



ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE TRACES OF WOMB ENVY IN THE PATRIARCHAL PANTHEON IN
GREEK MYTHOLOGY¹

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Abstract

Myths provide insight both into the cultural aspects of human societies and the psychological motivations behind human actions, drives, urges, dreams and fantasies. Myths illustrate how the ancient people make sense of their existence, creation, the working of the Earth, natural events and catastrophes. They also provide symbolic representations and projections of desired attainments, relations, bodies and institutions in human culture. In this sense, wishfulfillment can be considered one of the fundamental functions of myths. Important psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung also extensively make use of myths to shed light on various aspects of cultural practices, human psyche and behavior. This paper intends to explore the traces of womb envy in Greek mythology since it is one of the fundamental feelings and desires that can be observed in the male psyche. The child-bearing capacity of women, along with the pre-oedipal mother-child relation, has always created anxiety and fear in male deities, which in fact reflect the real life experience. Gods' desire to possess the ruling power can be seen as an attempt to overcome this fear and make up for their lack of reproductive capacity. This paper will examine the selected myths in a psychoanalytic framework with specific references to Melanie Klein's and Karen Horney's concepts of womb envy in the light of the following defense mechanisms: 1) compensation and sublimation, 2) over-idealization and valorization of manhood, 3) devaluation of the self, 4) devaluation of female body and capacity, 5) appropriation of reproduction and procreation.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Womb Envy, Greek Mythology, Defense Mechanisms, Sublimation and compensation

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YUNAN MİTOLOJİSİNDE ATAERKİL PANTEON'DA RAHİM KISKANÇLIĞININ İZLERİ

Öz

Mitler, hem insan toplumlarının kültürel yönlerine hem de insan eylem, dürtü, rüya ve fantezilerinin ardındaki psikolojik motivasyonlara ilişkin içgörü sağlar. Mitler, eski insanların varlıklarını, yaratılışlarını, dünyanın işleyişini, doğal olayları ve felaketleri nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını gösterir. Ayrıca mitler insan kültüründe ulaşılması arzu edilen kazanım, ilişki, beden ve kurumların sembolik temsillerini ve projeksiyonlarını sağlarlar. Bu açıdan bakıldığında özellikle de bilinç dışı dilek ve arzuların gerçekleştirilmesi, mitlerin temel işlevlerinden biri olarak kabul edilebilir. Sigmund Freud ve Carl Jung gibi önemli psikanalistler de kültürel uygulamalarla beraber insan ruhunun ve davranışlarının çeşitli yönlerine ışık tutmak için yaygın olarak mitlerden yararlanırlar. Bu makale, erkeklerde gözlenebilen temel duygulardan biri olan rahim kıskançlığının Yunan mitolojisindeki izlerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ödipal öncesi anne-çocuk ilişkisi ile birlikte kadının çocuk doğurma kapasitesi, erkek tanrılarda her zaman kaygı ve korku yaratmıştır. Tanrıların yönetme ve kontrol etme gücüne sahip olma arzusu ve hırsı, bu korkularının üstesinden gelme ve üreme kapasitelerindeki bu eksikliği telafi etme girişimi olarak görülebilir. Bu makale, konu ile ilgili olarak seçilen mitlerin, Melanie Klein ve Karen Horney'in rahim kıskançlığı kavramları çerçevesinde psikanalitik analizinin: 1) telafi ve yüceltme, 2) erkeğin aşırı idealleştirilmesi ve değer verilmesi 3) benliğin değersizleştirilmesi 4) kadın bedeninin ve kapasitesinin değersizleştirilmesi, 5) üreme işlevinin kendine mal edilmesi olmak üzere kullanılan savunma mekanizmaları ışığında yapılmasını amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Psikanaliz, Rahim Kıskançlığı, Yunan Mitolojisi, Savunma Mekanizmaları, Yüceltme ve ödünleme

INTRODUCTION

Myths provide insight both into the cultural aspects of human societies and the psychological motivations behind human actions, drives, urges, dreams, and fantasies. Myths illustrate how the ancient people make sense of their existence, creation, the workings of the Earth, natural events, and catastrophes. Many archetypes that constitute the collective unconscious have been derived from myths. They also provide symbolic representations and projections of the desired attainments, relations, bodies, and institutions. In this sense, wishfulfillment can be considered one of the fundamental functions of myths. Important psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung also extensively make use of myths to shed light on various aspects of cultural practices, the human psyche, and behavior. This paper intends to explore the traces of womb envy in Greek mythology since it is one of the fundamental desires that can be observed in the male psyche.

Womb envy is a term coined by Karen Horney in an attempt to challenge penis envy which Freud offered to provide justification for his claim that the little girl's psychic life is deeply influenced by the wish to possess a penis herself. Freud (1925) defines women as males who lack a penis and "refuse to accept the fact of being castrated" with the "hope of someday obtaining a penis in spite of everything" (p. 253). The girl's desire to have a baby, specifically a male baby, is indeed considered a substitute for the long-wished penis. According to Horney, the flight from womanhood is also motivated by penis envy.

However, Freud's theories concerning the psychosexual development of boys and girls have come under attack due to their sexist implications. Freud is alleged for being androcentric and thus valorizing the penis as the sign of power, prestige, and privileges. To Horney (1973),

Freud's insight into feminine psychology is incomplete and unsatisfactory (p.55). She maintains that "Psychoanalysis is the creation of a male genius, and almost all those who have developed his ideas have been men. It is only right and reasonable that they should evolve more easily a masculine psychology" (p.54). Horney (1973) does not see penis envy as a myth or an illusion nor does she deny this phenomenon as unnatural. On the contrary, she points out to the mutual envy and attraction the sexes feel for each other. She asserts that because of human nature, it is impossible to feel "appreciation without resentment toward capabilities that one does not possess" (pp.19-20). Similarly, Boehm (1930) states that "it excites our envy when others have something more than we have ourselves. We may say, further, that when they have something different, something which we can never have, we experience a sense of inferiority" (p. 457). From this perspective, womb envy is as natural as penis envy.

Although penis envy has gained a lot of support in male-dominated literary and psychoanalytic theories, womb envy has not yet received enough attention in psychoanalysis. Karen Horney (1973) introduced the concept of womb envy when she observed the frequency and intensity of male envy of "pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood, as well as of breasts and of the act of suckling" (pp.60-61) in her clinical practices which led her to propose the following three considerations:

(i) In boys of the same age, we meet with parallel expressions in the form of wishes to possess breasts or to have a child. (ii) In neither sex have these manifestations any influence on the child's behavior as a whole. (iii) Another possible category suggests itself if we accept the assumption that there is in every human being a bisexual disposition. (p.20)

Although Freud suggests that the instinctual life of a girl is marked by her desire to have a penis, Horney (1973) maintains that boys of the same age are likewise motivated by the desire to have a breast or a child (p.151). Several psychoanalysts and critics such as Nelson (1967), Zilboorg (1944), and van Leeuwen (1966) maintain that the male envy of women is much older, and thus more primary and foundational than the female envy of men. Eschbach (2008) asserts that womb envy can be regarded "as the most primordial of all envies" (p.49). Faergeman (1955) states that it is an established fact that men envy women for their "breasts, vagina and womb" (p. 16). Male pregnancy fantasies can be accepted as the consequence of this envy since "At the most, it is only in the act of birth that she perhaps has potentialities of pleasure denied to the man" (Horney, 1973, p.59). Female biology is one thing that grants women a sense of superiority and prerogative. "From the biological point of view woman has in motherhood, or in the capacity for motherhood, a quite indisputable and by no means negligible physiological superiority. This is most clearly reflected in the unconscious of the male psyche in the boy's intense envy of motherhood" (Horney, 1973, p.60).

In Greek mythology, Gods' act of swallowing up their offspring can be construed as the gratification of the pregnancy fantasy and female reproductive potential. Mother goddesses are earth goddesses and they are fertile like nature. Although this elemental life-creating power of women fill men with awe and admiration, this is exactly where problems emerge (Horney, 1973, p.115). Cronus, the father of the Olympian Gods, has been subject to womb envy. His act of swallowing up his offspring as soon as they are born can be taken as a clear manifestation of his pregnancy fantasy. He throws up the children he keeps in his stomach upon drinking the portion

Zeus serves him to save his siblings. This act of vomiting the children uncannily contains the satisfaction obtained from the realization of the fantasy of childbearing. The pregnancy fantasy can also be observed in Zeus's act of swallowing up the pregnant Metis. The baby automatically becomes a part of his belly and continues to grow up inside his body. Athena's birth causes Zeus to suffer from unbearable pain which is very much like the pain of labour a pregnant woman goes through during the delivery of the baby. Similarly, Zeus' placing his son, Dionysus, in his own body is another example of womb envy and desire for pregnancy. Zeus saved the as-yet-unborn baby from the ashes when the six-month pregnant mum Semele has been burnt down by his lightning. The baby is taken away from Semele's womb and placed in Zeus' thigh where the baby has stayed for three more months, which, like Athena's birth, is the symbolic representation of the physical delivery of a baby by a man.

Because of culturally promoted patriarchal teachings and impositions, the acknowledgment of womb envy is out of the question for men since it brings shame, humiliation, and disgrace to their overvalued manhood. Hence, men make use of various defense mechanisms as coping strategies to protect their self-respect in the face of womb envy. Defense mechanisms are intentional mental maneuvers to decrease the negative impact of "internal" or "external sources of stress", and "unacceptable impulses" (Cramer, 2006, p.7) by "chang[ing] the way in which we perceive 'reality' and think about ourselves" (Cramer, 2006, p.4). Defense mechanisms serve two functions: "to protect the individual from experiencing excessive anxiety, and to protect the integration of the self" (Cramer, p.7). Klein (1957) described six defenses men employ to handle their feeling of envy which she had discovered through her clinical work: 1) idealisation, 2) devaluation of the object, 3) devaluation of the self, 4) appropriation, 5) stirring up envy in others, 6) stifling feelings of love and corresponding intensifying of hatred (pp. 62-67). Deriving from Klein's model and Freud's defense mechanisms, this paper examines basically five different responses and behavioral patterns the womb envy generates in men: 1) compensation and sublimation, 2) over-idealization and valorization of manhood 3) devaluation of the self 4) devaluation of female body and capacity, 5) appropriation of reproduction and procreation.

1. COMPENSATION AND SUBLIMATION

Horney puts forward that women's potential for generating, maintaining, and supporting life in the process of pregnancy and motherhood brings about fear and jealousy, which lead men to develop a neurotic need that can be observed in their obsessive search for success, achievement, and power. According to Freud (1925), neurosis develops as a result of anxiety and fear and can be caused by traumas and the return of the repressed. Horney defines neurosis as the "psychic disturbance brought by fears and defenses against these fears, and by attempts to find compromise solutions for conflicting tendencies" (Horney, 1999, p.28). Likewise, Horney (2013) suggests that neuroses emerge as a result of social and cultural factors as well as "disturbances in human relationships" (p.12) or when one pays too much attention to their weaknesses and worries and becomes obsessed by something (Kora, 1995, p.vii). Neurotic behaviours include reactions such as aggressiveness, negativity, cynicism, low self-value, megalomania or narcissism and urge men to find ways to handle their fear by turning their attention to and

investing their energy in activities and areas to assert their superiority through compensation and sublimation.

For Horney, the development of neuroticism and the emergence of cultural attitudes and expectations are intrinsically interrelated. Neurotic dispositions in men lead to not only the valorization of male achievement and masculinity but also the devaluation of femininity in a given culture. Uranus can be given as an example to illustrate such a neurotic personality. He is the first ruler of the universe, the first king of the Titans, and the first son and the husband of Gaia. Uranus pushed back and imprisoned all of his offspring (12 Titans) into the nurturing womb of Gaia immediately after they were born because of his unmanageable fear of losing his authority to his children. The female act of giving birth is profoundly threatening for the father/husband since he perceives the newly-born baby as a menacing rival who might challenge his power and uproot him from his status through his cooperation with the mother. This fear is not baseless indeed, and is eventually fulfilled when Cronus castrates his own father, which is organized and encouraged by Gaia who has been empowered by her womb and reproductive capacity. Zeus also suffers from the neurotic fear of the womb which can be observed in his act of swallowing Metis after Gaia's prophecy that the second child by Metis would be a son and would dispose of the father and rule the heaven. Metis, the embodiment of intelligence and wisdom and considered to be the wisest of all the deities, now becomes a part of Zeus' body, which makes Zeus the greatest and mightiest lord of the gods whose reign lasts forever.

Although Helene Deutsch claims that the masculinity complex in women is more fundamental and intense than the femininity complex in men, Horney states that Deutsch's assertion undermines the fact that masculine envy can lead to more successful sublimation than the penis envy in women (Horney, 1973, p.61). "In her capacity for motherhood she has such indubitable biological advantages that one could rather think of the reverse, an envy of motherhood in the boy's mind. I want to indicate briefly that such a phenomenon really exists and that from it a powerful stimulus arises that drives the male to his productivity in the cultural area" (Horney, 1973, p.77). Because of the small part men play in creating a new life, they are motivated by a strong desire to create something that really matters, which can satisfy their sense of pride: "State, religion, art, and science are essentially his creations, and our entire culture bears the masculine imprint" (Horney, 1973, p.115).

As a matter of fact, men overcompensate for the lack of a womb with sublimation. The Latin word *sublimis* means "lifted up, elevated, lofty, distinguished, the movement of going from lower to higher" (Colonge, 1871, p.944). The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the definition of the verb *sublimate* as follows: "to raise to high place, dignity or honor"; "to act upon (a substance) so as to produce a refined product"; "elevation to a higher state or plane of existence; transmutation into something higher, purer, or more sublime" (1971, pp. 3122-3123). Men in patriarchal cultures feel a strong urge to pose as godly figures with the display of unquestionable superiority, absolute power, and unbending posture. That men constantly seek various forms of power and public display of authority to assert their manliness can be taken as an outcome of the act of sublimation, which is an attempt to make up for their lack of

reproductive capacity. “Their overwhelming inner compulsion to prove their manhood again and again to themselves and others” (Horney, 1973, p.145) results in narcissistic overcompensation. “In any case this is the reason why, in the most varying fields, inadequate achievements are contemptuously called ‘feminine,’ while distinguished achievements on the part of women are called ‘masculine’ as an expression of praise” (Horney, 1973, p. 56). In this sense, our civilization can be viewed as the attainment rendered possible thanks to male sublimation. Like Horney, Freud, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), sheds light on the masculine characteristic of our whole civilization and explains that humans sublimate their instincts toward the important purposes and tasks to improve culture and civilization: “Sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life” (p.97).

The reason why human civilization has become increasingly the achievement of men can be attributed to womb envy. Several psychoanalysts such as Van der Leeuw, Boehm, Lax, and Horney have drawn attention to the correlation between womb envy and male production and achievement in cultural, scientific, and socio-economic realms: “Is not the tremendous strength in men of the impulse to creative work in every field precisely due to their feeling of playing a relatively small part in the creation of living beings, which constantly impels them to an overcompensation in achievement?” (Horney, 1926, p.61). Men have always been willing to invest their energy and efforts into the projects of creation, which is motivated by their desire to compensate for their lack of reproductive capacity. Van der Leeuw (1958) states that “creative work normally serves as an outlet for the sublimation of male wishes for pregnancy and childbearing” (p.353). Boehm also (1930) explains that “Envy of the woman’s capacity to bear children is a considerable incentive to the capacity for production in men” (quoted in Warnes and Hill 1974, p. 26). Men, through their acts of creation and production, venture to deny their dependency on women for procreation. Rank (1941) argues that men’s ambition of self-crafting and gaining immortality stems from the need to repudiate the fact that they were born of woman: “Herein is to be found the dynamic drive for man’s religious, social and artistic creativity through which he not only proves his supernatural origin (religion) and capacity (art) but also tries to translate it into practical terms of social organization (state, government)” (p. 236). Male achievements in engineering, architecture, medicine and art, all of which require acts of planning, construction, creation, and shaping, function as substitutions for biological production. Lax (1997) puts forward that creative activities like “model building, art, etc.” as well as “the fulfillment of nurturing wishes by raising pets, gardening, and the like” provide gratification for the male wish of pregnancy, child-bearing and suckling (p.132). Men’s persistent claim and striving for the possession of language along with the importance they attach to intellectual and critical thinking is also a form of sublimation. As Fromm (1952) maintains, male production “with his mouth, his word, his thought” serves the purpose of covering up for the lack of a womb and reproductive capacity (p.199). Similarly, Horney suggests that “Language itself points to this origin of cultural productivity. In the historic times that are known to us, this productivity has undoubtedly been incomparably greater in men than in women” (Horney, 1973, p.61). Klein, on the other hand, draws attention to the parallelism between artistic creation and womb envy and argues that womb envy is experienced by “painters and writers, who feel they

give birth to their works like a woman in labor after long pregnancy” (1937/1953, p. 32). In this sense, Apollo and his son Orpheus with their exceptional talent for music, art, and poetry can be accepted as sublimating characters who divert and invest their energy into creative acts of art.

Mead (1949) highlights the tie between women’s biological reproductivity and men’s desire to attain something concrete since paternity is never as visible and definite as maternity:

The recurrent problem of civilization is to define the male role satisfactorily enough — whether it be to build gardens or raise cattle, kill game or kill enemies, build bridges or handle bank-shares — so that the male may in the course of his life reach a solid sense of irreversible achievement, of which his childhood knowledge of the satisfactions of childbearing have given him a glimpse.” (p.160)

Ortner (1974) maintains that men “lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert their creativity externally, “artificially,” through the medium of technology and symbols” (p.75). In this sense, the male attempt to create different forms of beings by making use of their technical skills in craftsmanship and plastic arts such as sculpture and metalworking can be seen as the sublimation for the lack of reproductive bodies. Daedalus and Hephaestus, a god of fire, sculpture, and metalworking and a chief artificer and a blacksmith to all the Olympian deities, are considered the greatest craftsmen and inventors in Greek Mythology. It is Hephaestus who created Pandora from the earth. He also generated robotics and automata for his workplace, which illustrates male aspiration for creative power. All the deities who generated a human being including Cronus and Zeus are male. Similarly, Pygmalion, the greatest sculptor in all of Greece, created statues of marble so skillfully that they seem real and alive. Galatea, the most beautiful statue of his has been brought to life upon his wish and sacrificial offering by Aphrodite who has been influenced by his attachment to the statue and its exceptional beauty and liveliness. Pygmalion’s artistic skill and creativity in generating flawless physical beauty also display the deep-seated envy for the reproductive capacity of women.

The cultural distinction between public and private realms and the distribution of labor between the male and female deities according to this spatial arrangement maybe also result from man’s desire to sublimate their failure to conceive and create human life through the public display of their accomplishments. The ideologically constructed image of an angel in the house can be clearly observed in Greek mythology. Gods, to single themselves out, have limited goddesses to domestic life so that they can spare and appropriate the public life for their own purposes. The function of goddesses, on the other hand, has been reduced to the management of marriage life, household duties, child-birth, and child-rearing activities in the private realm which are all invisible. Women’s existence, function, and production are underestimated and rendered insignificant through social, economic, and political invisibility, which makes man’s practices and production seem more important, functional, and meaningful in Greek myths.

2. IDEALIZATION OF THE SELF

In recent years, the idea that penis envy emerges as a consequence of man’s envy of the female has gained more support. Klein (1957) maintains that Freud’s concept of penis envy which suggests the superiority of man is an example of the defense mechanism of “*provoking (or stirring up) envy in others*” (p.65). Horney (1973) asserts that man’s dread and envy of the

woman leads men to become “genital-narcissistic” (159). Men who suffer from a distressing or anxiety-driven condition restore their masculine self-respect by reactively strengthening their phallic narcissism, which can be observed in Zeus whose excessive libido can be taken as the manifestation of the resentfulness for and renunciation of the womb envy through the overvaluation of penis. Zeus’s inexhaustible lust and excessive sexual energy function as compensation for the lack of reproductive ability. By possessing every woman he sexually desires, most of the time by deceit and force, Zeus imposes the superiority of his phallic power.

Horney (1973) is opposed to Freud’s idea that men develop a sense of hatred for women because of the absence of the penis in women; she, conversely, maintains that men are afraid of vagina and they hide their dread under the disguise of hatred for women: “What we actually see is dread of the vagina, thinly disguised under the abhorrence” (p.137). The female genitalia has been inferiorized and detested by men because of their fear of castration through the overestimation of masculinity. Castration anxiety is mostly “the ego’s response to the wish to be a woman” (Horney, 1973, p.144). In this sense, Athena and Artemis, whose experiences and expressions of womanhood have been masculinized, act as the cultural manifestation of the male’s urge to find the penis in women, which is, in fact, an attempt to deny not only their desire to be a woman but also the existence of the sinister female genitalia (Horney, 1973, p.138). The female genitalia no longer exists for him; the unexplored vagina is a denied vagina (p. 144). The fear for the female genitalia and the dread of the mother is more intense, more deep-seated, more repressed, or more covered-up than the menace of the castrating father (Horney, 1973, p.137). The image of a phallic woman therefore springs up as a result of men’s valorization of the penis which is necessary to hide both their fear and admiration for the vagina.

3. REACTION FORMATION AND NARCISSISTIC MORTIFICATION

When men are suddenly faced with the threat of self-annihilation and self-disintegration and recognize their own limitations and defects, the fear of falling short of ideals with accompanying humiliation comes up to the surface. Because of the fact that a woman can bear a child by performing “her part by merely being” in sexual intercourse, men develop a sense of admiration and resentment (Horney, 1973, p.145). Thus, by turning their fear of women into a feeling of admiration or hatred, men are involved in psychological processes to protect themselves “against anxiety and from the awareness of internal or external stressors” as indicated in the American Psychiatric Association (1994, p.751). Thus, men’s adoration or exaltation of women can be regarded as reaction formation and thus has nothing to do with respect, appreciation, romantic love, or any sentimental feeling but it is a strategy to conceal their dread: “There is no need for me to dread a being so wonderful, so beautiful, nay, so saintly” (Horney, 1973, p.136). This strategy also enables men to preserve their “masculine self-respect” (Horney, 1973, p.136).

Gods’ attempt to get rid of their offspring is a common pattern in Greek mythology, which results from their dread for their children. In this process, the male wish and desire to have a baby is transformed into the feeling of aversion and apprehension for their children who constantly remind them of the impossibility of the realization of their pregnancy fantasy. Uranus, for instance, locks up Cyclopes and the hundred-handed giants into Tartarus and

imprisons his other 12 children in the womb of Gaia. Cronus, on the other hand, evades his offspring by swallowing them up. Although this homicidal act is justified with the claim of inevitability and necessity in order to maintain social order, stability, and safety since the children are likely to uproot their fathers from the throne, it is possible to see different psychological motives behind this brutal action. With the birth of the baby, the father suffers from the return of the repressed, that is the desire to reproduce with the impossibility of giving birth. In order to cope with this challenge, fathers can apply to reaction formation as a self-defense mechanism. Defense mechanisms are not the cases of psychopathology but individual strategies of adaptation, or one's "formula of coming to grips with the challenges of living" (Uwe Hentschel etc., 2004, p.4). They can also be viewed as "forms of ego protection against dangerous impulses" (Madison, 1961, p.181) that relieve "the internal turbulence" and disturbances (A. Freud, 1946).

Reaction formation is one of the most commonly used defense mechanisms in which "the conscious feeling is the opposite of the id drive" (Kline, 2014, p.98). Feelings of inadequacy, impotency, incompetency, shame, and humiliation that can cause a negative self-image are sublimated, denied, or changed into its opposite through reaction formation to reduce the stress and anxiety it creates and to tolerate unbearable effects. The cases of reaction-formation observed in men show that womb envy can lead to narcissistic mortification (Lax, 1997, p. 131). Narcissistic mortification is "intense fear associated with narcissistic injury and humiliation [...] the shocking reaction when individuals face the discrepancy between an endorsed or ideal view of the self and a drastically contrasting realization" (Miller&Campbell, 2011, p. 45). Libbey (2018) mentions two strategies narcissists make use of for the restoration of the self. The "deflated" narcissist has a tendency either to devalue and degrade the self or "inflates or idealizes the object in order to reacquire it" (p. 136). Men's desire to achieve perfection, "invulnerability", "limitlessness" and "omnipotence" is an attempt to deal with the challenges of the loss of the ideals and overcome the feelings of inferiority, envy, worthlessness, self-contempt, shame, and humiliation that emerge because of the discrepancy between their real achievement and aspiration (Miller&Campbell, 2011, p. 47). This explains why the Greek gods including Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades suffer from narcissistic mortification and thus are so austere, forbidding and grim.

4. DEVALUTION AND DEPRECIATION THROUGH BACKGROUNDING

Men are torn apart and fluctuate between their desire and fear for women, which causes men to be driven by the tendency to "devalue pregnancy and childbirth and to overemphasize male genitality" (Horney, 1973). Men make use of various strategies to provide a legitimate basis to justify and rationalize their fear of women. Representing women through the images of monstrous and hideous beings, which is widespread in mainstream culture, serves this purpose. "She herself is malignant, capable of any crime, a beast of prey, a vampire, a witch, insatiable in her desires. She is the very personification of what is sinister" (Horney, 1973, p.133). In addition to the fear, men suffer from envy and their inability to become a mother brings about a sense of inferiority (Horney, 1973, p.62); in order to avoid the threat of wounded self-esteem, man withdraws his libido from the mother figure and diverts it to his self and genitalia (Horney,

1973, p.144). This overvaluation of the male self to reinforce his positive self-image necessitates and thus is accompanied by the devaluation and backgrounding of women. Men have an inclination to “debase the love object”. As Horney suggests, the so-called “inferiority of women” results from an “unconscious male tendency” to depreciate women (Horney, 1973, p.62): “We observe that men are evidently under a greater necessity to depreciate women than conversely” (Horney, 1973, p.146).

That men underestimate and inferiorize the womb and woman’s capacity to give birth points out the close connection between envy and devaluation: “Devaluation of an envied object is a typical defensive maneuver, for as long as an object is devalued it does not need to be envied” (Lerner, 1974, p.542). Boehm suggests that womb envy which is socially and culturally more offensive and unacceptable feeling can bring about a sense of inferiority (1930, p.457) which is, in turn, “replaced by femiphobia and/or misogyny or devaluation (more socially acceptable forms of emotion)” (Lerner 1974, p.542). Throughout history, man has seen a woman as a sinister and mysterious being, particularly dangerous, unpredictable and unmanageable. Monsterization, marginalization, and vilification of women, in this sense, can be viewed as a strategy used by men to hide their envy and justify and legitimate their dread, for which Medusa can be given as an example. Men consider giving birth as an empowering act, which leads men to fear of losing their power and authority to women. By creating the image of a monster, “a society makes apparent its anxieties and fears as well as its ideals and desires” (Langsdale & Coody, 2020, p.1). Myths, fairy tales, and folktales are full of female monsters, ugly and hideous witches, evil and sinister women. The existence of such images reveals the expression of men’s fear and anxiety. Medusa, once an extremely beautiful maiden, is turned into a gorgon by Athena on the ground that her temple was defiled when Medusa was raped by Poseidon. Thus, monstrosity is not her choice but forcefully inflicted on her, which makes her an abject. Through the images of monstrous women, the hideous and menacing side of women is naturalized and foregrounded (Wilson, 2020, p.7). The female monstrosity also reveals the dread for women who are overreachers and transgressors subverting the norms and rules of the patriarchal institutions as Foucault (2003) suggests, “[T]he monster is the limit . . . [it] combines the impossible and the forbidden” (p.56).

The representations of women as monsters are also partly related to maternity since maternal figures cross borders, destabilize cultural and gender normality, and problematize pure identity formation. Thus, the act of childbearing which functions as a source of abjection because of bodily fluids including blood and breast milk, is expressed through the images of monsters (Langsdale & Coody, 2020, p.6). “Females and femininity as not only as monstrous, but also as powerful, as able to kill the patriarchal beast. The purpose of such representations is ‘to instill dread and loathing for the female’” (Wilson, 2020, p.2). This explains male control over female nature, female body, and reproductive capacity. Goddesses’ delivery of monstrous offspring is also the extension of the fear of the womb. Hera’s giving birth to the lame, sickly, and ugly Hephaestus when she attempts to procreate without a male partner constitutes a good example. This is the punishment given to her for undermining the male role in conceiving the baby. The birth of the minotaur is another case that can be examined in this context. Pasiphae, the wife of the King Minos of Crete, mates with the sacred bull and as a consequence, she gives

birth to a minotaur, which is a half-man, half-bull monster. The exclusion of men from the process of conceiving the baby results in a curse or retribution for the mother and the child.

The way Tartarus is depicted and represented also reveals man's fear of the invisible and mysterious power of women's bodies. Hesiod represents Tartarus with multiple purposes since it has many functions to fulfill (Johnson, 1999, p.27). Tartarus, the deepest and the darkest part of the underworld, has operated as a prison where the rebellious, the overreachers, and the abominable are kept to ensure safety and order in the socio-cultural domain. It is also the house of the ongoing cycles of day, night, sleep, and death (Johnson, 1999, p.27) and identified as the beginning of things, separations, and finality (Johnson, 1999, p.27). Hesiod also refers to "Black Tartarus within earth's spacious womb" in *Theogony* (line 119). Tartarus can hence be the metaphorical conceptualization of the womb and the female genital organ. The threat and horror associated with Tartarus are also closely related to the fact that it functions as a constant reminder of the castration which men will be exposed to unless they give up on their desire for and attachment to the mother's womb.

Pandora's box/pot has a lot in common with Tartarus in the sense that both contain the unwanted, the negative, and the evil. Both are dark, hidden, and covert without easy access. As accounted in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (2008), Pandora is created out of clay and water and then given a jar by the Olympian deities to be taken as a gift to Epimetheus. She is the first human woman created jointly by the Olympian gods and goddesses to implement Zeus' plan of taking revenge on men for accepting the stolen fire from Prometheus. Pandora means all-given and/or all-giving earth that maintains life and this definition supports the idea that Pandora's jar, like Tartarus, is the symbolic representation of a fearful, 'monstrous' womb. In *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, she is described as 'beautiful evil', 'dangerous trap', and 'great plague for the mortals'. Pandora, the mother of all wicked women, has been identified as the source of chaos, problems, and evil. Her ontological status as secondary reveals "the degree of negativity in the Greek version of woman's creation". Harold Blum (2018) also discusses Pandora and her jar as a symbol and metaphor in relation to psychoanalysis. It represents the "repressed unconscious", "the repressed, the return of the repressed, the curiosity and censorship" (p.18). The contents of Pandora's box are considered to "be perilous to the individual, the family, and/or society" and the box which involves "concealed and revealed secrets" as "a symbol of ambivalence" is regarded as the symbolic embodiment of the female genitalia and reproductive organs (Blum, 2018, p.19). This explains the horror attributed to Pandora's box.

The devaluation of nature and the natural capacity of women can also be observed in the dichotomy and hierarchy between nature which has been traditionally associated with women and culture which has been ideologically identified with men. In this binary opposition, culture has been assigned supremacy and significance while nature has been treated as inferior, dull, and unsophisticated. In many cultures, because of this dualistic thinking, nature has been feminized and women have been naturalized. In Greek mythology, nature is also gendered as *she* and represented as Mother Earth and patriarchy has been driven with the ambition to obtain mastery, domination, and control over Female Nature. Gaia and Demeter are the main goddesses related to nature. Gaia is the embodiment of the archetypal womb, through whom all else comes

into existence. The act of giving birth can be disempowering and put women at a disadvantage since women are imprisoned into motherhood and entrapped in domestic life, which leads to the loss of power and status. Gaia, after creating Uranus and Pontus without a male partner (parthenogenesis), has lost her power and authority to her son Uranus who becomes her husband and the ruler of the universe, and she has been automatically reduced to motherhood and wifedom from the position of the primordial creative power.

After the reigns of Uranus and Cronus, the patriarchal order has been strengthened and founded on a much stronger basis by Zeus. Before Zeus, matriarchy was relatively functional and effective; goddesses were more influential and active in the socio-political and cultural realms. Gaia, for instance, designed a plan in which she cooperated with her son Cronus to castrate Uranus to uproot him from power. Similarly, Rhea, along with the help of Gaia, saved her youngest son Zeus who overcame the oppressive father Cronus. The reign of Zeus established a relatively more democratic and participatory system; the dominion of each God was seemingly determined through consensus and negotiations. However, the division of duties and responsibilities among the Olympian gods and goddesses reflects the ideological and systematic devaluation and backgrounding of women. The boundaries between public and private realms were clearly drawn and the goddesses were excluded from the rule of the public domain. While three Olympian gods Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades cast lots to determine who will rule the sky, sea, and the underworld, three sisters are held responsible for domestic duties. Hera is required to protect marriage and childbirth. Hestia is responsible for safety and well-being of home and family. Demeter provides fertility and abundant harvest. Such an arrangement of distribution of the dominions among the gods and goddesses falsely creates the impression that the female deities do not play a significant role both in the earthly life of human beings and in the realms of divinities. To Plumwood, 'backgrounding' is a way of denying the importance of women and nature and includes the "treatment as providing the background to a dominant, foreground sphere of recognized achievement"; that is, the male achievement (Plumwood, 1993, p.21).

It allows the oppressor the illusion of control, of power, and of being alive. As with women as a class, nature and animals have been kept in a state of inferiority and powerlessness in order to enable men as a class to believe and act upon their 'natural' superiority/dominance (Collard and Contrucci, 1988, p.1).

Nymphs and maenads, who are the representations of the spirits of nature and inhabit woods, mountains, trees etc. can be given as an example for backgrounding and depreciation of female deities. These minor deities are regarded as naïve, vulnerable, and weak creatures. They are reduced to physical beauty and treated as sexual objects. "Any spot that is refreshingly cool, green, and pleasing to the eye might be the abode of nymphs...Nymphs had a sensual, sexual aura" (Larson, 2001, p.10). They are worshipped in the garden, meadow, or in the plain which are closely associated with female genitals. "*Gardens, meadows, and fields in Greek religious thought bore an archaic association with female sexuality or the maternal genitals. The Greek word pedion, for example (Homer's 'Elysian field' is an Elysion pedion), means both 'plain, field' and (sexually mature, i.e., maternal) female genitals*" (Caldwell, 1993, p. 158). Men overcome their fear of female sexuality by creating such images of subordinate and submissive female characters whom they can easily manage and control.

5. APPROPRIATION

Appropriation is another strategy men make use of to redesign femininity in such a way that it will serve the purpose of patriarchy in order to exalt masculinity and manhood. Appropriation can be described as follows; “A dominant group steals or borrows icons, ideas, or other beliefs from a weaker group” which implies a “hierarchy and power dynamic”. In the *Cambridge Dictionary*, appropriation is defined as “the act of taking something such as an idea, custom, or style from a group or culture that you are not a member of and using it yourself” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/appropriation>) and it has “the connotations of aggressive seizure and forced possessions” (Huang & Rivlin, 2014, p.2).

Male deities appropriate “both the physical and mental creative capacities of the female in the interests of the paternal” or more correctly “patriarchal power” (Zeitlin, 2002, p.61). Zeus’s act of swallowing up the pregnant Metis is an attempt to appropriate female wisdom and intelligence which is usurped to be rendered a quality that is exclusively possessed by men. Furthermore, Zeus embeds Metis’s pregnant body into his body, which makes him automatically a man biologically carrying a baby. Thus, the birth of Athena can be regarded as an endeavor to appropriate the female reproductive capacity to hinder the empowerment of women. Although Zeus carries Athena in his belly, she comes out of his head. This is a clear indication of the denial of the function of the womb for reproduction and establishing man’s mental capacity through which men can go beyond the limitations of the material body and make everything possible through mind and intelligence which they believe can enable them to become adequate, self-sufficient and almighty.

Athena, a goddess of war, wisdom, arts and crafts, is born as a warrior in full armor and with a shield. This extensively masculinized version of the goddess can be accepted as an example for the *flight from womanhood* to emerge as a *phallic woman*. Horney suggests that due to the “purely masculine character” of civilization, it is quite difficult for women to experience sublimation that would provide gratification. The assumption that women cannot successfully and efficiently perform male tasks reinforces women’s sense of inferiority. To Horney, the social subordination of women, when combined with a sense of inadequacy and low self-esteem, leads to the unconscious rationale for the flight from womanhood (Horney, 1973, p.70). “The entire complex of feelings and fantasies that have for their content the woman’s feeling of being discriminated against, her envy of the male, her wish to be a man and to discard the female role, we call the masculinity complex of woman” (Horney, 1973, p.74). Like in the case of Athena, it is possible to observe a masculinity complex in Artemis as well. Artemis, as the virgin goddess of hunting and childbirth, is defined outside and beyond the traditional gender roles and culturally determined division of labor. She is also spatially located in the wilderness outside the domesticated cultural setting. Artemis turns out to be a skillful archer who rules over mountains and wild animals. Women, because of the imposition of cultural teaching, view achievement merely as a male attribute by underestimating and undervaluing female potential and capacity (Horney, 1973, p.145). Thus, Athena and Artemis are assigned culturally-determined so-called masculine qualities in an attempt to craft the masculinized version of womanhood which is necessary for the attainment of approval, recognition, and acceptance in the male realm. Women’s unconscious envy can make women blind to their own virtues, as a result of which

they can perceive even motherhood as a burden since they measure their womanhood and femininity against masculine values (Horney, 1973, p.75). As a consequence, both Athena and Artemis take an oath for eternal virginity.

Virginity has been highly appreciated and respected in the patriarchal pantheon in Greek mythology. The cult of the Virgin can be seen as the projection of cultural appropriation of womanhood to overcome the male fear of female sexuality and genitalia. Horney suggests that the man's "dread of the woman (the mother) or of the female genital is more deep-seated" and is more strongly and intensely repressed than the dread of the man (father), and that the desire to discover the penis in women is an attempt to deny and overcome "the existence of the sinister female genital" (Horney, 1973, p.138). Since virgin women are asexual and strictly avoid sexual intercourse, they never use their reproductive potential, and thus they do not arouse feelings of distrust, suspicion, and fear in men. Thus, virginity, rather than as the symbol of purity and chastity, should be taken as the assurance of safety for men. In Greek mythology, the virgin goddesses are overestimated and overvalued. Zeus, for instance, rewards Hestia by honoring her with the first portion of every public sacrifice. Athena and Artemis have been granted phallic power that enables them to function effectively in the public realm.

These two goddesses are not entrapped in a domestic space with domestic duties. On the contrary, they are equipped with masculine qualities and granted access to the male realm. Athena, who is invincible on the battlefield and defeated Ares several times, automatically becomes a part of the symbolic order with her birth as an embodiment of not idealized womanhood but a masculinized femininity. Unlike the leading Olympian female divinities, she functions in the cultural life and makes great contributions to the progress of male-centered civilization thanks to her inventions of useful agricultural tools such as bridle, yoke, plow, rake, chariot, pottery, and musical instruments including the flute and the trumpet. She also designed the first ship and developed the science of mathematics. The privileged status the formidable Athena and Artemis occupy in the male-dominated culture is provided as the substitution for the penis since phallus is ideologically and culturally associated with power, authority, and prerogative. The visual and discursive representations of Athena and Artemis with phallic symbols reinforce this idea. Like Athena's shield and armour, Artemis becomes closely associated with phallic images including a bow, arrow, mountain, road, and harbor. In this sense, Athena and Artemis are appropriated and constructed as phallic women. Phallic woman, as a term, refers to a woman to whom the phallus is symbolically assigned or traditionally masculine characteristics are attributed. Athena and Artemis' wombs have been denied and physically replaced by fetishistic objects of desire which function as a substitute for the castrated penis. Fetishism results from male's fear of castration complex and a feeling of hatred and fear due to the absence of the penis in women and they seek a penis in the female body to avoid the confrontation with the possibility of castration. Thus, a fetish such as a sword, arrow, bow, and mountain is a substitute for the penis that men imagine women have lost.

To conclude, although womb envy has not been sufficiently examined and explored both in psychology and literature, it is a very commonly observed phenomenon and it can shed light on several aspects of men's behaviours, responses, and attitudes. Womb envy men suffer from is

one of the reasons why female identity, sexuality and genitalia are debased, degraded, and backgrounded. As a result of devaluation, the Mother Earth and her feminine consciousness that permeated every part of the cosmos was abandoned and the whole universe was masculinized. The lack of child-bearing potential has led men to the over-idealization and valorization of manhood. This can be accepted as a form of reaction formation which point out deep-seated envy mixed with fear and admiration for women and their reproductive capacity. Sublimation is another defense mechanism men make use of to compensate for their inability to give birth by investing their energy and skills in the advancement of culture and civilization with their artistic creativity, intellectual and cultural productions, and scientific and technological inventions. Patriarchy has been erected on stronger bases as a consequence of the sublimation of womb envy through cultural, economic, and political achievements. Myths provide enough examples and evidence for how male deities experience and deal with womb envy with the defense mechanisms they employ. In this sense, myths offer a fertile ground for the exploration of psychological motivations behind human actions, attitudes, and relations.

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