

**2015 ASWM Symposium, “Tales and Totems”
Panel/Workshop Abstracts**

Graciela Baez, PhD

**Hierogamy and Creation: The Sacred Union of Xmucane and Xpiyacoc
in the *Popol Vuh* [1]**

The *Popol Vuh* is the name given to a sixteenth-century Maya-Quiché creation myth of highland Guatemala. This text includes an epic creation myth, followed by a legendary history of the Quiché dynasty up to the arrival of the Spanish in 1524. This narrative was first copied and translated from its original Quiché into Spanish between 1701 and 1703 by the Dominican Friar Francisco Ximénez. Today his manuscript represents the only standing copy of the native text and the sole source for scholarly studies, since the original Quiché text is reported to be lost. The *Popol Vuh* is one of the most studied indigenous manuscripts of Mesoamerica because it is considered a pristine and authentic pre-Hispanic indigenous expression.

This paper will focus on the seldom-discussed sacred couple of the *Popol Vuh*. The existence of a sacred couple in the creation motif- the "mother/father of life, of humankind"- is all the more striking because the female is named first (Xmucane), and then, the male (Xpiyacoc). These divine parents, older than the other Gods, it is believed, worked not alone, but in consort with the younger ones to bring life into existence. Each had her and his specific function, and thus, were paradoxically divided. A paradigm of the coexistence of antithetical attributes, this primordial couple worked as a cohesive whole in the creation of humankind. Their union (hierosgamos) offers the power to metaphorically birth understandings and concepts of a new self; thus, reconciling the dualities these cultures experienced then, and are still experiencing in present day.

Virginia Subia Belton, MA

**Abalone Woman: Reflections on Place and Tending to the Soul of
Community**

This reflection takes on a particular resonance when one considers the implications of trans-generational trauma, Place and indigenous populations when envisioned through an eco-psychological lens. Many indigenous populations continue to suffer the trauma of ancestors' literal bones being removed from sacred sites and burial grounds, only to be put on display or warehoused in the dusty residence of research institutions.

When individuals are born into communities that have suffered a traumatic past, that past continues to haunt the present, demanding expression and return. There is no possibility of closure, and the linear narratives of a complete and official national history need to be broken open again and again for unsettled retellings and memorializing of unfinished history. Such needs are in direct opposition to those of others in the community whose historical positions have placed them on the side of forgetting. (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 130)

The need to examine the psychological impact of such practices and policies on communities carrying the effects of collective trauma resulting from colonialism, might perhaps open a space for what Watkins and Shulman (2008) have described as “re-thinking multi-cultural encounters”. What story needs to be told and witnessed to “memorialize this unfinished history” (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 130) of ancestors defiled by the scientific method? Could attention from an eco-psychological lens trouble and illuminate these “pathologies of perpetration”? This presentation describes how the myth of Abalone Woman served one indigenous community’s reawakening, on California’s Pacific North Coast.

Jody Gentian Bower, PhD

Ereshkigal: A New Look at an Old Goddess

Most of the scholarship on the Sumerian myth of Inanna and Ereshkigal focuses on the story from Inanna’s point of view. Inanna, the Queen of Heaven, descends to visit the Underworld realm of her sister Ereshkigal, only to be stripped naked, transfixed by Ereshkigal’s “Eyes of Death” until she dies, and her body hung on a hook to rot. Three days later, she is revived and ascends to Heaven once again.

The majority of writers who address this myth see it as a metaphor for a woman’s psychological descent and return. Ereshkigal is treated primarily as a chthonic force, an archetypal energy, rather than as an individual in her own right.

This paper looks at the story from Ereshkigal’s point of view. Why is she in the cave of the Underworld in the first place, and why doesn’t she leave? What can we learn from her about the many other women in our society who are Ereshkigals themselves, by chance or by choice? Why is she so angry?

What does she really want from Inanna? What lesson is she trying to teach her sister, and does she succeed?

Zsuzsanna Budapest

Goddess Lineage

In this lecture, I will introduce some of the exceptional women in my family of origin, sharing the essence of my matrilineal heritage.

I am the daughter of a ceramic artist/poet/story teller /medium Masika Szilagyi ,who was the daughter of Ilona Topercel Szilagyi ,a well known suffragist and social organizer in Hungary. Her mother died when she was only 16, and that early loss influenced her entire life, perhaps, motivated her. Topercel Szilagyi's tireless work in securing the vote and improving the lives of women is legendary.

My mother's sister, Elisabeth Szilagyi, was a pharmacist and healer. These strong, accomplished, barrier breaking women raised me like the two Piscean fishes who swam in opposite directions.

I will explore the lives of these women, in particular, my mother, who persevered and produced great works through the privations of World War II, and through the societal limitations of her sex. My mother's art evolved around the Three Great Mothers, The Parkas, as she called them. The Fates.

Through the lens of my foremothers, I will examine the evolution of my life's work as author, storyteller, and feminist witch. The most important gift of feminist spirituality and mythology is a reconnection. They create a shift in worldview, self-view, and of course, lead to natural sisterhood that evolves from the celebrating circles that women have participated in through the course of women's herstory.

Kristen Calvert-Chavez, MA

Crafting the Function of the Sacred: Native American Basketry

What we honor; how we perceive life determines what is sacred and what is secular. Sometimes Native American women's works are misinterpreted as non sacred and utilitarian because of their functional capacities. This presentation will examine, through historical and on site research, how adding the ritualistic, mythic and embodied visionary aspects in Native American practices, form sacred art that connects the object with the life of

the maker, her spirit-helpers/environment and lineage. In this context, a basket is a symbolic representation of a woman's life cycle; the myths/symbols of her culture; and how she weaves her essence into her community.

Kristen Calvert-Chavez and Jessica Bowman
Waterways to the Goddess Inside: Visualizing Your Gifts

Kristen Calvert-Chavez and Jessica Bowman propose to do a joint workshop around the idea of sacred water and Native American myths. During the workshop we intend to have the women discuss Native American myths around water and meditate on photographic images of bodies of water throughout California and Oregon. To enhance this process there would also be a cleansing bowl water ritual with sounding and sacred herbs. After the water meditation and ritual the women will create a visual of the sign they saw during the water meditation/ritual.

This workshop is based on Native American water myths, in particular the "Legend of the Klickitat Basket." In this myth from Washington, right off Oregon border, we learn that it is only after the basket maker devises a sacred water symbol based her observations of water is she able to weave a watertight basket. In this workshop we will explore women's deep complex relationship with water and her mythic ability to resonate with water by relating to its divine nature and symbolically reflecting it.

This is also based on Kristen's personal experience with sacred bodies of water in the Pacific Northwest most notably Crater Lake which she views as her first childhood encounter with the Creatrix Goddess. We will also explore and discuss our personal myths around water and how they are reflected in the signs created in this workshop.

Susan G. Carter, Ph.D.
Honoring the Japanese Sun Goddess: Myth and Lineage of Her Sacred Places

Every goddess has a specific and special place (or places) where she resides and is honored. This is also true of the Japanese Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-omikami, preeminent deity in the Shinto pantheon. The myths of this Sun Goddess first appear in the historical chronicles and records, the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* (ca. 712 and 720 CE respectively), and were thought to have been

ancient when first written down. In these accounts, we learn of the creation of myriad *kami* (deities), the beginnings of the islands of Japan, and the lineage of the Imperial Family as having descended directly from the Sun Goddess. We also learn of times of awe, fear, struggles and contests, as well as abundance—for both *kami* and humans—that caused mortals in ancient Japan to designate certain places as sacred. Many of these sacred memorials and places of worship in the Shinto tradition continue to be acknowledged, tended, and honored today.

This presentation highlights Japanese myths that narrate the events and lineage of several such sacred places. Through image and story—from the cave where the Sun Goddess once hid from struggle and violence, to the Ise Jingu (Grand Shrine of Ise), where her *shintai* (*kami* body) resides and she has been worshipped continually for more than 1,700 years—we will explore the mythology and manifestations of sacred sites where Amaterasu-o-mi-kami continues to be worshipped and her myths come alive.

Alexandra Cichon Ph.D.

Reclaiming the Goddesses of Bronze Age *Ariadnian* Crete

The Goddesses of ancient Crete appear to be both stunningly individual and indissolubly linked. This paper seeks to unravel the interrelationship of the one and many manifestations of the Great Goddess of Bronze Age Crete by imaginatively reconstructing a ‘wheel’ of Cretan Goddesses founded upon Her many epithets, place names, and iconographic forms in the culture’s art, archaeology and myth. For the Cretan Goddess, notes Knossos excavator Sir Arthur Evans, is depicted with “doves perched on her head in a celestial relation, or with serpents twined round her as Lady of the Underworld . . . as Mother Goddess we see her with her hands on her matronly breasts, *but with the same tiara, and the same apparel even to the patterns of her dress.*”

Yet Evans christened this civilization *Minoan*, after Minos, “king” of Crete and father to Ariadne in the Greek myth, despite archaeological evidence overwhelmingly pointing to a culture centered in the worship of a Great Goddess, in various guises, and her priestesses, with the notable absence of a dominant male figure of a king. Such naming reflects the “serious and continuous obstacle in the study of ancient societies” said archaeomythologist Marija Gimbutas, “the indolent assumption that they must have resembled our own.” This proposed wheel of the Goddess[es] of

Life, Death, and Regeneration, takes the form of a deepening *spiral* into the depths, mirroring the mysteries of the Cretan Labyrinth where, at the center, Ariadne as mediatrix and psychopomp, holds the thread.

Kathleen Damiani, Ph.D.

"I AM THE WHORE AND THE HOLY ONE"* What Sophia (*philosophia*) and Vak (the Vibration of Creation) speak about the primal female force that precedes all gods

This presentation will focus on the extraordinary discovery of nearly identical self-revelations of two ancient female divinities; the earliest appearance of Wisdom speaking in Sanskrit, her younger incarnation in Greek. Separated in time by thousands of years, the more ancient Vak was comprehended and articulated in the sophisticated cosmology of the non-dual in jnana yoga, the highest yoga in India; while Sophia appears in the word philosophy, first used by Pythagoras, "love of wisdom." Sophia is the central focus of the five Wisdom books of the Bible and the object of mystical visions in the wisdom traditions of the Common Era within Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Neither was typically worshipped as goddess or rendered in visual art or sculpture as fertility deities. As variations of a Cosmic Feminine archetype; they personify the Vibration of Creation itself. They name the form of the energetic pulse of the collective psyche.

What these two dimensions of the same world-creating impulse reveal, is not limited to self-revelations, but rather to their Being-in-Relationship. What are they related to: the creation or appearance of the male god(s). In Sanskrit, Vak creates the gods; in Greek, Sophia is "the first of His works he created me." This twisting of the primary position of the divine feminine Creatrix from being *prior* to the god(s) to being "the first thing created" (by a capitalized "Him") is noteworthy and has enormous reverberations in the Western world, both philosophically and in the subsequent development of monotheism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

*begins speech of the gnostic Sophia in *The Nag Hammadi Library* (texts written circa 4th c CE)

Dr. Gayatri Devi and Dr. Savithri de Turreil

Title: From Divine Mothers to Ghostly Predators: The Devolution of the *Yakshi* Tree Spirits from a Matriarchal Matrix to Patriarchal Overlay

The pan-Indian tree spirits known as *Yakshis*, trace their representational lineage back to the beginnings of civilization itself in the geographical region known as the Indian subcontinent. Archeological evidence has incontrovertibly proved the existence of a goddess cult in the Indus valley civilization dating from circa 5000 BCE. Excavations in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa have unearthed numerous terracotta figurines of a female figure, nude except for short skirts, usually overburdened by a profusion of medallions and necklaces, with two cuplike objects on each side of her fan-shaped headdress. Similar figurines have been unearthed in ancient Sumer and the Middle East. The few male figurines unearthed from Indus valley are unadorned and unmarked. Numerous seals excavated from Mohenjo-Daro by archeologists show figures of a nude female with her legs apart and a plant issuing from her womb; groups of women engaging in ritual dance; female worshippers holding sprigs of leaves on their heads paying obeisance to a nude tree goddess seated amidst the branches of a *pipal* tree; two men spreading apart a tree and a woman emerging from the tree; a kneeling man making an offering to a female figure in the tree. Many seals depict a female figure with the body of a tiger, and a profusion of seals delineate bulls with garlands around their necks kneeling before a deity and standing beside a dancing woman.

The terracotta figurines and seals from the Indus Valley civilization conclusively prove the existence of a female goddess figure, who was venerated as the source of fertility and worshipped in her maternal role. Two interesting divergences have happened to this proto-mother goddess of the Indus valley in historical and contemporary India. This ancient mother goddess presiding over nature and residing in trees have been not only subsumed as a minor goddess under Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism, but she has also been transformed from a benevolent figure into a bloodthirsty succubus figure that devours men. However, traces of the mother goddess in her tree form exists in the matriarchal ethos in particular communities in India. This presentation will chart the transformation of the goddess from her pre-Aryan context, through successive stages of Sanskritization under Brahminical patriarchy, and her conservation in pan-Indian matriarchal communities. The authors will discuss both the iconography of the goddess from pre-Aryan contexts, her decline and subjugation in Buddhist, Jain, and Vedic Hindu traditions through analysis of select scripture passages, religious iconography, myths and folk tales, and the conservation and emergence of the goddess within matriarchal rituals and narrative traditions.

Dr. Marion Gail Dumont

The Tale of *Kau'xuma'nupika*: decolonizing Northwest history

In my doctoral dissertation I recount the stories of three Northwest women. One of these stories is the tale of *Kau'xuma'nupika*, a historic member of the Ktunaxa Nation or Kootenai as they are known today in the Northwest. Originally born a woman, she claimed sexual transformation at a young age and lived the remainder of her life as a man. *Kau'xuma'nupika* served northwest indigenous nations as a renowned prophet, warrior, and shaman. Feminist historians have shown that the annals of western conquest have privileged the discourse of dominant groups at the expense of those who have been marginalized. Decolonizing the story of *Kau'xuma'nupika* serves as a small contribution to the reconstruction of Pacific Northwest history.

I write as a non-native American living more than two hundred years after *Kau'xuma'nupika's* birth. While I recognize my inability to tell this story in all its fullness, I am inspired to tell it as a way of honoring her presence in the Northwest. My focus will be to highlight the ways in which *Kau'xuma'nupika* engaged with the incalculable changes brought to the indigenous nations as a result of European contact and colonization, namely, her activities as a courier, guide and prophet in the Columbia Plateau region.

Alexis Martin Faaberg

Should Native Women Be Feminists?

Should Native women consider feminism a valid methodology for decolonialization? This topic has been widely debated within American Indian and Women's Studies. However, this dialogue has not addressed whether indigenous ways of interrelatedness can be fully expressed within the dualistic nature of Western feminism and, if they can, how should Western feminists and Native women relate towards one another in a manner that is beneficial to both? My paper addresses the issue of unequal relationships between traditional indigenous and feminist ideologies with special attention to how indigenous women need to situate themselves as coming from a place of strength. Specifically, I will be looking at Laguna Pueblo author Carol Lee Sanchez's discussion of teaching non-Natives an indigenous worldview and aboriginal author Lee Maracle's work, which shows that prior to contact with Europeans Native women experienced a more prominent cultural position in some indigenous societies than

feminism can offer. In contrast, I will discuss Australian feminist Val Plumwood's work on dualistic structures and how these provide the framework for gender hierarchies and domination, in order to reveal that previously misunderstood robust societal structures within Native pre-contact cultures. Lastly, my paper showcases how Native women are working to return to a pre-contact worldviews in which women can go beyond equality. In conclusion, by closely examining the contrast between pre-contact Native and Western feminist views I will shed new light on how positive relationships can assist in achieving the goals of both.

Bethroot Gwynn

Womyn's Land Culture: Living Among the Muses

Sourced in the wellsprings of feminism, social justice, creative expression, culture-making, and earth spirituality, the Oregon womyn's lands represent living circles of revolutionary experiments with Goddess-inspired women-only space honoring woman as holy. The living mythology of embodied goddesses comes alive through writing, art, creative building, theater, song, seasonal ceremony—with participants from an extended network of land-loving women throughout Oregon. At lands including Fly Away Home, Steppingwoods, OWL Farm, and Cabbage Lane, the deep spiritual connection of women and land ignites creativity that has the power to transform culture and kindle social change. Steeped in the creative, authentic cauldron of her women's land experience for almost four decades, Bethroot reflects on ways that land-based, women-only space changes the world. Women who build their own, bury their own, invent their own, are architects of the wild, preserving oases of meadow and forest as sacred space for the long, long haul.

Marna Hauk, PhD

Stories of the Foremothers: Women's Lands Regenerating the Living Earth

This paper shares themes arising from qualitative interviews conducted in 2011-2013 with foremother founders of Oregon women's lands. The research demonstrated that these intergenerational living land-cultures function as informal "universities" and as sites of earth regenerative wisdom learning. The research surfaced key characteristics that can serve as models for designing matriarchal educational systems. Key features across six scales from the individual to the galactic include embedment within the emergent, living, unfolding creativity of the universe; fostering full embodiment and

experiential learning that open the senses and catalyze biocultural symbiosis and land regeneration; liberating the imagination and catalyzing collaborative creativity; while nurturing ongoing processes of healing, creating sacred space, and building skills in culture-facilitation. These findings were triangulated with a larger body of research on priorities for wisdom school design (N = 50). Oregon women's lands serve as living libraries and learning matrices for the generative and regenerating earth.

April Heaslip, MA

Tracking Magdalene: Creativity & Wasteland Irrigation

According to Jungian psychology, myths develop from an intrinsically creative collective unconscious, gifting us with stories infused with potent messages from psyche, often threatening dominant paradigms. They also might need to go underground in order to survive; what goes underground eventually rises, often changed. Since the rediscovery of the Gospel of Mary and other Gnostic texts, there has been an eruption of scholarship and creative reimagining of the significance of Mary Magdalene, tapping into patterns that are archetypal—universal, mythic dynamics, primordial patterns—and are appearing simultaneously through the creative arts, scholarship, and pilgrimage for Christians and non-Christians alike. This paper applies mythology to explore the gap between history and meaning-making as we delve into the power and significance behind these current trends, and the potentialities embedded within the embodied, resurrecting Magdalene archetype.

Kathryn Henderson, PhD

Lessons of Deer Woman: Metaphors of behavior in sexual relations and towards nature from First Nations Story-Telling

This paper will look at the deer in indigenous First Nations story-telling and contemporary literature through examination of general and gender-related deer symbolism, especially the numerous representations of Deer Woman, a shape-shifting, trickster character with hooved feet, who appears as a strikingly beautiful woman at an opportune time and seduces some young man who may become bewitched, disappear, or marry her, only to be abandoned. Her lesson regards untamed sexuality, warning that the selection of mates should be within the known community. Occurring throughout native cultures from the Pacific Northwest and across the Great Plains, Deer Woman traditional stories provide such a powerful metaphor that new

versions with updated lessons about right conduct and sexual conduct continue to be created, set in contemporary times and even urban spaces, aimed at both indigenous and non-indigenous audiences in women's writings such as the collections of Paula Gunn Allen and the fiction of Susan Powers and Louis Erdrich. Other traditional stories and traditions describe the sighting of Deer Woman to be a sign of personal transformation or a warning while yet others represent the deer as symbolic of peace and tranquility or a lesson in taking only what is needed for sustenance. In these stories the deer as metaphor conveys messages about human behavior with one another and with nature that span time, space and cultures.

Ingrid Kinkaid

The Antlered Reindeer Goddess and The Missing Grandmother

For women descended from the tribes of Northern Europe and the British Isles, the model of the wise grandmother is missing from our collective story. Instead we may turn to the Antlered Reindeer Goddess and her matriarchs as wisdom keepers. It is the female reindeer who keeps her antlers through the winter and is ready to protect the herd as well as to give birth in spring. Her attributes and skills have much to teach us about protection, safety, and the wisdom of the body.

Saveena Kohli

Looking for the Girl on the Lion: My Spiritual Journey of Unearthing the Intrinsic Goddess Durga

This thesis project explores the sacred and powerful relationship between the Hindu warrior, Goddess Durga and unmarried Hindu women from North India. A powerful goddess in a culture where a woman's identity is most often seen through the lens of the man in her life, father first and husband later. This work shows the power of the embodiment of Goddess Durga for single women, such as me, who are seeking their own identity.

I am a 34-year-old unmarried Hindu woman from Punjab State in North India, who left my birth country at 18 and came to the United States to pursue a bachelor's degree. In 2012, I became deeply aware of how torn I was between the two cultures—East and West. By then, I had lived in the United States for 16 years, after having spent the first 18 years of my life in India. In a matter of 2 years, I would have spent half of my lifetime in the two different countries, and two different cultures. Using Goddess Durga as

an archetype, I was able to bridge the gap between the two cultures as well as create my own unique and positive self-image.

Through the use of heuristic methodology, I share my story: the story of a Hindu woman who pursued a role outside of the stereotypical Hindu women roles, while still connecting with a Goddess of her own culture. Journal entries, dreams, and spiritual incantations have been combined with the research as part of the heuristic methodology. This thesis can help unmarried Hindu women discover their own hidden, intrinsic, dynamic potential, an empowered state of being, which is not dependent on a male. Meditations on Goddess Durga and her weapons as focal points gave birth to a spiritual channel that was used to access and write about the knowledge that is ever present within my self. This abstract is part of my submission for the Shakti, Prakriti, and Purusha from East to West panel in the 2015 symposium, *Tales and Totems*.

Dr. Michael McDermott

Cannibals and Saints-the transformation of Celtic goddesses Eachtai and Gobnait and the need for theodiversity.

Mendenhall, Margaret

The Feminine Balance of Energies v. the Monotheistic Ideal of Perfection

Influenced by the teaching of Christine Downing, the writings of Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rita Gross, and bridging the Goddess framework of Jean Shinoda Bolen and Maureen Murdock's distaff reworking of the hero's journey, my concept is that unlike Abrahamic religions' monotheistic goal of perfection of the soul, the aim of the Feminine Balance of Energies, inside all of us, is a balance between the three types of feminine drives, that I have labeled "Artemis" "Lilith" and "Ishtar".

Feminine energies have been designated in a dualistic manner by Abrahamic religions as either all good "virgin/mother" or evil "whore/bitch," for tendencies that do not fit into the patriarchal ideal. Conversely, my concept of feminine energy is a balancing of three types of drives: "Lilith" – with a capacity for sexual power that androcentric religions deem "whore" because they fear its strength; "Artemis" – for the aptitude that is independent and doesn't feel the need to identify with masculine needs and is therefore deemed "Bitch" by Abrahamic societies; and "Ishtar,"

the Babylonian forerunner to Aphrodite and Venus, which represents the female half of the celestial marriage. “Virgin/Mother,” an oxymoron, is not represented in my diagram. When compared to the “Hero’s Journey,” a circular, counter-clockwise forward progression, the graph of the Feminine Quest for Balance, is similar to a lemniscate, or infinity sign, with the flow of energy in a state of constant flux, from one extreme “Lilith” to its opposite “Artemis,” each time going nearer to the balance in the center, “Ishtar.”

Dr. Margaret Merisante

Tears and Fragrance for the God’s Death and Resurrection: The Funerary Syncretism of Mary Magdalene with Isis

This paper looks at Ptolemaic Egyptian funerary practices and rites together with the ancient Egyptian funeral myth that centers on Isis, Nephthys, Osiris, and Set, and draws fascinating lines of connection to the New Testament mythos around Mary Magdalene and her role during the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Particularly, this paper presents that the mythic figure of Mary Magdalene shows startling correlations in ritual and myth to Isis’s funerary roles in the widely known Isis-Osiris myth. Weaving together fragrance, mourning, hair symbolism, and ancient Egyptian ritual practices, this paper shows the synchronicities within the then newly emerging Christian myths about Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

Mary Beth Moser, Ph.D.

Moonbeams of Mystery, Cycles of History: Lunar Presence in the Folk Wisdom of the Italian Alps

Art and artifact, oral history, and folk literature reflect the importance of the moon in the lives of villagers in northern Italy. Imbedded in this lunar lineage, which reaches back over millennia and continues today in folk traditions, are clues for the spiritual roles and sacred rites of women, as well as evidence for the veneration of female divinity.

In the folk stories, so-called witches dance under the full moon, whose rays can bestow life or bring lunacy. A popular folk story known as “The Pale Mountains” culminates with the marriage of a Moon Princess and an Earth Prince. Magic women do their laundry at night, and in contemporary practices, some women wash their clothes on Monday, a day dedicated to the moon.

Women embody lunar knowledge through the entrainment of their menstrual cycle with the moon, reflected in their everyday actions that spiral through and from these cycles. Like the moon, which waxes, wanes and renews, all of life has cycles of growth, dying back and rebirth. Agriculture and the preparation of food, medicine, spirits, and clothing are governed by the phase of the moon. Calendars, known as *lunari*, still note the phases of the moon.

Lunar consciousness, which recognizes many ways of knowing, permeates the folk culture and affirms the sacredness of the source and cycles of life. In this visual PowerPoint presentation, I share insights and examples of folk practices informed by feminist theory, onsite research, and folk literature.

Musawa

We of the Moon: We'Moonland, We'Moon Datebook, and We'Mooniversity Weaving Goddess Wisdom

Across dimensions of everyday lived experience, shared learning engagement, and international womyn's culture, We'Moon initiatives have interwoven culture, land, education, community-building, and Goddess spirituality for more than forty years. A land-based community in Oregon, We'Moonland practices earth-based spirituality, consensus, natural healing, organic gardening, permaculture, and earth-friendly building. We'Mooniversity is a nascent experiential School of Life for womyn and children in community with Mother Earth, dedicated to bringing the outpouring of We'Moon creativity down to earth, where artists, writers, astrologers, priestesses can network on land and online. The We'Moon Datebook is a lunar calendar weaving women's art and writings, a collaboration of international womyn's cultures. These innovative projects reflect study of ourselves as the primary sources: the Goddess within, the Goddess among; remembering and recreating the world in Her image. Reflecting intersubjective (Tedlock, 2005) and trans-subjective (Ettinger, 2006a, 2006b) approaches, we'moon culture is research in process, as work in progress, affirming the processual nature of emergent, living Goddess cultures.

Anaïs Pedica, MA

South Sea Mermaids: A study of images of vahine and mermaiders

Visual manifestations of Polynesia depict the region as 'paradise' and have been ripe with myths, particularly concerning Polynesian women. In this

paper I explore Western visual representations of mermaids and Polynesian women. Mermaids have survived history more than any other mythical creature and are still featured in popular culture today. The term ‘South sea mermaids’ is a play on words that merges the concept of the South sea maiden with the mythic fish-women. The South sea maiden represents one of the terms used to characterise sexualised representations of Polynesian women. This atypical connection was inspired by a personal impression that in popular culture, mermaid visual imagery mirrors the idea of the ‘wild woman’. Thus, throughout this essay I will ask the following question: what is the relationship between Western visual representations of Polynesian women and mermaiders? The paper exposes the historical relationship between myths, mermaids, goddesses and Polynesian women since European navigators’ first encounters with Pacific islands. I analyse predominantly contemporary photographs of mermaiders and Tahitian South sea maidens but also classical and contemporary paintings and illustrations, their mise-en-scène, and the representation of bodies from a literal and symbolic point of view. I discover common patterns and resemblances between these images, specifically in the eroticisation and exoticisation of places and bodies. Then, I suggest that these images are informed by Jung’s concept of the ‘collective unconscious’ and represent projections of the archetype of the Goddess, the essence of the Divine Feminine.

Lydia Ruyle

Despachos & Pachamama

A *despacho* is an ancient sacred ceremony to honor Pachamama / Mother Earth and ask her help with a transformation of energies. It is traditionally performed by a shaman. In Peru, the shaman constructs an offering of gratitude and resetting to Pachamama / Mother Earth and the Apus / Mountain Spirits. You can choose to create your own despacho for a purpose that you are connected to emotionally. Acting with sacred intent and respect for the process are the main components. A visual presentation will show and tell tales of three despachos from my personal experience.

Lydia Ruyle

Modern Matriarchal Studies

What is “Matriarchal Studies?” What are the origins of this area of study, and how has it developed over the decades? How does it relate to indigenous scholarship and to studies of goddess mythology?

Cristina Rose Smith, Ph.D. and Jeannette L. W. Kiel, MA
Mestiza Daughters in Conversation: Spiritual-Feminist examination of Mestiza Identity

As Filipina-*Mestizas*, both with individual and unique stories, we long to learn the languages of our ancestors. In this paper, we first discuss the related themes that have become clear through this conversation and then create space for Filipina-*Mestizas* to share their stories. This study explores the cultural-spiritual of lives of multiethnic daughters of mothers who did not or could not pass on the gifts of their ancestors. This study explores the details of this journey back to multiethnic ancestral roots. This study then transcends into a space of healing and justice and concludes with a discussion on one can use the creative arts as a tool to reconnect to our ancestors and help one to speak, both consciously and unconsciously, through the creative process.

Rationale: Filipina-*Mestiza* need to describe their borderland identity and spirituality to create threshold space for new consciousness in the field of women's studies. These daughters might have been separated from their mothers or these mothers might have had to sacrifice ancestral gifts in order to survive a white masculinist framework that lingers in post-colonial US; nevertheless, there are consequences of not having role models with mothers who may not have looked like us and/or mothers that could not share their gifts. Isolation, confusion, and lack of resonance, the *Mestiza*-Filipinas must hear the call to come back to her ancestral gifts.

Reconstructing Durga's prehistory
Nancy Vedder-Shults, Ph.D.

Continuing in Charlene Spretnak's footsteps (specifically her *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*, 1978), I will retell the Hindu myth of Durga from a pre-Brahmanic, pre-Sanskrit perspective. Using tools created to understand how patriarchy distorts, assimilates, and demonizes the deities of the indigenous peoples it has conquered, I will investigate the Indus Valley Civilization, which predated Hinduism, and what remains of its goddesses within the Sanskrit tradition. Scholars of Hinduism agree that the basic impulse for Goddess worship in Hinduism came from such non-Aryan peoples. I will look at the Indus Valley's cultural representations in order to demonstrate how this egalitarian culture's early religious icons have lived on despite the suppression of the patriarchal Indo-Aryans. By examining the

similarities between Hindu gods and goddesses with this earlier iconography as well as exploring some striking differences, I will demonstrate the reasons for my reconstruction of this myth. I will also draw parallels between Durga as She was incorporated into Sanskrit tradition and the Dravidian village goddesses of today (from the area of southern India that the Indo-Aryans never reached).

NOTE: Stay for the evening “Sacred Shindig” and hear Nancy tell her story of the reconstructed Durga myth.

Rhea Wolf

Resurrecting Medusa: Sex, Gender, and the Body’s Wisdom

When surveying the amount of art, poetry, research, and theory that has been devoted to exploring the powerful, mysterious figure known as Medusa, it is obvious that she continues to captivate our human imaginations. Indeed, there must be something about this Greek gorgon with snakes for hair and a gaze that turns men to stone that touches the eternal. In the legends that surround her, Medusa is variously depicted as a terrifying monster enacting indiscriminate vengeance on helpless humans, or as a facet of the ancient Great Goddess who presides over fertility, sexuality, and women’s mysteries. In early psychological interpretations, Medusa became a castrating, devouring nightmare in Freud’s patriarchal subconscious; then shape-shifted into a symbol of feminist empowerment as the face of rage against misogyny. In this paper, I offer an overview of the different manifestations of this mythic figure, focusing on the dramatic change of perception regarding women’s sexuality and power that took place in a relatively short period of time between the 8th and 7th centuries BCE.

Looking at modern representations of women’s sexuality from current headlines, I examine how the themes of this story continue to reinforce sexual stereotypes and even violent behavior towards women. Myths may touch the eternal; but historically, myths have been transformed, enhanced, or rewritten to suit current cultural needs. Recognizing the urgent need to create new mythologies that take us beyond historical oppression, I will also present a creative continuation of Medusa’s story.

Megan Rose Woolever, MA

Mary Magdalene: Dark Madonna, Female Christ

We, the priestesses of the 21st century, are midwives to an awakening intelligence, the embodied consciousness of the divine feminine in

ourselves. Many women feel the deep pull of the divine feminine as Mary Magdalene, the dark Madonna, who some believe was consort and co-equal to Jesus, the Christ. This paper seeks to reconstruct the myth of the Magdalene as co-redeemer and embodiment of the Christa. In it I argue that the emerging Magdalene materials cast a hermeneutics of suspicion on the traditional interpretation of the Gospels and offer a feminist interpretation of the nature and identity of the Christos-Magdalene relationship. The emergent Mary Magdalene is an embodied Goddess, a model of empowered female sexuality and the fully awakened woman. She teaches us how to awaken this within ourselves and our beloveds. Perhaps, the second coming of Christ is happening now, and this Christ is a woman—many women?

Dawn Work-MaKinne, PhD

Healing the Roots of the Tree: The Indigenous Regeneration Mythology of the Norns in Old Norse Cosmology

Many texts of Norse mythology lead the reader to focus an excess of attention on the male deities and the deeds of patriarchy and battle. Certain texts, however, reveal a cosmology of female power and regeneration. Standing at the center of this power are the three Norns Urð, Verðandi and Skuld, the goddesses who speak the primal law and daily heal the cosmic tree. Their well, the Urðbrunnr, is both source of healing and repository of dew and wisdom. The cosmic tree is usually known as Yggdrasil, steed of Ygg, another name of the god Oðinn, but it has another name: Laerað, the Listener. At the 2013 ASWM Symposium, keynote speaker Arieahn Matamanosa-Bennett declared, “We are all native people.” This paper explores the indigenous religion at the heart of northern cosmology, its reliance on primal goddesses and its sharing of shamanic wisdom traditions and ancestor reverence with other religions of the far north. There has been much criticism among indigenous North Americans of white Caucasians co-opting their native traditions and beliefs. Northern Europeans have their own indigenous traditions that can be reclaimed and celebrated. This paper builds on the work of scholars Karen Bek-Pedersen, Paul Bauschatz and Dana Kramer-Rolls, as well as Wilhelm Grimm, Joyce Tally Lionarons, Jenny Jochens and Lotte Motz.

