As far as I know masculist interpretation of scripture does not exist; indeed its birthing may be premature. By masculist interpretation I mean something different from male interpretation, which is simply what everyone did until twenty years ago. That is interpretation undertaken mostly by males of texts which were written mostly by males, without the possibility occurring to anyone that this might limit or skew what the interpreter saw. Feminist interpretation drew attention to all that and asked what might become visible in texts when women read them as women rather than as honorary men. Masculist interpretation is parasitic on feminist interpretation; it is by definition post-feminist. It asks what might become visible in texts when they are read in conscious awareness of maleness. Arguably, at least, masculist interpretation of course need not be limited to males any more than feminist interpretation need be limited to females, but in this piece I write as a man seeking to be self-aware as a man.

A passage such as Hosea 1—3 provides an obvious context for the raising of this question. This is not merely because there seems no prospect of coming to agreement on an understanding of these chapters on a historical-critical basis (e.g. what are the literary relationships between the chapters and the historical relationships between the events they refer to and between the female figures who appear?), though that is so. It is because whatever the answers to these unanswerable questions, the text is overtly an expression of a distinctively male experience, and it is this experience which is then a base from which an understanding of God is expressed. There is of course a feminist literature which illumines Hosea 1—3, but a masculist interpretation will have a different starting-point and perspective, even if possibly a complementary one. If feminist interpretation uses women's experience as an aid in gaining illumination on the text's own concerns, including its implications for the nature of God, and in
discovering its affirmation and challenge regarding what it means to be women (and men), masculist interpretation uses men's experience for parallel ends.

Now the feminist literature on Hosea 1—3 raises telling questions about the male prophet, his God, and their attitude to their partners, and a so-called masculist interpretation could be a means of avoiding those, a means of subverting the feminist agenda, evading the challenge to patriarchy and androcentrism, and reinstating male interpretation in new man-ish guise (it is for this reason that its birthing may be premature). That is not my desire. A masculist interpretation does not replace a feminist one; further, the masculist interpretation of Hosea 1—3 which follows is not the only possible one (it is a conservative one, to begin with, more Phyllis Trible than Mieke Bal or Cheryl Exum). But my hope is that something like masculist interpretation might help me to handle the theological implications of the androcentric, patriarchal aspect to scripture, and help me come to terms with myself as a man in such a way that I may be able to change and thus respond to the feminist critique. To be post-feminist is to build on feminism, but not to attempt to leave it behind.

**Masculinity and Genesis 1—4**

So what is masculinity? The opening chapters of Genesis point to three particular features of maleness which both resonate with the experience of many men and women today and also seem of prima facie relevance to the interpretation of Hosea 1—3. They thus make Genesis 1—4 a suggestive text to put alongside Hosea 1—3. First, men discover who they are by setting themselves over against women. It is when the man sees the woman that he knows who he is. It is enough to make him leave father and mother and want to live with her. Of course he then finds that his relationship with this wonderful creature gets him into dead trouble. For a man, at least, there is thus a tragic ambiguity about the man-woman relationship. Women are our making: we are lonely or dissatisfied or incomplete without them, as they do not seem to be without us (part of the background may lie in the fact that a girl's first relationship is with a person of her own sex, a boy's with a person of the opposite sex). But women are also our