

“A lively, provocative, sensitive engagement with both familiar and lesser-known biblical women. It touches all that women encounter, translating the dialogue into contemporary idiom and filling in the narrative space so often found in biblical stories.”

—KENT RICHARDS, PhD, professor of Old Testament,  
Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado

“Virginia Stem Owens’ illuminating portrayal of biblical women bridges time and culture, shattering any prevailing, one-dimensional view of these characters. She paints these women neither as heroines nor villains but as vulnerable, chosen instruments of God.”

—CYNTHIA HICKS, author of *The Feminine Journey*

“*Daughters of Eve* is an essential guide for women seeking to know their true nature. What better place to look for that than in the myriad stories of the Bible?”

—CARA DAVIS, author; editorial director, Relevant Media Group

# NAVPRESS DELIBERATE

From the very beginning, God created humans to love Him and each other. He intended for His people to be a blessing to everyone on earth so that everyone would know Him (see Genesis 12:2). Jesus also taught this over and over and promised to give His people all they needed to make it happen—His resources, His power, and His presence (see Matthew 28:20; John 14:12-14). NavPress Deliberate takes Him at His word and stirs its readers to do the same—to be the children of God for whom creation is groaning to be revealed. We have only to glance through the Bible to discover what it looks like to be the blessing God has intended: caring for the poor, orphan, widow, prisoner, and foreigner (see Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:31-46; Isaiah 58); and redeeming the world—everyone and everything in it (see Colossians 1:19-20; Romans 8:19-23).

NavPress Deliberate encourages readers to embrace this holistic and vibrant Christian faith: It is both contemplative and active; it unites mystery-embracing faith with theological rootedness; it breaks down the sacred/secular divide, recognizing God's sovereignty and redemptive work in every facet of life; it dialogues with other faiths and worldviews and embraces God's truth found there; it creates culture and uses artistic ability to unflinchingly tell the truth about this life and God's redemption of it; it fosters a faith bold enough to incarnate the gospel in a shrinking and diverse world. NavPress Deliberate is for everyone on a pilgrimage to become like Jesus and to continue His work of living and discipling among all people.

Become what you believe.  
The NavPress Deliberate Team

DAUGHTERS OF

# EVE

SEEING OURSELVES IN WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

VIRGINIA STEM OWENS

NAVPRESS® 

Sample from *Daughters of Eve* / ISBN 1600062008

Copyright © 2007 NavPress Publishing. All rights reserved. To order copies of this resource, come back to [www.navpress.com](http://www.navpress.com).



## OUR GUARANTEE TO YOU

We believe so strongly in the message of our books that we are making this quality guarantee to you. If for any reason you are disappointed with the content of this book, return the title page to us with your name and address and we will refund to you the list price of the book. To help us serve you better, please briefly describe why you were disappointed. Mail your refund request to: NavPress, P.O. Box 35002, Colorado Springs, CO 80935.

The Navigators is an international Christian organization. Our mission is to advance the gospel of Jesus and His kingdom into the nations through spiritual generations of laborers living and discipling among the lost. We see a vital movement of the gospel, fueled by prevailing prayer, flowing freely through relational networks and out into the nations where workers for the kingdom are next door to everywhere.

NavPress is the publishing ministry of The Navigators. The mission of NavPress is to reach, disciple, and equip people to know Christ and make Him known by publishing life-related materials that are biblically rooted and culturally relevant. Our vision is to stimulate spiritual transformation through every product we publish.

© 1995, 2007 by Virginia Stem Owens

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission from NavPress, P.O. Box 35001, Colorado Springs, CO 80935.  
[www.navpress.com](http://www.navpress.com)

NAVPRESS, BRINGING TRUTH TO LIFE, and the NAVPRESS logo are registered trademarks of NavPress. Absence of ® in connection with marks of NavPress or other parties does not indicate an absence of registration of those marks.

ISBN-13: 978-1-60006-200-1

ISBN-10: 1-60006-200-8

Cover design by The DesignWorks Group, Jason Gabbert, [www.thedesignworksgroup.com](http://www.thedesignworksgroup.com)

Cover photo by Veer

Creative Team: Caleb Seeling, Amy Spencer, Kathy Mosier, Arvid Wallen, Pat Reinheimer

Some of the anecdotal illustrations in this book are true to life and are included with the permission of the persons involved. All other illustrations are composites of real situations, and any resemblance to people living or dead is coincidental.

Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the *King James Version* (KJV). Other versions used include: the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® (NIV®). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved; the *Revised Standard Version Bible* (RSV), copyright 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, used by permission, all rights reserved; and *THE MESSAGE* (MSG). Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2005. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Owens, Virginia Stem.

Daughters of Eve : seeing ourselves in women of the bible / Virginia Stem Owens.

p. cm.

ISBN-10: 1-60006-200-8

ISBN-13: 978-1-60006-200-1

1. Women in the Bible—Biography.

2. Bible—Biography. 3. Bible stories, English. I. Title.

BS575.094 1994

220.9'22'082—dc20

94-38148

CIP

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 / 11 10 09 08 07

FOR A FREE CATALOG OF NAVPRESS BOOKS & BIBLE STUDIES,  
CALL 1-800-366-7788 (USA) OR 1-800-839-4769 (CANADA).

Sample from *Daughters of Eve* / ISBN 1600062008

Copyright © 2007 NavPress Publishing. All rights reserved. To order copies of this resource, come back to [www.navpress.com](http://www.navpress.com).

# CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b>	9
<b>Author's Note</b>	12
<b>Introduction: Women's Ways: Women of the Bible Speak to Women Today</b>	13
<b>Mothers</b>	17
Eve: The First Mother	19
Sarah	24
Mary	32
<b>Women and Marriage</b>	45
Ruth	47
Michal and Abigail	56
Samaritan Woman	70
<b>Women on the Outside</b>	77
Hagar	79
Syro-Phoenician Woman	86
Woman with the Issue of Blood	91
<b>Single Women</b>	97
Martha	99
Jephthah's Daughter	108
Miriam	112
<b>Women and Violence</b>	117
Tamar	119
Rizpah	124
Woman Taken in Adultery	128
<b>Sensual Women</b>	133
Potiphar's Wife	135

Shulammite Maiden	140
Mary of Bethany	147
<b>Manipulative Women</b>	151
Rebekah	153
Delilah	162
Salome, Wife of Zebedee	168
<b>Political Women</b>	175
Esther	176
Jezebel	184
Herodias	193
<b>Business Women</b>	199
Rahab	201
Sapphira	208
Prisca	213
<b>Women and the Supernatural</b>	219
The Necromancer of Endor	221
Huldah	226
Mary Magdalene	230
<b>Discussion Guide</b>	236
<b>Notes</b>	247
<b>About the Author</b>	253

# PREFACE

When I wrote this book more than seventeen years ago, I was largely ignorant of the lives of women who lived in Africa and in those regions we call the Middle East and Far East. Many of my comments in the introduction illustrated this sad lack of understanding. I wrongly considered polygamy a thing of the past, like arranged marriages. Little did I know that such customs persist in most of Africa and large parts of the Middle East. On the Indian subcontinent, current law allows multiple marriages to Muslims but not to Hindus, Jains, or Sikhs. My remarks were aimed at the women I perceived as my audience—mostly middle-class women of the Western world.

But on September 11, 2001, my world, everyone's world, changed. Since then we have all become more aware of one another. In an effort to learn more about such cultures, I read a number of books by both outsiders and insiders. Many were memoirs by women of the Middle East, Africa, and China. In them I discovered how great are the differences between their lives and ours.

From the firsthand account of the Sudanese girl Mende Nazer, I learned what it was like to be kidnapped by raiders and sold into slavery in Khartoum.

With Norwegian journalist Asne Seierstad, I lived with an Afghani bookseller's family for several months in the spring of 2002. She chronicled the truncated lives of the two wives and several female children under the total domination of their husband and father.

In another book, later made into the movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, Doris Pilkington tells the story of her mother, one of three half-caste Maori girls who were forced from their clan and taken to a dreary

government school a thousand miles away to be trained for domestic service. After several months the girls managed to escape and miraculously made their way back across the thousand miles to their families.

I learned something else too. These women had much more in common with the women of the Bible than I and my daughters and friends do. No doubt the Sudanese girl would understand in a way I never would the plight of Hagar, the Egyptian slave woman who bore Abraham's first child, Ishmael. The first and aging wife of that Afghani bookseller knew well the humiliation of seeing a younger woman supplant her, just as Sarah had when Hagar bore Ishmael. The Maori girls, like Miriam, had to live among strangers in exile. Also like Miriam, they experienced the triumph of escape, followed by the travail of the long trek through the wilderness.

In short, I now see the black, draped figures of veiled women on the news ululating over their dead sons as living embodiments of Jeremiah's description of "Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."<sup>1</sup> I look at the figures of children hunched in the Darfur desert, their eyes empty of hope, and I know they look as might any young Israelite girl legally placed into slavery under ancient Hebraic law. I watch the exuberant celebration of a wedding party in Bombay, the shy bride, sitting bedecked with gold coins, and know that the bride in Cana could be her twin.

Those days are not gone. Those voices are not dead. Nor are the inner lives of women, Eastern or Western, completely alien to one another. We all want love and respect. We all want to protect our children. We all suffer disappointment and regret. And we all struggle to keep hope alive in our hearts.

But the trappings of our own culture make it hard to discern our similarities. Our clothes and accouterments are different. We enjoy a flexibility and freedom they have never known. But we also live in a demeaning, sexually saturated environment they would find uncomfortable. The cultural distance between us and these women

who still live in what we picture as biblical times seems unbridgeable. But if we value our connection to Sarah, Mary, and Prisca, we need to appreciate these daughters of Eve. The ancient voices still speak.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

So plainly is this not a work of scholarship that I hardly need to disavow such an intention. I have accepted the stories whole, as they stand in the received text, rather than investigating their origin, which as with all stories, is ultimately irrecoverable and past our finding out.

I have often paraphrased the characters' dialogue in a more contemporary idiom. Nevertheless, I have remained true to the actual text. Biblical narrative is always sparing in its details. Large gaps of time may be passed over with a single word or phrase, sometimes with no time indicator at all. Characters' motives are rarely spelled out. Instead, the narrative leaves space for the reader to speculate. I have tried to indicate when my descriptions of a character's thoughts or actions come from my own reflection on the text by introducing them with terms such as *possibly*, *maybe*, and so on.

# INTRODUCTION

Women's Ways:  
Women of the Bible Speak to Women of Today

It was my mother who first introduced me to biblical women. For the most part, this was a thinly disguised attempt on her part to socialize my often unsociable nature. She used Hannah, the mother of Samuel, to impress upon me, a child who didn't even like to play dolls, how important children are to women and how important I was to her. Unfortunately, the story had the opposite of its intended effect. I was horrified that a mother would abandon her child at the tender age of three to an aging clergyman, a kind of priestly Rumpelstiltskin.

Next she tried the story of Miriam, emphasizing her obedience and resourcefulness as a babysitter for the infant Moses hidden in the bulrushes. The message was pretty clear. If Miriam could save her little brother from Pharaoh's cruel soldiers, the least I could do was keep mine from running out in the street.

That was fifty-five years ago.

In the past few decades we've come to realize our distance from those women. The details of their world—drawing water at the town well, herding sheep, arranged marriages based primarily on economics, worth gauged by childbearing—all make their lives seem not only ancient but also alien to us. Can those women have anything significant to tell us today?

Of course, certain basic attributes of human nature remain the same over time. People are still envious like Cain, fearful like Isaac, arrogant like Saul, hopeful like Anna. And their words from the ancient world still speak to our condition—at least when we consider ourselves generically as human beings.

But is there any special word to women found in the lives of scriptural women? Is there any gender-specific wisdom to be gleaned from these stories?

After all, women are no longer considered property. Instead, they vote, hold office, own property, marry and divorce as they choose, decide when or if to have children, obtain whatever education their society provides, determine their own careers. Widows don't have to rely, as Tamar did, on the levirate marriage law—the obligation of a man to marry his brother's widow. A woman “taken in adultery” is unlikely to lose her life and may not even suffer much harm to her reputation. An infertile couple, unlike Hannah and Elkanah, have any number of medical options open to them—sperm banks, in vitro fertilization, even surrogate uterus agreements. And such a mother would never give her child away. If she did, she'd find herself entangled in legal snares—as would any father who, like Jephthah, proposed to slaughter his daughter to fulfill an ill-considered vow. Those things just don't happen in the modern world.

Or do they?

How much has life really changed for women? Are there, in fact, gendered propensities that persist over time, threads that run through time and across cultures, revealing essential patterns? Are we, even after centuries of change, still “sisters under the skin” with the Middle Eastern, North African, and Mediterranean women who people the biblical pages? Do their fears and sorrows, hopes and joys connect with ours? If we paid attention to them—not as cultural oddities or bit players in the biblical drama—would they have anything significant to say to us?

One way to tell is to look. Over 150 women are named in the Bible. How many of these do we know? Most of us have trouble naming a dozen. Though the writers and compilers of Scripture have taken a lot of heat recently as patriarchal chauvinists, they included more women in the story than we have paid attention to. Puritans used to give their daughters names like Hephzibah and Jemima

because they knew who those biblical women were.

We don't. And if we don't know their names, much less their stories, how can we hope to glean any insight those stories might offer? Most biblical commentaries, I find, seem blind to the part women play in scriptural stories. Thus they systematically, if unconsciously, exclude these characters from exegetical consideration.

I decided to sift the pages of Scripture for these women. What follows are their stories. Some you may know; others will be less familiar. Don't expect them all to be admirable characters. Just like their male counterparts, the women of the Bible can be malicious, stupid, vengeful, and conniving. But the *ways* in which they are courageous or cowardly, devoted or deceitful are, I believe, peculiarly women's ways, colored by the exigencies of gender. I have arranged these stories in groups according to issues women find urgent today—issues like rape and multiple marriages. And strange though it seems, and as much as cultures have changed in the intervening millennia, I have found plenty of stories to fill the categories.

Back to my mother, where I began. She was born in 1920, the same year the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution granted women the right to vote. She knew the women of the Bible thoroughly and was inspired by them. Today, few of my friends and acquaintances, despite their greater opportunities, know much about Hannah or Miriam. Many of these friends and acquaintances are what we now call “professional women”—a term I used to find irritating, because they have studied and trained for a vocation, regardless of their gender. Teachers, lawyers, doctors. Professional athletes, maybe, or professional musicians. But professional *women*?

Then I think of my mother. She, like most of us, has found being a woman a difficult undertaking. While there are no bar exams, no certifications, no degrees, she has studied for this vocation all her life. What she has studied has been Scripture. And the parts she's found most illuminating, most tenable, are not the overtly instructive portions about covering your head or keeping quiet, but the stories. And not only

Hannah's and Miriam's. She can scheme like Rebekah, be as adamant as the Syro-Phoenician woman, and should the need arise, I have no doubt she, like Jael, could drive a stake through the head of a man.

My mother would never call herself a courageous person, and certainly not a daring one. But there have been many occasions on which she was called upon to act with nobility. She knows how to do this too. Where did she learn it? Whom did she use as a model? I believe it was the vassal queen for whom she is named: Esther.

# mothers

I START MY EXAMINATION of the Bible's women where we all, male or female, begin—with mothers. Though the ancient world—just as our own—produced bad mothers as well as good ones, changing social patterns have probably affected motherhood less than any other human bond, including marriage. The mother-child relationship has endured millennia of pushing and pulling with very little alteration to its essential character.

Whether women can take any particular credit for this could be debated. Do mothers, in whatever culture, continue to nurture and sacrifice for their children because women possess superior, more magnanimous natures, or is their mothering merely biologically based instinct? Whatever the answer to that question, whether the cause is genetic programming, cultural conditioning, or conscious choice, the fact is that women routinely attend to and care for their offspring more than men, a state of affairs that has persisted.

Its persistence, however, does not always guarantee that maternal nurturing actually benefits the child. Samson's mother, known only to us as the wife of Manoah, went to great lengths to raise her boy by all the rules prescribed by the angel who announced her impending pregnancy. Yet all her watchful care did not keep her son from falling into the hands of the designing Delilah.

Maternity, then, though frequently portrayed as steadfast and

selfless in the Bible, is not presented as an absolute or ultimate value. And just as well for women, simply because not all women are mothers. The Bible does not value women solely, or even primarily, for their ability to reproduce. Otherwise we could make nothing of women like Deborah and Esther from the Old Testament or a whole raft of childless New Testament women, including Anna the prophetess, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha of Bethany, Dorcas, Lydia, Joanna, Susanna, and Prisca.

Nevertheless, we begin with mothers because they do embody that bond among our species that has endured virtually unchanged over centuries and with whom we can thus most easily connect.

# EVE: THE FIRST MOTHER

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18–4:26

With the possible exception of Mary, Eve is the most misunderstood woman of the Bible. She has been wrenched from the actual words of the text, then shoved and pounded into various shapes to fit whatever void a culture feels in its collective psyche. So many alterations has she undergone, so many cultural reconstructions has she suffered, so many private purposes has she served, that it is next to impossible to get past this most symbolic of all females to examine the “real” woman.

Most people’s image of Eve owes more to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* than to Genesis. From the apostle Paul to C. S. Lewis, writers have used her to make theological points about human nature. This was inevitable, of course. The same thing happened to Adam. Being the first of one’s kind, a prototype, inevitably bestows unusual significance. We expect that essential information about ourselves is wrapped up in this original pair; they contain the secret to ourselves. And, according to which theologian one reads, Eve’s story is proof of women’s inferior reason, their innate feminine guile, or their superior daring and courage.

Let’s start with the story itself then, in the hope of coming closer to the original and thus seeing more clearly.

In the first chapter of Genesis, God produces the human race generically and in his own image—“male and female created he them”<sup>1</sup>—a fact repeated verbatim in the fifth chapter. There, both male and female are called “Adam.”<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, neither of the pair

becomes an actor in this drama until the second chapter, when they are provided with a setting: “a garden eastward in Eden.”<sup>3</sup> Eve doesn’t receive a separate name until late in the third chapter—after the pair’s expulsion from the garden.

But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. First, we are presented with the solitary figure we know as Adam but whose name, to get the full effect in English, should be called something like Earthly, since the name in Hebrew means “of the ground.” While plentifully supplied with food, pleasant scenery, and stimulating projects (tending the garden and naming the animals), Earthly is nevertheless lonely. He can’t find a suitable companion among the entire menagerie God presents him with. He can name them, but they can’t return the favor.

Specifically to remedy this, God performs a primal act of genetic engineering, producing from Earthly’s own flesh and bone a companion. Recognizing this new creature to be of the same genus as himself, yet curiously different, he gives her a name that reflects this, calling her Woman. (The effect of the added syllable in English is similar to the Hebrew: Man = *Isb*; Woman = *Ishah*.)

Since there’s only the two of them, they feel no need to bother with clothes, which hadn’t been invented yet anyway. They are both rare, indeed unique; they have no one else to compare themselves or one another to and thus no shame.

Enter the serpent.

He speaks to Woman.

The rest, as we say, is history.

Much has been made of those six short verses containing the interchange between Woman and the serpent and its result. Some theologians have claimed that the serpent approached the woman because her weaker mental and spiritual powers made her more susceptible to temptation. Others maintain that, on the contrary, her more active intelligence led her to experiment with the tree of knowledge. One thing is certain: Everything we know as human civilization, from manufacturing (“they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons”<sup>4</sup>)

to psychology (“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked”<sup>5</sup>) came from her experiment. From wisdom to war, it’s all there, wrapped up in that one inquisitive mouthful.

During the fateful encounter, Earthly himself remains oddly passive, never opening his mouth except to take the bite the woman offers him. We’re not even sure where he is during the critical conversation between the woman and the serpent. Later, when Earthly is called on to answer for his own disobedience, he points an accusing finger at his companion. Ironic, especially since ever afterward men would consider themselves bolder and more fearless than women.

But then, lots of things changed after that; the world didn’t make sense the way it had before. It didn’t operate with its previous harmony of purposes. Woman’s independence suddenly comes to an end when she chooses to imitate Earthly’s response to the divine interrogation. He blames her for the disaster; she loses her originality by following his example and blaming the serpent. The serpent itself crawls off—now just a mute snake in the grass. The end of cross-species conversations.

Even the weather changed. The mists that had gently watered the garden were replaced by storm and drought. Weeds supplanted parsley. The world turned carnivorous. In fact, God himself, realizing fig-leaf aprons wouldn’t hold up to the wear and tear of farming, replaced their vegetarian clothing with animal-skin coats. Creation kept on operating, but the basis of its economy was no longer so benign. The unhappy couple are evicted from their home. Earthly had to go to work.

But with all the loss, Woman also got something—a name. At that point in their depleted circumstances, it was about all that Earthly could afford to give her. He called her Eve. Or, strictly speaking in English, Living.

And earthly living, as every generation since has known it, began.

First thing off the bat, of course, Living gets pregnant. Second thing off the bat she gets pregnant again. The Lord God hadn’t been kidding when he said he would greatly multiply her conception. And her sorrow. The curse he laid on her (“thy desire shall be to thy husband,

and he shall rule over thee”<sup>6</sup>) resulted in just that—conception and sorrow. Men, having on average 30 percent more body weight, have dominated women physically ever since. But women have also been driven by their own irrational desire, with the erotic impulse inevitably yielding to the maternal function.

“The mother of all living”<sup>7</sup> she’s called in Genesis. And every ancient civilization we know anything about, from the Sumerians on, preserved some version of this blank-faced Mother-of-All-Living. Some of the oldest artifacts known to the human race are images of her. Small limestone or ivory figures with bulbous breasts and hips dating from as far back as the Ice Age have been found all over the world, their faces always smooth and featureless. A stylized female figure carved from mammoth ivory, found near Pekarna, Czech Republic, has a hole where the face should be.

Her identity absorbed by her maternal function, Eve remains essentially invisible to her progeny, the whole human race. Coming directly from God’s fashioning hand, she had been unique, possessed of personhood. But a prototype, by its very nature, has no individuality. Once she became the Mother-of-All-Living, that individuality was submerged in the enormity of her mythic proportions. Such immense figures, looming larger than Mount Rushmore in our vision, look featureless. And mothers ever after have shared Living’s fate. In their children’s eyes, they have no name. They are always “Mama,” “Mom,” “Mother.”

Now this is a state of affairs that women, for the most part, accept with joy. Your toddler stretches yearning little arms toward you, and you melt. Your Cub Scout snuggles against your side, and your very bones begin to glow.

God had no doubt felt the same way about Earthly and Living in the garden—full of tenderness, eager to answer every need. And, like him, every mother of a teenager knows what it feels like suddenly, overnight, to be perceived as “the enemy” by these darlings on whom we have lavished such care. It is then that we learn how much of a catastrophe the Fall was, not just for the human race, but for God; how he must

have suffered from “empty-nest syndrome” when he sent those original children forth to make their own way in the world. And how brave he was to let them go. In motherhood we come as close as any human can to both the joy and agony of God himself.

Conceiving and grieving—that was Eve’s lot in post-garden life. Note the lack of softness or sentimentality in this picture of the first maternity. Pain and sorrow are its identifying marks, not pink and blue layettes. The first child born into this world, Living’s firstborn, murders his younger brother. The Mother-of-All-Living is also the Mother-of-Killing.

We must mention here a rather spooky correlation in the ancient world to this part of the story. The Mother-of-All-Living goddess, known in Canaan as Astarte, was universally worshiped around the Middle East. Her temples contained “asherah,” stone or wood poles that, like the faceless figurines mentioned earlier, represented her fertile presence in the land. The Bible mentions these worship sites in a number of places, most frequently to warn against them. For one thing, women of all classes hired themselves out as prostitutes there to ensure their fertility. These temples were often bloody places. On their altars were sacrificed not only animals, but at times of particular social stress, human children. The Mother-of-All-Living becoming the Mother-of-Killing—an ultimate perversion of what today we call maternal instinct.

Eve had to endure one son’s murder and the other’s guilt. In her sorrow, we finally see Woman become a woman. Her suffering makes her an individual to us. Turning her into a goddess can only diminish her reality. Evading her humanity and claiming her divinity leads to degradation of her sex and death for her children.

We have only one more glimpse of poor Living. Bereaved of one son, without hope of ever seeing again the one who’s been exiled, she is giving birth to yet a third son. This one she names Seth—“Compensation.” And birth-racked, death-racked Eve finally seems human.