

# Eve Revisited, Reimagined and Redeemed

Britt Johanne Farstad

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.  
But to what purpose  
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves  
I do not know.

(T. S. Eliot *Four Quartets* Burnt Norton I)

The article is a preliminary study of a larger research project on Marianne Fredriksson's (1927–2007) Bible-inspired novels. Fredriksson was a bestselling author, translated into many languages and loved by her many readers across the world. She was a prominent author, not only in Sweden, but around the world. Her books have been translated into 47 languages and sold more than 17 million copies.<sup>1</sup> Despite her success, Fredriksson's writing remains virtually unexplored. Fredriksson's novels were in the midst of important currents of ideas that took place during the 1980s and 1990s. In this article Fredriksson's debut novel *The Book of Eve* (1980) is read in relation to a number of mindsets about Eve in religious, postbiblical reconstructions and philosophical contexts. According to the Abrahamic religious traditions, Eve was the first woman and mother in a prehistoric world. I follow Eve's story from *Genesis*, through Milton's recreation of her in *Paradise Lost*, to her role in the Church Fathers' and philosophers' argumentations about the inferiority of women. From there, I scrutinise Eve's resurrection from the mythical darkness as the main character in Fredriksson's *The Book of Eve*, as a strong, wise and brave woman, daughter, wife, mother, mother-in-law and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nordinagency.se/clients/fiction/marianne-fredriksson>

ancestral mother to new generations. This new Eve is a possible, capable character and I argue that when Fredriksson revisits the legendary first mother and reimagines her, it is done with the aim to redeem the historically heavily burdened mythical character.

Many of the themes that recur and are further explored in Fredriksson's writing can already be discerned in the debut novel, *The Book of Eve*. Fredriksson returns time and time again to biblical characters and tells their stories from new perspectives. Her next book is a reimagination and retelling of another central biblical myth, *The Book of Cain* (1981) and is based on the scarce mentions of Cain in *Genesis*. However, as other archaic characters in *The Bible*, Cain has a complex history in Jewish and Islamic traditions (Kirby 2024). Fredriksson's third novel is *The Saga of Norea* (1983). This daughter of Adam and Eve is not found in *The Bible* but is found in Gnosticism (Layton 1974; Robinson 1991). Matriarchal and patriarchal religions compete for power in a mythic past. Feminist authors belonging to the second wave of feminism had a need to create new narratives, reinvent and fill their characters with knowledge and reason, and ideas about prehistoric gynocratic or matriarchal societies emerged. Goddess worship and ideas about ancient matriarchal religions and societies supplanted by patriarchal belief systems, were important parts of discussions in feminist debates (Armstrong 1986; Irigaray 1993; Eller 2000; Gale 2003; Onsell 1985; 1992; 1994). The three novels were later published in the collection *The Children of Paradise* (1985).

*He Who Walks by Night* (1988) takes place a few decades before, during and after the birth and death of Jesus. One central theme is how a new religion emerges; how it is defined depends on memories, interpretations and choices from persons with power over the narrative. In 1990, Fredriksson returns to *Genesis* and the myth about Noah and the Flood and tells another story about the myth in *The Deluge*. Noah's wife and three daughters-in-law are resourceful and skilful women with great responsibilities in the construction and management of the Ark's construction and every accomplishment necessary for survival. In 1997, *According to Mary Magdalene* is published. Maria Magdalena's perspective gives new thoughts about the narratives in the *New Testament*. The central theme seems to be how a new religion emerges; how it is defined depends on memories, interpretations and choices from persons with power over the narrative, male apostles stand against female apostles. Mary Magdalene is at the center of the struggle for power over the new religion, where the male apostles use old traditions to silence the female apostles. The novel scrutinises coincidences that may have determined the formation of the new religion (Armstrong 1991; Skovmand 2021).

Fredriksson's Bible-inspired novels were published in the 1980s and 1990s, when important renegotiations were taking place in feminist philosophy, philosophy of religion, historiography and women's fiction writing. Female writers turned to historical figures, mythical characters and prehistoric times when exploring women's life opportunities. In that way,

Fredriksson's writings are part of a significant, ongoing rewriting project in the Western world, where myths, fairy tales, biblical and historical characters and events are being reformulated as acts of resistance against the dominant social order (Nilson 2005; Rønning 2012; Nauwerck 2018). Fredriksson work challenges the pervasive effects of religious and oppressive narratives.

### A revised creation myth

In *The Book of Eve*, the reader meets the protagonist, Eve, on her arduous trek back to Eden, the land of her childhood and youth. She has recently lost one of her sons in the first well-known fratricide in Judeo-Christian mythology: Cain has murdered his brother Abel and for Adam and Eve their world has deteriorated. In her state of grief, Eve wanders away from her husband and son to seek answers, explanations and, perhaps, comfort. She struggles to remember, and to remember accurately. Memories of people and events come back to her during the journey. Early in the wandering, one of the first memories that comes to mind is how she and Adam "timidly and tentatively had begun to talk about the words. About how the words came to them" (Fredriksson 1980: 22). Adam and Eve had once left the old land to create a new life. They wanted to live in close proximity to each other and in harmony with the nature they lived in and from. According to Fredriksson's narrative, Eve is full of self-accusations and accusations towards her husband Adam and his God. She has lots of questions about how this tragedy could happen. The couple have distinct and entirely different strategies for their grief and shock. Adam locks himself away, prays and asks questions to his God. Eve walks both physically and mentally back in history, wanders in their old footsteps and seeks places that can trigger her memories. Eve's journey is a hazardous wandering back to the mostly forgotten land of her childhood as she struggles to come to terms with her life. The land of her childhood is shrouded in mystery, and only incomprehensible bits and pieces of images are found in her memories. Eve realises that she needs to remember correctly. The journey down memory lane turns out to be difficult – what was it like 'really'? She imagines that knowledge about her early history can help her family to cope with the present and the future. During the trip, many memories return, and she understands better what she and Adam have been through as children and young people.

*The Book of Eve* is a revised creation myth, where the characters we think we know something about are given bodies, new outlines, complex minds and lifegoals, new explanations and plausible life stories. They are also placed under the intense gaze of Jungian psychology and, thus, appear in a new light to the reader. Jungian psychology is not the focus of this article, however. It is the emancipatory project for Eve that is of interest. In Fredriksson's reconstructed myth, Eve tries to grasp and control her world – and her life – through language, memories and dreams. Early in her journey she states: "After all, words make the world rich in content, she thought. Before the

words there was only greenery, now there are colours, species, differences, experiences, characteristics, order, possibilities” (Fredriksson 1980: 22). In Fredriksson’s narrative, Eve is a woman who believes in the power of language, stories and communication for solving disagreements and to understand the world.

The significant key in the Judeo-Christian creation myth is ‘The Word’ by which God creates the world. The word that creates and organises the world is also central in Fredriksson’s narrative, although here the power over the word and language has to a great extent been assigned to Eve. Eve puts a lot of effort into describing what she experiences, reaching her memories and understanding how her early experiences have formed her as an adult. She is very thorough when recounting her journey to the people in the nomadic tribe she meets on her way back home. When she later comes home, she is extremely careful about reconstructing every move and communication she has experienced on her journey back to Adam. She wants him to really understand and not be furious and misunderstand her. She knows that her new understanding of what has happened to them will upset him, especially it doesn’t fit with his understanding of earlier events and circumstances.

When Eve is finally able to tell the story to Cain it is easier because he really wants to listen to her experiences and learn from her. So, she weighs the words differently and considers who she is speaking to, as it is important to her that her narrative is correct. How something is said, how something is described, which names and words are used are particularly important to her. In the novel, it is Eve who masters the words, the name-giving, the argumentation and the storytelling. Adam cannot win a battle with words with Eve. They are both aware of this and his reaction is often violent or leaving home and fleeing to his altar and the prayers to his God.

### **Fantastic fiction as an emancipatory movement**

Fredriksson describes a prehistoric world loaded with a multitude of essential ideas and moulds them into a new tale about ‘the first woman’. It is possible to define the novel as fantastic fiction. According to Attebery, a key feature of fantasy is that it does not hide its fictitiousness. Furthermore, fantastic fiction does not put itself forward as literally true or authoritative, and here lies the subversive edge of fantasy. Attebery writes that there is “room within the fantasy genre itself for a range of responses to religious myth” (Attebery 2014: 40). He also claims that the fantastic, “that is, creative and disruptive play with representations of the real world—can be found in many genres of oral and written storytelling” (Attebery 2014: 52). Myths themselves belong in the realm of the fantastic. When myths are reimagined, rewritten and remade, they can offer new perspectives and thought possibilities on old, well-known narratives. This remaking often confronts and challenges so-called ‘truths’.

*The Book of Eve* can be said to be a ‘counter-narrative’, or ‘counter-myth’. Fredriksson addresses and challenges historic assumptions about the character she has chosen. Instead of arguing, she confronts previous concepts and tells us a new story, and chose to retell one of the oldest myths in our culture. The novel is understood as ‘fantastic fiction’. Fredriksson is briefly mentioned in *The History of Nordic Women’s Literature* (Volume 5, 2000: 94). Fahlgren writes that Fredriksson’s novels “depict human beings who possess a special sensibility”:

It is mostly Fredriksson’s female characters who keep in touch with their inner selves. Often they have a privileged relationship with nature. In *Evas bok* (*The Book of Eve*), the first woman, Eve, is renowned for her knowledge of the healing properties of plants. The strong women radiate motherliness, a natural solicitude for others that is a prerequisite for their inner strength (Fahlgren 2012).<sup>2</sup>

Fredriksson is not alone in the urge to retell myths during the 1980s and 1990s (Rønning 2012)<sup>3</sup>. She uses narrative technique belonging to fantastic fiction as she speculates, changes perspectives and asks new questions to well-known mythical occurrences and characters. By giving the mythical figures thoughts, circumstances and life goals, and making them ‘fully’ believable as characters, readers gain new perspectives on well-known and sometimes old, worn-out images. According to Rønning something happened in Nordic literature in the 1980s, and several recreations of prehistoric and mythical characters were published. More or less forgotten mythical heroines were adapted to the contemporary world. Rønning writes that the new women writers in the Nordic region:

began to write about hidden, forgotten, overlooked, or entirely unknown women from past centuries, and the books were welcomed by huge audiences (and by reviewers) with such overwhelming interest that it began to look like just the genre for which they had all been searching for so many years (Rønning 2012).

During the 1970s and 1980s, ‘women’s literature’ was very successful in the literary market and, for a period, “this literature was at the centre of attention of both the critics and the readers” (Rønning 2012). During this decade, women’s literature updated the heroines’ issues, circumstances, phases and dreams: “1970s literature of experience expands the emotional register, sexuality is given more room, and the liberation theme is emphasized” (Rønning 2012). In the 1980s, the historical novel underwent a similar process and female heroines were adapted to the contemporary world. Rønning writes that in historical novels during the 1970s and 1980s,

the story about female resistance and struggle takes on a new form, and the novels make the liberation discussion legitimate and relevant far beyond the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nordicwomensliterature.net/2012/02/13/the-good-story/>

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reach of the new women's movement. These new historical narratives are full of rebellion and sexuality, and the main characters are strong women who make a break from convention time and time again (Rønning 2012).

Several female authors have written fiction about women's lives during the misty prehistoric era. Eve and her antagonist sister, Lilith, re-entered the literary world in Sweden in 1980 when Anita Gustafsson published *Lilith, Adam's First Wife*. Lilith is interesting and has had an exceptional evolution throughout literary history. Adam's first wife has metamorphosed from a demon spirit into a significant icon of women's liberation (Dame et al. ed. 1998; Lantz & Farstad 2023). In 1980, another novel about a young girl swept across the literary world. Ayla, who miraculously survived a natural catastrophe, grew up to womanhood in a presumed prehistoric, patriarchal world. *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, the first book in what became a series of novels by Jean M. Auel. The series is known as the *Earth's Children* series and consist of six novels. Unlike Eve and Lilith, Ayla is not a well-known mythological figure, but a creation of Jean M. Auel's mind. She is placed in a prehistoric world surrounded by mindsets and myths. Critics were harsh against Jean M. Auel as an author, but scientific research has shown that the life conditions she gave Ayla are relatively plausible. The female protagonists in the above-mentioned novels are highly rational beings, physically strong, intellectually capable and have extensive knowledge about nature, how to use and live by it. These characters are – at least – equal to men in all respects.

The need to tell new stories about the kind of life that women could have experienced is understandably strong – and the readers need for this kind of fantastic fiction seems to be equally strong. Ideas about a prehistoric matriarchal world was also important during this period. Female authors belonging to the second wave of feminists had a great need to create new narratives about how life might have been for women in prehistoric times, to reinvent women and fill their characters with knowledge and reason. During the 1970s and 1980s speculations about prehistoric gynocratic or matriarchal societies engaged feminists (Onsell 1999; Nilson 2005; Eller 2000). Reusing myths in fiction can be a way of remembering the past and reminding the reader of the same, which makes it imperative that the myths are reformulated in relation to different worldviews and politics to avoid reproducing outdated ideas.

### The word creates the world

Compared to her mythical sister Lilith, who became an icon for female emancipation, Eve has been perceived as a more obedient and 'dull' mythical character. Although Eve was allowed a place in religious history, she was also highjacked by patriarchy, philosophy and the church fathers. Fredriksson's recreation and elevation of Eve to 'royal descendant' and mother of a king to be, is a well needed act of emancipation for this character. Early in the

narrative, Eve believes that she and Adam invents the language. Later songs become vital part of their lives. The songs sung by the nomadic tribespeople that Eve encounters tell stories about important events. The songs are passed on, reformulated and developed further according to the different occurrences that appear and vary depending on the occasion. Music and song are unknown phenomena to Eve until she meets the people in the nomadic tribe who eventually becomes her dear friends and relatives through Cain's marriage. Through the stories and songs of the tribe, Eve learns about her own origins and her association with the royal family. The people in the tribe immediately recognise her distinct appearance. They call it 'the royal profile' and understand that she is the daughter of the princess who once left the temple where she was meant to serve. Prior to the wedding between Cain and a daughter from the tribe, songs are rewritten and complemented with additional information – mainly by the men in the tribe together with Adam's contribution to parts of his own and Eve's story. Eve recognises that Adam fabricates the story according to his own ideas about what really happened to them since leaving Eden. Adam portrays Eve as a temptress, a woman who lured him away from his calling. Despite the singer's editing of Adam's story, traces of Adam's perspective on their history will be passed on to new generations. Eve is troubled with his narrative but wonders mostly about his need to diminish her and why he needs do that.

In Fredriksson's novel the power of the language and the narrative is important themes. Helga Kress writes about how women were deprived of power over the word and the stories, or rather robbed of it, during the Old Norse Middle Ages. In the article "What a woman speaks: Culture and gender in Iceland in the Old Norse Middle Ages", Kress writes that there are "many indications that women were largely responsible for the oral tradition in Norse literature" (Kress 1995: 22ff) and that this largely concerns "the eddic narrative poems which by and large thematise women's experience and have a female perspective. The poetry was linked to the art of divination known as *seid* and to the *healing arts*, both of which were predominantly female spheres; that is to say, poetry, *seid* and healing arts were components of one and the same system, forming a ritual unit" (Kress 1995: 22ff). Kress describes how the skaldic mead was stolen from Gunlad, who was set to guard it. According to Kress's analysis, it is a myth about how and when men took control of the language, the words and the stories in the old Norse Middle Ages. When the ancient oral tradition was transformed into written language, women lost their voice and power in society.

The shift from oral to written language in human cultural history is a well-known and researched phenomenon. *Genesis* was written long before the Norse myths were committed to paper. *Genesis* is assumed to have become written text around the 6th and 5th centuries BCE (Armstrong 1996: 8-9). In the same way as old Norse literature, the stories are based on oral materials that are much older than the time of their incorporation into a written work.

The book that finally became *Genesis* is supposed to contain ancient oral and written traditions. In *Genesis 1*, God speaks eight times and everything comes into being and in its rightful place: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was unformed and void, darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (*Genesis 1: 1-3*). The Judeo-Christian God does not need a female counterpart. All he needs is his word by which he commands everything to come into being. Without exaggerating, it is safe to say that characters and episodes described in *Genesis* have inspired mindsets and cultural expressions throughout Judeo-Christian cultural history. Fredriksson was obviously aware of the long-lasting and often negative effects of mythical narratives and she shapes her characters in opposition to persisting mindsets. Mythical material can be used to maintain the status quo and to overturn ingrained thought patterns (Farstad 2013: 251-255). The modernisation of myths is a significant narrative technique, which in the fantastic fiction genre has the function of indicating development or potential change. Due to the mental place of myths and mythological characters in different imaginary worlds, archaic material can reformulate the meaning of what they represent to achieve constructive effects. At the same time, retold myths can function as conserving elements (Farstad 2013: 287). In Fredriksson’s reimagination of Eve, several movements for change are set in motion.

## Eve – according to *Genesis* and postbiblical reconstructions

- Do you really believe all that you said about the snake's tongue and the apple that got you in my power? she said, drilling her gaze into his.

- You eavesdropped, you bitch.

But she got the answer, for he was scarlet with shame when he ran out of the cave (Fredriksson 1980: 157).

The Eva we meet in Fredriksson's novel is very different from the Eva we find in the stories told in post-biblical narratives. We start with the myth-building about Eve and the first two creation-myths in *Genesis* chapters one and two. These two stories have different perspectives – and most probably – different purposes. Orally transmitted for centuries, they were transformed into written text over centuries. According to tradition, Moses wrote the five first books in *The Bible*. *Genesis* was written about 950 BCE (Long 2023). In the *Complete Jewish Bible* (CJB) we can read: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (CJB). The earth was dark, unformed and empty and the myth tells a story about how everything came into existence. Late in the creation process we come to a passage of relevance for this topic:

Genesis 1:26 And God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and



over the cattle, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

In the first chapter, the world and everything in it is given to the two human beings simultaneously. They are both created by God, in God’s image, and are equal in a hierarchical sense.

The first two chapters in Genesis tell two different versions of the creation myth. According to bible historians, *Genesis* chapter 2 is assumed to be older than *Genesis* chapter 1 (Meyers 2021). In the second chapter, the man is created first, then the animals and finally “the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him a helper meet for him’” (CJB).

Genesis 2:21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

Genesis 2:22 And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman and brought her unto the man.

Genesis 2:23 And Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (CJB).

One common interpretation of the discrepancy between the two chapters is that the first chapter tells the story of Adam and Lilith, while the other chapter tells Adam and Eve’s story (Dame et al. 1998; Lantz & Farstad 2023). In this context, it can be noted that the reconstructed myth changes the conditions of the woman’s existence in the world. In this version, the woman does not exist in her own right, but comes into existence to fill the man’s need for a helper. She is made of the man, and she comes into existence after the man has given all creatures their names. Consequently, as she is made of another material than the man, the world is already defined by the man, the social order is set before her arrival and she is ranked lower than the man.

Therefore, the next step in Eve’s degradation follows quite easily when the infamous serpent enters the scene and tempts Eve with the legendary apple. This occurrence, known as “The Fall”, is described in the third chapter of *Genesis*. According to the mythical calendar, the split between God and mankind happens in the early days of human existence. With the serpent’s promise to “be as gods, knowing good and evil”, the woman makes the mistake that will haunt her and her daughters for millennia:

Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and ate, and gave also unto her husband with her: and he ate (CJB).

When God confronts them with disobedience, Adam takes the easy way out and blames Eve. He also reminds the creator that the defiant woman was given to him by God himself. Eve ate the apple from the tree of knowledge and that act has since been used as an argument by the Church Fathers and

philosophers to prove that women are inferior to men (Tuana 1992: Tuana 1993: Lloyd 1995: Gale 2003).

The next significant postbiblical, literary reconstruction of Eve is found in John Milton's interpretation of the biblical creation myth in *Paradise Lost* (1667, book VIII). Eve is of no great interest to Milton, although he does describe the creative act in detail by focusing on how Adam falls asleep and how a perfect female human being – of great beauty and virtue – emerges before the man, in accordance with his dreams and wishes. In Milton's narrative, Eve is created by Adam and not at all by God (Milton, book VIII). In Milton's poem, Adam dreams about Eve and when he wakes up she is there, next to him in Eden (Milton: 194-195). Thus, according to Milton's narrative, Eve is a being of Adam's making, which makes her inferior in relation to the First Man, who is God's own creation. In short, Eve is the result of the man's desire and creative act. This is one of the postbiblical narratives about Eve which Fredriksson challenges in her novel.

Jonsson (1987) states that *Paradise Lost* represents one of the "historically most weighty among the Bible-inspired literary genres. In learned terminology, it is usually referred to as a *hexaameron*" (Jonsson 1987: 19). The Greek word indicates the connection with the six days of creation in *Genesis*. Jonsson finds that the biblical starting point is well-defined by the poem's name and form. Few subjects can be more demanding than the origin of all things, Jonsson contemplates, and "since the Bible's account of God's six-day work and the conditions he then set for mankind are the ultimate premise of the world-historical drama, it called for constant interpretations" (Jonsson 1987: 19). Literary "hexaameron occurs in a fairly continuous stream during the late antiquity and Middle Ages, and the genre re-emerged into a new, this time vernacular life during the Renaissance and thereafter" (Jonsson 1987: 21).

According to this, Milton's narrative about Eve does not even exist in God's imagination. The scene is now set for all kinds of arguments for women's inferiority on all levels of life: physical, morally and intellectually. The overarching notion in philosopher Friedrich Hegel's theoretical construction is the greater awareness of the world spirit. The greater insight of this world spirit is the supreme goal of knowledge accumulation. For Hegel, there is an internal main enemy that can complicate the realisation of the utopian state he imagines. He writes: "Womankind - the everlasting irony (in the life) of the community - changes by intrigue the universal purpose of government into a private end" (Hegel 1987: 458). Hegel further writes that "since the community only gets an existence through its interference with the happiness of the Family, and by dissolving (individual) self-consciousness into the universal, it creates for itself in what it suppresses and what is at the same time essential to it an internal enemy - womankind in general" (Hegel 1987: 458). Hegel's thinking is also part of a long tradition of arguing for the order of nature, which consists of the subordinate status of women and the

superior status of men. In accordance with a long tradition of thought, women have been undervalued and been seen to lack reason.

It is often said that *The Bible* is the bestselling book of all time. It has been cherished and celebrated as the word of God, yet ignored as mythical stories from distant times that have no meaning in our time. World religions and religious fractions of different conviction are based on interpretations of *The Bible*. Non-believers have judged *The Bible* as oppressive, especially of women. It is also considered to be spiritually liberating for believers. The poet William Blake stated that “The Old and the New Testaments are the Great Code of Art” and was himself inspired by the myths in his own writing (Frye 1993). Literary scholar Northrop Frye agreed with Blake and considered *The Bible* as the key, the great code, for understanding western culture. Frye used *The Bible* as a structural template and as an interpretation of literature in *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Frye 1993). Roland Barthes talked about “myths as stolen language”. He asked what the characteristic of myth was and suggested that it was to “transform a meaning into form” and wrote that “myth is always a language-robbery” (Barthes 1972a: 131). When it comes to the Judeo-Christian creation myth, many ‘thefts’ have occurred over the course of history. Several efforts to trace and change the persistent narrative have been made, mainly by female philosophers. Here I would like to highlight a few religious scholars and philosophers who have clearly pointed to problems with the persistent argument about the inferiority of women based on the creation myth.

## The Image of God

Fredriksson depicts a scenario where Adam and Eve are both suffering from the male idea about God. Eve has never had the need to communicate with Adams God.

- God will decide, he said, and she smiled a little as usual as he handed over the decision to the god.

A little later, she overheard the conversation with the heavenly lord from the garden where the man built himself an altar under the largest apple tree

(Fredriksson 1980: 29).

Fredriksson’s Eve finds her comfort and joy in nature and all that is living and growing. Eventually, it becomes evident even to Adam that his ideas of God are memories of the shaman who once was his teacher.

Eve finds no comfort or resemblance to herself in the God that Adam worships. Several feminist and religious scholars have pointed to problems with the Judeo-Christian mythology’s lack of divine female characters. The Judeo-Christian God is male, and he needs no female counterpart. Women thus have no role model or existence in this religion. An early attempt to challenge gender problems from religious convictions was made by Elizabeth Cady Stanton when she published *The woman's Bible* in 1898. Another early

publication was made by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *His Religion and Hers: A Study of the Faith of Our Fathers and the Work of Our Mothers*. The book was published in 1923 and was – despite several difficulties with her view of race – a central text that initiated significant thoughts and debates about religion and gender. Authors and philosophers alike have been inspired by Perkins Gilman’s approach to the foundations of our societies – which she found in the myths about creation and the arguments for female subordination. Fredriksson makes a clear distinction between the man and the woman regarding God and religion. Adam has his belief, his religion, the God who gives him directions, restrictions and a purpose in life. Eve is neither interested, nor convinced, that her husband’s God is worth taking into consideration. As God focuses on the man, Eve does not consider herself called by this God. To Eve, all nature has a divine force and she develops her skills to use plants and herbs to make food, clothes and medicine for her family and others.

Religious scholar Kari Vogt wrote that on “the basis of a common scale of values, the categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ are polarized, and the ‘becoming male’ metaphor indicates in all contexts a development from a lower to a higher stage of moral and spiritual perfection” (Vogt 1995: 171). The commonly used religious and literary metaphor ‘becoming male’ means that women can ascend towards perfection by becoming men: “When a woman becomes a ‘man’ in the path of God, she is a man and one cannot anymore call her a woman” (Vogt 1995: 182). Karen Armstrong has dedicated her entire career to research on religion and specialises in the effects of the holy books from ancient history to today’s societies. In *The Gospel According to Woman: Christianity's Creation of the Sex War in the West* (1986), *Holy War: The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World* (1988) and *The End of Silence: Women and the Priesthood* (1993), she scrutinises religion in relation to gender. In *A History of God* (1994) and *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (2000) she goes through the whole history as we know it. Karen Armstrong argues against the “widespread assumption that the Bible is supposed to provide us with role models and give us precise moral teaching, but this was not the intention of the biblical authors” (Armstrong 2009: 42). She also claims that the Eden story is not a morality tale. Like “any paradise myth, it is an imaginary account of the infancy of the human race. In Eden, Adam and Eve are still in the womb; they have to grow up, and the snake is there to guide them through the perplexing rite of passage to maturity” (Armstrong 2009: 42).

Professor of religion, Carol Meyers, reminds us that the image of Eve, “who never appears in the Hebrew Bible after the opening chapters of Genesis, may be more strongly colored by postbiblical culture than by the biblical narrative itself” (Meyers 2021). However, the effects of the many polarised interpretations cannot be neglected. Religious scholar Mary Daly writes that the roles and structures of patriarchy have been maintained and

developed in accordance with the artificial polarisation of human characteristics. The image of man as sovereign and in power depends on his opposite for his existence. The effect of reusing archetypal models could be that patriarchal patterns are not only reinstalled but reinforced. In her article, "After the Death of God the Father", Daly writes that religious symbols "fade and die away when the cultural situation that gave rise to them and kept them alive no longer gives them the stamp of reasonableness. [...] Rather, symbols emerge from a changing collective situation and experience" (Daly 1996: 224). She also takes the myths very seriously and believes that the function of symbols is never something innocent in a process. She writes that I have "already implied that if God is man, man is God. The Divine Patriarch castrates women as long as he is allowed to live in people's imagination" (Daly 1996: 226). Daly goes on to say that the process of "cutting out the Supreme Phallus can hardly be a purely 'rational' affair" and argues that the biggest problem is "transforming the collective imagination so that this distortion of man's quest for transcendence loses its credibility" (Daly 1996: 224).

Philosopher Genevieve Lloyd traces the tedious and devastating view of women through the history of philosophy in *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (1984/1995). Philosopher Nancy Tuana continues to explore the topic in *Woman and the History of Philosophy* (1992). Using chapter headings like "a fallen soul" (Tuana 1992: 12-14) or "a mutilated man" (Tuana 1992: 157-158), follows this tiresome patriarchal argumentation. Tuana digs even deeper into gender related to religion and philosophy in *The Less Noble Sex: Scientific, Religious, and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman's Nature* (1993). In *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian tradition* (Børresen ed. 1995), several religious scholars analyse ancient religious texts and interpretations that have had a great impact on our societies. Eve and the apple are constantly used as evidence for women's inferior capacities. Nancy Tuana writes that a woman "must decide where to place herself. When the philosopher speaks of the nature of man, informs us of the rationality of man, provides us with the rules a man must follow in order to act morally, does the woman include herself within the referent in the term 'man'?" (Tuana 1992: 12.) The obvious meaning of the words has, of course, been problematised for several decades, but the doubt remains, and we have not yet reached a state where the female reader can identify with certainty in 'man' as a concept for mankind that includes women. Fredriksson evidently decided where she wanted to be with *The Book of Eve*. I read the novel as an emancipatory project of the first mythological woman. What follows could be an emancipatory project for women in general.

In *Sexes and Genealogies* (1993), the philosopher Luce Irigaray writes that when there is no female divine trinity, a woman will have no "mirror wherewith to become woman" (Irigaray 1993: 63). Irigaray argues that "as

long as woman lacks a Divine made in her image, she cannot establish her subjectivity or achieve a goal of her own. She lacks an ideal that would be her goal or path in becoming” (Irigaray 1993: 63). Irigaray may thus have pinpointed the main problem with the many interpretations of the ancient narrative about how human beings came into the world. Men’s identity as godlike is repeatedly confirmed throughout postbiblical, western history. The stories were written by men and interpreted by men until quite recently. This is of importance to us, because one of the fundamental bricks in Judeo-Christian societies has been *The Bible* and the many interpretations of it.

Religion-anthropologist Gomola states that the “myth of creation of woman from man was also a crucial component of Western anthropology, until modern times being the cornerstone of relations between the two sexes and a justification of the inequality between them for Christians, sanctioned by God” (Gomola 2014: 77). Gomola points to translation as a fundamental part of myth transfer, both in the prehistoric past and in the present: “As myths by their nature carry with them ideas and notions that date back to ancient and distant cultures, translation of myths is always an act of interpretation, and usually one specific interpretation becomes so dominant that it excludes in time other possible renderings of the text” (Gomola 2014: 77). Hence, Christianity based its understanding of the relations between the sexes, among other things, on translations and interpretations of the Hebrew text – from certain perspectives in the translators’ social and personal mindsets. Gomola suggests that different translations of the biblical myth of the creation of woman could have changed women’s social status in Christianity altogether. However, what might have been we will never know. That’s where fiction comes in – to play the imperative role as a mind-opening tool.

Stories and storytelling have increasingly become the focus of philosophers, historians and evolutionary theorists. One example is Jonathan Gottschall, an American literary scholar specialising in literature and evolution (2005; 2012). And according to evolutionary historian Yoav Noah Harari, stories are vital components of human development (Harari 2015). Harari argues that stories have played crucial roles in the success story of homo sapiens as the dominant species on the planet. In *The Good Book of Human Nature: An Evolutionary Rereading of the Bible* (2016), evolutionary anthropologist Carel van Schaik and historian Kai Michel advance a new view on *The Bible* in their re-reading as descriptions of homo sapiens’ cultural evolution. They argue that the texts were written to make sense of the single greatest change in history, the transition from egalitarian hunter-gatherer to agricultural societies. Van Schaik and Michel read the texts in *The Bible* as documentation of strategies to cope with unprecedented levels of epidemic disease, violence, inequality, and injustice that confronted human beings. They argue that *The Bible* is “humanity’s diary, chronicling our ancestors’ valiant attempts to cope with the trials and tribulations of life on Earth” (Van Schaik & Michel 2016: 18). ”That’s why the Bible is such an inexhaustible

and incomparable anthropological resource. By surveying the problems described in its pages, we can assemble a catalogue of the afflictions that plague humanity” (Van Schaik and Michel 2016: 28).

In *Four Quartets* Burnt Norton I, T. S. Eliot elaborates on how memories evolve over time. One question is whether we are composed of our memories and, if they are constructive/reconstructive, how do they define us? “Down the passage which we did not take/Towards the door we never opened” (T. S. Eliot 1969: 171). Myths are our collective memories and they evidently define us far more than we like to believe. Eliot imagines that every time we access a memory we alter it in some way. In her authorship, Fredriksson works with memories and alterations of ‘memories’. Eve’s work of remembering is a crucial point in the novel. Using and reusing primordial material also means working with memory and memories. The transforming or conforming of myths is a struggle in individual and collective arenas. There can be a variety of intentions when authors choose to use ancient and mythical characters and happenings as narrative tools.

### Risks and benefits in the reuse of prehistoric material

I think it is safe to assume that authors have distinct intentions when they reuse or reinvent mythical characters and events in fiction. Myths and mythmaking, stories and storytelling can be said to define what people believe to be their life’s possibilities, or what is desirable or undesirable to achieve. Philosopher Karl Popper argues that humanity’s greatest inventions are the myths, ideas and scientific theories about the world we live in. In *Objective Knowledge: A Realistic View of Logic, Physics, and History*, Popper structures human knowledge in three levels, of which the first is the material world with its physical objects, energy, weight, movement and rest (1972). The second level consists of subjective consciousnesses, intentions, feelings, thoughts and dreams. The third level consists of memories and ideas that, according to Popper, are objective and consist of patterns and structures of ideas that influence the material world. According to his argumentation, abstract thought patterns affect the concrete world. Popper claims that ideas are humanity’s most important assets and strongest means of influencing reality. The consequence of Popper’s perspective of thought is that fiction appears as a highly pragmatic phenomenon:

... we have created a new kind of product or artefact which promises in time to work changes in our corners of the world as great as those worked by our predecessors, the oxygen-producing plant, or the island-building corals. These new products, which are decidedly of our own making, are our myths, our ideas, and especially our scientific theories: theories about the world we live in (Popper 1972: 287).

Thus, according to Popper, fiction belongs to the realm of ideas and abstract notions that we have about reality.

The pervasive structure of myths is important to reflect on. I think it is safe to say that when authors turn to myths as their narrative material and starting point, it is not a coincidental choice but has a specific purpose. Literary scholar Roland Barthes emphasises that myths should be regarded as a significant communication system (Barthes 1972: 205). According to Barthes, myths are not only concepts or ideas, but a way of giving something meaning or form. They “have a commanding, exhorting nature: are part of a historical concept, suddenly emerging directly from the state of the matter” (Barthes 1972: 205). The mythical address is authoritarian and, as Barthes writes, it is “me it seeks: it is turned against me, I endure its deliberate force, it forces me to receive its frank ambiguity” (Barthes 1972: 205). Barthes thus points to an unbending pattern that can be found in mythical material, its hint of inevitability and naturalness, and writes that “this exhorting utterance is at the same time a solidified utterance: the moment it reaches me, it is interrupted, turns against itself *and finds* a universality: it is permeated, excused and innocent” (Barthes 1972: 205). Long (2023) writes that the cosmogonic myth has a pervasive structure and expression in the form of philosophical and theological thought. According to Long, this is only one dimension of its function as a model for cultural life: “Though the cosmogonic myth does not necessarily lead to ritual expression, ritual is often the dramatic presentation of the myth” (Long 2023)<sup>4</sup>. Such dramatisation, Long suggests, is “performed to emphasize the permanence and efficacy of the central themes of the myth, which integrates and undergirds the structure of meaning and value in the culture” (Long 2023).

In *The Battle of Reality: Philosophy, Trend Analysis, Interpretation*, science historian Bengt Kristensson Uggla points to the problematic nature of re-establishing myths as a way of interpreting the world and history (Kristensson Uggla 2002: 145-150). He writes that social and political conflicts increasingly take the form of “a struggle over the past” and that it seems “highly problematic to let the battle for the past be decided in a mythical market where everyone talks at each other’s mouths, even if the myths are never so life-affirming” (Kristensson Uggla 2002: 150). Kristensson Uggla emphasises the viewer’s position and interpretive aspects and states that the present is not “something you can only analyse from a distanced viewer position and the future is not something you can predict in the extension of development trends in the present. There is no one who has privileged access to either the present or the future. We always perceive reality from a certain perspective” (Kristensson Uggla 2002: 12).

When formulating fictive and theoretical texts, authors and literary scholars usually choose some kind of position. Roland Barthes writes that “no one can write without passionately taking sides (however disengaged his message may sound) for or against *all that is or is not as it should be in the world*: the misfortune of men or their happiness, and what these *awaken in us*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/creation-myth>



[...] all these constitute the primordial material of signs” (Barthes 1967: 13). This also goes for authors and how they choose to reuse the mythical ‘primordial material’ in modern texts.

Philosopher Paul Ricœur asks two central questions in the introduction to *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2005). The first is *what* is it that is remembered? and the second, *who* is it that remembers? (Ricœur 2005: 39). Ricœur places history in an intermediate position in relation to memory and forgetfulness to point out that what ultimately becomes history arises from complicated and interacting processes of individual and collective memory work. In Ricœur’s hermeneutic model, forgetfulness also has a prominent role as a simultaneously active and passive action in the work of memory at conscious and unconscious levels and individual and collective levels. Oblivion also exists in cracks between beliefs, experiences and mental processes. For Ricœur, however, imagination is a key to memory and forgetfulness – imagination determines what ultimately becomes the story depicted in an individual or personal sense, as well as in a historical and collective sense. One purpose for the reuse of mythical persons or events could be to create possibilities for new knowledge to emerge. It is necessary for us to face the unknown and see it as something new or foreign in order to arrive at new insights. According to Ricœur, two distinct movements are initiated where the text both widens and closes the hermeneutic circle. The choice the characters are given is to alienate the familiar and thereby open a new understanding through the gaze that is forced to ‘see for the first time’, whereby new insight can arise. The second possibility is to make the foreign familiar. The latter option closes the possibilities for new knowledge, as the unknown is smoothed out and made familiar. Thus, the potential of the curious gaze is lost, in that the subject allows “the sign belonging to the absent present sensation to coincide with the present sensation”, as Ricœur puts it, which according to his reasoning is to “make a complete mistake” (Ricœur 2005: 45). Ricœur’s reasoning about ‘the next of kin’ as a bridge between past and present time is a method used by Fredriksson (Ricœur 2005: 169ff). In order to remember correctly and be able to forgive, close relatives and relations to other human beings are imperative. Relatives are a central part in Fredriksson’s reinvention of Eve and her struggle to remember.

## Reinventing symbolic, ancestral, female characters

Religion is the strongest modifying influence in our conscious behaviour. It expresses our highest instincts, and serves, or should serve, our best advancement. Yet the religions of mankind, so far, are responsible for much evil as well as good, and the best we know have only brought us to our present state (Charlotte Perkins Gilman 1923).

The tradition of man’s interpretive primacy and supremacy is heavy and sits deep in language, metaphors, myths, our religious narratives and

philosophical foundations. According to philosopher Alice Jardine, a vital part of the crises of modernity is, “the concern over the father’s loss of authority and [...] winding forecasts associated with Paranoia and the End of Man and History” (Jardine 1985: 25). Jardine emphasises the importance of the existence of gender identities and gender differences on a symbolic level, as determined by language and politics (Jardine 1985: 37). Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu writes in *The Male Dominance* from an ethical point of view about the symbolic power factors that make changes in gender roles so difficult to access. He argues that “in a world where the order of sexuality is not constituted as such, but gender differences remain immersed in the contradictions that organize the cosmos as a whole, sexual attributes and actions are overwhelmed by anthropological and cosmological determinations” (Bourdieu 1999: 19). The result, says Bourdieu, is that gender differences “seem to be ‘in the scheme of things’ [...] to the point that it is inevitable: it exists in an objectified state” (Bourdieu 1999: 20). The reinvention of myths can therefore be helpful in a process to comprehend, on an essential cognitive level, how deep the constructions of mindsets that surround us are based on mythical presuppositions.

In *The History of Woman and the History of Philosophy from Plato*, philosopher Nancy Tuana describes the tradition that established that human nature consisted of two kinds and that “the superior race would hereafter be called man” (Tuana 1993: 111). This approach has permeated the mental climate so that, in accordance with Gnostic and early Christian thought traditions, ‘becoming Male’ is a metaphor for human perfection. Aristotle established the philosophical interpretation in his time, and from then on the argument was transferred to superiority/subordination between man and woman: “Therefore [...] the male is separated from the female. For the first principle of the movement, or efficient cause, whereby that which comes into being is male, is better and more divine than the material whereby it is female” (Tuana 1993: 129). As the philosopher Genevieve Lloyd writes in *The Man of Reason: 'Male' & 'Female' in Western Philosophy*:

From the beginnings of philosophical thought, femaleness was symbolically associated with what Reason supposedly left behind - the dark powers of the earth goddesses, immersion in unknown forces associated with mysterious female powers. The early Greeks saw women’s capacity to conceive as connecting them with the fertility of Nature (Lloyd 1995: 12).

This mindset leads to the idea that a woman’s “role is mainly to be a kind of incubator for the foetus, created either by the father or by a male Deity” as Margaret Clunies Ross states in *Pagan Echoes: Myth and Society in Ancient Nordic Literature* (Clunies Ross 1998: 51).

The philosopher Luce Irigaray writes that one result of this mentality, tradition and reality is that women lack divine identity on both the symbolic and metaphorical levels, and that as they lack “a divine made in her image she

cannot establish her subjectivity or achieve a goal of her own. She lacks an ideal that would be her goal or path in becoming” (Irigaray 1993). However, this symbolic construction of female and male mythical identity can be reformulated and consciously changed by allowing new stories to be created that also relate to this historical background. Ruth Bienstock Anolik (2001) writes about the appropriations and revisions of mythical stories and reconstructions of the motif of to “appropriate the authority of creation (and sexuality, the basis of biological creation) for women” (Anolik 2001: 41). Anolik claims that when authors rewrite the texts to include female figures of authority and power, the possibilities of female creation and power are revealed and surpass the original and traditional stories (Anolik 2001: 41). This is what Fredriksson does in *The Book of Eve*. She appropriates and revisions the myth and creates a new mythical ancestral character of great authority.

Fredriksson is not alone in her intention to deliberate and redeem Eve. In 2019, Qurrota Ayunin, a researcher in gender studies at the State University of Indonesia, writes that the purpose of her study “EVE, the Existing Object”, is to “offer another view and that the figure of Eve is a figure whose existence must be appreciated” (Ayunin 2019: 43). The study is conducted within a framework called *Postmodern Feminist Study toward the Story of Adam and Eve in Bible*. In the study, Ayunin emphasises that biased “interpretations are not supposed to be just silenced but those must be resisted by generating new interpretations and new views” (Ayunin 2019: 41). The creation myth in *Genesis* continues to engage researchers from several religious traditions. Ayunin writes that: “Holy books should be read with a variety of more egalitarian and unbiased perspectives so that gender justice can be realized without the pretext of religion as a barrier” (Ayunin 2019: 41). Ayunin’s position is that the narrative of human creation is interpreted in a biased way, “not only in one or two religions, but there are many interpretations from various religions which still present a lame interpretation. Therefore, efforts to reread all religious texts are central” (Ayunin 2019: 47). The most significant achievement is to bring out a “woman as a subject rather than what the biased interpreter has been deliberately drowned in a patriarchal interpretation” (Ayunin 2019: 47). The liberation of mythical, ancestral mothers continues to be necessary in emancipatory processes.

Fredriksson creates a history for Adam and Eve that coincides with the perspective of Eden as a prehistoric world of hunters and gatherers and that the people living there lived in a state of ‘innocence’, unaware of a future, ‘sin’, ‘evil’ or ‘good’. Fredriksson assumes that they have no appraisal of the cultural and social conventions appreciated by other human beings living at the same time. In Fredriksson’s novel there are still people who have not yet eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The people in Eden have no memories of the past or no plans for the future. Instead, they live in a long, constant ‘Now’.

In the novel, the father's faith and the mother's work mainly reflect how religion may have been perceived in a prehistoric reality based on one of the fundamental myths in our culture. Fredriksson follows in Perkin Gilman's footsteps by making serious points about fatherhood and motherhood. Fredriksson also describes the critical occurrence that takes place in Eden after The Fall: the first mythological fratricide. Cain and Abel's offerings are described in a similar way as in *Genesis* chapter 4. However, the denial of Cain's offering, which is attributed to God in *Genesis*, is placed on Adam, the father, in Fredriksson's novel. It is Adam who explains to Cain that God has rejected his sacrifice. Eve is furious when she realises what her husband has said. Adam knew, she rages, that it was impossible for the smoke from Cain's offering of fresh grain to rise in the air. Hence, the father knew why the offerings behaved differently, but chose to blame his son for the failure.

### Eve re-created

The novel is thus a reconstruction of the creation myth itself. Through her memories, Eve struggles to remember and remember correctly. She wrestles with Adam and his God. In the novel, Adam and Eve are two human beings born into an existing, prehistoric world with a multitude of societies, gods and traditions. Throughout the narrative, the reader learns that the societies vary from a primitive clan living on the steppe called Eden to well organised cities. The people in Eden are well known but not well liked by other human beings. They lack an advanced language and are driven by primitive, basic emotions, in that they eat, copulate, fight about females and sleep. They live day-by-day with no thoughts of yesterday or tomorrow and their lives are short. Eve wanders back to Eden in her struggle to remember and understand. She remembers a certain light that is connected to the steppe where she lived with the clan. Once she is back in Eden, Eve is repulsed by the sight of her old people. She recognises an old woman who she understands is her sister and starts to remember her mother. This is the most significant key to opening her mind and being able to remember. Eve realises that the behaviour of the people in Eden is not evil. They have no perception of good or evil – they just exist. On some level she misses the innocence of her life in Eden. Eden represents the innocent, childhood years that she has mostly forgotten.

We learn that Eve rebelled against the treatment of her when her baby daughter died in Eden. She was not allowed to grieve, became furious and verbally raged against the leader of the clan. Eve's mother and the shaman decided that she must leave the clan, and Adam, full of love for the beautiful girl, chose to follow her and leave his teacher, the shaman. They began a new life on their own and started a family in the mountains a few days journey away from Eden. When Eve started to remember her childhood and life before they left Eden, memories of her mother came back to her. She understood, as she watched the people in Eden, that her mother was different and not like the women in the clan. Memories from her childhood revealed that it was her

mother who taught her the language, the names of plants and herbs and how to use them to heal infections and wounds. In her memories, the pieces of the puzzle gradually fall into place during Eve's journey. Thus, Adam and Eve are far from alone in the prehistoric world of Fredriksson's making. There are nomadic clans and, eventually, the journey that Fredriksson invites us to join her in leads to a great city called Nod, which struggles with wars with neighbouring kingdoms. The people there are hunters, gatherers and farmers, in the city there are temples with priests and priestesses, royalties, soldiers and skilled craftsmen of all kinds (Fredriksson 1981; 1983). Eve is well known in the area for her great knowledge of how to cure people with healing herbs and plants. People seek out Eve and Adam in their mountain home so that Eve can heal their sick. Adam is also known to the people as an apprentice to the shaman who could conjure up rainy weather in times of drought. The nomadic tribe they become acquainted with eventually becomes closely linked to the family on the mountain through the marriage of Cain and the daughter of the tribe's leader.

Eve's journey can be read as a psychological journey. Her rebellion and leaving could be understood as a product of puberty and teenage years. However, I find this to be too simple an argument, even if we have learned from Campbell to understand myths and sagas as collective memories and symbolic psychological tools. In this context, it is perhaps more relevant to regard Eve's characteristics as a critique of the guilt-ridden and blamed first woman. According to Fredriksson's reimagination and re-creation of 'the first woman', Eve is a royal person, who on her journey learns from the nomadic tribespeople that her mother was a princess who had left the temple and city to be a teacher to the people in Eden. She had run away with the priest who became the shaman and Adam's teacher. So, Eve is descended from royalty and her kin will inherit the throne.

In the endeavour to recall her memories, Eve recognises that it is the shaman who condemns them as they leave. Fredriksson repeats the words in *Genesis* 3:17-19, but puts them into the shaman's mouth. Eve has a totally different view of the notion of God than Adam, and it is an unexpected revelation to her that it is the shaman's teachings that dictate Adam's apprehension of the world and how to live in it. Adam is a deeply guilt-ridden man and has, among other things, learnt from the shaman that sexuality is despicable. Eve is furious when she understands the damage that the shaman has caused in their lives. Eve holds the shaman responsible for the tragedy inflicted on Adam and, consequently, on their family, of considering sexuality as something ugly, something to be avoided.

## Eve Redeemed

Fredriksson's Eve is a character with great social capital, which her husband and children benefit from in the reconstruction of the myth. She is indeed an extremely capable person with deep knowledge about how to live and manage

in the world. Above all, she is a rational, practical, independent and responsible person. Thus, Fredriksson redeems Eve from the myths surrounding her. But she does more than this. Fredriksson lifts Eve up in social ranking and makes her the daughter of an old bloodline of royals, the granddaughter of a queen and herself the grandmother of royals to come. However, Eve does not become a matriarch since her daughter is childless, so that it is Cain, her son, who continues the bloodline. Cain is the one who inherits and passes on an indispensable maternal legacy from Eve (Fredriksson 1981). Cain takes up Eve's interest in and knowledge about seeds, plants and medical herbs and develops it further. The first decision he makes as a newly chosen king is to establish gardens and plantations with medical and healing herbs and to teach people how to make medicines. He insists on medical treatments, instead of the meaningless magic rites conducted by the priests. Cain also reintroduces the goddess cult that has been tossed aside by the male priesthood. Norea, Eve's daughter and Cain's sister, eventually becomes the cult's leading priestess (Fredriksson 1983).

Fredriksson did not engage in polemics with theologians or gender theorists, nor did she engage in philosophical debates. Instead she told a new story, an epic saga. Fredriksson met the accusations that Eve has been exposed to over the centuries and provided her protagonist with all the qualities she has been deprived of. Fredriksson tested her ideas in fiction, told the story of an alternative Eve and placed her in a convincing and challenging context where she could evolve and prosper. Fredriksson reimagined Eve as an intelligent and strong woman with great skills – a woman who can heal people and relations and give advice to leaders. The simple home that Adam and Eve once built in the mountain developed and flourished thanks to Eve's multiple capacities. Eventually, their home became a central spot in the country and expanded as they get more deeply involved in the complex administration of the kingdom.

There can be no doubt about Eve's rationality, her moral competency, her power over language or her capacity to lead and govern. *The Book of Eve* is a convincing accomplishment in redeeming Eve from the numerous centuries of submission, guilt and blame.

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