (2001): 395–426. The shift in question has not been viewed favorably in all quarters. For a critique from within early Christian studies, see Shelly Matthews, “Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography,” *JFSR* 17 (2001): 39–55.

61. See Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 11–64; Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 3–20; Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington,: Indiana University Press, 1994); Tina Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray’s Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

62. Julia Kristeva, “Women’s Time,” *Signs* 7 (1981): 21.

63. For an example of the latter approach, see Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna, *Gender: An Ethnometodological Approach* (New York: Wiley, 1978); Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersixed* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 134n2. While Judith Butler’s treatment of “gender” as a conceptual category is arguably far more complex, provocative statements of hers such as “perhaps [sex] was always already gender” leave themselves open to (mis)construal along these lines. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 11.

64. Note that the term does appear occasionally in Lacan's corpus. See, for example, Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan XI*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), 187, 192. Also the related unsigned article (produced out of a group project in Lacan's school), "The Phallic Phase and the Subjective Import of the Castration Complex" in Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton and Pantheon, 1985), 108, 110, 120.

65. In her early work, Irigaray offers critically mimetic readings of (male-authored) Western philosophical and psychoanalytic texts in an effort "not to create a theory of woman, but to secure a place for the feminine within sexual difference. . . . [T]he feminine has never been defined except as the inverse, indeed the underside, of the masculine. So for woman it is not a matter of installing herself within this lack, this negative, even by denouncing it, nor of reversing the economy of sameness by turning the feminine into *the standard for 'sexual difference'*; it is rather a matter of trying to practice that difference." Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 159, emphasis original. See also Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985). Sexual difference emerges here as *the* deep-seated structural issue that underlies language, bodies, and their interrelation—a difference needing defiant assertion in the face of a symbolic economy that presently can conceive of only one (male) sex. Irigaray herself refers to her critical tactic as "having a fling with the philosophers." She sees this project of miming philosophical texts from the space of sexual difference as having a continuously disruptive or subversive function within the phallogocentric symbolic—though "woman" must resist the ever-present drive of the discourse to collapse her into sameness if her mimetic readings are to preserve their subversive edge.

Irigaray's later work has increasingly emphasized the ethical primacy of the heterosexual couple—and thus heterosexual love as the privileged site in which alterity may be (most truly?) encountered. See as representative Irigaray, *Ethics of Sexual Difference*; Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1996). For critiques of this trajectory in her thought in terms of its presumptive heterosexuality and its inability to deal adequately with the complexities of other identificatory differences (related to race, class, political status, and/or gender identifications that trouble the masculine/feminine binary), see the comments of Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell in Phing Cheah, Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler, and Drucilla Cornell, "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell," *Diacritics* 28 (1998): 19–42. For a defense of Irigaray on these points, see Phing Cheah and Elizabeth Grosz in the same interview; Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, 22–34, 51–52, 58–64; Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 42.

66. See for example, Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 9.

67. Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 284n42.

68. For Sedgwick, "sexuality" and "sex" (i.e., sex acts) are part of a complex that refers

to “the array of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures, identity-formations, and knowledges, in both women and men, that tends to cluster most densely around certain genital sensations but is not adequately defined by them.” Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 29.

69. Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 30. Here she uses the term “gender” in an admittedly loose way “to denominate that problematized space of the sex/gender system, the whole package of physical and cultural distinctions between men and women” (29).

70. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 284n42.

71. Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 185.

72. Hollywood, “Strategies,” 19.

73. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 8, emphasis original. See also the important critique of Laqueur’s use of the categories “sex” and “gender” in Rebecca Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12–16.

74. Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 5–6.

75. Stephen D. Moore, *God’s Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and Around the Bible* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 136, emphasis original. See also Jonathan Walters, “Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought,” in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P. Hallet and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 41.

76. Here Moore’s conclusions are based on a rich and complicated debate (by no means settled) within ancient studies. On this issue, see as representative Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), Martin, “*Arsenokoitēs* and *Malakos*: Meanings and Consequences,” in *Sex and the Single Savior*, 37–50; Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990). While the complexities of this debate cannot be explored here, two important critiques of the position summarized by Moore are worthy of mention. (1) The argument for the “symmetry” of male and female in the Greek novel as an exception to the dominant hierarchical discourse. See David Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). Note also the nuanced critique of this position in Simon Goldhill, *Foucault’s Virginity: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). (2) Amy Richlin’s critique of the ways the Winkler/Halperin “Foucauldian school” of classical studies has marginalized earlier feminist insights; see Richlin, “Zeus and Metis: Foucault, Feminism, Classics,” *Helios* 18 (1991): 160–80; Richlin, “Not Before Homosexuality: The Materiality of the Cinaedus and the Roman Law Against Love Between Men,” *JHS* 3 (1993): 523–73; Richlin, “Foucault’s

History of Sexuality: A Useful Theory for Women?,” in *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity*, ed. David H. J. Larmour, Paul Allen Miller, and Charles Platter (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 138–70. For an overview of the classical studies debate in its early manifestations, see Marilyn B. Skinner, “Zeus and Leda: The Sexuality Wars in Contemporary Classical Scholarship,” *Thamyris* 3 (1996): 103–23. On the intersection of biblical studies with the classics debate, see Stephen D. Moore, “‘O Man, Who Art Thou . . . ?’: Masculinity Studies and New Testament Studies,” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 16–22. See also the helpful overview in Vander Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender*, 50–62.

77. On the complex (and shifting) interplay between vulnerability and masculinity in the transition from antiquity to late antiquity, see Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 159–68; Virginia Burrus, “*Begotten, Not Made*”: *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 18–35.

78. So Moore argues, “Greco-Roman discourses on sex conjure up a sex-gender system in which every sexual act *must* involve a masculine and feminine partner—to the extent that when an anatomically female partner is lacking, an anatomically male partner must be conscripted to play the woman. Within the terms of this system, sex can only ever be a masculine-feminine activity: sex can only ever be heterosex. . . . For whether the sexual partners happen to be a man and a woman, or a man and a ‘woman’ (in the case of two males), or a ‘man’ and a woman (in the case of two females), the superiority of the man and the inferiority of the woman is symbolically affirmed—endlessly reaffirmed—in and through the act of penetration. This symbolic reiteration of gender hegemony was the quintessence of sex for Greek and Roman male elites, rendering the concept of nonpenetrative ‘lesbian’ sex literally unthinkable (the phallus is the switch that activates the mechanism; without it no sex is possible). Greco-Roman heteronormativity thus turns homosex—even homosex between women—into an expression of misogyny” (*God’s Beauty Parlor*, 170–71, emphasis original).

79. Note then the contrast between two otherwise complementary treatments. According to Diana Swancutt (following Laqueur), “the dominant ideology of the body in the premodern West was a one-sex/body, multi-gender model that reflected ancient gender norms for the distribution of power.” Diana M. Swancutt, “Sexing the Pauline Body of Christ: Scriptural Sex in the Context of the American Christian Culture War,” in *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transfiguring Passion at the Limits of Discipline*, ed. Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 71. Whereas Dale Martin takes a similar position but with a different analytical emphasis: “It should be clear that I am here rejecting the second-wave feminist differentiation between ‘gender’ (which is taken to be culturally constructed) and ‘sex’ which is taken as rooted in biology or ‘nature’). In my view, it may sometimes be helpful, perhaps even necessary, to speak in terms of ‘biology’ and ‘culture,’ but we should not take those terms as referring to different *kinds of things*. I insist that biology *is* cultural, and that culture *is* biological.” Martin, “Queer History,” 220n41, emphasis original.

80. Colleen M. Conway, “Behold the Man!’ Masculine Christology and the Fourth

Gospel,” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Moore, 164–65. See also L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 24–32; Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

81. Virginia Burrus, “Mapping as Metamorphosis: Initial Reflections on Gender and Ancient Religious Discourses,” in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 4.

82. Vander Stichele and Penner expand on this point with reference to the colonial expansion of the Roman Empire: “one of the features of a colonial context is a degree of instability in terms of social and political structures. On the one hand, there is an attempt to impose the hard and firm agenda of the dominant center on the margins, and there is much evidence of such an effort by the Romans in terms of their ruling of the provinces. On the other hand, this colonial structure is mapped over already existing frameworks of power, which both conform to and also strain against the colonial order. This milieu provides for a variety of gendered dynamics, interactions, and possibilities as a result.” Vander Stichele and Penner, *Contextualizing Gender*, 72–73. See also Carlin A. Barton, “All Things Beseem the Victor: Paradoxes of Masculinity in Early Imperial Rome,” in *Gender Rhetorics: Postures of Dominance and Submission in History*, ed. Richard C. Trexler (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1994), 83–92; Eric Thurman, “Novel Men: Masculinity and Empire in Mark’s Gospel and Xenophon’s *An Ephesian Tale*,” in *Mapping Gender*, ed. Penner and Vander Stichele, 185–229.

83. Burrus, “*Begotten, Not Made*,” 21. Here Burrus has in view the situation in the second century (following Maud Gleason), but extends and complicates Gleason’s account beyond the early empire to explore late ancient Christian constructions of masculinity in the fourth century.

84. Thurman, “Novel Men,” 185.

85. Thanks to the “Divinations” Editorial Board for pushing me to clarify this point.

86. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 10, emphasis original.

87. So Butler herself acknowledges with respect to Genesis 1–3. See Judith Butler, “Afterword,” in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 283.

88. Here it is less helpful to assess this interpretive creativity with evaluative terms like “misreading” or “radical subversion.” Rather, as Karen King has pointed out with reference to the *Apocryphon of John* (one such creative retelling of the early chapters of Genesis), comparisons between Genesis and its mythic reinterpretations demonstrate “not piety or impiety on the part of the mythmakers . . . (that judgment depends upon a normative positionality), but differences in the strategic deployment of common themes and logic.” Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 218. For the theoretical issues in the philosophy of signification that undergird the larger point regarding citation and reiteration, see Amy Hollywood’s discussion of Derrida, Butler, and the iterability of signs. Amy Hollywood, “Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization,” in *Bodily Citations*, ed. Armour and St. Ville, 260.

89. For the translation “earth creature,” see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 36; Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 85ff; Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 112–14. Cf. also Gen 5.1b–2.

90. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 37. See also Phyllis A. Bird, “Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image,” in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 5–28.

91. For a list of relevant texts, see Anders Hultgård, “God and Image of Woman in Early Jewish Religion,” in *The Image of God*, ed. Børresen, 32.

92. 2 En. 30. Cf. also *Sib. Or.* 1.22–30.

93. “In the first week Adam was created and also the rib, his wife. And in the second week he showed her to him. And therefore the commandment was given to observe seven days for a male, but for a female twice seven days in their impurity” (*Jub.* 3.8 [Charlesworth 2.59]). In this way, the assertion of Gen 1.27 is acknowledged, while at the same time, the text justifies purity regulations related to the birth of male and female children through their correspondence to Adam’s priority over Eve in creation. For this interpretation, see James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 85. Hultgård acknowledges the possibility of this reading but asserts that textual corruption in *Jub.* 3.8 may be a more probable explanation. Hultgård, “God and Image of Woman,” 46n19.

94. In addition to the seminal article by Wayne Meeks discussed above, see further discussion in Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There Is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 35–46; Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, 184ff. For a useful compilation and overview of relevant sources that constitute the ancient intellectual context of the myth, see Luc Brisson, *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Note also that speculation on Genesis and primal androgynes could come in different shapes and sizes (not just the platonizing version of Philo that I examine here). Boyarin discusses the way in which Palestinian midrash picked up the trope, emphasizing the *bodily* dimensions of the creature formed in 1.27—a hermaphrodite with a female half and a male half, later separated through the removal of one side (i.e., rib) in Genesis 2. See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 42–46. Such rabbinic speculation resonates (whether intentionally or not) with Aristophanes’ humorous tale of doubled human beings (originally in three kinds: male-male, female-female, and male-female) later cut into two by Zeus in Plato’s *Symposium*. See Plato, *Symposium* 189d–193e. On the pre-Socratic roots of ideas of primal androgyny, see MacDonald, *No Male and Female*, 25–26n21.

95. For an overview of the general issue and relevant texts in Philo’s corpus, see Thomas H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983), 20–35. John Dillon notes

that Philo's development of a double creation motif was to have an important impact on what he terms the "underworld" of Middle Platonism." John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 176. See especially *Poimandres* 12–19.

96. In addition to the Philonic texts discussed here, see *Leg.* 1.31–32, 1.53–54, 1.88, 1.90–95, *Opif.* 69. Cf. also Plato, *Timaeus* 30a–c, 46d and discussion in Tobin, *The Creation of Man*, 45–46, David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 334–40, 556–58. Note, however, that Philo is not entirely consistent in reading the two creation narratives as referring to two sequential events. See Annewies van den Hoek, "Endowed with Reason or Glued to the Senses: Philo's Thoughts on Adam and Eve," in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 69.

97. *Opif.* 134 (Runia 82).

98. On the complex hermeneutical connections involved in this reversal, see Annewies van den Hoek, "Endowed with Reason or Glued to the Senses: Philo's Thoughts on Adam and Eve," 68–69, especially n18.

99. On this point, see Richard A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 40–44; Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" & "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 22–28; Kerstin Aspegren, *The Male Woman: A Feminine Ideal in the Early Church* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1990), 79–98, Dorothy Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 78–80. For a critique of aspects of this position, see David Winston, "Philo and the Rabbis on Sex and the Body," *Poetics Today* 19 (1998): 41–62.

100. *Leg.* 2.50 (Colson and Whitaker, LCL 255–57).

101. Annewies van den Hoek points out that "[Philo's] allegories do not adhere to a consistent program, since they were sometimes ad hoc inventions, concocted for his purpose at the moment." Van den Hoek, "Endowed with Reason," 64. For example, in *Opif.* 151–52, Philo devalues both woman and bodily pleasure according to a slightly different interpretive logic: "But, since nothing is stable in the world of becoming and mortal beings necessarily undergo reverses and changes, the first human being (*ton prōton anthrōpon*) too had to enjoy some ill fortune. The starting-point of a blameworthy life becomes for him woman (*gynē*). As long as he was single, he resembled God and the cosmos in his solitariness. . . . But when woman too *was moulded*, he observed a sisterly form and a kindred figure. Rejoicing at the sight, he came up to her and gave her a greeting. She, seeing no other living creature that looked more like herself than he, was glad and modestly responded to his greeting. The love that ensues brings together the two separate halves of a single living being as it were, and joins them into unity, thereby establishing in both a desire for union with the other in order to produce a being similar to themselves. But this desire also gave rise to bodily pleasure, which is the starting-point of wicked and law-breaking deeds, and on its account they exchange the life of immortality and well-being for the life of mortality and misfortune" (Runia 87, emphasis original to translation). Here woman is no less to

blame for the evils of sense perception (i.e., desire and sensuality) than in *Leg.* 2. But the emphasis is different, insofar as Philo appeals not to the hierarchical correlation between man/Mind and woman/Sense-perception, but rather to the image of an original—and perhaps even complementary—unity (“two separate halves of a single living being”) not unlike the hermaphroditic creatures of Aristophanes’ tale in the *Symposium*. In the context of condemning bodily pleasure, this proves a useful trope, even as it runs against the grain of Philo’s interpretive emphasis elsewhere. Cf. also the gendering of pleasure (*hēdonē*) as a “shameless prostitute” through its association with woman and the senses in *Opif.* 165–66.

102. Jacob Taubes observes, “the thread that links creation and redemption is a very thin one. A very, very thin one. And it can snap. And that is Marcion. He reads—and he knows how to read!—the father of Jesus Christ is *not* the creator of heaven and earth.” Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 60. Surely Taubes is correct that Marcion represents one way around the Pauline anthropological dilemma. For excerpts from the relevant heresiological texts related to Marcion and so-called Marcionism, see Arland Hultgren and Steven A. Haggmark, eds., *The Earliest Christian Heretics: Readings from Their Opponents* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 101–15.

103. The critical discussion on haunting (or what is increasingly called “hauntology”) has developed in two different (but not entirely separate) directions, focusing on the philosophical analyses of Derrida on the one hand and the psychoanalytic work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok on the other. (Note, however, that Derrida is himself an appreciative if critical reader of Abraham and Torok. See Jacques Derrida, “Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok,” trans. Barbara Johnson in *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans. Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986), xi–xlviii.) For the former direction, see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994); Michael Sprinker, ed., *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx* (London: Verso, 2008). For the latter, see especially Part V of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Nicholas T. Rand, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Colin Davis notes that the influence of Abraham and Torok’s work on haunting has been somewhat limited in literary circles (and when present is typically read through a Derridean lens), whereas “Derrida’s *Spectres de Marx* has spawned a minor academic industry.” Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 10. See as representative, Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, eds., *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Jodey Castricano, *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida’s Ghost Writing* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001); Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006). For an example of the use of Derridean hauntology in biblical studies, see David Jobling, “Jerusalem and Memory: On a Long Parenthesis in Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*,” in *Derrida’s Bible: Reading a Page of Scripture with*

a *Little Help from Derrida*, ed. Yvonne Sherwood (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 99–115. Davis also points out that there is important work emerging on these issues from perspectives not significantly influenced by either of these two streams. Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, 161n28. For an example, see Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

104. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 45, emphasis original.

105. See Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 10, 29, 37.

106. Fredric Jameson, “Marx’s Purlloined Letter,” in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 2008), 39.

107. For a programmatic statement that similarly argues for the usefulness of “haunting” as an analytic category (with respect to the study of race, ethnicity, and gender) in New Testament and Early Christian studies, see Buell, *God’s Own People*, 159–90.

108. Žižek, *Fragile Absolute*, 3, emphasis original. See also Žižek’s critical distancing of himself from Derrida (with respect to the relationship between spectrality and the ethical) in Slavoj Žižek, “Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology,” in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Žižek (London: Verso, 1994), 26–30.

109. Žižek, *Fragile Absolute*, 64.

110. Derrida notes “an equivocity essential, signifying, decisive in its very undecidability . . . that the double genitive marks.” Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood, John P. Leavey, Jr., and Ian McLeod (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 37. With reference to Derrida’s famous formulation “specters of Marx,” Pierre Macherey explains the doubleness of the construction as follows: “The formula ‘specters of Marx’ is written in the plural because it associates two uses, subjective and objective, of the genitive. It does not mean only the ghost Marx has become for us . . . but it also evokes all the ghosts that already haunt Marx’s work.” Pierre Macherey, “Marx Dematerialized, or the Spirit of Derrida,” in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 1999), 17–18. See also Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 120–23.

111. Cf. Derrida’s reflections on Hamlet’s famous claim that “The time is out of joint” in *Specters of Marx*, 20–34.

112. While it may be possible to discern an incipient split between eastern and western forms of early Christianity in the division between Parts I and II, due to various complicating factors (the piecemeal nature of the evidence, the unknown provenance of many Nag Hammadi texts, and the connection of the *Gospel of Philip* to Part II), I prefer not to generalize along these lines.

113. See as representative Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); 141–43; Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 278–82. See also Spivak’s summarizing reflections on plenitude, meaning, metaphysics, and desire within Derrida’s philosophical project in Spivak, “Translator’s Preface,” in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, esp. xix–xx.

114. Derrida analyzes this metaphysical anxiety as follows: “All dualisms, all theories of the immortality of the soul or of the spirit, as well as all monisms, spiritualist or materialist, dialectical or vulgar, are the unique theme of a metaphysics whose entire history was compelled to strive toward the reduction of the trace. The subordination of the trace to the full presence summed up in the logos, the humbling of writing beneath a speech dreaming its plenitude, such are the gestures required by an onto-theology determining the archeological and eschatological meaning of being as presence, as *parousia*, as life without difference.” *Of Grammatology*, 71.

CHAPTER I. THE MANY BECOME ONE: THEOLOGICAL MONISM AND THE PROBLEM OF THE FEMALE BODY

Epigraph: Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 109, emphasis original to translation.

1. See Benjamin H. Dunning, *Aliens and Sojourners: Self as Other in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 31–36.

2. Rebecca Lyman, “The Politics of Passing: Justin Martyr’s Conversion as a Problem of ‘Hellenization,’” in *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 38.

3. Rebecca Lyman, “Hellenism and Heresy,” *J ECS* 11 (2003): 211.

4. Lyman, “Politics of Passing,” 39.

5. Though most readily associated with the third-century NeoPlatonic philosopher Plotinus, this project has a rich genealogy stretching back to the classical period.

6. Plato, *Tim.* 31a–b (Bury, LCL).

7. E. R. Dodds, in a classic article, offers a concise summary of the problematic in philosophical terms: “Think of a principle of unity which so completely transcends all plurality that it refuses every predicate, even that of existence; which is neither in motion nor at rest, neither in time nor in space; of which we can say nothing, not even that it is identical with itself or different from other things: and side by side with this, a second principle of unity, containing the seeds of all the contraries—a principle which, if we once grant it existence, proceeds to pluralize itself indefinitely in a universe of existent unities.” Here Dodds points to the connection of these two propositions in the first and second hypotheses of the *Parmenides* (137c–142a, 142b–155e) and argues for the dialogue’s crucial importance with respect to later platonizing philosophical speculation: “Read the second part of the *Parmenides* as Plotinus read it, with the single eye of faith . . . and you find in the first hypothesis a lucid exposition of the famous ‘negative theology,’ and in the second . . . an interesting sketch of the derivation of a universe from the marriage of unity and existence.” E. R. Dodds, “The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the NeoPlatonic One,” *CQ* 22 (1928): 132–34.

8. Plato, *Parm.* 142b (Fowler, LCL).

9. Albert Keith Whitaker, *Plato's Parmenides* (Newburyport, Mass.: Focus/Pullins, 1996), 18.

10. See Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 166–67.

11. The category “Middle Platonism” is a creation of scholars, not a self-designation of ancient thinkers—and the disjunction between philosophers of this period and later Platonists such as Plotinus (i.e., Neoplatonists) should not be overemphasized. With respect to the topic at hand, Pauliina Remes maintains that “All or most Platonists [Plato, the Middle-Platonists, and Neoplatonists] share the idea of a cosmic unity and its explanatory role in everything.” Pauliina Remes, *Neoplatonism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 3.

12. John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 51. See also Lloyd P. Gerson, “What Is Platonism?” *JHP* 43 (2005): 253–76; Gerson, *Aristotle and Other Platonists* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005). On the importance of the *Parmenides* in Neopythagorean circles, see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 8, Dodds, “*Parmenides* of Plato,” 135–40.

13. Lyman, “Hellenism and Heresy,” 217.

14. Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 192.

15. See King, *Gnosticism*, 160, 192–201. Cf. also Kurt Rudolph's characterization of “Gnosis” as “dualism . . . interwoven with a monistic idea” or “dualism on a monistic background.” Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson, P. W. Coxen, and K. H. Kuhn (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 58.

16. Like the epithet “Gnostic,” the term “Valentinian” is not without its problems. Einar Thomassen observes that it too is a heresiological “outsiders' label,” not a self-designation of a group of Christians. While acknowledging this issue, here I follow Thomassen (as well as a more general scholarly trend) in using the term with reference to “a particular branch of ancient Christianity with its own identity and history . . . even if it was not the preferred self-designation of the ones who considered themselves to be ‘the spiritual seed.’” Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 5.

17. William R. Schoedel, “Gnostic Monism and *The Gospel of Truth*,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*, vol. 1, *The School of Valentinus*, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 390. Cf. also King, *Gnosticism*, 160.

18. In addition to King, see Michael Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 14–31.

19. See the synopsis of MacDonald's argument at Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There Is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 14–16. Note that MacDonald makes no claim to the saying's “authenticity” with respect to what the historical Jesus actually said.

20. MacDonald, *No Male and Female*, 62.

21. MacDonald himself understands Paul as modifying the dominical saying in an (unsuccessful) attempt to eradicate the androgyny myth from baptismal anthropology. On this reading, “‘There is no male and female’ is Paul’s vision of sexual equality in his communities as they *should* be, not a witness to conditions in these communities as they were in fact.” MacDonald, *No Male and Female*, 130.

22. 2 *Clem.* 12.2–6.

23. On the variants of this passage in the textual tradition of 2 *Clement*, see MacDonald, *No Male and Female*, 42n92.

24. *Strom.* 3.13.92. Here Clement in fact cites his opponent Julius Cassian’s own citation of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. Clement’s own interpretation of this saying will be dealt with at length in the following chapter.

25. *Strom.* 3.9.63.

26. MacDonald, *No Male and Female*, 47.

27. King, *Gnosticism*, 197. See also Elaine Pagels, “Exegesis of Genesis 1 in the Gospels of Thomas and John,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 481–89.

28. For other examples of the gospel’s interest in an end that is like the beginning and/or unicity rather than division, see *Gos. Thom.* 11, 18, 37, 61, 72, 106.

29. *Gos. Thom.* 114.

30. Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment in Gnosticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 90, emphasis original.

31. Thus Buckley eschews the language of “paradise regained” (cf. King above) and instead emphasizes “becoming Adam *before* he was put into Paradise. It was as a ‘living spirit’ that he was placed in the garden that led to his subsequent division and misery” (*Female Fault and Fulfillment*, 89, emphasis original). Note however that despite these differences in nuance, in their respective contexts, King and Buckley seem to be making more or less the same point.

32. Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment*, 94, emphases original.

33. As Robin Scroggs argues, the idea that “*Urzeit* does equal *Endzeit*” was common in apocalyptic Jewish traditions of the period. See discussion in Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 23–31.

34. Stevan L. Davies, “Christology and Protology in the *Gospel of Thomas*,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 668–69. As Davies elaborates the specifics of this argument more fully, “Paul may argue in 1 Corinthians against certain persons who held a Thomasine perspective. Of course, the crucifixion is crucial to Paul and irrelevant to *Thomas* and the kingdom is yet fully to come for Paul but present now for *Thomas*. Nevertheless, even such substantial differences should not obscure the points of agreement between them. Both may agree that the kingdom of God is the establishment in the world of the condition of the image of God in the primordial time of creation, and that is no small matter” (677).

35. See, as representative, Michel R. Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 5–7; Einar Thomassen, “Notes pour la délimitation d’un corpus valentinien à Nag Hammadi,” in *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi et le problème de leur classification*, ed. Louis Painchaud and Anne Pasquier (Quebec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1995), 243–59.

36. King, *Gnosticism*, 154.

37. Elaine Pagels, “Adam and Eve, Christ and the Church,” in *The New Testament and Gnosis: Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson*, ed. A. H. B. Logan and A. J. M. Wedderburn (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 160.

38. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), III, 113–14.

39. Ismo Dunderberg, “Lust for Power in The *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I, 5),” in *Coptica-Gnostica-Manichaica*, ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier (Québec/Louvain: Presses de l’Université Laval/Peeters, 2005), 237.

40. *Tri. Trac.* 51.8–11. On the complex relationship of the *Tripartite Tractate* to the monistic impulse of late Middle Platonic/Neopythagorean speculation, see John Peter Kenney, “The Platonism of the *Tripartite Tractate* (NH I, 5),” in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, ed. Richard T. Wallis and Jay Bregman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 187–206; Einar Thomassen, “The Derivation of Matter in Monistic Gnosticism,” in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts*, ed. John D. Turner and Ruth Majercik (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 1–17.

41. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 166. See the detailed discussion in Thomassen, “The Structure of the Transcendent World in the *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I, 5),” *VC* 34 (1980): 358–75.

42. *Tri. Trac.* 75.19–21.

43. *Tri. Trac.* 77.21–22.

44. *Tri. Trac.* 80.11–17.

45. On the complexities of this division in *Tri. Trac.* and in Valentinian thought more generally, see Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, esp. 120–33; Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 134–38, 175–78; Luise Schottroff, “Animae naturaliter salvandae: Zum Problem der himmlischen Herkunft des Gnostikers,” in *Christentum und Gnosis*, ed. Walther Eltester (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1969), 65–97. See also further discussion in Chapter 3.

46. See the excellent discussions in Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 46–58, 166–87.

47. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 166–67. Thomassen notes that “More than any other term . . . the problematics of dyadic extension and plurality is expressed in Valentinian texts by the word *pathos* [‘passion’]”—a term that can carry multiple, interrelated connotations, one of which is desire. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 288.

48. *Tri. Trac.* 78.11–13.

49. *Tri. Trac.* 94.16–20.

50. *Tri. Trac.* 132.15–28.

51. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 167.

52. *Tri. Trac.* 124.33–40. Note however that the Savior is still characterized as conceived without sin or corruption (*Tri. Trac.* 115.15–17). See Desjardins, *Sin in Valentinianism*, 87–91.

53. Thomassen, *Spiritual Seed*, 56.

54. *Tri. Trac.* 106.18–19. This reference to the first human’s mixed state pertains to his material, psychic, and spiritual components—the first two provided by a lower demiurge

and the last by the Logos, now purely spiritual following his repentance (see *Tri. Trac.* 104–5). Out of this primordial tripartition will eventually come the three kinds of human beings.

55. *Tri. Trac.* 123.5–8.

56. *Tri. Trac.* 108.5–6.

57. See Elaine Pagels, “The Valentinian Claim to Esoteric Exegesis of Romans as Basis for Anthropological Theory,” *VC* 26 (1972): 241–58; Pagels, “The Mystery of the Resurrection: A Gnostic Reading of 1 Corinthians 15,” *JBL* 93 (1974): 276–88, Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1975); Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve: Imagery and Hermeneutics in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Gospel of Philip*,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1988), 187–210. See also Minna Laine, “Gnosis, Love and Resurrection: Interpretation of Pauline Epistles in the Valentinian Gospel of Philip,” in *Lux Humana, Lux Aeterna: Essays on Biblical and Related Themes in Honour of Lars Aejmelaes*, ed. Antti Mustakallio, Heikki Leppä, and Heikki Räisänen (Helsinki/Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 415–35.

58. Pagels, “Pursuing the Spiritual Eve,” 192. Note that in context this quotation applies to the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, a text typically designated Sethian rather than Valentinian. But in light of her larger argument, it proves an apt description of numerous Valentinian hermeneutical projects as well.

59. For the reconstructed text, see Clement of Alexandria, *Extraits de Théodote*, trans. François Sagnard, SC 23 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970). For English translation, see Werner Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 146–54, 222–33. Dunderberg rightly notes that this sort of evidence, while important, must be evaluated with caution: “The early Christian authors writing against Valentinians are often identified as belonging to ‘patristic’ theologians, but I prefer to designate their works as ‘hostile sources.’ This designation reminds us that their treatises are not neutral accounts of what Valentinians taught and did but often show outright hostility to them. . . . Valentinian theology thus became defined by its differences from what the opponents saw as normative Christianity.” Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 8. Note, however, that the precise contours of the polemical context are not always clear. In the case of Clement’s *Excerpts from Theodotus*, it can sometimes be difficult to tell when Clement is citing a rival viewpoint versus articulating his own.

60. See Wesley W. Isenberg, “The Gospel of Philip (II, 3),” in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 139–41.

61. *Exc.* 23.1–2. As Pagels points out, this passage argues for a double aspect to Paul’s preaching, claiming that he proclaimed one gospel to psychic Christians and another (more esoteric) teaching to spiritual ones. Pagels, *Gnostic Paul*, 5–7.

62. *Exc.* 56.1–2; cf. 1 Cor 15.47.

63. *Exc.* 80.1–3; cf. 1 Cor 15.49.

64. *Gos. Phil.* 55.12.

65. *Gos. Phil.* 58.17–21. Cf. also *Philip*'s polemic against an alternate construal of typology in *Gos. Phil.* 67.36–68.3.
66. *Gos. Phil.* 71.16–21.
67. *Philip* is by no means alone among early Christian texts in articulating a typological link between different kinds of virgin births—a topic explored at greater length in Part II of this book.
68. Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism*, 56. See also Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium (Nag-Hammadi-Codex II,3)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 421–42.
69. See Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment*, 82–83. Cf. also Heracleon, *Frg.* 5.
70. *Exc.* 67.2–4. Cf. also *Exc.* 68.
71. Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment*, 78.
72. *Exc.* 68.
73. *Exc.* 79.
74. Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment*, 83.
75. *Gos. Phil.* 65.1–26.
76. *Gos. Phil.* 65.9–11.
77. See the overview in April DeConick, “The Great Mystery of Marriage: Sex and Conception in Ancient Valentinian Traditions,” *VC* 57 (2003): 307–42.
78. Michael Williams, “Uses of Gender Imagery in Ancient Gnostic Texts,” in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrel, and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 207–8.
79. Michael Williams, “Variety in Gnostic Perspectives on Gender,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1988), 18.
80. Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment*, 106.
81. *Gos. Phil.* 68.22–26.
82. *Gos. Phil.* 70.9–22.
83. Here Williams situates *Philip* in the context of Valentinian texts in which “Wisdom is one of the several divine entities that, as a group, constitute the full reality (Greek: *Pleroma*) of God, the Father of all. . . . [T]hese entities are typically grouped in male-female pairs, or syzygies. And the problem described by Valentinian myths is normally precipitated by Wisdom acting ‘alone,’ without her consort.” Williams, “Gender Imagery,” 209.
84. Buckley, *Female Fault and Fulfillment*, 129.
85. *Exc.* 80.3.
86. *Exc.* 79.
87. *Gos. Phil.* 69.1–4. Given the context, it seems appropriate to translate *rōme* (elsewhere rendered “human” or “human being”) with the sexually specific term “man.”
88. *Gos. Phil.* 71.4–5, 7. Cf. also the characterization of Mary as “the virgin whom no power defiled” (*tparthenos ete ‘mpe dunamis jahmes*) in *Gos. Phil.* 55.27–28.
89. Williams, “Gender Imagery,” 210.
90. *Gos. Phil.* 71.19–21.
91. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 422.
92. Here *Philip*'s strategy resonates with Monique Wittig's claim that “The category

of sex is the product of heterosexual society that turns half of the population into sexual beings, for sex is a category which women cannot be outside of.” See Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 7.

93. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 16.

94. Daniel Boyarin, “Gender,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 126.

95. Jacques Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Nass (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 88.

96. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 207.

CHAPTER 2. DESIRE AND THE FEMININE: CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA’S DISPLACEMENT OF EVE

Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 95.

1. *Paed.* 1.4.10. Throughout this chapter, I use the following editions of Clement’s texts: citations from the *Protrepticus* are taken from *Clementis Alexandrini Protrepticus*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Leiden: Brill, 1995). Citations from the *Paedagogus* are taken from *Clementis Alexandrini Paedagogus*, ed. Marcovich (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For citations from the *Stromateis*, I have used the Sources chrétiennes editions (when available) and *Clementis Alexandrinus II: Stromata Buch I–VI*, ed. Otto Stählin and Ludwig Früchtel (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985).

2. *Strom.* 6.12.100.

3. John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 181.

4. See Denise Kimber Buell, “Ambiguous Legacy: A Feminist Commentary on Clement of Alexandria’s Works,” in *A Feminist Companion to Patristic Literature*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 26–55; Kari Elisabeth Børresen, “God’s Image, Man’s Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1.27 and 1 Cor. 11.7,” in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 187–209.

5. Børresen, “God’s Image, Man’s Image,” 194.

6. As discussed in the Introduction, Daniel Boyarin argues that such “inconsistencies” on the part of platonizing early Christian thinkers can be resolved as follows: “Insofar as the myth of the primal, spiritual androgyne is the vital force for all of these representations, androgynous status is always dependent on the notion of a universal spiritual self that is above the differences of the body, and its attainment entails necessarily a renunciation of the body and its sexuality.” Daniel Boyarin, “Gender,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 125, emphasis

original. Here Boyarin helpfully draws a line of continuity from Philo to Paul to Clement, grounded in the androgyny myth. More specifically, the continuity he identifies between two generations of Alexandrian thinkers—Philo and Clement—in their philosophical and anthropological assumptions provides a warning against accepting too easily more optimistic appraisals of Clement such as the following: “The answer to the question whether there is any hope for Eve in Philo is clear: basically there is none. Her only hope . . . is to leave womanhood behind to become a unity again, undivided, siding with the mind rather than the body . . . There are, however, other voices in Antiquity. Clement of Alexandria, for example—who owes much to Philo and often follows in his biblical and philosophical tracks—offers a ray of hope. Although he inherits some of the same ideas, such as the identification of male with mind and female with senses, he still visualizes women as endowed with the ability to pursue virtue equally with men. Following Stoic writers, such as Musonius Rufus, and Jewish-Christian missionaries, such as Paul, Clement makes a special point of saying that no distinction should be made on the basis of gender or social status.” Annewies van den Hoek, “‘Endowed with Reason or Glued to the Senses’: Philo’s Thoughts on Adam and Eve,” in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 74–75. While these observations regarding Clement’s text are technically correct (as we will see in the analysis that follows), Boyarin’s argument reminds us that even Clement’s claims about men and women’s equality in virtue or ability to philosophize must be understood within the overarching framework of his platonizing androcentrism—that is to say, in the context of the long shadow cast by the problem of “the Platonic woman.”

7. Buell, “Ambiguous Legacy,” 27.

8. Buell, “Ambiguous Legacy,” 55.

9. See also the related point in Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 84, Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 229–32.

10. According to Buell, “The *Protrepitkos* has received virtually no attention from feminist scholars.” “Ambiguous Legacy,” 38.

11. *Protr.* 11.111–12. Note that I have followed Marcovich’s suggested emendations in my translation.

12. *Paed.* 1.4.11.

13. *Paed.* 2.10.83.

14. Børresen, “God’s Image, Man’s Image,” 195.

15. Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 34.

16. Note that elsewhere in the *Protrepitkos*, when the Adam-Christ correlation is not directly in view, Eve *does* appear, connected to the deception of the serpent. See *Protr.* 1.7.

17. David G. Hunter, “The Language of Desire: Clement of Alexandria’s Transformation of Ascetic Discourse,” *Semeia* 57 (1992): 105. See also Jean-Paul Broudéhoux, *Mariage et famille chez Clément d’Alexandrie* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1970), 122. Cf. as representative *Strom.* 2.20.119.

18. Hunter, “Language of Desire,” 104. Hunter notes the parallel in usage to Plutarch’s *Amatorius* 750c–e. See Hunter, “Language of Desire,” 109n38; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1986), 199–200.

19. Hunter, “Language of Desire,” 100. Hunter points out, however, that in his maneuvers against the Encratites, Clement significantly broadens his use of the term so that it has purchase beyond the sphere of the specifically sexual (98–99).

20. Note that this connection does not prevent Clement in other contexts from appropriating images of the female body (virginal and/or maternal) to refer to Christ, God, and the church. On this complex trope in Clement’s thought, see Verna E. F. Harrison, “The Care-Banishing Breast of the Father: Feminine Images of the Divine in Clement of Alexandria’s *Paedagogus* I,” *StPatr* 31 (1997): 401–5, Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 149–79.

21. *Strom.* 3.9.63.

22. *Strom.* 3.13.92.

23. *Strom.* 3.13.93.

24. *Strom.* 3.13.93.

25. Cf. Philo, *Agr.* 73. See also the discussion in Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 98–99n7. On the gendering of *thymos* and *epithymia* in Plato, see Verna E. F. Harrison, “The Allegorization of Gender: Plato and Philo on Spiritual Childbearing,” in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 523–26. On the broader Middle Platonic philosophical context that undergirds Clement’s ethical orientation here and elsewhere, see Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 60–117.

26. Hunter, “Language of Desire,” 98–99. Cf. also *Timaeus* 42a–d, where being mastered by irrational emotions such as desire (here *erōs*) is associated with a fall into femininity.

27. *Strom.* 3.17.102.

28. *Strom.* 3.17.103; cf. also 3.14.94.

29. On Adam and Eve as children in paradise in early Christian literature, see the further discussion in Chapter 4, as well as M. C. Steenberg, “Children in Paradise: Adam and Eve as ‘Infants’ in Irenaeus of Lyons,” *J ECS* 12 (2004): 1–22. Osborn notes that “the picture of Adam as a child in paradise is common to Clement and Irenaeus, but the notion of playing is peculiar to Clement.” Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 34.

30. In this way, Clement can maintain against his opponents that Adam was created “perfect”—thereby not ascribing the creation of imperfection to God. But he locates that perfection in humanity’s *capacity* to acquire virtue rather than in a fixed ontological status. See *Strom.* 6.12.96 and discussion in Peter (Panayiotis) Karavites, *Evil, Freedom, and the Road to Perfection in Clement of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 45–46, 164–65.

31. Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation*

Narratives (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 87. See also Sarah Petersen, “The Fall and Misogyny in Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria,” in *Society and Original Sin: Ecumenical Essays on the Impact of the Fall*, ed. Durwood Foster and Paul Mojzes (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 44–45. On Adam and Eve’s more appropriate timing in the later conception of Seth, see *Strom.* 3.12.81.

32. *Protr.* 11.111.

33. On metonymy in this sense, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 35–40. Here my argument is indirectly indebted on a conceptual level to Jacques Lacan’s well-known structural correlation between metonymy and displacement (in the technical Freudian sense—though I do not intend to invoke this technical connotation). See especially Jacques Lacan, “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud,” in *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 2002), 138–68.

34. Here “Gnostic” is Clement’s preferred term for the highest level of spiritual attainment—not to be confused with the debates over “Gnosticism” discussed in Chapter 1.

35. *Paed.* 3.3.18–19.

36. *Paed.* 3.3.19.

37. *Strom.* 4.8.59–60.

38. Buell, *Making Christians*, 48.

39. Buell, *Making Christians*, 48, emphasis original.

40. For fuller treatment of Clement’s thought with respect to marriage, see Broudhéoux, *Mariage et famille*; Michael Mees, “Clemens von Alexandrien über Ehe und Familie,” *Aug 17* (1977): 113–31.

41. *Paed.* 2.10.83.

42. *Paed.* 2.10.95.

43. *Strom.* 2.23.137.

44. *Paed.* 2.10.90.

45. *Strom.* 3.7.58.

46. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 135.

47. *Strom.* 6.100.3.

48. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 182.

49. Harry O. Maier, “Clement of Alexandria and the Care of the Self,” *JAAR* 62 (1994): 734. See also Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 247–72.

50. *Strom.* 3.7.57. Here the purview of *epithymia* is broader than just sexual desire. Clement sees Moses in his fasting on Sinai as the ideal paradigm of this desire-free state, a motif he may well develop from Philo. Cf. *Mos.* 2.68–70. See also Annewies van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 187.

51. Michel Desjardins, “Clement’s Bound Body,” in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 421, 424. See also Blake Leyerle, “Clement of Alexandria on the Importance of Table Etiquette,” *J ECS* 3 (1995): 123–41; Kamala Parel, “The Disease of the Passions in Clement of Alexandria,” *StPatr* 36 (2001): 449–55.

52. *Paed.* 2.10.111.

53. *Paed.* 2.10.114–15. Here Clement’s advice regarding women’s veiling is grounded in this broader regimen of bodily practices and not, as Donald Kinder points out, in the specific sin of Eve (in contrast to a thinker like Tertullian; cf. *Cult. fem.* 1.1). Donald Kinder, “Clement of Alexandria: Conflicting Views on Women,” *SecCent* 7 (1989–90): 219. On veiling in Clement (and its connection to inciting desire), see Michel Desjardins, “Why Women Should Cover Their Heads and Veil Their Faces: Clement of Alexandria’s Understanding of the Body and His Rhetorical Strategies in the *Paedagogus*,” *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 700–708.

54. See as representative *Paed.* 2.2.33, 2.11–12.116–29, 3.2.6–7.

55. Literally “to set relaxation aflame” (*ekphlegousai tas rhatymias*), *Paed.* 2.10.114.

56. *Paed.* 3.3.23.

57. Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 69. Cf. also *Strom.* 3.18.81.

58. On the connection between beards and masculinity in antiquity, see Richard Hawley, “The Male Body as Spectacle in Attic Drama,” in *Thinking Men: Masculinity and Its Self-Representation in the Classical Tradition*, ed. Lin Foxhall and John Salmon (London: Routledge, 1998), 91.

59. *Paed.* 3.3.20.

60. *Strom.* 2.18.81.

61. See *Strom.* 2.19.97. While Clement uses the terms “image” and “likeness” with a variety of different nuances, Eric Osborn summarizes the general contours of this frequent theme in his thought: “Gen. 1.26 sets out, according to Clement, God’s saving plan for humanity, a plan which begins at creation and is not yet perfected. Only Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, has fulfilled the plan. God has given to him the human race that he might bring that race into his own divine likeness. Apart from Christ, all other men begin as ‘according to the image of God,’ yet Christians are called to fulfill the ideal of Gen. 1.26 to become god-like humans. Humans are called to live the life of heaven in the imitation of Christ, by following him. All do not heed the command to follow, and so there are men in the image and men in the image and likeness. Indeed, every man is the image of God . . . but only those who share completely in the redemption offered by Christ are in the image and likeness.” Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 233–34.

62. *Strom.* 2.19.102. Cf. also *Protr.* 10.98.

63. As John Dillon observes, this position does not necessarily run counter to Clement’s Middle Platonic context. He argues that within the Platonic tradition lie “two significant strands . . . both stemming from Plato himself, but developing separate histories in later times: that of straightforward rejection of the body, or at least of the soul’s association

with it . . . and that of the disciplining and refining of the body, to make a worthy, or at least noninjurious receptacle of the soul.” John M. Dillon, “Rejecting the Body, Refining the Body: Some Remarks on the Development of Platonist Asceticism,” in *Asceticism*, ed. Wimbush and Valantasis, 80. For the latter orientation in Plato’s text, see *Tim.* 34b, 90a–d. On the complex fusion of philosophical influences (Platonic, Stoic, Aristotelian, Neopythagorean) operative in Clement’s thought, see Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*.

64. *Paed.* 3.1.1. Note that elsewhere Clement maps this tripartite division of the soul differently. See discussion in Desjardins, “Clement’s Bound Body,” 413–14n6. See also further discussion of the tripartite soul in Chapter 3.

65. *Paed.* 3.2.4.

66. Desjardins, “Clement’s Bound Body,” 415–16.

67. On Clement’s understanding of this transformation in relation to Pauline and other New Testament texts, see Olivier Prunet, *La morale de Clément d’Alexandrie et le Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 221–23.

68. *Strom.* 6.12.100.

69. *Paed.* 1.4.10.

70. *Strom.* 4.8.59.

71. *Strom.* 6.12.100.

72. *Strom.* 4.8.62.

73. *Strom.* 6.12.100. Here I render the crucial term *metatithetai* as “translated” following the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* translation. See *ANF* 2:503.

74. Note that elsewhere Clement makes clear that the problem in the garden has to do with Adam following Eve’s lead. See *Strom.* 2.19.98; cf. also 3.12.80.

75. While Clement here externalizes *both* pleasure and desire, insofar as he relegates the snake to the realm of allegory (“the serpent is an allegory for pleasure”), pleasure’s externalization does not go very far. Rather, it is linked closely with desire (as discussed above). Externalization of desire, however, is more complicated, precisely because of its link to Eve. As the figure of sexual difference that characterizes created humanity as Clement knows it, Eve cannot be allegorized out of the narrative. But neither, as I have already argued, can she appear in it overtly.

76. As Karmen MacKendrick helpfully notes (in a very different context), “Desire . . . is never precisely locatable. It is . . . always *between*.” Karmen MacKendrick, *Word Made Skin: Figuring Language at the Surface of Flesh* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 62, emphasis original.

77. *Paed.* 1.4.10.

78. *Paed.* 1.4.10.

79. *Protr.* 11.112.

80. Desjardins, “Clement’s Bound Body,” 427.

CHAPTER 3. WHAT SORT OF THING IS THIS LUMINOUS WOMAN? SEXUAL DIMORPHISM IN ON THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

Epigraph: Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 320, emphasis original.

1. See Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), Michael Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

2. Karen L. King, “Which Early Christianity?” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David Hunter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 72; King, *What Is Gnosticism?* 231.

3. Here I am consciously distancing myself from an approach such as Bethge’s which classifies *On the Origin of the World* as “essentially non-Christian.” See Hans-Gebhard Bethge, “On the Origin of the World (II,5 and XIII,2),” in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 171.

4. See *Orig. World* 105.25–30.

5. For the Coptic text of *On the Origin of the World*, see Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, Coptic Gnostic Library (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 28–93. All translations from the Coptic are my own unless otherwise noted, though the English translation of Hans-Gebhard Bethge and Bentley Layton and the French translation of Louis Painchaud have been consulted. See Layton, ed., *NHC II, 2–7*, 28–93; Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre: Traité sur l’origine du monde (NH II, 5 et XIII, 2 et Brit. Lib. Or. 4926[1])* (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1995).

6. Judith Butler, “Afterword,” in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 283.

7. See Alexander Böhlig and Pahor Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962); Michel Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques: Adam, Éros et les animaux d’Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi (II, 5)* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974).

8. See PHEME PERKINS, “On the Origin of the World (CG II,5): A Gnostic Physics,” *VC* 34 (1980): 37; Bethge, “On the Origin of the World,” 170.

9. Louis Painchaud, “The Redactions of the Writing Without Title (CG II.5),” *SecCent* (1991): 218.

10. Bethge, “On the Origin of the World,” 170.

11. Note that Painchaud (following Jean Doresse) has argued for a direct literary relationship between *On the Origin of the World* and *Eugnostos the Blessed*. See Louis Painchaud, “The Literary Contacts Between the Writing Without Title *On the Origin of the World* (CG II,5 and XIII,2) and *Eugnostos the Blessed* (CG III,3 and V,1),” *JBL* 114 (1995): 81–101.

12. Bethge, “On the Origin of the World,” 171.

13. This will be explored in more detail below. See also Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre*, 109–15.

14. Painchaud, “Redactions,” 221.
15. Hans-Gebhard Bethge, “Introduction to Tractate 5: Treatise Without Title on the Origin of the World,” in Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7, 12.
16. Bethge, “On the Origin of the World,” 171.
17. *Orig. World* 101.25.
18. Of the female names/counterparts, only Ialdabaoth’s consort, Pronoia, plays any real role, and even her part in the drama is relatively minor.
19. *Orig. World* 103.11–13.
20. *Orig. World* 107.35–108.2.
21. *Orig. World* 108.8. Here I follow Bethge and Layton in translating *aeine* ‘*rrōme* as “a human likeness” since specifically masculine sexual difference does not seem to be in view (though note that context suggests that the Adam of Light is in fact a male figure). On the difficulties and ambiguities involved in translating gendered Coptic language, see Deirdre J. Good, “Gender and Generation: Observations on Coptic Terminology, with Particular Attention to Valentinian Texts,” in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1988), 23–40.
22. The other powers in heaven, however, are able to see the light the human likeness gives off. As a result, they are distressed even though they cannot see the likeness directly. See 108.10–14.
23. *Orig. World* 108.17.
24. The basic difficulty is that the text seems later to reference the union (112.11–14) but at this point in the narrative does not spell out what is taking place between Pronoia and the Adam of Light in any explicit way. Tardieu solves the difficulty by positing that in her pursuit of the first Adam, Pronoia gets hold of some of *his* light elements, which she then spills out upon the earth. The problem with this solution is that the reference to Pronoia’s pouring action makes no mention of the light belonging to Adam. Rather, “she poured *her* light onto the earth” (*aspōht* ‘*mpesouoēin eḡm pkah*, 108.19, emphasis added). See Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 142. Given the lack of textual basis for this sort of solution, Painchaud follows Schenke in arguing for probable corruption. See Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre*, 347–48; Hans-Martin Schenke, *Der Gott Mensch in der Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 50.
25. Patricia Cox Miller, “‘Plenty Sleeps There’: The Myth of Eros and Psyche in Plotinus and Gnosticism,” in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, ed. Richard T. Wallis and Jay Bregman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 229.
26. See Miller, “Eros and Psyche,” 230–34; Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 144–63.
27. *Orig. World* 112.12–13.
28. A possible exception is 117.19.
29. *Orig. World* 108.7.
30. *Orig. World* 107.25–34.
31. *Orig. World* 112.30.
32. *Orig. World* 112.33–113.5.
33. As Mary Rose D’Angelo observes, in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* there seems to be

greater ambiguity around this point: “When he was first created, before he was endowed with, then separated from the female divine spirit, Adam resembled the androgynous archons who had created him in the likeness of their bodies, as well as according to the (female) divine image they had seen. The comment that the rulers modeled Adam after their own body may mean that he also was androgynous, but the rulers also describe Adam as the male counterpart of the image.” Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Transcribing Sexual Politics: Images of the Androgyne in Discourses of Antique Religion,” in *Descrizioni e iscrizioni: politiche del discorso*, ed. Giovanna Covi and Carla Locatelli (Trento: Dipartimento di scienze filologiche e storiche, 1998), 130. Note that by contrast, in *On the Origin of the World* the celestial model the rulers appropriate (in this case the likeness, not the image) is not the divine female Pistis Sophia but the male Adam of Light.

34. See Schenke, *Der Gott Mensch*, 120–43.

35. *Opif.* 69–71 (Runia 65). See discussion in Annewies van den Hoek, ‘Endowed With Reason or Glued to the Senses’: Philo’s Thoughts on Adam and Eve,” in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttkhuizen (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 66–67.

36. *Strom.* 2.102.6. See Robert McLachlan Wilson, “The Early Exegesis of Gen. 1.26,” in *StPatr.*, ed. Kurt Aland and F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), 433.

37. *AH* 5.6.1 (*ANF* 1:532).

38. *AH* 1.5.5 (Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 55:35).

39. “Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (NRSV).

40. *AH* 1.5.5 (Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 55:35).

41. *Val. Exp.* 37.25–29 (Turner, *NHL*, 486).

42. *Ap. John* 15.12–13 (King, 53) / *NHC* II 15.1–4. All citations of the *Apocryphon of John* are from Karen King’s translation (King, *Secret Revelation*) and use the single numbering system she provides. I have also included cross-references to the older manuscript/line number system.

43. *Hyp. Arch.* 87.29–31 (Layton, *NHL*, 163).

44. On this point (though offering a different reading), see Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 100.

45. *Orig. World* 113.17–20. Though the prefix pronoun in *efnatame* is masculine in form (in order to agree with its antecedent *‘mpesrōme*), I intentionally translate the pronoun generically in English (i.e., “it” rather than “he”) since the molding of a sexed (female) body for Sophia’s human is explicitly discussed in the lines that follow.

46. Given this purpose, the text initially designates Sophia’s human as “the instructor” (*treftamo*, see 113.33 and possibly 113.21). Note, however, that the use of the term is slippery. Later in the text “the instructor” is also equated with the Beast (the serpent of Genesis). See 114.1–3, 118.25–26, 119.6–7, 120.1–5. By connecting the dots, Painchaud sees in this slippage a further redactional identification of the spiritual female with the serpent—though he acknowledges that the connection is not one the final redactor develops in any significant way. Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre*, 424–25.

47. *Orig. World* 113.23–24.

48. *Orig. World* 113.25–26.

49. *Orig. World* 113.29, emphasis added.

50. *Orig. World* 103.29–30.

51. *Orig. World* 112.35.

52. It is unclear why this creation process takes twelve months—and indeed difficult to reconcile this temporal framework with that of the “days of creation” operative in other parts of the text (see 115.25–35, 117.27–118.2). The disjunction seems to be leftover from multiple levels of redaction (see the discussion of Painchaud’s theory below). A similar problem occurs at 115.10–11 with the reference to the abandonment of the soulless Adam for forty days. The text as it stands shows no concern to correlate the timeframe of the fortieth day (on which Sophia sends her breath into Adam) to that of the day of rest—presumably the seventh day (see 115.23–35).

53. On the difficulties of this passage in the Coptic text (with Coptic script rather than transliteration), see my more thorough treatment in Benjamin H. Dunning, “What Sort of Thing Is This Luminous Woman? Thinking Sexual Difference in *On the Origin of the World*,” *J ECS* 17 (2009): 71–72n55.

54. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 104–7. This remains the case even if (as Painchaud argues) the presentation of the figure and its titles has been complicated in 113.30–35 by a later redactor intent on seeing a reference to Seth’s birth. On the intricate set of puns with the name “Eve” that lead to the designations “instructor,” “[mother of] life,” and—by the archons—“beast” (114.1), see Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 106.

55. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 104, translation mine.

56. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 104, translation mine.

57. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 104–5.

58. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 105–6.

59. D’Angelo, “Transcribing Sexual Politics,” 120.

60. D’Angelo, “Transcribing Sexual Politics,” 145.

61. Cf. Aristophanes’ “androgynous gender” that Zeus separates into male and female in Plato’s *Symposium* (189a–191d).

62. *Opif.* 134 (Runia 82).

63. This stands in marked contrast to what we see in Philo.

64. Within this framework of oppositions, “flesh” (*sarx*) generally appears to be associated with the choic/psychic side of the binary. See discussion in Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 132. Note, however, that its position is not entirely unambiguous. On the one hand, flesh is perishable and has no place in the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15.50). But on the other hand, it is multiple and thus potentially valued in variable ways: “Not all flesh (*sarx*) is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish” (1 Cor 15.39, NRSV).

65. On tripartite aspects of Plato’s anthropology in the *Timaeus*, see John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 213.

66. According to Plutarch, “Most people rightly hold man to be composite, but wrongly hold him to be composed of only two parts. The reason is that they suppose mind to be somehow part of soul, thus erring no less than those who believe soul to be part of body, for in the same degree as soul is superior to body so is mind better and more divine than soul.” Here human beings are an amalgam but not a strictly dualistic one. Furthermore, the divisions are not hermetically sealed off from one another but rather mingle productively to produce different faculties of the human: “The result of soul and body commingled is the irrational or the affective factor, whereas of mind and soul the conjunction produces reason.” This leaves the soul in something of an ambivalent position, allowing Plutarch to conclude, “The soul is a mixed and intermediate thing.” Plutarch, *Fac.* 943A–945D (Cherniss, LCL). As Dale Martin helpfully summarizes, in both Plato and his Middle Platonist interpreters, “we are . . . dealing with something more like a spectrum of essences than a dichotomy of realms.” Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 12.

67. Cf. Philo’s discussion, which also correlates different kinds of subjects to each of the three divisions in a human being: “Some men are earth-born, some heaven-born and some God-born. The earth-born are those who take the pleasures of the body for their quarry. . . . The heaven-born are the votaries of the arts and of knowledge, the lovers of learning. For the heavenly element in us is the mind. . . . But the men of God are priests and prophets who . . . have risen wholly above the sphere of sense-perception and have been translated into the world of the intelligible and dwell there registered as freemen of the commonwealth of Ideas, which are imperishable and incorporeal.” Philo, *Gig.* 60–61 (Colson, LCL). Here Philo associates people of the earth with the body, people of heaven with the mind, and people of God with the incorruptibility of the noetic realm.

68. See Luise Schottroff, “Animae naturaliter salvandae: Zum Problem der himmlischen Herkunft des Gnostikers,” in *Christentum und Gnosis*, ed. Walther Eltester (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969), 65–97.

69. Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre*, 136. Cf. Irenaeus, *AH* 1.30.1.

70. *Orig. World* 117.27–118.2.

71. See my more technical discussion of this complicated (but ultimately plausible) theory in Dunning, “Luminous Woman,” 75–76.

72. Bethge, “Introduction,” 21. Note that in Painchaud’s reconstruction of the text’s history, the figure of the second Adam and the addition of Eve into Sophia’s creation account come from two separate levels of redaction. The equation of Eve with the second Adam in my analysis is a result of reading the text as a narrative unity as it stands in its final form. See also Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, 104–5.

73. Painchaud, “Redactions,” 227.

74. *Orig. World* 115.13–14. Note that this Adam is still referred to in 115.1 as “a psychic human” (*ourōme mpsukhikos*)—a crucial contradiction that Painchaud sees as a leftover from the earliest layer of tradition.

75. Painchaud, “Redactions,” 227. See also Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre*, 424–5.

76. Without necessarily questioning the plausibility of Painchaud’s redactional

reconstruction, here I am interested in a different set of questions—focusing instead on the vision of human beings articulated in the received text as we actually have it.

77. Note that my analysis below will not take up Painchaud’s suggestion that the text’s final redaction includes a “fourth race” who is truly saved—a “Sethian” addition with a sectarian bent meant to trump the “Valentinian” tripartite anthropology (*Orig. World* 125.3–6). See Painchaud, *L’Écrit sans titre*, 132; Painchaud, “Redactions,” 230. While I think Painchaud is most likely right in his appraisal of this fourth race as a later sectarian addition, this anthropological supplement comes late in the text and is not developed in any detail. Thus the anthropogonic account with which we are concerned still works with a tripartite anthropology.

78. See 15.20–27 (King, 52–3) / NHC II 15.13–23. On this process and the correspondence between the components of Adam’s body and the human body in Plato’s *Timaeus*, see Roelof van den Broek, “The Creation of Adam’s Psychic Body in the Apocryphon of John,” in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 67–85.

79. *Ap. John* 19.12 (King, 61) / NHC II 21.9–12. See van den Broek, “Psychic Body,” 67–85; Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, “The Creation of Man and Woman in *The Secret Book of John*,” in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 141–51.

80. *Orig. World* 114.27–29, emphasis added. This same point is made even more explicitly in *Hypostasis of the Archons*: “They modeled their creature as one wholly of the earth.” *Hyp. Arch.* 87.26–27 (Layton, *NHL*, 163).

81. Michael Williams, “Divine Image—Prison of Flesh: Perceptions of the Body in Ancient Gnosticism,” in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part 1*, ed. Michael Feher (New York: Zone, 1989), 130, 133.

82. *Orig. World* 115.10–11.

83. Painchaud solves this problem through just such an appeal. In his reading, the text’s first redactor takes the primitive tradition of the archons’ Adam as a psychic human and transforms it into “an account of the moulding of a *man left without soul*”—all part of the larger project to polemicize against the Pauline conception of psychic and pneumatic humans in 1 Corinthians 15. See Painchaud, “Redactions,” 227, emphasis original.

84. *Orig. World* 115.4–5.

85. *Orig. World* 115.10–11. Here the text shows a slippage between the terms “pneuma” and “psyche” that I take as pointing to the fundamentally choic nature of Adam’s body at this stage in the narrative.

86. The anthropogonic summary (117.27–118.2) makes this point explicit: the second Adam is psychic as opposed to the first (pneumatic) Adam and the third (choic) one.

87. *Orig. World* 116.1. I take the term “counterpart” here from Bethge and Layton’s translation. The Coptic literally reads “fellow-likeness.”

88. *Orig. World* 116.2–3.

89. Cf. *Hyp. Arch.* 88.3–15. Here the chief ruler is the one who breathes into Adam, endowing him with soul-substance but leaving him spiritless and thus flailing upon the ground.

90. *Orig. World* 116.7–8. Here the text plays off Gen. 3.20 such that Adam's receiving of psychic status from Eve serves to explain (in narrative form) the scriptural etymology of Eve's name as "the mother of all living" (NRSV). In this way the hermeneutical opportunity provided by the etymology may in fact drive the narrative of Adam's ensoulment. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for the *Journal of Early Christian Studies* for drawing my attention to this point.

91. *Orig. World* 116.13–15, Bethge and Layton translation (*NHL*, 182) with minor modifications.

92. *Orig. World* 116.15–18.

93. For a related (but different) analysis of this same point, see Gedaliahu A. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 43. On Eve's rape in the *Hypostasis*, see also Karen L. King, "Ridicule and Rape, Rule and Rebellion: The Hypostasis of the Archons," in *Gnosticism & the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson*, ed. James E. Goerhing et al. (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1990), 3–24.

94. *Hyp. Arch.* 89.20 (Layton, *NHL*, 164).

95. *Hyp. Arch.* 89.20 (Layton, *NHL*, 164).

96. Note that in the *Apocryphon of John*, it is Ialdabaoth who acts, not putting Adam to sleep per se (the Christ narrator is explicit on this point) but rather into a trance "weighed down with insensibility." See *Ap. John* 21.6 (King, 64) / BG 58.20–59.1.

97. See Luttkhuizen, "Creation," 151–55; Karen L. King, *The Secret Revelation of John* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 104–5.

98. See Roger Aubrey Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons: The Coptic Text with Translation and Commentary* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), 74–80; Elaine Pagels, "Genesis Creation Accounts from Nag Hammadi," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986), 269–70.

99. *Orig. World* 116.21–25.

100. *Orig. World* 116.28. In this case, the text seems to be using the term *eine* differently than earlier where *eine* was paired with *hikōn* in a deliberate reference to Gen 1.26. There Eve's likeness was to Pistis Sophia as reflected in the waters, but here "likeness" has a decidedly more negative connotation, implying a certain fluidity to the use of the term. The latter usage is perhaps akin to the formulation of *Hypostasis of the Archons*: "a shadowy reflection resembling herself" *Hyp. Arch.* 89.26 (Layton, *NHL*, 164).

101. "And when they saw the likeness of this one with [Adam], [the archons] were troubled, thinking that this one was the true Eve (*euba 'nalēthine*)." *Orig. World* 116.35–117.2.

102. *Orig. World* 118.8–9. As Michael Williams points out, this is possibly in connection to the beastly form of the archons themselves (see 119.16–18). Williams, "Divine Image," 137–8.

103. *Orig. World* 118.11–14. On a related note, see the reference to both Adam and Eve's ongoing luminous state at 123.18.

104. *Orig. World* 117.24–28.

105. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for urging me to reflect further on how

ancient tripartite distinctions among humanity play out with respect to the always porous boundaries between bodily/material and discursive registers—as well as the spaces and overlaps between those registers. While I readily admit that I have not been able to do justice to this difficult but important problematic here, I hope to take up the issue in future work.

106. The language of “fall” is borrowed from Boyarin’s analysis of Philo—though he himself notes that Philo never puts it quite this strongly. See Daniel Boyarin, “Gender,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 121.

107. Williams, “Divine Image,” 130, emphasis original.

108. Painchaud, “Redactions,” 227.

CHAPTER 4. VIRGIN EARTH, VIRGIN BIRTH: IRENAEUS OF LYONS AND THE PREDICAMENTS OF RECAPITULATION

Epigraph: Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 219.

1. “This alignment of the body with spiritual attainment, together with an increased emphasis on seeing the touch of transcendence in human physicality, also signaled that a shift had occurred . . . In late fourth-century views of both the creation of Adam and the resurrection, body was an integral, if troubling, part of the human being.” Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 35.

2. Miller, *Corporeal Imagination*, 7. Judith Butler addresses the issue in an illuminating way: “Every time I try to write about the body, the writing ends up being about language. This is not because I think that the body is reducible to language; it is not. Language emerges from the body, constituting an emission of sorts. The body is that upon which language falters, and the body carries its own signs, its own signifiers, in ways that remain largely unconscious.” Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 198; see also Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), ix.

3. For the earliest example of this connection, see Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 100. Cf. also *Prot. Jas.* 13.1.

4. See as representative, Tina Beattie, “Mary in Patristic Thought,” in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 86–87; Jean Plagineux, “La Doctrine mariale de saint Irénée,” *RevScRel* 44 (1970): 179–89; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), 42–52; Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 51–58; José Antonio de Aldama, *María en la patristica de los siglos I y II* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1970), 273–93.

5. M. C. Steenberg, “The Role of Mary as Co-Recapitulator in St Irenaeus of Lyons,” *VC* 58 (2004): 118.

6. *AH* 1.3.4. All citations of Irenaeus’s texts are taken from the Sources chrétiennes critical editions. Regarding issues of gender and English translation, I consistently render the Latin *homo* as “man” when the typological context suggests that the specific man Adam (or Christ) is in view (given my contention that, for Irenaeus, the male bodies of Adam and Christ are not theologically incidental). When the context points to a more collective sense, I opt for the gender neutral “humanity” or “people.”

7. J. T. Nielsen, *Adam and Christ in the Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), 57.

8. See *AH* 5.20.2.

9. Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21. On the complexity of this doctrine and its many nuances in Irenaeus’s thought, see the thorough discussion in Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 97–140. See also Dominic Unger, “Christ’s Role in the Universe According to St. Irenaeus,” *FS* 5 (1945): 128–34.

10. Nielsen, *Adam and Christ*, 59–60.

11. See *AH* 3.16.7.

12. Nielsen, *Adam and Christ*, 61.

13. Nielsen, *Adam and Christ*, 82, emphasis original.

14. Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 101.

15. Steenberg, “Mary,” 130.

16. Steenberg, “Mary,” 132.

17. Steenberg, “Mary,” 133, emphasis original.

18. Steenberg, “Mary,” 136. See also M. C. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of Redemption* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 150–52.

19. On this point, see Domingo Ramos-Lissón, “Le Rôle de la femme dans la théologie de saint Irénée,” *StPatr* 21 (1989): 169, 173.

20. Tina Beattie, *God’s Mother, Eve’s Advocate: A Marian Narrative of Women’s Salvation* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 174.

21. See most famously, Tertullian, *Cult. fem.* 1.1.2 (and discussion in Chapter 5).

22. Beattie also offers a parallel argument from the standpoint of natural law, contending that “from the perspective of the female body, the clitoris might be recognized as a sign of God’s affirmation of woman’s capacity for sexual delight in a way that is not dependent upon penetration and that has no reproductive function.” Beattie, *God’s Mother*, 174–75. See also Tina Beattie, “Carnal Love and Spiritual Imagination: Can Luce Irigaray and John Paul II Come Together?” in *Sex These Days: Essays on Theology, Sexuality and Society*, ed. Jon Davies and Gerard Loughlin (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 160–83.

23. Tina Beattie, “Redeeming Mary: The Potential of Marian Symbolism for Feminist Philosophy of Religion,” in *Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Critical Readings*, ed. Pamela Sue Anderson and Beverly Clack (London: Routledge, 2004), 115.

24. Beattie, *God’s Mother*, 175.

25. As I will argue, close analysis of the relevant texts shows that the symmetry is in

fact *not* satisfying and to some degree breaks down as Irenaeus's argument develops—a crucial point for situating the significance of sexual difference in his thought.

26. Beattie, *God's Mother*, 175. Beattie develops this suggestion through an exploration of the ambivalence and instability of the term “hymen” (following Derrida), which she sees as necessitating Mary's *perpetual* virginity: “for virginity to be a sign of woman's freedom from the law, it must be perpetual if one accepts Derrida's understanding of the ambivalence of the unruptured hymen. Virginity acquires patriarchal significance when it is lost. The ruptured hymen becomes retrospectively a sign not of the woman's integrity and independence, but of her commodification. . . . So only perpetual virginity symbolizes the recreation of woman in a way that is outside the domain of phallic signification. . . . In Mary's case, the potential ambivalence of the unruptured hymen resolves itself into an affirmation of woman's integrity and freedom. The attribution of virginity to Eve and Mary exploits this ambivalence through developing a dialectic between virginity as a sign of fallenness in Eve and virginity as a sign of redemption in Mary.” Beattie, *God's Mother*, 178.

27. See discussion in Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 115–16. Also Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, trans. Ross MacKenzie (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 192–201.

28. “*puram . . . vulvam eam quae regenerat homines in Deum*,” *AH* 4.33.11.

29. For the connection to Theophilus of Antioch and further references, see Anders-Christian Jacobsen, “The Importance of Genesis 1–3 in the Theology of Irenaeus,” *ZAC* 8 (2004): 301, n.5. See also Friedrich Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1930).

30. For a thorough analysis of the issue, see M. C. Steenberg, “Children in Paradise: Adam and Eve as ‘Infants’ in Irenaeus of Lyons,” *J ECS* 12 (2004): 1–22. Steenberg himself argues against a “literal” versus “metaphorical” approach to the question, offering a more complex reappraisal of the textual evidence. Building on (and critically revising) the work of Ysabel de Andia, he argues that for Irenaeus “it is material existence that connects a given being to the progression of time, while spiritual beings (e.g., the angels) have no such physical composition and thus no time-bound existence. Accordingly, and this is of the utmost importance, it is Adam's physicality, his material being, and *not simply his creation into the eternity of God* that is the root of his lack of full development and his relative ‘distance’ from the Creator. . . . It is the dust, the matter from which and into which Adam is formed, that makes him *nēpios*, for matter binds its subject to time, and time necessitates developmental experience. At his root, Adam is a ‘child’ because he is physical.” Steenberg, “Children in Paradise,” 18, emphasis original. See also Ysabel de Andia, *Homo vivens: Incorruptibilité et divinisation de l'homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1986), 127–45.

31. Steenberg, “Children in Paradise,” 21.

32. *AH* 3.22.4.

33. All quotations from *Epid.* are from the standard Sources chrétiennes edition by Adelin Rousseau and follow Rousseau's suggested emendations. Since the SC edition is a Latin translation of an Armenian manuscript tradition (itself based on a Greek original), John Behr's English translation directly from the Armenian has also been consulted. For

a helpful overview of the manuscript tradition, see John Behr, *St Irenaeus of Lyons: On the Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 27–38.

34. Note the contrast to later patristic thinkers such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. As Peter Brown has argued, for Origen “Basic aspects of human beings, such as sexuality, sexual differences, and other seemingly indestructible attributes of the person associated with the physical body . . . [were] no more than provisional.” For Nyssa, while the advent of sexual difference in Adam and Eve was by no means a punishment, it was “simply a secondary and necessary adjustment to the new conditions created by the fall.” Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 167, 296; see further discussion 163–68, 293–98. Also Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, “Image of God and Sexual Differentiation in the Tradition of *Enkrateia*: Proto-logical Motivations,” in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 142–53.

35. *AH* 3.23.5.

36. John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 112.

37. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 211–12. On the development of the early Christian ritual kiss as an expression of holiness and purity, see Michael Philip Penn, *Kissing Christians: Ritual and Community in the Late Ancient Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

38. While in *AH* 3.22.4, Irenaeus only makes the connection between protological childhood and virginity explicit through appeal to Eve, by logical extension of the argument, the link applies equally to Adam as well.

39. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 209.

40. As I will show in the following section, Irenaeus eventually slides into a very different set of conceptual connotations for virginity—predicated on the logic of penetration and thus in the bodily distinctives of sexual difference. Already here, in fact, his fragile balancing act (arguing for *both* bodily sexual difference *and* a virginal state not defined by specifics of male and female bodies) totters on the brink of this slide, insofar as he refers to Adam and Eve's preservation of their intact nature and raises the question of what was breathed *into* them (*Epid.* 14).

41. For a brief overview of this context, see Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 108–17.

42. *AH* 5.9.1–5.14.4. For a succinct analysis of the brilliant set of exegetical maneuvers that Irenaeus makes in order to argue that, while the flesh may not itself inherit, it can in fact *be inherited* by the Spirit in the kingdom, see Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997), 148–50. On Valentinian exegesis of 1 Corinthians, see Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1975), 53–94, especially 85.

43. *Epid.* 11.

44. Iain MacKenzie has argued against “any idea that Irenaeus is advocating a mythological synthesis between the substance of the dust of the earth and the substance of the

Creator as that which man is.” Iain M. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2002), 103. For MacKenzie, any interpretation along these lines would disrupt the consistent distinction between creature and creator that he sees as “paramount in Irenaeus’s thought.” He thus maintains that the phrase “mixing his own power” must be taken as a circumlocution for nothing more specific than God’s workmanship in creation. However, the distinction that MacKenzie seeks to protect here is likely not as sharp as he portrays it. Another possibility is that the “power” in view is the Holy Spirit. See Jacques Fantino, *L’Homme, image de Dieu chez saint Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1986), 157. Cf. also Orbe’s argument for an “anima mundi”—reading Gen. 1.2 not as a personal Spirit but rather as “la virtud del Padre” at work in the world. Antonio Orbe, *Antropología de San Ireneo* (Madrid: Biblioteca des Autores Cristianos, 1969), 61. Yet, as Behr notes (*Asceticism and Anthropology*, 88–89), Irenaeus does not ever mention the Spirit here. More convincing on the whole is the nuance of Behr’s own analysis: “the idea behind both *Dem.* 11 and *AH* 5.3.1–3 seems to be that whatever is created receives, and so participates in, the art, the power, and the wisdom of the Creator. . . . It is by receiving this power, or having it ‘mixed in,’ that the dust taken from the earth becomes God’s handiwork (*plasma*).”

45. Orbe draws a further contrast to the anthropology of Origen with its focus on *nous* (rather than *pneuma* or *sarx*), which he characterizes as psychological. See Orbe, *Antropología*, 527–28. MacKenzie (*Demonstration*, 101) makes a related argument in starker and less nuanced terms (critiqued below), maintaining that Irenaeus’s purpose in emphasizing the purity and delicacy of the soil that formed Adam is to combat dualism, in this case “the dualism of the heretics in which all that is material or corporeal is regarded as evil and the product of evil.”

46. Similarly, Irenaeus’s anthropology as a whole retains a texture and complexity beyond a simple valorizing of the flesh over and against a flesh-spirit “dualism.” Drawing on tripartite notions of the human being that go at least as far back as Plato, he argues in *AH* 5.9.1 that the complete person is composed of flesh, soul, and spirit. Here the soul acts as a kind of intermediate component between spirit and flesh, sometimes ascending towards the former and other times falling into the lusts of the latter.

47. *AH* 1.5.5.

48. *AH* 5.15.4.

49. Cf. *AH* 1.5.5, as well as the discussion in the previous chapter of Sophia’s human, created from a luminous drop flowing on the waters (*Orig. World* 113.21–24).

50. Behr points to an additional parallel that can be seen when reading *AH* 5.15.4 and *Epid.* 11 together: “The act of Christ spitting on the ground is paralleled in *Dem.* 11 by Irenaeus’s introduction of a supplementary action of God into Genesis 2:7, the mixing of his power with the dust from the earth, as a preparation for the formation of man.” Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 88.

51. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 15, emphasis original. Note however, as Martin himself admits, that we do see something akin to a Cartesian dualism in *some* ancient texts—in particular Plato’s *Phaedo* (11).

52. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 116.

53. Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.6 (Perrin, LCL, 181).

54. Cf. Philo, *Opif.* 137.

55. *Epid.* 32.

56. Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginité*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 105.

57. Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998), 137; Ann Ellis Hanson and David Armstrong, "The Virgin's Voice and Neck: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 245 and Other Texts," *BICS* 33 (1986): 97–100.

58. Mary F. Foskett, *A Virgin Conceived: Mary and Classical Representations of Virginité* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 34.

59. Here Giulia Sissa reads the Hippocratic texts more in line with Soranus (see below), arguing that the corpus shows no evidence of belief in a protective membrane or vaginal hymen as a marker of virginité. She points to a view in *Diseases of Women* that treats any membrane causing obstruction as a pathology to be corrected. Sissa, *Greek Virginité*, 115. Ann Hanson offers a critique of this position based on the imagery of the womb as a jar or jug: "Unsealing the wine jug" is expressed in the same terms as "violating the young girl" and "penetrating the city's walls," for all three actions share a conspicuous visual similarity, whereby a rounded and sealed-off inner space is opened up and made available to the man who penetrates the protective barrier." Ann Ellis Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 327. But as Lesley Dean-Jones points out, none of these images necessarily refer to a vaginal hymen. Thus Hippocratic medical theory may in fact "[equat]e defloration with loosening the [uterine] stoma rather than with rupturing a sealing membrane." Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 52.

60. See the discussion in Sissa, *Greek Virginité*, 111–12.

61. Soranus, *Gynecology* 1.17; from *Soranus' Gynecology*, trans. Owsei Temkin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 15.

62. Soranus offers two further points to bolster his case: no membrane is found in dissection and vaginal probes can be inserted into virgins without meeting resistance. See Soranus, *Gynecology* 1.17.

63. Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 74. See, for example, *Prot. Jas.* 20.1.

64. Soranus, *Gynecology* 1.16 (Temkin, 15).

65. Sissa, *Greek Virginité*, 105.

66. Brown, *Body and Society*, 8.

67. *Epid.* 32.

68. On the necessity of Christ's conception without human semen as an important theme in Irenaeus and other early Christian writers, see Guy Marie Bertrand, *Saint Joseph dans les écrits des Pères de saint Justin à saint Pierre Chrysologue: Analyse des textes et synthèse doctrinale* (Montreal: Fides, 1966), 129–31.

69. A further logical consideration (though not one Irenaeus raises) is that the dirt of Christ's day is not only tilled/rained upon but actually *cursed*, following the events of Gen 3. As such, it no longer has any claim to virginal status.

70. Unger summarizes the position of various "heretics" on the problem of Mary's virginity (as outlined by Theodoret): "Simon, Menander, Cerdo, and Marcion denied the Incarnation and called the nativity from the Virgin a fable. Valentinus, Basilides, Bardesanes, and others admitted the conception and birth from the Virgin but said that the Word passed through her as through a channel and took nothing from her, as he was a man only in appearance." Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, trans. Dominic C. Unger and John J. Dillon, ACW 55 (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 170.

71. Donovan, *One Right Reading*, 87–88.

72. Elizabeth Castelli, "Virginity and Its Meaning for Women's Sexuality in Early Christianity," *JFSR* 2 (1986): 71. See also Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 175.

73. See Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, 33–39.

74. Castelli, "Virginity," 72.

75. Though in the case of Eve, he will not be adverse to metaphor as needed (see below).

76. See Antonio Orbe, *Teleología de San Ireneo, comentario al Libro V del "Adversus haereses"* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1985–1988), 2:256–83; Orbe, "La Virgen María abogada de la virgen Eva," *Greg* 63 (1982): 453–506; Steenberg, "Mary," 128. Orbe draws this conclusion (unconvincing to my mind, given the textual counterevidence discussed below) based on the contrast in *AH* 5.19.1 between the word of the angel that "seduces" Eve (which Orbe reads as an insinuation that Eve's disobedience was sexual, involving intercourse with Adam) and the word of the angel that announces good news to Mary.

77. *AH* 3.22.4. Thus Orbe's contention that the prohibition of Gen 2.17 refers indirectly to carnal matrimonial relations cannot be maintained. See Orbe, *Antropología*, 251–52.

78. *AH* 3.22.4. Note that in the sentence that follows, Irenaeus must point to the binding legal character of betrothal such that a betrothed virgin can actually be considered a wife—thereby preserving an otherwise precarious parallel between Eve and Mary.

79. Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 100.

80. *Epid.* 33.

81. Though the image of the fertile body (the body that conceives, gestates, and gives birth) could be put to multiple uses in antiquity (some more explicitly gendered than others), its cultural logic remains rooted in a notion of feminine difference. This is a perspective nicely summed up in a pithy statement from Soranus: "Now we say that there exist natural conditions in women particularly their own (as conception, parturition, and lactation if one wishes to call these functions conditions)" (Soranus, *Gynecology* 3.5, trans. Temkin, 132). In his analysis of Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*, David Halperin compellingly shows that the ancient Greek association between giving birth and "a distinctively feminine

order of experience” was operative even in cases of metaphorical fertility tropes such as intellectual and masculine procreation. See David M. Halperin, “Why Is Diotima a Woman? Platonic *Eros* and the Figuration of Gender,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 277, as well as larger discussion at 275–84. See also Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 47–48.

82. See LXX 2 Kgs (2 Sam) 7:12 and especially Ps 131(132):11.

83. Here I follow Behr in translating Rousseau’s doublets and triplet simply as “proper.” See Behr, *Apostolic Preaching*, 108n107. See also the extended parallel passage in *AH* 3.21.5.

84. I take the initial phrase of this section’s title from Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 67.

85. *Epid.* 33.

86. *AH* 3.22.2.

87. *AH* 5.19.1.

88. A crucial issue here (and one that has generated much scholarly conversation) is the precise nuance entailed in Irenaeus’s characterization of Mary as Eve’s *advocata*. While it is not known for sure exactly what Greek word the Latin *advocata* translates, the Armenian version of the text points to the conclusion that the original term is *paraklētos*. de Aldama, *María*, 287. However, this still leaves the open question of the sense in which Mary functions as Eve’s defender or intercessor.

89. See de Aldama, *María*, 278–93. Cf. also Eberhard Neubert, *Marie dans l’Église antécécienne* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1908), 264; Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 56.

90. There is an undeniable resonance between the language of “remainder” and “excess” that I use here and psychoanalytic (particularly Lacanian and post-Lacanian) ideas about the feminine as excess, as disruptive of a phallogocentric symbolic, and as entailing a “supplementary” jouissance that eludes or exceeds the phallic function. Rather than attempting to develop these connections in the context of this chapter, I have restricted my analysis to a *logical* problematic I see at work in Irenaeus’s own text, one that I argue is generated by the ways he himself sets up the parameters of his recapitulative argument. Nevertheless, while I in no way wish to pursue a directly psychoanalytic reading of Irenaeus, I remain indirectly indebted to psychoanalytically inflected conversations within feminist theory in terms of many of the questions I bring to these ancient materials. See especially Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972–73, Encore: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998); Jacqueline Rose, “Feminine Sexuality—Jacques Lacan and the *école freudienne*,” and “Femininity and Its Discontents,” in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 49–81, 83–103.

91. Osborn, *Irenaeus*, 116. See also Bernard Sesboüé, *Tout récapituler dans le Christ: Christologie et sotériologie d’Irénee de Lyon* (Paris: Desclée, 2000).

92. Steenberg, “Mary,” 135.

93. See respectively *Epid.* 33 (and *AH* 5.19.1), *AH* 3.22.4, *AH* 4.33.11.
94. See especially *AH* 4.33.11.
95. See as representative Halperin, “Diotima,” 275–84; Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 29–34.
96. Pace Orbe; see n76 above.
97. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*, 112–13.
98. “For Eve did not obey while she was still a virgin” (*AH* 3.22.4).
99. The role of desire may also be significant here, insofar as the only desire operative in Mary’s experience of procreation is her desire for obedience to God—not the problematic sexual desire Irenaeus imagines will be eradicated at the eschaton.
100. As Ann Hanson shows, the uterine mouth could be as much at issue as the opening of the vagina in ancient popular and medical reflections on sexual penetration and its effects. Hanson, “Medical Writers’ Woman,” 324–30.
101. *AH* 3.22.4.
102. Beattie, *God’s Mother*, 174.
103. Kari Elisabeth Børresen, “God’s Image, Man’s Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1.27 and 1 Cor. 11.7,” in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 189.
104. The notion is at the very least metaphorical, though arguably more robust as well.

CHAPTER 5. “THE CONTRARY OPERATION”: RESIGNIFYING THE UNPENETRATED BODY IN TERTULLIAN OF CARTHAGE

Epigraph: Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 171, 181–82.

1. *Cult. fem.* 1.1.2. On the translation of *homo* as “man,” see Chapter 4, n6.
2. *Bapt.* 17.4.
3. Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women’s Heads in Early Christianity,” in *Off with Her Head! The Denial of Women’s Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 151–52. On the issue of Tertullian’s supposed schismaticism, see below. For the characterization of Tertullian as a misogynist, see as representative Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1995), 55; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women’s Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 162; Averil Cameron, “Early Christianity and the Discourse of Female Desire,” in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night*, ed. Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler, and Maria Wyke (New York: Routledge, 1994), 153.
4. See as representative *An.* 9.4, *Exh. cast.* 10.5, *Res.* 11.2.

5. See Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 155–72.

6. D'Angelo, "Veils," 150. Cf. also Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Rhetoric and Tertullian's *De virginibus velandis*," *VC* 59 (2005): 20–22.

7. Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity*, Harvard Theological Studies (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Divinity School, 2003), 100. See also the discussion in Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority, and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66–69.

8. M. C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 58.

9. Thus my analysis will not attempt to locate individual treatises in terms of the convoluted debates that surround the dating of Tertullian's writings.

10. In addition to those discussed here, see also as representative F. Forrester Church, "Sex and Salvation in Tertullian," *HTR* 68 (1975): 83–101, Elizabeth Carnelley, "Tertullian and Feminism," *Theology* 92 (1989): 31–35, Marie Turcan, "Être femme selon Tertullien," *VitLat* 119 (1990): 15–21.

11. Barbara Finlay, "Was Tertullian a Misogynist? A Reconsideration," *JHistSoc* 3 (2003): 504.

12. Finlay, "Was Tertullian a Misogynist?" 521.

13. Tina Beattie, *God's Mother, Eve's Advocate: A Marian Narrative of Women's Salvation* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 96. On Beattie's reading, Tertullian's treatment of Christ's birth attacks Marcion's position by detailing at great length and in graphic detail the fleshly processes of gestation, labor, and delivery that so deeply appall his opponent. According to Beattie, "Tertullian suggests that it is Marcion who regards the womb as a source of disgust or revulsion, while he, Tertullian, thinks it should be honoured and held sacred. . . . He suggests that the incarnation redeems the materiality of childbirth with all its carnal associations so that Christ's birth rehabilitates the symbolism of birth and restores it to its rightful place as the natural origin of human life." Beattie, *God's Mother*, 97. On a similar note, Judith Perkins argues that "Tertullian shows no contempt for processes of the feminine body; nursing and the biology of lactation are not, as they were for Marcion, offered as disgusting features, as too obvious signs of humans' animal nature and therefore beneath a deity." Judith Perkins, "The Rhetoric of the Maternal Body in the *Passion of Perpetua*," in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 321. See *Carn. Chr.* 4.1–4, *Marc.* 3.11.7, 4.21.10–11. Note also Jennifer Glancy's nuanced and (to my mind) convincing counter-proposal: "Although at first Tertullian seems to reject the association of womb with sewer, an association he attributes to Marcion, he reiterates and ultimately relies on related comments about the shameful filthiness of gestation and childbirth to clinch his affirmation of human flesh. . . . Tertullian's celebration of flesh only succeeds emotionally if flesh celebrated is flesh reviled." Jennifer A. Glancy, "The Law of the Opened Body: Tertullian on the Nativity," *Hen* 30 (2008): 272.

14. Karen L. King, “Prophetic Power and Women’s Authority: The Case of the *Gospel of Mary* (Magdalene),” in *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 32.

15. Carly Daniel-Hughes, “Dressing for the Resurrection: Modest Dress as Embodied Theology in Tertullian of Carthage” (Th.D. dissertation, Harvard Divinity School, 2007).

16. Carly Daniel-Hughes, “Wear the Armor of Your Shame!: Debating Veiling and the Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage,” *SR* 39 (2010): 181, 183.

17. Daniel-Hughes, “Wear the Armor,” 184.

18. Daniel-Hughes, “Wear the Armor,” 189.

19. Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 60.

20. Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 52–53, emphasis original. Note that Burrus’s interest here is in the “specter of John” rather than the “specter of Paul” (as she has graciously pointed out to me). However, her point about the centrality of flesh for Tertullian remains relevant for analyzing his appropriation of Pauline typological categories.

21. Tertullian deals with the specifics of this problematic verse by making a distinction between the kingdom of God (which will be inherited by faithful believers) and the bodily resurrection (which Christians and non-Christians alike will experience—the latter to undergo judgment). He argues that the verse excludes flesh and blood not from the resurrection but from the kingdom—and thus it applies only with respect to the flesh’s sinful actions, not its substance. See *Res.* 50.

22. On the connotations of penetration and intactness in antiquity, see the discussion in Chapter 4.

23. *Mon.* 5.6.

24. *An.* 27.3.

25. The full philosophical and anthropological complexities of Tertullian’s theory of the soul go beyond what I can do justice to here. For a classic overview of the issues, see the introduction and commentary in Jan H. Waszink’s Latin edition of *De anima*. For an excellent analysis, see Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 95–127.

26. *An.* 5.5–6. Here Tertullian explicitly admits his affinities with the Stoics. See *An.* 5.2. Also the detailed discussions in Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 115–19; Jérôme Alexandre, *Une chair pour la gloire: L’anthropologie réaliste et mystique de Tertullien* (Paris: Beauchesne, 2001), 241–50. For a reading that argues for less emphasis on Tertullian’s indebtedness to Stoic materialism, see Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 55–103.

27. Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 115.

28. *An.* 9.4.

29. Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 116.

30. Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 116. See also *An.* 10–21.

31. Daniel-Hughes, “Dressing for the Resurrection,” 39.

32. *An.* 27.2–3.

33. *An.* 27.5–6. Here I render the first instance of *homo* as “man” insofar as the context seems to point to male sexual experience.

34. See the discussion in Daniel-Hughes, “Dressing for the Resurrection,” 44.

35. Note that the force of the argument centers on when and how Adam *comes to life*. Elsewhere Tertullian acknowledges that (unlike in the case of ordinary human conception), Adam’s flesh existed prior to his ensoulment. See *Res.* 5, 45, 53.

36. *An.* 27.7–8. On the use of agricultural metaphors in ancient discussions of procreation, see Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 34–36.

37. Daniel-Hughes, “Dressing for the Resurrection,” 49.

38. *An.* 27.9.

39. *An.* 36.2, 4.

40. *An.* 36.4.

41. *An.* 36.4.

42. Daniel-Hughes, “Dressing for the Resurrection,” 49–50; pace Finlay, “Was Tertullian a Misogynist?”, 521.

43. Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 35–36. Note, however, that body and soul experience different destinies after their separation at death (but prior to the bodily resurrection). As Bynum explains, the body may be divided into bits (and later reassembled)—whereas the soul, Tertullian insists, is both indivisible and immortal. See *An.* 51.

44. *Res.* 57.6.

45. See *Mon.* 10, *Ux.* 1.

46. See *Res.* 61.

47. Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body*, 36, citing *Res.* 55. See also David Satran, “Fingernails and Hair: Anatomy and Exegesis in Tertullian,” *JTS* 40 (1989): 120.

48. *Res.* 62.3–4.

49. See especially *An.* 36. One possible exception to this conclusion is Tertullian’s enigmatic reference to women receiving “the same sex as men” (*idem sexus qui et uiris*) in *Cult. fem.* 1.2.5. Some scholars have taken this as evidence that Tertullian envisions a resurrection devoid of sexual difference or entailing a return to an androcentric “androgyny” (such as we have examined in earlier chapters). For the former, see Finlay, “Was Tertullian a Misogynist?” 521; for the latter, Kari Elisabeth Børresen, “God’s Image, Man’s Image? Patristic Interpretation of Gen. 1.27 and 1 Cor. 11.7,” in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 190; Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 231. However, given the overwhelming preponderance of evidence throughout Tertullian’s corpus pointing in the opposite direction, Dyan Elliott’s assessment proves more convincing: “When Tertullian assures women that they are to receive ‘the selfsame sex’ as men, the school of androgyny he seems to be aligning himself with is not unlike the Gnostic predisposition to regard prelapsarian humanity as male. . . . But Tertullian ultimately recoiled from this vision of male-inflected androgyny, which threatened to collapse the angelic and

human race, instead favoring a resurrected body that was ineradicably sexed.” Dyan Elliott, “Tertullian, the Angelic Life, and the Bride of Christ,” in *Gender and Christianity in Medieval Europe: New Perspectives*, ed. Lisa M. Bitel and Felice Lifshitz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 22–23.

50. See n13.

51. *Res.* 6.3–5.

52. *Res.* 49.6–8. See also *Res.* 48–53.

53. For an overview of the debates regarding *De carne Christi* and the relevance of ancient rhetorical theory for its interpretation, see Willemien Otten, “Christ’s Birth of a Virgin Who Became a Wife: Flesh and Speech in Tertullian’s *De carne Christi*,” *VC* 51 (1997): 246–60. Also the response to Otten and proposed rhetorical reading in Dunn, “Rhetoric,” 1–30.

54. See *Carn. Chr.* 17.1.

55. *Carn. Chr.* 17.2.

56. *Carn. Chr.* 17.2.

57. *Carn. Chr.* 17.3.

58. *Carn. Chr.* 17.3–4.

59. Osborn, *Tertullian*, 62. This is not to imply that Tertullian does not have an operative notion of recapitulation. According to Osborn, “For Tertullian as for Irenaeus . . . Recapitulation comes as the climax of history, of the economy which runs from the Alpha to the Omega, and which declares the triumph of Christus Victor.” But Tertullian’s emphasis is on an ongoing historical process in which there is the need “to see new links, delight in what is new and discover hidden proprieties”—thus his openness to (and theological dependence on) what Nasrallah terms a “periodization of history.” See Osborn, *Tertullian*, 40, 206; Nasrallah, *Ecstasy of Folly*, 148–53.

60. *Carn. Chr.* 17.4. In this context, the sense of *aemula* points to contrast or rivalry rather than positive comparison or emulation. Thus I follow standard translations in rendering it in English as “contrary.” See *ANF* 3:536; cf. SC 216:281 (“une action contraire”).

61. *Carn. Chr.* 17.5.

62. Burrus, *Saving Shame*, 55.

63. See Otten, “Christ’s Birth of a Virgin,” 254; Geoffrey D. Dunn, “Mary’s Virginité *in partu* and Tertullian’s Anti-Docetism in *De carne Christi* Reconsidered,” *JTS* 58 (2007): 478.

64. *Carn. Chr.* 17.3.

65. Here Tertullian conveniently ignores the (possibly) penetrative inflection of God breathing *into* the man in Gen 2.7. Cf. also Irenaeus, *Epid.* 14.

66. Beattie, *God’s Mother*, 123.

67. *Carn. Chr.* 17.6, emphasis added.

68. Glancy, “Law of the Opened Body,” 269.

69. *Carn. Chr.* 17.5–6.

70. See *Val.* 29.

71. Pace Dunn, “Mary’s Virginité,” 478.

72. While Tertullian treats both widowhood and perpetual virginity as states of holiness, Elliott notes his tendency “to rank the virgin’s effortless attainment above the widow’s virtuous perseverance.” Elliott, “Tertullian,” 28. Furthermore, his approval of marriage applies strictly to first marriages only. For Tertullian’s polemics against second marriage, see *Exh. cast., Mon., Ux.* 7.

73. *Exh. cast.* 9.4. In this treatise, Tertullian recognizes three forms of sexual renunciation that he classifies as types of “virginity”: abstinence from birth, abstinence from baptism forward, and abstinence following a spouse’s death (see *Exh. cast.* 1). Here Tertullian’s primary concern is to defend single marriage over and against second marriages of any kind. But it is noteworthy that he looks to the symbolic power associated with the trope of virginity to build the case.

74. *Exh. cast.* 9.5. See also the valorization of virginity in *Mon.* 3.1.

75. Elliott, “Tertullian,” 26. See also the discussion in D’Angelo, “Veils,” 143–52.

76. *Virg.* 7.2.

77. Cf. also the arguments in *Or.* 21.

78. As D’Angelo notes, “In 1 Cor. 11:3–10 it is specifically female derivativeness, the secondary creation of woman inscribed by means of the texts of Genesis, her natural ‘lack’ of autonomy, that must be signaled by the veil.” D’Angelo, “Veils,” 139.

79. Elliott, “Tertullian,” 26.

80. *Virg.* 4.2–3 (cf. 1 Cor 7.34).

81. *Virg.* 4.7.

82. For the discussion of Eve and Mary, see *Virg.* 5–6. Note also Tertullian’s comment later in the treatise that “that rib of Adam’s was first a virgin” (*costa illa Adae uirgo primum fuit*), *Virg.* 7.3.

83. *Virg.* 16.4. On the dangers of the libidinal gaze (to both men and women/viewer and viewed) in the context of a range of gazing subjects (human, divine, demonic), see Daniel-Hughes, “Wear the Armor,” 193–95. For a broad consideration of the ancient theories of vision operative here, see Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

84. For Tertullian’s defense of the authenticity of the “Book of Enoch,” see *Cult. fem.* 3.

85. *Virg.* 7.6. Just in case an argument could still be made that the women of Gen 6 were not virgins, Elliott notes that Tertullian is “careful to have it both ways.” So he asserts, “But even if those angels lusted after females who were already defiled, how much more ‘on account of the angels’ ought virgins to be veiled, insofar as the angels would have been able to transgress even more so on account of their being virgins.” *Virg.* 7.8. See Elliott, “Tertullian,” 23.

86. *Virg.* 7.7.

87. Elliott, “Tertullian,” 26.

88. *Res.* 61.5–7.

89. *Res.* 60.9.

90. Elliott, “Tertullian,” 28.

91. See for example, *Virg.* 8.6; cf. also the use of both terms in 10.1.

92. *Res.* 61.6.

93. *Virg.* 8.5.

94. *Carn. Chr.* 20.7.

95. *Mon.* 5.5–6.

96. Here what seems to be in view is celibacy, not literal castration. Furthermore, Tertullian allows that, for those who find the call to celibacy too burdensome, monogamy may be sanctioned (but not second marriage). For these Christians, Christ may be understood as “a monogamist in spirit (*monogamus . . . in spiritu*), having one spouse, the church.” *Mon.* 5.7. Cf. also Eph 5.22–33.

97. Elliott, “Tertullian,” 25.

98. *Carn. Chr.* 23.3–5. Here my rendering of certain phrases in English relies on Glancy’s felicitous translation of this passage. See Glancy, “Law of the Opened Body,” 285–86.

99. Glancy, “Law of the Opened Body,” 285. As Glancy notes, the term *uulua* in imperial Latin slides between the sense of “uterus” and “vagina” or “vulva” but tends to be more common in epigraphic (rather than literary) sources. She carefully demonstrates how Tertullian’s rhetoric here capitalizes on this slippage: “Throughout *On the Flesh of Christ* Tertullian uses *uterus* and *uulua* interchangeably to refer to the uterus. In *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, J. N. Adams proposes that Tertullian’s reliance on *uulua* to refer to the uterus—a reliance unusual for a literary source—is an artifact of his use of the Old Latin translation of the Bible, which has a marked preference for *uulua*. The meaning of *uulua* slides from uterus in the scriptural quotation [Luke 2.23] to vagina in Tertullian’s exposition. A woman whose marriage is conventionally consummated has her vagina, not her uterus, opened by her male partner” (286). See also J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 105. Note, however, Ann Hanson’s point that the penetration of the uterus could also be an issue in ancient thinking. See Chapter 4, n100.

100. I take this helpful phrase from Elliott, “Tertullian,” 23.

101. See discussion in the Introduction, n78.

102. Beattie, *God’s Mother*, 176. Note also the related insecurity reflected in the argument of *Virg.* 10.1–3, summarized by D’Angelo as follows: “It is worse still, indeed ‘inhuman,’ for female virgins, who ought as women to be subject in every regard, to proffer any honorific sign of their virginity [unveiling] when *male* virgins are accorded no such sign (10.1–2). Indeed, the males ought to get more credit, since men are ‘greedier and hotter for women’ and therefore have to work harder at continence (10.3).” D’Angelo, “Veils,” 147, emphasis original.

103. See *Marc.* 4.19.11, *Mon.* 8.2.

104. Cf. the much-debated Matt 12.46–60, Mark 3.31–35, Luke 8.19–21.

105. See for example, Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* 2, Jerome, *Helv.*

106. *Carn. Chr.* 23.5.

107. Glancy, “Law of the Opened Body,” 286.

108. “it did not matter whether the violence was of the male let in or let out,” *Carn. Chr.* 23.3.

109. Burrus, *Saving Shame*, 56. See also *Carn. Chr.* 20.5. Note that in addition to Tertullian, here Burrus also plays off of Julia Kristeva’s language of “connection” between the maternal body and the child. See Julia Kristeva, “Stabat Mater,” trans. Léon S. Roudiez, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 177–80.

110. Fredric Jameson, “Marx’s Purloined Letter,” in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 2008), 39.

111. See the related point in Daniel-Hughes, “Wear the Armor,” 195–96.

CONCLUSION: SPECTERS OF PAUL

Epigraphs: Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986), 83; Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 138, emphasis original.

1. Joan Acocella, “Betrayal: Should We Hate Judas Iscariot?” *New Yorker*, 3 August 2009, 71.

2. Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 17.

3. Thanks to the “Divinations” Editorial Board for helping me with this formulation.

4. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 21.

5. Butler, *Giving an Account*, 24.

6. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 143.

7. Butler, *Giving an Account*, 40.

8. Catherine Keller, “The Apophasis of Gender: A Fourfold Unsayings of Feminist Theology,” *JAAR* 76 (2008): 925.

9. Keller, “Apophasis of Gender,” 925.

10. Keller, “Apophasis of Gender,” 925, emphasis added.

11. Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000), 90, emphasis original.

12. Žižek, *Fragile Absolute*, 90–91.

13. Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5.

14. See especially Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978), 44–49.

15. Jacques Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Nass (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 118, emphasis original to translation.

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