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WOMEN
Minns Lecture
Saturday, November 8, 2014
Kings Chapel, Boston, MA
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So a guy dies and goes to heaven. He gets up to the pearly gates, and there's St. Peter with his book of righteousness open before him.

"Hi, my name is Ted, I think you're expecting me?"

St. Peter runs a finger down the page in his book: "Ah yes, Ted. Cab driver, good guy, Assemblies of God... This all looks fine. There is, of course, a test I must administer before I can let you in."

"A test? Aw, jeez! I thought I was good to go...!"

"Don't panic," says St. Peter soothingly. "It's not that difficult."

"Well, okay," says Ted. "What is it?"

"Spell cat."

"C-A-T" says Ted.

"Brilliant! You're in! You can pick up your wings and halo at the welcome desk on your right..."

Another guy approaches St. Peter. "Good Afternoon. I'm George. I believe I have a reservation?"

"Ah right. Let's see: George... Yale University... Methodist, and I see you licked that little issue you had with alcoholism very nice...yes, I think we'll be all set just as soon as you pass the test."

"Test? What test? No one said anything about a test: You know, I was a legacy at Yale, I'm really not that good at..."

"Spell dog."

"D-O-G"

"That's it! In you go..." and George strolls through the gates.

Then Gloria Steinem appears.

"I'm Gloria Steinem."

“Yes Ms. Steinem...ah, yes, author, activist, plenty of good works, well done...there is just this little matter of a test.”

“Oh, yeah, right!” says Gloria. “Sure! It’s because I’m a woman, isn’t it? There’s always just one more test for a woman who wants to get into the good ol’ boys club...”

“No no, Ms. Steinem, please, you’ve got it all wrong. Everyone has a test before they can enter heaven. The two gentlemen who came in before you both had to pass a test....”

“Well, all right,” says Gloria. “What’s the test?”

“Spell Czechoslovakia.”

I love that joke.

You can really wreck a joke by analyzing it.

Still, have you ever noticed that these jokes always start with “A guy dies and goes to heaven?” It’s never “A woman dies and goes to heaven?” In this case, of course, that’s sort of the point, but even when it’s not, the guy dies and goes to heaven and no one thinks: *Oh, it’s a guy. Interesting.*

There’s an experiment that I first performed while at seminary, in a class on science and religion. Though this particular seminary boasted students from diverse religious backgrounds, “Science and Religion” attracted a mostly theologically liberal group. Eight out of the dozen or so students in the class were women and, though a minority at the seminary, Unitarian Universalists were well represented. One of these was a UU minister, ten years or so my senior. She had been active in the feminist movement of the 1970s, and was well known in Maine’s UU community for her adherence to feminist theology and rigorous championship of liberal causes. I was in awe of her.

Anyway, the experiment was fairly simple: I asked everyone to take out a piece of a paper and a pencil, and begin writing a story about a squirrel who has found an acorn the size of a watermelon.

After some thought, they all began to write. I gave them five or ten minutes, then called for pencils down. I asked each student in turn to read aloud the first few sentences of his or her story.

My colleagues had some pretty good little stories under way, mostly funny ones, though some were slightly tragic, and at least half were clearly destined for use as a Sunday children's homily. There were good and evil squirrels, fat squirrels, hungry squirrels, squirrels who'd been profiled by the police... Too bad the exercise wasn't actually about story-writing. Halfway through the readings, that uber-feminist UU minister said "Ai yi yi" and dropped her head in her hands. She'd just realized the point: *Every single squirrel in every single story was male.* Including the squirrel in her story.

I've since repeated this exercise many times, with men, women, boys and girls, in a wide variety of contexts. The squirrels are *always* male.

Why?

I'm going to give you an answer to the question... if you'll let me. I'm a little defensive, frankly, because the other day I was describing this phenomenon to my friend Susan—those of you who were here last night were introduced to Susan: She's another UU minister and staunch feminist. I'd gotten as far as the point where all the squirrels in the stories were male... and I was drawing breath preparatory to expounding my own theory about why this might be when I was pipped at the post: With that wise, sad, abstract look on her face, Susan said "Yes, there it is, isn't it?"

"What?"

"In a patriarchal society women are still marginalized and oppressed."

"Well, but even the super-feminist minister had a boy squirrel..."

"That just shows how entrenched it is, and how premature it is to declare an end to the revolution," Susan said darkly, as if she was thinking we might have to resort to re-education camps or something.

"Because there's a glass ceiling for fictional squirrels?"

At which point Susan got mad at me, not for the first time, and we had to turn the conversation to something else.

I'll get back to the squirrels eventually, I promise, but Susan's reaction illustrates something I talked about last night: The human tendency to construct theories and then defend them against all comers. The metaphor I used last night was a box: Maybe today I'll talk about the lenses we look through, and how the same lens that brings some things more sharply into focus tends to render others more obscure.

How many characters in Winnie the Pooh's Seven Hundred Acre Wood are female?

One.

Kanga—Roo's mom.

It's an old-school story, written by A.A. Milne early in the last century, when the world was even more in the iron grip of patriarchy. Clingy Edwardian sexism can explain why ol' AA didn't write more girls into his stories, but I read Winnie the Pooh as a child in the 1960s and 70s and read them to my own children in the 1980s and 90s. I'll probably read them to my grandchildren in the 2020s.

Sitting there on the sofa, moving, breathing and having our being in a world in which 50 percent of the bears, pigs, marsupials and people are female, why did neither my children nor I notice that Pooh, Tigger, Rabbit, Roo, Owl, Eeyore and Piglet are all boys? Why didn't it seem really strange to us that nearly all the puppets on Sesame Street were boys—Cookie Monster, Big Bird, Elmo, Grover, Oscar the Grouch, Snuffleupagus, Ernie and Bert?

I mentioned this to a young parent recently. She assured me that they've got a lot more female characters on Sesame Street these days, though she couldn't name any of them even though her kids do watch the show.

I looked it up—Google is a great thing—and out of the twenty puppet characters regularly appearing on Sesame Street, six are now female. Well, okay. That's an improvement, I guess, although if you want to support America's most progressive, politically correct television production company by buying stuff, only two out of the ten "character collections" on offer at the Children's Television Workshop website are based on girl puppets. If you take your kids to see Sesame Street Live, only three of the twelve muppets dancing will be girls.

But don't worry: Your kids won't notice.

Unless, of course, they hang around my house: My poor children had to put up with me counting the women in every movie we saw together "See!" I'd mutter at them, between mouthfuls of popcorn. "Only two women. There's Mom, and there's the Love Interest."

If you don't believe me, ask an actress. I asked Caitlyn Fitzgerald—she's an actress on the show Masters Of Sex. She's a Mainer (we're very proud of her) so I asked Caitlyn and yup: She says the paucity of female characters in the stories we tell on-screen make life as an actress a precarious thing.

There appears to be an unspoken and all-but-unrecognized rule under which our imaginations are constrained. I call it the Automatic Boy rule.

An average story will have, at best, two female characters: Mom, and the Love Interest. Otherwise, every character in every story we tell, in whatever medium, will be male unless there is some compelling reason to make a character female.

The compelling reason might be reality—historical reality, for example. Queen Elizabeth simply was female, no getting around that.

The compelling reason might be that, having viewed the world through the lens of feminism, the story teller decides to make a deliberate effort to be non-sexist. The makers of Sesame Street have been making that deliberate effort for a long time now—half a century—and it's still painfully, obviously deliberate and the results are frankly piss-poor and pathetic.

Is it merely “society” that has shackled our imaginations? Shackled them so thoroughly that the sad donkey who marks a birthday with a popped balloon or the grouchy green monster who dwells in a trashcan have to be, automatically, boys?

By the time “Spongebob Squarepants” appeared on television, I'd given up TV altogether, preferring my children to imbibe their sexist biases from the pages of a good book. Still, on a show so wildly imaginative that it made a hero out of a yellow kitchen sponge, only one of the seven main characters in the story is female.

At least she's a squirrel.

What's with all the boy squirrels?

The basic recipe for a story is this:

There's a character.

The character has a problem.

The character solves the problem (happy ending).

The character fails to solve the problem (sad ending).

In a good story, the virtue, the worthiness, the goodness (or lack thereof) of the character is developed and revealed.

My friend Susan had an interesting thought: She suggested that maybe the problem is that storytellers are ultimately, if metaphorically, dealing with morality and ethics. Women are known to be more naturally moral than men, so there's less dramatic tension in a story that tests her virtue?

I have to say, this hadn't occurred to me. Are women really known to be more moral than men? Kind of a refreshing change, if so, from the days when women from Eve on down were considered morally inferior as well as inferior in all other ways.

Maybe Susan is onto something: In an essay included in a book entitled *What Makes a Man?* filmmaker Michael Moore writes: "In the past few centuries, things seem to have taken a final turn for our gender. As is our wont, we commenced work on a series of projects that stunk everything up and made a mess of our world. Women? They deserve none of the blame. They continued to bring life into this world; we continued to destroy it whenever we could.

How many women have come up with the idea of exterminating a whole race of people? I think we all know the answer."

Presumably, Moore is talking Hitler, and the Holocaust.

As it happens, I've been making a personal study of the Holocaust lately. Since I studied the subject back in college, a whole lot of fascinating information has emerged out of the archives of the former Soviet Union and the former GDR. This time around, I am spending much less time reading accounts by and about the victims of the genocide, and more time investigating the motives and mentality of the perpetrators.

This is because, as I said last night, being the victim of a crime reveals nothing about you other than that you are vulnerable. Being the perpetrator of a crime reveals much, and because I am professionally interested (indeed, obliged) to think long and deeply about good and evil, violence and victimization, guilt and innocence, it makes sense to ask what the hell the perpetrators—the Germans and their accomplices—were thinking. Who were these people?

Some of them—more than you may have realized, and obviously more than Michael Moore realized, were women.

Hitler's long-time comrade Eleanor Baur participated in the Beer Hall Putsch (for which she was honored with the Blood Order) helped found the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP/Nazis) and had a major role in the construction and administration of Dachau. Though Hitler never received a majority of German votes in a free election, of those who did vote for him, a disproportionate number were women.

Remember that violence is primarily—not exclusively but primarily—the responsibility of men. Nonetheless, about 10 percent of concentration camp guards were women and by all accounts their behavior was no less brutal or sadistic than that of their male counterparts.

Though the Nazis were reactionary about gender roles, it was women who, as nurses, carried out the euthanasia program aimed at eliminating the mentally ill and genetically suspect from the *Volksgemeinschaft*. It was women who, as secretaries in concentration camps and SS offices, typed up the lists of murdered innocents and mailed them off to female secretaries in Berlin for tidy filing.

Female teachers withdrew their nurturance and support from the Jewish children in their classrooms and administered lessons to the rest of the class in the scientific and moral legitimacy of racism. And it was the wives and mothers who unpacked the crates of plundered goods that flowed in from the lands their menfolk conquered, women who, for the duration of the war, were able to feed their German families well on the spoils of war even as other European families went hungry. It was women who dressed their young in the wee clothes of murdered Jewish children.

When Linda Gordon, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, reviewed Claudia Koontz' book about women in Nazi Germany, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, she discovered in it the “disturbing” and thus presumably novel message that “...women are not necessarily morally or emotionally superior to men...”

That comforting modifier is striking, isn't it? Not necessarily! Even after reading an exhaustive, 500-page study of all the ways German non-Jewish women endorsed, encouraged, acquiesced in and profited by the Nazi movement, Professor Gordon inexplicably retained the hope that the moral and emotional superiority of the female sex might yet be proved.

If, consciously or otherwise, you share Moore's assumptions or Gordon's hopes, you'll be surprised by how many American women were implicated at every level in the Abu Ghraib scandal.

Lynndie England wasn't the only female soldier standing around the bloodied concrete floor of Cellblock A. Sabrina Harmon and Megan Ambuhl also smiled their pretty smiles at ugly acts. General Janet Karpinski was the commander of all detainee operations in Iraq, while Captain Carol Wood, fresh from a stint at Baghram Airbase in Afghanistan (she would have the dismal privilege of being featured in Alex Gibney's Oscar-winning documentary about detainee torture, "Taxi to the Dark Side") is credited with writing General Ricardo Sanchez' famous memo authorizing various take-the-gloves-off interrogation "enhancements" for use at Abu Ghraib. One could legitimately include Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in the list of implicated females, since Rice was certainly aware of the torture memos and aware, too, that there were big problems at Gitmo, Baghram and Abu Ghraib.

When I mention the surprising number of women who, having been given the opportunity for full participation in the military, went on to take star roles in the Abu Ghraib abuse scandal, female friends get defensive.

"Well, but these were women who were trying to get by in a male environment," they insist. "They were trying to fit in."

"They weren't just trying. They were succeeding."

"Yeah, but you just know that they had had to prove themselves and, show they were just as tough as the guys. They couldn't rock the boat!"

"Lyndie England claims she went along with the abuse because she didn't want Charles Graner to stop liking her."

"Well, okay, but wasn't she from sort of a deprived background? I mean, she was pretty powerless..."

Power is a relative thing. Compared to Condoleezza Rice, Lyndie England was indeed one of America's social weaklings. On the other hand, compared to the naked guy on the other end of the leash, she had all the power anyone could ask for.

At some point during the vivid, almost painfully beautiful autumn that followed 9/11, I received my fall issue of *Tricycle* magazine. *Tricycle* is published by and for

American Buddhists and, though I am not a Buddhist, I usually find much that is interesting and useful within its pages. Yet I had not been looking forward to this issue.

On the cover was a dark image of the twin towers. Inside, I knew I would find admonitions to peacefulness, nonviolence, acceptance, forgiveness of enemies, and probably that story about the Tibetan lama whose greatest fear was that he would forget to be compassionate toward his cruel Chinese captors.

I like acceptance and forgiveness, I like Tibetan lamas, but cops in New York, a few of whom I knew personally, were digging the remains of their comrades from the rubble of the World Trade Center. I just wasn't in the mood.

What I had forgotten, however, is that the editorial offices for *Tricycle* are located in lower Manhattan. The editors had been deeply, personally affected by that day. One of them, Stephen Batchelor, refrained from reiterating the old understandings, and refreshingly confessed to a new one. After decades as a Buddhist committed to non-violence, he had watched police officers running past him in the streets, moving toward and not away from the place of greatest danger. He now understood that his ability to practice non-violence without risking his life had been predicated on the willingness of the state—in the form of police officers and soldiers—to use violence to protect him.

Batchelor recognized that our relationship with violence is considerably more complicated than we might wish.

Batchelor's insight could be expanded beyond the peaceful American Buddhist's dependence upon the protection of soldiers and police officers. We could recognize all kinds of ways in which gentle, peaceful people who wouldn't hurt a fly are in reality only allowing others to do the dirty work.

My children grew up in a Colonial house situated on a half-acre of land. The house isn't just "colonial" in style: It was actually built when Maine was still part of the English colony of Massachusetts. It's old enough to retain vestiges of the eighteenth century's version of a Safe Room. In what is now the living room, the walls were thickly reinforced between the beams with handmade bricks capable of stopping arrows during an Indian attack. Though the original floor has long since been replaced, it would have been equipped with a trapdoor leading to a tunnel, through which the colonial family could escape if Indians set the house on fire.

No record exists of a battle waged over the particular half-acre we referred to as “the backyard” but we can nonetheless be perfectly certain of who won. European-American men forcibly wrested all the land in the vicinity from Passamaquoddy and Micmac men. European-American wives and children waxed fat at the expense of their Native American counterparts and, numerous as stars, continue to do so down to the present day.

The women and children did not do the violence themselves, for the most part. But we have benefited from it. If the European women settling in and around New England in the seventeenth century had refused to countenance violence, had refused to make their homes on stolen land or feed their children from the spoils of war, Native Americans would still own my land.

If white women in the American South had refused to participate in and profit by the enslavement of black women and men, there would have been no slavery here. If German gentile women had refused to go along with the persecution of the Jews, there would have been no Holocaust.

By the evidence of history, my own life and, frankly, my own behavior, I’ve long been convinced that women, as a group, are no more naturally moral than men. Should one of my daughters decide to join the armed forces or, for that matter, become a police officer, she would be faced with the same complex moral choices such service posed to her brother when he joined the Marines, or anyone who accepts responsibility for meeting and managing the realities of power and violence in the world.

As it happens, my youngest daughter Woolie has indeed become a police officer. As a woman in a virtually all-male world, she’s learning to handle sexism. She’s learning to “spell Czechoslovakia.”

She’s good at it, and I’m very proud of her. To assert, as Michael Moore would do, that the mere possession of ovaries streamlines my daughter’s moral decision-making and makes virtue easy neither compliments nor honors her.

In fact, ironically, it is Lynndie England’s leash that lets us grasp the full heroism of the female soldiers who lie buried with my father at Arlington and the female law enforcement officers whose names are engraved beside the name of Woolie’s dad, there on the memorial in Judiciary Square.

So maybe we tell stories about boy squirrels because boy squirrels have interesting problems with morality, while girl squirrels are naturally, tediously good...but I doubt it, and I hope not, because frankly, I'd rather be bad than boring.

I can think of another reason.

Once upon a time, there was a knight in shining armor.

The knight was asked to fight a fierce and terrible dragon that was menacing the kingdom. The knight puts on his shining armor, takes up his sword and fights the dragon. Eventually, he kills the dragon. The kingdom is free! Yay!

What is the knight's reward?

The princess.

Let's say the knight is female. She fights the dragon, kills the dragon, frees the kingdom. Yay! Does she get to marry the prince and have his babies?

Depends.

Is she pretty?

An evolutionary biologist would explain that, by killing the dragon, a male knight has offered proof of the superiority of his genes. Anthropologists would identify the fight with the dragon as analogous to coming-of-age rituals in which boys must prove their strength, courage, intelligence, tenacity and/or endurance. These are real tests. Pass the test—kill the dragon—and you're a man, with the rights, privileges and responsibilities of full adulthood.

What college quarterback doesn't get the connection between winning the game and winning the cheerleader? A woman can win the game, defeat the dragon, win the election, win the MacArthur Genius grant, and while these accomplishments will no doubt be very satisfying, these won't get her any closer to womanhood. Personhood, yes. Womanhood, not so much.

Remember that the basic story line goes like this:

There's a character.

The character has a problem.

The character solves the problem.

And changes or reveals himself in the process.

Real life isn't like that. In real life, you can get eaten by the dragon no matter how brave and good you are. We don't like it...so we tell stories.

If the character is female, the problem is solved; she learns something about herself and in real life that would be great!

In a story, that would be... okay.

If the character is male, however, he gets the kingdom and the girl, pretty little Princess Reproductive Opportunity! Wahoo! And the teller and hearer of the story vicariously get it too.

I don't mean that we're all thinking about sex while we write about squirrels, or Big Bird or Spongebob Squarepants... I just mean that it is more fun to tell a story in which the stakes are instinctively understood to be high. Fighting a dragon (or for that matter, a Heffalump) is a big risk. Social recognition as an adult man is a big prize.

So much for the Automatic Boy.

As it happens, however, the Automatic Boy has a consort. I call her the Unexpected Girl.

I take it as a given that (other than Mom and Princess Reproductive Opportunity) every character in a story will be male unless there is some compelling reason to make it a female. So whenever a female character appears in a place that COULD HAVE BEEN occupied by a male... I pay attention.

And so do you. We pay attention to Unexpected Girls.

Here's an example: Joan of Arc.

She's familiar, right? If you can name no other figure from French history—certainly no other figure from the Hundred Years War, which was Joan's war—you'll be able to name Joan.

She was kind of a big deal, I guess: By the time she appeared on the scene, the Hundred Years War was pretty close to earning its moniker, the English had nearly achieved their goal of a dual monarchy under English control, and the French army was pretty much circling the drain. Joan's mission to the besieged city of Orleans was a bit of a Hail Mary pass, conducted at the behest of God and the uncrowned Charles VII. It worked, anyway, and the siege was lifted. Later, of course, Joan was captured and burned at the stake as a heretic.

This is a pretty dramatic story, but I submit to you that mere drama doesn't explain Joan. Everything else in the story could've been exactly the same—the military miracle, the religious visions, the death at the stake—but if Joan's name had been John, he would not be a saint, and would not appear as a thousand statues, icons, coins and boxes of Brie throughout the Francophone world, and you would never have heard of him.

Slightly less famous is the British Boadicea, also a female military leader from long-ago days whose noble visage is an important cultural icon in the U.K. Like Joan of Arc, she is not memorialized as herself, but as a symbol of her people. Other countries have them too—Sweden has Blenda (who fought off the Danes) Japan has Hangaku Gozen and Vietnam the Trung Sisters...women warriors, unexpected and remembered.

Joan of Arc is an Unexpected Girl. How does an Unexpected Girl come to be?

Rahab makes for an interesting case study. She's a Canaanite prostitute from the Hebrew Bible. Dwelling in the besieged city of Jericho, she had evidently heard enough from the anxious guests of her brothel to conclude that the Israelites were going to win the coming battle.

Rahab could have run away, or taken up arms, but instead she exhibited the "tend-and-befriend" response described by UCLA researchers as an especially feminine alternative to fight or flight. She helped a pair of Israelite spies in exchange for their promise of protection for herself and her extended family.

Now, in the normal way of things, Rahab would not have had to worry too much about dying in the Battle of Jericho. She'd lose all her menfolk, or at least the males of military age, but she and her children would probably survive because they would be considered part of the spoils of war, slaves to be taken along with the livestock, the grain stores and the land itself.

But maybe what Rahab heard from those Israeli spies was that this wasn't going to be the usual sort of war. This was religious. (Uh oh.)

When the Walls Came A' Tumblin' Down, Joshua told his men to put all the inhabitants of Jericho to death and, just to leave them no wiggle-room, he was specific about the women and children. Thirty thousand were, he later claimed, sacrificed as a thank-you gift to God for knocking down those walls.

When you fight a war for the glory of God, it isn't about personal gain. You aren't supposed to walk away with a bunch of new wives, concubines and slaves. That's what made the slaughter Joshua's personal sacrifice—he was giving up his legitimate possessions for God.

Rahab is a Hebrew heroine, and is named in the New Testament as one of Jesus' honored ancestors, but had the Canaanites won the Battle of Jericho, Rahab might have received the kind of treatment the French meted out to women they accused of being "horizontal collaborators" at the end of the Second World War.

French women who had formed sexual relationships with German soldiers had their heads shaved, and were paraded naked in the streets.

Eighty thousand babies were born to French women and German fathers during the occupation. For that matter, five thousand Danish women gave birth to children sired by German soldiers, and no, these were not, for the most part, rapes: In a wartime poll, 51 percent of women in occupied Denmark confessed to finding German men more attractive than Danish ones.

When I mention this to female friends, they express bewilderment. Men get it instantly: "The Germans were the victors," my friend and fellow history-buff, Warden Jason Luce, declared succinctly. "Victory is sexy to women."

Frenchmen found this discouraging. Their humiliation was presumably soothed by ritually abusing women who had so obviously spurned them for the conquerors, but it also allowed them to pretend that they themselves had not gone along with the Nazi Program.

As one French commentator dryly declared, "We were all in bed with the Germans."

Anyway, the point is that, traditionally, if there is a war, men get killed and women get hitched, raped or carried off into slavery by the victors.

I have no wish to be raped, don't get me wrong, but being raped is not a fate worse than death. Even if my noble human spirit rebels, my selfish Darwinian genes rejoice: Where there's life, there's the hope of making it into the next generation.

When a woman takes up arms, like Joan, she forfeits whatever safety she might have had in being considered war booty. Thus, the participation of a woman in a battle

is a galvanizing signal that the fight isn't just another man-to-man joust to determine the Alpha Male, this is a conflict that has the commitment of the entire community.

At the very end of the Second World War, in one of his last, desperate attempts to rally the Germans, the Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels told the story of Maria Bierganz, an attractive, "Aryan-looking" seventeen-year-old girl. Bierganz had been arrested by the American troops occupying her town, Monschau, on suspicion of being a member of the pro-Nazi resistance.

Goebbels invented a much more dramatic ordeal for Maria than the one she actually endured: She was held for a couple of months by polite, friendly soldiers in what she afterward admitted were good conditions, but Goebbels called her "a heroine in the shadow of death" and invented a whole trial scene in which she bravely spoke up to the Americans sitting in judgment.

"We all know" Goebbels said, "that this girl spoke in our name. This child of the people spoke for the whole *volk!*"

Yes. Exactly.

Lots of German boys and men were being arrested for resisting the American occupation... but the Unexpected Girl can speak for the whole people.

Postwar Germans, wishing to distance themselves from a frankly disgusting past, would anoint a new personification of Germany, Sophie Scholl.

Sophie belonged to a student resistance group called the Order of the White Rose that wrote and distributed leaflets within Germany, exposing the crimes of the Nazis and calling on the German people to rise against Hitler. Founded with her brother Paul Scholl, most of the group's members were boys. Three were caught and executed, including nineteen-year-old Sophie... and it is Sophie who has statues, coins, icons and images all over Germany, Sophie who has movies made about her, Sophie for whom more than two hundred German secondary schools are named.

Sophie Scholl was an Unexpected Girl—a fine one to represent a new and better Germany.

I mentioned Eve, didn't I? Eve was an Unexpected Girl.

Oh, I know: Isn't Eve the original Mom and Reproductive Opportunity rolled into one? Well, yes.

Sometimes you ruin a story by analyzing it. Sometimes the story, once analyzed, just gets better.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and God created the Ha'adam, the Earth Creature. "Let us create man in our own image," God said, and made an Automatic Boy who, in his wholeness (whole because Eve had not yet been taken from his side) spoke and named the animals: Bear, Owl, Rabbit...Squirrel...Grouch...

That the Earth Creature might not be lonesome, that the Earth Creature might make love—*eros*, yes, but also *storgi* and *philos* and especially *agape*...That the Ha'adam might join *agape* to *agape* and earnestly desire the wholeness of the beloved whole...

God divided the Ha'adam, drawing the Unexpected Girl from the side of man that they might dwell together in peace, seek the truth in love, and help one another. And behold: It was good!

Until...it wasn't.

One of the questions that has apparently vexed theologians over the centuries is this: What was up with Adam?

You remember the story, right? God makes Adam, God makes Eve, God tells them both to go frolic in the garden, do whatever they want, just don't touch the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Ah, but the serpent says: "Look, you've got to taste this fruit. Seriously! Eat this, and you will be as Gods!"

And Eve argues. She says, "God told us not to eat this fruit..." and they go back and forth a few times, and then Eve takes a bite.

"Then she gave the fruit to Adam and he ate also."

Why didn't he argue? Say: "Damn, woman, what are you thinking, eating that fruit?"

Well, maybe it was because he was a really nice guy, and he didn't want Eve to sin alone? I went to Sunday services at a tiny Methodist church on the Caribbean Island of Jost van Dyke, and that was what the minister preached: That Adam didn't want Eve to sin by herself, because he was a good guy.

But maybe Eve tricked Adam?

Maybe she seduced him?

It's funny: Just about everyone seems to imagine that when Eve and the snake had their little *tête-à-tête*, Adam was somewhere else. Check it out sometime: In a graphic novel version, including the recent one by the cartoonist R. Crumb, you'll see that Eve is there, the snake is there, and Adam is... somewhere else.¹

There's no evidence for this in the Bible story. In fact, the story makes a lot more sense if you assume Adam and Eve are standing together. When the serpent makes his pitch and Eve argues with him, she is speaking for both people—the whole Ha'adam. When she gives the fruit to Adam, he doesn't argue because she has already made the argument for them both.

Before the Fall, before both Adam and Eve ate the fruit, there was no existential separation between them. Disunity was among the sad consequences of disobedience. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were (sorry, R. Crumb!) on the same page, and spoke with one voice.

If the one voice they spoke with was Adam's voice, what would you and I presume?

That Adam was dominant over Eve, that she was made by God to be subordinate and voiceless, and that female silence and subjugation were part of the creation God called "good," not a tragic departure from that goodness. Only by allowing Eve to speak, only by giving us an Unexpected Girl could the storyteller in Genesis let us know what Paradise really was.

None of us is a character in story—we aren't automatic or unexpected girls but rather full, complex human beings, the descendants not of Eve or Adam, but of the original Ha'adam, male and female created he them.

Adam was an automatic boy... but God wasn't happy with that. It is not good for a human being to be alone, it's boring and lonesome, and so God created an unexpected girl and with her a community and a world

¹ As it happens, Brendan Powell Smith's *The Brick Bible* is an interesting exception!

By all means, notice and protest the automatic boys, and when you tell your own stories or even crack your own jokes, see what happens when you turn a few of those boy squirrels, grouches and sponges into girls, just for fun.

But when someone is telling a story to you, pay attention to the unexpected girls—from Eve to Joan, from Sophie Scholl to Lynndie England, moral or immoral, it is she who speaks in our name. It is she who speaks for the whole people.