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(RE)ENVISIONED (PRE)HISTORY:
FEMINISM, GODDESS POLITICS, AND READERSHIP ANALYSIS OF
JEAN M. AUDEL'S
THE CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR AND THE VALLEY OF THE HORSES

BY

GLENN M. ANDRADE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
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1998

Abstract

(Re)Envisioned (Pre)History: Feminism, Goddess Politics, and Readership Analyses of Jean M. Auel's The Clan of the Cave Bear and The Valley of the Horses

Jean M. Auel's popular novels, The Clan of the Cave Bear and Valley of the Horses, are examined via theories of political thought (history, economics, power), feminist theory (oppression, sex/gender roles), and popular literature's (genre) appeals to various 80s readership communities. Chapter Two draws from historical interests in women's myth to show that 70-80s religious and anthropo-archeological revisionism promote an 80s goddess theory in support of 70-80s feminism; nonetheless, from a 90s vantage, Doni-goddess theorizing is problematized by universalism, teleology, and gender stereotyping. Chapter Three examines Clan's politics, religion, gender roles and the pitfalls of mythmaking to Clan's conservative, moderate, and liberal readership communities and to those who vary in their acceptance of feminism to suggest that the exaggerated patriarchal scenario promotes the less radical ideas of 70-80s feminism.

Following a similar organization, Chapter Four analyzes Valley's readership communities located according to their familiarity with goddess theorizing and by their preferences of genre fiction(s) to reveal that Valley's mythmaking reinscribes masculinist assumptions. Chapter Five examines Ayla's performances in several roles: as a heroine who confirms and reverses readers' expectations about the historical-romance-soap-opera and adventure; as a female hero who replicates some 70-80's archetypal impulses; and as a feminist hero who popularizes some 70-80 feminist issues for the general reader. The conclusion maintains that in spite of the deviations from genre expectations, the novels must be considered feminist since they address women's oppression and gender constrictions for a wide 80s audience who can (re)envision (pre)historical alternatives, hence their own lives.

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Chapter One

When Jean cleared her throat and Suzanne smiled wanly, I held my breath. A couple of weeks before, I had lent my new copy of The Clan of the Cave Bear¹ to my close friends in our fiction writing group. I'd expected that as English Department chair, Jean would admire Auel's use of goddess mythology, a popular topic at CSU Fresno in 1980. However, instead of praising the novel, Jean faulted several of Auel's notions about early hominids, including the assumption that they shambled instead of walked. Then too, when I looked to my fellow graduate student for support, Suzanne merely complained about a dangling participle and the flat characters instead of validating a female hero, another popular issue we supported. Since my friends saw only the novel's flaws, I sighed in dismay.

It was not that they were against popular fiction because we were sensitive to the problem of excluding all women readers; rather, they were critical of inaccurate and inept writing. Nevertheless, after Jean Auel's novel attained best-selling status that year and the sequel The Valley of the Horses² sold millions of copies in 1982, I found comfort in the idea that the Earth Children saga was succeeding in the spread of feminist ideas through best-selling fiction.³ Even hearing of the text's popularity can

reassure a female reader that women's independence is not her issue alone.

I was so intrigued by Ayla's strong character that I bought each of Jean Auel's novels when it first came out, not even awaiting the paperback edition, my usual custom. Many readers and I enjoyed The Earth Children's series as it follows the adventures of Ayla, a Cro-Magnon woman, through paleolithic western Asia and Europe. The saga begins with Clan⁴ when the orphaned Ayla is adopted into a Neanderthal⁵ tribe and follows her growth through early maturity until she is outcast for using a weapon. The sequel, The Valley of the Horses,⁶ details Ayla's survival alone in the wilderness until she rescues Jondalar, the man who becomes her lover. I was less impressed by the romance in The Mammoth Hunters,⁷ the third novel that tracks Ayla and Jondalar to several Cro-Magnon tribes, than by its incorporation of women's issues. I even read The Plains of Passage⁸ that traces the couple's trek to Jondalar's home community, in spite of the increasing romance proscriptions that tended to diminish Ayla's role as a hero. Altogether I fancied that women's circumstances in the prehistoric past were more desirable than in my own 80s present. And it is against this milieu that Auel's first two novels are better judged.

To read Auel's The Clan of the Cave Bear and The Valley of the Horses in this new way requires a look at cultural

criticism. In general, cultural criticism seeks to understand a work by placing it within its wider socio-economic and political context. Although cultural criticism remains difficult to define since new theories continually add to its map now as in the past,⁹ some American antecedents endure as familiar avenues. The three avenues especially useful in examining Auel's first two novels are political criticism, feminist theory, and the analyses of popular literature and readership.

In part, seeing Auel's Clan and Valley as components of the 70-80s scene involves examining political criticism which tracks the influences of history and economics. Viewed through Terry Eagleton's construct that political criticism examines a history that organizes people's lives and their power relations (Literary Theory 194), each of Auel's first two novels says as much about 80s historical circumstances as they do about prehistory. In my third chapter, I examine the Neanderthal community in Clan as it coincides with the 80s political scene, especially in its liberal and conservative trends. In my fourth chapter, I show how Valley mirrors specific ideas from the 70-80s conceptions of goddess worship to promote women's political and economic equality. Furthermore, Auel's novels can be examined for their use of history itself. For instance, science writers, such as John Pfeiffer,¹⁰ approve the accu-

racy of Auel's paleolithic setting, whereas others, such as Timothy Taylor, do not. Next, Auel's texts can be placed within a history of other genres to locate the texts' intended audience, as when Sandy Rovner allies Auel's Clan to "a sort of Ice Age `Dallas'" romance.¹¹ Finally, Auel's texts can be examined as objects within their economic history. For instance, we can say that Clan attained an economic or commercial success, as deduced from the fact that by September 1980, Clan went into its fourth printing during its year of publication (Rovner). Simply put, an historic investigation offers new perceptions of Auel's Clan and Valley through examining the economic and political intersections among critic, text, publisher, and reader.

As is well known, however, using history to explicate Clan and Valley steers through various quicksands of ideology. Simply defined by Althusser as "the system of ideas and representations that dominate" minds and social groups ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" 84), ideology shapes an historic assessment because any interpretation incorporates someone's individual beliefs (Selden 95). For example, the author of a text on paleolithic art, Marija Gimbutas may interpret the history of Venus figurines according to her wish to see women as central to religion. Then too, because history tends to reflect the dominant ideology, it may suppress others (Nostbakken, "Cultural

Materialism" 22). For instance, the sexist notion that men always hunted and women foraged (Mary Zeiss Stange, "The Once and Future Heroine" 61) suppresses the history of people who choose jobs in spite of gender stereotyping. In allowing Ayla to hunt, Auel attempts to thwart a "dominant" historical interpretation (Nostbakken 22) and to foreground a feminist history which may have been discrepant or interrupted (Foucault, Power/Knowledge 83). On the other hand, even critics who advocate for a repressed history succumb to overlooking evidence. For example, Robert Graves's chronicling of early moon goddesses to prove their universality for women's early power frequently disregards the history of an early moon god. Furthermore, just as critics and historians suffer an inherent bias, so do fiction writers. Auel's choice of feminist nonfictional sources reveals her own partiality to the concept that paleolithic women joined materially in the rise of civilization.

Similarly, a political criticism approach through an economic perspective invites problems of subjectivity because ideology influences writers, readers, and the publishing industry. Derived from classic Marxism, political criticism assesses the economics of material production inside the text as well as the text's economic activities of "communication, art, [and] human consciousness" (Nostbakken 21). Since a writer tends to replicate her own ideological

and economic biases, we may interpret Auel's Clan as revealing her stance that misogyny originates from a proto-capitalist system and her Valley as proposing that egalitarian relations flourish under an equal-distributionist one. In addition to assessing Auel's socio-economic position, we can examine Auel's opinion on the issue of class. Hence, readers may surmise that Valley's Cro Magnons are the superior class for their appreciation of art and for their preference of verbal rather than hand-signal communication in contrast to Clan's Neanderthals. In fact, I will elaborate upon Auel's Neanderthals and Cro Magnons' socio-economics and class circumstances in chapter three, especially those issues pertaining to some 80s ideas. Finally, economics functions in the interpretation of texts within their milieu because the publishing industry helps define what reaches both readers and critics. Some writers may not get published, while others may be heavily mass-marketed, as is true in Jean Auel's case.¹² Furthermore, the economic circle includes readers as consumers whose buying habits help determine reprints and sequels, thus the eventual success of a series.

Regardless of the pitfalls in following history and economic theory for their political trails, following an incomplete map to Auel's novels is better than none. The benefit of historic and economic explications is that they

reveal those paths that the writer both took and avoided. To illustrate, although Auel grants Ayla the choice of using birth control like other 80s unmarried women, no married Ice Age woman chooses this option. Hence, a critic can posit that Auel's ideological position is that married women should avoid birth control. Moreover, just as Auel has her own ideology, so readers have theirs, and I have mine. Accordingly, I grant that readers are themselves apt judges of Auel's intentions and of my own, so I invite them to question my argument's partialities and incompleteness when I analyze Auel's two novels.

In addition to politics and economics, cultural criticism adds to an exploration of Auel's novels by viewing the sociological interrelationships within the text's, the critic's, and the reader's milieu. To study the Earth's Children's series, cultural critics can search different kinds of 80s texts for similar themes, for example, applying the emerging theory of the female hero to Auel's portrayal of Ayla. Additionally, cultural critics examine the readers' milieu, such as the appeal of the soap opera formula, as does Tania Modleski's milestone Loving With a Vengeance, and of the popular adventure as delineated in John Cawelti's Adventure, Mystery, and Romance. In Auel's Clan, for instance, the romance plot promised by the soap opera format fills some readers' needs to be admired, while the adventure

plot in Valley fills others' to experience the excitement of a human against the environment theme, topics I explore in a later chapter. Together, the complex interrelationships of text, critic, and readers begin to appear as a multilevel freeway exchange rather than as simple avenues. For example, upon encountering Clan, a reader may sympathize with Ayla's ostracism, admire her heroism, wish that she find a suitable lover, and thrill at Ayla's hunting of predators--the same feelings cultivated by different mythic codes that underwrite the popular romance and adventure.

As well as supplying 80s parallels, cultural criticism adds 90s insights to Auel's novels and thus surpasses the limitations of a similar approach. In contrast to New Historicism, which views a text as inscribed solely by its time period and ideology, cultural criticism can remake an 80s novel from a 90s vantage and can carry the more positive belief that re-envisioning a text can lead to ideological changes (Nostbakken 22-23). Whereas myth theorizing was highly regarded by some critics in the 80s, a 90s reassessment suggests that myth-making even for feminist intentions harbors masculinist assumptions not previously evident, a consequence I probe in chapter three on Clan and in chapter four on Valley. Therefore, cultural critics can supply 90s insights to Auel's early 80s novels to further extricate the

weblike interchange among texts, critics, and readers as they now appear to present day readers.

When further explicated by cultural criticism, Auel's novels reveal submerged power relations, which I will analyze via Foucauldian thought. Foucauldian power relations examine the forces which produce what happens, the distribution of power among discourses, and the diminishment of people hidden in the margins. (Smith 316). As will be demonstrated in the Clan chapter, the unequal male and female power relations manifest themselves in the characters' actions and in discourses--as when Neanderthal males punish females for their lack of deference--and as when females tacitly agree among themselves that a man's physical needs surpass a woman's choice. Furthermore, discourses of power flow from narrator to reader. Just as discourses of power may be marked by a multiplicity of voices within the text, power relations appear within dialogues different from that of the narrator (Bakhtin 263). Illustrated in the upcoming Valley chapter are Auel's attempts to disrupt the voice of 80s male religious authority by revising the discourse of Christian ritual. Additionally, understanding power relations enables my readers to perceive who is marginalized. Obviously, women are pushed to the margins in Clan; however, not so evident is the marginalization of Others in a goddess religion, discussed in the later Valley section.

A further advantage of using cultural criticism for Auel's novels is that it employs power relations theory and Marxist ideology to examine dialectics. Power relations occur within institutions which support the dominant mode of production (Nostbakken 22). Hence, power relations often reduce to simple binary oppositions. To illustrate, male privilege--the most apparent power dialectic in Clan--is upheld by the institution of religious law. As I demonstrate in chapter three, the institution of religion supports the Neanderthals' sexism, consolidates misogyny, and relegates women to a lower class--problems all derived from the male/female opposition.

Additionally, cultural criticism can probe power relations as a functional system in Auel's novels. An analysis of power relations not only identifies who controls whom, but also locates how the dominant order attempts to suppress rebellion (Nostbakken 22). In Jonathan Dollimore's terminology (qtd. in Nostbakken 22), the power relation in Clan includes "consolidation" in which the dominant male order perpetuates itself, "subversion" in the heroine's quiet rebellion against it, and "containment" in which the dominant order of males attempts to suppress women's rebellion, both overtly and covertly. Then too, power relations reach beyond the text, as when Auel's novel The Valley of the Horses intends to disrupt 80s male authority by promoting

women's capacity for spiritual leadership. Along the way, cultural criticism maps out new territory in Auel's novels by applying an interdisciplinary approach. Just as Auel drew upon more than fifty books of anthropology and archeology among others before she wrote her novels (Spitzer 6), a cultural critic can draw upon similar and even different sources, including feminist theory, the study of goddess worship, archeological criticism, and readership analyses-- or whatever discipline offers new inroads to Auel's novels. In short, when it embodies cultural materialism, cultural criticism encompasses "'historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis'" (Dollimore and Sinfield qtd. in Nostbakken 21). Just as political thought is integral to cultural literary theory, it is intrinsic to most feminist approaches.

Feminism is the next avenue of cultural criticism that permits reading Auel's novels in a new way beyond the political assessments. While feminist study includes many feminisms, some political elements prevail, such as common oppression, activism,¹³ and cultural intervention. Many feminist critics who agree on the common oppression of women (i.e., that most women are subject to male control) study the traces of gender "in literary texts and in literary history" (Warhol and Herndl, "About Feminisms" x). Hence, Clan not only details women's oppression, but also illus-

trates its unfortunate consequences. Since many feminist critics believe that feminism must work to put an "end to the subordination of women" (Felski 13 adapting Jaggar), Valley encourages 80s readers to imagine a society where men and women are equal in status. Even though some critics quarrel with some anti-feminist details found in the novels,¹⁴ I assert that Auel produces Ayla as a female hero to invite some 80s women to take control of their own lives.

Furthermore, feminism probes power relations inside and outside of the text specifically to uncover the kind of women's oppression dramatized in Clan. Alison Light holds that critics should examine texts for "Subjectivity," which considers how people "express and define our concepts of our selves" and "where operations of power and the possibilities of resistance are played out" (141). As I will show in chapter three, Clan's Neanderthal women define themselves by their biological and social inferiority to the men, cannot envision any alternative to their subjugation, and endure an environment that makes change impossible. Conversely, when Ayla defines herself by her competence in hunting and resists male authority in hunting despite the community's warning, she recognizes that change is infeasible and so accepts her eventual expulsion at the end of Clan.

Further through a feminist view, power relations work upon readers outside of the text. Light asks that critics

seek not only how "social and historical formations" operate outside the text, but also how "they inform and structure the material" within it since both identities enable readers "to become the agents of political change" (144). Since women's oppression in Clan resembles the situation within some conservative 80s enclaves, readers are invited to negotiate their own independence outside the text. For readers already committed to personal liberation, Ayla's plight in Clan can initiate advocacy for other women.

Auel's Clan and Valley, additionally, must be read as a feminist push for women to take agency. When a woman takes agency, she intervenes in culture (Todd 137). The concept of "agency," which is to advocate for oneself, includes the "capability" of both the internal capacities for making choices as well as the external conditions which permit choices (Nussbaum qtd. in Gardiner, "Introduction" 13); hence, agency can be inhibited or facilitated by the vicissitudes of "interpersonal and discursive fields of power" (Gardiner 13). To take an obvious example in Auel's text, Ayla is prevented from attaining complete agency in Clan because authoritarianism prevents her intercession for other women.¹⁵ In short, some 90s feminists prefer to look beyond simply recognizing female characters as oppressed or victimized, but elect to see women's characters as agents of

power and change, or else examine why such agency is stultified by the circumstances (Gardiner 13), as occurs in Clan.

Additionally, Auel herself is a model of agency since her novels argue for women's liberation. Her novels intervene in 80s culture by highlighting women's oppression in Clan and women's equality in Valley. Some feminist critics encourage Auel's kind of activism because it "plays a worthwhile part in the struggle to end oppression in the world outside of texts" (Warhol and Herndl x). Auel's feminist activism--meaning championing women's causes--occurs, for instance, when she addresses the issues of rape in Clan and of women's religious position in Valley. The woman reader then has dual models: Ayla as the female hero in the texts and Auel, the author, if readers view her as taking agency to intercede in 80s culture.

Likewise adopting a feminist position, I contend that Auel's greater purpose is to undermine misogyny and to promote women's causes in her 80s readership. Feminist criticism aims beyond interpreting literature. As Patri-cinio Schweickart asserts, feminism's goal "is to change the world" (531). Therefore, just as Auel invites 80s readers to consider that a communal effort can better their own sisters, a 90s rereading should not entirely invalidate

Auel's feminist intention, but rather teach readers how to reconfigure an even better world.

In addition to supporting women's agency and activism, many 90s feminists advocate for other marginalized groups, a strategy beneficial in viewing Clan and Valley. As Warhol and Herndl write, "most feminists agree that the oppression of ethnic and racial minorities, gay men and lesbians, and working class people is closely tied to the oppression of women" (x). Situating Ayla among the Neanderthals, Clan disparages racial (or even species) discrimination, champions a minority's rights to self determination in the community, and equates the Neanderthal women to the working class. In Valley, by contrast, women's marginalization appears less obvious in a society not based upon class privilege. Nonetheless, Auel's treatment of gay and lesbian characters in both novels is a bit more problematic. If we grant that Clan's characters are all heterosexual because of rigidified sex roles, we must look to Valley's one non-heterosexual for the treatment of gays and lesbians in a re-envisioned world; however, as I reveal in chapter four, this character is marginalized, but in a less obvious way.

To advocate for women's liberation, Auel draws upon several disciplines. In this, she shares the same kind of interdisciplinarity which evolves from Women's Studies in order to help women. Within social history, Women's Studies

engages research into "sociology, anthropology, history, religion, psychology, political science, and communications" (Warhol and Herndl x). And to intervene in 80s culture, Auel engages ideas from all the above disciplines. Sociology helps explain how women react under different pressures in Clan and Valley. Physical anthropology suggests how the anatomical differences between Neanderthals and Cro Magnons might have structured their ways of thinking and of understanding the world, which in turn influences their perceptions of women. Cultural anthropology appears in the feminist conviction that prehistoric women participated in developing civilization. The novels' site in prehistory illustrates how early women may have held equal status during the paleolithic era. Religion surfaces in speculations about matriarchal worship and female spiritual leaders. Jungian psychology illuminates the Neanderthals' inherited racial memory. Political science reveals itself in the proto-capitalism in Clan and the communal distributionist communities in Valley. Communications show that Clan women are contained by the prohibition against addressing men directly. In short, Clan and Valley follow many feminist ideas garnered from various disciplines in the academy, but especially as synthesized from the study of women.

Auel's feminism follows a tradition of advocating for women. Although American feminists recentered women in canonical literature in the past, recently they embarked upon cultural intervention. At one time, some feminists recaptured works of little-known women writers to reconstruct a female literary tradition whereas other feminists practiced revisionist readings of female characters within male-authored texts. Other revisionists sought to make women equal by the reworking mythic approach to the text (Warhol and Herndl xii), sometimes to isolate unique or "essential" feminine qualities. However, others refuted the concept of a woman's "natural" superiority as based on some biological or moral trait. "Feminist literary history" affirms Janet Todd, "is not a study of women as nature or of a natural woman, but of women intervening in culture, making culture and being naturalized by culture in subtly different ways and different times" (137). As will be seen in the upcoming chapters, Auel chooses to travel both lanes. In her goddess-worshipping communities, women are not only equated with nature, but also naturalized by this perception. Yet in creating Ayla, Auel suggests that since women have intervened in paleolithic culture by discoveries and inventions, they can do so again.¹⁶

The third avenue that cultural criticism travels is that of supplying readership analysis, a direction which

leads to newer perspectives into Auel's novels. As a result of 60-70s democratic influences, not a few feminists turned away from privileged academic texts to those of the popular marketplace. While some feminists might have ridiculed popular literature in the past, others concede their own interest and challenge such divisions as "between 'literature' and 'writing'; 'high' and 'popular' culture; the 'classics' and the 'mass market'" (Mary Eagleton 91). For example in Sensational Designs, Jane Tompkins finds the academy "exclusionary" of "sentimental" fiction and critical of the "popularity" of women's novels (xiv). Though some popular texts are not "masterpieces," Tompkins explains, they share with "classic texts" the bearing of "a set of national, social, economic, institutional, and professional interests," so that reputation evolves from circumstances of history (Sensational Designs xvii). In other words, just as Auel's popularity is no guarantee of literary quality, Auel's inclusion of 80s concerns is not dissimilar from other texts. In fact, her popularity may result from touching more 70-80s issues than do similar Ice Age fictions, such as William Golding's The Inheritors among others.¹⁷

Regardless of their popularity or literary quality, I will argue that Auel's novels succeed because they captivate readers' own emotional conflicts. As Tompkins asserts, "literature has power in the world" to connect "with the

beliefs and attitudes of large masses of readers so as to impress or move them deeply" (Sensational Designs xiv). She views "literary texts not as works of art embodying enduring themes . . . , but as attempts to redefine the social order" since texts articulate "the way a culture thinks about itself" and offer "solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment" (Tompkins Sensational Designs xi). Simply said, both canonical and popular texts offer solutions to socio-cultural problems, though popular texts, such as Auel's, tend to reach the wider audience.

In addition to their journey into social relations, Auel's texts act as vehicles of political persuasion. As Tompkins explains, popular texts seek to influence the biggest audience so as "to make people think and act in a particular way" (Sensational Designs xi). These popular texts, says Tompkins, provide readers with

a means of ordering the world they inhabited . . . in relation to [their society's] religious beliefs, social practices, and economic and political circumstances.

(Sensational Designs xiii)

To give one example of political circumstances, some 80s readers could perceive that women gain equality under the more liberal system, as in Valley, rather than under the conservative society in Clan.

However, just as other cultural critics believe that popular fiction also separates readers from the dominant ideology, Auel's novels work this way too. Popular fiction also achieves what Tony Bennett calls the "work" of "distancing"; that is, it includes the effect of "separating the audience from, not rebinding the audience to, prevailing ideologies" (qtd. in Smith 319). To illustrate, Clan's extremely oppressive conditions can convince some readers to reject a male-dominated society altogether. Similarly, Tompkins views the popular novel for its "continuities rather than ruptures, for the strands that connected a novel to other similar texts" (Sensational Designs xv); however, Fredric Jameson feels the deviations within these similar texts offer "clues" to ideology (qtd. in Radford 11). In other words, Auel's novels can be read for the similarities to others in the genre and for the deviations or gaps which expose her ideology. Thus, Valley can be investigated for its resemblance to other mythic-plot romances where the hero descends into an underworld-like realm and for its deviation since it foregrounds a woman in this role.

Because the focus upon readership communities clearly involves a shift from authorial intention to reader reception, this kind of analysis of Auel's novels provides additional meaning.¹⁸ Some critics reject authorial intention to favor a text's wider political view¹⁹; other critics

relegate the focus on woman-as-author to a closed system which interferes with emancipatory politics.²⁰ Both views fail, it seems, because they are based on the premise that women's popular fiction merely copies the prevailing ideology (Light 141). Both views demean readers by presuming them incapable of extracting the author's biases (Light 141). Instead, examining the author's biases is also emancipatory and does not preclude readers from seeing the texts as reflecting social conditions (Felski 7). Additionally, the shift to reader reception does enhance the wider sociopolitical view that culture and readership communities act reciprocally. Thus, Auel's novels both mirror 80s cultural issues and anticipate women's interests since consumers' purchases determine what gets published.

When exploring the genre of the popular novel, such as Clan and Valley, American feminists often speculate upon its effects on groups of women readers. To mention a few noteworthy feminists, Tania Modleski assesses viewers of soap operas, Janice Radway investigates romance readers, and Charlotte Spivack interprets readers' responses to fantasy fiction. However, just as a single text may include aspects of different genres, a text may reach a reader with several concerns. One way of perceiving the differing effects is to locate women readers by common interests into groups of "communities," bound by congeniality of concerns rather than

by proximity of place. Since these readership communities comprise overlapping, diverse audiences ringed by differing needs, their boundaries are continuously in flux. Even individual readers' concerns are not static. For instance, just as my friends and I shared feminism as a readership community, Jean also read Clan for its scientific validity and Suzanne for its writing technique, each the locus of a separate readership community. It was I, perhaps, who saw the novel as more significant for its feminist persuasion intended for the wider audience. Should we all reread the novel now, each of us would apply different insights shaped by time and culture. Applying a readership-community theory to Auel's Clan and Valley permits readers to see beyond the immediate moment since they can "relate texts to changing ideological structures" and to "changing cultural perspectives" (Felski 8). Whereas I was once part of a readership community that admired Auel's 80's mythmaking, I now belong to a 90s community of academic readers that deconstruct myth for its socio-political intention.

Besides linking readers into communities outside of the text, the sense of community in Auel's novels works within the text as a two-way street which connects text and reader. What Tania Modleski says about the TV soap opera may also apply to readers of popular "soap opera" formula fiction, such as Auel's. Modleski believes that mass art "simul-

taneously challenges and reaffirms traditional values, behavior and attitudes" (112); consequently, soap operas appeal to a woman's fantasy for an "extended family, the direct opposite of her own isolated nuclear family," a fantasy which is "collective" and which distorts desires while stimulating them (Modleski 108). Certainly, Clan challenges the 80s convention of women's inferiority, but reaffirms traditional heterosexual pairings. Likewise, Ayla desires to find acceptance in her Neanderthal community and wishes to locate her original Cro-Magnon family. However, whether a reader's need for a family is unique to the soap opera or to romance fiction is debatable since fiction depends upon a number of unresolved conflicts that delay gratification.

What is more important, Modleski was among the first to situate the nuclear family as central to popular fiction's appeal and as supportive of the dominant ideology. Yet even Modleski ultimately concedes that the fantasy of community is not only a "real desire," but is finally a "salutary" one (108). Likewise, Mary Eagleton finds that the reader of romantic fiction can find satisfaction within a community of readers (92). Susannah Radstone speaks of a special novel shared in secondary school, which enhances pleasure in the

present reading of novels (13). The pleasure of community thus works in Auel's novels inter-textually and sub-textually: readers enjoy sharing texts, and readers yearn for Ayla to find a family or a community, a need continually postponed by the plot.

Following feminist cultural criticism, reading Auel's novels as a romance is not taken as personally detrimental to readers. Radway, for example, views such genre reading as advantageous since women can "do something constructive" for themselves (5) in an act of agency. Tompkins maintains that the common reader should not be "held up to scorn" (Sensational Designs xiv). Alison Light agrees that romance fiction should not be tagged as regressive escapism: "Such an analysis," Light complains, "denigrates readers . . . [and] treats women yet again as victims of . . . their sensibilities" (141). As Mary Eagleton summarizes, "The reading of romantic fiction can express dissatisfaction as much as submission, can offer the woman reader a sense of power, or resolution, or achievement" (92). In short, reading Auel's novels is not necessarily a submissive retreat into a fictional romance where Ayla is saved by the hero, but rather a space where readers can try out Ayla's courage, like test-driving a car, in preparation for re-entry into the world outside the text.²¹

Consequently, when Auel's novels are interpreted as popular romance, they include the potential to foster socio-political reorganization. Following Barret's thought, Light advocates reading as a "process which helps to query as well as endorse social meanings" and so allow for change (141). Subsequently, Light advocates for popular romantic literature as a "source of pleasure, passion, and entertainment" (141), and she sees fictions as balanced restatements, "(however mediated) of a social reality" (141). Similarly, Patricinio Schweickart advocates activism in the endeavor of reading because she sees that "literature is realized as praxis" (531). Thus, the reader of Clan who purchases Valley may be construed as reacting positively to the theme of woman's independence.

Other critics view reading the romance as a safety valve for submerged resistance against a bourgeois patriarchy (Jon Cohn 6) or even as a channel for newly awakened ideas. For instance, Tompkins views popular novels as instructive about personal behavior which leads to a shift between classes. She says that since the popular novels' functions are "heuristic and didactic rather than mimetic," popular novels teach a reader which behaviors "to emulate or shun" and so help in "remaking the social and political order" (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvii). For instance,

just as the learning of manners may help some readers rise in social class, the learning of Ayla's rebellion may induce some readers to act more independently, thus shifting them away from more conservative strictures.

Indeed, the sharing of romantic fiction links women readers with their collective, familial, and individual past as well as with their present circumstances. Hence, the reading of Auel's romantic fiction is as much a political act as a personal one, though critics may disagree on which particular effects are beneficial.

To understand readership communities' interests, feminist cultural critics, such as Jane Tompkins, often explore the popular novel's identifiable forms. In part, formula fiction involves the standard patterns of characters and their relationships and of the narrative development. Each has its own appeal. In general, formula fiction, notes Jane Tompkins, depends upon the "formulaic and derivative" by "tapping into a storehouse of commonly held assumptions . . . in a typical and familiar form" (Sensational Designs xvi). Consequently, Tompkins argues for the "presence of stereotyped characters" which allow the novels to operate as instruments of cultural self-definition" (Sensational Designs xvi). In fact, Tompkins believes stereotyped characters are "essential to popular successful narrative[s]" since they carry "strong emotional associations" and are

based on the familiarity of a "social equation" (Sensational Designs xvi). In addition to other critics, Tompkins finds the linear plot no disadvantage since it embraces "problems concerning relations among people of different sexes, races, social classes, ethnic groups, economic levels" and so require a different narrative structure than those of "modern psychological novels"---since they explore social and political "solutions" (Sensational Designs xvii).

In short, because stereotypical characters and predictable plotlines facilitate reader identification, Auel's Clan and Valley can be read for their management of some 80s readers' social and political concerns. In Clan, for instance, Ayla's stereotyping as a woman at the bottom of the social ladder because she is "ugly" can satisfy women readers who understand that a woman's physical beauty is prescribed by culture. Likewise, Ayla's domination by men in Clan can correlate with those readers who feel repressed under the political organization of a patriarchy. In addition, a predictable plot encourages a reader to follow a heroine's progress since success is guaranteed. In Clan, Ayla's independent spirit is rewarded when she leaves the community to seek a better world, in accord with a mythic hero's code. In Valley, when Ayla prospers while living alone, she satisfies the expectations of some feminist readers who admire a lone woman's self-sufficiency and of

some romance readers who anticipate Ayla's reward of a suitable lover. Simultaneously, because of the codes' predictability, Clan and Valley's plot events also help "solve" two 80s feminist problems of encouraging women to move to a position of subjecthood, as Ayla does in the first novel, and into one of agency, as when Ayla masters her wilderness environment in the second.

Recognizing the similarities among formula fictions, feminist cultural critics often dissect different popular genres for their unique appeals to readership communities. As John Cawelti postulates, formula stories are similar in four ways: they present an imaginary world that is aligned with current interests and attitudes to reaffirm a culture's consensus about reality and morality; they resolve tensions and ambiguities of different cultural groups; they permit readers to explore the forbidden in a controlled way; and they assist in assimilating new ideas to contribute to cultural continuity (35-36). But while formulas have much in common, their varieties affect readers in diverse ways by producing different kinds of heroes for different audiences (Cawelti 38). As will be seen, among those formula types applicable to Auel's novels are historical fiction, fantasy, the popular romance, the soap opera-saga and the survival-adventure.

Of the several genres that Auel transverses, the historical romance in particular appeals to women readers. In spite of the fact that some critics disparage historical fiction as fantasy,²² others are aware of the benefits. As Lillian Robinson contends, popular historical fiction need not be escapist since it can propel the woman reader "into envisioning 'historical possibilities'" (206). Hence, readers may envision Valley's harmonious female-centered society as a remedy to misogyny in their 80s era. Another benefit is that historical fiction recreates a nostalgic past where readers feel more control over their lives, more meaning in their work (Rabine 882), and more satisfaction with a sense of achievement (Tompkins, West 12) since the rewards of their efforts are immediately apparent. The benefit of historical fiction is obvious: by accepting changes in a removed world, readers can rehearse changes for their nonfictional one. In this way, the reading of historical fiction is not too altogether different from that of general fiction though the time displacement allows for wider choices.

In reading Auel's Clan and Valley as a subgenre, critics are divided on the effects of prehistorical fiction in particular. Some critics defend Ice Age fiction as an "historical projection" allowing even young readers to imagine a different future (Patty Campbell 215), but others

complain about the history and the fiction. Given the popularity of Ice Age study, the fictionalized prehistoric world affects readers, some would say, as a land that is over idealized.²³ However, just as the Neanderthal world in Clan is scarcely ideal because of its misogyny, neither is the Cro-Magnon realm in Valley very appealing since racial hatred mars it. On the other hand, Valley is based partly on the depiction of an idealized egalitarianism so that some women can imagine better possibilities in their own "real world." To the additional charge that the fictionalized Ice Age accentuates readers' androcentric superiority,²⁴ Auel herself admits she intended to "humanize" the Neanderthals' behavior as not too different from present-day people (Spitzer 12).²⁵ Consequently, in merging history and fiction, Auel suffers criticism against both. Some critics dismiss the novels because of their historio-scientific inaccuracies while others reject the inclusion of factual discourse as disruptive to the fictional romance element; hence, Auel is no different from other authors who suffer from readership communities' unresolvable fiction/nonfiction tug-of-war.

When perceived as part of the "fantasy" genre in addition to that of historical fiction, Auel's two novels offer advantages to both writer and reader. A woman writer can engage fantasy to "re-evaluate women's history from her own

perspective," says Nickianne Moody (187) as well as to sow feminist ideas through "the accessibility of romance" (201). As I will discuss in chapter five, Auel avoids the science fiction label often associated with fantasy to reach those readers who preferred to see the plausible, not the magical. However, the true "fantasy" element is neither Auel's creation of the Neanderthal's collective unconscious in Clan, nor her postulation that women were pivotal in prehistoric culture in Valley, but rather that her heroine is idealized physically and emotionally as is typical in a romance genre. Such an identification with the protagonist is beneficial because it allows a reader to feel comfortable in assessing the protagonist's choices. On the other hand, reader identification with heroine is not all-encompassing: as Laura Kinsale posits, a reader also uses the heroine as a "placeholder," a position of distance which allows the reader to evaluate the character's choices and options (32).

In addition to drawing upon historical fiction, Auel's two novels sweep into other subcategories of the romance genre. One way of explaining Auel's appeal to different readership communities is to view her novels as bridging at least three romance subgenres, which correlate to a woman's developmental sequence. Tania Modleski views the progression of (Harlequin) romances, Gothic novels, and soap operas as

corresponding . . . roughly [to] courtship
 and marriage [while] . . . the third stage
 . . . soap opera, covers . . . motherhood and
 family life. (61)

Auel's Clan and Valley cultivate a wide readership in part because they touch upon all three stages of courtship, partnership, and motherhood, although not in Modleski's precise order. As I discuss in chapter five, Clan develops Ayla's satisfaction with motherhood as a consolation for the domination she must live under, and Valley ends with Jondalar's courtship of Ayla, a partnership tested in later novels.

When perceived as a saga, Auel's novels cultivate effects similar to the soap opera's. Since a saga often empowers a female protagonist because her parental origins are superior to her peers' (Moody 190), Ayla's Cro-Magnon heritage provides her with (biological) advantages over Clan's Neanderthals though she is endangered by this descent. Furthermore, the saga format expands readership by postponing the protagonist's quest for identity and by extending the texts' typical oppositions (Bridgwood 168-73), such as in the self/community dialectic. Like a soap opera, the saga operates upon unfulfilled closure. Both embrace especially the theme of securing a happy family and make "the anticipation of . . . [this] end an end in itself"

(Modleski 88). Consequently, Auel's saga-soap opera format cultivates a continuing readership because binary oppositions, which underlie the conflict, remain unsolved and because the attending quests for self and for community are continually postponed.

Viewing Auel's novels as akin to the Gothic romance further aids in understanding her readership communities' interests. For one thing, the typical Gothic romance heroine reveals autonomy in selecting a mate, which heightens the male character's esteem of her and, consequently, the reader's (Radway in Mussell 19). As Gothic romances, Auel's novels fulfill a woman reader's "ultimate romantic fantasy" to make a male character more "complete" by her love (Williamson 131). More important, the Gothic romance paints pictures of feminism to allow readers to envision choices, especially for those readers who "might otherwise resist changing models of womanhood" (Thurston and Doscher qtd. in Mussell 19). Clearly, in spite of criticism to the contrary, the Gothic element of mate selection propels readership interest in Auel's novels because it seems to empower choice.²⁶

Such differing views of romance's effect on power relations can be reconciled by acknowledging a spectrum of political awareness in readers, generally aligned with liberal and conservative tendencies. In general, conserva-

tism includes the valorization of the individual, a concern with status, and a belief in certain absolute moral values (Adelson 126).²⁷ In contrast, liberals tend to devalue the individual's material success, inherited status, and self restraint; instead, they value self-expression, including a more permissive sexuality (Adelson 126-7). If liberal women readers seek sanction for their independence in reading romances, conservatives may enjoy the romance as a consolation. Readers who "feel more secure than threatened under the conditions of the patriarchy," says Jon Cohn, will find the gratification in the familiarity of a romance's codes and will identify with the heroine to experience "negatively sanctioned" emotions, hence playing out "tabooed roles in defiance of the social order" (6). Moderates, it may be speculated, read Auel's romance for sanction of some ideas, for consolation of others, and for inspiration to change their lives or their community. In fact, any reader may embrace both liberal and conservative political beliefs in addition to other interests or views. Readers of romances also include those who accept feminism's various political beliefs, ranging from those who do not question the status quo to "radical" feminists interested in revolutionizing patriarchal capitalism.²⁸ In brief, readers along the political spectrum can respond to Auel's novels because they bridge various power relationships.

Not all critics agree that readers of romances may be covertly attracted to the heroine's fight for independence to test out their own rebellion. As Sabine contends, working women who make up a large percentage of the 80s work force may bring their past emotions to their reading and reject the "more competitive, success-oriented emotional equipment" into which men have been socialized (885). Yet certainly some women are just as driven as some men. Perhaps a more comprehensive explanation is that women readers, like men, simply enjoy the acute pressures of a hero taking agency within the fictional world since readers' "real" time seems to disappear (Tompkins, West 15). Hence, as I will discuss in chapter five, some readers may admire Ayla because her competitive spirit does not invalidate her maternal instincts and because the working out of her conflict prolongs readers' own "time" in weighing options.

While much of Clan and Valley conform to genre expectations, readers respond to subversions of the formulas too. These subversions work in two ways: some critics see the form itself as subversive, Jon Cohn for instance (6); others point to the formula's discrepancies as subversive. Charlotte Spivack enumerates several aspects that point to subversion within the romance-fantasy genre. Of those applicable to Auel's novels, Spivack's assessments include the foregrounding of a female protagonist, a matriarchal

setting, and the adaption of "a feminine point of view on a subject matter traditionally presented from a male perspective" (Merlin's Daughters 10). Not mutually exclusive, both tactics reveal Auel's appeal to different readership communities. In accord with John Cawelti's observations about the romance,²⁹ Auel's Clan and Valley run against type. For instance, in Clan, Ayla is more properly the hero of a male survival-adventure story, though she pines for romance. In contrast to Ayla, Jondalar is the hero of their romance in Valley because it is he who seeks a central love relationship. Another reversal of the romance is that Jondalar expresses "transparency" or a wish for an "open, honest, direct, and unambivalent relationship" usually attributed to a woman (Modleski 112). Reassured by some familiar constructs of formula fiction, readers may not perceive that these role-reversals undermine the formulas while seeming to conform to them. Such variations enable Auel to promote Ayla as a female hero in the popular romance formula.

Seen as a combination of a Gothic romance, saga, and adventure, Auel's Clan and Valley offer Ayla as the model for an active female hero to challenge the mainstream norm of 80s women's popular fiction. Overall, the novels reach several communities of women readers because Ayla undermines the male norm as a female who follows Joseph Campbell's mythic plot and who rebels against male domination.

Recently, American feminists have focused on popular romance novels not only to locate power, subjectivity, and agency in the novel's discourse, but also to explore the newer ideas of gender, ethnicity, and myth especially as it purveys the dominant ideology. For instance, Radstone posits that reading the romance should take into account the ways that texts provide "constitution or . . . reconstituting of femininity and masculinity" and ways in which "class, gender, [and] ethnicity" all contribute to a reader's perceptions of herself and of her culture (13-14). In contrast, some American feminist critical approaches have been abandoned or have been turned around; for instance, the myth analysis of the 70-80s has given way to a counter-myth reading that attempts to disrobe a text's prevailing ideology. Since formula fiction depends upon stereotyping and predictable plots however, myth analysis still contributes to understanding the influence of Auel's formula fiction upon different readership communities. Additionally, because myth functions so widely and so variously, mythic and archetypal deconstruction of Clan will appear in chapter three and of Valley in chapter four.

That women readers buy romantic novels is a given. That Auel's first two novels attained such widespread popularity results from her appeal to many readership communities with varying ideologies. Clan and Valley reach both

conservative and liberal sympathies within women readers. The novels also find correspondences with women readers who may reject feminism, accept a few standard beliefs, or even embrace one or several radical positions. Scholars, too, were interested in Auel's feminism though they were divided on its efficacy.³⁰ In addition, as I will discuss in chapter five, Auel's novels attract readers linked by special interests, including those intrigued by the Ice Age setting and by factual descriptions, which range from anthropology to zoology. Furthermore, Auel's novels cultivate wide readership by exploiting genre fiction conventions. This breadth may, in part, answer why Auel's novels hit such popularity that both Clan and Valley reached the best-selling list among "mainstream" (non academic) readers.

Primarily, Jean Auel interprets women's concerns in the vehicle of popular fiction (defined in part by its conventions of minimizing symbolism to foreground a hero's conflict within a linear plot) in order to promote feminism to a wider audience than a more "literary" style might permit.³¹ That she successfully addresses 80s women's concerns is suggested partly by all four novels' continuing "best selling" status, with yearly sales reaching the millions. That she succeeded, in part, can be explained by her role as a female author, by her publishing house's mass-marketing strategy,³² and by the frequent mention of women's issues

during interviews and reviews. Overall, Clan and Valley's popularity indicates that the novels attained broad acceptance in the (non-academic) audience, which includes readership communities not limited to feminist parameters nor to liberal sympathies.

Against the 80s broader socio-political and economic panorama, Auel's two novels inculcate two particular feminist ideas shifting into popular culture from the academy. At the time, some feminists in Women's Studies Programs and English Departments at universities and colleges were developing analyses of goddess worship and of the female hero to refute religious and social misogyny. Subsequently, a goddess religion (in which women are the deities worshiped and the spiritual intercessors) and female heroism (at times following the male pattern, but then differing from it) began emerging in popular culture. Of specific interest in Clan and in Valley is the goddess theory that postulates an alternate feminist prehistory and spirituality. Moreover, Clan and Valley foreground the female hero who usurps the archetypal male's heroic pattern, codified by Lord Raglan and developed by Joseph Campbell, and the feminist hero who participates in creating civilization. Since Auel's novels bring the goddess theory and the female hero out of the margins of academia into popular 80s literature, they become a new site of resistance to patriarchal power and a new

platform for women's issues, some of which are still unresolved today.

Obviously, Auel's portrayal of the Ice Age speaks as much about the 80's decade as it does about the paleolithic or pre agricultural millennium. In spite of the fact that an application of 90s insights will carry its own, often unrecognized, cultural assumptions with it, I will examine how Auel's goddess theory, her development of the female hero, and her unfolding of romance heroine affect diverse audiences of 80s women readers, whose readings are shaped by the cultural milieu, and in turn, whose preferences determine what gets published.

Several years have passed since the publication of the last novel, The Plains of Passage, the longest hiatus between Auel's novels in the Earth Children series, which was initially projected to six books. Whenever asked about Auel's newest entry in the series, Crown Publications generally responds with "in the next two years." As a reader, I cannot help but wonder if the author has lost interest in pursuing Ayla's quest. As an academic, I can only speculate whether recent critical theories might have dissuaded her from continuing the series. As a returning graduate student interested in feminist cultural criticism, I seek to understand the various facets of goddess mythology and female heroism in the novels.

As I reflect upon Auel's first two novels in particular, I find they appear as innocuous romantic adventures which attain "success" because the texts fit their immediate contexts (Tompkins Sensational Designs xviii) of supplying curious readers with information about how prehistoric women lived, loved, and worshiped.³³ Nonetheless, the two novels also function subversively within early 80s culture. First, readers with politically conservative tendencies are invited to reject the repressive patriarchy in Clan in favor of the more liberal and egalitarian cultures in Valley. Second, readers dismayed by the constrictions of Judeo-Christianity can learn about the alternative of goddess worship, hinted at in Clan and developed in Valley. Next, readers accustomed to formula fiction may respond to the reversals of male and female roles, especially in the reworking of Ayla into the pattern of the male hero. In short, these reversals may help explain Auel's success as 80s best-selling mainstream fiction.

Seen from a 90s perspective however, some of the novels' subversions themselves reveal gaps. In exploiting female myth and the goddess theory, the novels perpetuate the male/female binary and descend into problems of essentialism, universalism, and teleology. Hence, for all Clan and Valley's success in championing feminism for some 80s readers, both novels bear problems Auel may not have

recognized nor anticipated. In the long view nonetheless, Auel's feminism is best appreciated as a product of 70-80s culture which served the immediate goals of addressing women's subordination and of questioning the marginalization of others.

Chapter Two

Auel's Doni Theory and The Readers

When she drafted her Earth's Children series in the late 70s, Jean Auel was riding the up swell of the interests in myth and in the matriarchy³⁴ that flowed out of the academy into popular culture. Integrating these ideas in part, Auel's novels encourage 80s readers' support of feminism through three general strategies. First, Clan and Valley incorporate ideas from feminist nonfiction in the social sciences to support a woman's heritage of power since pre-historic times. Second, the novels' use of mythic stories and female symbols attempt to legitimate women's power, particularly in religious worship subsumed under goddess worship. Finally, the novels purvey the idea of women's early religious power through the avenue of genre fiction which itself relies upon mythic codes that readers share. In all these ways, Clan and Valley reach a variety of women in a range of readership communities, including those who embrace differently and even conflicting ideas about feminism, liberalism, and goddess theology, in addition to those readers who prefer the historical romance.

Drawing from many sources, Auel develops her own goddess hypothesis to support some 80s feminist ideas about women's position in prehistory. Both novels rely upon the

premise that religion originated with a woman-centered spirituality derived from women's biological correspondences with nature. Generally, Clan suggests that paleolithic people had been organized under a matriarchy and had worshiped female deities, a knowledge deliberately suppressed by the Neanderthal's patriarchy,³⁵ yet divulged through ancient myths. Valley interprets the Cro Magnons as an egalitarian community where female myth and ritual support a goddess religion.

On the one hand, the 70-80s goddess theory contributes to readings of Clan and Valley within their immediate milieu and helps explain their wide popularity among diverse readers in 80s mainstream (non-academic) America. On the other, Auel could not foresee that goddess conjectures and female mythmaking would later be challenged by feminists of the academy themselves to fall into disfavor. In fact, myth as a theoretical approach underwent such scrutiny during the 80s that it eventually converted into an anti-myth examination which discloses a text's assumptions and biases. Thus, some readers may criticize goddess myth-making as problematizing for Clan and Valley's feminism. Scholars today might argue that what seemed admirable prior to the 80s, slides into essentialism and gender constriction, scarcely coincident with current feminism. Therefore, this chapter not only examines the many trails that contributed to Auel's

goddess hypothesis and explores its appeal among several readership communities linked by differing interests, but also offers an anti-myth strategy to unfurl the writer's presumptions, an approach further developed in subsequent chapters.

While Clan merely suggests a woman-centered prepatriarchal religion, Valley more clearly illustrates Auel's particular version of the goddess hypothesis. Based on the worship of Doni, one tribe's name for the Earth Mother, Valley develops the theosophy behind the Doni religion. Doni worship derives from the broader concept of Earth Mother worship³⁶ which customarily perceives "the universe as an organic, alive and sacred whole . . . in which all life on Earth participate as 'her children'" (Baring and Cashford, "Preface" xi). As a result, the Earth Mother's power extends into the metaphysical realm: She creates "the universe and its laws, [and rules] Nature, Fate, Time, . . . Justice, Love, Birth, Death, etc." (Barbara G. Walker 346). The source of the Earth Mother's power derives from her dual role as mother and creatrix: as goddess, "the female figure [is] almost always more powerful than the male" because she is not only "his Mother, the author of his being;" but also "the deity who infuses all creation with the vital blood of life" (Walker 346). Equally important, the Doni theory integrates spiritual transcendence with sexuality, but not

necessarily derived from the "magic" of "fertility." Instead, as Sjoo and Mor say, because "no necessary connection" was seen between fertility and religion, "sex was practiced rather for the sake of "ecstatic self-transcendence, a sexual-spiritual fusion of the human with the cosmic All" (75).

In general terms then, some readers might recognize how Valley's Doni worship replicates Earth Mother theology. Doni functions as the universal parent whose name is granted to each "nation's territory," as Walker describes (263); therefore, the Cro Magnons conceive of themselves as "Earth's Children" (Valley 365). Moreover, Doni is their "universal parent" (Valley 263)--just as Walker defines (346)--who receives tribute as the creatrix of the world (Valley 192), the giver of life (Valley 454), the source of Love (Valley 192), the bringer of "luck" (Valley 33), and the ruler of human destiny (Valley 203). Additionally, Doni's power connects nature and fertility: as the earth personified (Valley 303), Doni is the goddess of vegetation (Valley 22) and the wellspring of material gifts, including food, water, and shelter (Valley 192). Moreover, through the women-nature correspondence between women's menstrual cycles and Doni's moon phases (Valley 430), women are perceived with more mystical power than men, as when some Cro-Magnon women shape shift for revenge (Valley 454). In con-

trast, men appear second in importance: men need a guardian to the spirit world, whereas women need no such guide because they are manifestations of Doni's spirit (Valley 454). But Doni has a dark side too: she is the goddess of death (Valley 52) as well as the bringer of global retribution (Valley 52) and of male impotence (Valley 34). For readers supporting goddess worship, Doni empowers women not only as a life-giver, but also as a death-bringer who induces fear in men, in a kind of 80s feminist reprisal for past injustices.

Therefore, many readers would undoubtedly recognize Valley's Doni religion as it draws from the themes which evolved from a century-and-a-half promotion of women's power: in the matriarchy as a female authority structure, in paleoarcheological female icons as indicators of female worship, in feminism as a political stance, and in myth revisionism which sought to overturn patriarchal misogyny, especially under Judeo-Christianity. When read together, Clan illustrates the problems under the patriarchy, which I examine further in chapter three. Valley presents the solutions in a re-envisioned prehistory that refutes sexism by suggesting that goddess worship might promise women a better life and even a new model for an 80s American socio-economic and religious reconstruction, ideas I debate in chapter four.

Readers familiar with the heritage of a century-and-a-half investigation of anthropology and literary sources to ascertain women's power in prehistory would certainly understand Clan and Valley's assumption of matriarchal societies. Interest in matriarchies began, arguably, in the middle nineteenth century³⁷ with Bachofen's Das Mutterrecht which promoted women's moral superiority.³⁸ A second surge of attention occurred in the 1920s-30s, concurrent with Briffault's anthropological speculation in The Mothers³⁹ about feminine biological and mystical supremacy. The third swell of interest in matriarchal societies emerged in the late 40s with Robert Graves's publication of The White Goddess and gathered impetus in American academia with Graves's The Greek Myths in 1955, wherein the Triple Goddess theory was applied to various women's roles in literature. Also adding momentum to establishing women's roles in early culture was E. O. James' Cult of the Mother Goddess in 1959.

The pursuit of myth and the matriarchy rose through the 60s-70s and appears to crest during the 80s.³⁹ Generally, all three surges coincide with the popular excitement over new archeological and anthropological discoveries⁴⁰ and with women's more active presence in the public sphere. The last two swells correlate with female academics' specific interests in myth, religion, psychology, and literature.

The final surge of investigating myth and the matriarchy merged with the politics of second-wave feminism. Some women who supported the movement against racial discrimination in the 60s-70s turned to liberating women from men's oppression. After the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, many women in mainstream America began to perceive their own marginalization, organize the reform movement known as "women's liberation," advocate for women's equality, promote the Equal Rights Amendment, and challenge the "patriarchy," which privileged men as the central gender (Harriman 332-335). Hence, one group of readers might respond to Clan and Valley's Ayla as she fills the more conventional picture of a heroine who is morally and spiritual superior to men, whereas another group would recognize the novels' pro-feminism in the 70-80s reassessment of women's socio-economic, political, and religious position.

Many 80s readers could look to Clan and Valley for an illustration of the origin of women's power in prehistory, especially since the novels integrate goddess mythology emerging from the academy. During second-wave feminism in the 70s, academicians explored the matriarchy and mythic stories to recenter women in history.⁴¹ Just as women established women's councils and coalitions in the community at large, women in academia gained some authority by creat-

ing Women's Studies programs and began to explore whatever seemed helpful to promote women's position. Hence, readers of Clan and Valley could find correspondences among many 70-80s feminist ideas either fulminating in the academy or flowing into the mainstream.

Some 70-80s feminist ideas that underpin Clan and Valley, which I will examine shortly, are the roles and status of women in prehistory, the retelling of goddess and hero myths, the conflict between patriarchies and matriarchies, women's economic exploitation in early culture, and goddess worship as a spiritual alternative to Judeo-Christianity.

To begin, 80s readers might well respond to the examination of gender roles in Clan specifically as determined by biology. Unwilling to be relegated to the roles of sex objects and child bearers, some 80s readers refuted the popular catch phrase of the time, "biology is destiny," or rejected the kind of biological determinism, as did Elizabeth Gould Davis in The First Sex (1970). At the same time, women had begun to argue for women's biological equality if not supremacy⁴² and to celebrate the physiological differences. Hence, readers might well note that Ayla's female biology is demeaned by the Clan community since she is isolated when her first menstrual cycle occurs (288). Additionally, some women who read Clan could well admire Ayla as

a woman who has certain physiological advantages over the Neanderthal men (such as height and coordination) while other readers under the throes of the 80s physical fitness craze might appreciate Ayla's athletic physique, gained without tedious exercising. When readers engage Valley, they discover that women no longer suffer an inferior status; instead, the Doni religion celebrates a woman's biological gender and her procreative link to the goddess.

For 80s readers rejecting the sexual double standard, Valley can be read as a reassessment of family structures and gender roles that extrapolate concepts from ancient Indo-European fertility cults. Drawing from sources as far back as Bachofen, some 60-70s writers enjoined anthropological and archeological hypotheses to sustain a women's right to a freely chosen sexuality. Early on, Robert Graves predicates his Triple Goddess theory upon women's sexual equality (or superiority), but especially upon the Artemis/Diana and Aphrodite types of religious cults of ancient Eurasia (The Greek Myths: 1, "Introduction" 21; The White Goddess 61-73). Later, feminist authors such as Merlin Stone and Marija Gimbutas use more recent archeological evidence from Eurasia to support sexual equality for women. Consequently, 80s readers could find correlations among non-fictional texts about women's sexual autonomy among early religions, Valley's Doni theory, and moon-myth allusions.

Other readers might connect the novels' concept of sexual liberation with anthropological studies of rituals, such as Frazer's classic The Golden Bough or Margot Adler's 1979 Drawing Down the Moon to ascertain that (even married) women in prehistory participated in religious rites that granted women sexual autonomy. Since such examinations seemed to prove that women were free of a male's tyranny at one time and acted as sexual beings with similar desires and options as men, some readers could identify the themes of women's sexual oppression in Clan and sexual liberation unfolding in Valley.

Additionally, readers following the search for women's equality might well recognize Clan and Valley for their 70s supposition that after the patriarchy overthrew the matriarchy, women suffered doubly from gender stereotyping. Readers familiar with Helen Diner's Mothers and Amazons republished in 1965 may have recognized Valley's premise that female physiology prescribed early matriarchal religions and that Clan's deities followed a gendered sequence. Furthermore, readers acquainted with Diner's "patriarchal overthrow" hypothesis could recognize the familiar theme that men had debased the female halves of certain male/female binary oppositions, including light/dark, sun/moon, sky/earth and line/circle among others and applaud Valley's inclusion of these same female symbols which seem to re-establish

a women's heritage. Secondly, readers who believe that women's power in prehistoric matriarchies had been distorted by patriarchal impress or neglected by male academics⁴³--or, worse--deliberately withheld in a "Great Silence" (Daly, Beyond God the Father 93) would respect Clan for disclosing the Neanderthals' use of religion to suppress women's knowledge of a prior matrifocal spirituality. Thus, for readers espousing women's equality, Valley interrogates the Clan's patriarchy and re-evaluates women's roles under pre-biblical matriarchies, not questioning the seemingly natural struggle between the two in which either men or women held control.

Women readers who believe in a female's innate spiritual and mystical superiority too can find correspondences in Clan and Valley. As if to compensate for women's past marginalization, some 70-80s feminists continued extolling women's spiritual and mystical supremacy within gendered family roles. Using concepts that commenced with Bachofen or earlier theorists, some feminists such as Helen Diner and Elizabeth Davis advanced a woman's position, not only as the moral arbiter of the family and society, but also as the conduit to spiritual realm.⁴⁴ In part, women's unique spiritual link to Nature in prehistory was determined to have evolved from the "magic" of a woman's giving birth. Other magical attributes were commonly explained by the physical correspondences between the women's biology and

nature, i.e. among the moon's cycles and the thirteenth-month year, and the moon's three phases that aligned with the stages of a woman's sexual development as maid, mother, and crone or with the life-maturity-death-cycle, popularized by Graves and adapted by others. In the 70s, this "magic" of women's mystical superiority seemed to elevate women's status to compensate, in part, for years of relegation to a subordinate position. For early 80s Clan and Valley readers, the connection of women to Nature seems to legitimate a woman's religion, advance women's autonomy, and support a collective advocacy for women in general. Still other readers who followed the feminist impulse to form a spiritual tradition outside of the patriarchy would find resonances in Valley's Doni religion which foregrounds women as equal participants, spiritual leaders, and the deity worshiped--all integrated with mysticism.

At first, Clan and Valley's readers may have found resonance in the recasting of mythic imagery for women. Readers familiar with the ideas of 70s scholars, like Esther Harding, often favored balanced traits of animus/anima within the psyche (The Way of All Women 1), a gender balance implicit in Clan when Ayla persists in the male activity of hunting (197). Other readers might respond to the source of women's power as derived from the womb-as-enclosure image of

the Great Mother,⁴⁵ symbolized by the female emblem of the circle, a motif found in Valley's wedding ceremony (192).

Eventually, however, Jungian interpretations were discarded for their essentialist bias. For instance, during the mid 70s, Carol Christ proposed that women promote cultural myths, but reject Jungian essentialism ("Spiritual Quest" 5), which presents a "fixity of pattern and image incompatible with a feminist understanding of gender and power relations" ("Some Comments on Jung" 66). Subsequently, Cynthia Davis divides feminist myth criticism into two sites, one that re-centered women by advancing the mythic tales of "Demeter/Kore [and] Psyche" that represent "a repressed tradition for women" and another site that examined women's marginality within its cultural context (118), such as the angel/madwoman mythotype from Gilbert and Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic.

Because revising classical or biblical myth seemed to support women's power,⁴⁶ 80s readers of Clan and Valley could look to Ayla as a new role model for women as patterned after the classical goddesses.⁴⁷ Identifying Ayla's character as a mythotype from the classic tradition, Mary Zeiss Stange perceives her as an Artemis figure who braves hunter-gatherer sexism (61) but who acknowledges the death aspect often downplayed in the Artemis archetype (64). Other critics employ varying mythic narratives about partic-

ular goddesses to reformulate new patterns of power for women.⁴⁸ Kathryn E. Palumbo, for instance, examines Ayla's growth as one of several Psyche figures who remakes herself in "Psyche Revisited: Images of Female Heroism in American Literature 1950-1980."

Although some archetypalists persisted in offering women classical Indo-European psychological patterns,⁴⁹ for 80s readers who reject the goddesses of the classical Greek-Roman pantheon as too paternalized, Valley offers Ayla as a transgressor of Judeo-Christian stereotypes. Some 80s feminists extend their revision or rejection of biblical myths begun in Mary Daly's Beyond God the Father of the 70s. For 80s readers who pursue the challenges to biblical authority in such ways as revising female Christian images in literature (Barbara Rigney, Lilith's Daughters 1982) or exploring misogyny's sources in Genesis (Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent 1988), Valley encapsulates both the revised Eve figure and the re-envisioned Eden imagery, similarities I develop in chapter five. Altogether then, readers of Clan and Valley could advocate for Ayla's balance of male/female qualities in wanting to hunt and to nurture, or respect her mythotype as Artemis, a proto-feminist (Clan 271). Not a few women readers of Valley could feel a new pride in their link to the goddesses, a connection which appeared to enhance women's subjecthood and power even into the 90s⁵⁰;

others might well applaud the addition of the independent Eve cultural mythotype to supplant biblical misogyny and the Eden revisionism which promised women a new role model who behaved more assertively.

Then too, readers would certainly respond to Clan and Valley's archetypalism as trans-cultural myth. Popularized by the Joseph Campbell myth series, the monomyth theory acknowledges the primacy of early women's worship and the interpretation of symbols as male and female, but especially addresses the universality of the hero's pattern. For those readers seeking women's subjecthood via the recast Jungian pattern of the mythic hero, Clan and Valley provide a proto-feminist heroine of the strong Artemis/Diana mythotype whose storyline replicates those of not only the male mythic hero, but also of the female hero. As I discuss in chapter five, Ayla is the female hero who acts subversively in culture, following a new pattern identified by Annis Pratt's Arche-
typal Patterns in Women's Fiction, the first of many such feminist myth revisionisms in literature and then in popular culture.⁵¹

Furthermore, since such archetypal plots underpin the romance element, Clan and Valley readers are made comfortable by the familiarity of mythic codes in the narrative structure. Genre fiction aids readers in exploring socio-political solutions (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvii),

such as women's subjugation in Clan. In addition, archetypalism offers alternatives to the 80s nuclear family. In particular, the Artemis archetype frequently models independence for the unmarried woman (Jean Shinoda Bolen 60) such as for Ayla in Clan; moreover, the Aphrodite archetype sanctions a woman's refusal to "settle down" with one partner (Bolen 253), just like Ayla in the later novels.⁵² For many 80s readers then, Ayla's archetypal-stereotypical character replicates general Jungian conjectures about the persistent, unmarried female hero who disputes traditional gender roles to attain independence. Because the novels delve into "a storehouse" of archetypal characters and plots (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvi), some readers of Clan and Valley can feel so reassured by the formula that they permit themselves to take on even prohibited roles and envision choices.

Auel's use of the reinterpretation of archeological evidence capitalizes on the intent to counteract men's authority, a strategy that resonates with feminist tendencies in her readers. Undaunted by criticism, some 80s feminists persevered in adapting new archeological discoveries to the prehistoric image of woman as the goddess.⁵³ Throughout the 1970s-80s and into the 90s, Marija Gimbutas persists in linking the goddess to archeological discoveries of icons (from the 1974 The Goddesses and Gods of Old Eu-

rope) to the 1989 The Language of the Goddess). Even men reworked the goddess imagery.⁵⁴ The burgeoning of the anthropo-archaeologically influenced goddess phenomenon helps explain Clan and Valley's popularity among those popular readers curious about the connections. Assured of privacy (Robinson 206), readers often select a historical romance like Clan and Valley to enjoy the leisure (Tompkins, West 15) of evaluating evidence. Confirming the tangible evidence of a goddess religion in Auel's novels can even enable women readers to ponder social change.

For those readers aware of archeological research, the novels transmit what had been occurring in the academy. In part, the focus on women's roles began when feminists new to archeology began challenging male-centered interpretations. As Riane Eisler notes, feminist researchers began refuting "hunting magic" explanations of cave paintings, instead attributing paleolithic symbols to female genital images which postulated women's power in prehistory (4) especially in matriarchies.⁵⁵ As the earliest art icons, "Venus" figurines are a typical indicator of female worship (Merlin Stone 13), such as the kind of talisman that Jondalar carries (Valley 33) and the statue he later carves to represent Ayla (Valley 462). Colors and patterns of paleolithic art are frequently interpreted as women's symbols: to wit, red ochre signifies women's menstrual or even birth blood to

anoint a corpse during death rites (Cooper 40-41) also found in a burial in Clan (424) and during a baptism in Valley (425). The circle mirrors the womb (Sjoo and Mor 73), an emblem significant in Valley's matrimonial ceremony (192). Even animal symbols are equated with women worship. It comes as no surprise that Ayla tames a cave lion in Valley, for example, since the cat was long associated with women in Egyptian myth (Walker 148), or domesticates the horse in Valley, since the mare particularly connects with female worship, especially with separatist Amazon cults of the Eurasian steppes' "warrior women" (Walker 413).⁵⁶ Indeed, just as many investigators hoped that the prehistoric egalitarian communities might model an 80s American political reconstruction (e.g. Eisler xiv), many readers of fiction were compelled by this archeological-myth-based alternative, a world similarly evoked by Auel.

Undoubtedly, some readers respond to Clan and Valley's diverse economic realms that compare and contrast to 80s circumstances. To sever economic dependence upon men, 70s feminists often probed early matriarchal cultures to locate women's economic independence or the source of material oppression. Within anthropology, Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women" draws upon Engles's view of the double nature of production and reproduction as means of capital expansion, but singles out the "propagation of the species" (165) as

unique to women. In viewing the evolution of sexual exchange along the Marxist lines of money and commodities (204), Rubin's observations that several kinds of politico-economic systems exchange women for various purposes, such as the trade for other women and for property for the consolidation of kinship strata and the extraction of surplus labor from females (205-10), appear in Clan's patriarchy which not only trades women (60), but exploits their production and reproduction capacities. Although Rubin ultimately rejects history as the ontology of women's sexual exploitation (199), other feminists retained the concept of an early matriarchy for its socio-political promise. For instance, Paula Webster's "Matriarchy: A Vision of Power" concedes that while the existence of matriarchal societies had not been proven, women needed to imagine alternatives to a patriarchal construct (155). Therefore some readers will respond to Clan's dramatization of women's socio-economic objectification under the earliest patriarchal proto-capitalism where women are considered men's property to be traded off when they lack value (60); alternately, Valley illustrates a liberal sharing of resources in the earliest matrifocal communities (301).

For those readers attuned to 70s-80s feminist exploration of religious politics, Clan and Valley incorporate many popular ideas to advance women's liberation. Readers can

recognize radical beliefs such as Mary Daly's repudiation of much biblical doctrine for its legitimation of women's oppression or Merlin Stone's alternatives in the new lineage of ancient goddess beliefs, rituals, and stories, particularly from the Indo-European heritage. Typically, liberal feminists, such as Naomi Goldenberg, promote a more equal position for women within Judaism and Christianity. For the most part, reader who reject the misogyny of those religions that evolved from the Hebrew heritage, specifically Judeo-Christianity, find correspondences within Clan and Valley: Clan presents the problem of women's secondary status when female worshiper are excluded from certain sacred religious practices (79) while Valley refrains from such discrimination, as when women and men share in a communal warmth during the marriage ritual under Doni worship (192).

For those readers who question women's subjugation under the patriarchy, Clan illustrates the process of religious codification of masculine power. Readers familiar with the premier 70s work of Mary Daly's widely heralded Beyond God the Father (1973) would find correspondences in Clan where a "worldwide phenomena of sexual caste" is created by the "sex role socialization" of culture (Daly 2) and where patriarchal religion reifies the seemingly "natural" aspect of a "divine plan" (Daly 3-4).⁵⁷ Similarly, the theological-ethical system in Clan supports the kind of

sexism (Daly 3-4) that polarizes the eternal masculine and feminine qualities (Daly 15) that some readers are invited to reject many Judeo-Christian premises on political grounds. To illustrate, in one sacred service, the men retreat into a cave for a quiet and "inward" experience while the women succumb to "unrestrained abandon" in a polarized logic and emotional essentialism (Clan 87-88). Hence, Clan's illumination of gender stereotyping invites some 80s readers to query the sexual discrimination within their own religious practices and to advocate for change.

Important to some 80s readers, Mary Daly's images of women oppressed under Judeo-Christianity appear in Clan, specifically Catholicism's images of Eve and Mary. First, Clan questions the sinful Eve stereotype who not only causes man's downfall, but who fosters women's psychological self-aggression, women's objectification as "the Other," and the segregation of any rebellious female as "the enemy" (Daly 46-48), a motif which acquires "cosmic proportions" since God's viewpoint is actually man's (Daly 47).

Secondly, Clan questions the virginal Mary myth as dysfunctional for women. Although acknowledging Mary's link to the Great Goddess (92), Daly both criticizes Mary as the image of a woman who places her own needs last (88-91) and interrogates Christianity which so "idealizes" women-as-

victim (77) that women do not even perceive themselves as victims (133). Corresponding to Daly's observations, Clan dramatizes the Neanderthal women as the sinful Eves who shun Ayla for refusing to make a Mary-like sacrifice and quit hunting so as to protect the men's egos (256-7). Since Ayla presents a strong case for women's independence in her pursuing her skill, some readers would not only support Ayla's rebellion against discrimination, but also feel compassion for 80s women enduring job discrimination as codified by religion.

For readers who wish to look beyond Clan's illustration of the Judeo-Christian codification of family structure and gender roles, Auel's Valley posits a cosmic covenant. Readers familiar with Mary Daly's ideas can look to Auel's second novel for the promotion of women's existential courage as well as self-actualization (20) which aims towards a "universal community" (32) among sisters, which includes men who agree (172) though this new community may not evolve from a recognizable theological or philosophical language (33). Hence, for those readers who distrust Judeo-Christianity under Clan's strictures, Valley's Doni religion offers the unique theological position of a new cosmic covenant under Mother Earth worship to readers who already favor a goddess covenant and to others who seek the opportunity to

extrapolate possibilities (Lillian Robinson 206) for a better future.

If some readers discover correspondences in Valley's rejection of the patriarchy, other readers could support the less radical approach which seeks not an escape from Judeo-Christianity, but rather a reinterpretation of women's power from prehistory. In many respects, Valley draws upon strategies similar to those of Merlin Stone's When God was a Woman (1976), such as the use of comparative anthropology, religious rituals through matrilineal descent, and ancient icons--all to secure women's religious prominence from the earliest times. Valley especially coincides with Merlin Stone's ideas that matrilineal or mother-kinship derived from the misunderstood relationship between conception and birth (Stone 10-11) and that the practice of ancestor worship led to the assumption that the first creator was most likely the deified Divine Ancestress (Stone 13). Just as Merlin Stone uses paleolithic "Venus figures" to indicate that non-nomadic hunters of prehistoric Eurasia worshiped a great mother goddess or a "Clan Mother" (13-14),⁵⁸ Valley's Doni worship correlates "Venus" figurines with great-mother worship to connect with 80s readers seeking a newly ennobled female religious heritage.

To explain women's current subordinate status, Stone offers that during the neolithic, women's shared religious

power slipped under masculine domination. After worship of the "Divine Ancestress" began to include a subordinate male as son or brother, lover or consort (Stone 18-19), male power accelerated.⁵⁹ Men codified patriarchal law within Hebrew texts, especially in the Bible (Stone 104), which prescribed women's premarital virginity and marital fidelity so men could control property and land (Stone 162). In particular, Stone interprets the Adam and Eve myth as a suppression of the ancient goddess religion (198). In brief, Stone believes the Bible justifies a culture's attitudes towards women in religious beliefs as well as in gender roles and family structure--attitudes so ingrained as to "appear natural or instinctual" (239). To counteract biblical misogyny, Stone proposes the earliest female cultures not only developed law, government, and medicine among other discoveries and inventions (Introduction xxiv), but also establishes women as the spiritual source of religion. Though not advocating a return to the ancient female religion, Stone hopes a dismembering of false patriarchal images would invite women to understand their heritage (Introduction xxv), but especially--it seems--women's oppression under the patriarchy.

Similarly, Clan depicts patriarchal excesses excused by a biblical jurisdiction, and Valley underwrites the Doni goddess religions of the divine ancestress-cum-clan mother,

based upon religious art and ritual. Moreover, both novels portray Ayla as a proto-feminist who improves medicine (Clan 309) and who makes discoveries, such as the use of flint (Valley 118) as well as inventions, i. e. the horse harness (Valley 167). In this way, Clan and Valley tend to remedy patriarchal misogyny by cultivating 80s women's admiration of Ayla who begins women's independence in prehistory's sacred and secular realms.

If women readers admire Ayla's rebellion against the patriarchy's religious strictures, they might wish for a new theology that enhances women's position. Just as Daly rejects Judeo-Christianity and Stone offers the improved heritage of goddess worship, Naomi Goldenberg renders nature worship as the alternative spirituality for 80s women. In The Changing of the Gods (1979), Goldenberg supports a Wiccan nature goddess (61-62) and lists some positive aspects of modern witchcraft. Among other things, "The Craft" includes the absence of body and soul dualism, the view of nature as sacred, the value of the individual will, and the remedy of the sex-equals-sin proscription by advocating for sex and play in religious worship (Goldenberg 111-114). Thus, readers looking for a new spirituality will find resonances in Valley's Doni religion because it reunites the body and soul through sex play, honors nature as sacred, and

allows for individual will to remedy blind submission to patriarchal dogma.⁶⁰

Clearly, for those readers dissatisfied by the philosophical denigration of women under patriarchal Judeo-Christianity, Valley offers egalitarianism in concrete religious practices. Refutation of Judeo-Christian misogyny begun in the 70s continued under other feminists who sought to address the thorny problem of women's ordination. Whereas the U. S. Episcopal Church ordained its first women priests in 1977, the Church of England rejected the ordination of women in 1977, again in 1978, and finally sanctioned it in 1981 (Williams and Walker). However, the Catholic Church continued its uncompromising stance against women priests. In the main, the 70s issue of women in religious leadership accompanies Valley's women-centered worship to offer women readers a new agency in their spiritual lives. Just as Valley exalts 80s women's image by postulating the central deity as a female, the novel elevates women into the position of religious leaders for the community. Readers might admire Haduma's authority among the Hadumai in determining the participants of the First Rites (Valley 60), or one shaman's control over the Sharamudoi when she rescues Jondalar from a woman's sexual advances (Valley 227-9), or even another Shamud's status when conducting a wedding ritual (Valley 192). Consequently, readers who question Valley's overturn

of the prevailing "social reality" of 80s male religious authority may subsequently take agency and advocate for change (Light 141) to elevate women's religious leadership in the world outside the text.

For some 80s readers then, establishment of a matri-focal religion seemed especially advantageous for the justification of women as an equal member of the congregation, as an intercessor, or even as the deity. The woman-nature connection appeared to legitimate a new woman's religion that favors peace, ecology, sexual liberation, and more open family and gender roles. Such a woman-centered religion might not only reject biblical stereotypes of women, but also resolve the problems of body/soul dualism (Daly 45; Goldenberg 111-114), of original sin, and of good/evil (Daly 32; Goldenberg 111-114). Such a religion might create a new female religious heritage (Stone Introduction xxv). This religion would certainly include the worship of female deities (Goldenberg 111-114) under a female covenant (Daly 172), perhaps to incorporate sex and play (Goldenberg 111-114) and even to confirm female spiritual leaders. Hence, for those 80s readers horrified at women's position under the Clan's patriarchy, Valley's goddess theory⁶¹ promises to return women to an equal place in religion once again. Even readers discomfited about expressing their discontent may

find a certain pleasure in playing the part of a spiritual leader under the privacy of the fictional past.

As has been suggested, when seen from the broadest perspective Clan's treatment of patriarchal misogyny and Valley's Doni theory connects to people in various readership communities. Since readership communities often intersect, readers can participate in one community or several and even entertain conflicting personal beliefs. Although beliefs change through time, we may say that a first reading of Clan and Valley will resonate with a person's most immediate wishes and needs.

For our purpose then, we can postulate several 80s readership communities, simplified to center upon a particular position. The first of Clan and Valley's readership communities includes women as delineated by their familiarity with feminist politics: women who do not consider themselves as feminists, who are staunch advocates, or who accept some tenets but not others. A second community encompasses women who are disposed to certain principles connected with a particular political system. These readers can be tentatively defined as having conservative, liberal, or even radical political sympathies, without ignoring those readers who espouse some ideas from all three positions. In particular, the readers with conservative tendencies frequently esteem the individual, acquired status, and certain

traditional moral values; on the other hand, readers of a liberal ilk tend to deprecate an individual's material success and inherited status, but support self-expression even in sexuality (Joseph Adelson 126-7). Naturally, some readers can entertain both liberal and conservative ideas.⁶² A third readership community includes 80s women in relation to their knowledge about the goddess theory, from those unaware of or dubious about goddess theorizing and those simply curious about prehistoric women as the images emerge into popular literature and pop psychology to those more radical women wresting a new image of woman from prehistory to change the present. Even goddess adherents themselves comprise a fourth readership community, some arguing for separatism and an alternative religion for feminist revolutionaries while others foster moderation in changing Judeo-Christianity from the inside (Conkey and Tringham, "Archaeology and the Goddess" 209).⁶³

Superimposing these readership communities onto Clan and Valley's realm allows for some general observations about Ayla's appeal to different readers. Basically, even conservative readers can applaud Clan and Valley's themes of a woman's biological, moral, and spiritual superiority in the character of Ayla. Other readers may respond to the heroine's balanced male/female psyche or to the plot advancing Ayla's heroism. Although not all conservative women

will accept liberal ideas, for those open to change, Clan dramatizes how a traditional society (or patriarchy) can oppress independent and spirited women like Ayla. Furthermore, for the readers who accept feminism's more personal goals the novels dramatize Ayla's choices not to opt for an abortion in Clan (299) or to practice birth control after Jondalar arrives in Valley (477). Similarly, for readers leaning towards materialism, Valley promises Ayla a new community with more equal participation in jobs and in religious worship. Finally, for goddess adherents, Valley's Doni religion provides hope that Ayla will either discover personal validation in solitary worship or find a community that values women. Readers following a more radical ideology can even see Ayla's solitary success in Valley as supporting separatism.

Simply put, Clan and Valley's goddess religion reaches readers of varying 80s ideological leanings. The readership communities range from those women naive about goddess religions to goddess activists, to those who embrace conservative tendencies to radical feminists. For some readers, the goddess theory may suffice as just a fictional background to the novels. However, others can respond to Clan's misogyny and to Valley's matrifocal society as supporting women's selfhood and agency. For readers with conservative and moderate inclinations, Clan and Valley's fictional

representations enable safer explorations of some feminist issues than do feminist tracts. Because historical fiction plumbs archetypal characters and plots, readers who feel an emotional concern for the protagonist can work out their inner conflicts and explore potential changes leisurely and privately--which may encourage social change outside the text. However, for the liberal readers already devaluing material success and inherited status (Adelson 126-7) under the conservative patriarchy, Clan and Valley win double approval: they promote a female character's intervention in culture and bring feminist socio-political issues to the mainstream. In fact, feminist readers in the academy as well could well appreciate Auel's own attempt to intervene in 80s culture.⁶⁴

Obviously, many people's attitudes towards the Judeo-Christian religions changed during the 80s. Neo-Paganism which had evolved from the counter culture of the 60s was striving for recognition as an alternate religion, sometimes in concert with, but often separating from the practice of witchcraft, as advocated by Z Budapest and Starhawk. Certainly, goddess worship had raised people's consciousness about living peaceably with the land, hence the trends towards ecofeminism and the Gaia Hypothesis. Moreover, women's spirituality focused on a healing movement of all kinds, whether of the psychological self, of herbal remedies

for the body, or for recovery programs, such as in Alcoholics Anonymous and similar groups (Carson 2). Undoubtedly, goddess spirituality changed the way women looked at their own religions. Charlene Spretnak, for instance, promotes the practice of goddess spirituality as a synthesis of several religions (Carson 7), while theologian Mary Jo Weaver centers women inside Catholicism to remain within conventional religion's covenant (Redmond 1), a conservatism followed by other revisionists.⁶⁵

Even those critics who dispute goddess mythology grant its far-reaching social changes.⁶⁶ Indeed, not a few readers persist in pursuing the goddess movement into the late-80s and mid-90s.⁶⁷ Carson herself annotates nearly twelve hundred written and auditory publications about the women's spirituality movement during 1980-1992. Further, the swell of the goddess movement remains current. One report in December 1992 indicates that more than 500,000 people "'identify'" with such ideas of alternate spirituality (Conkey and Tringham "Archaeology and the Goddess" 206: Megatrends qtd. in Phoenix Republic).

Altogether Clan and Valley's popularity suggests that very diverse readership communities responded favorably to Auel's prehistoric revisionism which treated women's concerns and which fueled her popularity during the entire 80s decade. Clearly, the novels achieved their cultural work

when they brought diverse 80s issues to the fore. Unfortunately, despite Auel's pro-feminism and popularity, Clan and Valley begin to suffer under a re-reading. Whatever advantages the Doni religion offers for 80s women readers, a second view reveals inherent problems in the strategies of goddess theorizing and of myth-making.

More recently, the generic goddess theory has been recognized as a cultural mythotype. In "Archaeology and the Goddess," Conkey and Tringham synthesize the many goddess theories into one. They observe that goddess references during the prior fifteen years include a paradigm of concepts about "prehistoric matriarchies, female power and empowerment, harmonious gender relations, spiritual redefinitions, ecological consciousness, and the politics of spirituality" (206). Conkey and Tringham affirm the goddess theory's political aspiration when they summarize that

there were past societies in Europe and the Near East, especially prior to the so-called invasion of Indo-Europeans circa five thousand years ago that were Goddess-worshipping, female-centered, in harmony with their environments, and more balanced in male-female relationships, in which the status of woman was high and respected. ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 206-207)

Conkey and Tringham particularly note that "the Goddess religions [offer] . . . various challenges to contemporary, especially Judeo-Christian, religious traditions ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 206-07). As a result of the conflation of many goddess theories, the goddess theory coalesces into an 80s mythotype with the political intention to promote women's position, especially by subverting Judeo-Christianity.

Readers who recognize the same goddess mythotype in Clan and Valley may well respond positively to the use of myth in two other ways. To underwrite the general circumscriptions of the goddess mythotype, the novels offer mythic stories and female symbols. Moreover, the novels follow the adventure-romance plot formula, codified by myth. The success of each of these will be discussed in later chapters devoted to each novel.

Writing in the late 70s, Auel rode the surge of feminist theory that supported the use of myth to enhance fiction. Ever since the 50s when Northrup Frye formalized literature's myth patterns in his Anatomy of Criticism, many advocates affirmed a universal approach. However, as a theoretical strategy, the reading of myth was changing from a universal construct to a semiotic-cultural approach as initiated by Claude Levi-Strauss who found no central or universal myth, but who proposed that myth was merely the

projection of the mythseeker.⁶⁸ Bit by bit, myth theory evolved into a anti-myth examination that explicates the cultural context and scrutinizes a text's biases and assumptions. Using deconstruction, Derrida saw that myth had no center, hence no central subject, an approach also incorporated into Barbara Godard's feminist theory.⁶⁹ In Mythologies published in 1972, Roland Barthes perceived that myth was a political discourse that perpetuated the dominant ideology. In general, myth theory falls into disfavor when it presumes a universalizing or totalizing power that eliminates divergent components (Conkey and Tringham, "Archeology and the Goddess" 207). Mythmaking miscarries when it promotes the kind of essentialism that results in exclusion of others and whenever it results in elitism, the stultification of gender roles, the proselytizing of masculinist assumptions, the valorizing of the heterosexual matrix, or the championing of any prejudice within the prevailing culture. In fact, as I show in chapter five, for the very reason that it superficially supports the prevailing ideology, mythic conventions tend to appeal to women readers of historical romance fiction.

For some readers of Clan and Valley, goddess myth-making takes several risks that result in some unfortunate consequences. First, some critics now doubt female-centered interpretations of ancient artifacts, such as Venus figu-

rines. Then too, Doni goddess mythmaking assumes a totalizing power that usurps other causes of oppression. Last, Doni theorizing drifts into the kind of essentialism that jeopardizes feminism's advances.

At the least, readers may discover that 90s feminist archeologists and anthropologists now challenge the hard evidence which supported the 70-80s goddess mythotype which shifted into popular culture. Interrogating the use of artifacts, Conkey and Tringham suggest that disappearance of Venus figurines might not confirm the patriarchal overthrow hypothesis, but instead reflect a new social context which engages a transformation of rituals ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 228) presumably not biologically based.⁷⁰ Another problem with the hard evidence is that the Venus figurines themselves invite misreading as symbolic art. As Mary Zeiss Stange summarizes about cave art interpretation--which can apply to figurines also--the viewers' explications reflect the current social milieu (60). The bias of art interpretation is important because Valley is partly predicated on modern understandings of "Venus" figurines which prove the Cro Magnon's superiority over the Neanderthals and which ground Doni worship as pre-Judeo-Christian.

Additionally, readers may perceive that goddess theorizing itself can result in a unjustified totalizing power. For example, Judith Butler cautions myth-seekers of patriar-

chal oppression to avoid perpetuating the many problems derived from the study of anthropology, one of which descends into the rationalizing of a nature/culture origin (Gender Trouble 35). Furthermore, just as the many goddess practices are falsely subsumed under a single one, the change to a patriarchy from a matriarchy is neither linear, nor universal (Conkey and Tringham, "Archaeology and the Goddess" 207).⁷¹ Just as all goddesses are not interchangeable, neither are their worshiper, nor are contemporary women interchangeable with paleolithic women (Conkey and Tringham, "Archeology and the Goddess" 209) in belief, practices, or circumstances. Furthermore, when "patriarchy" or "matriarchy" become transhistorical concepts seeking a common source to explain all injustices, the reduction may forestall other causes, such as class, racism, and gender bias.

Next, readers may fear that a teleological approach to mythmaking leads to a further problems. Paleoarcheological-mythic research may even reify male power by regressing to the biological ontology of the male/female binary. Worse yet, teleology appears to justify the heterosexual matrix. Monique Wittig, for instance, postulates that the collective and individual unconscious is not ahistorical ("The Straight Mind" 51), but is constructed by culture, often using warning and fear to oppress those who are not heterosexual ("The

Straight Mind" 53). Furthermore, teleology may naturalize the origins of gender in a male/female binary to preclude options. Inexorably, interpreting the Ice Age itself presents a problem: "prehistory," says Mott T. Greene, is merely "a permanently established frame, which shifts forward and back in time, a place where modern theorists construct origin stories about humans ("Introduction" xiv).

Finally, readers may discern that goddess mythmaking risks reducing into a form of essentialism that freezes people into the roles of the biological male/female. As Conkey and Tringham indicate, the goddess theory inherits "feminist essentialism" because its "fertility" base threatens to reduce women to a mere equation with Nature ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 207). Specifically, "[g]ender essentialism" can infiltrate writings about the Stone Age, says Stange, because some women come to "represent the peaceful, nurturing, biophilic; while men come to be identified with invading hunter-warriors" (61). This "tendency to identify women with innocence, purity, and nonviolence," continues Stange, "results in an idealizing" that subverts the basis of "social action" (61). In other words, just as the romanticizing of the peace aspect of the war/peace binary perpetuates the male/female dichotomy, any similar reduction to a male/female division precludes social influences.

Another unfortunate consequence of goddess revisionism is in its unexamined sexism⁷² that can lapse into androcentricity and an inadvertent validation of the patriarchy (Godard, "Feminism and/as Myth" 7). Whenever a goddess myth equates women to Nature, it risks supporting conservative views on the female role in post modern culture, especially with regards to political issues such as birth control, abortion, and sexual preference. Just as some readers suspect that a goddess myth can valorize the "essential" woman, others find broader problems within a general mythic approach.

Eventually, myth is criticized from a wider political perspective. Deleuze and Guatarri locate myth as a construct to promote familial capitalism (291 "Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Psychoanalysis"). Roland Barthes demeans myth as a tool of the right and of the bourgeoisie (Mythologies 146-149), but his theory also supports the use of myth criticism to scrutinize literature as well as culture (Mythologies 137). Barthes's assigning of myth as a second-order language system compels Godard to advocate for a deconstruction that can interrogate myth to locate meaning within power/knowledge relations and to plumb the text's silences, questioning ultimately whose interests are served ("Feminism and/as Myth" 19-20).

At the risk of oversimplifying, when taken together the prior theories combine into an anti-myth approach which critiques myth in several ways. First, anti-myth examines the mythic subjects' performances to disengage cultural or community assumptions about gender and identity (Butler 35). Next, it explores the presumption of heterosexuality, especially through the power of warning and fear (Wittig 53). Further, it probes the relationships between capitalism and the family (Deleuze and Guattari 291). Additionally, by conceiving myth as "depoliticized speech," an anti-myth approach unravels distortions, explains seemingly innocent "speech," and "discloses ulterior political motives" (Barthes, "Myth Today" 135-145). Finally, an anti-myth approach can include deconstructive aspects to view myth as ideology rather than as semiology, to probe the silences, and to question whose interests are being served. Whereas feminists once placed women in a subject position, deconstructionists "de-center" her so as to "reinscribe" her (Godard 19-20). In these ways, anti-myth critics are still myth-seekers, but with the reversed purpose of reading culture rather than of championing myth.

While such far-reaching effects of myth theory, feminism, and cultural criticism cannot be discussed in entirety in this project, suffice it to say that the goddess mythotype in part supported by mythic stories and female symbols

influences Clan and Valley readers. Furthermore, because readers find correspondences among Clan and Valley and other novels in similar genres, the omnipresent mythic codes ease readers' acceptance of new ideas.

For readers who prefer the genre of romantic realism, Clan and Valley's mythic elements work in a third but less obvious way. One remnant of 60-70s interest in myth theory still current in 80s-90s criticism engages the premise that the cultural code of myth undergirds the formal patterns of popular adventures and romances. One of several kinds, a "cultural code" refers to a body of knowledge, says Barthes, and includes a "mirage of structures" which ventures out of the text or which can take over a text (SZ 20-21). In a particular nod to adventure stories, Barthes determines that "[b]rute adventure" cannot organize a novel, but can reveal "traces" of an earlier plot, centered around the "fading idea of a hero under test" (SZ 390). As will be seen, because Clan and Valley capitalize on cultural codes, readers accept Ayla as the heroine of a romance in addition to the hero of an adventure.

For women readers accustomed to narrative patterns in romance fiction, the Earth Children novels supply a link to others in the genre. Some critics continue Northrup Frye's theory of the transhistorical function of myth as plumbing the "desire" or "dream" of humankind. But as Godard ex-

plains, "it is not the content of the quest motif . . . that matters," but the fact that these ritual patterns inform texts "far removed from one another" (8). As Jane Tompkins does, Godard proposes that "displaced myth and archetypes" can be located in popular literature, auspiciously in the genre of romance and in realism (Godard 8). Hence, readers of Clan and Valley who respond to Ayla's quest for a suitable lover will find comfort in the narrative's familiarity and more readily accept new ideas.

For readers who respond to certain fantasy elements elicited by mythic codes, Clan and Valley offer a connection to Auel's ideas. Maintaining that myth is only partly codified by culture,⁷³ Thelma Shinn insists that myth contains "flexible patterns" of "unanswerable questions" (8) which underlie the patriarchal surface of female power/powerlessness (10). Subsequently, Shinn investigates fantastic literature by women who "consciously redefine patriarchal myth from a female perspective or who reexamine origins," and she includes the retelling of prehistoric myths, closely retracing myth and culture (13). As her example of myth "being made" or "lived," Shinn cites Auel's sagas (13-14). When cultural myth becomes "historical fantasy," concludes Shinn, "the timeless truths are replaced by the perceived reality of the author's time and place" (46). Since prehistory is remade in accord with Auel's per-

ceived reality of 80s culture, some readers can explore such things as the Clan women's continual mistreatment as if children, or even Valley's recurring egalitarian relationships. For those readers who recognize the Neanderthal women as powerless, the questions of social conditioning and custom will compel analysis.

Other readers may be equally sensitive to the novels as myth combines within plot and character. For instance, Barlow attributes the romance plot to imitating the first primary aspect of the Triple Goddess's journey from virgin to mother (48). Clearly, this narrative appears as the substructure for Clan, and its reversal informs Valley. Thus, combining these mythic approaches, Ayla replicates the Triple Goddess-huntress Diana who journeys from virgin to mother (Barlow 48) in Clan, but who returns to inexperience in Valley to function as a female hero who remakes her own image (Palumbo 83). Since such familiar mythic elements undergird the popular romance, female readers esteem Ayla more readily and can feel vicariously empowered by this link.

For those readers attuned to myth as content, the novels' realistic paleolithic setting justifies the inclusion of mythic stories. For instance, the creation myth in Clan resembles Zeus' overthrow of Cronus, and the moon tale in Valley draws upon the Triple Goddess theory. Consequent-

ly, myth maximizes reader identification in Clan and Valley through popular fiction's familiar romance and the adventure plots and through fictionalized mythic stories as naturalized by the Ice Age setting.

In responding to myth's cultural codes, readers perceive myth's inherent oppositions, discerned through deconstruction. When they engage Clan and Valley as mythic romances, readers are drawn to paired plot elements, such as male/female, hero/victim and love/hate that elicit reader re-interpretation. But just as oppositions create tension for reader interest, they advance an ambiguity for reader interpretation.

Hence, some critics disparage the notion that naive readers find total "identification" with a heroine, but believe that readers retain some analytical distance to discern the heroine as a "placeholder," a position with more objective involvement (Kinsale 32). Consequently, readers may well perceive that certain binary oppositions need not be static. Since readers are not quite swallowed up by mythic codes, readers can evaluate their effectiveness. Thelma Shinn assess the mythic codes as flexible enough to escape "either-or" logic (11). For instance, while the self/community conflict underlies one of Ayla's conflicts, some readers may conclude that Ayla's need for a community

is not limited to the Neanderthal one, nor is even an immediate goal after Ayla leaves the Clan.

For readers preferring a romance, Ayla performs as a typical heroine, identified by familiar phrases. In sympathy with Jane Tompkins' Sensational Designs, Barlow and Krentz assert that elements such as stock phrases evoke emotion because of their familiarity to readers (21). Hence, Ayla is a blonde beauty unappreciated in Clan and admired by Jondalar in Valley. Even his character is described in typical romance terms. Familiar stock phrases not only facilitate identification, but also provide a baseline for judging Ayla's and even Jondalar's motives, behaviors, and circumstances. Identification plus a certain distance frees up readers to value the behaviors they admire or criticize those they dislike; consequently, readers can judge the efficacy of Ayla's agency or the honest intentions of Jondalar's search for the perfect woman.

However wide Clan and Valley's readership spreads because of popular acceptances of myth, one aspect does not conform to 80s popular expectations. Against the conventions of a male adventure plot, Ayla is showcased as one of the "first" heroes of an Ice Age adventure story in which a woman braves the elements. Ayla is "first" chronologically because she lives in the paleolithic era, and "first" because her expropriation of the male hero's quest is new to

be accepted by 80s mainstream readers of popular fiction. Consequently, Ayla's position as an archetypal hero and as a prototypical female hero both meets and overturns readers' expectations. In part, the gender recasting of the hero/victim may help explain Clan and Valley's immense popularity among diverse readership communities. As the next chapters will show, Ayla's heroic qualities set her apart from the women and from most men in Clan and empower her self-sufficient survival in Valley.

In sum, readers may respond to three mythic elements, in goddess theorizing, in female myths and stories, and in the submerged mythic codes that underwrite historical romance fiction. Altogether, readers who understood the problems of women's socio-political, economic, and religious domination under the 70-80s American patriarchy might well detect chilling correspondences in Clan: If persuaded to reject the Clan's patriarchal excesses, readers might appreciate the development of a particular goddess religion in Valley, which not only promotes the status of women, but also incorporates a sisterly covenant, an archeological legacy, a spiritual-sexual fusion, and an appreciation of nature. Then too 80s readers attuned to female myths and stories can find Clan and Valley supportive of feminism. Readers can appreciate Clan and Valley for depicting Ayla as a feminine, female, or feminist hero. She emerges as a

woman who balances male/female aspects and who is superior physically, morally, and spiritually. At the same time, readers can compare Ayla's oppression in Clan or her exile in Valley to women who thrive under goddess worship. In short, Valley's Doni-goddess religion addresses many 80s women's concerns and provides welcome alternatives, endeavoring to move women from the subjective position to one of agency in prehistory and in the 1980s.

Consequently, the two novels plumb several readership communities based on feminism, spiritual differences, and cultural codes. At least three 80s readership communities can be defined by their familiarity with feminism, the women in academia wresting a new image of women from prehistory, the American women outside of academia and receptive to the images of prehistoric women emerging into popular literature and pop psychology, and other women unaware of or were dubious about such theorizing. Among 80s readers seeking an alternate spirituality, several readership communities include those feminist spiritualists who prefer an individual relationship with a divinity (Ostriker 83) and those who conceive of spirituality as a social apparatus (Daly 32). Among those readers seeing religion as a social condition, readership communities include those who seek to escape traditional religion and those who work to modify the institution (Conkey and Tringham, "Archeology and the Goddess,"

209). One group of readers could relate to Clan and Valley's use of mythic cultural codes. Some readers will accept the prevailing 80s cultural beliefs supported by familiar romance and adventure plots; other readers will view the disruption of the conventions as either confirming or subverting feminism. In brief, Clan and Valley's readers may respond to the spectrum of the myth as encompassing Frye's view as content and form to Barthes' view as sociology and semiotics (Godard 8).

For the rest of this investigation of Auel's Clan and Valley, three themes will be highlighted: family structure and gender roles, Auel's Doni religion, and Ayla's role as a female hero or heroine. In general, the next three chapters will encompass political thought (history, economics, and power), feminist theory (oppression and gender roles), and myth in popular literature's (genre) appeals to various readership communities. In particular, the next chapter, "Clan's Kindred: Patriarchal Politics" will show how Ayla's heroic rebellion against The Clan's misogyny appeals to diverse 80s readership communities, including those who hold some "conservative" or "liberal" beliefs about social relations, those who accept some feminist precepts, and those who read romances. The subsequent chapter, entitled "Valley's Vision: Goddess Politics," evaluates the success of

Valley's liberal culture and Doni religion for 80s women readers, especially those who seek alternatives to patriarchal religious oppression. After this chapter, "The Romancing: Clan and Valley's Readers" describes how mythic codes of the romance purvey 80s ideology as filtered through Auel's narrator. All chapters will employ economic insights, feminist theory from the 70s-90s, as well as analysis of mythic codes. As will be seen, whether Auel succeeds in supporting feminism by creative myth-making is determined by who her readers are, when they read the novels, how they accept goddess conjectures in general, and the Doni theory in particular.

Chapter Three

Clan's Kindred: Patriarchal Politics

Since The Clan of the Cave Bear won wide 80s popularity, we must assume it reached various sympathies among different readers. At the least, Clan's very success suggests that many 80s women readers were curious about women's role in prehistory. For readers interested in 80s issues, Clan offers the safe place of a woman's romance to investigate feminism. Other female readers may have agreed with the general idea of women's oppression, but not with some of the novel's more liberal-feminist stands. For readers who suspect that traditional values tend to diminish women, Clan promotes Ayla's subjecthood and agency. For those readers sympathetic to understanding women's heritage, the novel succeeds in revising women's role in prehistory by re-interpreting patriarchal/matriarchal constructs, socio-political concepts, economic conditions, and religious misogyny. Nonetheless, as this chapter will show, Clan's dramatizing of the more popular issues sacrifices other feminist goals and problematizes its cultural intervention.

Although able to dismiss, question, or affirm any issue, readers leaning towards separate positions can find resonances in Clan. For our immediate purpose, we can hypothesize at least three of the novel's readership commu-

nities as including those readers as located by their tendencies towards liberal/conservative values, their relative acceptance of feminist ideas, and their responses to the use of myth in genre fiction.

One readership community includes Clan's readers who tend towards conservative or liberal politics based upon their general value system. As early as the 60s, people began to align themselves with "moral dispositions" rather than with the party labels that implied an affiliation with political machines (Robert Atwan and Jon Roberts, "Introduction" xxiii). Clearly, readers with the conservative tendencies of esteeming individual success, acquired status, and family stability (Adelson qtd. in Rottenberg 126-7) will recognize the Clan's patriarchal system as supported by the form of the nuclear family. As I will show, however, Clan undermines these same conservative values. Because the Neanderthals prize men's superiority and women's subservience to men, liberal readers who accept such ideas as alternate family structures, a more "distributionist" economy, and "egalitarian" relationships (Adelson qtd. in Rottenberg 126-7) would then reject the Neanderthal patriarchy. Naturally some readers, who may be deemed "moderate," will espouse values from both positions.

A second of Clan's readership communities encompasses a varying familiarity with 80s feminist ideology, ranging from

those readers naive about feminism to staunch advocates. For some, Clan is an introduction to several basic 80s feminist principles, such as woman's rights to equal treatment, to work, and to feel safe from violence. Other readers find Ayla as a new sort of hero who carries out some feminists' requests for an assertive protagonist or for a rebel against patriarchal oppression. For still others, the novel sustains the belief of some 80s "radicals" who would argue that sexism, not racism or classism is the origin of prejudice (Shugar 10). As I discuss later, Clan succeeds in its general thrust to bring some prevailing ideas of 80s feminism into mainstream recognition, but fails to support feminism's more argumentative positions about sexual orientation and heterosexuality's totalizing power over gender identity.

Clan's third readership is comprised of readers who respond to the various uses of myth, including the underlying codes of romance-adventure fiction. As I will examine later, even if readers fail to recognize Ayla as a proto-feminist hero or as a female whose narrative usurps the male-mythic plot, Clan offers Ayla as the independent heroine who personifies women's moral excellence. Though reactions vary, readers need not submit blindly to the romance's codes, but can exercise their "analytical distance" (Kinsale 32) to measure Ayla's actions against their own inclina-

tions. Furthermore, Clan resonates with those 80s readers who advocate for the creation of female-centered myths, stories, and allusions to replace the prevailing male focus. Nevertheless, as my anti-myth analysis shall disclose, the novel's good intention to supplant male myth devolves into essentialism and gender constriction.

Briefly put, Jean Auel's Earth Children series follows the adventures of Ayla, a Cro-Magnon woman, through paleolithic western Asia and Europe. Beginning with The Clan of the Cave Bear (1980), the orphan child Ayla is adopted into a Neanderthal tribe by Creb, the Mog-ur or shaman, and by Iza, a medicine woman. After Ayla grows to early maturity, she suffers rape and then expulsion for breaking the taboo against a woman's use of a weapon. Next, Ayla journeys into the wilderness of The Valley of the Horses (1982) where she survives alone and eventually meets Jondalar who becomes her lover. After Ayla and Jondalar encounter several Cro-Magnon tribes in The Mammoth Hunters (1985), they begin their return to his home community in The Plains of Passage (1990). In contrast to her adventurous independence in the last three novels, Ayla endures male subjugation under The Clan's patriarchy.

For those readers who perceive Clan as using negative examples to address some 80s women's concerns, the novel encourages compassion for women who are oppressed under a

patriarchal system. While not every reader will recognize correspondences between the Ice Age and the 80s, others can judge the novel's grim picture of patriarchal politics through the mechanism of "distancing," (Bennet qtd. in Smith 319), which allows that readers can evaluate textual situations without necessarily accepting them.

Before rejecting a patriarchal system, some 80s readers had to be persuaded it needed change. Readers needed to see how a conservative society based on traditional values excused male privilege and pushed women into a secondary position. At the same time, 80s readers would have to hope that not all women acquiesced to male subjugation in the dark world of prehistory, so Clan unfolds the main character of Ayla who functions as the mythic hero reinterpreted as a female and a rebel. Drawing upon re-envisioned myth, Clan insinuates that a better alternative to male-dominated religion can be found in the earliest prehistory when the deity was a female. In short, Clan's worst-case of patriarchal excesses attempts to validate 80s feminism and advance Ayla as a new role model for 80s women. For those readers aware of second wave feminism, Clan confirms that while women had been subjugated ever since the prehistoric era, some stood up bravely for their rights. To those readers discontent with 80s religious misogyny, Clan suggests that prior to male domination, women held power in the

sacred realm when spirituality originated from women's connection with nature.

Although not all readers would connect women's oppression in prehistory to that of the 1980s, it is safe to say that most women understood the basic feminist view that males dominated females historically. Readers could scarcely avoid the thrust of second-wave feminism which pervaded the American milieu ever since the 60s. Women's issues continually coursed through the popular media in visual, auditory, and printed forms of communication, especially in women's general interest magazines and in periodicals devoted to women's concerns, such as Ms.⁷⁴ However, for those readers who choose to avoid public debates, Clan offers a safe place to examine feminist issues in the private world of fiction. For the majority of readers willing to consider women's inequality for the first time, Clan offers the security of the romance genre, known to be shared by women. In fact, Clan's very popularity encourages acceptance of women's issues since readers feel more secure when they share in the approval of a large community. Readers dismayed by the maltreatment of women in Clan can find the same kind of awareness about feminism that Auel herself experienced in the 70s, just after reading Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (Ringle 2).

Generally, Clan functions as a metaphor for the kind of sexism and misogyny intrinsic to some 1980s enclaves. Examining a very traditional society based on male privilege, Clan exposes readers with conservative tendencies to sexual discrimination within the realms of the home, the work place, and the religious sphere. For those who esteem the specific moral presumption that males are superior to females, Clan's fiction provides a new look at women's oppression under a patriarchal society. Of course, some readers with conservative leanings may have found the patriarchal scenario comforting for its familiarity, especially in contrast to a volatile 80s world. Nonetheless, the popular issues of violence against women, such as Clan's depiction of beatings and rape (294-5) would have stimulated questions about the abuses of male power within the traditional family. Additionally, a shift in the cultural perception of women's roles reverberates with some of Clan's readers. Even 80s women with conservative leanings were re-evaluating the restrictive customs that relegated all women to the role of domestic servant. To prevent children from suffering poverty, some traditional homemakers acknowledged that widows or abandoned mothers need to pursue an education or go to work. Since nearly one out of two women were employed by the 1980s (Harriman 346), many readers could admire Ayla for persisting in her career as a hunter and for

accessing power through her work as a medicine woman--in contrast the other Neanderthal women who needed an affiliation with men to gain status within the hierarchies of family, clan, and clan gathering (Clan 78). Another shift in the 70-80s cultural milieu which resonates with Clan's readers is the reassessment of women's biological uniqueness. When mainstream women began to accept that a woman's natural biological function carried no moral stigma, some women questioned why the menstrual cycle was deemed a "curse" (Clan 288) or why biology necessarily decides a woman's supposed inferiority.

In addition, the misogyny in Clan's patriarchy allows readers of moderate persuasions to rethink their resistance to the more controversial feminist issues. Although perceiving their restrictions under conservatism, some middle-of-the road readers may not have examined a patriarchal system's socio-political causes nor fully acknowledged its effects. They may have even believed themselves "apolitical" in the sense that they did not worry about party platforms, except perhaps the always incendiary abortion issue. Other moderates who affirmed the material goals of feminism, such as equal pay for equal work, and who believed in gender equality as a principle often failed to see how "the patriarchy" affected their lives. Unfortunately for the women's liberation movement, some moderates even joined

in the feminist backlash after the media trivialized several social issues, such as who opened the car door or why wear a bra. In addition, some moderate American women indoctrinated to the material advantages of capitalism often distrusted women's "libbers" who urged a struggle between men and women or a separation from men, opinions of radical feminism often conflated with all feminist methodology. Potentially, Clan's problems of male domination and female objectification works to shift middle-of-the-road readers towards more liberal positions on the more significant issues of sexual discrimination, acceptance into the professions, and reproductive rights.

Finally, Clan's patriarchal excess may well have affirmed some liberals' ideas. As this chapter will illustrate, Clan postulates that prehistory initiated women's oppression because of sexism, custom, and a rigidified class structure. Additionally, for those supporting female supremacy, Clan's Ayla performs as the exceptional feminist hero who so suffers under patriarchal oppression that her only alternative is to leave. Other liberals may have supported Clan's use of myth against religious misogyny to imply that women's spiritual power evolved from the beginnings of history when women existed in harmony with nature. Liberal readers may not have immediately recognized that

female-centered myths intended to improve women's images also risk supporting the dominant ideology.

Following 80s feminists' speculations in general, Clan guides readers into a tableau of sexism's origin in prehistory. Clan's Neanderthal tribe functions as an extremely traditional society with conservative values⁷⁵ that subordinate women, such as the valorization of men, the concern with male status, and the belief that men should rule women.

To begin with, readers are asked to question the Clan's presumption that male biology grants men the right to rule under a patriarchal system. Apparently, the Clan men dominate their women because of biological supremacy encoded into "male" traits, such as competence from hunting prowess (Clan 70), and the responsibility to provide (Clan 116). Since men have "stoic endurance" (Clan 371), male competition allows them to be the center of attention (Clan 85) while self-discipline derived from hunting determines male leadership (Clan 143). Briefly said, the "masculine" traits of competence, responsibility, and leadership define what a man is and secure his agency. However, Clan readers learn that Ayla also reveals competence in her weapons use (153), assumes responsibility for the Clan's medical needs, and exhibits the necessary self-discipline for leadership (419). Thus, when a woman also embodies the so-called male traits, readers recognize that socialization, not biology, shapes a

community's acceptance of male domination. Additionally, women readers who prize men's opinion can esteem Ayla even more highly at the end of Clan when the male leader Brun recognizes Ayla's having more courage, determination, and more self-control than even his own son Broud (468). Further, feminist readers would agree that just as men are not born with leadership traits, neither do they necessarily exhibit inherent "rationality" or "'objectivity'" (Daly 15). To illustrate, in contrast to Ayla's quiet reasoning, Broud riles against Ayla irrationally until his anger congeals into "revenge" (Clan 458).⁷⁶ For many 80s readers interested in the issue of women's equality, Clan not only exposes the false assumption of men's biological superiority, but also affirms that since social conditions shape behavior, women are just as capable as men.

Another excess of the patriarchy illustrated for readers is that male leadership is "codified" by the Clan's traditional sexism (Clan 23). Men alone decide which path to take on their journey (Clan 40). Furthermore, Clan's current leader Brun exemplifies the "masculine" traits required for a good leader: self-control (Clan 157) and responsibility to the group (Clan 419). In fact, during the gathering of several clans, Brun appears as a more positive model, unlike the other Neanderthal leaders who were "independent, dictatorial men . . . accustomed to being a law

unto themselves (Clan 358). Nonetheless, his judgment is clouded by the demand of custom and by his pride in fatherhood. Pleased that his son will inherit his position (Clan 73), Brun continues to groom him for Clan leadership even though Broud is unsuitable and Ayla appears as a better candidate. Ayla's potential poises the question of female leadership to readers who may not have realized that custom deprives women of the possibility, though the issue of women's leadership was gaining national and international political interest during the 1970s and 80s.⁷⁷ Because the custom of inherited (male) leadership prevails over individual worth, readers sympathetic to Ayla can agree that the codification of male-only leadership not only reinforces sexual discrimination to deny capable women an access to power, but also condones male leadership even when some men are unfit.

In addition to learning that a patriarchy privileges men, readers discover that privilege can lead to an abuse of male power within personal relations, specifically in Broud's sexist treatment of Ayla. For instance, Broud's sexism reveals itself when he becomes angry at Ayla's "showing him up" in public, not because she is a better hunter, but because she is a "female" (Clan 239). Broud's masculinity suffers most when the Clan eventually accepts Ayla's hunting in spite of his argument that it violates (male)

tradition and jeopardizes the Clan's solidarity (Clan 241), implying, of course, the "solidarity" of the men. Next, when Broud resorts to raping Ayla publicly, his act is one of revenge, humiliation, and the power of a "newfound dominance" (Clan 295-7). By their silence, the entire Clan descends into tacit acceptance of violence against women. As a result, readers who feel sympathy for Ayla and anger at male aggression discover their compassion for other women's physical and emotional brutalization, recognizable problems to even conservative women during the 70-80s.⁷⁸ Even Broud's continuing demands for sex from Ayla (Clan 294-303) resonate with readers aware of sexual harassment, a problem not unfamiliar in the 80s work-place.

Rendering some patriarchal men as brutish, Clan convinces readers that most women are made dependent through socialization. Defined by their inferior relationship to males, Clan females' apparent "natural state" is submission (Clan 158). Whether derived from the Clan's genetics as solidified by generations of tradition as Auel postulates (Clan 23) or from socialization, female traits are to be "docile, subservient, unpretentious and humble" (Clan 153). Because Ayla is often unsuccessful in adopting these traits, readers are invited to contrast her to the Clan women so socialized by fear that they dislike being without male protection (Clan 138).

Additionally, readers are encouraged to doubt that the Neanderthal women were naturally "weak, willful creatures unable to exert the self-control of men," who not only needed "the control" of a "firm hand," but also "wanted men to command them" (Clan 169). Hence, in contrasting Ayla's behavior to the Neanderthal women's, readers discover that the Neanderthal women are manipulated into depending upon male control. For some of Clan's readers, Ayla exemplifies a woman with the same traits as the Neanderthal men: she is "fearless" (55), decisive in administering medicine (311), and capable of enduring periodic separation from the group (259-270, 328). Moreover, Ayla overturns female stereotyping as the passive woman who practices self-abnegation (Daly 15) since she persists in her hunting activity even though she experiences the community's condemnation.

After illustrating the patriarchy's socio-psychological manipulation for readers, Clan dramatizes women's oppression. Perceived as inferior to men, Clan women behave submissively as a sign of respect for men and remain silent unless spoken to. Women's actions signify their deference in that they must wait for men to walk ahead (Clan 373) and look at the ground when speaking or spoken to (Clan 41, 98). Moreover, Clan women cannot refuse to answer any man (Clan 611), nor bother him with "insignificant requests" (Clan 4). Worse yet, women must submit to any male's sexual demand by

immediately assuming a receptive position (Clan 125). Consequently, any behavior which subverts the female norm of dependence is punished by men. Naturally, Ayla's insolence and rebellion especially result in a beating (Clan 155). In short, if propaganda does not keep Clan women in line, brutality will. Similarly, Clan's persuasion is plain: if feminist tracts cannot open a reader's eyes to oppression and misogyny, dramatized brutality may.

For readers who recognize sexism's underpinnings of socio-psychological manipulations, Clan demonstrates that men's prejudice against female biology is codified by ritual. For instance, menstruation is an actual "curse" in the Clan which results in taboo (Clan 109), and menstruating females even suffer physical isolation (Clan 123). Furthermore, sexism based on biology is affirmed by Clan ritual. Whereas a young man's coming of age results in a public celebration, the arrival of a girl's menarche must be hidden. Moreover, during the girl's private instruction about the "facts of life," she is indoctrinated to gratifying a man sexually (Clan 288) though young men hear nothing of woman's pleasures. Worse yet, sexism prevents women's subjecthood. In contrast to a male's coming of age which is as determined as much by skill as by physiological maturity, a female's menarche is the sole requirement for adulthood, a biological event beyond her physical control. For some

readers of conservative leanings, Ayla's inferior status confirms the conventional belief about women's secondary place in the 80s milieu. Nevertheless, for many readers, because Auel even depicts menstruation, she risks violating this "taboo" in most women's 80s romance fiction and instead carries out the requests of academic feminists for more female-centered content.

Aware of patriarchal misogyny, readers discover that the Neanderthal women endure not only physical and psychological manipulation, but also aggression. When a woman accepts a diminished role, her concept of self leads towards an internalized self-hatred (Daly 45-46). As a consequence of their inferiority, Clan women remain silent, live vicariously through men, and even ostracize the rebellious female, as when Ayla's mother shuns Ayla in punishment for using a weapon (Clan 252-4). Furthermore, placing their own needs last, the Neanderthal women (Clan 67) internalize the supposed "compensations" that some religions "idealize" for women (Daly 75-77). As "docile, subservient, unpretentious and humble" (Clan 153), the Neanderthal women replicate victimized Mary figures who are valorized for their "passive suffering, humility, [and] meekness" (Daly 77). At this point, Clan's sexism is so blatant that few readers could miss the message that such a repressive culture causes women to internalize sexism. For other readers, Ayla's courage in

resisting the submissive image invites a personal reassessment of their own situation. Hence, Clan achieves its cultural work of questioning the kind of passive acceptance that traps women into unequal power relations or forces them to resort to flattery and manipulation to help others (Clan 182).

Moreover, Clan readers soon recognize that even custom, which ostensibly protects women, reinforces misogyny. The novel illustrates that kinship customs oppress women while seeming to protect them. Although one kinship custom allows both males and females to inherit job roles, social custom dictates that as inferiors, Clan women must depend upon marriage as a step to status and power. A woman may improve her status by marrying upward (Clan 393) and attain the highest position when married to a leader (Clan 52). Hence, marriage is such a desired goal (Clan 74) that young women exclude females as lesser companions (Clan 102). Indeed, since marriage is so esteemed, two of Ayla's continual concerns are that she will not find a mate, nor will her "half-breed" son whom she "betroths" to another "half-breed" girl (Clan 442). While some readers may sympathize with Ayla's romantic predicaments, a number Clan's readers would prefer that woman acquire status and power through other means. For many readers, the novel furthers second-wave feminism's

impetus to extend women choices beyond marriage, to include getting an education or opting for a career.

Whereas the Clan's social custom of marriage guarantees women's status, 80s readers ascertain that custom merely reinforces the Clan's dictate that women are men's property. That wives are male possessions is seen in the plight of a widow who is a burden without any male to provide for her; subsequently, having "no status, no value," she is "traded off" to another tribe (Clan 60). That women are valued as sex objects is excused by male biological need: It is considered "worse for a man to restrain himself than to take the nearest woman" (Clan 126). Male need also debases a woman as a receptacle since "any man could take any woman whenever he wished to *relieve* himself" (Clan 125-126; italics mine). Auel's word *relieve* here carries such a negative connotation of excretion that it is difficult for any reader not to be repulsed. Clan's agenda to disclose the traditional concept of women as possession, sex object, and male receptacle finds recognition in readers of liberal leanings who understand that under a patriarchy's customs, women are denied the subjecthood to make their own choices and the agency to carry out their decisions.

Depicting marriage as the primary means of women's power in a conservative enclave, Clan engages different

readership communities. Readers of romances might not question the traditional goal of marriage, but pity Ayla for not finding a mate. However, since Ayla is the beautiful heroine by (our) conventional standards, they would expect her to find a worthy partner. Readers with more feminist leanings might sympathize with Ayla for coping as an independent, unmarried woman in a male-ordered enclave, subjected to the male-marriage market. Still other women readers would view Ayla's ultimate banishment as a socio-political commentary on the 80s traditional marriage: rather than be eclipsed by domination, women should reject marriage and the patriarchy as well.

To further undercut the patriarchy for 80s readers, Clan illustrates that women are denied subjecthood within family relations. In exercising their power, men treat women like children, and children like toys. Men pride themselves upon a spouse's good behavior as a "compliment to his good training" (Clan 219), just as is a child's conduct. In addition, because the Neanderthal men attend only to well-behaved babies (Clan 451), they become play things. More important, Clan dramatizes the nullification of a wife's reproductive rights. A secret among medicine women, birth control drugs are dispensed only to wives in hardship situations (Clan 301). For example, when Broud condescends to take Ayla as a second wife, Ayla vows to use birth con-

trol after he threatens to kill her future children (Clan 457). Thus, the novel resorts to the most dire circumstances of polygamy and infanticide to persuade readers about the necessity of birth control. Even readers who were not outraged or repulsed would feel unease at the Clan women's overt humiliation. On the other hand, readers with liberal tendencies might smile secretly at Clan's agenda to tempt other women to seize subjecthood in their own lives. At the very least, Clan upsets the societal notion that women's best method of gaining approval is through role-playing as an obedient child, especially when their infants' lives are endangered.

To support those readers concerned with women's equality, Clan describes the mechanisms of women's economic subjugation. Just as the Neanderthal women are esteemed primarily for their work ethic (306) which contributes materially to the community, a wife becomes a man's property and a "hardworking" (Clan 306) servant in the domestic realm. As property, women are "disciplined" (Clan 165) to become "productive" members of the tribe (Clan 169), akin to workers in a capitalist society. Likewise, economic potential shapes the treatment of children. Since boys will eventually hunt for the food which assures the elders' livelihood (Clan 183), adults invest in male children as a source of new labor. In fact, male children are so esteemed that the

announcement of a female's birth must be prefaced with an apology (Clan 107). Female children are merely tolerated because they assure the genetic survival of the race and the production of laborers. Consequently, readers recognize the problems of male ownership and control over women's reproduction. In fact, the Clan's nuclear family replicates a proto-capitalism in which men govern the means of production by controlling women's labor and reproduction, an economic classism similar to that explicated by Gayle Rubin (207). In fact, for some radical readers, Clan affirms that classism derives from sexism, the source of the first prejudice (Shugar 10).

Subsequently, readers alert to classism learn that the Clan's patriarchy tightens into a division based on the sexist principles of men's merit, privilege, and family inheritance. Even though class is determined by competition not by the surplus of material wealth created within the enclave (Clan 51), competition is particularly prized among the men who vie for superiority in hunting skills tests (142). In addition, class position is endowed by gender inheritance. Both men and women receive status by birth within "illustrious lines" (Clan 15), for example, Iza's inherited medicine-woman "lineage" (Clan 52) as well as Broud's leadership (Clan 72). Along with gendered inheritance, sexism configures a person's "position and status"

(Clan 15): an individual's placement in Brun's community shows itself during a line up, arranged first by the status of the male head of household, then by gender, last by age (Clan 78). Additionally, when the clans assemble during the seventh-year "Gathering" (Clan 358), the groups merge into a larger male-dominant hierarchy. In short, just as the father rules the family, the male leader rules the clan, and the leaders' superiority consolidates each clan's status. Thus Clan resonates with readers of liberal leanings who can confirm that when patriarchal domination based on male merit, gender, and inheritance duplicates itself in larger gatherings, sexism merges into a proto-capitalist system.

In addition to detecting that the Neanderthal women suffer prejudice within the family, readers realize that women suffer discrimination as a group during local celebrations. For instance, after public thanksgiving for locating a new cave, the men and women rejoice separately (Clan 79). However, this is not a separate-but-equal situation since the narrator says that the "Women were allowed their own celebration" (Clan 79; emphasis added). To further establish women as the original oppressed class and to encourage 80s readers' rejection of women's individual and collective segregation, Clan reveals sexism in the religious congregation. Generally, the Clan's religion reinforces the sexism

of the "reigning system" (Daly 32) since religious leadership is exclusively male (Clan 454).⁷⁹ For example, in the "Gathering" of the many clans, men participate in a secret ceremony while women congregate elsewhere (Clan 397-402). That Clan women are excluded from the important spiritual rituals has wide implications. Primarily, the separation replicates the practice of many 80s Judeo-Christian religions where men are privileged to congregate in the inner sanctum while women were are left outside, physically and metaphorically. It was this kind of discrimination that contributed, in part, to such dissatisfaction with Judeo-Christianity that some women favored the emergence of a goddess-centered religion where women become centralized as leaders and deities.

Furthermore, Clan makes it apparent that religious ceremonies marginalize women. Although the rituals seem separate-but-equal since both men and women drink hallucinogens for transcendence, the experiences differ substantially for the Clan women. In the first occurrence, women resort to the use of a hallucinogen to escape male domination. As the narrator says, if in the beginning of the celebration the women "were too accustomed to guarding their actions in the presence of men" to relax, they would later dance in a naked and "frankly erotic" rhythm to alleviate their "pent-up emotions, so repressed in everyday life"

(Clan 87). Thus, just as 70s feminism had proposed, Clan women exhibit the same sexual appetites as men but are inhibited under masculine control. Subsequently, Clan's narrator offers that the "men would have been shocked by the women's unrestrained abandon" (Clan 88).

In the women's next segregated religious experience, women are marginalized again; however, their ecstatic behavior begins to problematize the novel's agenda. During this episode, women demonstrate the kind of violent frenzy (Clan 397) illustrative of the Maenads' legend. Clan's depiction parallels similar theories that surfaced from Women's Studies feminism, perhaps even promulgating Dionysian worship in particular (Daly 104). Auel prefers to illustrate the violent, not the more gentle Demetrian model (an assumption questioned much later in the 80s) for two reasons. Logically, gentle Demetrian worship is assumed to have evolved from the neolithic era when women were closely connected with the vegetative rebirth cycle, not the hunter-gatherer paleolithic. More important, Auel dares 80s women to seize agency against male domination and seek an alternate spirituality, perhaps in goddess worship.

Nevertheless, Clan readers looking for solutions to 80s religious misogyny must turn elsewhere. Regardless of the Neanderthal women's covert religious rebellion, Clan's separate-but-equal solution ultimately reaffirms sexual

discrimination by curtailing women's participation in important religious rituals. Further, when women's religious practices erupt into a chaotic eroticism, women's images slide to the unconstrained half of the reason/emotion opposition. At one time, some feminists advocated for the woman-nature connection as a powerful antidote for the stereotyping of women as reticent sexual partners and as passive receptacles; nonetheless, when women are promoted as passionate non-thinkers, the division reaffirms the logos/eros dichotomy. In addition, Clan women are divided from the civilized world when the logos/eros binary shifts into a culture/nature opposition. Worse yet, when equated to unrestrained Nature, women's exuberant eroticism excuses male control over women's sexual impulsiveness.

To illustrate the unfortunate consequences of the binary oppositions in both segregated religious experiences, the logos/eros dichotomy solidifies the men's connection to a deeper and more superior consciousness than women's. Although the details are omitted, Creb the shaman reflects upon different religious practices in the men's and women's gatherings, observing that while women's catharsis was expressed in dancing, "The men's catharsis came from the emotional tension of the hunt" (Clan 88). In this way, women's energy is a less-valued psychological release through artistic expression, while men's energy serves the

greater economic good. Additionally, characterizing the men's ceremonies as "more restrained [and] turned inward" (Clan 88), Creb valorizes men as superior thinkers who connect with the spirits in a ceremony, while women appear as self-indulgent pleasure-seekers who anesthetize themselves in mere revelry. In Mary Daly's words, just as Clan men duplicate the "eternal masculine" of "rationality [and] objectivity" (Daly 15), Clan women replicate the "eternal feminine" of "hyperemotionalism" (Daly 15). Thus, males dominate the world of religion while women succumb to the realm of pleasure, a reduction that again thrusts women into the false binary oppositions of culture/nature, logos/eros, work/play, and male/female.

In recognizing that power relations and religious worship reinforce one another, Clan readers can delight in Auel's own bit of humor. She allows Creb to speculate that the women would have been shocked by "their stoic mates' feverent supplications to the invisible spirits" (Clan 88). So just as women beg men, men beg the spirits. While the hierarchy of female-male-spirit remains, readers can agree that the novel diminishes male power by revealing men's fear of the spiritual world. But the larger point is simply this: in a patriarchal society, men rule women by fear in the same way that the spirits rule men--thus, an authoritarian god is created by authoritarian men. And though Creb

might wish to include women in the men's ceremony, he believes it would ire the spirits and destroy the Neanderthal tribe (Clan 88). Like the men, the spirits are discriminatory and vengeful, doubtless a projection of the Clan's misogyny. Hence, Clan's readers recognize the sequence of women's religious oppression: the male is the deity worshiped as the supreme father god (Stone 20), the shaman is the male spiritual advisor, and men head up the family unit.

On the whole, Clan achieves its cultural task of addressing some 80s women's issues for a breadth of readers. In dramatizing violence against women, the novel invites some readers to distance themselves from their assumptions and to analyze the entitlement of males in tradition, custom, and religious practices through the codification of sex roles, especially within the nuclear family. Offering Ayla as an exception to the kind of woman valorized under the patriarchy, the novel engages readers' recognitions that a woman's body is not an unclean object, that women need not yield to the role of domestic worker nor resort to male affiliation or flattery for access to power, but rather that women deserve equal treatment and opportunity. In addition, Clan addresses the problems of more middle-of-the-road women. Foregrounding Ayla as an independent single mother, the novel compels readers to confirm the rights of women to use birth control, to gain acceptance into a non-traditional

profession, and to reject sexual harassment. Equally important, Clan accomplishes the general feminist goal of establishing a tradition of women's independence in prehistory by foregrounding Ayla's rebellion against male domination and her attempt to attain subjecthood under a patriarchy. Additionally, the novel suggests that female worship provides an alternative to religious misogyny although not necessarily feasible under the nature-eros framework. In short, Clan depicts women's subjugation and socio-economic exploitation under a patriarchal system. In fact, misogyny so permeates Clan's Ice Age that some readers might very well discontinue reading if not for the characterization of Ayla.

In order to lighten the bleak illustration of women's socio-economic and religious oppression, Clan demonstrates that not all Ice Age women submitted willingly to patriarchal oppression. Clan provides an admirable rebel in the main character of Ayla who pits herself against Clan misogyny. Many 80s readers could more easily reject the traditional views of male/female relations, women's subjugation to male authority, and women's lack of choices if they identified with Ayla heroism and felt that women's oppression is not inevitable.

Readers' wish for a female hero responds, in part, to several 70-80s socio-political trends promoting the heroine

and the mythic hero. While some feminist critics fail to see how a female hero might avoid merely replicating a masculine plot structure (except in science fiction and in the more "literary" story),⁸⁰ others defend the heroine to avoid marginalizing readers of popular literature. Such feminists surveyed mythic codes to understand a female protagonist's appeal to women specifically. In addition to connecting with readers who reject sexism, Ayla resonates with readers who simply prefer a heroine, a preference I will examine in the next chapter.

Even women readers not supportive of second-wave feminism could admire Ayla for those superior qualities long attributed to women in prehistory by investigators of myth. In accord with notions reaching as far back as Bachofen, Clan's Ayla dispels the assumption of a women's biological inferiority and personifies a woman's moral and spiritual excellence. As a Cro Magnon, Ayla is biologically superior in some ways to the Neanderthal men: she is taller than the Neanderthals (Clan 290) and is physically adept at survival alone when ostracized from the community (Clan 256). Moreover, Ayla illustrates her highly developed moral responsibility when she sacrifices her need to fit into the community to her seemingly natural parental instinct; for instance, when she exposes her use of a weapon to save a child's life (Clan 232). Further, Ayla becomes especially responsive to

spiritual connections (Clan 398), thus suggesting that females intuitively hold superior mystical connections to the world beyond. Because of the customary expectations of Ayla's superior physical, moral, and spiritual virtues, readers with more conservative tendencies can admire Ayla's character and begin to identify with her situation. For readers further expecting the traditional rewards of her moral excellence, Ayla becomes positioned as the heroine of a romance too, as I will elaborate on in chapter five.

For readers aware of mytho-Jungian analysis, Clan achieves its cultural work of allowing readers to respect Ayla because her actions correspond with 80s ideas derived from archetypalism. Clan usurps the Jungian mythic plot, develops Ayla as the female hero of a Diana archetype, and elevates the female half of male/female symbols to challenge patriarchal doctrine. Even Ayla's participation in the Neanderthals' communication with the spirit world suggests her own connection to the collective unconscious (Clan 88). Archetypal theory also works to undermine the patriarchy through Clan's exploitation of the male/female mythic symbols. To reclaim female authority in a prehistoric religion, female symbols are heralded as positive indicators of women's preeminence in religion. For example, when Ayla learns of an ancient matrifocal religion, she is surprised about the presence of female deities symbolized as rain and

mist (Clan 283). However, as I will demonstrate, the novel's tactic of attributing female deities to personifications of nature reverts to diminishing women because of its essentialism.

For readers supportive of archetypal analysis, Clan undercuts male authority by advancing a female who contests the exclusive role of male hero. Readers of the entire Earth Children series can follow Ayla's typically Jungian heroic quest for identity and for the restoration of her (Cro-Magnon) family though she is female. In Clan, Ayla's story replicates the first phase of the conventional psychological hero: following Joseph Campbell's ever-popular pattern, Ayla "leaves" her community for a journey into adulthood (though she is actually cast out at the end of the novel). More important, Ayla's character appeals to advocates for a new female hero as derived from myth since her actions easily correspond to the Artemis archetype, right down to her inclination to hunt, to protect deer, and to succor newborns (Clan 195).⁸¹ In short, the formulation of a female hero serves to replace the stereotype of woman as villain or victim. While some readers recognize Clan's Ayla for her superior virtues, others perceive her deeds as reconfiguring a new role model for 80s women as derived from the mythic conventions. As the fifth chapter will explicate in greater detail, the next novel Valley tempts some readers

to approve of Ayla more highly when she begins to resemble newer 80s versions of the female hero.

For feminist readers who may doubt mythic revisionism, Ayla remains a female hero for embodying the concepts that liberate women from religious stereotyping. In accord with some of Mary Daly's solutions to 70-80s misogyny, Clan's Ayla performs as a proto-feminist who challenges the "rules and roles of the reigning" patriarchy (Daly 32). Primarily, Ayla practices "courage" and "self-actualization" (Daly 23) to eventually stand alone against passive "masochistic attitudes" (Daly 30). Recognizing her own talent in hunting, Ayla rejects the role of woman as victim and breaks the rule against women's weapon use (Clan 202). Moreover, in spite of her few accommodations to masculine expectations, Clan's Ayla disrupts the sinful Eve and the virginal Mary stereotypes by not internalizing the kind of self-hatred that some feminists regard as leading to self-aggression (Daly 46). In contrast to the Mary image exemplified by other Clan women, Ayla resists the "passive acceptance of suffering, humility, [and] meekness" (Clan 202) to avoid further "victimization" (Daly 77). Then too, Ayla ignores the confines of a male religion when she elects a new spiritual philosophy which evolves from a personal connection with Nature (Clan 196). Finally, for readers interested in verifying a religious legacy for women, Ayla heroic actions

induce the shaman to reveal the male containment of ancient female deities, the secret that Daly calls the male "Great Silence" (93).

In addition, for readers familiar with the 70-80s feminist impulses to revise paleoanthropology, Ayla's character re-interprets women's pre-patriarchal roles. For readers acquainted with Merlin Stone's anthropo-archeological explanation of women's oppression since prehistory ("Introduction" xxv), Ayla suffers subordination under the Clan's patriarchal rule. More positively though, Ayla not only benefits from matrilineal descent (Stone 43) of her mother's medical expertise, but takes on the proto-feminist role as an expert in medicine herself (Stone, "Introduction" xxiv). Ayla's medico-pharmacological expertise fosters her social acceptance, grants her some status, and some measure of protection. More important, readers see Clan's Ayla as a role model who challenges male domination. Much as 80s women are encouraged to do, Ayla questions male prerogatives, stands up for women's rights, and even develops material culture, such as when she perfects the use of the sling (Clan 195). Interceding for women's equality and advancing material culture (Stone "Introduction" xxiv), Clan's Ayla plays the proto-feminist hero poised in the margins ready to resist patriarchal oppression.

In fact, several of Clan's readership communities can respect Ayla's activism, especially for her choice to hunt. For readers of a conservative nature, Ayla's status as a single parent justifies her hunting for survival. For female readers sympathetic to feminism's material goals, Ayla is admirable for her persistence in an occupation formerly reserved for men. In general, women with liberal inclinations can esteem any woman who challenges restrictions of roles according to gender.

For some readers, Ayla's other admirable qualities include her defiance of gender stereotyping in Clan. Clearly, when Ayla persists in her rebellious role as a "male" hunter, she crosses gender lines. As Gayle Rubin explains, the division of labor by sex roles is a taboo against the "sameness of men and women" and separates "the sexes into two mutually exclusive categories" (178). For readers who reject the Clan women's passive acceptance of the female sex role, Ayla's "male" behavior begins to interrogate sex role differences. For instance, the bully Broud attributes Ayla's willful defiance (Clan 159) and her "actions" to her "male" qualities (Clan 158). Furthermore, Ayla's persistence in hunting transgresses the gender category of male. Since the exaggeration of sexual difference "creates gender" (Rubin 178), the Clan tend to perceive Ayla as a "woman

because she answered to the same motion as other women" (Clan 440); however, her son Durc believes that Ayla fits the neither category of male nor female since only men hunt (Clan 440). He concludes that "She was woman and not woman, man and not man. She was unique" (Clan 440).

Furthermore, Ayla's resolve to hunt despite the community's disapproval resonates with 80s readers who would construe this behavior in Clan as a contestation of codified gender roles. When a woman continues to behave differently than other women, her repetitive performance indicates her role as a gendered male (Butler 145). Thus, Ayla's behavior in Clan not only disputes the pre-80s anthropological dictum that "men hunt and women forage" (Clan 52, 116), but also the construction of male-female categories based on job categories. In fact, the more that Ayla transgresses the female gender role by using her weapon, the worse her punishment: even though the Clan comes to permit her hunting (Clan 285), when she uses her sling to save Broud's son, Ayla is outcast from the community (Clan 464). Apparently, Ayla's hunting is grudgingly approved when away from the community, whereas her use of a weapon within the community provokes a larger threat especially to men who would forestall any armed rebellion. If Ayla's rebellion against taking an unworthy mate appeals to romance readers, Clan's

Ayla also strikes chords in liberals yearning for a female hero who thwarts gender-role stereotyping.

In spite of some of Ayla's gender-disruptions however, some readers may be disappointed to learn that Clan's Ayla is ultimately considered a female because of her sexual preference. Even though Clan's strict division of labor by sex stereotyping creates a society against which Ayla rebels, it also prescribes sexual choice that Ayla does not question. The Clan's strict division of labor by sex roles mandates heterosexuality. That such a division of labor is not biological in origin is conceded by Levi-Strauss who asserts that "the sexual division of labor is nothing else than a device to institute a reciprocal state of dependency between the sexes" (1971:347-48 qtd. in Rubin 178). As Gayle Rubin deduces, "The division of labor" constricts "sexual arrangements" to "those containing at least one man and one women, thereby enjoining heterosexual marriage" (178). The Clan, therefore, defines gender according to sexual preference more so than by behavior, job, and repetitive performance. Such a traditional heterosexual pairing affirms conservative sympathies in some of Clan's readers accustomed to the romance codes. Alternately, other readers could attribute the codification of heterosexuality to patriarchal directives.

To institute heterosexuality, the Clan controls choice by threatening those who are different. Socialized to be so afraid that they require male protection and even domination, women cannot conceive of any other sexual relationship. Likewise, men are so frightened of emasculating behavior (Clan 143) that they seem unable to allow for an alternative to heterosexuality. But even "masculine" men are not attracted to other "masculine" men, a temptation which clearly could appear in a realm that valorizes "masculine" traits.

The heterosexual assumption so permeates Clan that no one even thinks about a same sex partner in spite of the fact that the only circumscribed prohibition is the incest taboo between brothers and sisters (Clan 125-126). Just as heterosexuality is a given in mainstream society during the 80s, Ayla cannot conceive of any alternative. And just as the Clan's threats by fear and warning stifle Ayla's adoption of any male role (except hunting), a society's fear and warnings against gay or lesbian sex prevail against any relationship other than heterosexuality (Wittig 53). That sexual choice is constricted to a same-sex partner might be relatively unquestioned for Clan's readers inclined to reject anything else as disruptive to the traditional romance formula. Hence, while Clan serves to question gender roles, it installs a heterosexual environment to secure the

trust of readers with conservative tendencies so as to nudge them towards a more liberal position without disrupting their traditional sexual practices. Consequently, readers looking for engagement of the problem of alternative sexuality would seem to anticipate some solutions in the next novel where people enjoy egalitarian choices. And The Valley of the Horses does indeed depict a non-heterosexual, but as will be seen in the next chapter, Valley also avoids a direct confrontation of this 80s social problem.

In short, various readership communities can respond to Ayla's status as female hero. Readers with conservative sympathies can retain their admiration for Ayla's physical, moral, and spiritual qualities which elevate her above other prehistoric and contemporary males and females. These readers might even respect Clan's Ayla for her individual courage in working to support her family, as long as she remains patently heterosexual. At the very least, readers find comfort that Ayla is neither a villain nor victim and question her maltreatment as an object and receptacle.

Readers with more middle-of-the road tendencies find Clan sympathetic to several feminist ideas. The novel confirms that women's oppression begins with the sexist opinion that the men are more important than women. Moreover, the novel exemplifies that masculine privilege derives from the false assumptions that women's bodies are the

property of men, that marriage alone confers status, that women should be subordinate in the household, and that female-headed households are dysfunctional. Clan's readers may even discern that some 80s problems such as the right to use birth control, are more important than trivial issues of social behavior, such as quarreling about who opens a door; however, many customs, such as the preference for male children and for male affiliation are shown to confirm misogyny. Admiring Clan's Ayla as a woman who rebels, readers reject the male codification of both political and religious leadership. Most certainly, Clan offers readers chances to champion Ayla's hunting as a woman's right to work and to admire her tenacity in pursuing this right. Along these lines, Ayla's plight in Clan can even move readers to encourage other women to seize more subjecthood in their own lives.

Ayla's actions against the Clan's patriarchal religious heritage and the Eve/Mary stereotyping further resonate with feminist readers. Ayla rejects the Eve stereotype by functioning as an adult woman (Daly 8) and by transforming from the virgin into a reworked Mary image who acts rather than intercedes. Ayla refuses to play up her "innocence" by pretending to be incompetent, to use sexual temptations to get her way (Daly 46), or to accept a woman's role as scapegoat (Daly 47) for men's faults or for their uncontrolled

sexual desire; instead, Ayla's confidence eases her from even Broud's oppression (Clan 197-8), and her competence with the sling saves his child (Clan 232).

Moreover, Clan's readers can admire Ayla when she begins to practice a new spiritual philosophy which challenges the patriarchy. Her spirituality evolves from a personal connection (Daly 183) with Nature's animals (Clan 195). She exposes Clan's readers to the suppression of ancient female deities during the Ice Age and in the pre-80s "Great Silence" (Daly 93). Interceding for women's rights and advancing material culture, Clan's Ayla depicts a rebellious role model for 80s women and invites them to understand Stone's "heritage" (xxv) of women's socio-economic oppression since ever since males dominated in prehistory. Simply put, for many readers in various readership communities, Ayla represents a female who resists male domination.

In addition to developing Ayla as a hero to demonstrate that women need not accept patriarchal oppression, Clan employs the tactic of creating new myths. Obviously, Clan's plot introduces Ayla as usurping the typically male-mythic-hero story line, and the novel's characterization of Ayla reverses the cultural mythotypes of the biblical Eve and Mary. In these ways, the novel's use of myth connects with readers who require a romance, who reject the traditional heroine, or who want both.

To supplement these strategies, Clan develops new mythic stories and symbols to solidify readers' rejections of religious misogyny, especially as derived from Judeo-Christianity. Since some 70-80s feminists advocate for new mythic female stories, female symbols once disparaged or demonized are now elevated and even integrated into female worship to subvert male power. Thus, Clan offers to 70-80s readers the cultural myth that power and agency will return to women if they can promote a more ideal prehistory when female worship preceded male.

Accordingly, some of Clan's readers can be situated by their familiarity with ideologies of goddess spirituality in addition to their feminist beliefs. For the uninitiated, Clan introduces the goddess religion to 80s mainstream readers. For the curious-but-not-indoctrinated, Clan suggests that goddess worship offers an alternative to patriarchal Judeo-Christianity. For those supportive of the goddess hypothesis, Clan dramatizes the causes of goddess suppression in prehistory. To recover power for 80s women, Clan revises old male myths, recovers female myths, and integrates new ones, although with several unfortunate effects.

In general, Clan's good intention to wield myth against patriarchal Judeo-Christianity falls into a reification of sexism. Clan appears to follow Roland Barthes' observation

that since myth is "depoliticized speech" (Mythologies 143), the "best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an artificial myth" (Mythologies 135). While Barthes was talking more generally about the critics's role and saw myth as favoring the dominant ideology, Auel takes on the role of writer to support then-submerged ideology of feminism. However, just as Barthes predicts that vanquishing myth from the inside induces the myth-maker to become the "prey of myth" (Mythologies 135), Auel's mythmaking succumbs to myth's infection. At times, Clan's mythic stories promote feminism through goddess theorizing; at other times, the myths merely replicate the dominant masculinist ideology.

To begin with, the etiological myth at the start of Clan falls into some unfortunate assumptions that support conservatism. At first look, the inclusion of a female deity as the mother and wife strives to empower women since Clan ceremonies largely omitted the mention of women altogether. When Ayla listens to the Mog-ur petition for a new cave home, for example, she hears Creb explain the glacier in the terms of natural phenomena. "Protect your Clan," says the shaman to the Cave Bear totem, "from Ice Mountain, and the Spirit of Granular Snow who begot him, and the Spirit of Blizzards, her mate" (Clan 26). Also noteworthy

is the vengeful spirit which strives to support female authority under the auspices of a female-goddess mythotype. Nevertheless, because of its pattern upon a conventional format, the myth drifts into certain traps. As a traditional myth, the story presents the male Ice Mountain as the more feared deity, hence the more powerful; moreover, the myth supports the position of males as religious leaders, even though male-only leadership was under general scrutiny during the 70-80s. More insidiously, Creb's story naturalizes Ice Mountain's genealogy so the Ice Age audience (and some unperceiving 80s readers) accept the superiority of the male deity. In charting a lineage for Ice Mountain, the shaman sanctions male power through male inheritance. Additionally, the genealogy presumes a two-parent heterosexual family, a unit relatively unquestioned in conservative, mainstream American. Therefore, despite the myth's attempt to suggest the power of a goddess, the Ice Mountain story naturalizes male deities, male religious leadership, the two-parent heterosexual family, and the tradition of genealogy--all to support male dominance.

Later in Clan, the continuation of the glacier myth further sustains the patriarchy. At the gathering of several clans, Ayla listens to the continuation of the glacier myth which unfortunately promotes several androcentric ideas. Initially, the inclusion of female deities suggests

Clan's subversion of masculine superiority in the glacier myth's Zeus-Cronos variation. Since the aunt facilitates the attempted overthrow and aids the mother, the myth appears to empower women, to endow them with some measure of agency. It may even be read a lesson that women must become advocates for other women and must resist Cave-Bear morality. Nevertheless, the glacier myth continues to depict women in a subordinate position. First, the myth naturalizes the deities by attributing genders to them. Hence, the "Sun Spirit" is a male who hates the young, male glacier, while his female aunt "Storm Cloud Spirit" tries to save the glacier child (Clan 128). In a traditional mythic interpretation, the sun is typically the powerful male deity, a motif which sets up a male/female reification of masculine power. Then too, the glacier myth replicates the traditional motif of the older male generation obstruction of the young male's power, similar to the oedipal-like rebellion of Zeus against Cronos. Like the young Zeus, originally the nature deity of thunder, the young male Ice Mountain is the nature deity of the glacier, and both "grow" to dominate the land. Therefore, Clan's mythmaking tends to solidify male power by reifying the sun-equals-male and the son's-overthrow-of-the-father archetypes. In brief, by the patterning of the glacier myth upon the Zeus-Cronos archetype, Clan once again re-inscribes male dominance.

If Clan fails in re-writing a male creation myth to aid feminism, the novel does achieve some success in illustrating how and why female myths might have been suppressed historically. Within a 70s context, some feminist academics proposed that women-centered myths had been purposely neglected, changed, or hidden (i.e. Stone 11 and Daly 93). Since other readers outside of academia may have been unaware of matrifocal religious suppression, Clan exposes submerged female myths to suggest the goddess concept to a wider audience. Clan postulates that women suffer under the patriarchy where the overthrow of a matrifocal society has already taken place and where Daly's "Great Silence" (93) now reigns.

Clan betrays men's containment of matrifocal myths and legends when Ayla's mother prepares for a secret ceremony. As the medicine woman decocts a ritual drink allowed only for men's use, the narrator divulges that

There was an ancient legend, passed down from mother to daughter along with . . . esoteric instructions . . . that at one time, long ago, only women used the potent drug. The ceremony and rituals associated with its use were stolen by the men. (Clan 86)

So in spite of the drink's passage down through medicine women's descendants and in spite of Iza's receipt of a

return gift, Clan men have not only stolen the ceremony and ritual, but also pressed women into service for them (Clan 87). The secrecy of the concoction appears as women's last vestige of previous power.

Such a revelation certainly works to pique some readers' curiosity about women-centered worship. Further, readers hear that women's legendary past religious power is just as threatening as women's present weapons use. The secret comes out when Ayla must suffer the ancient punishment of "death" (banishment) for using her sling. Clan's narrator explains that the customs punishing a woman's use of a weapon "were closely linked with the legends about a time when women controlled the access to the world of the spirits before men took them over" (233). Apparently, the knowledge of women's prior religious power is even more threatening than their use of weapons. Thus, for those accustomed to male-ruled religion, Clan offers readers the chance to object to men's containment of women's religious power and to the "laws" that curtail any resistance.

Readers also discover that Clan men suppressed the old legends because the past history of a matrifocal community verified women's equality and separatism. In the same confrontation between the misogynist Broud and the Mog-ur, the shaman divulges that "long before we were Clan, women helped men to hunt" (Clan 246). Although "helped" might

signify that women merely aided men, the shaman concedes women's independence when he adds that "Men did not always provide for women then" (Clan 246). Moreover, the shaman implies that the nuclear family was not the primary organization when he makes the comparison that "Like a mother bear, a woman hunted for herself and for her children" (Clan 246), a statement that suggests the pre-existence of a matriarchal unit, perhaps even one that worships a deity like Stone's original "Clan Mother" (18). Consequently, the novel appeals to a wide range of readers, from some 80s women who agreed with the concept of women's autonomy in a household to feminists who advocated for separatism, an issue under much deliberation in the radical feminist community.⁸²

In addition, readers can confirm that the worship of female deities has been selectively forgotten by the Clan, just as it has been by pre-70s American culture. After Ayla returns from her one-month banishment of "death," the Mog-ur holds a ceremony to condone Ayla's weapons use. In the invocation, the Mog-ur petitions "the most Ancient Spirits, Spirits we have not invoked since the early mists of our beginnings [whose] names are but a whisper of memory" (Clan 283). That the deities replicate Stone's "Divine Ancestress" (18) is evinced when the Mog-ur calls out the names of the etiological spirits of rain and mist. Ayla is

astonished: "The names are female names; I thought all protective spirits were male" (Clan 283). Not politically astute, the Neanderthal's religion, unlike Catholicism, has not even attempted to incorporate female "saints" to pacify the common people.

Nonetheless, while readers may have understood Clan's feminist agenda to confirm the causes of women's religious oppression, Clan's mythmaking backfires. Using teleology, the novel inadvertently confirms male dominance. As Judith Butler warns, "the telling of a single authoritative account [of origins] . . . makes the constitution of the law appear as a historical inevitability (36). At first, when some women valorized women's intuitive sense to establish nature-mysticism as the earliest religion, the connection appeared to grant a new avenue of power to women. However, other feminists recognized that when women chose to avoid competing with men in intellectual matters, women condemned themselves to the impoverished half of the emotion/reason binary. Moreover, if slippery slope reasoning determines that the emotion/reason binary derives from an innate male/female difference, then women risk the danger of being naturalized as non-rational thinkers. Hence, instead of reconfiguring a prejudicial past for feminism, Clan's teleology seems to sanction the "precultural authentic feminine" (Butler 36). Consequently, Clan's women's hyper-emotionalism makes it

seem reasonable that since male laws originated to keep women under control, later laws need to continue this tradition. Thus, laws become naturalized in reinscribing the logos/eros and male/female binary to women's detriment.

Unfortunately too, when the novel asserts that the "Great Silence" derives in part because of women's capacity to create life, Clan descends into supporting a conservative ideology. Presumably, prehistoric women's mystical power derives from the speculation that prehistoric people did not connect conception and pregnancy (Diner 197, Stone 11). In Clan, the supposed division of prehistoric women from spiritual ritual is revealed when the narrator explains the need for male privacy during a manhood ceremony:

(I)n the fearful world of unseen forces, the woman was endowed with potentially more power She was kept from full participation in the spiritual life of the clan to keep her ignorant of the strength the life force gave her. . . .

(L)egends were told of the time when women were the ones who controlled the magic to intercede with the spiritual world. The men had taken their magic from them but not their potential. (Clan 123)

So on the one hand, that prehistoric women held power because of their mysterious biology was reassuring if not invigorating to some mainstream 80s women readers just learning to activate their potential strengths and to celebrate their womanhood. On the other, when power is attributed to the magic of a woman's biology, its inherent essentialism creates other problems. Objectifying women as nature, maternity, and the body leads to gender distinctions that constrict rather than expand women's options and that might even support the conservative agenda against birth control and abortion. Stereotyping women as "mystical" can again devolve into a logos/eros binary, separating women from the intellectual realm. Ultimately, the "Great Silence" even appears to confirm that because prehistoric women preferred to exploit their mystical powers, their rejection of male logos permitted their own marginalization.

In conclusion, Clan can be read as interpreting several 70-80s feminists' beliefs about humankind's social, political, and economic origins. Simply put, when men rule in prehistory, women are oppressed (Stone Introduction xxiv); when men control the religious sphere, women are further subjectified, victimized, and vilified (Daly 46). Depicting patriarchal excess, Clan reaches several diverse audiences of various socio-political and religious alignments.

Clan offers readers with conservative sympathies a new perspective on 80s culture by illustrating the worst-case scenario of patriarchal excess. Although some readers may continue to deny 80s feminism, Clan persuades others to accept some basic feminist principles. For readers willing to doubt the fairness of women's treatment in the Clan community, the novel offers a hapless view of women mired in a conservative enclave. The novel encourages readers to recognize how conservatism supports the dictums that men alone are the heads of household and the ones to enter the public realm to work, to compete, or to participate in decision making. Recognizing that women's bodies are neither dirty nor evil, readers learn to distrust religious misogyny and male entitlement. Through the novel's depiction of male violence, women are sensitized to the problems of sacrificing themselves to codified sex roles and to a rigidified nuclear family. Readers can agree that not all women need settle for the role of domestic worker nor for the status conferred by male affiliation, but can turn to education and to the work place to enhance their own prestige. Therefore, in cultivating readers' compassion for women who are raped, abused, and traded away, Clan not only questions the traditional view of male/female relationships, but also censures the patriarchy for its sexism and misogyny in the sacred and secular realms.

To some conservative women who read romances, the stereotyping of Clan's Ayla as the beautiful heroine facilitates an identification with women's independence. For those readers who "feel more secure than threatened under the conditions of the patriarchy," the gratifications of a romance are "at least familiar," says Jan Cohn: These readers identify with the heroine to experience emotions "otherwise negatively sanctioned [and] to play out tabooed roles in defiance of the social order" (6). And because romance readers simultaneously engage a simultaneous analytic distance (Kinsale 32), they can reject their own behavior as dependent, obedient, and passive subjects. Further, since Ayla's heroism is described in the conventional female terms of moral and spiritual excellence and is developed in a conventional romance plot, conservative readers feel doubly safe. At same time however, Clan evades the question of alternate sexual choices to avoid alienating readers who may believe that religion prohibits such options. Generally, Clan succeeds in introducing some 80s feminist issues because as romance fiction, the novel permits readers to feel safer in playing an independent woman than if readers selected a non-fictional text, an act assumed to be one that indicates political agreement.

To ameliorate the Clan's repressive practices, the novel postulates that since Ice Age women, exemplified by

Ayla, once participated in cultural intervention and in material advancement (Stone Introduction xxiv), they can do so again. Moreover, the character of Ayla functions as a student who discovers through myth that women were unconstrained under matrifocal worship, a belief that becomes contained by male authority. In several ways then, Ayla represents one aspect of the 80s audience, the woman reader who barely recognizes women's oppression or who may be curious about female myth-making or goddess hypothesizing.

For female readers sympathetic of feminism's declaration that women have been victims in a repressive society, Clan dramatizes women's subjugation. Clan suggests that under a patriarchy men are more important than women and that female behavior is presumed instinctual (Stone 239). Clan asks women to refute the dictums that women's bodies are the property of men, that marriage is a sole step to status, that women should be subordinate in the household, and that female-headed households are dysfunctional. For these readers, the novel focuses less on the issues of social behavior (which is shown to confirm misogyny) to address instead some other social problems of rape, birth control, and acceptance into the professions. Additionally, Clan offers that readers reject the codification of male political and religious leadership, thus encouraging a shift towards a more liberal feminist position. The novel compels

readers to reassess their resistance to some women's issues, nudging them towards further subjecthood. Readers who admire Ayla as a rebellious proto-feminist may even accept agency in the advocating for the rights of others.

For readers of more liberal or radical beliefs, Clan formulates a socio-political critique against conservative values and the traditional marriage that oppress women. Clan points to male status as being conferred by biology, by gender roles, by family inheritance, by individual competition, and by the "essential" "male" traits of leadership, responsibility, and religious wisdom. The novel also establishes that the traditional nuclear family replicates a miniature proto-capitalist system based on male proprietorship of women, who can be objectified, controlled, exploited, traded off like goods or slaves, and even be enculturated to "want" domination. Clan indicates that male domination within the family begins women's oppression and shapes the larger structure of the Neanderthal community as a an incipient capitalist society. Thus, the novel presents the wider liberal view that male competition, misogyny, and the stultification of the nuclear family deprive women of subjecthood and agency.

Clan's prehistory reconfirms the liberal view that the patriarchy initiated women's oppression. When biological essentialism predetermines an individual's roles and rela-

tionships in a patriarchy, women are victimized in two ways: physically, as exemplified by domestic abuse and rape, and socio-psychologically, as when internalized sexism denies women agency in their choices. Simultaneously, Clan confirms several 80s ideas. Clan resists sex stereotyping in the social sciences, especially in the paleoarcheological dictum that men hunt and women forage. Furthermore, Clan contributes to the integration of female deities and woman worship in early culture to win some 80s feminists' approval. In addition, Clan carries out the academy's feminist agenda to create an active female hero and to discuss women-oriented issues, such as menstruation. Just as Clan portrays Ayla as the proto-feminist who intervenes in prehistoric culture, readers can admire Auel for taking agency in her presentations of prehistoric misogyny to an 80s culture.

Moreover, Clan allows women readers to question the division of labor by sex roles in a patriarchy. Clan depicts Iza as a woman empowered by medical knowledge and her daughter Ayla as taking subjecthood by hunting. Ayla challenges the established female gender role by behaving as a male which negates the dictum that biological destiny creates the division of labor. Although a woman's biology as a human resembles a male human's more than other species, Ayla disrupts the notion that a female sex role must be based upon "the biological differences between the sexes" (Rubin

178). Another consequence of the strict division of labor by sex roles is that the Clan threatens those who do not conform to heterosexuality, thereby controlling choice. Additionally, Clan suggests that the strict division of labor according to sex roles results in a proscribed heterosexuality which circumscribes gender according to behavior, job, repetitive performance, and sexual preference. In brief, liberal or radical women could reject the patriarchy, the nuclear family, and a proto-capitalism system as contributors to, if not the originators of, the subjugation of women.

Therefore, Clan's Ayla cultivates several readership communities simultaneously. Some readers may merely sympathize with Ayla as the heroine in her romantic quest for a partner and hope for her better future. Other women readers may empathize with Ayla because she is subjected to job discrimination, the male-marriage market, and other forms of blatant sexism. Women with more liberal inclinations may recognize Ayla's position as a woman in the margins poised to subvert the patriarchy and to restore women's psychosocial and politico-economic autonomy.

On the other hand, Clan presents problems for some other readers. Although it attempts to reform religious practices, Clan's suppressed women's religion is based upon essentialism and unexamined myth that tend to weaken its own

feminist aims. Revising male myth for feminist intentions merely naturalizes male deities, male religious leadership, the two-parent heterosexual family, and the tradition of genealogy--all to support male dominance. Moreover, a matrifocal religion based on essentialism and upon Dionysian celebration (Daly 104) reduces women to the negative half of a logos/eros binary opposition by making it seem imperative that women required male control. Stereotyping women as "mystical" can devolve into a logos/eros binary, separating women from the intellectual realm and from culture. Finally, stereotyping women as nature, maternity, and the body leads to gender distinctions that constrict rather than expand women's options, which might even support the conservative agenda. Ultimately, even the dramatization of the "Great Silence" suggests that because prehistoric women preferred mysticism to "male" logos, they allowed themselves to be imprisoned by patriarchal power.

On the whole, Auel's The Clan of the Cave Bear affirms the feminist agenda of her liberal audience, refocuses her more middle-of-the-roaders on issues, and dramatizes conservative women's untenable position under the patriarchy. If Auel had not created a sympathetic, romantic hero, she would not have retained some readers so as to persuade them by negative example in Clan, nor gained their anticipation that The Valley of the Horses could promise positive solutions.

Clearly, Auel's novels introduce the goddess hypothesis to those readers who might more easily pick up a novel, rather than a feminist tract. As the next chapter will show, Valley's solutions to Clan's problems of authoritarianism, misogyny, and oppression further attempt to move women readers out of the margins into a subject position. After making Clan's women readers kindred in feminism, Valley promises a new vision of women's subjecthood and agency under goddess egalitarianism. However, from an anti-essentialist view provided by an anti-myth strategy, Auel's more overt myth-making and goddess theorizing in Valley will reveal even worse problems for feminism.

Chapter Four

Valley's Vision: Goddess Politics and the Readers

For readers who have grown sympathetic to Ayla's plight in Clan, the next novel offers the promise of resolutions. At the start of The Valley of the Horses (1982), readers rejoin Ayla's story right after her expulsion from the Neanderthal community and follow her while she learns to survive in her valley, apart from other humans. Alternating with her narrative is that of Jondalar who travels into several communities where readers are introduced to liberal societies under Earth Mother worship. After Ayla rescues him from death, Jondalar explains his Cro-Magnon customs, practices, and beliefs in the religion of Doni, his name for the Earth Mother. Subsequently, the pair unite in sexual ecstasy and leave the valley together.

Thus, readers in several communities can relate to Ayla's changed circumstances in Valley. For readers who witnessed Ayla's subjugation under patriarchal rule, Ayla has become liberated. For readers repelled by religious oppression, Ayla can pursue her own spiritual practices or accept indoctrination into the religion of Doni. For readers who fear for Ayla's possible frigidity caused by her rape, Ayla can experience joy in a sexual-spiritual fusion.

Not intended to be sharply drawn, the above descriptions resonate with a reader singly or in any combination as a result of Ayla's new opportunities.

The introduction of Jondalar permits Valley's readers to witness the efflorescence of a romance and the vision of a better prehistory for women. Readers continue to respond to the integration of myth as it amplifies an Ice Age goddess religion and shapes female stories and symbols. At the same time, readers can explore the Doni religion as remedying the kinds of problems postulated in Clan. Using ideas from feminism, Valley offers most women a better treatment under the Cro Magnon's more liberal society which generally rejects sexism than under the Clan's kind of conservatism. Instead, the Cro-Magnons' values and beliefs predispose women's equality with men, where status is not predetermined by gender, affiliation with males, nor by women's economic utility to the community. Compared to Clan's women who suffer male hatred and domination, most of Valley's women enjoy male esteem and personal liberation. As I will discuss, The Valley of the Horses aims to offer a different kind of community subsumed under a goddess theology to 80s readers disgusted by Clan's authoritarianism.

For readers dissuaded by the patriarchy's misogyny, Valley illustrates the advancement of women's roles in the Doni-inspired economy, gender relationships, family struc-

ture, and religion. For those readers concerned with 80s women's secondary economic status, the early Cro-Magnon communities appear as sites of women's equality where reciprocity and sharing benefit women and children materially. Valued as equal to men, most Cro-Magnon women participate freely in the community and in its leadership. Consequently, Cro-Magnon women define themselves differently than do Clan women: in general, Cro-Magnon women express their opinions publicly, earn respect for their talents as when they excel at flint knapping (Valley 20), and take part in activities traditionally engaged by men, as when they embark on lengthy hunting expeditions (Valley 132-3). For readers troubled by 80s male-dominated family relations, Cro-Magnon women head several family units, so women need not depend on a dominant male nor feel exploited as producers or reproducers.

Significantly for readers who witnessed women's marginalization under the Clan's patriarchal religion, Doni's matrifocal worship seems to offer women several better alternatives. Because of their biological correspondence with the Doni Earth-Mother goddess, Cro-Magnon women attain a certain pride in their mystical tendencies and become central in goddess worship where belief is backed by female myth and symbols. For those readers aware of second-wave feminism, Valley answers some immediate religious questions.

To address women's religious discrimination, Doni worship offers a universal and religious sisterly covenant under the concept of a matriarchy. For readers sensitive to 80s religious misogyny, Cro-Magnon women claim leadership under goddess worship (Valley 62, 189, 228) to ground a new spiritual heritage, in part supported by paleoarcheological reinterpretations (Valley 32). Further, Cro-Magnon women join in a nature religion where women feel pleasure instead of guilt for sexual relations when conjoined with new spiritual practices (Valley 68, 192, 229). As I will show, Valley's societies attempt to mediate some 80s socio-political, economic, and religious concerns, but not without problematizing its feminism.

To evaluate some of Valley's cultural work, I will apply a combination of several critical strategies to better decipher the effects of the novel's mythmaking. As postulated by Deleuze and Guattari, the deconstruction of myth probes power relations between capitalism and the family (291), but deconstruction can be applied as well to Valley's links among liberalism, the family, and the individual. Additionally, following Roland Barthes' analysis, an anti-myth investigation unravels the novel's distortions, explains seeming innocuous "speech," and unwraps "ulterior political motives" (Mythologies 135-145). In general, this strategy serves to deconstruct Valley's myth as ideology, to

probe the silences, and to question whose interests are served. More particularly, this anti-myth approach reveals the novel's assumptions about gender and identity, such as those that Judith Butler locates (35) or the operations of fear and warning to contain heterosexuality, dynamics that Monique Wittig specifies (53). To assess the efficacy of feminist intentions, this anti-myth strategy also incorporates Barbara Godard's process of decentering female characters and then reinscribing them (19-20). In short, this chapter employs a synthesis of anti-myth strategies to evaluate Valley's cultural work of mythmaking for feminist intentions.

Through an anti-myth analysis, I will illustrate the ways that Valley's particular strategies of goddess hypothesizing, of myth-making, and of illustrating goddess's practices all problematize its feminism. First, the novel's improved picture of women's socio-economic status is not necessarily contingent upon goddess worship. Next, by its promotion of female sexuality, the Doni religion tends to reconfirm biological determinism, generally venerating women for their mysterious capacity of reproduction and even confining couples to heterosexuality. Third, although the novel responds to some feminists' wishes to wield myth against the patriarchy, I survey how the novel devolves into reinscribing gender roles and marginalizing gays and lesbi-

ans. Whereas Clan dramatizes some 80s socio-political problems rather admirably, I contend that Valley's Doni theory falls short of providing workable solutions.

First, Doni worship's socio-economic benefits to women derive from a liberal economy that is not exclusive to goddess worship. Certainly, Valley's Cro Magnons value liberal beliefs such as self-expression, egalitarian relationships, and a more permissive sexuality (Adelson qtd. in Rottenberg 126-7). The Cro-Magnon people esteem self-expression in art whereas the Neanderthals lack any creative facility (Valley 412-3). Men and women speak easily among themselves, even bantering with one another (Valley 214) in contrast to the Neanderthal women who must ask permission to address men (Clan 41). In addition, Cro-Magnon women are free to engage non-traditional occupations, such as boat building (Valley 213) and hunting (Valley 132) in addition to flint-knapping (Valley 20). Women attain subjecthood when they seek education in a new language and take long journeys to explore the world (Valley 29). Valley's women even attain agency when they arbitrate disputes (228), command men (58), quiz strangers (63), practice medicine (129), and perform as spiritual intercessors (221).

In addition, not a few women readers would be pleased to discover that equal relations indicates a more permissive sexuality. Young unmarrieds experiment with sex with little

penalty; young men often learn about love-making from experienced, older women (Valley 475); and unwed mothers are respected, not punished. However, these advantages derive from liberal social attitudes, not necessarily from a community that practices goddess worship. In fact, as I will show later in this chapter, Valley's premise of sexual tolerance is limited by its silence about gay and lesbian relationships.

Furthermore, regardless of the more permissive sexuality under Doni worship, readers find that gender roles remain static. Because the Cro Magnons believe that sex has a utilitarian sociological value as well as a religious one, women are relegated to their traditional role. Valley's narrator observes that "Some women believed . . . that women were given the ability to give men pleasure so men would be bound to them" to provide food when a woman was pregnant or nursing (Valley 69). Readers must question what other Ice Age women believed since this is not specified. Perhaps other women would reject such a trade with a male if based upon sex. Readers might even surmise that in a true communal distribution of goods and services, women should share equally in resources, whether nursing or not. Hence, in spite of allowing pre- and extra-marital sexual relations, the Doni religion shapes females and males into traditional gender roles. Even Jondalar has been socialized to accept

that a man's "sole purpose" is to provide support for mothers and children (Valley 303). Perhaps it is beneficent that motherhood is so honored by the community that if a particular male does not provide for a mother and children, the community will do so (Valley 301). However, a reader must question what happens to community members who are dependent, but who are neither mothers nor children. In short, Doni worship tends to prefigure the roles of women as mothers and men as providers, scarcely non-traditional role choices.

Even Valley's more liberal family structures evolve from a social acceptance of egalitarian relations, ideas not exclusive to a goddess congregation. Of course, in contrast to the preceding novel, Valley grants women new power in family relations. In Clan, all families are headed by a male: even Ayla whose hunting skills provide her economic self-sufficiency must share the hearth of her male foster-parent, Creb. In Valley, liberal attitudes enable alternate forms of the family (Adelson qtd. in Rottenberg 126-7) as when women head up the family unit, initiate divorce (Valley 438), and invite male lovers or male parental figures to join the family (Valley 190). Additionally, male biological parentage does not determine a family unit; kinship is calculated through mother-child relationships (Valley 438). In fact, unlike women's conditioned dependency upon men

(Clan 138), Valley proves a woman can function independently as when Ayla thrives alone in her valley.

For some feminists, of course, the goddess construct succeeds in reaching other readers wary about feminism. Because Doni worship thrives within a peaceful domain, 80s readers suspicious about female rebellion can more readily accept the more liberal ideas of egalitarian relationships and alternate family constructs. Nonetheless, other readers will discern that egalitarianism does not necessarily depend upon goddess worship since hypothetically men or women may be treated as subservients under any religion, even one that ameliorates male-female conflicts.

For some readers recently introduced to feminism, Valley's goddess-liberalism conflation provides the rationale for women's choices. Such readers will find the Cro-Magnon communities appealing for their relaxation of moral constrictions. Since Valley's people perceive morality within the context of the immediate circumstances, morality is a guideline, not an "absolute," (Adelson qtd. in Rottenberg 126-127). As differing circumstances require different solutions, even a mother's death can be hastened to alleviate her suffering (Valley 293). Hence, while Valley addresses the 80s social problems of pre-marital sex, teen pregnancy, unwed motherhood, and euthanasia, these changes may be as readily ascribed to liberal attitudes about

women's choices, regardless of the frame of goddess worship. It is not necessarily a consequence of religion alone, but of male-privileged power that women's bodies are treated like men's property (Stone 162), their roles stultified, and their sexual choices constrained.

At first, 80s readers are led to applaud women's improved position under Doni worship and even to feel that the reversal of power relations under a matrifocal community compensates nicely for women's oppression under the patriarchy. Unseparated, the union of goddess worship with liberalism seems to solve two 70-80s problems: the improvement of women's socio-economic circumstances and the establishment of a religion free from misogyny. Readers who discern that Valley's better picture for women stems from a liberal economy might even welcome its camouflage under an ancient matrifocal religion for its maneuvering of other readers into the acceptance of liberal ideas. However, the prehistoric setting operates at a risk since other readers may conclude that choices once possible during pagan times are no longer feasible. Hence, Valley's use of Ice Age goddess worship to slide women's issues into the mainstream simultaneously problematizes its feminist potential.

Unfortunately, for women readers who reject Judeo-Christianity for its discrimination in particular, Valley's more direct propagation of the Doni faith offers few

feminist benefits. When separated from its economic advantages, Doni practice becomes highly problematic for women. Whereas the philosophy of Doni worship aims to empower women, its reversion to universalism, essentialism, and gender constriction undermines its own feminist intentions.

In concert with the 70-80's popular impulses to celebrate women's connections, Valley suggests that religion originated universally with women worship. Universalism is a concept once used by theorists to explain the prevalence of similar myths world-wide, as does Joseph Campbell, or to establish common motifs in literature, as does Northrup Frye, or to locate a single cause for a certain injustice. Nonetheless, after myth's universalism was initially challenged by Levi-Strauss who recognized that myth's structure is discontinuous⁸³ and lacks any central signifier, myth was further dismissed by Derrida, who deconstructed myth's binary oppositions to expose their gaps.⁸⁴ Universalism slid further into disfavor when other critics determined that humans have no immutable commonality because social and historical influences individualize people. Even the perception of a shared humanity is suspect since personal biases influence any person's construct of a "universal" concept. Consequently, whenever a text, such as Auel's Valley, presumes a universalism, readers are invited to

probe the gaps, question the biases, and assess authors' agendas as influenced by the milieu.

For readers dubious about pre-biblical matrifocal spirituality, Valley posits a scientific rationale for Doni's universalism, partly through the use of socio-linguistics. Nevertheless, readers find two common problems: the universality is unproven and the attempt at universalizing Doni the mother-goddess creates its own prejudices. The tradition of using similarities among names to show the evolution of an historic image was popularized mid-century by Robert Graves' The Greek Myths although women academics had employed the technique as early as the turn of the century.⁸⁵ Especially pertinent for 70-80s readers, feminist Merlin Stone postulates linguistic connections among those Indo-European goddesses suppressed by the Bible to expose women's oppression by the patriarchy (When God was a Woman 9). Hence, for readers requiring scientific explanations, socio-linguistics facilitates acceptance of Valley's Doni whose name has spread through a territory when people migrated from one Ice Age community to another. For example, because the suffix on Jondalar's tribe's name and on other tribes in his region is "-doni," meaning the Great Earth Mother (Valley 365), these permutations of "Danu" supposedly replicate the names of actual ancient goddesses.

Nonetheless, Valley's etymological strategy is only valid for the locales that Jondalar visits. The reader hears little about other communities beyond north-central Europe. When Jondalar meets a woman of Asian origin, she is silent about any other deity (Valley 288). Regardless of the impulse to link female readers to women in the text, Valley's etymology fails to establish women-worship as the prime religion because "Doni" and its variants prove regionalized than global.

Although some feminists persist in retaining the concept of a woman's world community for its empowerment of women, readers of Valley must judge universalism problematic because of its promotion of other forms of prejudice. For some 80s readers, Cro-Magnon women attain equality under a sisterhood community that includes men who agree (Daly 172) and aim towards a "universal community" (Daly 32) through intra-tribal worship of the Earth Mother. As a universal figure, "Doni [is both] Ancient Ancestress, First Mother" acknowledges Jondalar (Valley 33). Doni's religion includes both the "Clan Mother," worshiped singly and the "Divine Ancestress" revered for her heritage (Stone 18). One such human venerated as a "living First Mother" and as an Ancient Ancestress is Haduma from whom six caves have developed (Valley 61). Her veneration rests upon the assumption that the female human is more "powerful than the male" because

she is not only "his Mother, the author of his being," but also is "the deity who infuses all creation with the vital blood of life" (Walker 346) since "all life springs from her" (Valley 192).

However, for readers who question a simplistic universal explanation, Valley's Doni theory reverts into the marginalization of others. Even if the local people join Doni worship willingly, others by virtue of their physical distance are excluded. For those who prefer a more personal connection to a deity, the superimposing of communal goddess spirituality preempts the free will that goddess worship intends to foster. More importantly, basing a universal worship on motherhood not only fosters a bias against men, but also discriminates against other women, for instance, those who prefer to remain childless or who are infertile. Moreover, in Haduma's case, having many descendants does not assure that a woman is worthy to be venerated: even a great-great grandmother may be a person of questionable character.

For readers seeking further proof of a universal ancient goddess, Valley integrates 70-80s American feminists' research into paleoarcheology. For these readers, Valley proposes successfully that the Doni's monotheistic and anthropomorphic worship is more progressive than the Clan's polytheistic totem beliefs.⁸⁶ As further suggested by 80s anthropology, just as the female heads the Cro-Magnon house-

hold (for the most part), the community worships a female deity. Moreover, Doni worship confirms that matriarchal cultures flourished before the occurrences of the patriarchal "overthrow" situation and the male "Great Silence" (Daly 93) conspiracy as are illustrated in Clan. To bind readers against women's oppression, Valley implies male containment could have reoccurred during the twentieth-century. Unfortunately, the overthrow conspiracy is not only exceedingly difficult to prove in the past as well as in the twentieth century, but also reverts to connecting women by their mutual victimization, the very position that 80s feminism works to alleviate.

Furthermore, for readers who rely upon the "hard evidence" of paleoarcheology, Doni worship's scientific bases present problems of interpretation. In concurrence with 80s feminist interpellations, the Doni theory derives from paleolithic icons presumed as objects of worship. Auel's map on the inside front cover of The Valley of the Horses locates the sites of actual discoveries of "Venus" figurines and offers sketches that reproduce these artifacts. However, interpretations of "Venus" figurines vary with each investigator: whereas once hunting magic explanations covered Ice Age art, during the 70-80s, women's worship became the blanket explanation (Stange 60). Investigators not only carry their own preconceptions, but are influenced

by their culture, just as are writers who select a certain investigator's explanations. Therefore, in choosing 80s goddess-explained artifacts, Auel reveals her predilection to champion women's improved position under goddess worship and to foster the universal goddess mythotype emerging into early 80s popular culture.

For 70-80s readers yearning to embrace the heritage of female worship, Valley's interpretation of Venus figures serves to establish the origin of religion during the paleolithic. However, the main problem with the use of archeological evidence to support goddess antiquity is in ascertaining an artifact's original function. Deciding how an object is used within a culture is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible at times (Conkey and Tringham, "Archeology and the Goddess" 228). Determining a Venus figure's purpose is speculative at best--especially from a culture so ancient as to preclude writing. Even Auel seems uncertain. For example, although Jondalar keeps his Venus figure as a talisman (Valley 33) and carves another to depict Ayla, the figurine (or any larger version) does not appear integral to any particular Doni religious ceremony except in Ayla's First Rites, experienced apart from the Doni community (461).

More important, universalism so oversimplifies a situation that cultural influences become overlooked. In Valley,

when one suitor resorts to "kidnaping" a woman to get around some "certain," yet rather vague "customs" (193), the act suggests that the bride-to-be is still the possession of the family or community. The kidnaping may connect with our own wedding ritual in which the father gives away the bride, a custom under question in the 70s. The kidnap can be read as an example that since women wished to be "rescued" in the past, they might enjoy it currently. On the other hand, the kidnaping may derive from some as-yet-unascertained paleolithic custom, which may have nothing to do with rescue or power relations. The kidnaping, in short, might reflect a different social context, one that even engages a transformation of rituals (Conkey and Tringham, "Archeology and the Goddess" 228). Although some readers may enjoy its romantic component, the kidnaping may not include the admiration of a woman or her biology, nor even the woman's desirability as a potential wife.

For readers who favor the verification of women worship by anthropology, Valley's construct of matriarchal societies seems to affix women's power in prehistory. Nonetheless, the concepts of matriarchies and patriarchies compel an illogical either/or choice since such divisions are not as simple as presupposed under some feminists' concepts. Patriarchies and matriarchies are neither universal in prehistory (Conkey and Tringham, "Archeology and the God-

ness" 211), nor omnipresent now. Neither must one necessarily replace the other in any hypothetical "overthrow" theory, as is suggested in Clan. Such societies might have co-existed peacefully, or a transition within one may have been harmonious, or the transition may not have occurred in all cultures. More than likely, the antagonism between the two systems has been exaggerated in the last two centuries so as to re-evaluate men and women's positions, or to blame one for suppression of another to level unequal power relations. Worse yet, this type of universalism also predisposes women as peace bringers (Valley 184) and men as warriors, thus equating women to passivity and men to action, an idealization short-circuiting the influence of social interaction (Stange 61).

Finally, universalist applications of Doni religion tend to preclude other causes of oppression such as class and race. In fact, Valley's Doni religion seems to encourage the Cro-Magnons' racial superiority over the Neanderthals. For instance, Jondalar despises the "flatheads" in "a reaction born of irrational prejudice . . . never questioned by most people he knew" (Valley 394). As Charlotte Spivack points out, the Cro Magnons in Valley "do not recognize the humanity of the Clan," nor of mixed children (47). Likewise, prejudice descends into discrimination and caste since those mothers of mixed-spirits children are considered

"untouchable" and their children are such "'polluted mixtures of spirits . . . that even the Mother, the creator of all life, abhorred'" them (Valley 425 qtd. in Spivack 47). Emphasizing the "universality" of Cro-Magnon female worship then, the Doni hypothesis plummets into a new oppression of the mixed "species" and installs them as a lower class. Among the Cro Magnons, "class" even appears to elevate the Doni Shamuds above the general Cro-Magnon populace since they are treated with exceptional deference (Valley 66, 124). By its very nature of totalizing one cause, universalism pre-emits other causes of oppression.

In addition to questioning the viability of Doni universality, readers must challenge the assumption that the existence of everything in nature can be explained in terms of purpose. Such a teleological approach to goddess worship cannot actually "prove" anything in the present. To illustrate, the sexual bonding that some Cro-Magnon men experience with a woman does not necessarily cause them to bring her supplies during her pregnancy (Valley 69). Similarly, just because early people worshiped nature does not indicate that a modern nature worship induces the same kind of spiritual connection. We understand that conception-pregnancy relationship is not "magic." Furthermore, Valley's attribution of "magic" to the conception-pregnancy sequence opens a gap in the text. While Ayla seems to be the only person who

perceives the outcome of intercourse, other characters who supposedly do not know behave otherwise. Consequently, Haduma's request for Jondalar to father a child with similar bright blue eyes (Valley 63) is anachronistic. More important, a teleological approach may even reify masculine power (Witting 51). For example, just as the Clan women's Maenad ecstasy can excuse Neanderthal men's domination, 80s women's licentious behavior might continue to justify men's control. In Valley, a woman's initiation into sexual intercourse by an experienced man not only tends to codify heterosexuality, but also envisions that path for women of future generations.

Adding to the problems of goddess worship, Doni's biological base ends up shortchanging women, if not men. While Doni worship appears to empower 80s women by elevating women's biology to make up for past prejudice, personifying the deity as a female leads to other issues. It may well be that for some 80s female readers, biological correspondence with Doni permits a vicarious power since the goddess, effectively, rules the universe. Genderizing the deity as female, the Doni religion combines Earth Mother as cosmological force with Mother-Goddess munificence (Valley 33). Jondalar conjoins the two goddess types when he says, "Doni means the Great Earth Mother" (Valley 365). Each form of the goddess provides something different. For those readers

seeking power in a misogynist world, the Doni religion promotes women's identification with a boundless authority as a cosmogonic figure: Doni is the "Creator and Sustainer of all life" (Valley 33) and the creatrix of the physical earth (Valley 185). Unfortunately, the assumption proposes that some women cannot gain power except through re-constructing a deity. If this presumption substitutes for confidence in their potential for social interaction, women may be prevented from seizing the agency needed to make tangible changes in their physical circumstances. For other readers, Doni's beneficence may even appear as the further perpetuation of women as the ones who must give selflessly or even "don"-ate themselves to others which exacerbates the all-giving Mary stereotype and men's role as "takers."

For readers seeking protection and reassurance under a new religion which challenges Judeo-Christianity, Doni's biological base slips into essentialism. Doni is the "cosmic parent figure" (Walker 346) who not only renews "life" through her fertility and provides the material necessities of "food, water, and shelter," but also who provides "wisdom" and "all-encompassing love" (Valley 192). At the very least, such goddess theology interrogates patriarchal religions though the individual reader may not actually change her religion or denomination. Still, while Auel's use of the goddess religion may have achieved its cultural work of

providing an alternative, the Doni religion promotes women's power by dividing people into the binary of male/female, excising men from some beneficent qualities and limiting choices to the detriment of people unwilling to be pressed into exclusive gender categories.

In addition, that a woman's biology can empower women through magic and mystery is a superficial advantage. For instance, Doni endows women with magic for their own benefit, which includes a metaphysical empowerment as when some women claim to "take Her spirit form and fly like the wind" (Valley 33). However, resorting to superstition tends to achieve respect by fear and to minimize women's concrete contributions to society, which should instead be admired. In part, a women's mystery is rationalized as deriving from a woman's capacity for giving birth, but even this explanation appears inadequate. Apparently, neither Clan's Neanderthal nor Valley's Cro-Magnon men connect conception and pregnancy (although Ayla seems to have an inkling). That paleolithic people were not sophisticated enough to understand this cause-effect replicates a general 80s speculation enjoined by many goddess advocates,⁸⁷ but this speculation may just as easily derive from our own culture's biased need to feel superior over our ancestors, or result from some other presumption.

At any rate, equating women's pregnancy with marvel and magic again risks descending into facile reasoning, which may even precipitate the kind of nature/culture split that Judith Butler admonishes against (35). If women are equated solely with mystery and magic, it follows that women should adopt those same qualities which distinguish a primitive society from a civilized one--all to women's detriment. Although few women would actually advocate for replacing magic and mysticism for logical thinking, the inclination remains to reduce women to the poorer emotional half of an eros/logos dichotomy. Such a situation demeans a woman's intellect, which in turn, works to stultify her advancement in power relations. Simultaneously, this binary diminishes men who may not wish to suppress their emotions in favor of their logical thinking, a problem still salient today.

For female readers rationalizing that their correspondence with a goddess's gender licenses sexual equality, Doni worship appears to enhance women's choices. For these readers, Valley's communities coincide with the lascivious Aphrodite archetype evolving from nature's fertile abundance. In accord with feminists' who contended that ancient fertility rites substantiate a history of women's sexual liberation, Valley re-creates the Doni goddess communities where Cro-Magnon adults enjoy guilt-free sexual equality. Adults generally select their sexual partners based on

mutual attraction. A female's biological coming-of-age is not relegated to shameful secrecy, but rather is announced by the ritual of the First Rites (Valley 64). Moreover, women do not suffer from the consequences of becoming pregnant when unmarried or when carrying a child conceived by someone other than their husband. Because Valley attributes women's sexual liberation to the premise that the paleolithic people had not yet connected conception to pregnancy, readers can imagine women's emancipation from being sex objects. In fact, Valley even reverses the problem of women-as-sex-object when Jondalar feels like "prized goods" upon being considered to initiate a young girl into adulthood (Valley 58-59) and when he feels "victimized" from unwanted sexual advances (Valley 228). For some 80s readers, this turnabout cleverly dramatizes women's problems of the sexual double standard and women's objectification.

Nevertheless, each of these so-called advantages presents difficulties. When relegated to the lascivious Aphrodite image, women once again accept the eros/logos opposition to their own disadvantage. Next, the evidence of women's free sexuality under Eurasian fertility cults merely confirms that another religion prostituted women since their favors brought financial offerings to the temples. Instead, Valley's readers are probably responding to those benefits for women who live under a more liberal culture which does

not constrict a woman's sexual experience to marriage, a condition not necessarily limited to a goddess society.

More problematical, Doni's essentialism twists back to support sexism. Apparently, the greater mystery of Doni worship is that of the sexual pleasure that women bring to men. Both the Great Mother and her ministers bestow one special gift upon men: "to share Her Gift with as many women as he desired as often as he wished" (Valley 34). But this naturalizes women as sexual objects and plays to men's fantasies of multiple partners, erections, and orgasms. At the same time, it codifies women reader's perceptions of men as driven primarily by their own sexual gratification.

The second and more significant problem with Doni essentialism is that its nature connection results in difficulties within Doni's religious practice. For the readers who would connect Doni to a nature-worshiping theology, the conjoining of sex play and religious worship (Goldenberg 111-114) may overturn both the patriarchy's sex=woman's sin proscription and the submissive virginal-Mary role; nonetheless, Doni's rites marginalize others instead. Even if free from a sacred text (Goldenberg 111-114), Doni worship continues in sexist rituals. Readers learn that the celebration of the First Rites values a woman's sexual readiness as the mark of adulthood (Valley 68-69), but sadly enough the rite demeans women by excluding their acceptance of adult

responsibilities or their material contributions to the community. In Clan, by contrast, young men are initiated into the community because of their skill in hunting.

Additionally, when sexuality becomes central to Doni's religious worship, women's power is diminished and other people become excluded. Doni worship unifies religion and sex in magic, practiced apparently for "ecstatic self-transcendence" (Sjoo and Mor 75). For instance, Jondalar experiences sexual-spiritual fusion with Ayla and merges "with the cosmic All" (Sjoo and Mor 75) of the Great Mother personified (Valley 485). Yet Doni's essentialist sexual pleasure tends to signify that women's primary method of gaining power is through sex, not action. Moreover, the conflation of sex and religion marginalizes others. While the goddess could be perceived as a "young and nubile body" (Valley 33), which suggests some of Robert Graves's triple goddess theory, such a worship excludes the sexually immature, which seems highly ironic in a society devoted to motherhood and children. In addition, limiting religious ecstasy to sexual performance even marginalizes certain worshiper, possibly the handicapped, the infirm, or the greatly aged. Similarly, religious sex for spiritual transcendence excludes people who prefer to practice chastity, fidelity to a dead spouse, or abstinence for other reasons. Most unfortunately, spiritual transcendence based on heterosexuality ex-

cludes worshiper who are bisexual, gay, or lesbian. The conflation of sexual practice and goddess philosophy then segregates others who would participate in Doni worship or who would seek different modes of connecting with the Cosmic All.

The third significant problem with Doni's essentialism comes from women's reduction to their procreative roles which jeopardizes choice in personal matters. Clearly, Valley's representation of the Earth Mother coincides with the 70s impulse to link women worship to a goddess's fertility. Nonetheless, problems result. For one, if motherhood is valorized to the exclusion of other options, birth control might be discouraged or prohibited. For instance, in the Cro-Magnon community, children are so welcome that women apparently do not question the choice of not bearing children. Indeed, Ayla is the only woman in either Clan or Valley who practices birth control. Furthermore, if motherhood is women's most important role, then women may have no option other than to continue a pregnancy even if unwanted. Similarly, no woman in either Clan or Valley chooses this alternative. Even Ayla who has the means to an abortifacient in Clan prefers to continue the pregnancy. Distressed that her homeliness precludes marriage, Ayla's fear of never having children compels her to risk community disapproval with unmarried mothers (Clan 300). Hence, while Ayla can

choose, she has been so socialized to want children that she refuses to consider abortion even though her child was conceived in rape (Clan 300). In spite Clan and Valley's feminist impulses, Ayla's rejection of abortion inclines towards the conservative's high regard for motherhood. Again, this gap can reveal something about the writer and her milieu: even if the author herself does not revere child-bearing, she succumbs to pleasing her romance readers who generally do. Consequently, to console some women in readership communities who must live under male domination (Modleski 61), Valley valorizes motherhood to the denigration of woman's choice.

Equally important, readers are led to believe that women who benefit from the goddess's beneficence are also convinced that Doni's negative aspects empower them. Because the goddess governs transformations, malevolence, and vengeance (Valley 33), readers who reject Judeo-Christianity's victimization can feel invigorated by the goddess's potential for action and revenge. In particular, the novel encourages a feeling of sexual dominance since Doni's biggest threat to men is to withhold sexual performance and pleasure (Valley 34). The "withholding" punishment may derive from archetypal analysis of the female container image, such as Neumann exploited in The Great Mother, popular in the 60-70s. More certainly, the novel

vindicates some women readers' experiences of sexual subjugation. Doni's rule over sexuality appears women's most threatening weapon since Jondalar confesses that if Doni "was angered or dishonored, She was capable of many fearful deeds, but the most threatening was to withhold Her wondrous Gift of Pleasure" (Valley 33-34). In addition to empowering women through sexuality, Doni grants women spiritual leaders the weapon of psychological retribution since they can curse a man to "shrivel up so that he could bring Pleasure to none, nor find any himself" (Valley 34). While such psycho-physiological revenge may initially read as amusing, further analysis reveals that a woman's power results from negative qualities gained at the expense of sexualizing women as malevolent creatures or as container images.

As a result of suffering under patriarchal religious misogyny, some of Valley's readers might rightly identify with goddess power. Just as women's spiritual power derives from the Doni's positive side of creation, Doni seems to enhance women's authority by threatening punishment, death, and divine retribution, especially in psycho-sexual punishment for men. Nonetheless, women who depend upon a psychic-spiritual revenge to remedy injustices run the risk of sublimating their energy to refrain from making actual changes in their real world. Women who share victimization need not choose inactivity, but agency.

Regardless of Valley's goddess power over men, Doni worship problematizes people's choice in sexual preferences. Doni worship predisposes heterosexuality as the only option because the "most threatening" condition of impotence ensues selectively when "a woman chooses to open herself to a man" (34). Therefore, while some women readers may delight in a woman's prerogative to have sex and to punish men for not behaving well, other readers recognize that within its sexual intimidation, Doni worship champions the heterosexual lifestyle. At least one woman or two would have to ponder how Doni believers would respond to lesbian sex (which would seem a rather obvious occurrence in a matrifocal society), or even to gay sex. Just as Valley rejects abortion and valorizes motherhood to compensate some readers oppressed under the patriarchy, the novel rewards readers who prefer a heterosexual lifestyle.

One outcome of the Doni theory is that although some readers respect its 80s impulse to recenter women in prehistory, attendant problems curtail its feminism. The attempt at a universal explanation for female worship falls short because the "hard" evidence appears questionable, its functions inexplicable, and the explanation merely a parallel of the 70-80s paleoarcheological predilection to support female worship. Further, such a teleological approach cannot "prove" anything in the present, but can mistakenly support

male power. Universalism so oversimplifies a situation that cultural influences become negated at the risk of denying women agency, and universalism downplays the other oppressions of class and race.

Another consequence is that Doni's biological determinism shortchanges women as well as men. The reduction of women's power to the mystery and magic of Nature may reconfirm a nature/culture binary which positions women outside of culture. Possibly, the romance of mysticism might even reify conservatives' notions of a woman's value and impoverish men who work to express their positive emotions. When it equates sexual pleasure and spirituality, Doni worship tends to signify that women's primary method of gaining power is through sex, which demeans a woman's intellect and paralyzes her options for advancement in power relations. Yet another problem arises when essentialism fixes sexual ecstasy with spirituality so that other worshipers are excluded, including children, the infirm, the handicapped, the very aged, gays and lesbians, and people who choose to practice chastity, fidelity to a dead spouse, or an alternate spirituality. Finally, Doni essentialism tends to rigidify gender roles and preclude choices of occupations, lovers, roles, and behaviors, among other alternatives.

The third problem with Doni's biological basis is that woman may be reduced to their procreative roles, thus jeop-

ardizing choice in personal matters. If motherhood is so valorized, birth control is scarcely an option and women will have little option about an unwanted pregnancy. In the one situation which would support women's choice in Valley, the pregnant woman dies in childbirth along with the child, so readers suffer no difficult decision (292). In spite of some feminist ideas cultivated in Clan and Valley, Ayla's rejection of abortion inclines toward conservatism, which may disclose Auel's need to cultivate the romance readers' admiration for motherhood, which can serve as a consolation for a life under male domination (Modleski 61). Even the fact that Ayla is the sole woman in either Clan or Valley to practice birth control is scarcely a strong feminist stance since the choice pre-emits infanticide. Finally, Doni essentialism reverts to codifying the heterosexual matrix that marginalizes gays and lesbians.

Essentialism continues to be problematic when Valley attempts to support the Doni version of feminism for readers by the tactic of creative myth-making. The novel not only draws upon images of goddess heroes like Artemis, but also incorporates revised myths to enhance women's position. For readers who support a new religious tradition, Valley's inclusion of female symbols and the revision of Judeo-Christian ritual appears to corrode the power of the patriarchy. For readers interested in justifying the goddess's ways to

women, the Cro-Magnons' stories and religious practices include a new cosmology and the advent of female priests. Others may find the reinterpretation of Christian ritual, such as in a wedding ceremony (Valley 192) comforting for its familiarity or even distressing for its audacity. For still other readers, the strategy of integrating female-centered rites into male doctrine runs into the dangers of descending into essentialism and of supporting the dominant ideology, which become the case frequently in Valley's myth-making.

For readers who follow some feminists' wishes to install a goddess heritage, the novel uses the tactic of female myth revisionism. At first glance, revisionism of symbol and myth succeeds in undermining Judeo-Christianity during the Sharamudoi wedding ritual. For one, the Shamud's recitation combines a creatrix origin, popularized by some 70-80s feminists, and the female symbol of the circle. The Shamud begins the blessing with:

A circle begins and ends in the same place.
Life is as a circle that begins and ends
with the Great Mother; the First Mother who
in Her loneliness created all life.

Valley 192)

For readers familiar with feminist myth-making, because the creatrix origin ascertains women-worship as the earliest

form of religion and the circle represents the cyclical form of nature worship, these rites succeed in replacing the top-down hierarchy of Judeo-Christian religions by indicating the more egalitarian relationships--between women and men--and among the goddess and her worshiper.

Next, readers recognize that the allusion to the goddess substitutes for god within this feminized version of the Catholic mass. Continuing the blessing, the Shamud says, "Blessed Mudo is our beginning and our end. From Her we come; to Her we return" (Valley 192). In essence, the adaptation of a different time period and of a female deity to Christian ritual undermines its totalizing power. When engaging in this parody, the novel employs Bakhtin's concept of "polyglossia" which is the presence of two or more languages interfacing in one cultural system (431), a technique which can destroy the "homogenizing power of myth over language" (60).

Further in the wedding ritual, the myth-making negates the sex-equals-sin Christian myth by an elevation of the sexual experience. Using the word "Pleasure"--Auel's invented euphemism for sexual intercourse--the Shamud blesses the union thus:

The Great Earth Mother delights in
our enjoyments, and therefore, She has given
us Her wondrous Gift of Pleasure. We honor

Her, show Her reverence, when we share
Her Gift. (Valley 192)

Hence, for some readers, the novel's myth-making undermines the power of Judeo-Christianity and promotes goddess worship.

Nevertheless, when readers take a second look at the attempt to remake myth and ritual, they see that the strategy falls to the "prey of myth" just as Barthes predicts (Mythologies 135). The change of emphasis from spiritual to sexual love reverts to perpetuating male/female biological differences when the liturgy indicates that women are the more "Blessed" since they receive the goddess' "Greatest Gift . . . [of the] miraculous power to create Life" (Valley 192). The separation of men and women into traditional roles predetermined by sexual fertility reverts to "essential" biological aspects once again. The male's marriage commitment is to "provide" for the woman and her children (192), which suggests she cannot provide for herself or her offspring. The woman's role is to be fertile and to give birth (192) relegating her once again to the primary function of child bearer. That women's fertility brings them "esteem" but not necessarily power is suggested in another matrifocal community where The First Mother Haduma is honored for producing sixteen children, but is not an official ruler (Valley 66). Although Valley tries to return the

power of reproduction to women through myth revisionism, Doni's fictionalized ceremony totalizes men and women according to their biological roles.

The culmination of Valley's attempt to balance feminist ideas with traditional ideology is that the scale tips to the side of conservatism. Possibly, the novel trades upon the conventional roles to appease more conservative audience who would accept marriage as a correction for the portrayal of guilt-free premarital sex, described sumptuously and frequently during the novel. However, this same impetus becomes problematic for other readers, especially those who incline towards liberal feminism. When Valley institutes male-female pairing for procreation, it presumes only heterosexual marriages and the nuclear family. Thus, in serving both the liberal feminist and the more traditional woman reader, Valley's mythmaking damages the feminist position.

Just as essentialism and prejudice problematize the wedding ritual, myth revisionism presents difficulties during the episode in which Ayla and Jondalar's sexual-spiritual fusion incorporates larger themes. The inclusion of myth brings about ambiguous or even negative readings of Ayla's and Jondalar's metaphysical experience near the end of Valley. As Charlotte Spivack perceives it, Auel's use of myth reveals positive images. After Jondalar accepts Ayla

and her Neanderthals as human because of their capacity for myth-making (Valley 425), he recognizes the human need to understand the reality expressed in stories (Spivack 48). Further, when Jondalar envisions the image of a woman's reflection in a pond (Valley 455), he experiences the freedom to "learn and grow" (Spivack 48). Thus, the Cro-Magnon consciousness brought by legend and dream, says Spivack, helps "humanity cope with and relate to the known and unknown worlds" (48). Moreover, Spivack sees Auel's own mythmaking as a new pattern which "breaks from tradition" and encourages minds to push beyond memory, and "beyond logic to metaphor" (49).

Nonetheless, readers who return from metaphor to logic rediscover that this episode's mythmaking complicates its larger themes. During this same scene near the end of The Valley when forecasting the end of goddess worship, the narrator errs and even perpetuates some binary oppositions. The narrator wrongly postulates that Mother Earth worship ceases at the end of an Ice Age (Valley 455) since many goddess cults flourished with the emergence of agriculture. Worse yet, when read as a metaphor, the postulation of the Ice Age's end is equivalent to the replacing of belief with intellect because now the Earth Mother's "children [had] to pay the consequences of their own actions" (455), another reduction to a female/male binary opposition to the detri-

ment of females. Even though the narrator attempts to disrupt the binary by insisting that the Earth Mother goddess passes along her parting "Gift of Knowledge" (455), this rather ambiguous gift can be interpreted in several ways. If understood as the knowledge of female worship, then the narrator has undermined the goddess theology--for we know that according to feminist prehistory, the male will rule once he figures out his role in procreation. Eventually, goddess worship will be supplanted by male worship, revised by the sky-god cultures, or demonized by the Hebrew patriarchs, according to whichever feminist goddess-theorists one reads. If the gift is understood as the knowledge of people's new independence because the Goddess' "children [had] to find their own way" (455), then the narrator suggests that Doni had fostered dependence to the detriment of both males and females. If the gift of knowledge is of the recognition of individual independence as might occur when people must now "carve out their own lives" (455), then the community spirit of goddess worship seems to fall in disfavor. If the gift is taken as the supplanting of nature-based culture by scientific-technological one, then the contrast reduces once again the female/male binary.

Furthermore, because the narrator plants the recognition of the goddess's loss in Jondalar's consciousness, myth-making privileges males once again. Jondalar is the

one who feels a "void" at the goddess's leaving and hears the keening wail of her cry (455). Ayla, it seems, has no corresponding feeling of loss, no sense of the departure of goddess worship, no awareness of her dependence upon nature, and no recognition of the enormous implications of her place in the larger world.

In the final analysis, readers respond to Valley's attempts to redress two 80s cultural problems of improving women's socio-economic circumstances and envisioning a religion free from misogyny. Using ideas from feminist-oriented politico-economics, the novel grants women new subjecthood as a consequence of liberal attitudes about self-expression, egalitarian relationships, and a more permissive sexuality ((Adelson qtd. in Rottenberg 126-7). Readers also connect with women's agency promised by a new religion that integrates a feeling of sisterhood in a "universal community" (Daly 32) and that takes on "cosmic proportions" (Daly 47). The Doni religion ameliorates the problems of separation between the body and soul, of corporal good and evil (Goldenberg 111-114), and seems to exclude sexist rituals, patriarchal dogma, and sexism in spiritual leadership. Because a woman's biology connects to Doni's, the female human's connections with mysticism and magic contrive to support their roles as mothers and as equal sex-partners. Hence, readers envision a better prehistory for

women as evidenced by 80s reinterpretations of paleolithic icons and matrifocal communities; or even a better present, based on many of the same principles found under the goddess mythotype; or even anticipate an improved future free of religious misogyny and prejudice. Auel's novel responds to readers' curiosity about the goddess hypothesis shifting into popular culture, to the wish for women's unification, to the political intention to interrogate Judeo-Christian practices, and to the establishment of a pre-biblical goddess worship that grounds a heritage of women's religion through scientific evidence.

Although Doni worship's conflation with liberal ideas may initiate some readers into feminism's more general principles, other readers find the Doni mythotype, its scientific bases, and its female myth revisionism--all problematic for feminism's wider concerns. For one, the rejection of male-privileged power relations derives from a liberal view, which may or may not be supported under goddess worship. Intended to undergird women's power, Doni's biological basis slips into universalism and essentialism. While Doni worship is not proven as universal, its very construct of explaining all things for all people is an oversimplification that disregards cultural influences and precludes other causes. Moreover, Doni worship even supports discrimination by race, class, and sexual orientation,

and risks confirming male power through teleology. Worse yet, when maternity is so valorized, Doni worship risks the nullification of women's choices in birth control and abortion. Even the mythology which accompanies this religion tends to relegate women to their childbearing function and men to the role of provider.

Finally, because Doni's spiritual advisors traverse societal norms of the Ice Age, the Shamud position intended to support 80s women's power reverts to reifying the contemporary mainstream ideology. Although Valley attempts to empower women by depicting female religious leaders, readers could scarcely aspire to the position because the Shamuds are simultaneously marginalized as "Other" for being fat, non-white, or non-heterosexual. Moreover, this relegation even tends to support the Doni community's rigidified sex roles. Apparently, just as Valley responds to mainstream readers' rejection of abortion and to their valorization of motherhood to compensate for their oppression under male power, the novel also perpetuates the heterosexual bias prevalent in mainstream ideology. All in all, Valley's reliance upon on goddess theorizing and mythmaking reverts to universalism, essentialism and teleology, problems that nullify people's choices, create other prejudices, and marginalize other people--curtailing the very independence of the people that feminism tries so hard to secure.

However, for the several readership communities who enjoy Ayla's new circumstances in Valley, readers have witnessed her opportunity to become independent and her freedom from a masculinist religion wherein she develops her own religious practices. Ayla even experiences a mutual joy in a sexual-spiritual fusion, though she is not transformed as is Jondalar. Most of all, readers have experienced Ayla's discovery of subjecthood, in which she defines and expresses her self (Light 141) in a new way. Such readings about Ayla can best be examined in the next chapter, "The Romancing," which investigates her roles as the heroine of a romance, the female hero of an archetypal myth, and the feminist hero who not only incorporates some 80s feminist ideals, but also the values of the 80s culture as filtered through the author's perception. On the whole, readers continue to encounter any, several, or all of the expectations brought about by Ayla's improved circumstances.

Chapter Five

The Romancing:

Clan and Valley's Readers

Not all 80s readers will react to Clan and Valley's socio-political themes and overt mythmaking, yet most Americans share in the mythic codes that permeate genre fiction in general and Clan and Valley in particular. In fact, readers experience a web of correspondences since the novels interweave several genres, including the historical romance, soap operatic saga, and the adventure. Alternately, the residuals of the familiar codes may preclude some readers from discerning that Valley simultaneously reverses elements of the romance and adventure. The codes even reposition Ayla as less the heroine of a conventional romance than as the female hero of the adventure quest or as the proto-feminist hero, both images that challenge some 80s stereotypes about women--in spite of criticism to the contrary, as I shall argue.

For readers dismayed by her lack of a suitable lover in Clan, Valley presents Ayla with a fresh opportunity for romance. After banishment from the Neanderthal community and a trek to seek her Cro-Magnon people, Ayla alights in a verdant valley. Alone, Ayla learns to survive, plan ahead, and create her own "family" of animals. Following Jonda-

lar's arrival, the pair unite in sexual bliss and then depart for the Cro-Magnon realm together.

In spite of criticism to the contrary,⁸⁸ readers who are reassured by genre's mythic codes respond to Clan and Valley as romance-adventures. When genre deviations are seen as "clues" to the "concrete historical situation of the individual text" (Jameson qtd. in Radford 11), the romance codes shape the agenda of inculcating 80s feminism. For example, Ayla's self-reliance (Valley 110-111) not only avoids the older romance convention of manipulating men to get ahead, but also promotes the 70-80s argument for women's independence. When Valley's structure is interpreted as "ideology" (Jameson qtd. in Radford 11) which is simply a "system of ideas and representations" (Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" 84) that mold an individual's assessment of history (Selden 95), the plot deviations reveal the author's biases as influenced by 80s culture. Hence, Ayla's flight into the wilderness veers from the typical social-climbing situation and indicates Auel's awareness of the 80s trend to support women's agency prior to marriage. In addition, as I will show, Clan and Valley promote Ayla as a newer form of female hero to advance some 80s feminist ideas about liberation and gender in spite of criticism to the contrary.

From the start, Clan and Valley set up the familiar codes of the historical romance. Even though both 80s men and women respond favorably to Clan and Valley in a variety of ways, the romance conventions and the historical setting resonate with American women especially. Working against stereotypes rampant in popular culture about Ice Age people in general⁸⁹ and prehistoric women in particular,⁹⁰ both novels garner women readers through such formal romance elements as a sympathetic heroine, a removed setting, and conventional themes.

Primarily, when readers of Clan and Valley admire Ayla as a beautiful young woman, they embrace the most pervasive code in romance fiction. Since the stereotyping of female beauty in delves into a "storehouse of commonly held assumptions" (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvi), Clan readers can admire Ayla for being a blonde, a young woman, and one who is physically fit. Ayla's athletic physique even cultivates 80s readers' envy since her shapely figure is attained through purposeful activity, not through repetitious aerobics or rigorous dieting. More importantly, readers feel sympathy for Ayla when they learn that her appearance is repeatedly demeaned by the Neanderthals (Clan 23, 64, 202), and they respond to the theme that the beauty ideal changes according to different societal standards. When readers admire and sympathize with Ayla, they respond to the "social

equation" (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvi) that matches beautiful romance heroines with honesty and morality. Although some critics disparage the beauty matrix for its anti-feminism (i.e. Gallagher 15),⁹¹ others defend it for facilitating some readers' exploration of new ideas. Surmising Ayla to be a trustworthy model, fans can envision such changes as the pursuit of a non-traditional occupation or of establishing a woman-headed family, behaviors consistent with 80s trend to liberate women.

Ayla's independent character combined with her new freedom in Valley contributes to readers' further acceptance of feminist ideology. Whereas the circumstances in Clan prevented Ayla from achieving subjecthood, Valley's new environment provides Ayla the chance to acquire the confidence, competence, and freedom to enjoy her own choices. The heroine's very subjecthood benefits readers as Ayla's evolving competence in Valley provides the female reader with a model of the ability to push beyond one's own boundaries. Thus, the heroine actually functions to "disseminate 'feminist' visions to readers who might otherwise resist changing models of womanhood" (Thurston and Doscher qtd. in Mussell, 19). Since the novel teaches that mutually satisfying sexual pleasure occurs after a woman attains subjecthood, a married reader may certainly favor a new independence for other young women even if she refrains from making

changes in her own life. Especially for those female readers who might forgo fictionalized politics for a good romance, Valley particularly supports those changes in male-female relationships which help to redefine the 80s "social order" (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xi).

Another way that readers of the popular romance become sensitive to feminism is through their response to Ayla's character in history. By its very nature, says Lillian Robinson, popular historical fiction "forces the [female] reader into some definition . . . of history and historical processes" to envision "historical possibilities" (206). Thus, Valley's readers benefit from the vicarious experience of surviving alone or participating in a liberal, goddess-worshipping community to ponder an alternate prehistory, acknowledge current feminist issues more readily, or anticipate changes in the 80s milieu.

In part, Clan and Valley readers respond to Ayla's circumstances favorably because the setting is historically plausible. By virtue of Valley's "realistic" settings, readers more readily accept a picture of feminism in the mainstream romance genre if the circumstances appear more plausible than possible. Unlike many fantasy writers,⁹² Auel refrains from exploiting any form of implausible "magical" to balance the odds between men and women or from employing science fiction to explain away anachronisms. Even

the Neanderthals' psycho-religious experiences in Clan are no more fantastical than "transcendent" experiences of other characters in other "realistic" settings. Obviously, a greater number of mainstream readers more readily accept a seemingly plausible world than a merely possible one since the intrusion of fantasy elements "seriously jeopardize the strategies through which romance functions" (Cohn 9).⁹³

Moreover, the novels' avoidance of science fiction intervention actually advances feminism in presuming to recast women's role in prehistory, a strategy that brings a greater reward for the risk: while the re-envisioned history exposes the novels to critiques of its use of historical facts, Clan and Valley reach the wider audience because mainstream readers tend to reject the science fiction label as readily as the "fantastic" one.⁹⁴

Although Valley exploits the romance more overtly, even from the start of the Earth Children series, readers share in Clan and Valley's historical-romance codes. American readers enjoy the "exotic geographic" location (Robinson 204) of the Eurasian setting to learn about such things as indigenous flora, fauna, or geological processes. More importantly, the exotic yet realistic setting introduces different customs and offers new ways of thinking about behavior and culture. Made safe by physical distance, readers are freer to reject sexism as is found in Clan or to

explore women's power in Valley; consequently, self-education inspires women's advancement in power relations (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvii). Similarly, the setting of the remote paleolithic time period persuades readers to envision that the "historical possibilities" (Robinson 26) of alternatives to women's oppression are possible in the future. Just as Clan's Ayla provides a feminist role model for some readers, Valley's Cro-Magnon communities promise such 80s feminist concepts as egalitarian relationships, marriages as partnerships among equals, and non-monogamous sexual partnerships as we have seen in the previous chapter, regardless of some disagreements about Auel's feminism in her later novels.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Valley's readers can internalize new behaviors. For instance, readers instructed by Ayla's preparations for winter (Valley 174-5) imagine a woman as very capable of planning for her own future.

Thus comforted by such displacements of place and time, readers more readily probe a character's decisions than when they engage a novel set in 80s America which prompts more immediate, hence riskier choices. The double displacements of place and time encourage a reader's activism and an advancement in social relations. When inspired by Ayla, readers can map out contingencies in their own domestic realm and adapt behaviors that empower them. At the very least, readers' self-education in simple factual knowledge

unites them to an educated social class, which in turn contributes to reconceptualizing the social order (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvii).

Class issues provide additional appeals within the historical romance of Clan and Valley. As is typical, the novels present an unusual "class locale" (Robinson 204) to win readers' admiration and sympathy. In Clan, readers sympathize with Ayla's lower-class status since she endures prejudice against both her Cro-Magnon parentage and her gender. Additionally, Clan readers admire Ayla for her superior intelligence and capacity for foresight--attributes that also discredit the Neanderthals' racial prejudice against the Cro Magnons. For readers responsive to the issue of sexual discrimination, Ayla gains prestige by working as a medicine woman and hunter, thus earning a higher status through her own efforts. In Valley, Ayla's Cro-Magnon parentage enhances her eligibility for a more worthy partner, yet she defends her Neanderthal upbringing. Hence, as romance novels, Clan and Valley not only facilitate social change among readers, but also assist in redefining 80s culture (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvi) as a time that gender politics encourages smart women to work towards recognition of their independence.

In addition to inspiring readers' admiration and sympathy, the mythic codes allow romance readers to commiserate

with Ayla's personal problems. In Clan, readers can partake in Ayla's typical soap-opera dilemmas: Ayla suffers "the great sacrifice" of abandoning her child, reproach as "the unwed mother," and restrictions on her "career vrs. housewife" roles (Weible qtd. in Modleski 59-60) since she prefers to hunt. In Valley, Ayla continues to worry about abandoning her child and finding a suitable mate, but the necessity of providing for herself tends to override these concerns. All these worries tap into the soap opera code of spending much time resolving "personal and domestic crises" (Modleski 86) since romance heroines generally devote much more time to these crises than do protagonists in other genre fictions. Then too, Ayla has the usual confidante, who is not the more conventional female character, but rather the romance reader herself who may commiserate with Ayla's personal problems as an unpopular teenager in Clan and as a busy, but isolated woman in Valley. Recognizing familiar characters and themes, readers feel emotionally satisfied from their exploration of current social problems (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvi), such as leaving home to seek a suitable mate and balancing work with personal fulfillment as well as with motherhood.

Equally important, the familiar themes of self/other, self/family and self/community gratify readers expecting the romance code. Readers find comfort in exploring the usual

self/other theme which pits Ayla against Clan's Broud as an unsuitable lover and which maximizes Ayla's sexual yearning and loneliness in Valley. Readers reacting to the self/family theme worry whether Ayla will find a suitable father for her child in Clan and whether her instinct for motherhood will be satisfied in Valley. Furthermore, readers recognize that the self/community conflict exacerbated in Clan by Ayla's rejection and in Valley by her exile will be resolved eventually. Readers find pleasure in negotiating the familiar self/other, self/family, and self/community conflicts because the romance formula virtually guarantees a happy ending.

Because of the promised happy ending, Clan and Valley's readers respond to the familiar unresolved themes, much as they would in a soap opera or saga. As Modleski holds, in contrast to (Harlequin) romances, soap operas (like the saga) enchant readers because closure is increasingly denied: "by placing ever more complex obstacles between desire and fulfillment, [the narrative] makes anticipation of an end an end in itself" (88). Quite simply, readers resume the Earth Children series beyond Clan in part since they enjoy anticipating Ayla's solutions even more than the resolutions themselves. When readers continue into the second novel, Valley becomes the saga, a romance subgenre that particularly depends upon a heroine's unresolvable

oppositions (Bridgwood 168-73). As I will demonstrate, while both novels share in romance oppositions, Valley complicates the themes of self/other, self/family and self/community to extend readers' emotional investment and pleasure.

Banished at the end of Clan, Ayla must again negotiate the full range of personal problems alone in Valley. Readers can imagine that Ayla's wish for a romance, driven by the self/other theme, will resolve itself when she meets Jondalar, whose tale alternates with hers. The self/family desire for motherhood is temporarily sublimated into Ayla's gathering of animal youngsters, an action that anticipates the self/family closure, satisfies readers' maternal fondness for babies as well as for animals, and gently questions the boundaries of a family.⁹⁶ Moreover, when Ayla and Jondalar leave the valley, faithful followers anticipate Ayla's further obstacle of the self/family opposition, hoping that she nestle elsewhere into the roles of content human mother or housewife. Faithful readers even feel apprehensive about Ayla's resolution of the self/community problem in Jondalar's world because she risks rejection by other Cro Magnons, known to be prejudiced against the Neanderthals. In short, the self-other/family/community problems coax readers into the next novel where similar delayed resolutions propel and complicate the narrative.

Responding to Valley's romance codes, readers participate in several self/other complexities when Jondalar enters the picture. Readers who respect Ayla's rebellion in Clan and her self-sufficiency in Valley feel rewarded by Jondalar's approval. Typical heroines are "rebels," as Penelope Williamson explains, who suffer for their "spirit and independence--until . . . the hero comes along to . . . fall in love" with her very same qualities (128). Thus, Jondalar's awe at Ayla's hunting expertise and appreciation for her high spirit enable readers to admire Ayla even more highly. Additionally, the codes reward readers who value Ayla's perseverance in awaiting the perfect lover since Jondalar who is the "powerful man" already "sensitive and caring" (Valley 320). The Ayla-Jondalar romance even integrates the typical 19th century reversal of male-female power as a part of the formula: That Jondalar is "wounded" physically and that Ayla responds with nurturing love conform to the conventional romantic ending especially when the "hero" is perceived as originally superior in some way to the "heroine." Interpreted this way, Ayla's rise from the lower "class" of the Neanderthals occurs because her acquired superiority wins Jondalar's esteem. Consequently, Valley's romance entices readers with a prevailing 80s moral tale: a smart and competent woman wins the best lover who is not

only sensitive, caring, and supportive, but who offers a rise in status.

Playing to 80s readers, Ayla's self/other conflict of delayed marriage in Valley is cherished for its complications. Just as some readers excuse the delayed marriage in Clan since Ayla is superior to any male, eligible or otherwise, other readers relish the marriage-postponement in Valley as a sort of extended foreplay. Jondalar wishes for the exact kind of woman that Ayla represents and finds other partners less satisfactory; Ayla experiences a free-floating arousal when watching animals copulate (Valley 258) and dreams about a tall, blond Cro-Magnon (Valley 261). Because her sexual naivete contrasts to his expertise, romance readers accede to the familiar code of the male teacher who will gratify the heroine's yearning for sexual pleasure. That the couple do not find one another until the last quarter of Valley when Jondalar is near death prolongs their sexual consummation and offers readers the time to appreciate Ayla's nurturance and nursing skills. Even after Jondalar recovers, readers experience the tension derived from the self/other code because the couple's miscommunication permits both partners to fear the other's rejection (Valley 435). In true romance terms, the pair seem fated to mate.

Subsequently, the self/other conflict brings readers the reward of participating in Ayla and Jondalar's mutual

admiration. As Penelope Williamson observes, mutual admiration contributes to the "ultimate romantic fantasy" that occurs when a man meets an "heroic" woman, so "he is uplifted, enhanced, made complete" and made more "heroic" by her love (Williamson 131). A heroine's subjecthood "does not threaten men or cause them to retaliate," explains Janice Radway, "rather it seduces and transforms them" (Radway qtd. in Mussell 19). Similarly, after falling in love with Ayla's intelligence and competence, Jondalar is transformed. Since Ayla is "tainted" by her past association with the Clan, his reconciliation of his love and her upbringing converts his racial prejudice to an acceptance of the Neanderthals' humanity, determined partly by their religious worship and honor for the dead (Valley 425). To love her, Jondalar must accept that Ayla's character has been molded into an acceptable one, if not an admirable one, by her Neanderthal upbringing. Thus, Jondalar confronts the very same inner conflicts typical of romance heroines: he wrestles with his prejudice in a self/other confusion and struggles with his rejection of the Neanderthals via self/family and self/community oppositions. Subsequently, his introspection endears him to romance readers as the 80s quintessential "sensitive," caring, and supportive lover. In spite of some criticism to the contrary,⁹⁷ most readers respect Jondalar for overcoming his racial prejudice, so Valley's

romance benefits readers and society by resolving the kind of issues that separate cultural groups (Cawelti 35-36).

Reassured of a happy ending for Ayla and Jondalar, Valley's readers easily negotiate upsets of the more conventional romance codes restrictions. Since Ayla and Jondalar do not marry, readers of Valley benefit from the marriage postponement code to envision alternatives. Some readers can respond to Valley as they might to science fiction since both examine women's social situations and avoid the typical romance genre ending which valorizes marriage as the ultimate closure (Moody 199). In fact, not necessarily overcome by the romance codes, readers use Ayla as a "placeholder" (Kinsale 32) and spend the persistent resolutorial delay in re-evaluating the character's options at their own pace. Admiring Ayla, female readers who participate in overcoming physical dangers and psychological loneliness are tempted to transfer their confidence to the 80s world where remaining single provides the rewards of competence, confidence, and the eventual companionship of a worthwhile admirer.

Adding to readers' rewards, Valley presents Ayla as the heroine of the saga, a subgenre of romance fiction. Saga fan expect that Ayla's love affair with Jondalar will not culminate in marriage, the more conventional end to a romance. The marriage-delay expands readers' envy of Ayla because it upsets the convention that once married, a woman

must refrain from sexual relations with others. However, since women as well as men can enjoy sex with other partners, Valley's readers can avoid the stricture of a monogamous marriage to benefit doubly: readers watch Ayla retain Jondalar as a devoted companion and yet vicariously experiment with other sexual partners in subsequent novels, much like early-80s women who covet others' sexual liberation, as yet unaware of the HIV threat. Simultaneously, readers experience a heightened sense of apprehension since the lack of marriage-closure risks Jondalar's attraction to another woman. Hence, readers are compelled not only by the lack of closure in which "makes anticipation . . . an end in itself" (Modleski 88), but also by the heroine's deferral of choice, so that readers fluctuate between admiration and apprehension when identifying with the heroine's risk-taking.

Based upon Ayla's continual desire to locate her parents' community, the longer threads of the self-family/community themes stretch through all four Earth Children novels to establish the saga. While not tracing generations of a single family which typifies a saga, the series does closely examine the one woman who serves as the progenitor of subsequent fictional heroines. Furthermore, Valley brings readers the expectation of "an original settlement disrupted and finally restored" (Bridgwood 191) even to the end of the fourth and seemingly final novel of The Plains of

Passage when Ayla has not yet located her own home community nor completed her trip to Jondalar's tribe. Thus, the second novel's continual promising and postponing of the couple's happiness even catapults readers into the still-anticipated fifth novel, not yet published as of late 1998.

Incidentally, the same impetus to marriage-closure may help explain the novelist's reluctance to pursue the saga beyond her fourth novel. The saga seems to conclude prematurely when Ayla's romantic partnership and her pregnancy with Jondalar's child narrow into marriage-like closure in The Plains of Passage (1990). Although Ayla has not yet found her parents' community nor her acceptance in Jondalar's to resolve her self/community conflicts, the later novels' increasing reliance upon the self/other focus undermines Ayla's other attraction as an independent hero. Constricted by partnership and pregnancy, Ayla's dependence upon Jondalar may have brought Auel to such a close proximity of a traditional marriage she might have lost the motivation to finish the series.

As the heroine of a saga, Ayla's independence particularly resonates with readers seeking enhanced power. Just as the wish for "female autonomy" is a main ingredient of romance fiction in general (Modleski 113), saga readers prefer a "strong, uncompromising female" protagonist who exercises the autonomy of choice (Moody 190). Responding to

a heroine's power to "choose the father" of her child (Moody 190), readers of Clan who witnessed the birth of Ayla's first child conceived in rape find that Valley permits Ayla's selection of a more appropriate father of her future children. Better yet, because she practices birth control (unlike other female characters) Ayla's opportunity to avoid having children allows some readers to explore such forbidden topics as non-monogamous relationships and birth control in a "controlled way" (Cawelti 35-36). While certain readers may never transcend their passive resistance to male power (Cohn 6) or lack resistance altogether, others can use the reading experience to rehearse changes in their actual lives, and still others might utilize the interaction to initiate birth control measures in an act of feminist "praxis" (Schweickart 531). Sharing this new behavior with other women, readers contribute to the "assimilation" (Cawelti 35-36) of birth control rights and sexual choice within 80s culture.

Clan and Valley's various romance appeals that shift power relations resonate with readers who may consciously avoid feminist issues. As Jon Cohn maintains, the romance's focus on love and marriage becomes the "means for appropriating the power and dominance" (9). Consequently, for the readers who feel threatened by the patriarchy, the codes serve as a consolation because the gratifications are "at

least familiar" (Cohn 6). Moreover, readers who respond to Valley's romance codes can benefit vicariously by experiencing independence "otherwise negatively sanctioned [and can] . . . play out tabooed roles in defiance of the social order" (Cohn 6). Readers with conservative tendencies who wish for autonomy in a love choice even participate in a challenge to "existing gender relations in . . . [a] patriarchal society" (Cohn 3) since the romance becomes a "forbidden exercise in female self-realization and the will to power" (Cohn 5). For those who would not dare emulate her, merely reading about Ayla's independence satisfies some readers' unconscious wishes for power and may even initiate their approval of independence for others.

On the other hand, the fictitious reversal of power relations can be construed an impotent fantasy. Even though a heroine's agency in choosing her lover suggests power, the critic Jon Cohn presumes that the romance operates as a token compensation for powerlessness in the actual world. When excluded from the market place, Cohn postulates, women's only means of attaining power is through the "upward mobility" of marriage (8). Clearly, this mobility through marriage proves unsatisfactory for Ayla while Clan's female kindred prefer this avenue. In fact, since the marriage delay is safeguarded by the romance codes, less liberal readers of Valley can admire Ayla's independence, compe-

tence, and challenge to stereotypical gender roles. Although Ayla proves her own will to power when surviving the two hostile worlds of the Clan community and the valley's realm of capricious nature, the expectation of the pair-bond code compels readers with its happy ending, i.e. a marriage and family. Possibly the most coercive mythic code underlying the romance, when ending in a marriage-like closure, the romance "reaffirms the status of the patriarchal family" (Cohn 5) and when the pair settle down, they replicate the pattern of "bourgeois society" (Cohn 3). Thus, though Ayla and Jondalar do not marry nor settle down, female readers who yearn for other options are reassured by the safety net of the marriage-and-family conclusion.

Thus lulled by the romance codes, readers may not notice that Valley reverses some of the formulas while seeming to conform to them. Though Ayla is frequently slotted into the category of the heroine of Valley's romance, Jondalar also functions in this way. John Cawelti's observations on the genre of romance clearly define Jondalar as the hero in Valley because it is he who searches for a central "love relationship with adventure/incident as subsidiary elements (Radford 11).⁹⁸ Diane Wood agrees when she tags Jondalar's tale as a romance, "since following Cawelti's definition, . . . [Jondalar's] preoccupation is with finding the ideal woman" (37). Thus, at the end of Valley,

the Jondalar-Ayla meeting reverts to a more conventional romance because the major focus is now between "heroine and hero" (Radford 11).

If Jondalar proves the focus of the romance, Ayla plays the hero in a typically male adventure story in both Clan and Valley. Because the adventure tale focuses on the conflict "between the hero and villain" (Radford 11), the Ayla-Broud antagonism establishes her role as the hero of an adventure story in Clan just as does the human-against-nature theme in Valley. Reassured by the familiar constructs of the formulas, the reader may not perceive that the Ayla-Jondalar role-reversals transpose the formulas while seeming to conform to them. Such variations even allow male readers to admire Jondalar's hero status⁹⁹ and to facilitate women readers' indoctrination into the goddess theory.¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, Ayla's mask as the heroine of a conventional romance slips aside to reveal her role as an adventure hero who can embody feminist ideas in a fictional form (Moody 201).

If gauged solely as historical fiction romance, Clan and Valley disrupt the genre conventions to connect with those readers dissatisfied with a traditional heroine. While Auel's historical novels do "tend to emphasize the emotional and sexual lives of key figures in history" as Robinson asserts about romances in general (204), Valley

also violates two norms of the female protagonist: Ayla claims her role in history without the association of a male and without the typical mode of sexuality. If Ayla's rebellion against the patriarchy ennobles her in Clan, her will to survive alone without men gains readers' esteem in Valley. Even if some female readers may not want to experience the "more competitive, success-oriented emotional equipment" into which men have been socialized (Rabine 885), other female readers who are ambitious are guaranteed by the adventure code that the female hero's competitive spirit will be justly rewarded, unlike in the world outside of the text. Her just reward may even exclude the traditional love, marriage, and children promised by the romance.

Not all readers find Clan and Valley's soap-operatic saga-romance conventions appealing however. Some readers who disparage the conventions may find the characters as seemingly rewritten according to romance genre proscriptions. At times, the sex scenes are "fatuous" (Burrue 99), "ludicrous" (Hornblower, "Queen" 88) or described in too much "painstaking detail" as if someone told Auel to spice up Ayla's life (Rovner 3). Auel's characters have been criticized as "too good--and too modern--to be true" by Susan Isaacs (14). Barbara Mertz entitles the genre "cave opera" since besides Clan's few stock characters of "the motherly wise woman and the surly villain," the rest are

"outstandingly undistinguished" (23). At times too, the dialogue appears disingenuous. As Isaacs points out, for example, Jondalar muses about wanting a woman who knew her own mind, not a girl (Isaacs 14) when he asserts his preference for women who have "done more, or learned something" (Valley 96). Then too, the couple is idealized and romanticized. Together they are the "golden couple" whose blondness is stressed "almost ad nauseam" complains Susan Isaacs (14). The same reviewer casts these characters as "archetypes" who serve as "models of what humanity was capable of," but remarked these "superhumans" were not believable (Isaacs 14).

Nevertheless, these same mythic codes facilitate reader acceptance of issues that underlie the historical romance saga. It is certainly unlikely that living in a prehistoric world, "Barbie doll" (Geeslin 1) Ayla would suffer no blemishes on her smooth skin other than the emblematic scar of the cave lion's slash. For romance readers however, Ayla must live in a more idealized "world" so readers can set aside time and space for themselves and forget mundane problems. As Kay Mussell observes, "All fiction provides escape from present reality; the choice of formula allows escape to a world that appears more satisfactory than the readers' own" (11). When functioning well, the historical

romance saga allows Valley's readers to concentrate on other issues, even such feminist concepts as the survival of a lone woman in a dangerous world or equal opportunity in enjoying more than one lover without guilt.

Altogether, any reader might connect to any or all of these expectations brought about by the mythic code of the romance which permeate the Valley's text. For 80s readers who prefer the conventional romance, the more visible codes set up Ayla as the traditional heroine who awaits rescue by a lover, and for those weary of women's role as the lascivious villain or languid victim, Ayla functions as an assertive heroine whose inherited aspects and acquired achievements reward her with the perfect lover, whom she enthralls, but need not marry. Ayla's character not only supports women's subjecthood prior to marriage in working at a non-traditional occupation and managing a female-headed household, but also women's choices in birth control and sexual liberation, and the more general concern of reconciling racial prejudice--issues which, in turn, motivate some 80s women to change their behavior in a feminist act of praxis that helps redefine culture.

To motivate some 80s women readers to look beyond the romance codes, both novels foreground Ayla as a hero of an adventure to disrupt the typecasting of women as passive observers or as objects. As Diane S. Wood observes in 1986,

Ayla represents "a relatively new type of protagonist for the adventure story, the female hero" (33). Certainly, as the hero of an adventure in Valley, Ayla differs from Cawelti's general observation about adventure stories starring the male protagonist (Radford 11). Suggesting Ayla's alignment with myth, feminism, and popular culture, one critic praised Ayla's adventurous character rather backhandedly as a "mixture of Wonder Woman, Betty Friedan and Pauline (as in the Perils of)" (Rovner 19). Another critic commended the adventure in Clan, though his words were unwittingly sexist: "When it's man against the elements struggling to survive in a forbidding and hostile world he doesn't understand, [Auel's] writing rings clear and true" (Simms LA Times qtd. in Ross, CA 30).

Probably the most important appeal to 80s readers, however, derives from Ayla's transgression of the norms of several male-hero types. The male-hero pattern begins to be decentered when readers correlate Ayla's suffering to that of the Aristotelian tragic hero in Clan. At the same time, Ayla's character resonates with readers who accept her self-discovery theme as a reworking of the Bildungsroman, traditionally a male subgenre of self-discovery. Furthermore, readers respond to Ayla's development as a female hero because the novels engage a reassessment of gendered power relations by encompassing a variety of 70-80s ideas about

mythotypal role models for women. More overtly in Clan and Valley, Ayla expropriates the archetypal pattern of the male legendary hero, a challenge undergoing 70-80s feminist discussion. As I will demonstrate shortly, the concept of the female hero elicits several controversies about the problems of binary oppositions, of the reversal of male norms in general, and of Ayla's inability to rise to some 80s standard in particular. In the long run, however, Auel's transplantation of the female hero from academic discourse to popular fiction indicates that the novels must be considered feminist for their influence upon the wider community ship of 80s women readers.

If some of Auel's mythmaking fails in presenting workable solutions to 80s problems as we have seen in prior chapters, Clan's early incorporation of a hero myth succeeds in setting the stage for Ayla's primary attraction, the shift of the female hero into women's best-selling fiction. Ayla's female heroism is foreshadowed in Clan as soon as she hears of the Durc myth, a hero who never returns to his community. Although the Clan accepts the hero's presumed death as a moral tale against disobedience and desertion, Ayla interprets the myth personally. Seeing only a hero, neither male nor female, Ayla admires that Durc was "different," "brave," and wants something new (Clan 132). Having already named her son after the legendary hero, Ayla will

leave the Neanderthal community like the hero Durc because she suffers as "the Other." In this instance, Ayla's acceptance of the myth coincides with the 70s trend for women to find new role models when the gender difference of a hero was not accounted a barrier. Nevertheless, the casting of a male hero in the myth may not have mattered much to Ayla or to her readers. Ayla's heroic status reaches female readers most readily because in contrast to men who identify with male heroes directly, women readers tend to read across gender lines as a consequence of their socialization which encourages them to please and to express sympathy towards others (Tompkins, West 16). Hence, Ayla reaches female readers on two levels: she appears in the text as the woman who models herself on the mythic hero seemingly uninfluenced by gender, and extra-textually, she becomes readers' female hero who usurps the male hero's position as codified prior to the 70-80s.

After Clan, readers can also participate in Ayla's inner development as a female hero who moves towards further subjecthood in Valley. Surviving alone for three years in the canyon, Ayla discovers her own strengths and capabilities to redefine herself as superior to her environment and as central to her new family of animals. In part, readers admire Ayla's physical strength where her female biology serves her well enough to defend against animal predators

and the seasonal elements (Valley 431-2). In addition to connecting with the physical fitness trend, Ayla's athletics resonate with readers who advocate for women's active self-defense against physical victimization, such as rape. Other readers admire Ayla's female body-nature connection as an illustration of women's contributions to the creation of a civilized society as when Ayla's documentation of her menstrual cycles leads to her recording of time (Valley 431-2).

For female readers influenced by the emerging 80s hypothesis of the female hero, Valley's circumstances particularly allow Ayla's subjecthood to evolve into agency. After attaining the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual strengths of her new subjecthood, she illustrates the "capacity" to change (Nussbaum qtd. in Gardiner 13). Subsequently, Ayla achieves a certain agency in her realm--functioning as the decision-maker (Valley 245), the provider (Valley 243, the secure protector (Valley 175), and the wise religious intercessor for her family (Valley 111). In fact, Ayla's adventures reinvent and assuage women readers' fears about mastery and identity, not unlike the popular westerns that play to men's same concerns (Tompkins, West 44-45).

Since the mythic code of the identity theme is shared by many forms of literature, some readers may correlate Ayla's heroism to that of the classic tragedy. Because Clan's Neanderthals force Ayla's submersion of her self,

readers who pity Ayla experience the same emotion that helps define the audience's emotional response to a tragic hero. In disobeying the community's law against women using weapons, Ayla's pride initiates the kind of downfall suggestive of the tragic hero. She even resembles the classic scapegoat who must be purged from the Neanderthal community, especially for her "sin" of female rebellion which threatens the community's stability. When readers respond with pity and fear generally reserved for the male hero of Aristotelian tragedy ("Poetics"), Clan's mythic codes elevate Ayla's suffering to ennoble the issue of women's oppression. In fact, even for those readers who cease reading after the end of Clan, Ayla's exile and the forsaking of her son may be construed as less a perpetuation of the "ritual immolation of women" (Gilbert and Gubar 82 qtd. in Gallagher 16) or as an ending subordinated to the need for a sequel (Palumbo 129) than it is an extolling of strong women who strive against their human oppression. In short, Ayla's correspondences with the tragic hero in Clan modify her stereotypical role as romance heroine, a role which later threatens to overcome her feminist aspects in subsequent novels.

Because mythic codes also underwrite the particular genre familiar as the Bildungsroman, Ayla's narrative begins to press against type when she supplants the male role in a coming-of-age story. Clan challenges the male Bildungsroman

which generally typifies a young man's first sexual experience and an acquisition of power through competition (Gardiner 79). However, readers attuned to the codes encounter a reversal of expectations since Ayla's initiation into sex occurs through rape and her new power as a hunter is gained through individual effort, not public competition. Whereas Ayla's victimization elicits both sympathy and admiration, her agency as a hunter accentuates readers' admiration for a woman's uncommon physical and moral strength. What readers recognize about 80s women's Bildungsroman in general, but which apply to Ayla in particular, is their foregrounding the themes of women's need for "meaningful social roles" as Ayla lacks in Clan, "erotic autonomy" as she pursues in Valley, and a celebration of femininity (Pratt 171)--a theme which coalesces from the chapters' alternating of Ayla's growth and Doni ceremonies.

Further differentiating Ayla's coming-of-age narrative from the male hero's are lack of aggression and growth towards inward fulfillment. As Judith Gardiner explains, since most female heroes fear the loss of one's self in the private realm and domination in the public, they struggle against power in male-female relationships and for the powers of knowledge and self-definition in female relationships (79). Accordingly, readers recognize Ayla's loss of self beneath Clan's male subjugation and her reach towards

self-definition in attaining the position of medicine woman just like her mother-substitute Iza, a position which enables her to support women's choices, albeit secretly. More importantly, Ayla's character eschews the usual aggression or sexual redemption as she moves towards subjecthood. As Diane Wood observes, "While . . . conform[ing] in public, [Ayla] does not allow others to decide what she must do in private and eventually breaks out of the rigidly narrow sex role assigned to her" (34). Wood further confirms that Ayla's actions resist the typically passive role since she "acts courageously without regard for her own safety [and even] saves the lives of men" (34). Female action in the 80s novel is itself subversive because it supplants male action. According to Wood, Ayla becomes the "rescuer expected in adventure fiction and assumes a male persona for wider opportunities (34-35). Hence, Ayla's coming-of-age recaptures the adventure story which is "characterized by a historical and linear structure" (Felski 126) to unfold Ayla's internal maturation and external growth.¹⁰¹

In general, Valley coincides with the 80s trend in female self-discovery novels that represent a positive development in contrast to the marriage-or-death endings of earlier versions. In fact, according to one view, the recovery of a "different sense of self" links Ayla to a novel of "awakening" in which her new "point of origin"

leads to a threshold of a new identity (Felski 142-43). As such, even popular literature serves feminism's goals in creating the kind of "autonomous selfhood" which fosters political involvement by inspiring "survival and resistance" (Felski 151).

The primary attraction for many 80s female readers, of course, is that in addition to her inner quest, Ayla's external quest transgresses the codification of the male legendary hero. To those familiar with the 70-80s trend to advance women, Clan and Valley readers have witnessed the presumption of Ayla as the earliest female hero to presuppose that female heroism (albeit a fictional one) predates the patriarchy and its legacy in the classical Greek myths. For those questioning the politics of religion and especially of Genesis via the ideas of feminists, such as Daly, Goldenberg, Stone,¹⁰² and Pagels, Clan and Valley's portrayal of Ayla generally undermines Judeo-Christian stereotypes of women. In Valley, Ayla further matures into the feminist hero who continues to test the limits of 80s cultural constrictions. After isolation challenges her will to survive without the help of a community or the assistance of a man to advise, protect, or provide for her, Ayla breaks through the Neanderthal's psycho-social conditioning which makes a woman dread loneliness (Clan 193). Once free from the external conditions of patriarchal oppression (Gardiner 13),

Ayla gains access to personal power through physical and psychological means to seize agency within her own realm. Consequently, for readers looking past the romance-heroine stereotype,¹⁰³ Ayla takes on the archetypal "male" role of a strong, capable, and smart female hero whose tests or tasks on the way to maturity (Valley 397) dispute the exclusivity of males as legendary heroes in their inner and outer quests.

As challenger to the male legendary hero, Ayla plays a relatively new role in popular 80s fiction. Although critics frequently applied the plot of the legendary hero to male protagonists in the canon after Lord Raglan's The Hero in the 40s, during the emergence of second-wave feminism, critics sensitive to raising women's position promoted the female hero. At first, such strategies included those such as re-aligning Robert Graves' Triple Goddess Myth or reworking Joseph Campbell's popular The Hero with a Thousand Faces, which attached Jungian explications to explain the "universalism" of hero myths.¹⁰⁴ Feminists sought variations of the legendary hero in the literary novel and the classics, such as Pearson and Pope's The Female Hero (1981) and Annis Pratt's Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (1981).¹⁰⁵ Later critics applied the legendary hero's plot to female protagonists in other genres--for example to the Bildungsroman genre as does Judith Kegan Gardiner in her

1983 Provoking Agents (74) and to women's fantasy as does Charlotte Spivack's 1987 Merlin's Daughters (9) in concert with feminism's embrace of the woman's popular novel. In the 90s, concepts of the female hero integrate ideas about social construction. Maureen Fries, as do many others, describes the female hero as subversive in using direct action and in resisting a supportive role ("Counter Heroes" 15) while another feminist asserts that a female hero of fantasy is necessarily a multiple hero.¹⁰⁶ Advocating for the female quest myth, Dana Heller maintains that since heroes are socially instituted, female heroes move between separateness and connectedness (The Feminization of Quest-Romance 119). On the other hand, some critics reject female heroism as based upon the male pattern of the quest, as Heller concedes when she acknowledges that establishing a female hero risks establishing a new totalizing structure (The Feminization of Quest-Romance 119); nevertheless, Rita Felski points out that female heroism of the inner and outer quests are not mutually exclusive (152), a point I support.

For in fact, during the 70s when Auel began her series, 70-80s women writers had already commandeered the legendary hero's plot for their ancient female heroes. For example, Carson lists approximately 90 fictional novels of fantasy and science fiction that foreground female protagonists.¹⁰⁷ Then too, Maxine Hong Kingston's acclaimed novel The Woman

Warrior, which encapsulated the legendary hero's pattern for a female Chinese general, was popular in 1976 just when Auel began drafting her Earth Children manuscript.¹⁰⁸ Since formula fiction relies upon familiar plots, some writers such as Auel sought to align female heroes in a unique feminine patterns to pursue the "social equation" (Tompkins, Sensational Designs xvi) that women are as heroic as are men. In this way, the novels respond to the 80s swell of interest in observing how female protagonists seize roles formerly denied them.

The plot elements of both novels confirm that Ayla now treads the male's well-worn path.¹⁰⁹ Following most of Raglan's pattern for the legendary hero, Clan encompasses a multitude of plot devices that include Ayla's "superior" parentage (as Cro Magnon rather than as royalty), her rearing by foster parents in a far country, her superiority over her childhood peers, her scar as a means of identity, her intelligence as a "divine" gift, and her mentoring by the wise elders, Creb in religious matters and Iza in medical. Continuing in Valley, the mythic plot enhances Ayla's status: After expropriating the male role of leaving home on the quest for a new "kingdom," she experiences several standard male tests and rewards in Valley. As it would for a male hero, Ayla's expulsion from the Clan results in an underworld-like descent as well as a journey into the wil-

derness, where she confronts and then domesticates wild animals, i.e. the horse and cave lion (Valley 92-94, 234-239), which become her animal boon companions, as Jondalar later becomes her human one. And (from Jondalar's point of view) Ayla appears especially blessed by the goddess, specifically in her ability to command animals (Valley 331). Because the novels' familiar plot showcases both the female point-of-view and Ayla's usurpation of the male hero in the adventure genre, the novels employ what Spivack identifies as "overt feminist strateg[ies]" (9). On this level then, the expropriation of the adventure plot by a female hero charms readers seeking new role models and translates feminism into popular culture.

Furthermore, Ayla's command as a new female hero in popular literature reverberates with readers perceiving mythic connections as supportive of women psychologically. At the same time that the linear plot initiates Ayla's journey into female heroism, the events allow for archetypal interpretations of Ayla's psychological development. Ayla's departure from her home community in Clan and her journey on the road of trials in Valley begin the basic plotline of Joseph Campbell's monomyth archetype (The Hero with a Thousand Faces 3-109). Ayla follows the first half of Campbell's "call to adventure" aimed at establishing the "ego" as Charlotte Spivack (9) ascertains¹¹⁰; nevertheless,

Ayla's correspondence to the second half of the legendary hero's path elicits varied opinions. During this segment, Ayla should follow the cyclical pattern of symbolic death, descent, and rebirth, culminating in a return to the starting place which establishes the "total self" (Spivack 9). Indeed, Valley's Ayla does follow the death, descent, and rebirth pattern; however, as we shall see, Ayla's failure to return to her "starting place" of the Clan remains problematic for several critics.

For some 80s women readers then, Ayla presents the new kind of female hero who usurps the male pattern. In part, women are prime candidates for legendary heroism because by virtue of their gender they begin from the position of outsider (Pearson and Pope 9-10). Then too, Ayla's escape from the confines of a closed environment and appropriation of the male-hero journey tend to promote a woman's development of "courage, skill, and independence" (Pearson and Pope 8). While some 80s feminists advocated for a cyclical plot to allow introspective novels to be heralded as feminist, other feminists promoted a feminized quest to illustrate a woman's emergence from otherness in a shift from subjectivity of the passive to the subjecthood of the active (Heller 121). Clan and Valley's quest-for-identity develops into one which is more typically associated with the male, even

to the search for her ancestral "roots" (similar to the popular 70s novel and TV mini-series of the same name).

Ayla's journey into the wilderness particularly reveals Valley's feminist agenda of promoting a female hero through psychological change. In this familiar plot device, the male hero often encounters a wilderness to confront his more primitive aspects, not unlike a descent into the chaos of the id or a regression to childhood, from which he emerges with some boon, new understanding, or reconciliation. Similarly, Ayla's descent into the valley resonates with readers accustomed to a hero's quest inward. Whereas Clan shapes Ayla into a female hero against her society, Valley encourages her inner growth by removing her from society so that she awakens to inward experiences, not as a social act, but rather as a personal transformation.

The retreat-to-the-wilderness motif suggests some feminist reworkings of the legendary hero's pattern to suit 80s feminism and women readers' needs. Obviously, Ayla's entry into Eden resonates with readers wishing for a new Eve to rebut biblical stereotyping and the kind of misogyny reminiscent of Paradise Lost. Moreover, entering the "green world" corresponds with various revisioned archetypes, among them the female hero who links with the Earth Mother/Demeter as well as to other manifestations of the Triple Goddess,

interpretations which reveal as much about 80s culture as about universal truths.

To begin with, the physical description suggests Ayla's retreat into the green valley as an entry into an Eden of re-wrought patriarchal theology, science, and history. Vegetation is lush, food and water appear in abundance, and other necessities (such as stone for tools) are delivered into Ayla's hands by a biblical river of plenty (Valley 39-40). In addition, as simple geography, the valley corresponds to more general anthropological location of the first human as the origin of humankind in the Tigris-Euphrates, but then in Africa's Rift Valley. The geography of the valley can even be read as a metaphor for the female genitalia to foreshadow Ayla's rebirth. As the first inhabitant of "paradise"--as Jondalar later labels the valley (356)--Ayla serves as a reworked Eve who falls into the "sacred" and therefore into freedom (Daly 68). In short, the origin of woman's religious subjecthood begins with Ayla's "re-birth" in a pre-biblical Paradise.

For readers who perceive Ayla as a reconstructed Eve, Ayla upturns the biblical Garden of Eden misogyny. Ayla arrives in the Garden first, not created by a male God from the rib of a man, and then domesticates and names the animals in her dominion (Valley 370), thus usurping Adam's role and his prior relationship with god (Daly 8). In contrast

to the biblical god who punishes Edenic humans by withdrawing eternal life, Ayla rescues Jondalar from physical death by commanding her pet cave lion, ironically her "male" totem. Applying her knowledge of medicine, Ayla not only renders Jondalar naked while she attends to his injuries (Valley 323), but also feeds him with a spoon made of a rib bone (Valley 328). In association with a birth image, he becomes conscious at the same moment Ayla is delivering a colt from her pet mare (Valley 328-329). Thus, Ayla is the feminist Eve in a topsy-turvy Garden of Eden whose female authority and knowledge save Adam from physical death,¹¹¹ reversing the kind of Judeo-Christianity that feminists such as Pagels condemn ("Introduction" xxiii). Just as Ayla personifies a strong and independent female hero in Clan (194) to overturn the male prerogative of the adventure hero, she transforms into a feminist Eve mythotype in Valley to reconfigure Genesis where people make their own choices and where a female thwarts the stereotype of women's supposedly evil nature.

For 80s readers who prefer to reconceptualize women's roles via mythotypal connections, Valley offers a wealth of interpretation. Readers can associate Ayla with several goddess-mythotypes who initiate active roles for women, some images coinciding with the familiar Triple Goddess archetype, for example Persephone (Pratt), Artemis (Wood), and

Aphrodite, while other images less reflective of the masculine pantheon establish goddess-hero figures, such as Psyche (Palumbo).

Clearly, readers can recognize that Valley's garden imagery links Ayla to the Persephone/Demeter mythotype initially popular in the 70s. Thematically, the garden's connections to the Mother Earth-Demeter archetype suggest Ayla's renewal. Ayla's entry into the "green world" of Valley precipitates an inward withdrawal to resolve psychological conflicts and to propel a "rebirth" similar to the Persephone figure popularized by Annis Pratt.¹¹² On another level, the nature imagery promotes Ayla's inner journey of recognition and self-healing. After enjoying her freedom for a while, Ayla recognizes that her life had been constrained under the Clan patriarchy (Valley 318). In addition, Ayla heals her own rape trauma and recovers from patriarchal abuse by finding succor in the garden's nurturing-mother image. Then too, Ayla recognizes the typical time suspension (Valley 416, 433) that the garden's image as safe, sacred space offers (Pratt 169). Readers connect these motifs to the Demeter/Persephone archetype in which the Earth Mother propels her daughter's renewal and rebirth. In turn, the archetype of the female hero's "reconciliation" with a parent figure of the same sex reflects Pearson and Pope's popular 80s theme of women's rebirth through connec-

tions with Mother Earth, if not with other women (Pratt 171), especially in reconfiguring new daughter-mother relationships.¹¹³ Although conceding that such an inner journey risks a passive withdrawal from society, at least one feminist critic maintains that the inward quest echoes through the history of women's fiction and so achieves positive "audience effects" (Pratt 170).

Ayla's acquisition of power creates connections through her resemblance to the Aphrodite archetype. Beyond her role as the desirable love-goddess connoted in Ayla's resemblance to Aphrodite's luscious figure and (sometimes blonde) beauty, Ayla takes on the love-goddess' power during several incidents. In one, she communicates with birds, animals favored by Aphrodite, during an almost Disney-like Cinderella parody (Valley 356). More important, similar to the Aphrodite who renews the young Adonis' life in classic myth, Ayla's relationship with Jondalar suggests the reversal of gendered power relations. After Ayla saves Jondalar from an animal's attack, she attends to his thigh laceration, likewise Adonis' injury, sometimes interpreted as a euphemism for a genital wound. Certain readers may even recall that the Fisher King motif of the goddess-mortal lover is a part of a Grail-type quest originally proposed by Jessie Weston, the female academic writing at the turn of the 20th century. Moreover, the two roles of Persephone and

Aphrodite resonate with readers who believe that Graves' Triple Goddess theory is supportive of women.

Ayla also functions as an Artemis figure, an important aspect of the Triple Goddess for 80s readers who search for an independent role model. In Valley, one incident in particular coincides with Artemis' power. When Ayla bathes nude in a new pool, she is spied upon by Jondalar; ironically, he is punished by getting sunburn (357-64), an apt metaphor for his increasing desire for her. In addition, Ayla moves beyond the local connections of virgin and huntress. Identifying Ayla's character as a mythotype from the classic tradition, Mary Zeiss Stange perceives her as an Artemis figure who braves hunter-gatherer sexism (61) but who acknowledges her often underplayed the death aspect (64). Like the Persephone image, the Artemis-as-destroyer connection tends to unsweeten Ayla's role as a romance heroine.

In addition, Ayla's interpretation as a Psyche mythotype resonates with readers who avoid the Greek pantheon, but who explore other classical goddesses in a search for powerful role models. In her 1989 "Psyche Revisited," Kathryn Palumbo confirms that Ayla's retreat to the garden challenges sexist social authority through a creative re-fashioning of her self (104-105). Perceiving Ayla as merging art and nature within the garden, itself a symbol of

nurturing and wholeness (104-105), Palumbo offers that "The retelling of the female's place within the garden" consciously denies "the myth of female culpability for the sins of men, as told in the biblical tale of Adam and Eve" (104). For many women readers then, the reconfiguring of goddess mythotypes supports Ayla's challenge to male mythic and biblical heroes.

On the other hand, some readers are disappointed in Ayla's role as a female hero. At least one critic deems Auel's narrative as corrosive of feminist myth-making. Palumbo decries Clan as a "speculative tale which subverts the scholarly research of feminist theologians" (129). Other critics disparage the two novels for the escapism of the romance elements. As Mason complains about Auel's sequel The Mammoth Hunters, the romance elements make a book "that people read when they want to escape from the pressures and problems inherent in their world; [sic] not when they want to learn more about human nature or society (6). Some critics see Ayla's failure-to-return as Auel's dependence on the romance code to satisfy the popular reader. For instance, Palumbo finds Clan "incomplete" and a "cheat" motivated "by the author's need for a sequel" ("Psyche Revisited" 129). Gallagher believes that Ayla's inability to continue her resistance in Clan bespeaks of an either/or

power relationship between men and women, negating reciprocity ("Failed Feminist Pre-history" 17).

The more important charge is that Ayla is unable to intercede for marginalized women in the narrative because she never disrupts the Neanderthals' assumption that a hero must be male. Concluding that Ayla miscarries as a female hero since Clan ends with her "death" and banishment to forestall societal change (129), Palumbo complains that Ayla's dereliction of the quest's second part inhibits Ayla's inward growth of her "total self" (104-105). While she does not examine the sequels, Palumbo's criticism seems to remain valid since as late as the Plains of Passage (1990) Ayla neglects to execute agency for the Neanderthal women. Another more general complaint that lingers into the 90s is that the role of female hero, to which Ayla may be compared, merely reverses the male norm. All these issues have answers.

Commonly, these criticisms yield uncertain proof that the novels are anti-feminist for many readers. First, the charge against the Earth Children's feminist theologians' scholarship (Palumbo 129) is less valid for its inaccuracy than it is for its essentialism as the previous chapter discloses. Nonetheless, for many readers, 70-80s mythotypical interpretations do affirm feminism's goal of combating

women's oppression by women authors who foreground the topic of female heroism (Palumbo herself serves as an example).

Second, whereas Clan and Valley do indeed reveal the author's sacrifice of some feminist goals to the preferences of the popular reader, that the novels never progress beyond simple "escapism" is too simplistic a notion. Certainly, the saga (as is complete now in four novels) never pushes beyond the marriage-like closure.¹¹⁴ Indeed, Ayla's spirituality is less than a genuine connection to the divine than to a politically inspired agenda since Ayla shows few introspective moments of transcendence or spiritual "grace." Nonetheless, Clan's feminism moves beyond simple "escapism." For one, the novel resonates with readers who discern the results of the Neanderthal's cultural practices. The novel addresses the theme of the individual's relationship to society since the Neanderthals suffer from both the physiology which prevents social change and the lack of a social evolution which further "cements" change (Clan 37). To interpret Clan's message that feminism is unworkable because this Neanderthal society is unable to change (Gallagher 17) ignores Auel's dire warning that the inability to adapt can lead to a species' extinction. Even when interpreted narrowly, Clan produces the 80s theme that perhaps the most heroic tactic is for a woman to abandon an abusive relationship or group (even permanently) and so reject the sexist

obligation to return women to such situations regardless of their personal risk.

Then too, as the first novel in a series, Clan's messages for women must be considered as within the context of its sequels and as responsive to its cultural context. For instance, Clyde Wilcox defuses the insinuations of racism against Clan¹¹⁵ and supports Auel's feminism by drawing evidence from the later novels ("The Not-so-Failed Feminism of Jean Auel," Journal of Popular Culture 63-70).

Additionally, Clan's Neanderthal-Cro Magnon inter-species conflict rises above the war-between-the-sexes motif. As Wilcox contends, the competition between "species of humans" engages the larger message that warns readers against a society dependent upon past behavior (66). When interpreted as a caution against being inured by tradition, Auel's writing is less "escape" than some critics abjure (Mason 6). Moreover, to negate Clan and Valley as mere romance literature dismisses those readers willing to rehearse feminist roles. Subsequently, the "cheat" of Clan's ending (Palumbo 129) as well as of its sequels is rather to be interpreted as benefitting romance readers because the postponement of self/community conflict prolongs readers' contemplation of Ayla as the kind of female hero whose actions as a "counter-hero" subverts male social values (Fries 6). To dismiss romance novels outright even drifts

into a kind of class elitism that diminishes romance readers.

Next, Ayla's failure-to-return to the Neanderthals to complete her quest must be assessed within the context of the development of female heroism during the 80s decade. Early on, the female hero typically progresses through a three-step pattern which includes separation from society to locate a problem, differentiation from others to become a rebel, and a repudiation of that society because of its unsolvable issues. Seen as an early 80s female hero, Ayla is unusual for her shift to more personal relationships, but away from war and politics, as an alternate selfhood for women (Spivack 9). In accord with the next trend to establish the female hero as one who does not recede from society, but who participates in the community, Ayla seems to fail. However, when Ayla is interpreted as shifting between separation and connectedness in accord with Gardiner's ideas (74), Ayla's heroism avoids the fixity of this position. For instance, Ayla experiences a separation/connectedness conflict as a daughter (Gardiner 74)--as when her biological and foster mother die in Clan--and as when she accommodates Mother Nature's hostility and healing in Valley. A third consideration calls for perceiving Ayla as an 80s female hero whose separation from society in Valley is a false reduction to an action/emotion binary because action does

not necessarily negate emotion, nor emotion forestall action. Furthermore, the charge against Ayla's failure-to-return to the Neanderthals may be understood as a part of her continuing development: her more immediate purpose entails her personal intervention against the Cro-Magnon's racial prejudice, just as she will engage in the third novel. Ultimately, to judge Ayla's failure-to-return as disappointing at the end of Valley or even the later novels descends into a hasty judgment since the full development of Ayla's character is obviously short-circuited by the series' lack of conclusion.

Ayla's heroism can be further criticized along the lines that the female hero is a mere role-reversal. After Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope remodeled the female hero on Campbell's monomyth pattern in the 80s, but offered that the hero reconcile herself to a mother figure instead of a father figure, some readers could applaud the reversal of masculine norms as new to 80s's culture in an attempt to decenter male heroism; later, however, other critics complain that such kinds of reversal merely reinstate the male norm. Some critics may even find that the differentiation of a female from a male hero risks reduction to essentialism when the cyclical plot suggests the nature-and-body connection (configured by Pratt) since the opposition valorizes male linearity and logic.

Another charge that may be made against Ayla as a female hero is that when heroism is particularized as "female," the issue of gender identity becomes less important. However, when we consider the female hero as evolving from changing social trends, the boundaries of gender identity are challenged by the role-reversal (Heller 120-121). For example, as we have seen, Ayla's actions do contest the notion of "male" in Clan and the role of incompetent female in Valley. Hence, Ayla's actions interrogate the textual forces that shape identity and gender by investigating heroism. These same challenges to gender also influence readers' perception of self. In fact, Clan and Valley's interrogation of women's subordination and of gender categories can be considered the two hallmarks of feminist literature (Felski, "Introduction" 14). Moreover, female heroism which tests the limits of gender construction also tends to promote an "intersubjectivity" (Heller 122) that returns power to each community. Seen this way, if Ayla returns to the Neanderthals, she may even be criticized for imposing her Cro-Magnon's culture beliefs on Others.

Indeed, the recognition of the hero becomes society's test of its own immediate socio-cultural problems (Heller 122-3) and solutions. Culturally instituted, 80s female heroism juxtaposes questions of identity, gender, and intersubjectivity, though 90s readers might anticipate still

other changes. If readers respond to the Earth Children series as the cultural quest for the emerging female hero of the 80s, later novels could include Ayla's acceptance of leadership in a public position. Given the popularity of current female heroes in the 90s TV media, Ayla could become a prototypic Odysseus-like leader of others as is Star Trek's Captain Janeway or a solitary justice hero, as in Xena the Warrior Princess. Until the hero and the quest are accepted as ungendered or androgynous, they will continue to test society's problems and culture's presumptions.

Altogether, any reader might connect to any or all of these expectations brought about by the mythic codes which permeate the 80s text, codes which range from romance prescriptions to feminist proscriptions hence the broad appeal of the series. If readers seek a conventional romance, Clan and Valley create a valorous heroine in a plausible setting, whose morality, honesty, and spiritual connections win Jondalar's admiration and readers' esteem. Through the mythic codes of the romance, historical fantasy, and soap opera-saga, even readers with less liberal tendencies can appreciate Ayla's new independence in Valley since her parentage is valued and her circumstances offer her the choices of a lover and father of her children--or no lover and no children. For women readers who want, but who fear independence, the familiar romance and removed setting

reduce personal risk (Cohn 6). Valley's ending with Ayla and Jondalar as unmarried partners elicits readers' apprehension and anticipation, and while readers suffer the continual postponement of the typical romance self/other-family-community resolutions, the romance code ultimately guarantees a happy ending. If heroism is socially constructed according to readers' needs, Ayla's self/community conflict replicates not only that indicative of a typical romance, but also that of the temporal 80s impulse to move women to action, although in some cases as Clan suggests, flight is more expedient than fight--and as Valley offers, arbitration more pragmatic than intervention.

Additionally, for 80s readers weary of women as villain or victim, Ayla functions as an assertive romance heroine where a woman can no longer depend upon a male to provide the necessities of life, but must adapt to changed circumstances. In contrast to older versions of the romance heroine, Ayla's acquisition of her own subjecthood before meeting her lover within her own realm and her avoidance of sexual manipulation all provide clues to the text's historical situation of 80s feminism which supports women's subjecthood and agency prior to marriage. Furthermore, since Ayla more properly fits role of adventure hero in a human-against-nature conflict, Valley's crossings of genres indicates Auel's awareness of the 80s trend to support a woman's

agency in planning ahead, developing skills while working, and acting to control her environment. In this way, Ayla's status as a liberated romance heroine serves feminism's goals to resist women's oppression and a codified gendered identity--both goals sheltered by the conventions of genre fiction.

Some readers may prefer to view Ayla as the female hero of a typically male adventure quest who acts upon central events through will, not sexuality, to prove that women are just as capable as men. Corresponding to 80s impulses to envision mythic female heroes, readers admire Clan and Valley's Ayla for her expropriation of the male quest-plot in which she establishes subjecthood and agency. Hence, Valley's foregrounding of the female hero's solitary adventures in prehistory appears a rare among best-sellers of the early-80s mainstream fiction.¹¹⁶ For adventure buffs, the pair will continue to struggle against a hostile environment in subsequent novels, whether against physical dangers or racial prejudice.

For other readers, Ayla functions more directly as the proto-feminist hero who encourages 80s women readers to re-envision their position in prehistory, and by extension, in their own culture. Clan and Valley suggest that Ayla compares with the 80s trend of ascendant mythotypes as the Aphrodite mother-lover-transformer of Jondalar, as a strong

female hero of the Artemis archetype who encompasses a destroyer-death image as Wood identifies her, as a Psyche who refashions herself into a new image as Palumbo sees her, or as a Persephone figure as suggested by Annis Pratt's theme of the heroine who heals her own rape trauma and who seeks new mother-daughter relationships. Moreover, as revised Eve figure in a Garden of Eden setting, Ayla overturns the usual Adam-God relationship. While such images may be seen as "essentialist" according to 90s standards, they clearly resonate with 80s readers who wish to reinterpret myth to enhance women's power and to find new answers to the 80s cultural problems of women's agency in the physical world, the spiritual realm, and in the arena of religious politics.

For 80s readers who prefer a less conventional heroine who disrupts all conventions of popular literature, Ayla seems disappointing. However, if female heroism is understood as a process still evolving within culture, the fixity of some either/or positions is avoided. Even in the 90s, the ideal of a non-gendered hero has certainly not attained acceptance within the popular television media--if current examinations of Captain Janeway of Star Trek: Voyager and Xena: Warrior Princess indicate the continuing interest in female heroes as leaders or as figures of parody.¹¹⁷

Clearly, if Ayla led a group or acted as a justice hero within the early 80s, the novels may have been relegated to the realm of science fiction or fantasy, thus hindering the novels' material goal to introduce feminism to the popular reader. As an emerging concept, female heroism still provides a useful construct in viewing popular literature for its shifting of power relations as well as for its dimensions of gender identity, and such distinctions do provide stepping stones to women's acceptance.¹¹⁸ In other words, until heroes are received as ungendered, women in some communities will continue to admire and to validate other heroic women in other communities who serve as even temporary role models, at first copying and then challenging the norm of the hero as male.

Thus, for those readers who decipher Valley's "structure as ideology" (Jameson qtd. in Radford 11), Auel grafts familiar romance emotional themes upon a mythic plot to respond to many readers wishes for a proto-feminist hero who synthesizes some of 80s feminism's goals. Reducing the hero to the romance heroine who cultivates readers' emotions or to the adventurous female hero who engages readers' admiration is a false choice, which tends to exclude women readers who favor both.¹¹⁹ Even limiting women's self-discovery novels to the inner or external quest tends to overlook the coming-of age plot as part of a sequence of female develop-

ment and as a social reconfiguration of women's heroism. Hence, the criticism against Clan and Valley for merely reconfirming male/female norms fails to recognize those many readers newly curious about feminist concepts and constructs. By refusing to play to only feminist readers, the novels' socio-political intentions "seed" feminist ideas of liberation and gender construction, and the romance-adventure codes allow the ideas to grow and fruit. Because Ayla's female heroism responds to the 80s trend of illustrating women's subordination and of surveying the boundaries of gender identity to readers of popular fiction, separating popular from "literary" works even devolves into a elitist prejudice which marginalizes readers denied a liberal upbringing or education.

For those critics who would decry Clan and Valley's romance-adventure because the fascination with serial monogamy and a free sexuality without guilt shrouds the assumption of the heterosexual matrix, a similar rebuttal must be made. Of course, when some readers respond to the 70s-80s fantasy of engaging in pre- or extra-marital relationships, they rarely question the heroine's heterosexual preference. In general, readers do count on the romance formula to supply a "straightforward focus on a stylized heterosexual love story" (Robinson 204) and to provide the promise of the marriage-and-family ending however long postponed. Seeming-

ly, Clan and Valley reaffirm the culture's consensus about morality and reality (Cawelti 35) since Ayla is the good, moral female hero who acts assertively, but who follows mainstream expectations about heterosexual love and the marriage conclusion. At the end of Valley in fact, Ayla appears so overshadowed by the romance conventions that readers who continue the series might doubt that Ayla can stay so sure-footed on the heroic path begun in the first two novels. Nonetheless, since heterosexual love attracts many women readers, Clan and Valley might not attain best-selling status nor win approval of the larger audience for feminism's other ideas if Ayla's own romance included a same-sex relationship. For one, readers might not accept Ayla if she is depicted as anymore marginalized than she is already, by sexism in one novel and by racial prejudice in the next. For another, some Clan and Valley readers who have grown to admire Ayla for her heroism against sexism and racial prejudice may be more accepting of her next challenge in some future novel, that of prescribed heterosexuality.

Seen another way, the mythic code of postponed self/other, self/family, and self/community themes may even suggest that the romance formula is driven less by a stylized heterosexuality, than by the more basic needs for love and sexual reward. If this is the case, to fault a romance novel for its lack of a protagonist's same-sex relationship

is to pre-empt those readers who read past gender for emotional fulfillment. On the other hand, some of Valley's female readers may continue the Earth Children series to wish that Ayla come into contact with other women in later novels who do not necessarily prefer a heterosexual relationship, who are not marginalized by those same local communities that Jondalar has already visited, and who live a satisfactory life with social acceptance.

Perhaps a broader concept can help explain many readers' interest in pursuing Ayla's adventures beyond Valley. As Jane Tompkins postulates, whether readers are male or female, all forms of fiction work in a similar way: readers enjoy the acute pressures within the fictional world since their "real" time during reading seems to disappear (West 15). The soap opera-saga's very extension of perceived time even gives women readers the luxury to re-evaluate their own options at their own pace. The adventure novel's prolongation of physical survival gives readers the time to consider tangible alternatives, even the more simple one of fight or flight. Thus, Ayla's romancing is a triple one: for readers who admire a woman author and a female protagonist, the Earth Children series provides new role models; for those sympathetic with the romance codes, whether heterosexual, gay, or lesbian, Valley's Ayla seems to promise an eventual love relationship which may include marriage and family; for

those attuned to adventure codes, Valley works upon the expectation that whatever trail Ayla takes, the realm inside the text will provide more satisfactory choices, even temporarily, than the realm outside of the text.

Conclusion

Nearly two decades have passed since my friends disparaged The Clan of the Cave Bear during our discussion. When she faulted the stereotyped characters, Suzanne failed to foresee that this very same element would help catapult the Earth Children saga into mainstream popularity. Then too, while Jean questioned one of the novel's scientific premises, the general reader and the popular critic appreciated the many other realistic details in the paleolithic setting.¹²⁰ When I advocated for Clan, I responded to some 80s wishes to advance feminism: I had rightly adjudged that readers who admired Ayla's heroism would be more amenable to accepting some newer ideas about women's liberation.

On the positive side, Clan and Valley fulfill their greater intention of bringing some feminist ideas into 80s mainstream notice. As popular literature, the novels successfully engage such strategies as the exacerbation of some conservative beliefs and customs to make liberal ideas more acceptable, the examination of early power relations as a cause of women's oppression, and the interrogation of some traditional family and gender roles. Clan's bleak scenario raises such an alarm against patriarchal oppression that few 80s female readers could ignore the general theme of women's liberation. For readers attuned to 80s women's economic

inequality, Clan reveals that men relegated women to possessions and exploited their productive and reproductive capacities while Valley envisions a better community where women share equally in the distribution of resources. For readers who examine power relations, Clan confirms that conventional values tend to support sexual discrimination and to contain women's power; Valley promotes women's sexual and social liberation through women's authority in the family, in the secular and sacred communities, and in heterosexual relationships. For readers who question women's roles, Valley offers women as heads of family units, as workers in occupations formerly reserved for men, and as equal participants in spiritual matters. Thus, for some 80s readers who aim to challenge the prevailing socio-economic and political milieu, Valley suggests that a liberated woman can thrive by herself or opt to join in a community that values women.

Employing various genre conventions, Clan and Valley maximize a broad 80s readership for feminist themes. In fact, Clan and Valley's integration of the historical romance, the fantasy, the soap opera, the saga, and the adventure maximize the range of readership communities by spanning many different kinds of experiences. For readers drawn to the mythic codes that underlie romances, resolutional delays in such typical conflicts as self/other, self/family, and self/community offer the chance to consider feminist

ideas under the protection of fiction's conventions. At the very least, the romance codes in Clan and Valley provide consolation, wish-fulfillment, and an acceptance of other women's subjecthood outside the text.

Clan and Valley's success generally derives from the appeal of Ayla as a romance heroine even though the novels disrupt some genre conventions at times. The novels secure the widest readership among women readers by offering an identification with Ayla as a beautiful, smart, and courageous female protagonist. In Clan, readers can assess Ayla's tenacity against patriarchal oppression through the mechanism of distancing so they are not unnecessarily engulfed by over-identification. In Valley, readers can ruminate upon Ayla's choices safely since the novel's sheer length permits sufficient time to envision the consequences of their own behavioral changes in the world outside the words.

For other readers, Clan and Valley's success derives from Ayla's position as an active woman hero. Although some readers will perceive Ayla as only a romance heroine who awaits her lover's rescue, others can admire her as a female hero who usurps the male archetypal quest, or as a feminist hero who carries out some 80s ideals of women's liberation, including the impetus to intervene in the making of culture. Many readers can esteem Valley's Ayla who demonstrates that

a woman can become a subject in her own realm by successfully living alone in a hostile environment, overcoming the conditioning of misogyny, and rejecting some forms of discrimination. Furthermore, readers can prompt themselves to practice new skills of agency, such as in managing tasks, following through on decisions, and in advocating for others, or else examine why circumstance prevent such actions.

For some readers then, Ayla serves as one of several "firsts" in the 80s popular novel scene. According to Clan and Valley, Ayla is historically the "first" woman in paleolithic times to stand up for her rights and to advance civilization.¹²¹ In addition to being the original feminist, Ayla is the first female hero whose physical competence in an archetypal quest captivates those 80s readers who usually prefer that romance fiction take place in more sophisticated settings, without the attendant dangers of wild animals and a hostile climate. Ayla is certainly the only Cro-Magnon female to star in four Ice Age novels, each of which retained a top-ten position on the 80s New York Times' Best Seller lists for dozens of months after its initial publication. The novels' popularity cannot even be reckoned by documented sales or by library circulation records because innumerable women lent their books to friends and family.¹²² In sharing the novels, some women readers may even have felt a sort initial collaboration to disrupt "The Great Silence"

about women's prominence in prehistory. If gauged by sheer volume alone, Clan and Valley succeed in promoting some feminist premises to mainstream readers.

On the other hand, other readers may have been so romanced by Clan and Valley's early-80s feminist intentions that they failed to see other problems. For one, though Clan and Valley intend to reach mainstream readers by exploiting the mythic codes that underlie popular literature, the strategy sacrifices people in the margins. Even when the romance-adventure codes are reversed and even if the romance satisfies many readers' more general needs for love and companionship, the codes retain the heterosexual bias to the diminishment of other options. Relying upon the primary expectations of heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family, the novels risk the marginalization of Others, especially gays and lesbians, at which point the novels are abandoned by some of these same readers.

Although Auel follows the general 80s trend to create new myths to support feminism, her mythmaking generally lapses into reinscribing the dominant ideology. Clan's mythmaking to counter male myth merely re-establishes masculinist assumptions. If derived from Dionysian chaos, an alternate woman's religion risks descending to the eros/logos binary which reduces women's intellect. By adapting the patterns of established myth, Clan inadvertently

naturalizes male deities, religious leadership, the two-parent heterosexual family, and genealogy--all to support male dominance inadvertently. The dramatization of the "Great Silence" suggests that when paleolithic women resorted to mysticism to counteract "male" logos, women lay vulnerable to patriarchal domination. Thus, Auel's good intentions to rewrite myth for women mostly succumb to myth's infection.

Likewise, under Valley's goddess mythotype, Auel's creation of Doni worship reduces women by its reliance upon some very unfortunate assumptions. When the Doni theory's universal explanation relies upon 70-80s women's-worship preferences and other conjectures, the novel simultaneously fosters other oppressions, such as those of race and class. Just as teleology falters in suggesting that prehistoric spiritual connections can suffice for a sophisticated 80s populace, it tends to codify the heterosexual matrix and male/female roles. Epistemology not only tends to support male power through history, but also neglects cultural influences to problematize both gender construction and gay and lesbian relationships. Further, the Doni's women-Nature connection shortchanges women when their empowerment derives from fear rather than from respect for action. More importantly, the connection risks a descent into the nature/culture split which can exclude women from participating in

civilization, relegate them to the poorer emotional half of an eros/logos dichotomy, and valorize men as logical thinkers and prescribe them as providers. When based on sexual pleasure, Doni worship tends to re-signify that women's primary method of gaining power is through sex; consequently, Doni worship marginalizes other worshiper, including children, the infirm, the handicapped, the very aged, gays and lesbians, and people who choose to practice chastity, fidelity to a dead spouse, or an alternate spirituality. Subsequently, Doni essentialism rigidifies gender roles to exclude both men and women from choices of occupations, lovers, roles, and behaviors. The final problem with Doni's biological base is that women are reduced to their procreative roles which constrict rather than expand women's options. In this way, while I was proven correct about the efficacy of genres' mythic codes, I was incorrect about the efficacy of creative mythmaking to support feminism.

When both novels are demystified through a more 90s feminist view, their ideologies and silences lead to questions about whose stakes are supported. After Ayla is decentered as heroine, female hero and feminist, her re-inscription suggests an 80s need for a female protagonist who serves up all petitions to all suppliants. Even as a feminist hero, Ayla can be criticized from a 90s view in that she stops short of realizing full agency by not return-

ing to free the Neanderthal women. When Jondalar is examined, his role as the love object is a simple reversal that merely reconfirms the general demand for a heterosexual romance. When the role of Shamud is scrutinized, the religious advisor's position appears unenviable since Valley relegates Others to the role of Shamud. Moreover, the novels fail to reconcile how gays and lesbians fit in a community when not part of the clergy. Therefore, in spite of the many feminist ideas developed in Clan and Valley, the novels incline towards some conservative elements, which may suggest Auel's own 80s biases. It appears that Auel generally advocates for women's sexual liberation, for equal opportunity in the work place, for women's authority in the family and in religion and against women's rape, but remains conservative on other issues. She avoids a clear stand on the abortion issue, downplays community approval of birth control, presumes a heterosexual lifestyle, and relegates gays and lesbians to a position where sexual activity is negated--all issues which may be attributed to either Auel's personal philosophy or to her adaptations of the romance-adventure format to reach her targeted readership communities.

Furthermore, Auel's biases offer possible explanations about why the series is incomplete. For one, during the lengthening hiatus, Auel may well have changed her philoso-

phy about Ayla's agency in choosing to free the Neanderthal women, which would necessitate a radical change from the projected plot of the next two novels. More important, Auel's increasing dependence on the romance format may explain her reluctance to resume the Earth Children series since by the end of the fourth novel, Ayla is enfolded in a marriage-like closure and Jondalar has taken over as the leader of the nuclear family that now travels to his home. Whereas Auel has pulled Ayla from her cave-like oppression in Clan, the author pushes her into physical dependence by her progressing pregnancy at the end of The Plains of Passage. Of course, the simpler explanation may be that Auel's re-negotiations with her publishing house have delayed publication of the fifth book: as of July 1998, rumor has it that Auel is still asking Crown for more money.¹²³

For those who have finished the series as it stands, Ayla's adventure into the fifth book promises continually delayed romance-adventure resolutions. In fact, to this day, some 90s faithful fans persevere in wanting to know whether Ayla settles down and finds happiness. As of July 1998, online fans continue to predict Ayla's further adventures¹²⁴ and plan for upcoming Earth's Children Summer Meetings in the State of Washington in 1998 and in France in 1999.¹²⁵ While Auel's publishing house persists in answering that the sequel will appear sometime soon, the delay so

frustrates fans that they have taken to writing Auel's fifth novel for her: "Ceelie" on the website is currently sharing her own creative interpretation of Ayla's further adventures,¹²⁶ so that other readers can chat about future events and speculate on the upcoming plot twists. It is perhaps indicative of the Auel's kind of readers that the "new" writers of the Earth Children saga engage in conversations which revert to the gender bias of the early 80s: the women "writers" worry about whether Ayla will lose Jondalar to another woman, whether Ayla will find acceptance in her mate's community, and whether Ayla's two children will ever meet. Conversely, when the young men on the internet do not await Jondalar's further adventures,¹²⁷ they tend to so admire Auel's researching skills that they submit more recent anthropological-archeological sources for her study.¹²⁸ The resolutional delay of the saga, it appears, continues to romance Cave Bear Cultists nowadays on the new medium of the World Wide Web, where the Chatbox and Message boards encompass their own private worlds.¹²⁹

In the long view, the question of Auel's feminism must ultimately rest upon deciding for which readership community the feminism is intended. If the readers espouse certain 80s radical or 90s feminists beliefs, then the novels conform to most conventional expectations and only seem to overturn others. If the reader is the 80s mainstream woman

who seeks a better understanding of women's liberation, then the novels have achieved the purpose of education.¹³⁰ Should some 80s women emulate Ayla's independent and enduring spirit, the novels' feminism succeeds in its larger goals of redefining women's roles and of reshaping of 80s culture.¹³¹ Considered in their cultural context then, Clan and Valley are feminist in their general destination to intervene in women's behalf. For the very reason that the first two novels are "popular," not "literary," does indeed influence thought about "women's issues" although some critics doubt otherwise (i.e. Mason 49). Subsequently, the readers' specific choice of material becomes just as much feminist praxis as it is a rehearsal: women readers exercise agency when they buy, read, discuss, and share texts with other women. In these ways, The Clan of the Cave Bear and The Valley of the Horses do succeed in traveling the path of feminism, but at a slower pace, with several detours and frequent stops, rather than with the kind of singular velocity of 80s feminist non-fiction.

In the late 70s she drafted the 450,000 word manuscript that was to become the Earth Children saga, Auel created Clan and Valley as a paradigm of visions and histories. As an en-vised prehistory, the two novels construct a fictional reality that connects to readers who prefer a world better than the present. Generally, readers reject cavemen

stereotypes to favor the notion of a nostalgic past. In this version of the paleolithic era, readers assume that early people led lives more connected to their work, closer to the natural environment, and free from the supervision of big government. Moreover, Clan and Valley play to readers' overall admiration for those independent humans who coped with physical dangers and hostile weather in an Ice Age which offered rudimentary weapons, tools, utensils,¹³² and shelter.

In a re-envisioning of prehistory, Clan and Valley allow Auel to explore the importance of women's roles in the paleolithic era. As revisionist historical fiction, both novels permit the woman writer to "re-evaluate women's history in her own perspective" by re-interpreting evidence (Moody 187). Though some sources were being questioned in academia at the time, Auel draws from similar concepts as does 70-80s feminism. Clan depicts the beginnings of women's discrimination, which appears as the original prejudice, against which Ayla functions as the first feminist. Valley illustrates how a paleolithic woman can survive alone and perform as a co-creator of culture. Through her use of the goddess theory, Auel offers the solutions to the kind of Patriarchal oppression found in Clan: women benefit from a liberal economy, equal opportunities in jobs, and shared participation in religion. Clearly, Auel's Ice Age becomes

a paradise where she can "experiment and create as well as seeding tenets of feminist consciousness in a fictional form, which has the accessibility of romance" (Moody 201). Under the safety of the historical romance, female readers who admire Ayla's new subjecthood and agency can seek new freedoms for themselves and for other women.

In en-visioning her own history, Auel responds to her 80s milieu where many readers wish to understand the politics of feminism under the safer form of fiction. As formula fiction in particular, Clan and Valley's imaginary world aligns with current interests and attitudes (Cawelti 35-36). For some 80s readers, Clan dramatizes the women's oppression to the point of enslavement so as to win readers' pity and elevates Ayla as the strong woman who challenges the patriarchy so as to win readers' admiration. For readers who wish to confirm that a beautiful woman can also be a feminist,¹³³ the novels stereotype Ayla as the slim, heterosexual blonde woman of a European heritage who wins adoration as well as sympathy since her embodiment of the 80s notion of beauty brings the Neanderthals' derision, but Jondalar's infatuation. Likewise, Valley plays to readers' interests and attitudes in affirming that a lone woman can enjoy success in a hostile world or pleasure in an egalitarian community. As 80s formula fiction, the novels also tend to reaffirm a culture's consensus about reality and morality

(Cawelti 35-36). In Clan's realm, 80s readers can find comfort that Ayla will be rewarded eventually for her high morals because she sacrifices her own need to the greater good of saving a child. In Valley's microcosm, Ayla's adoption of baby animals confirms that good women who value motherhood and family will be rewarded with a perfect lover. Additionally, Clan and Valley use the romance-adventure to resolve tensions of different cultural groups (Cawelti 35-36). Clan and Valley not only work to resolve tensions within the text, such as racial prejudice, but also negotiate some 80s disagreements about the advantages of feminism, especially sexual liberation, equal opportunity in jobs, equitable roles in the family, and shared participation in religion.

In part, Auel's re-envisioning of the 80s milieu through romance codes allows even some rather traditional readers to explore the forbidden in a new way (Cawelti 35-36). For readers who might wish to don the garb of feminist power, the security of a romance-adventure format and the distance of a doubly removed setting of time and place facilitate admiration for a female protagonist even if readers feel reluctant to concede to feminist ideas. Hence, more conservative readers can experience satisfaction in a text where women succeed through will and intelligence,

whether they aim for physical and intellectual freedom or for the power to decide a mate.

Furthermore, in her own historical circumstances, Auel evaluates her 80s economic realm successfully. Apprizing the intersections among the economics of the publishing industry and the purchasing power among wide groups of 80s readers, Auel's presentation of the more popular feminist ideas in a familiar form creates novels that secure a best-selling status. The novels' commercial popularity suggests that Auel judged accurately that readers also participate in the economic cycle of determining what gets published.¹³⁴ Auel's residual popularity into the 90s is even confirmed by Crown's continual claim that the fifth novel will be published soon.¹³⁵

In re-envisioning 80s history, Auel postulates some solutions to society's inequities. Therefore, readers can view Auel's texts and their divergences from the more conventional formulas as her ideology and as her response to 80s needs as she perceives them. Just as Clan encourages readers to resist women's oppression and Valley proposes solutions, the novels even illustrate that 80s women readers' preferences approved some changes in the romance genre. Whereas readers had spurned the rape scenario in romance novels during the prior decade, Clan confirms that

rape is violence and Valley proposes that a woman can remain single and enjoy sexual encounters outside of the marriage-closure. Hence, the two novels reveal that the author presumes that a society's liberal attitude enhances the status of women and that an egalitarian religion provides women with fairer treatment and more equal opportunities. Moreover, Auel urges that a new shift towards more liberal values in power relations would grant many, but not all women, a new subjecthood and agency. The author fancies that women be active, innovative, and sexually adventurous, yet heterosexuals and good mothers. In these ways, Clan and Valley assist in integrating new ideas to contribute to cultural continuity (Cawelti 35-36), but at the cost of codifying old ones. In revising the outlook for 80s readers, Auel seeks less to establish a paleolithic utopia for profeminists, than to build a text which responds to 80s romance readers' wishes for improved prospects in the foreseeable future.

Penultimately, this investigation of Clan and Valley offers new opportunities for research on the more general topics and upon the specifics of Auel's two subsequent novels. Investigators need to further explore such avenues as the use of myth to support feminism, the continuing evolution of the female hero, and the ongoing attraction of romance-adventures for different readership communities.

Likewise, the topic of prehistoric-based fiction presents further challenges: Investigators may find deeper resonances within the Ice Age's fictional setting or more telling differences among Auel's popular series and the two novels published in proximity with Clan, specifically William Golding's The Inheritors and Bjorn Kurten's Dance of the Tiger, novels which are more "literary," the one written by an author-turned-scientist and the other by a scientist-turned-author. To add to these new roads, when critical interpretations of reading popular fiction change, their approaches should be applied to texts which maintain reader interest. Similarly, since Auel's Earth Children series persists in gathering new readers while retaining devoted fans, the next two novels provide more material to continue assessing the reciprocal influences of readers upon the text and of the text upon readers. It may very well be that The Mammoth Hunters tests Ayla's relationship with Jondalar in ways as yet undiscerned and that The Plains of Passage examines new Cro-Magnon communities which reveal different socio-political configurations. Both investigations would access current thinking and examine other socio-economic alternatives. It would seem that the next two novels reflect differing trends of the late 80s and early 90s, trends which elicit new discussions among browsers and fans as well as among readers who simultaneously try to discern the

novels' potential for the advancement of feminism yet avoid the marginalization of Others.

Ultimately, in conforming to genre codes, the novels do sacrifice feminism's more controversial issues of sexual preference, gender construction, heterosexual bias, and the valorization of motherhood; nonetheless, we should not condemn Auel for sacrificing some feminist ideas to purvey the primary feminist objectives of addressing subordination and questioning gender roles to a wider audience.¹³⁶ Rather, we should learn from the detours to further improve women's lives both in and outside of the text. Similarly, if readers of my text discern my partialities, they can continue the investigation to enhance women's lives through re-reading the two novels as romance-adventure, as cultural biases reinterpreted by the author, or for other connections which illuminate the readers' perceptions. At the least, we must admire Auel's impulse in Clan and Valley to create a multi-valent paradigm of (re)envisioned (pre)history to reward those readers so intrigued by Ayla's liberation that they demanded more novels on the same themes throughout the 80s and continue to await the fifth novel far into the 90s decade. Only by examining what we read and think can we venture to understand our visions and our histories so as to revise our world for the betterment of ourselves and our posterity.

Notes

¹ Jean M. Auel, The Clan of the Cave Bear (New York: Crown Publications, 1980).

² Jean M. Auel, The Valley of the Horses (New York: Crown Publications, 1982).

³ In particular, the sales histories of Clan and its sequels record Auel's development as a "best-selling" author. For the initial publication of Clan (1980), Auel received a \$130,000 contract from Crown, and sales scored more than \$750,000 with 130,000 copies in circulation as early as October 6, 1980 (Hopkins 64). About the same time, publishing rights were sold to England, Germany, Italy, Holland, Japan, France, Spain, Latin America, Sweden, and Finland; moreover, the Literary Guild chose it as an alternate selection (Rovner 18). On September 26 of 1982, Auel's The Valley of the Horses (1982) was third on The New York Times Book Review "Best Sellers" list by the fourth week. The fourth and seemingly final novel in the series, The Plains of Passage, was launched in October of 1990 with a 1.25 million first printing, serialized by the Ladies' Home Journal, and was selected as the main selection by the Book of the Month Club before August 24 (Publishers Weekly). A week later on August 31, 1990, Publishers Weekly tallied the previous sales of Auel's Earth Children series: Clan (1980) sold 196,000 in hardcover and 5.5 million in Bantam paperbacks; Valley (1982) sold 375,600 hard covers and 4.78 million in paper; The Mammoth Hunters (1985) sold 1.45 million in hard and 3.45 in the mass market. Their popularity assured, by November 1991 all four novels had been audio recorded unabridged for "cultists" of the "Cave Bear" series (Cheuse Forbes 1). While only one of many women authors bringing women's issues into the mainstream, Auel is among

the first to succeed so commercially in purveying 70-80s goddess ideology.

⁴ Jean Auel, The Clan of the Cave Bear (New York: Crown Publications, 1980), hereafter shortened to Clan.

⁵ Although some writers prefer the "Neandertal" spelling for its closer approximation of the original pronunciation of the old German (Boyce Rensberger, "Time Tames the Beast; Image of Neanderthals Undergoes Rehabilitation," The Washington Post, 24 Feb. 1992: A3), I retain Auel's spelling for its familiarity to the popular reader.

⁶ Jean Auel, The Valley of the Horses (New York: Crown Publications, 1982), hereafter shortened to Valley.

⁷ Jean Auel, The Mammoth Hunters (New York: Crown, 1985).

⁸ Jean Auel, The Plains of Passage, New York, Crown Publications, 1990.

⁹ Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg quote Stuart Hall as saying cultural studies is "'not one thing . . . [and] never has been'" (11).

¹⁰ John Pfeiffer, The New York Times, August 31, 1980.

¹¹ Sandy Rovner, The Washington Post, September 27, 1980.

¹² See, for examples, Jean Crichton 44 and Elizabeth Mehren BR1.

¹³ In "About Feminisms," Warhol and Herndyl declare that "Feminist critics generally agree that the oppression of women is a fact of life, that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and on literary history, and that feminist literary criticism plays a worthwhile part in the struggle

to end oppression in the world outside of texts" (x).

¹⁴ See Bernard J. Gallagher's "Jean Auel's The Clan of the Cave Bear: Failed Feminist Pre-History" for example.

¹⁵ However, as I debate in chapter five, other readers decry that Ayla's lack of activism diminishes her role as female hero since she never intervenes for other women after attaining liberation in Valley and beyond.

¹⁶ Acknowledging the influence of Betty Friedan, Auel is reported to have noted to a Boston Globe reviewer that feminism in the Ice Age was in the eye of the beholder (Christy 16). Furthermore, Auel is quoted as saying "In hunting-gathering societies, the woman's contribution was always valued. Men didn't turn down contributions that made their lives better The idea that men's contribution were 'more' came from the anthropologists who later studied these ancient people" (Christy 16).

¹⁷ No less a professional than Brian Fagan, Professor of Anthropology at UC Santa Barbara, credits the new phenomenon of Ice Age fiction to Jean Auel though he also praises author Bjorn Kurten's work and his credentials as a professor of paleontology (132).

¹⁸ Probably aware of authorial criticism, Auel herself states "I wrote the story I wanted to read. I didn't write it for critics or for a mass audience" (Lyons 6).

¹⁹ In particular, Tompkins desires to understand "the context" and "specific problems" the works address; therefore, she does not critique the writer's "social and political attitudes," but tries to discover the political view for the modern audiences (Sensational Designs xiii).

²⁰ Felski maintains that the focus on woman as author limits discovery to a "self-referential" system which ignores the "social function of literature" so vital to "emancipatory" feminist politics (7).

²¹ While some critics advocate non-conventional forms in women's writings because traditional ones such as the Earth Children's romance plot are not subversive enough, others feel this is a leftover view from formalist insistence upon aesthetic values. Mary Eagleton, for instance, recaps the argument for and against "Women-Centered" novels, and though speaking more particularly of autobiographical fiction, her judgement may serve for other genres. Eagleton explains that, on the one hand, some critics malign conventional forms (such as a linear narrative in which a heroine finds sexual fulfillment) as a "confirmation of women's position as 'personal, ahistorical, sexual and non-political'"; but on the other hand, such an unfortunate position denies the validity of women's experiences by censuring the identification among writers, characters, and readers (90-91). More specifically, identification among the writer, her characters, and readers can allow some of Auel's readers to rehearse changes in their lives.

²² At least one critic disparages historical fantasizing since readers roam in a "magical world where the impossible occurs" (Cohn 7).

²³ For instance, Conkey complains that the Ice Age has been so colonized by aesthetics ("Contexts" 85) that it presents a "'mirage'" (Jameson 1984 qtd. in Conkey "Contexts" 85-86).

²⁴ Greene views prehistoric fiction as cultivating the superiority of Cro Magnons over their "hominid ancestors"

(21).

²⁵ Spitzer quotes Auel as saying that she hoped readers would realize that early people "our ancestors, were human beings as we are human beings, with the same kinds of feelings and emotions,' and that they faced the same challenges we face--prejudice, new inventions, and changing social, cultural and working conditions."

²⁶ Many feminist cultural critics disagree on the effects of the romance in terms of power relations. Some critics hold that the female protagonist gains power through her ability to determine her lover. Others believe that readers enjoy the romance for its heterosexual love story in a bourgeois society, never looking beyond. Readers never "question the primacy of" male-female relationships, charges Modleski, nor examine "the myth of male superiority or the institutions of marriage and the family" (113). Further, other critics assert that this ability to choose a lover merely substitutes for a woman's powerlessness in the real world since women are excluded from the market place (Cohn 8). Since the story ends in marriage, Cohn complains, the romance "reaffirms the status of the patriarchal family" (5) and of "bourgeois society" (3). Yet Cohn also concedes that the very wish for autonomy in a love choice is itself subversive because it helps redistribute "power relations" in marriage and in gender relations (3). Thus the wish for autonomy in a love choice becomes a "forbidden exercise in female self-realization and the will to power" (Cohn 5).

²⁷ Having gleaned only some ideas from Adelson, I quote more in full:

"Among the values of traditionalism are: merit, accomplishment, competition, and success; self-restraint, self-discipline, and the postponement of gratification; the

stability of the family; and a belief in certain moral universals. The modernist ethos scorns the pursuit of success; is egalitarian and redistributionist in emphasis; tolerates or encourages sensual gratification; values self-expression as against self restraint; accepts alternative or deviant forms of the family; and emphasizes ethical relativism." (126-127 in Rottenberg's Elements of Argument).

²⁸ For a firmer definition of "radical feminism," I cite the from Dana Shugar's Separatism and Women's Community: "'radical feminism' [includes] the beliefs that women are oppressed as a class in patriarchy, that patriarchy is a geographically and historically vast social system of sexism, and that only the complete destruction of this patriarchal system--not reformist measures or the destruction of a few of its aspects--will liberate women" (xi).

²⁹ John G. Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture, (Chicago, U. of Chicago P, 1976): See especially 41-42.

³⁰ As a result of such mainstream popularity, Auel's works spawned scholarly notice from the mid 80s decade into the early 90s, centering around feminist issues. One negative note occurred In 1988, when English honors student Michelle Mason compared Auel's The Mammoth Hunters to Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale and Wittig's Les Guerilleres to conclude that Auel's solutions to women's themes relegate it to "popular" books in contrast to "literary" ones and that the book was "too simple and traditional to have any bearing on the classroom or on the expansion of thought with regard to women's issues." "The Distinction between Literary and Best Selling Novels as Evidenced by The Mammoth Hunters, The Handmaid's Tale, and Les Guerillas," Honors' Degree (Utah: Dept. of English, U of Utah): 49. Apparently, the politics

of women's place in prehistory and goddess worship were not regarded highly in 1988.

³⁰ Feminist criticism followed into the 90s. In 1991, Bernard J. Gallagher published "Jean Auel's The Clan of the Cave Bear: Failed Feminist Pre-History in the Journal of Popular Literature 5: 1, which was rebutted in 1994 by Clyde Wilcox' "The Not-so-Failed Feminist of Jean Auel" in the Winter issue of Journal of Popular Culture 28.3 (63). Briefly, Wilcox viewed the sequence of novels as a better view of Auel's feminism. He points out that among the Cro-Magnon, gender politics reveals itself in the third novel The Mammoth Hunters where Ayla and Jondalar meet a tribe ruled by both a headman and a head woman, "who share equal power and responsibility" and where decisions are made by "consensus," with everyone speaking and women taking an active role (67). In The Plains of Passage the fourth novel, Wilcox observes that when Ayla and Jondalar visit the Samudoi, they encounter a community where "women take part in tribal decision-making, and men help with the cooking while women help with the hunting" (67). But Wilcox also deems Ayla and Jondalar's meeting with the S'Armunai in this novel as evidence for anti-feminism if read narrowly. Since this matriarchal community is dysfunctional (much akin to an Amazonian one), the incident might be interpreted as a warning against feminist power; conversely, seen in the larger context, the incident reinforces Auel's theme that men and women must cooperate to form a functional community (68). In sum, Wilcox grants that Auel depicts a "pre-history that is perhaps even more egalitarian than our present society" (69) and that her presupposed sexist stereotyping of the gorgeous blonde Ayla and so forth results from Auel's appeal to "several seemingly distinct audiences" (68), among them, the soap opera market (67).

Finally, because Auel adhered to her soap opera conventions of the blonde beauty and so on, her novels have been labeled as "racist" as well as sexist. While the topic is too lengthy to develop in full, a few comments may suffice. Not a few critics point to Auel's valorizing the blonde-and-blue-eyed protagonists in contrast to the dark Neanderthals. Palumbo, for instance, speculates that "the most disturbing aspect" of *Clan* is that the Neanderthals' have "contemporary qualities, which plays "havoc with Auel's presentation of race"; therefore, "the reader must be careful not to be lulled into an unquestioning acceptance of Auel's racial superiority" since it would reverse the "morality tale" (124-25). Others equate racism with speciesism (Wilcox 69). Still others are less kind. Timothy Taylor finds it ironic that Auel's background of the archeological site in Czechoslovakia was the same that Himmler found useful in his anti-Semitic propaganda (533). Even when Auel introduced an African as Ayla's lover in The Mammoth Hunters and an Asian in The Plains of Passage, Edward Staski saw the encounters as "too little, too late" (118). It should be noted, however, that as early as The Clan of the Cave Bear, Auel tried to depict racism as a societal problem to be solved: even the Neanderthals are racist in their discrimination against Ayla. Creb decides her Cro Magnon features are ugly (CB 56); Broud's real problem is that Ayla was not Clan (CB 153); the clans at the gathering view her as an "oddity" and as "abnormal" (369); and even Ayla is enculturated to perceive her different features as "ugly" (290). Likewise, the Cro Magnons in Valley are prejudiced against the Neanderthals, and Jondalar's biggest problem with Ayla is his racial intolerance of her Neanderthal upbringing, yet he eventually thinks of the Clan as people (441). In brief,

the racism issue may evolve from Auel's adherence to the formulae of romance fiction in which the heroes are superior to others. Or it may also be another form of male critics "poisoning the well" in order to cast doubt on the feminist issues. Taylor, for instance admits that Auel did her "archaeology homework," yet expresses unease at the "Nordic physical credentials" (533). Nonetheless, Auel was not creating a utopia, but an alternate world where prejudice of all sorts existed. She places her novels in the past so she "can write about problems like racism, sexism, [and] prejudice in such a way that people can deal with them as abstract concepts . . . without the emotional hang-ups of the present day" (Ringle 7).

³¹ In contrast to similar novels about early humans, published around the same time, specifically William Golding's The Inheritors (1977) and Bjorn Kurten's The Dance of the Tiger (1980), Auel focuses on the beginning of the female hero heritage and aims towards the mainstream audience by incorporating aspects of genre fiction.

³² In contrast to the bronze-age female hero within Moyra Caldecott's The Tall Stone and the Temple of the Sun (1977), Auel's female hero Ayla lives in the pre-agricultural stone age to postulate the earliest beginnings of female herohood. Why Caldecott's novels never attained the same popularity as Auel's is unclear although, in part, Auel's success may derive from the publishing house's marketing strategy. Crown advertised the novels heavily, and Auel the writer was promoted as a busy mother, who went on a quest to learn about prehistoric life so she could write her books. The numerous biographical pieces tend to let the woman reader believe that she too could publish if she just tried hard enough to balance home, work, and writing. As

Bridgwood points out, the marketing strategy involves the ideology of the text sold as "oral history" which positions the reader as a potential writer of her own family's saga (170-171). Further, Auel's initial success with prehistory encouraged other women writers. For example, in 1993, Mary Mackey was so inspired by Auel's success and by paleo-archeologist's Marija Gimbutas' explorations of the neolithic era, she wrote The Year the Horses Came as a romance (Madrigal 13). In 1995, author of Mother Earth, Father Sky and My Sister the Moon, and Brother Wind, Sue Harrison freely admits her encouragement by reading Auel's works, but approached the topic from a native American perspective (Leithauser 6). Thus, Auel's commercial success inspired women to write about prehistoric cultures other than the Indo-European one.

³³ That Jean Auel's books activate the popular imagination is asserted by Begley and Lief's article about the American Museum of Natural History's exhibition of prehistoric artifacts, November 1986.

³⁴ Although the term "matriarchy" and its adjectival form has been questioned repeatedly, it is used here broadly to encompass any society in which women are perceived to be more powerful than men; the relative term "matrifocal" implies a society in which women retain less political power, but one which is still woman-centered. In general, I concur with Sjo and Mor's use of "Matriarchy" which includes an "entirely different *orientation of consciousness* around which entirely different patterns of personal, social, cultural and spiritual relationships could . . . occur" (Notes, 2).

³⁵ The "patriarchy" has been defined variously, but Adrienne Rich's definition appears to encompass more as-

pects, more fully: She states that the "Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men--by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. It does not necessarily imply that no woman has power, or that all women in a given culture may not have certain powers" (57).

³⁶ Other critics differentiate between the Earth Mother concept and the Mother Goddess theory. In the 1990 Encyclopedia Britannica, for instance, the Mother Goddess is a universal construct which includes "any of a variety of feminine deities and maternal symbols of creativity, birth, fertility, sexual union, nurturing, and the cycle of growth Portrayed as highly sexual . . . the Mother Goddess' disappearance imitates the vegetative cycle and her maternity extends nourishing and protection to all human-kind."

On the other hand, the same Britannica offers that the Mother Goddess is only one aspect of the larger Earth Mother concept, who is a "cosmogonic figure, the eternally fruitful source of everything," separate from sexuality and manifested as "simply the mother from whom all things come . . . return . . . and are her." In her most archaic form, the Earth Mother "transcends all specificity and sexuality" to produce "everything, inexhaustibly, from herself." Only in later versions does she unite with sexuality, with agriculture, and with renewal.

³⁷ Alternately, at least one pro-Catholic, male theologian bases the origins of 70-80s goddess worship from "New Age" and the "Age of Aquarius" doctrines which began in the

20s, but which derived from the earlier Gnostic movement (Hauke 44-46).

³⁸ The interest in female power begins in the mid-eighteen hundreds with the study of matriarchal societies as a cultural phenomenon of prehistory. In Myth, Religion, and Mother Right (1861), J. J. Bachofen is one of the first to explore the concept of matriarchal power. However, his myth cycle theory advocates male superiority of the "higher" rule of the father-right because women are linked with sexual promiscuity. In particular, he believes that during an "unnatural intensification of women's power" in the Amazonian matriarchy, women revolted against sexual exploitation, but were defeated by the Mothers to establish monogamous marriage and a conjugal matriarchy (Bachofen qtd. in Rich 88). Presupposing that both the matriarchy and patriarchy are locked in a "dialectical struggle" (Rich 99), Bachofen reflected his own 1800s cultural attitude about women's moral superiority, especially as derived from classical myth and literature (Rich 99). Yet these various themes of the enmity between matriarchal and patriarchal societies, of the different matriarchal types (antagonist Amazonian societies and peaceful Demetrian ones), of women's supposed prerogative in the domestic realm, and of their moral (and later spiritual) superiority--are all issues which occur continually, especially in the development of archetypal criticism and biologically based socio-anthropology, which inspire later goddess theories.

³⁹ If in the feminine phase of the 20s and 30s some men investigated the sources of women's power in prehistory, in the later half of the twentieth century both men and women began to theorize about the power of women's mythic images

in literature. On the one hand, male critics of the 50s, 60s, and 70s contributed to the surge of interest in myth and literature as based on biology. Graves' The Greek Myths uses etymology and the symbols in ancient art to interpret the nature of the archetypal triple goddess as maid, mother, and crone, according to her sexual development. Erich Neumann's The Great Mother defines women's functions in ancient myth by constructing an Jungian archetype based upon the biological model of enclosing/withholding. Likewise, Mircea Eliade's The Sacred and the Profane develops the enclosure image, but as a sacred space archetype. A major influence, Northrup Frye's Anatomy of Criticism seeks a universal pattern of myth in literature as transhistorical and transcultural cyclical "desire" which explain the "displaced" myths of romance and realism, concepts still current in the analyses of women's romance fiction.

On the other hand, other critics of the 60-70s, especially linguists, began testing the universalism of myth. Levi Strauss's The Raw and the Cooked found no central myth and proposed that myth was the projection of the mythseeker. Following this thought, Derrida saw that myth had no center, hence no central subject. In Mythologies published in 1972, Roland Barthes perceived that myth was a political discourse that perpetuated the dominant ideology. These were just the beginnings of rejecting myth criticism as a felicitous approach.

⁴⁰ In part, American feminists' interest in prehistory coincided with anthropological and archeological discoveries of the late 70s. In addition to Margaret Mead's popularization of anthropological studies in general, several important events occurred. In 1977, a 40,000 year old baby mammoth was found in the USSR. In 1978, Bradley's The Pre-

historic Settlement of Britain was deemed a significant scholarly publication. In 1978, Mary Leaky confirmed that sets of footprints pushed bipedalism back to 3.5 million years, and published her findings in Olduvai Gorge in 1979. Such events certainly stimulated interest in the source of women's images, in their oppression in prehistory, and in women's new role as writer, researcher, and discoverer.

⁴¹ Women of the 60s and 70s were engaged in explorations of the feminine and of feminist ideology in myth, literature, and speculative biology to recapture their own power. See, for example, the 1965 re-publication of Helen Diner's Mothers and Amazons which divides gynocracies into matriarchies and amazon cultures and which argues for a creatrix origin and female symbols based upon prehistoric societies; another case in point is Elizabeth Gould Davis' The First Sex (1970) which offers biological evolution to substantiate the matriarchy as an alternate political system. Both books offered alternatives to Desmond Morris' The Naked Ape (1967) which explained a man's view of man's prehistoric evolution and which reduced woman to a child bearer and sex object.

Nonetheless, when Auel was researching her novels in the mid-70's and "borrowing from anthropology," she still found more material on men's roles in than women's. She says

You can find quite a bit about hunting, . . . but [not about] what a woman does when she's going through her monthly cycle or how a woman changed babies, or what sorts of things someone might do to make food taste good. Most of the anthrop.-poloists have been men, so they looked for things that they were most concerned with. (Ross 31)

Impetuses to second wave feminism, several milestones in feminist thought appeared in the 60s-70s. Newly awakened American women were reading Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, which underscored that liberation for women was liberating for men too. And in 1963, Betty Friedan published The Feminine Mystique which attacked women's domestic imprisonment, dependence, and passivity: it was this work in particular which initiated Jean Auel's interest in feminism (Christy 18).

⁴² Early on, Elizabeth Gould Davis exploits 70s scientific research to point out that women's biology is primary since all fetuses begin as female, from which males evolve (The First Sex 34-35).

⁴³ See, for instance, the 1975 publication of Goddess, Whores, Wives, and Slaves in which Sarah B. Pomeroy acknowledges the importance of finding female dominance in prehistoric culture since it showed that "what had happened in the past" could happen again and that women were not subordinate "by nature" (15).

⁴⁴ See Adrienne Rich's further elaboration in Of Woman Born, 86-89.

⁴⁵ To illustrate, Marie-Louise von Franz's assertion that the Great Mother archetype has split into the destructive witch/good mother roles (89-110) is followed by Erich Neumann who charts the womb's withholding/releasing motif to illustrate women's capacity for good and evil (18-54).

⁴⁶ For instance, Barbara Hill Rigney's Lilith's Daughters: Women and Religion in Contemporary Fiction works from the premise that "literary revision of traditional religion begins with a revision of archetypal figures" (7); consequently, Rigney explores modern feminist literature to view

the woman in several roles: woman as victim and martyr, aligned as a Christ figure; woman as a Mary figure evolving into Goddess images; and woman as an Eve figure who return to the Garden.

⁴⁷ Spring published various Jungian reinterpretations of the Greek gods and goddess' characteristics as new psychological models. See, for example, James Hillman's collection Facing the Gods).

⁴⁸ To illustrate, Margaret Atwood utilizes the mother-daughter motif from the Demeter/Kore heritage, and Kathleen Wall's The Callisto Myth examines the rape metaphor.

⁴⁹ For one, Sylvia Perera's 1980 Descent to the Goddess explored the Inanna's reascent from the underworld as a method of reintegrating feminine wholeness. In popular psychology, for instance, Jean Bolen's The Goddess in Every Woman aligned individual Greek goddesses to female psychological modes.

⁵⁰ The goddess debate continued in mainstream literature until the early 90s though the goddess debate began to diminish in academia. In 1990, Miriam Roberts Dexter published Whence the Goddess, which examines goddess imagery in Indo-European literature. In 1991, Baring and Cashford persevere in probing the Jungian dream in The Myth of the Goddess. Clarissa Pinkola Estes adapts myths to women's psychology in 1992, but with a turn towards North American models in Women Who Run With the Wolves. Alternately in the same year, In the Wake of the Goddess, Frymer-Kensky reasserts the conservative view when she reevaluates goddess worship as a mistaken remedy for misogyny because the monotheistic god was supposed to have been considered an ungendered being. Some of these 90s challenges may, in part,

explain Auel's discontinuance of the Earth's Children series after 1990. It may be not that Auel doubted feminism, but that she recognized her myth-making as forwarding masculinist assumptions.

⁵¹ See also, for example, Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, The Female Hero in American and British Literature (New York: Bowker, 1981).

⁵² See, for example, Ayla's liaison with Ranec in Auel's The Mammoth Hunters.

⁵³ In 1987, Riane Eisler's The Chalice and The Blade, for example, used anthropological research and archeological evidence to reject the "dominator" model of the patriarchy and to postulate a partnership future, engaging a new spirituality, politics, and economics. In 1987, Sjoo and More submitted that the Earth Mother's origin in Africa accounted for black goddesses.

⁵⁴ For instance, Graves' popular Triple Goddess theory of the 60-70s was revamped into a 1989 Jungian interpretation of classic Greco-Roman literature by Adam McLean in The Triple Goddess: An Exploration of the Archetypal Feminine.

⁵⁵ See Robert Graves' 1971 The Greek Myths, for example, and Marija Gimbutas' 1974 The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe--7000-3000 B.C., Myths, Legends and Cult Images.

⁵⁶ For Amazon cults, see also Robert Graves, The Greek Myths Vol. 2: 355. Popularization of Amazon cultures was initiated in the 60-70s perhaps by Helen Diner, who exalted the Thermodontines as today's "necessary creation of fiery asceticism, a heroic formation for the formation of passionate individuality of a new order" (111). Even today, evidence continues to document the paleoarcheological existence of "Warrior Women": see, for example, Jeannine Davis-Kim-

ball's article of the same title in Archeology, Jan/Feb, 1997: 44-48.

⁵⁷ Daly reasons that feminists should reject each of three themes: submitting to God's will encourages a passive masochism and nullifies an activist stance (Daly 30); depending upon a promised afterlife negates action and fosters temporal resignation (Daly 30-31); and believing God is the "judge of 'sin'" merely perpetuates the "rules and roles of the reigning system" (Daly 32).

⁵⁸ As does Robert Graves, Stone posits the infamous goddess' "overthrow" theory. Initially worshiped singly, at one point the goddess acquires a subordinate male companion as son or brother, who was also her lover and consort (19). The youth symbolizes the sacred sexual union with the Goddess and his annual death is accompanied with grief and lamentation (19). This union reflects the arrival of northern invaders, Indo-Europeans, who brought the worship of a young warrior god and/or a supreme father god with them. Eventually, the male dominates as the husband or as her murderer (20), or the goddesses becomes masculine (28) and the religious laws reflect the new patriarchy (28). The Indo-European male deity, often a storm or volcano god, was annexed to the goddess as husband or as a rebellious young man who destroyed the female deity, often symbolized as serpent or dragon, associated with darkness and evil (67).

Subsequently, the orders for destroying the goddess religion were built into religion's laws, that of the Indo-Europeans, the Hebrews, the Christians, and even the Mohammedans (196). In the Bible especially, Stone recognizes patriarchal misogyny. Women were no longer respected as wise advisors but were to be hated, and seductresses served to warn all Hebrew men to shun the women's temple (221)

since in male religions the sexual drive is to be viewed as the woman's fault (and proven by the pain of childbirth) (222).

⁵⁹ As does Robert Graves, Merlin Stone postulates that this union reflects the invasion of Indo-Europeans, who brought the worship of a young warrior god and/or a supreme father god, who eventually dominates as her husband or murderer (20) or who shifts into a masculinized goddess (28). Stone speculates that the northern invaders were probably nomadic hunting-fishing groups (62), who imparted their concept of light as good and dark as evil, establishing a racist attitude (67).

⁶⁰ Some readers may have even identified how feminist theology and women-centered liturgies of the 80s promoted changes within Christianity and Judaism (Carson 7). Unfortunately, another consequence of the goddess hypothesis is that conservative religious practitioners began to fear the trend. As Anne Carson contends, since the fear of change drives much conservative religious criticism, goddess religion is often vilified by its supposed association with witchcraft, Satanism, and even child sacrifices (6). Catholic theologian Mary Jo Weaver, for one, views feminists' rejections of patriarchal "hostility" as leading to searches in a "dangerous place" for "signs of divine love in . . . pagan traditions . . . tarot cards [and] . . . music," as well as in alternative religions (Weaver 67). In short, the sins against women under Judeo-Christianity become women's sacraments under Doni's nature-goddess worship.

⁶¹ Roughly sketched, Valley's "Doni" goddess theory runs as follows:

Based on the 70s beliefs that the link between conception and pregnancy was misunderstood in paleolithic times

(Diner), that the mother-child bond accounts as the most significant force in child rearing (Stone), that the earliest surviving religious icons represent the female (Stone), that the earliest myths reveal creatrix origins (Graves), that matrifocal communities predate patriarchal ones (Stone), and that the first anthropomorphic deity was Mother Earth, revered for her fertility as well as feared for her capricious power over the natural elements and over fate (Walker)--the Doni theory postulates that women held more autonomy and power in paleolithic times than do many women in the 70-80s.

Situating the Doni theory among Cro Magnons, Auel offers that women's power in paleolithic times sustained several particular advantages: women had sovereignty in matters of biological choices; authority in medicine and pharmacology; determination in the social-legal relationships of kinship, property ownership, marriage, and (matrilineal) inheritance; and had governance over individual and collective spiritual matters--therefore, Ice Age Cro-Magnon women attained agency and subjecthood not enjoyed by all 80s women.

Further, Auel's Doni theory postulates that some (Neanderthal) men suppressed the origins of female worship to supplant the matrifocal culture and to limit women's independence and authority. Such men used tradition to valorize gendered job roles and to rigidify occupational choices--in order to undermine women's competence and confidence so as to render them docile and subservient. These same men even succeeded in victimizing women by controlling their productive and reproductive potential.

In short, the Doni religion tries to empower women by reclaiming a female history, by reconstructing a female identity, and by examining the beginnings of social, politi-

cal, religious, and economic relationships to either promote women's position or remedy women's oppression. Valley's Cro-Magnon women act as subjects in their own lives, practice agency in decision-making, and share power in a community. Thus, Doni worship postulates a better world for women in a matrifocal and liberal realm under goddess worship than under patriarchal authoritarianism. Clearly, the Doni religion addresses many issues which concern various 80s readers.

⁶² To illustrate, one of Valley's readers may believe in the feminist idea of as equal pay for equal work, yet in the conservative conviction that men are natural leaders.

⁶³ Goddess spiritualists themselves comprise another category when their beliefs intersect conservatism or liberalism. According to Mary Jo Weaver, goddess spiritualists can be situated within a four-place spectrum: Along the conservative side, traditional women may be mystics who believe in contemplation for a spiritual life or even Revisionists who work within the religious institution to modify it (Weaver 17). Along the liberal side, Liberationists advance exile and escape images (Weaver 59) from biblical revelations of redemption and exodus (Weaver 20) while advocating for the poor, for third-world cultures, and for environmental issues (Weaver 20) in addition to Goddess Feminists who reject traditional religion, but not spirituality (Weaver 16).

⁶⁴ Auel develops the strategies of legitimating women's authority through anthro-archeological research, of drawing upon spiritual concepts from pre-biblical religious practices, and of reclaiming female symbols in mythmaking. So like Ayla the female hero in Clan and Valley, Auel becomes a female author-hero who intervenes in 80s culture.

⁶⁵ Other feminist theologians who prefer to remain within the Judeo-Christian heritage are Rosemary Reuther, Elisabeth Fiorenza, and Carol Ochs (Carson 8).

⁶⁶ Clearly, goddess theorizing has advanced spirited social phenomena. For example, feminists' Conkey and Tringham add to goddess worship's effects: "ecofeminism, neopaganism, religious feminism, healing groups, and an "explosive literature . . . ranging from text and trade books to magazine and newspaper articles" ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 206). Likewise, Mary Zeiss Stange concedes that the goddess' rebirth influences occurrences such "as the peace . . . movements, second-wave feminism, . . . New Age religion, and twelve-step recovery programs, the current fascination with all things Native American, and the Gaia hypothesis" (55). In particular, Gloria Feman Orenstein calls for women to advocate for a new Matristic Garden to prevent the Earth from dying (xxii). Other feminists reject a goddess "religion," but advocate for a "feminist spirituality," resulting from conjunctions of "Jungianism, ecology, Native American religions, political feminism, paganism, Buddhism, Theosophy," among other influences (Cynthia Eller 38-39). Even 90s archaeologists Conkey and Tringham recognize that archeology has been forced to reexamine material culture ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 205), to accept "ambiguity" in meanings and evidence, and to allow for alternative accounts" among the "interpreter, the interpretation, and the audiences" ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 231).

⁶⁷ For example, see Adam McLean (1989), Gloria Orenstein (1990), and D. J. Conway (1994).

⁶⁸ Claude Levi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology, Vol I. Trans. John and

Doreen Wightman. (New York: Harper Torchbooks/Harper & Row, 1969).

⁶⁹ Barbara Godard, "Feminism and/as Myth: Feminist Literary Theory between Frye and Barthes," 3-21.

⁷⁰ Conkey and Tringham, instead, propose that 90s archeology reread Venus figurines as that of emerging "gender" even different from ours, and they advocate for an open future that includes "far more than what the Goddess literature has created" ("Archeology and the Goddess" 231).

⁷¹ In brief, goddess theorizing can foreclose the goals of feminism as well as of archeology. As Conkey and Tringham note, Gimbutas's kind of goddess theorizing thwarts "the goals of feminist--and even of traditional--archaeology" by inhibiting the "how and why humans use material culture" and the "various symbolic and social complexities of past human lives" ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 228-29). Subsequently, Conkey and Tringham assert that the goddess movement "fails to challenge the present, to redefine the relation between the present and the past, or to force reconsiderations of the dominant epistemologies of inequality and difference" (Reiff 1992 in "Archaeology and the Goddess" 231).

⁷² As Conkey and Tringham determine, goddess theology derives from secondary sources of the fertility religions, which are a "euphemism for ritual sex, [and] for ritual persecution" since women sold their bodies for a deity's treasury ("Archaeology and the Goddess" 207-08).

⁷³ Shinn distinguishes between ancient and modern myths as codified by culture: "Embellished by storytellers, the oral myth reflects its contemporaneous culture, but once written, myth embodies that society to become a cultural

myth (4). Further, Shinn rejects Darko Suvin's "private pseudomyth" theory of transplanted ideology to prefer instead a cultural-archetypal approach.

⁷⁴ Ms reached some 400,000 readers in the 1980s (Harri-man 338).

⁷⁵ As Adelson specifies, conservative values includes the valorization of the individual, a concern with status, and a belief in certain absolute moral values (qtd. in Rottenberg 126-7).

⁷⁶ In contrast to Gallagher's view that Broud's lack of redeeming qualities and of emotional resources condemn him as a "straw man" who is an unworthy opponent ("Failed Feminist Prehistory" 16-17), I would argue rather that the flat characterization facilitates readers' recognition of Broud as emblematic of misogyny.

⁷⁷ Since Auel was writing Clan of the Cave Bear in the late 70s and rewriting in the early 80s, her investigation of male leadership also suggests the wider national and international political scene. In the secular realm, leadership style comes to the fore with Reagan appearing in the persona of Brun, the aged ruler who leads by inheriting his position (from a political party) and who is blinded by custom in his conservative agenda. In some ways, the Clan replicates Reagan's ideal in America's return to rugged individualism, local rule, and economic self-sufficiency. Similarly, Brun can be equated to capitalism's leaders: Brun's qualities suggest Lee Iacocca's forceful endurance and "fairness" as well as Donald Trump's self-control--both men the subjects of popular biographies. In contrast to Brun the good Neanderthal leader is Broud the conceited, swaggering bully who may be patterned after the world's

"villains," especially Saddam Hussein and Muammar Kaddafi-- who rule by terrorism. In the spiritual realm, the benevolent patriarch Creb contrasts to the Ayatollah Khomeini whose religious fascism provoked internal warfare and promoted a religious jihad. Accordingly, Auel replicates the 80s male political power scene, but omits female leaders, in spite of the fact that the names of international leaders like Golda Meier, Margaret Thatcher, and Indira Gandhi were well-known. Likewise in the Clan, there are no female leaders. Although Ayla rebels against male domination and her adoptive mother Iza is a rare woman with some independent status because of her medical skill, both are excluded from the power of leadership because of their gender. Thus, Auel suggests by omission of female leaders that a patriarchy promotes male leaders regardless of their qualities, but excludes females with leadership potential.

⁷⁸ As a common issue for women, rape is evidenced by the widespread reading of such books as Susan Brownmiller's Against Our Will; In fact, the key phrase "against her will" appears in the very explication of Ayla's rape (303).

⁷⁹ In the sacred realm too, the patriarchy is undermined by the questioning of religious leadership. Creb the Mog-ur is guaranteed respect by the circumstance of male tradition. The adults perceive him with awe, fear and respect (Clan 32), though his individual qualities are also admirable. The children behold him as a punitive father, especially the girls (Clan 32) although he is indulgent of Ayla's behavior. Hence, male leadership is not only codified by tradition, good secular leaders are perceived as patriarchs and good religious leaders as benevolent, yet punitive father images. Thus, Clan leaders resemble those father images in a conservative community, whether of the

50s or 80s, whose authority based on male prerogative may be questioned.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Joanna Russ's "What Can a Heroine Do? Or, Why Women Can't Write" 1974 rpt. in Courage and Tools: the Florence Howe Award for Feminist Scholarship, 1974-1989. Ed. Joanne Glasgow and Angela Ingram, (New York, MLA, 1990): 28-39.

⁸¹ In fact, as Mary Zeiss Stange points out, Ayla's role as an Artemis figure also avoids the typical romanticization of the goddess-as-life-force stereotype because Ayla understands the goddess's Slayer-Destroyer aspect (64) in the next novel The Valley of the Horses.

⁸² See, for example, Dana Shugar, Separatism and Women's Community. (Lincoln, U of Nebraska P, 1995).

⁸³ "The Structural Study of Myth" 821.

⁸⁴ See "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences" for Derrida's discussion of Levi-Strauss' concept that oppositions in myth, especially the classic nature/culture binary, dissolve in a "confusion of opposites" and for Derrida's amplification that as an historic allusion, myth lacks any central position (87-93).

⁸⁵ See, for example, Jesse Weston's interpretation of "Merlin" in King Arthur and His Knights, (David Nutt, London, 1899) 17.

⁸⁶ In Clan, each Neanderthal holds a separate animal totem for his or her protector as if they were male protective spirits, like prophets, apostles, or saints. True to form, the Clan males adopt the larger male totems and females the smaller male totems (Valley 454). Unlike Catholicism which historically elevates Mary as a (subordinate)

female figure to placate believers drifting back into pagan worship, the Clan suppresses the worship of female spirits. In further accord with male chauvinism, the Neanderthals' central tribal totem is the pontifical, archaic cave bear. Unlike the Clan, Valley's Cro Magnons ascribe to a monotheistic deity and a human one, a female in the persona of the Earth Mother. Moreover, the Cro Magnons have no hierarchy of spiritual worship since all worship the Earth Mother only. The contrast suggests that the Neanderthals are a primitive and a politically conservative (if not repressive and regressive) community while the Cro Magnon religion is more advanced.

⁸⁷ See, for instance, Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor, The Great Cosmic Mother (San Francisco: Harper, 1987) 75.

⁸⁸ Some critics object to genre study because it tends to slate all works of a similar nature into specific genre in spite of a text's ideological bent or its often-conflicting readerships (Radford 10).

⁸⁹ For example, because comics and cartoon strips such as Alley TOP and One Million B. C. reduced early humans to dumb and ineffectual beings, Auel was enjoined to defend her work, insisting that her people "were not the Flintstones . . . Their lives were incredibly rich" (Hopkins 65).

⁹⁰ Auel cut against the second kind of stereotyping of early women in "realistic" settings found in popular, older B films, such as One Million Years B. C. and the camp classic Prehistoric Women. As one critic explains, Auel reaches "beyond the cliché of leopard-skin-covered, club-wielding grunters and [presents] a panorama of human culture in its infancy [allowing us to] savor what we might have been" (Isaacs 14). To combat the popular stereotypes, Auel

picks up the feminist banner of archeological and paleo-anthropological researchers to deliver a romance hero in prehistory that challenges modern disdain of Ice Age people in general and the secondary status of those women in particular.

⁹¹ For example, while allowing that Clan criticizes a culture's definition of beauty as "something universal, objective, and external" and beauty foregrounds Ayla to emphasize her correct values, Bernard Gallagher castigates Ayla's descriptions as a sexist stereotyping that undercuts feminism by objectifying a "culture's values" (15-16); however, his argument risks elitism in presuming that readers fail to discern the stereotyping.

⁹² Although originally promoted as historical fiction, currently Auel's novels are relegated to the fantasy sections in science fiction used-bookstores under the category of feminist revisionist history, and so have become separated from readers of mainstream romance fiction.

⁹³ Cohn perceives that popular romances must retain an appearance of "verisimilitude" so that readers accept the fictional world as "real," identify with the "ordinary circumstances even before the heroine meets the hero, and expect a heroine's potential for power relations within the "mimetic" heterosexual romance (9).

⁹⁴ A particular element that allows for Auel's novels to be packaged as fantasy, besides the historical revisionism and idealistic setting, is the creation of the Neanderthal's psychical experiences. Unfortunately, since this fictionalizing is often interpreted as "magic," it helped slot Auel's works into juvenile fiction category. For instance, when Patty Campbell reviewed Clan, she likened it

to the kind of epic novel that young adults would enjoy, akin to Dune (214), though another critic found the explicit descriptions of sex problematic (Long 22). It appears that the 80s trend was to cast women-authored, women-centered works of historical fiction into the science fiction or juvenile categories, which precluded many novels from reaching the mainstream audience. But Auel's Neanderthals' psychic experiences are no more fantastical than those of other characters in "realistic" settings.

⁹⁵ While Bernard J. Gallagher criticizes Auel's Clan as "Failed Feminist Pre-History," Clyde Wilcox contends that the novels' sequence presents a better view: his defense includes such occurrences as the egalitarian sharing of "power and responsibility," consensual decisions, and shared speakership during one tribe's gatherings (67) in The Mammoth Hunters as well as communal decisions and domestic role-reversals among the Samudoi in The Plains of Passage; moreover, Wilcox reinterprets the dysfunctional matriarchal community (akin to an Amazonian one) of the S'Armunai as an incident that reforges Auel's theme that men and women must cooperate to form a functional community (67-9).

In short, Wilcox grants that Auel depicts a "prehistory that is perhaps even more egalitarian than our present society" (69) and that her presupposed sexist stereotyping of the gorgeous blonde Ayla results from Auel's appeal to "distinct audiences" (68), among them, the soap opera market (67).

⁹⁶ The definition of a family may congeal into the capitalistic model which legitimates heterosexuality to guarantee a work force, such as in Clan, or may be extended into non-blood kinship relationships, such as within the several matrifocal communities touched upon in Valley.

Perhaps the inexact definition of a "family" thwarts both Ayla's goal and Auel's inability to complete the Earth Children saga.

⁹⁷ Because Auel adhered to the soap opera convention of blonde beauty, the novels have been labeled as "racist" by some. While the topic is rather lengthy to fully develop, a few comments may suffice. Several critics decry the elevating of blonde-and-blue-eyed protagonists in contrast to the dark Neanderthals. Kathryn Palumbo, for instance, warns readers against interpreting Clan's "most disturbing aspect" of the Neanderthals' contemporary qualities as racist which would reverse the "morality tale" ("Psyche Revisited" 124-5). Wilcox equates racism with "speciesism" ("The Not-so-Failed Feminism of Jean Auel" 69). Still others are less kind. Timothy Taylor finds irony in Auel's use of the same archeological site in Czechoslovakia that Himmler employed in his anti-Semitic propaganda (Rev. of Plains 533). Even when Auel introduces an African as Ayla's lover in The Mammoth Hunters and an Asian in The Plains of Passage, Edward Staski view the encounters as "too little, too late" (Rev. of Plains 118). It should be reaffirmed, however, that as early as Clan, Auel depicted racism as a societal problem to be solved: even the Neanderthals discriminate against Ayla's race. Creb decides her Cro-Magnon features are ugly (Clan 56); Broud's real problem is that Ayla is not Clan (Clan 153); and even Ayla is enculturated to accept her features as "ugly" (290). Worse yet, Valley's Cro Magnons are so prejudiced against the Neanderthals that they taunt and chase them, and even rape the women (34-5). In brief, Auel's adherence to formula conventions in which the heroes are superior to others allows for misinterpretation. Alternately, the charge of racism may be a diversionary tactic in

which male critics "poison the well" to cast doubt on feminist issues. Taylor, for instance, allows that Auel did her "archaeology homework," yet expresses unease at the "Nordic physical credentials" (533). Nonetheless, Auel was not creating a utopia, but an alternate world where all sorts of prejudice existed. As she asserts to Ken Ringle, she places her novels in the past so she can "write about problems like racism, sexism, [and] prejudice in such a way that people can deal with them as abstract concepts . . . without the emotional hang-ups of the present day" ("Jean M. Auel: The Smashing Saga of the 'Cave' Woman" 7).

⁹⁸ As the ancillary "hero" within a woman's romance plot, Jondalar is also every woman's fantasy love object. Jondalar is the strong, but "sensitive" man of the eighties, idealized by women romance readers. As Cawelti postulates, since a "romance depends on a special . . . identification between the reader and protagonist" (Radford 11), in identifying with Ayla, women readers would find Jondalar the epitome of the unattainable, but desirable hero. For instance, he is an "irresistible challenge" that no woman could win (Valley 33) and even practiced such self control over his sexual performance that it became "an art" (Valley 361). Moreover, after Jondalar and Ayla meet, his thoughts typically "center on the heroine and their relationship" (Mussell 11). Hence, the delay in Ayla's sexual gratification throughout most of Valley works as extended foreplay for many readers, but afterwards readers respond to Jondalar's dedication to Ayla as the idealized lover who is faithful his partner.

⁹⁹ Jondalar's character is designed to appeal to men to help Auel purvey her feminist persuasion. For one thing, Jondalar is also deemed a hero as indicated by the Shamud's

prophecy that he was born to the destiny of testing during his quest (Valley 203). More obviously, Auel's various descriptions aim towards men's sexual fantasies. While some women readers may have been put off by the frequent descriptions of Jondalar's "throbbing member" and his wish to find a woman who could take all of him, such set-pieces were important for Auel to hold male readership. In reply to faults in her dialogue, Auel explains that Jondalar is "'the early equivalent of today's technical genius, the engineer, the computer nut" (Ross, Contemporary Authors 30). What better way to approve of a goddess theology than to have a macho male believe in it, practice it, and introduce it to the female protagonist and to women readers alike.

¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Jondalar's romance character is what Modleski locates as women's wish for "transparency" or "for open, honest, direct, and unambivalent relationship" (112); and yet it is Jondalar who expresses this desire, when says to Ayla, "You are everything I ever wanted, everything I ever dreamed of in a woman, and more . . . You are totally honest, open, you hide nothing" (Valley 501). Thus, Jondalar becomes every woman's fantasy love object, a sensitive, unattainable, open, and experienced lover who meets an extremely desirable, beautiful, and independent young woman (much as the reader would like to perceive herself to be). Once hooked by identifying with Ayla, the female reader willingly accepts Jondalar's caresses and his indoctrination of Ayla into his goddess theology. Here, Auel reaches more women readers by playing to their emotions rather than by appealing to their intellect. Auel's propagandizing of the goddess theory gains easier acceptance among women readers because it rewards them sexually for their sublimated, valiant independence.

¹⁰¹ Additionally, Ayla's story subverts the Bildungsroman because its linear progression is not distanced through the retelling of a historical development from an adult reminiscence. Cast as a young orphan in Clan, Ayla cultivates readers' sympathy through their adult superiority. However, while the novel's use of an omniscient narrator deprives readers of the traditional irony of a backward view, the novel promotes a situational irony when readers discern that the American 80s has not progressed much beyond the narrative's Ice Age misogyny and prejudice.

¹⁰² As chapter four illustrates, Valley's Ayla corresponds with several 80s feminist works critical of Judeo-Christianity. Tracing the conjectures of Merlin Stone (xxv), Valley's Ayla performs as a pre-Judeo-Christian female hero-inventor (121, 233, 325) who constructs civilization. Readers acquainted with Naomi Goldenberg's Wiccan nature goddess (61-62) find Ayla bypasses male-hierarchalized religion when she connects directly to the divine and performs baptisms (Valley 111, 424), a religious practice that also avoids the problem of Doni essentialism. Readers familiar with Mary Daly's criticism of religion's psychological coercion of women into roles of the supplicating virgin or promiscuous temptress greet Valley's Ayla as a reworked Eve figure who challenges 80s biblical conventions and those of the legendary hero.

¹⁰³ For some readers, the mythic-Jungian connections in Clan evolve into Ayla's romance reward in Valley. Clearly, archetypalism underwrites the romance element of Valley when Ayla's "masculine" forthrightness is seen as balancing Jondalar's "feminine" sensitivity akin to her animus finding blissful union with his anima, a union of reward only after

Ayla attains subjecthood and agency.

¹⁰⁴ While Campbell does give a nod to female heroes at the end of his discussion (383), for the most part he investigates the male hero in such far-flung stories as Gilgamesh, Krishna, and Buddha; Virachocha, Quetzacoatl, and Raven; Osiris, Odin, and Oisin; Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in addition to those from other non-European cultures in his The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Index 393-416).

¹⁰⁵ After critics discarded some Jungian interpretations for their essentialist bias (Christ, "Spiritual Quest" 5) and their nullification of gendered power relations (Davis, "Some Comments on Jung" 66), other 80s feminists allowed for such mythic tales or mythotypes which uncover women's repression, reformulate new patterns of power, and explore culture's marginalization of women. For example, for women readers who accept popular psychological models such as proposed in Jean Bolen's The Goddess in Every Woman, Kathleen Wall examines the rape metaphor according to The Callisto Myth, and Lee Edwards' mythotype of Psyche as Hero is employed by Kathryn E. Palumbo who examines Ayla's growth as a woman who remakes herself ("Psyche Revisited").

For 80s readers who redress the goddesses of the classical Greek-Roman pantheon as too paternalized, Valley offers Ayla as a non-Greco-Roman model outside of the canon, such as an Inana figure whose reascent from the underworld facilitates female wholeness (Perera's Descent to the Goddess) and as transgressor of Judeo-Christianity's stereotypes of the female Christian images beyond Daly, such as Barbara Rigney's Lilith's Daughters (1982) or that explore misogyny's sources in Genesis (Elaine Pagels, Adam, Eve, and the Serpent 1988). Altogether, Valley's encapsulation of the re-envisioned Eve and Eden imagery resounds with readers

of Clan and Valley who could advocate for Ayla's balance of male/female qualities in wanting to hunt and to nurture, or who could respect her mythotype as the proto-feminist Artemis (Clan 271), or who might feel a new pride in their link to the goddesses, a connection which appeared to enhance women's subjecthood and power even into the 90s. During the progression of the goddess debate, even in the early 90s, critics first charged that European models marginalized others, but when goddess theorists employed non-European sources, critics decried this as colonizing others; subsequently, goddess theorists began looking at heroism as a social construction. Other readers might well applaud the addition of the independent Eve cultural mythotype to supplant biblical misogyny and the Eden revisionism which promised women a new world where women behaved more assertively.

¹⁰⁶ Sue Vaughn, "The Female Hero" 85.

¹⁰⁷ Anne Carson's section on "Fiction and Fantasy Literature" lists 90 representative works of fantasy and historical fiction that add to feminism (Goddesses & Wise Women (Freedom, Ca: The Crossing Press, 1992) 178-190.

¹⁰⁸ Maxine Hong Kingston, "White Tigers" section of The Woman Warrior (New York: Random/Vintage, 1976) 17-54.

¹⁰⁹ In part, Auel's depiction of Ayla as the female hero responds to impetuses in 80s feminism. The female hero has been evolving in American culture ever since writers and critics of the 70s proposed that she take a form different from that of the male hero. In the early 70s, Joanna Russ noted that since most literary plots are male, science fiction instead offers three alternative patterns for women protagonists: the hero and her relationship to a new world,

the hero as a questor to restore society, and the hero who locates a problem in society and changes it (37). Even though Clan and Valley are less science fiction than a romance-fantasy, Ayla's narrative follows the first of the three plots when she enters her new-world valley, and when Ayla leaves, she begins the second typical plot, engaging the quest to convert Cro-Magnon prejudice into acceptance for the Neanderthals.

¹¹⁰ When Ayla follows the first half of Campbell's "call to adventure" aimed at establishing the "ego" (Charlotte Spivack 9), she performs collectively for many readers; that is, her growth is a metaphor for the enlightenment of several communities of readers who develop a new consciousness about women's roles.

¹¹¹ Additional connections to Milton's Paradise Lost can be noted: To further subvert Judeo-Christianity for some readers, Valley offers a serpent image in this revised Paradise. However, the metaphorical serpent does not offer a temptation to be god-like as in Milton, but rather the temptation to consider one's self superior, in an all-too-human racial prejudice. Just as false pride motivates Eve to eat of the fruit, false pride becomes the evil in Jondalar's character, which corrupts Ayla's Paradise. When Jondalar discovers that Ayla had been living with the Clan, he is so revolted that he not only calls the Neanderthals "animals," but also castigates her "mixed spirit" child (Valley 394). Subsequently, their relationship is infected by his prejudice until he learns over time that the Clan's customs--such as burying the dead and the worship of spirits (454)--determine them as human. Thus, Valley tenders Jondalar's racial (or "species") prejudice as the false pride or "sin" which contaminates Eden. As such, Jondalar-Adam's

perverted "knowledge" of racial superiority brings the corruption of hate into Paradise as well as to the entire world, whether paleolithic or present. If "love" is the goddess' greatest gift (Valley 192), hate is the greatest sin. If Eve was blamed for introducing human evil into the patriarchal world, Adam is the serpent at fault in Valley's feminist Garden of Eden.

Consequently, Valley reminds readers that even the most liberal-seeming culture can harbor prejudice. As Spivack notes, Auel's theme of prejudice links to an earlier mythotype in Shelley's Frankenstein where society so alienates an Other, it creates a monster (Merlin's Daughters 47-48). Although unsaid, Spivack's correlation the Garden of Eden imagery in Valley and in Frankenstein finds another correspondence in that the serpent is male too.

¹¹² Annis Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (Indiana University Press 1981).

¹¹³ One thinks of Adrienne Rich's Of Mother Born, Nancy Friday's popular My Mother Myself, and even Joyce Carol Oates' recurrent mother-daughter imagery in fiction, notably in the popular Surfacing (1972).

¹¹⁴ In The Plains of Passage, Ayla's pregnancy with Jondalar's child forestalls her trek to Jondalar's home community and her own quest for her family.

¹¹⁵ Even if Clan is read singly, the fictionalized Neanderthals' unique brain-physiology accounts for their different mode of thought: Racism is averted because in spite of the Neanderthal's sex-specific memories, some remain "caring, decent individuals" regardless of their limited cognition (Wilcox 65-65) since they do indeed rescue, adopt, and nurture Ayla.

¹¹⁶ For instance, as taken from The New York Times Best Seller List at random, women readers were accustomed to women author's family sagas set in more contemporary times. On August 31, 1980 about the time when Clan was launched, paperback readers favored Leslie Arden's Love and Honor, a saga of Russian immigrants to America (#1); A Woman of Substance by Barbara Taylor Bradford, about a self-made woman tycoon in the twentieth century (#4); Class Reunion by Rona Jaffe (#8); and Chance the Winds of Fortune an 18th century romance by Laura McBain (#9); the most remote setting occurred within Mary Stewart's Arthurian The Last Enchantment (#12).

Similarly, during its year of publication when Valley hit #3 on the New York Times Book Review list of September 26, 1982, women readers of woman authors selected the saga of Lace in which Shirley Cameron explored "international glitter" (#6); the novel Crossings about WWII romances by Danielle Steele (#10); and a Belva Plain romance set in Casablanca (#14).

¹¹⁷ For example, during the Proceedings of The 1998 Annual Conference of the Popular Culture Association and the American Cultural Association, quite a few panels were devoted in whole or part to gender roles in Star Trek and in Xena: The Warrior Princess. The catalogue shows four to ST, #70 (41), #122 (60), #292 (118), #412 (157) and four to Xena, 338 (31), #166 (74), #201 (88), #410 (156).

¹¹⁸ The qualities for a female fantasy hero appear to center around two contemporary questions. The first is whether the female hero differs from the male hero and whether these differences risk a descent into essentialism. The second asks: If differences are socially constructed, how does culture mold that hero? The implication is that

when culture continues to define men and women differently, male and female heroes will be differentiated. However, when the time arrives that herohood is socially instituted by non-sexist standards, then gender will not make a difference.

¹¹⁹ If moving towards separateness or connectedness is one axis for the hero as Heller asserts, then another axis must appear. Since by its very nature, herohood encompasses activity, another axis includes the individual trait of action vrs. inaction, and the fantasy hero slides along both binaries. Additionally, a hero's doing or feeling is shaped by the juxtaposition to others and by the proximity to society; consequently, emotion does not oppose the quality of action. Rather a hero has (at least) the distinct qualities of separation and connectedness, action and inaction, and suppressed or expressed emotion. In this way, hero's doing and feeling are not binary oppositions.

¹²⁰ See "Lindsay Van Gelder on Jean Auel," Ms., 1986.

¹²¹ Apparently, Clan arrived on the scene too late to be included in Marc Angenot and Nadia Khouri's "An International Bibliography of Prehistoric Fiction" published in Science Fiction Studies in 1981, but was added by Gordon B. Chamberlain's "Addenda" to the list in the same publication in 1982 under the category of PR (Prehistoric Romance). If authors' first names are any indication of gender, Jean Auel appears as one of only a few of the women writers to have engaged this topic.

¹²² If I should serve as an example, I loaned my copies of Clan and Valley to at least six people, five women and one man.

¹²³ "Jean Auel...The Rumor Mill." [<http://www10.geocities.com/Athens/6239/Book5.htm>]: 26 Aug. 97; Available online, Alta Vista, 9 Nov. 97. As of July 12, 1998, "Ceelie" consoles internet fans that even if Auel's dispute with Crown continues to delay the fifth novel, a different publishing house may offer it sooner, online, Yahoo, [<http://www.geocities.com>]; accessed through Yahoo.

¹²⁴ Jean Auel, [<http://www.aol:/15863:126/mB:92816>]: online 19 Sept. 1997.

¹²⁵ See the following website, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/6293/events>, online, accessed 20 July, 1998.

¹²⁶ Jean Auel, [<http://www.aol:/12719:2-2Earths%20Children>]: online, 20 Oct. 1997. In May 1998, the speculative chapters are being translated into Dutch on the AOL Mirror as noted on [<http://geocities.com/Athens/6295/ael.num>].

¹²⁷ For instance, "Wil" who "hangs out" on the Earth's Children Live Chat board continues to await Jondalar's new adventures, online, Yahoo, [<http://www.earthchildren.com/ecchat.htm>], July 11, 1998.

¹²⁸ Jean Auel, [<http://www.aol:/12719:2-2Earths5Children>], online, 19 Oct. 1997.

¹²⁹ After I questioned two fans about Auel's "messages" to readers, each a male and female became hostile to my presumptions both in interpreting Auel's purpose and in assessing her feminism; they appeared to dislike any intrusion into Auel's fictional reality: online, Yahoo, [<http://www.earthchildren.com/ecchat.>], July 11, 1998.

¹³⁰ Auel insists that her series is not a "feminist polemic," but she confesses that "You have to be a feminist if you want to function at all today" and that Ayla is the

heroine she never had (Schwartz 195).

¹³¹ But even in the 90s, some fans reject Auel's seemingly "overt" feminist purposes to nullify women's subordination and to question rigid gender roles: one female fan admitted to becoming avidly interested in the series during the 80s after reading her first Auel book, but saw no correlation between her confessed addiction and her self-identified 80s socio-economic circumstances as a recently divorced mother who had just gotten her first job, online, Yahoo, [<http://www.earthchildren.com/ecchat>], July 11, 1998.

¹³² For instance, one popular Earth's Children website offers instructions for cooking Ayla's recipes in a leather "pot," online, Yahoo, [<http://www.wynja.com/arch/cooking.-html>], 25 Aug. 1998.

¹³³ Elizabeth Venant of The Los Angeles Times describes Ayla as "half feminist, half Hollywood pin up," "A Matriarch Promotes her Literary Clan," [Interview with Jean Auel], (The Los Angeles Times, Sunday, Home Edition 28 Oct. 1990): E1.

¹³⁴ Elizabeth Venant of The Los Angeles Times ascertains all four novels have sold more than five million each as of 1990, (E1); Gayle Feldman of Publishers Weekly cites further statistics, "Auel signs major three-book deal with Crown, Bantam" (Publishers Weekly 22 Dec. 1989): 34.

¹³⁵ See "Ceelie's" "Note from Crown Publishing" on the Message Board, dated August 26, 1997 [[Http://www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com)]. In fact, at least one publisher-bookseller continues to exploit fans' interests by underwriting an Auel website, by hosting a Sunday 9:00 World Chat and by promoting current novels upon similar topics under the "Alt-Reading Suggestions," internet, Yahoo, [<http://www.geocities.com>], 12,

July, 1998.

¹³⁶ The question of the Sharamudoi's Shamud as a homosexual or a "hamaphridite" posted by "Robyn" on the Auel message board (September 9, 1997) provoked a flurry of speculations during the month of September 1997, internet, [[Http://www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com)], July 12, 1998.

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