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“And God ... Created Woman”: Imagined in Terms of a Molding Process*

Regine Hunziker-Rodewald**

Les numéros correspondant à la pagination de la version imprimée sont placés entre crochets dans le texte et composés en gras.

<477> In spring 2015, an experimental archaeology workshop took place, organized by the author of this article in collaboration with the Archaeology Departments of the Universities of Strasbourg (France) and Freiburg (Germany) as well as with the Visual Arts Department of the University of Strasbourg, and directed by two professional potters and a specialist in prehistoric ceramic technology. The project included the construction of an updraft pottery kiln after the plans of a kiln excavated in Mari by archaeologists of the University of Strasbourg.¹ The main goal was to understand the intricacies of raw material preparation, to analyze various forming technologies in ancient ceramic figurine manufacture, to explore methods of mold production from a master figurine, and to understand the complexities of kiln firing.² RTI images³ and good photographs of female figurines from Mesopotamia

* For Erhard Blum on the occasion of his 70th birthday, with gratitude.

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¹ D. BEYER and F. LAROCHE, Nouveaux fours de potiers dans le secteur des temples de Mari : notes préliminaires: Les espaces syro-mésopotamiens (Mélanges Jean Margueron), *Subartu* 17 (2006) 305–311.

² R. HUNZIKER-RODEWALD, Experimental Archaeology Workshop Terracotta Female Figurines from the Ancient Near East (The Levant and Mesopotamia, II–I Millennium B.C.E.), *Les Carnets de l’ACoSt* 14 (2016) <http://acost.revues.org/818> and <https://vimeo.com/150722204> (accessed March 14th, 2019); for the Franco-German Figurines Project FGFP see R. HUNZIKER-RODEWALD, A. NUNN and T. GRAICHEN, The Franco-German Figurines Project (FGFP), *ADAJ* 59 (2018) 517–530.

³ R. HUNZIKER-RODEWALD and P. FORNARO, RTI Images for Documentation in Archeology: The Case of the Iron Age Female Terracotta Figurines from Buşayra, Jordan, *JEMAHS* 7.2

and Syro-Palestine of the 2nd and 1st millennium BCE served as models for the realization of the replicas. During this workshop which, due to the drying periods of the prototypes, molds and replicas, lasted more than six weeks, the moment when the first figurine cast was taken out from the mold became the trigger for a new understanding of the creation of Woman as it is told in Genesis 2,18–23.⁴

<478> I. Introduction

Hand-modeled and unfired, or sometimes probably only accidentally fired, clay figurines are known already from the Upper Paleolithic (from c. 50 000 BCE),⁵ while intentionally fired figurines, in kilns, appear only from the Neolithic onwards (from c. 10 000 BCE).⁶ Since the Early Bronze Age (from c. 3300 BCE), the hand-modelling technique⁷ was supplemented by the reproduction of figures and figurative scenes by means of shallow univalve molds. This new technique, developed in the tradition of the small modeled low-relief sculpture,⁸ represents during the 2nd millennium BCE an integral part in the Ancient Near Eastern inventory of clay artifacts.

(2019) (forthcoming). See also the application <http://figurines21.di.unistra.fr/> and <https://travis.ch/examples/figurine2.html>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDoWcwFHuh4> (accessed March 14th, 2019).

⁴ The title of this article is inspired by the movie title “Et Dieu ... créa la femme” (R. Vadim, 1956).

⁵ See A. CAUBET, *Les figurines antiques de terre cuite*, Perspective 1 (2009) 43 Fig. 1 (bisons, Cave Tuc d'Audoubert, France, c. 15 000 BCE, unfired clay); A. VERPOORTE, *Places of Art, Traces of Fire: A Contextual Approach to Anthropomorphic Representations in the Pavlovian* (Central Europe, 29–24 kyr BP), PhD, Leiden 2001, 95–100 (on the Pavlovian ‘ceramics’; amongst others, female figurines from c. 29 000–24 000 BCE).

⁶ R. AYOBİ, *Les objets en terre du Levant néolithique avant l’invention de la céramique: cuisson intentionnelle ou accidentelle?*, Syria 91 (2014) 7–34; F. BRUNET, *Les figurines en Asie centrale du Chalcolithique au Bronze ancien (V^e–IV^e millénaire): Étude technotypologique d’ateliers de production au Turkménistan*, in: S. DONNAT, R. HUNZIKER-RODEWALD and I. WEYGAND (eds.), *Figurines féminines nues. Proche-Orient, Égypte, Nubie, Méditerranée orientale, Asie centrale (VIII^e millénaire av. J.-C.–IV^e s. ap. J.-C.)*. Actes du colloque de Strasbourg (25–26 juin 2015), Paris 2019, 131–148 (in print); see also the female terracotta figurines Reg. Nr. AO 15327, AO 15329, AO 15325, AO 14442a from Tello, Lower Mesopotamia, 4700–4200 BCE, Louvre online collection.

⁷ See the unfired clay figurines Reg. Nr. 1998,0713.31 from Bab ed-Dhra, Transjordan, 3300–3100 BCE, British Museum online collection.

⁸ The beginnings of this technique can be traced back to Mesopotamian stamped bricks and seal impressions on tablets or jar stoppers, see M.-T. BARRELET, *Figurines et reliefs en terre cuite de la Mésopotamie antique*, tome I : *Potiers, termes de métier, procédés de fabrication et production*, Paris 1968, 27, 41–48, 86–127 (spec. 89–90), 425–426, and N. WREDE, *Terrakotten* (AUWE 4), Mainz 1991, 156 n. 39 (late 3rd mill. BCE); cf.

The Bronze Age molded females were impressed in bas-relief on oblong plaques of clay, which extended beyond the shape of the figurine on all sides.⁹ Towards the end of the 2nd millennium and at the beginning of the 1st millennium – the transition is fluid and the technical development is not straightforward <479> in the geographic area primarily concerned in this article (Syro-Palestine) – the mold imprint became deeper, the lateral excess of clay around the molded figurines was reduced and the back gently rounded (Fig. 1).¹⁰ Finally, during the 9th–6th centuries BCE, the frontal body contours of these females made in univalve molds was most often perfectly smoothed (Fig. 2). The figurines appear in high-relief with a finger- or tool-trimmed back which, in the side view, retains <480> additional clay behind the body. In most of the cases, the feet depicted show that these figurines were not meant to be free-standing.¹¹

In this article, the issues of local, regional or transregional classification of the iconographical features of these figurines,¹² the typological development and relative chronology, the interrelations and interdependencies of

C. ZIEGLER, *Die Terrakotten von Warka* (AUW 6), Berlin 1962, 200–204, pl. 7–12 (early 2nd mill. BCE, mostly molded); CAUBET, *Figurines*, 46 Fig. 5; the terracotta plaques Reg. Nr. AO 12454, AO 12457, AO 12453 from Eshnunna, Central Mesopotamia, 1st half of 2nd mill. BCE, Louvre online collection; R. OPIFICIUS, *Das altbabylonische Terrakotta-relief* (UAVA 2), Berlin 1961, 249–272 (pl. 1–24); for Syria see L. BADRE, *Les figurines anthropomorphes en terre cuite à l’âge du Bronze en Syrie* (IFAPO BAH CIII), Paris 1980, 118–120.138–142 and *passim* pl. VII–LX (2nd half of 2nd mill. BCE).

⁹ See the plaque figurine Reg. Nr. A17672 from Ishchali, Diyala, Iraq, early 2nd mill. BCE, Oriental Institute Chicago online collection; I. CORNELIUS, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qadeshet, and Asherah c. 1500–1000 BCE* (OBO 204), Freiburg i.Ue./Göttingen 2008, 5.24–25, 5.31–62; S. BÖHM, *Die ‘Nackte Göttin’: Zur Ikonographie und Deutung unbekleideter weiblicher Figuren in der frühgriechischen Kunst*, Mainz 1990, pl. 22–42.

¹⁰ The process of reducing the excess of clay shows itself with a frequently/numerously attested molded figurine type from Ugarit, 14th–13th century BCE (Louvre online collection, and Badre, *Figurines*, pl. LX): some of the examples of this type are still full plaques, while in others the head of the figurine is exempted from the plaque (ebd., e.g. the Nrs. 13.15 and 11.12.14).

¹¹ In Jordan, as far as can be seen at present, only slightly more than 5 % of the Iron Age female terracotta figurines (c. 450 items) have bell-shaped bodies with wheel-made or modeled bases which characterize them as free-standing. Excluded from this number are at least 21, mostly poorly preserved and much greater hollow statues from WT-13: P.M.M. DAVIAU, *A Wayside Shrine in Northern Moab: Excavations in Wadi ath-Thamad* (Wadi ath-Thamad Project I), Oxford 2017, 108–128.

¹² Dressed or naked, body proportions, gesture of hands, adornment, hairstyle, facial features etc., cf. R. HUNZIKER-RODEWALD, ‘Biblical World’: Diversity within Unity: Female Iron Age Faces in Palestine/Israel, in: K. FINSTERBUSCH and A. LANGE (eds.), *What is Bible?* (CBET 67), Leuven, 131–149.

the different centers of terracotta figurine production in the Orient and Occident (Mesopotamia, Levant, Cyprus, Greece etc.) as well as the controversial interpretation of these figurines cannot be discussed. The interest is focused on the well-attested existence of single-molded female figures in the southern Levant, west and east of the River Jordan, during the (second and) first millennium BCE which is, amongst other things, the period of the origins of the biblical traditions and therefore also of the story of the creation of Woman (Gen 2,18–23).¹³ But before we tackle this topic properly, a few thoughts about the milieu in which terracotta figures were made are necessary.



¹³ I am very grateful to my colleagues for their helpful comments on different issues addressed in this study: Michèle Daviau (Waterloo), Erin Darby (Tennessee Knoxville), Maria-Louise Sidoroff (New York), Anne-Caroline Rendu-Loisel (Strasbourg), Ulrike Steinert (Mainz), Pascal Attinger (Bern), Manuel Ceccarelli (Bern), Sebastian Fink (Innsbruck/Helsinki), Ziony Zevit (Berkeley).



Fig. 1 (left and center): Female figurine, terracotta, Megiddo Stratum IV, Iron Age IIA–B, 128 x 51 x 36 mm, lateral excess of clay trimmed, A19023, © Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.¹⁴

Fig. 2 (right): Female figurine, terracotta, Amman Citadel, Iron Age II; 146 x 55 x 38 mm, body contours smoothed; Amman, Jordan Archaeological Museum TJ 1639, © Department of Antiquities Amman via FGFP, photo: T. Graichen.

II. Potters fashioning figurines

As ethnoarchaeological evidence from modern Cyprus shows,¹⁵ pottery vessels and figurines, as well as cult objects, can be made from the same clay, created in the same workshop and fired in the same kiln. In traditional potters’ cooperatives, it appears that the regular cookware, small decorative pots, incense burners and figurines belong to the general repertoire of a workshop or cooperative, but not necessarily to the repertoire of every potter, man or woman¹⁶ who belongs to <481> that same cooperative.¹⁷ Different members of the family¹⁸ or of

¹⁴ Item detail and photo archive record: <https://oi-idb.uchicago.edu/id/1bd804cb-3fa5-46f0-b443-a4415b64f529> (online collection of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, accessed Dec. 5, 2018); L.A. PERI, *Figurative Clay Artefacts*, in: I. FINKELSTEIN et al. (eds.), *Megiddo V. The 2004–2008 Seasons. Vol. III (Monograph Series 31)*, Winona Lake IN 2013, 1051 No. AB.III.11.

¹⁵ My sincere thanks for manifold suggestions go to Gloria London, Seattle, who has been conducting long-term ethnoarchaeological studies on traditional potters in Cyprus.

¹⁶ On women as potters see C. MEYERS, *Women’s Daily Life (Iron Age Israel)*, in: S. LYNN BUDIN and J. MACINTOSH TURFA (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World*, London / New York 2016, 491.

¹⁷ On the notion of workshops see the groups of potters fashioning vessels on seal impressions from Susa (4th / 3rd mill. BCE), see BARRELET, *Figurines*, 20–21 Fig. 3a.b. To this day, in Cypriote cooperatives for example, decorated or composite clay artifacts are made by a subset of potters, see G. LONDON, *Ancient Cookware from the Levant: An Ethnoarchaeological Perspective (Worlds of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean)*, Sheffield UK / Bristol CT 2016, 38–39.61.

¹⁸ On the evidence for instructing children in pottery production see J. EBELING, *Women’s Daily life in Bronze Age Canaan*, in: LYNN BUDIN and MACINTOSH TURFA, *Women*, 470.

the community can be involved. The same is most probably true for the Ancient Levant. Although the workspaces and firing structures were often abandoned or destroyed after the clay-related activities of each year,¹⁹ it might be supposed (even if it is difficult to prove) that the fabrication of anthropomorphic figurines reflected, to a certain extent, the professional knowledge and ability of at least certain specialized members of one and the same workshop.²⁰ The activities of potters were the same in ancient times as they are today for example in Cyprus, between spring and autumn, on the margins of villages and towns, their smoking kilns are part of the everyday experience.

It is very likely that the Ancient Near Eastern elite too, the scribes, priests and prophets (*cf.* Jer 18:1–6) were, both from observation and education, somehow familiar with the crafts of pottery and particularly with its theological interpretation.²¹ It can therefore be assumed that reflexes of these activities appear also in the collected traditions of the largest text source from the Southern Levant rooted in the first millennium BCE: the Hebrew Bible.

<482> III. God shaping his people

In certain biblical texts, the act of smashing (Hebrew שבר, כרת, נבץ) earthenware objects into pieces stands for God's power of judgment and for an

¹⁹ For traditional village pottery production in Cyprus see LONDON, *Cookware*, 45–46.101 *et passim*; on the disappearance of traces of pottery activity in the off months see EBELING, *Daily Life*, 469–470. A rare find is a Late-Bronze Age pottery workshop in a cave that obviously was not cleared at the end of the potter's season, see A. MIDDLETON et al., *A Late Bronze Age Potter's Workshop at Lachish, Israel*, *Internet Archaeology* 9 (2000) <https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.9.8> (accessed Dec. 5, 2018). Thanks to Michèle Daviau who brought this cave to my attention.

²⁰ Large scale petrographic studies of the Judean Pillar Figurines (JPF) from Jerusalem's southeastern hill revealed that the figurines were locally produced from clays immediately adjacent to the site and to a considerable extent also used for regular pottery vessels, see E. DARBY, *Interpreting Judean Pillar Figurines: Gender and Empire in Judean Apotropaic Ritual* (FAT II 69), Tübingen 2014, 183–212. See also the assemblage of a mold fragment, figurines and vessels in the potter's cave workshop in Lachish (MIDDLETON, *Workshop*, sect. 2 fig. 2.3.9).

²¹ On the idea of gods as potters in Mesopotamian literature see BARRELET, *Figurines*, 7–11; *cf.* for Ancient Egypt R.K. RITNER, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (SAOC 54), Chicago IL, 1993.⁴2008, 138–139 note 614; P.F. DORMAN, *Faces in Clay: Technique, Imagery, and Allusion in a Corpus of Ceramic Sculpture from Ancient Egypt* (MÄS 52), Mainz 2002, 82.114–130 (gods working at the wheel); E. WARAKSA, *Female Figurines from the Mut Precinct: Context and Ritual Function* (OBO 240), Freiburg i.Ue. / Göttingen 2009, 92–93 and notes 384–388.

acute danger to life (Isa 30:14²²; cf. Jer 19:1–2, 10–11, Lam 4:2 and Ps 2:9).²³ Everybody who has experienced the scattered pottery sherds lying in the Near East all over excavation sites understands the timeless reference of crushed pottery to the fragility and transience of human existence and power (cf. also Dan 2:34, 35a; Aramaic דקק). In other biblical texts, the freedom of a potter to shape the clay according to his will refers transparently to God as the people’s “shaper” (יֹצֵר)²⁴ whose skills can never be questioned and who intervenes at his own discretion, for which he cannot be called to account (Isa 29:16²⁵; cf. 45:9 and 64:7). A similar relation between potter and clay is reflected in Jer 18:1–6, but with one main difference: while working at his wheel, the potter can decide anytime to destroy a failed vessel with the intention of reshaping and improving it.²⁶ The focus here is placed on a certain aspect of God’s sovereignty, namely on the warning that a failure in God’s eyes will be “reshaped”.²⁷

IV. God created the human ...

In the literary unit Genesis 2:4b–3:24²⁸, Yhwh God acts not only *like* a potter, but while creating the human (הָאָדָם)²⁹, he is presented *as* a potter. Gen

²² Isa 30:14 “... its breaking is like that of a potter’s vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a sherd is found for taking fire from the hearth, or dipping water out of the cistern” (unless otherwise specified, the Biblical texts are quoted from the NRSV 1989).

²³ A similar motif appears in Mesopotamian literature (3rd–1st mill. BCE), see BARRELET, *Figurines*, 17.

²⁴ The participle present active of the Hebrew root יצר “to form, shape, mold, fashion” stands in the Hebrew Bible for “potter”; on the use of יצר associated with clay terminology see DARBY, *Interpreting*, 261–277.

²⁵ Isa 29:16 “Shall the potter be regarded as the clay? Shall the thing made say of its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or the thing formed say of the one who formed it, ‘He has no understanding’?”.

²⁶ Jer 18:4,6 “The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him ... Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? ... Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”

²⁷ On Jer 18:1–6,7–10,11 see D.A. FRESE, *Lessons from the Potter’s Workshop: A New Look at Jeremiah 18.1–11*, JSOT 37/3 (2013) 371–388.

²⁸ As an example, we refer here to M.C.A. KORPEL and J.C. DE MOOR, *Adam, Eve, and the Devil: A New Beginning* (HBM 65), Sheffield 2014, 116.121–124, who date the final edition of these chapters in exilic time or even later, among other things because of the Greek conception of the woman as the root of all evil.

²⁹ The human or “earthling” (C. MEYERS, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, New York 2013, 72; for הָאָדָם as a sexually undifferentiated earth creature see already P. TRIBLE, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Philadelphia 1978, 80) calls himself

2,6–7a reads: “(6) and a spring would well up from the earth to water all the surface of the <483> ground, (7a) then Yhwh God fashioned the human – clay from the ground (עפר מן־האדמה) – and blew into his nostrils a breath of life.”³⁰ The wordplay אדם–אדמה in 2:7a leaves no doubt concerning the human’s “earthly” origins: it is about the creation of the very first figurine, hand-modeled (יצר) from humidified clay and, in 2:7b, the vivification of this figurine. The curious syntax of 2:7a “Yhwh God fashioned the human, clay from the ground”³¹ probably anticipates the nominal clause introducing the sentence in 3:19 “you are clay (and to clay you shall return)”.³² In the background of this accentuation of clay as a material, it is noticeable that the animals, which were not considered as counterparts for the human (2:20: לֹא־מִצָּא עֹזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ), were fashioned not from clay, but from the ground (2:19: מן־הָאֲדָמָה). This applies to the flora as well, at least to the trees (2:9: כָּל־עֵץ) which come from the ground (מן־הָאֲדָמָה). The ground thus represents the common creation *materia* that the human shares with other living beings, but from which he also slightly differs (עפר מן־האדמה).

“man” (אִישׁ) not until Gen 2,23. Nevertheless, J. DAY, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11* (LHB/OTS 592), London etc. 2013, 32–33, claims that אדם clearly cannot be sexless but “is certainly a man, though with one more rib than subsequently!”.

³⁰ Translation RHR. The rendering of עפר takes the imagery of figurine making (2,7a) into account: עפר “clay” is here primary *materia*, in contrast to processed potting clay (טיט//חמר, Isa 41:25; Nah 3:14; in Job 10:9, עפר is the dry aggregate state of חמר). On the misleading translation of עפר as (powdery) dust, see MEYERS, Eve, 71, who, however, places the agricultural imagery in the foreground (before Gen 3:23, the imagery is horticultural, RHR) and renders עפר by “clods” or “clumps of loose soil” broken by plowing or hoeing before crops (sic) could be grown.

³¹ On the origins of the double object in Gen. 2:7a see P. JOÜON and T. MURAOKA, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (SubBi 27), Roma 2006, § 125 v.

³² Cf. Gen 3:19 in the Septuagint: γῆ and the translation of עפר in the French Bible de Jérusalem 1973 (BibleWorks10): „glaise“ and in the German Lutherbibel 1984.1999 (BibleWorks10): “Erde”. The motif of man made from clay/earth is attested in Mesopotamian creation myths, see M. CECCARELLI, *Enki und Ninmah: Eine mythische Erzählung in sumerischer Sprache* (ORA 16), Tübingen 2016, 7.24–35.62.159–162 *et passim*; J.J.W. LISMAN, *Cosmogony, Theogony and Anthropogeny in Sumerian Texts* (AOAT 409), Münster 2013, 192–194.200–201.205.220–221 *et passim*; U. STEINERT, *Aspekte des Menschseins im Alten Mesopotamien: Eine Studie zu Person und Identität im 2. und 1. Jt. v. Chr.* (CM 44), Leiden / Boston 2012, 50–57. Similar stories containing the same motif from all over the world are probably mere “playbacks” of the biblical account, see T.H. GASTER, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament: A comparative study*, London 1969, 8–19.22; S. THOMPSON, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: a Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-books and Local Legends*, vol. 1, Bloomington 1955–1958, A1241; J.G. FRAZER, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament: Studies in comparative religion, legend and law*, vol. 1, London 1919, 6–9.12.29.

The contrast of clay and breath of life appears in three letters of a Phoenician city-state ruler, ‘Ammunīra, addressed to Pharaoh in the late 2nd millennium BCE.³³ In EA 141,1–5, ‘Ammunīra calls himself “your [sc. Pharaoh’s] servant, *aparu* at your feet” – which reveals a stereotype self-humiliation in the context of **484**> diplomatic correspondence –, while “breath of my life (*ša-ri* TIL.LA-ia)” is, together with “my lord, my sun god, my deity”, one of the epithets which the local king ascribes to Pharaoh. The imagery in this figure of speech is about the binary opposition of inferior and superior, of human and divine.

This very opposition is used in Genesis 2:4b–3:24 for an ontological definition of the human nature. The clay component of the ground (עפר מן־האדמה), as a primary *materia* used for the creation of the human (2:7a) is supplemented in a second step: the modelled “earthly” human form becomes the receptacle of breath and is thus brought to life (2:7aβ.b).³⁴ After this initialization of life by the endowment of the human with breath, neither the breathing of the animals (2:19) nor of Woman (2:22) is explicitly set in motion.³⁵ According to Genesis 2, life was only given once.

In contrast to Mesopotamian anthropogony, blood as an element of life³⁶ does not play any role in Genesis 1–2.³⁷ The biblical combination of clay and breath, instead of clay and (divine) blood/flesh, in the creation of the human corresponds to a concept of performance of the divine in the medium

³³ EA 141–143, A.F. RAINEY, *The El-Amarna Correspondence*, 2 vols, Leiden / Boston 2015.

³⁴ DARBY, *Interpreting*, 260 n. 6, claims that the use of the term עפר “dry dust” evokes the association of death as the human’s destiny. In the text world of Gen 2, however, the components עפר and נשמה, “substrate” and “life”, are brought together so that the human can till the garden (2:8,15), and 3:14–20 is also about life and returning to the “substrate” עפר, but not about death; however, see the later reflection on giving and withdrawing breath in Job 34:14 (רוח and נשמה), cf. Ps 104:29 (רוח).

³⁵ C. UEHLINGER, *Eva als “lebendiges Kunstwerk”*: Traditionsgeschichtliches zu Gen 2,21–22(23–24) und 3,20, BN 43 (1988) 90–99, here 98–99, claims with reference to Sumerian love songs that Eva as a quasi-divine being was, so to speak, alive by nature. For a (quasi-)divine status of the woman though, there is no hint in Gen 2; on the liveliness of Woman see below VI.

³⁶ CECCARELLI, *Enki*, 7.20.24–35.43; 33: “Der Mensch wurde aus Lehm erschaffen und ist doch lebendig, da ihm ein göttliches Element, das Blut, innewohnt”; LISMAN, *Cosmogony*, 205–206.220–221; STEINERT, *Aspekte*, 50–57; cf. *Enūma eliš* VI,33. According to the *Atramḥasis Epic* (I,208–230), the divine mind (*tēmu*) and spirit (*eṭemmu*) were transmitted with the divine blood (and flesh) to the created human, see STEINERT, *Aspekte*, 53–54.324–328.

³⁷ But see later Gen 4:10–11; 9:4; and e.g. Lev 17:11 and Deut 12:23.

of breath.³⁸ In this model, however, Yhwh is only one of the names amongst the Levantine references to the divine, El, Eloah and Šadday.³⁹ On the flesh as primary *materia* of Woman's creation see below.

<485> V. ... and God created Woman

21 וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצַּלְעָתוֹ וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה: 22 וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּבְאֶהָ אֶל־הָאָדָם: 23 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפַּעַם עָצָם מֵעַצְמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לָזָאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לְקָחָהּ־זֹאת: 40

²¹And Yhwh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the human, and he slept. And he took one of his sides/ribs and closed over with flesh in place thereof. ²²And Yhwh God built the side/rib that he had taken from the human into a woman. And he brought her to the human.

²³And the human said: This one, this time / bone of my bones / and flesh of my flesh // This one shall be called Woman / for from Man / was taken this one.

The traditional interpretation of the “building” of Woman from an element of bone taken out from the first human's body in Genesis 2:21b (ויקח אחת מצלעתיו) seems to fit thematically rather well with the phrase “bone of my bones” in 2:23a (עצם מעצמי). However, this view of the narrated events can be scrutinized in three respects: 1) the unique mutation of God from a potter to a “surgeon”, 2) the unique understanding of the biblical Hebrew term צלע as “rib” and 3) the unique use of the Hebrew verb בנה “to build” for the divine act of the creation of a human being.⁴¹

To begin with, the phrase “bone of my bones” (Gen. 2:23a) is an idiomatic formula for kinship that appears in different contexts, see, for example, Laban's words to Jacob: “Surely you are my bone and my flesh!”⁴² The

³⁸ According to this concept, the divine breath (נשמה) brings life (נשמת חיים Gen 2:7, cf. Isa 42:5) but it also constitutes, as an expression of God's wrath, a deadly danger (נשמת רוח אפרו 2 Sam 22:16 // Ps 18:16, cf. Job 4:9; Isa 30:33).

³⁹ Job 4:9; 32:8; 33:4; 37:10; these rather late references reflect nevertheless North-West Semitic divine names, see B. BECKING et al., Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, Leiden 1999, 274b–280a (W. Herrmann), 285a–288a (D. Pardee), 749b–753a (E.A. Knauf).

⁴⁰ Hebrew Text (BHS), Accordance 12.1.0 (2017), highlights added by the present author.

⁴¹ As distinguished from ברא “to bring out” (LISMAN, Cosmogony, 206–207 n. 928) used for the primary act of creation (Gen 1–6), בנה “to build, construct” in 2:22 is used for a second act of creation, associated to a new *materia* (2:21b בשר) and a new concept (2:22a אשה), see below VI.

⁴² Gen 29:14, cf. Judg 9:2–3, 2 Sam 5:1 and 19:13–14. On the kinship formula see C. WESTERMANN, Genesis (BK), Neukirchen-Vluyn ⁴1999, 314–316, referring to W. REISER, Die Verwandtschaftsformel in Gen. 2:23, ThZ (1960) 4.

rhythmic design and poetic form of the exclamation “this one, this time / bone of my bones / and flesh of my flesh”⁴³ point to a literary formula. It has been suggested that this formula, taken literally by the author of 2:21–22, gave the impetus for the invention of the rib motif which is not known elsewhere in the Ancient Near East.⁴⁴ But <486> this redaction/literary-historical thesis too cannot explain why a *rib*, of all bones, should have been involved in the “building” of Woman.⁴⁵

We come back to the story’s first narrated event to be scrutinized, the mutation of God-potter to God-surgeon. The idea that Woman was made from a bone goes back to the Septuagint. It’s not primarily about the rendering of $\gamma\lambda\zeta$ by πλευρά “side, rib”, but about the Greek translation of the Hebrew verb-preposition combination $\text{מִן הַצֵּל} \text{לִּי}$ “to take from” in order to express the idea of the provenance of πλευρά / γυνή (2:22, 23):

²¹ και ἐπέβαλεν ὁ θεὸς ἕκστασιν ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀδάμ, καὶ ὑπνωσεν· καὶ ἔλαβεν μίαν τῶν πλευρῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεπλήρωσεν σάρκα ἀντ’ αὐτῆς. ²² καὶ ᾠκοδόμησεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς τὴν πλευράν, ἣν ἔλαβεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀδάμ, εἰς γυναῖκα, καὶ ἤγαγεν αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸν Ἀδάμ. ²³ καὶ εἶπεν Ἀδάμ· Τοῦτο νῦν ὅστων ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων μου καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου αὕτη κληθήσεται γυνή, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς ἐλήμφθη.⁴⁶

²¹ And God cast a trance upon Adam, and he slept, and he took one of his ribs and filled up flesh in its place. ²² And the rib that he had taken from Adam the Lord God fashioned into a woman and brought her to Adam. ²³ And Adam said, "This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of her husband she was taken."

⁴³ The phrase literally continues: “// this one shall be called Woman / for from Man / is taken this one”.

⁴⁴ J.C. GERTZ, The Formation of the Primeval History, in: C.A. EVANS et al. (eds.), The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation (VT.S 152), Leiden / Boston 2012, 107–135, here 128, referring to K. SCHMID, Die Unteilbarkeit der Weisheit: Überlegungen zur sogenannten Paradieserzählung Gen 2f. und ihrer theologischen Tendenz, ZAW 114 (2002) 21–39, here 25 n. 29, and E. BLUM, Von Gottesunmittelbarkeit zu Gottähnlichkeit: Überlegungen zur theologischen Anthropologie der Paradieserzählung, in: G. EBERHARDT and K. LIESS (eds.), Gottes Nähe im Alten Testament (SBS 202), Stuttgart 2004, 9–29, here 12. The kinship formula has been literally taken as well by Z. ZEVIT, Was Eve Made from Adam’s Rib – or His Baculum?, BAR 41/5 (2015) 32-35; EADEM, What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden?, New Haven / London, 2013, 75–84, who suggests the removal not of a rib from the human’s body but of the baculum (the only bone, compared to animals, missing in the male body).

⁴⁵ The advocates of the theory that the rib motif in 2:21b–22a was spun out of the literally taken kinship formula in 2:23a (see above n. 44) leave entirely aside the part “flesh of my flesh”. However, Cassuto’s claim that God “took together with the bone also the flesh attached to it” finds no clue to the text (U. CASSUTO, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Jerusalem 1978, 134).

⁴⁶ Göttingen Septuaginta, vol. 1 Genesis (LXXG-GEN), by J.W. Wevers, Göttingen 1974.2008 (OakTree Software 2010, Version 1.4), highlights added by the present author.

While the grammatical-syntactic construction ἦν ἔλαβεν ἀπὸ in v. 22a corresponds to the Hebrew מִן לָקַח “which he had taken from”, the same verb-preposition combination מִן לָקַח in v. 23b is harmonized in the Septuagint with the nominal-clause wording of the kinship formula (... ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων μου ... ἐκ τῆς σαρκός μου ... ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς ἐλήμφθη).⁴⁷ The Greek text stresses, on the one hand, the ties between the sexes in terms of a possessive relation: Woman was not, as in the Hebrew version of 2:23b, taken from *Man* (מִן אִישׁ) but out of *her husband* (ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς).⁴⁸ On the other hand, the choice of the preposition ἐκ (v. 23b) instead of ἀπὸ (v. 22a), probably for reasons of verse-internal coherence,⁴⁹ constitutes the small but crucial difference in the wording which <487> moves the interpretation from “side” to “rib”, because not a side, but only a rib can be taken out. This interpretation has been adopted almost completely in the reception history of Genesis 2:21–23.⁵⁰

With this view, two distinct modes of creation have been established by the readers of Genesis 2: the divine potter, who modelled (יָצַר) the human and the animals, acts only two verses later as a plastic surgeon as he removes a rib from the human and “builds” Woman out of it (Gen. 2:7,19,21–22). Certainly, metaphors can be merged, for example in Psalm 23, where Yhwh is first addressed as a shepherd (v. 1–4) and then as a host (v. 5–6), but are we really confronted to a mixed metaphor in the story of Woman’s creation?

This point of our argumentation concerns the unique understanding of the biblical Hebrew term צֵלַע as “rib”. In the Hebrew Bible, the term צֵלַע refers to a lateral element of an object with a certain extension: it can be a side of

⁴⁷ Cf. Gen 29:14^{LXX}.

⁴⁸ “... for out of her husband she was taken” (Pietersma and Wright, Septuagint, 7). But cf. ... *os ex ossibus meis et caro de carne mea ... de viro sumpta est* (Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem, 5th rev. ed., by Roger Gryson, 2007 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, BibleWorks 10).

⁴⁹ The Greek text witnesses attest the distinction between ἐκ (v. 23b) and ἀπὸ (v. 22a) consistently (the prepositions therefore do not seem to be exchangeable); the only exception is Symmachus: οὐκ ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς ἐλήμφθη (23b) who probably squares the use of the preposition in v. 23b with the one in v. 22a, A.E. BROOKE and N. MCLEAN, *The Old Testament in Greek*, Cambridge 1906, 6.

⁵⁰ But see the understanding of צֵלַע as “side” in GenR VIII,1 (and XVII,6–7), B.L. VLSOTZKY, *Genesis in Rabbinic Interpretation*, in: C.A. EVANS et al. (eds.), *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, Leiden 2012, here 587 (the androgynous Adam is sawed in two), and by Philo, *Questions on Genesis*, transl. by R. Marcus, Loeb Classical Library 380, Cambridge 1953, I, 25 (woman is a half-section of man). – The Christian iconographical reception of Gen 2:21–22 reflects as well the difference between “rib” and “side”; see for example the mosaic in the Cappella Palatina, Palermo (mid 12th cent.), where God lets Eve come out from Adam’s side (*tulit Evam de costis eius*) and the mosaic in the Basilica di San Marco, Venice (early 13th cent.), where God is taking out a rib from Adam’s chest (*tulit unam de costis eius*).

the tabernacle, of the ark or of an altar, a board, plank, beam, door leaf, and also the slope of a mountain.⁵¹ The Hebrew word is obviously a technical term belonging to the field of architecture, and it is only in Genesis 2:21–22 that צלע is supposed, according to the traditional interpretation,⁵² to denote a specific bone of a human being.⁵³

<488> To understand the divine manipulation associated with צלע in the Hebrew text of the creation story of Woman, two points are to be defined: a) the *extent of the text segment* in which the story is built up and closed and b) the *keyword* around which the story is constructed.

a) The story develops from Yhwh God’s decision in 2:18 to provide to the human who is “on his own” (לבדו) a companion “as his counterpart” (כנגדו)⁵⁴ and it has two outcomes: a story-internal popular etymology (v. 23b) and a metacommunicative etiological remark (v. 24). The popular

⁵¹ DCH, vol. VII, 126; cf. Ug. *šl’* “rib piece of animal” (A.J. MILITAREV and L.E. KOGAN, *Semitic Etymological Dictionary*, Vol. I [AOAT 278], Münster 2000, 243–244); Akk. *šēlu, šellu* “side”, “side of chest”, “rib” (of animals; for humans very rare and only in Plural, CAD vol. 16 §, 125–126).

⁵² Apart from the Rabbinic and Kabbalistic reading of the creation of Woman (M.A. SWEENEY, *Genesis in the Context of Jewish Thought*, in: EVANS, *Genesis*, here 665 (“a gender differentiation of the primal human being”; see above n. 50), the understanding of צלע as „side” in Gen 2 is rare (F. SCHWALLY, *Die biblischen Schöpfungsberichte* [ARW 9], Leipzig 1906, 173–175 [referring to Plato and Rashi]; MEYERS, *Eve*, 74–76 [referring to GenR and Philo]); KORPEL / DE MOOR, *Adam*, 126.131 [referring uncommented to A. LA COCQUE, *The Trial of Innocence: Adam, Eve and the Yahwist*, Eugene OR 2006, 117–130, who in turn refers to Rashi and the Jewish Tradition [120]); all these interpretations have to deal with the question of androgyny.

⁵³ WESTERMANN, *Genesis*, 313, refers to the Jericho heads fashioned by clay on bone (R. AMIRAN, *Myths of Creation of Man and the Jericho Statues*, BASOR 167 [1962] 23–25), arguing that artists at that time could use bone for their artworks; cf. UEHLINGER, *Eva*, 1988, 90–99, who points to Mesopotamian bone statuettes as pieces of art; but that the making of “something aesthetically pleasing” (A. SCHÜLE, *Theology from the Beginning: Essays on the Primeval History and its Canonical Context* [FAT 113], Tübingen 2017, 42) really hits the story’s plot is more than doubtful! For the understanding of אִשָּׁה / Eve in 2,21–23; 3,20 WESTERMANN, *ibid.*, 314, relies on the idea of the adoption of a Sumerian popular etymology (TI “rib” / TI(L) “to make alive” in “Enki and Ninḫursag”), presupposes a lost Sumerian original of Gen 2–3 and claims the erroneous reading of several cuneiform signs, see J. FELDMANN, *Paradies und Sündenfall*, Münster 1913, 241–244; K. OBERHUBER, “Eva, aus Adams ‘Rippe’ genommen – Mutter des Lebens”: Nochmals zu Genesis 2, 21–23 und 3, 20, in: W. MEID et al. (eds.), *Studien zur Namenkunde und Sprachgeographie*, Festschrift für Karl Finsterwalder zum 70. Geburtstag (IBKW 16), Innsbruck 1971, 457–460.

⁵⁴ The semantic value of עֹזֵר “helper” is not pertinent in Gen 2:18–23, the contrast built up between לבדו “on his own” and כנגדו “as his counterpart” is determined not by assistance but by correspondence. In this context, a suitable translation of עֹזֵר would be “companion”.

etymology⁵⁵ אִישׁ-אִשָּׁה specifies the correspondence of the divinely conceived counterpart אִשָּׁה (v. 22), and the etiological remark, introduced by עַל־כֵּן, actualizes the story from a story-external, exclusively androcentric point of view by mentioning everyman's father, mother and wife and adding a general explanation of the (fatal)⁵⁶ sexual attraction of Woman to Man.

b) In the core segment 2:18–23, the adverbial כַּנְגִדוֹ “as his counterpart” reappears again after v. 18 in the short failure report (v. 20, כַּנְגִדוֹ, לֹא מָצָא עֶזְרָא) which triggers the divine manipulation associated with צָלַע (v. 21–22), that results in the idiomatic phrase declaring kinship (v. 23a) and is completed by the folk etymology (v.23b) which confirms by name assignment (קָרָא, cf. v. 19,20a) the correspondence of אִשָּׁה with אִישׁ. It seems obvious that Genesis 2:18–23 is constructed around the contrasting adverbials כַּנְגִדוֹ and לְבָדוֹ, which both determine, as an adverbial phrase, the relational state of the human. The point of reference of both suffixes in the 3rd person masculine singular (כַּנְגִדוֹ, לְבָדוֹ) is the human.

<489> In Genesis 2:18–23, Yhwh God is thus in search of a corresponding counterpart⁵⁷ of the figurine which he had modelled by hand and brought to life (2:7a). A counterpart is not a duplicate, as it only corresponds in some respects to the prototype. V. 19, 20a seems to define a criterion of the correspondence God is looking for: the naming of the requested being by the human as an act in which the correspondence itself becomes evident (v. 23). The first, unsuccessful attempt to find such a counterpart (v. 19–20) remains within the framework of the potter-creator paradigm. As pointed out above, the sudden mutation of Yhwh God from a potter to a “surgeon” in the traditional understanding of the word צָלַע in 2:21–22 is philologically based on the Greek text and has thematically been explained by a literal understanding of the kinship formula (2:23a). An indicator, in the Hebrew text itself, of a switch of imagery could be the mention of a new *materia*, flesh (2:21b), which, nevertheless, does not contradict the potter-creator paradigms such as for example in the Akkadian *Atramhasīs* myth, in which the goddess Nintu, in her various forms of appearance, Belet-ili/Mami/Aruru, mixed clay

⁵⁵ Etymologically, אִישׁ goes back to West Semitic ʾš and אִשָּׁה to Semitic *antatu* (see Wilhelm GESENIUS, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 18. Auflage, Berlin 2013, s.v.).

⁵⁶ By completing the sense of „flesh“ (בָּשָׂר) in the kinship formula in v. 23a with a new symbolic meaning, v. 24 adds allusions that go far beyond the story in Gen 2: both the abandonment of the parents (cf. Exod 20:12) and the verb דָּבַק “to cling” (cf. Gen 34:3) imply negative connotations; בָּשָׂר “flesh” is in Gen 6–7 a key term for creatures to be destroyed.

⁵⁷ J. BLENKINSOPP, *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch*, Grand Rapids MI 2004, 95, calls it a kind of mirror image of the human.

with divine flesh, blood and saliva as the raw material for the creation of mankind.⁵⁸

Hereafter it shall be assumed that the author of the Hebrew text retained the potter’s metaphor (cf. 2:6–7,19) and thus relied on a potter’s practice when he explained the process of taking the impression of one of the human’s sides (צלעות), establishing a flesh-equivalent (תחתנה) for the side taken and processing it into Woman (v. 21b,22a). Based on this hermeneutic assumption, the story will be retold. As a part of this retelling, the unique use of the Hebrew verb בנה “to build” will also be explained.

VI. A New Reading of the Story of the Creation of Woman

The basic idea to start from is that a potter who wants to create a figurine which should correspond to a hand-modelled prototype first makes a mold of that prototype (Fig. 3–4).⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Atramhasīs* I, 190–247, cf. LISMAN, *Cosmogony*, 192–194.205–206 and above n. 36.

⁵⁹ On the process of molding see BARRELET, *Figurines*, 41–44 and A. MULLER (ed.), *Le moulage en terre cuite dans l’Antiquité: Création et production dérivée, fabrication et diffusion*, Lille 1997.



Fig. 3–4: Mold (on the left: inside [impression in hollow], on the right: backside, with the incised letter “b”, probably a potter’s mark), Karak region; 106 x 47 c 23 mm; Karak Archaeological Museum, Jordan, © Department of Antiquities Amman via FGFP/photo: T. Graichen.

The manufacture of a univalve clay mold is a simple impression of an existing figurine, the prototype. The making and use of a mold are a procedure in three steps: <490>

- 1) Taking an impression of one of the sides of the prototype⁶⁰
- 2) Closing the negative of the impressed side with clay
- 3) Removing the positive clay cast from the mold and finishing details by hand.

⁶⁰ In the real world, between step 1 and 2, at least a drying term, better a firing term, would be added. The side chosen to produce an impression is normally the front side, see above fig. 3.

The initial impression (1) is obtained by pressing a slab of moist clay over one of the sides of the prototype. This manipulation will create a negative shape of the impressed side of the prototype in the slab.⁶¹ Once dried or fired, this impressed cavity which mirrors the original in the negative (Fig. 5–6) serves as a mold to create positive casts, i.e. identical replicas of the prototype.



Fig. 5–6: Mold (profile view, on the left: top, on the right: bottom, Karak region; 106 x 47 c 23 mm; Karak Archaeological Museum, Jordan, © Department of Antiquities Amman via FGFP/photo: T. Graichen.

<491> To create a positive cast (2) from such a mold, the potter will fill the mold’s cavity by pressing moist clay into it and closing over the back with more clay (Fig. 7).

After having taken out (3) the cast from the mold, the potter has a replica of one of the prototype’s sides in his hand (Fig. 8–9.10). Before firing, he can finish the cast, for example by smoothing the surface and completing certain required details (shape, aesthetic refinement, adornment etc.).

⁶¹ A rare example of a prototype preserved together with two of its molds is the so-called Sun God Tablet (9th cent. BCE; BM 91000, British Museum, collection online). It was found in an earthenware box which contained, along with the original, two impressions / clay molds (BM 91001, BM 91002) of the sculptured bas-relief displayed on the upper part of the tablet. The inscription on the back of one of the molds, BM 91002, identifies it as a “duplicate / copy / impression” (Akk. *gabarû*, CAD vol. 5 G, 2–3a), see BARRELET, *Figurines*, 39–40 with Fig. 11.

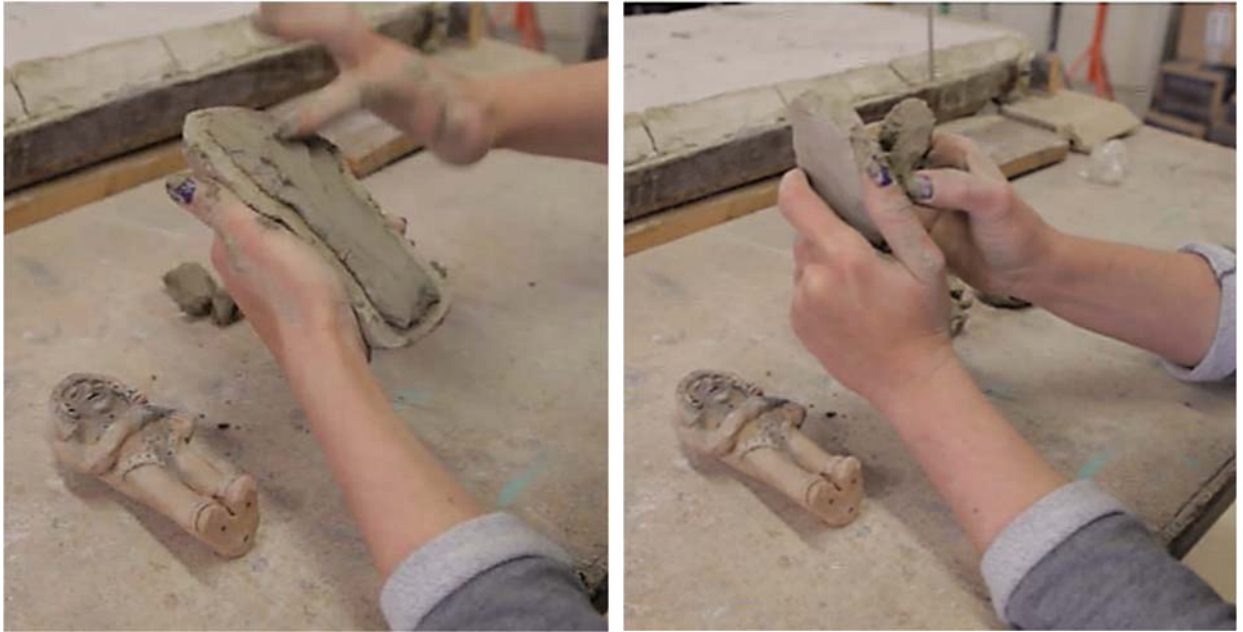


Fig. 7–8: above left: Filling clay into the cavity of the (fired) mold, closing over its back with more clay and trimming the back with the finger; **above right:** Starting to take out the cast from the mold. Experimental Archaeology Workshop Strasbourg 2015, © FGFP/photos: J.-Ch. Mougel.



Fig. 9–10: above left: Continuing to take out the cast from the mold; **above right:** The moist cast is ready to be finished by hand; Experimental Archaeology Workshop Strasbourg 2015, © FGFP/photos: J.-Ch. Mougel. For more pictures concerning the steps described see <https://vimeo.com/150722204> (accessed Dec. 5, 2018).

This procedure in three steps that makes a clay mold to produce a replica of an existing prototype corresponds approximately to the three steps in Gen 2:21b–22a, in which Yhwh God is occupied, in the proper sense, with the shape, the *materia* and the concept (Woman) of the second phase⁶² of the creation of mankind. This divine act can be read in terms of a molding process:

^{21a}And Yhwh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the human, and he slept.

- 1) ^{21b}And he took (ויקח) one of his sides
- 2) and closed over (ויסגר) with flesh in place thereof.
- 3) ^{22a}And Yhwh God built (ויבן) the side that he had taken from the human into a woman.

^{22b}And he brought her to the human. ²³And the human said:

⁶² On a similar two-phase creation of mankind in the *Atramhasīs Epic*, first of a human prototype (from a mixture of clay, blood and flesh of the slaughtered god Aw-ilu) and then of gendered human beings (from clay only), see U. STEINERT, *Created to Bleed: Blood, women’s bodies and gender in ancient Mesopotamian medicine* (forthcoming; many thanks to the author for generously giving access to the unpublished manuscript).

This one, this time / bone of my bones / and flesh of my flesh //
This one shall be called Woman / for from Man / was taken this one.

The process imagined in Gen. 2:21b–22a is to be commented as follows:

(1) “And he took one of his sides” (ויקה אחת מצלעותיו). The manipulation of Yhwh God, the potter, when obtaining the impression in negative of one of the sides of the immobilized human is not explained, but only summarized by the technical shortcut “taking a side”. As the human had been modelled in the round <492> (2:7a), the side taken is only one of several sides of his body, it will determine the shape of Woman’s body.

The creation of mankind by means of a mold is to date attested only once in the Ancient Near Eastern sources: in the Sumerian “Hymn to the Hoe” from the Old Babylonian period.⁶³ The composition of 109 lines is documented in over <493> ninety separate copies,⁶⁴ as a whole and in excerpts; it thus might have been used as a didactic poem for advanced scribal education. The hymn is an example of philological virtuosity, packed with puns, alliterations and word games,⁶⁵ whose meaning is not easy to understand for modern interpreters. But what can be identified with certainty is a praise to the god Enlil and his tool, made of gold, silver and lapis lazuli, for brick production, the hoe, which is involved, among other things, in the creation of mankind. In the lines 18–19 the text reads:

Here, “Where Flesh Came Forth”, he set this very hoe to work,
 he had it place the first model of mankind in the brick mold.⁶⁶

After this act, the people of Sumer start to sprout out of the ground (lines 20–21). While the traditions of creation such as *emersio* (growing like

⁶³ ETCSL 5.5.4, University of Oxford, online corpus; G. FARBER, The Song of the Hoe (1.157), in: W.W. HALLO and K.L. YOUNGER Jr. (eds.), The Context of Scripture, Volume 1 Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World, Leiden 2002, 511–513; J. BLACK et al. (eds.), The Literature of Ancient Sumer, Oxford 2004, 311–315; LISMAN, Cosmogony, 57–59; G. FARBER, Das Lied von der Hacke, in: K. VOLK (ed.), Erzählungen aus dem Land Sumer, Wiesbaden 2015, 69–76; C. HALTON and S. SVÄRD, Women’s Writing of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Anthology of the Earliest Female Authors, Cambridge 2018, 46–50.

⁶⁴ P. DELNERO, Variation in Sumerian Literary Compositions: A Case Study Based on the Decad, PhD Philadelphia 2006, 2021–2108 (partition).

⁶⁵ P. MICHALOWSKI, Where’s Al? Humor and Poetics in the Hymn to the Hoe, in: A. KLEINERMAN and J.M. SASSON (eds.), Why Should Someone Who Knows Something Conceal It? Cuneiform Studies in Honor of D.I. Owen on His 70th Birthday, Bethesda 2010, 195–200.

⁶⁶ “Where Flesh Grows / Grew” is the name of a sacred site inside Nippur, probably in the area of Enlil’s temple, see STEINERT, Aspekte, 49; CECCARELLI, Enki, 6–7.

plants) and *formatio* (being crafted) are well attested in Mesopotamian mythology,⁶⁷ the processing of the first model / concept / form (saġnam)⁶⁸ of a human with tools which are normally used for brick making is unique. The utensils mentioned, the hoe (al) to cut off the loam and the brick mold (u₃-šub), clearly imply clay as a creation *materia*, but the molding process as such remains unexplained.⁶⁹

Molds for brickmaking normally consisted of a simple rectangular wooden frame. But when the bricks had to be stamped with an image in bas-relief, a mold with a base was used in which the requested motif, the brick stamp, was incised.⁷⁰ It is conceivable that “placing” the human concept in the wooden brick mold is tantamount to the impression of a human shape on the base inside the <494> mold which will be represented on all the bricks produced in this mold. Even if the process in “The Hymn to the Hoe”, lines 18–19, is not clear in all details, the association of a mold and the *concept* of a human being is significant for our interpretation of Gen 2:21b–22a.

(2) “... and closed over with flesh in place thereof” (ויסגר בשר תחתנה, Gen 2:21bβ). Only minimal information is also provided for the second working step, the closing of the cavity which had been produced by taking one of the human’s sides. The act of replacing (תחתנה) the three-dimensional hollow shape⁷¹ of the human’s side is, again, only described by a technical shortcut: “closing over in place thereof”. The filling material, “flesh” (בשר), which appears in 2:21bβ for the first time in the Creation story, quasi in Yhwh God’s hand, is a new *materia*, but the text is completely silent about its provenance. In Mesopotamian anthropogony traditions, the flesh (and/or

⁶⁷ STEINERT, *Aspekte*, 48–57; CECCARELLI, *Enki*, 6–8.

⁶⁸ G.J. SELZ, A Mesopotamian Path to Abstraction? On Sumerian “ontologies”– Introduction, in: S. FINK and R. ROLLINGER (eds.), *Conceptualizing Past, Present and Future: Proceedings of the Ninth Symposium of the Melammu Project Held in Helsinki / Tartu, May 18–24, 2015 (Melammu Symposia 9)*, Münster 2018, 409–433.

⁶⁹ Whether the text alludes to a human-like form of the mold (so FARBER, *Lied*, 69) cannot be decided. But see in the Old Babylonian Turtle Incantation VAT 8341,5 the reference to a (plano-convex) brick in the shape of a turtle carapace which could allude to the existence of non-rectangular molds (J. PETERSON, *A Study of Sumerian Faunal Conception with a Focus on the Terms Pertaining to the Order Testudines*, PhD Philadelphia 2007, 412.424–425). Neo-assyrian texts mention ritual models made of ivory CAD N/1, 200f. s.v. *nalbattu*.

⁷⁰ See A. SALONEN, *Die Ziegeleien im Alten Mesopotamien (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae Ser. B Tom. 171)*, Helsinki 1972, 87–102 Tf. 6; BARRELET, *Figurines*, 90–91 Fig. 62–63; A. FALKENSTEIN and W. VON SODEN (eds.), *Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete (Die Bibliothek der Alten Welt MCMLIII)*, Zürich 1953, 150–151.

⁷¹ See the expression סגור לב in Hos 13:8 indicating the rib cage, literally the case / enclosure of the heart.

blood) which conveys life to the human creatures⁷² is of divine origin, but clearly different from Genesis 2, the flesh or blood is always taken from one or more gods which had been slaughtered for the purpose of its collection.⁷³

In 2:21b β , the use of the verb סגר can be transitive or intransitive: a) flesh was somehow at the creator's, Yhwh God's, disposal when he replaced the first human's side in the mold or b) flesh closed over the impressed cavity by replacing the first human's side in the mold.⁷⁴ So, the verbal form ויסגר in 2:21b β contains a certain ambiguity between the *formatio* and *emersio* traditions;⁷⁵ the former presents creation as a craft production and the latter could allude to a growing procedure.⁷⁶ The important element for our interpretation of Gen 2:21b–22a is Yhwh God's manipulation with the shape of one of the human's sides and a new *materia* which as such implies, against a common Ancient Near Eastern background, the vitality of the creature to be fashioned.⁷⁷ As in other Near Eastern <495> traditions, the creation of mankind from clay and/or from flesh remains within the scope of the creator-potter model.⁷⁸

(3) “And Yhwh God built the side that he had taken from the human into a woman (ויבן יהוה אלהים את-הצלע אשר-לקח מן-האדם לאשה) Gen 2:22a). Apart from all its occurrences where בנה “to build” associated with the preposition ל means the construction of an architectural structure (tower, house, wall, altar, town etc.) *for* someone, god or man, there is only one other verse in the Hebrew Bible where the verb means “to build as”, implying a second level of a working process:⁷⁹ an already prepared object or structure will be processed in a second step. Taking the impression of one of the human's sides and shaping by means of a mold an equivalent counterpart of that side prepared the “object” that would finally be processed (ויבן) into Woman

⁷² See above n. 36.

⁷³ See KAR 4 obverse 18–20 (blood of two slaughtered gods that makes mankind grow, see LISMAN, *Cosmogony*, 60–61); *Enūma eliš* VI 31–34 (blood of Kingu, the leader of Thiamat's army, see STEINERT, *Aspekte*, 54–55; Th.R. KÄMMERER and K.A. METZLER [eds.], *Das babylonische Welterschöpfungsepos Enūma eliš* [AOAT 375], Münster 2012, 252–253); *Atramḥasīs* I 208–226 (flesh and blood of a slain Igiḡu-god, see STEINERT, *Aspekte*, 53–54); Enki und Ninmah a29–37 (menstruation blood of Namma?, see CECCARELLI, Enki, 24–30).

⁷⁴ Cf. the intransitive use of the verb סגר in Judg 3:22 “and the fat closed over the blade”.

⁷⁵ See above n. 67.

⁷⁶ Certain elements of an *emersio* tradition, but related to cosmogony, are present also in Gen 2:6, 10–14 (a spring and rivers rising up from the earth).

⁷⁷ Pace UEHLINGER, *Eva*, 95.98, who insists on the fact that for the creation of Woman no flesh has just been used, so that it is quite difficult to explain Woman's vitality (93) if not by its quasi-divine nature (98–99).

⁷⁸ See the references in n. 73.

⁷⁹ 1 Kings 6:16 “and he built this within as an inner sanctuary, as the most holy place”.

(לאשה). The semantic value of the Hebrew בנה “to build” in the field of craft terminology corresponds perfectly to the architectural term צלע “side”.

When 2:21b–22a is read, as we propose, within the paradigm of a molding procedure, the equivalent counterpart of the human’s side, made of flesh, was adapted in a second step to a new *concept*: אשה “Woman”. According to the text-internal narrator, this concept had been defined in advance by Yhwh God himself (2:22a) and was later confirmed in direct speech by the human protagonist (2:23).

VII. Conclusion

The plot in Genesis 2:18–23 culminates, in accordance with the specification כנגדו as a “counterpart” (2:18,20), in a recognition of kinship (2:23a) but not of identity. The human had expressly fallen asleep (ויישן 2:21a) before Yhwh God took one of his sides and then processed its flesh equivalent into Woman. The human cannot have any knowledge of what happened while he slept. When Woman finally was brought to him (ויבאה 2:22b), he could only express, as the story goes, what he *now* saw: her shape corresponding to his own shape. From 2:23bβ it appears that, in this text, correspondence is defined by a general match in shape – which is itself part of the molding paradigm!⁸⁰

In Gen 2:21b, 22a, according to our interpretation, the creation of Woman started from the human’s shape, was realized in a new *materia* and became the visible outcome of a new divine concept. In 2:22a, the correspondence in shape <496> is emphasized a second time (“the side that he had taken from the human”), directly before a new term appears on the world stage, אשה which, like בשר, had never been mentioned before in the Creation story. Shortly thereafter, when stating the correspondence of shape, the human protagonist expresses his gendered perception of humankind by creating the term איש “Man” (2:23bβ) which appears in the Hebrew Bible only *after* the term אשה (2:22a, 23bα) – while the popular etymology, in accordance with the story’s plot, inverts the logical order (2:23b “this one shall be called Woman (אשה) / for from Man (איש) / was taken this one”).

The proposed understanding of Genesis 2:21–23 follows the inner logic of the text and corresponds to a coherent view of its pictorial and metaphorical world and language. Nevertheless, in the long run, this explanatory model of the origins, the similarities and differences of Man and Woman

⁸⁰ When working with mold links in the corpus of the 450 female terracotta figurines from Iron Age Transjordan, it became obvious that casts taken from the same mold are never identical; they differ especially by their finish (paint, decorative dots and lines applied by tools, surface treatment, etc.).

was obviously not satisfactory and needed, for reasons that cannot be discussed here, a theological update. In Genesis 1:26–27⁸¹, which was written later, an alternate vision of the creation of humanity is emphasized: the only prototype is God, in his image (צֶלֶם) he created them, male and female, both as “near-replicas”⁸² of himself (*cf.* Genesis 3:22!).

⁸¹ Gen 1:27 “So God created humankind (אָדָם) in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”, *cf.* 5,2 “Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them ‘Humankind’ (אָדָם) when they were created.”

⁸² A. BRENNER-IDAN, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Cornerstones Series), London etc. 1985.²2015, 127. For the relation of Gen 1:5 and Gen 2–3 see also J. BARR, *One Man, or all Humanity? A Question in the Anthropology of Genesis 1*, in: A. BRENNER and J. W. VAN HENTEN (eds.), *Recycling Biblical Figures: Papers read at a NOSTER colloquium in Amsterdam, 12–13 May 1997* (Studies in Theology and Religion 1), Leiden 1999, 3–21; and the response by D.J.A. CLINES, אָדָם, the Hebrew for “Human, Humanity”: A Response to James Barr, VT 53 (2003) 297–310.