

The Mysterious "J"

Laurie Anderson

In the book there are several chapters about women talking and women writing. Now it seems likely that men invented writing and wrote what? Maybe ninety, maybe ninety-five percent of everything that's ever been written. Oh there's the recent theory that a woman, the mysterious "J", wrote much of the Old Testament, but only because God was portrayed in this book as patriarchal, tyrannical and inconsistent, the way presumably only a woman would write about a man. But I think I can picture this "J" scribbling away and laughing although the first time I saw the Bible re-enacted was sometime in the 70s and there was a cable TV show in the Midwest and Bible study groups would act out parts of the Bible. But these were pretty low budget productions and shot in a church basement or somebody's ###160109 and all the prophets had towels wrapped around their heads for turbans, but you could see the tags, the ones with the washing instructions, sort of sticking out and back. There were ver! y few women on these tapes. They tended to be the odd shepherdess sort dancing girl bit part. Then last year I was invited to perform in Israel and I was very excited because I wanted to see Jerusalem where this mysterious "J" had spent her life writing and working and the Gulf War had made me even more curious. So I did some asking around, some informal research, and I talked to an Israeli woman who was living in New York and she was really having a hard time living there, and she was always complaining about American men, and she'd say:

You know, American men are such wimps, I mean, they're always talking about their feelings.

And I said:

They are?

And she said she really liked Israeli men because they were so tough and because they all had guns and I said:

Guns, you like guys with guns?

And she said she did and went on about how terrible it was that Clinton wanted to reduce the army and she was so animate about this that I started to get kind of worried. Yeah, I thought, yeah that's true, what are all these military people going to do when they lose their jobs? And then I thought, well, hang on, we've got all these service industries now, things like psychotherapy, and the military approach to psychotherapy would really be kind of perfect, really efficient and fast, you know, listen, you are nothing, you are a worm, and if you don't get that mother complex out by 0400 hours you are dead meat.

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