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Esame di Lingua e traduzione inglese III – CdL in Lingue e culture straniere occidentali e orientali

**Sessione Invernale 16 Gennaio, 2025**

***Reading* Time: 45 min.**

Instructions: *Write in your name and matriculation number above. Read the following text from Peterson’s Twelve Rules. Circle the answer to each question or, in the case of open questions, write the answer in the space provided.*

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Bachofen hypothesized a world of three developmental stages. The first, roughly speaking, was *Das Mutterrecht*—a society where women held the dominant positions of power, respect and honour, where polyamory and promiscuity ruled, and where any certainty of paternity was absent. The second, the Dionysian, was a phase of transition, during which these original matriarchal foundations were overturned and power was taken by men. The third phase, the Apollonian still reigns today. The patriarchy rules, and each woman belongs exclusively to one man. Bachofen’s ideas became profoundly influential, in certain circles, despite the absence of any historical evidence to support them. One Marija Gimbutas, for example—an archaeologist—famously claimed in the 1980s and 1990s that a peaceful goddess-and woman-centered culture once characterized Neolithic Europe. She claimed that it was supplanted and suppressed by an invasive hierarchical warrior culture, which laid the basis for modern society. Art historian Merlin Stone made the same arguments in his book *When God Was a Woman*. This whole series of essentially archetypal/mythological ideas became touchstones for the theology of the women’s movement and the matriarchal studies of 1970s feminism.

Carl Jung had encountered Bachofen’s ideas of primordial matriarchy decades earlier. Jung soon realized, however, that the developmental progression described by the earlier Swiss thinker represented a psychological rather than a historical reality. He saw in Bachofen’s thought the same processes of projection of imaginative fantasy on to the external world that had led to the population of the cosmos with constellations of gods. In *The Origins of History of Consciousness* and *The Great Mother*, Jung’s collaborator Erich Neumann extended his colleague’s analysis. Neumann traced the emergence of consciousness, symbolically masculine, and contrasted it with its symbolically feminine, material origins, subsuming Freud’s theory of Oedipal parenting into a broader archetypal model. For Neumann, and for Jung, consciousness—always symbolically masculine, even in women—struggles upwards toward the light. Its development is painful and anxiety-provoking, as it carries with it the realization of vulnerability and death. It is constantly tempted to sink back down into dependency and unconsciousness, and to shed its existential burden. It is aided in that pathological desire by anything that opposes enlightenment, articulation, rationality, self-determination, strength and competence—by anything that shelters too much, and therefore smothers and devours. Such overprotection is Freud’s Oedipal familial nightmare, which we are rapidly transforming into social policy.

The Terrible Mother is an ancient symbol. It manifests itself, for example, in the form of Tiamat, in the earliest written story we have recovered, the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish*. Tiamat is the mother of all things, gods and men alike. She is the unknown and chaos and the nature that gives rise to all forms. But she is also the female dragon-deity who moves to destroy her own children, when they carelessly kill their father and attempt to live on the corpse that remains. The Terrible Mother is the spirit of careless unconsciousness, tempting the ever-striving spirit of awareness and enlightenment down into the protective womb-like embrace of the underworld. It’s the terror young men feel towards attractive women, who are nature itself, ever ready to reject them, intimately, at the deepest possible level. Nothing inspires self-consciousness, undermines courage, and fosters feeling of nihilism and hatred more than that—except, perhaps, the too-tight embrace of too-caring mom.

The Terrible Mother appears in many fairy tales, and in many stories for adults. In *Sleeping Beauty*, she is the Evil Queen, dark nature herself—Maleficent, in the Disney version. The royal parents of Princess Aurora fail to invite this force of the night to their baby daughter’s christening. Thus, they shelter her too much from the destructive and dangerous side of reality, preferring that she grow up untroubled by such things. Their reward? At puberty, she is still unconscious. The masculine spirit, her prince, is both a man who could save her, by tearing her from her parents, and her own consciousness, trapped in a dungeon by the machinations of the dark side of femininity. When that prince escapes, and presses the Evil Queen to hard, she turns into the Dragon of Chaos itself. The symbolic masculine defeats her with truth and faith, and finds the princess, whose eyes he opens with a kiss.

p.381-382

**Questions**

1. Women have always been subjugated by the patriarchy.

True/False [1 point]

1. Much evidence exists to support Bachofen.

True/False [1 point]

1. Feminist matriarchal scholarship in the 1970s was based on ideas and claims.

True/False [1 point]

1. God was not a woman because… [2 points]
2. Stone said so.
3. women were overpowered by invaders.
4. only men have ever been gods.
5. women are not usually warriors.

5. What does Peterson fear about new trends in the modern family? [3 points]

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6. Jung rejected Bachofen’s three stages of development because they... [2 points]

1. seemed as if they were Freud’s.
2. more a matter of projection than of concrete evidence.
3. diverged from Jung’s concept of consciousness.
4. consciousness is symbolically feminine.

7. It is not pathological to desire… [2 points]

1. unconsciousness.
2. dependency.
3. an appreciation for human frailty and vulnerability to death.
4. a rejection of death.

8. Why do you suppose Tiamat seeks to destroy her own children?  [3 points]

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9. The idea of the Terrible Mother comes from… [2 points]

1. Mesopotamia.
2. Disney.
3. the patriarchy.
4. universal innate fears.

10. How did the behavior of Aurora’s parents coincide with the archetype of the Terrible Mother? [3 points]

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[total/20 points]