

**2017 Symposium Presenter Abstracts and Bios**  
**Association for the Study of Women and Mythology**

**2017 KEYNOTE: Dr. Peggy Reeves Sanday: "The Matrixial Foundation of Maternal Cultural Meanings in Myth and Ritual"**

In my long term study of and stay with the matrilineal Minangkabau of West Sumatra, Indonesia—off and on between the years 1981 and 2007—I found that women have a social value and structural importance in the historical continuity of Minangkabau culture that is observable today in their individual autonomy and collective identity. The same is true of adult men, who reside with their wives while carrying out life-long social responsibilities to their maternal family. This matrilineal society tends toward gender equality rather than gender (including male) dominance. The question I raise in this presentation is: What encourages the relative stability of this and other matrilineal egalitarian socio-cultural systems?

I address this question by reference to the symbolic similarities in the origin stories of selected matrilineal societies including the Minangkabau and the matrilineal Mosuo of China, whom I visited briefly at the end of 2016. In doing so I introduce a new term, developed by the Israeli scholar Bracha Ettinger, which has yet to be adopted by anthropologists, but which goes a long way to explaining the focus on child bearing and mother-oriented “matrilocal” households found in many matrilineal societies.

Bracha Ettinger is a French/Israeli philosopher, psychiatrist, and artist. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century she coined the term “**matrixial**” to represent a stage in psycho-sexual development emanating from the womb experience. Ettinger does not deny the power of the phallic in some cases nor do I. Indeed in a cross-cultural study of 186 societies, I found that the majority were male dominated. However, the claim for male dominance follows from a Freudian point of view that sees the “phallic” as a universal phase in psycho-social development. If this were the case, all societies should be male dominant, but as I have shown elsewhere they are not. Although not an anthropologist, in proposing that the **matrixial** is a stage in human pre- and I would argue post-natal development, Ettinger’s ideas are relevant for understanding the tremendous variation in human socio-cultural systems along with environment, history, food source and other factors, which I have shown have an impact on the nature of human social organization and world view cross-culturally (see Sanday 1981.)

**Session Presenters**

**Anadolu-Okur, Nilgun: Anatolian Great Mothers: Worship and Divinity in Asia Minor**

Much has been written about Anatolian women’s religious and secular practices on motherhood. Since antiquity Anatolian women’s affinity with religion and religious beliefs revealed characteristics of a multi-cultural, multi-civilizational female entity whose varying norms and traditions clearly manifest variations across region. Although a

great majority of Anatolian nations have adopted Islam since the onset of Selcuklu and Ottoman Empires, beginning in 1025 A.D., Anatolian women's cultural and religious practices about womanhood and motherhood continued to portray a variety of multidimensional practices, mainly derived from a pluralistic outlook to life, society and politics.

The origin of maternal lineage as a belief system and its worship dates back to 1600 B.C.E. which corresponds to the emergence of a highly civilized nation, the Hittites, in north-central Anatolia. Hittites had invented one of the earliest forms of writing; they were the pioneers of the first urban civilization on Anatolian soil. A multitude of civilizations that followed the Hittites, such as Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Ottomans, imposed their cultural and civilizational characteristics on Anatolian belief systems that were already established on female deities, and their worship. Womanhood was explained by the imperative of motherhood, in both literal and metaphorical sense. Practices of motherhood were shaped by complex factors, such as cultural exchanges and transformations, war, natural disasters, but most importantly, through an abundance of religious inferences.

While the worship pattern deified homogeneity, it resisted a singular identity for adulation. Besides deities, there were mythoformic formulations such as "saints," "warriors," and "cultural heroines" in Anatolia whose "motherhood" qualities helped foster more veneration for the public. In August 2016 a 2,100 year-old marble statue of Goddess Cybele was unearthed in the city of Ordu, in present-day northern Turkey. Cybele was honored long-before the Romans invaded northern Anatolia and established several garrisons along the Black Sea coast. Her "presence" among the ruins of the Roman fortress indicate that motherhood was highly revered even among Romans, and Cybele ruled both the physical and nether worlds, and continued to facilitate the society in organizing and rationalizing religion. I plan to mention these points in a slide-illustrated 20-min. paper.

Bio: **Nilgün Anadolu-Okur** is an associate professor at Temple University. Her publications include *Dismantling Slavery: Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and the Formation of the Abolitionist Discourse, 1841-1851* (forthcoming August 2016); *Essays Interpreting the Novels of Orhan Pamuk, the Winner of the Nobel Award in 2006*; *Women, Islam, and Globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and *Contemporary African American Theater: Afrocentricity in the Works of Larry Neal, Amiri Baraka, and Charles Fuller*. Her research is published in peer reviewed national and international journals, in reference books, and encyclopedias, such as the *Journal of Black Studies*, *Gender Issues*, *Journal of Global Initiatives*, and *Human and Society*.

### **Belton, Virginia: Soror Mystica Wears a Red Dress: The Alchemy of Midwifery and Decolonization in Our Last Wild Place**

This exploratory research conceived as ceremony makes an effort to rupture dominant narratives oppressing and marginalizing our exploration, understanding, and meaning making of the universal lived experience that is death. In modern society,

hegemony, commodification of the sacred, and medicalization of an otherwise organic human unfolding, along with a disrupting and oppressive nature of technology, contribute to the perceptions of a false separation in our dying time. In so doing, we deny our interdependence, pathologize death and hold our universal experience as a distant other.

Applying Meyer's triangulation of meaning to the intersections exploring end of life relationships, mixed methodologies in reveal how the Soror Mystica (the mystical sister) as alchemical metaphor of the midwife is engaged as the embodiment of an ethic of radical hospitality supporting an aim to cultivate collective wisdom in our dying time. In so doing, potentials for healing and transformation may be liberated, emerging as decolonized dwelling Places of intersubjective mutuality--an uncolonized last wild Place. A wild Place is a place ensouled by "the living present" (Abram, 1996, p. 201) of the feminine principle in *mysterium coniunctionis* with the phenomenal world; a Place where the practice of StoryTending takes death out of the shadows of colonization and offers the fresh eyes of loving curiosity, open to wonderment and the awe of mystery while meeting our existential anxiety.

**Bio: Gina Subia Belton** Gina Subia Belton MA PhD candidate, practices palliative psychology in tending to the psychological and spiritual aspects of the dying time. An educator, researcher, and arising out of her Mestizaje lineage, Gina Belton is also an emerging Indigenous scholar. In 2005 Gina Belton trained with the Metta Institute, led by Zen Hospice Founder, Frank Ostaseski and she is a committed Soto Zen student of Fugan Eugene Bush, Teacher at Arcata Zen Group as well as Practice Leader at Santa Cruz Zen Center. Locating herself in the ecological awareness of relationality, Gina Belton embraces the promotion of wellness and human dignity for all—in community—chiefly at the end of our life. Belton is also a published poet.

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### **Biaggi, Cristina: Volcano Goddesses of Transformation**

In this power point presentation accompanied by copious images I will examine volcano goddesses and talk about my rich experiences climbing various volcanos around the world. Some of the volcano goddesses I will talk about are Pele, from Hawaii, Lahalon from the Philippines, Mahuta from New Zealand and others. I will also describe and illustrate some of the more memorable volcano climbs I have accomplished.

**Bio: Cristina Biaggi, Ph.D.** has achieved significant recognition for her varied contributions to the field of Goddess-centered art and scholarly studies. Her works are a reflection and an extension of her lifelong interest in art, archaeology, women studies, literature and classics, acquired at Vassar, Harvard and New York University.

When she isn't preparing new pieces for an exhibition, Dr. Biaggi is writing and lecturing. She continues her studies in Kung Fu (Black Sash) and teaches Tae Kwon Do as a 5th Degree Black Belt. She has just finished writing her autobiography, *Art and*

*Activism*, and is seeking a publisher. Her artwork has focused on creating bronze portraits of people and their animal companions, and abstract collage. In talking about her creative process, Dr. Biaggi says, "As an artist, I enjoy transitioning from realistic work to abstract work. Creating my bronzes requires my total immersion in contemplating and rendering the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of my subjects—a process where I must concentrate on capturing the minute details of a face and the soul beyond it." Contact information: amandla72@optonline.net

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### **Birnbaum, Lucia Chiavola: Case in Point: Black bird and a pear tree**

Case in point for my *Future has an ancient heart*, this book, *Black bird and a pear tree*, may be considered a sublimated scream-- stop killing~ raping~poisoning the cosmos, earth, and all life - - joining many resistance movements (Dakota Water Protectors, Black Lives Matter, Sicilian midwives against USA militarization of their land ), working toward a new~old~new green world caring, sharing, healing, renewing life . *Dancing near the abyss gives us sudden shocks of lightning revealing glimpses of possibilities.*

Confirming scientific findings of African origins and migrations, story of Lucia and her love Wally, tracks their ancestors from the African Mediterranean to Levant in west Asia, to Ragusa Ibla and Palermo in Sicily. . . Frankfurt in Germany, Ukraine in EurAsia and Africa today where, in a latter-day reprise of ancient migrations are in massive flight from wars, persecution, hunger in Biblical lands of the African Mediterranean embracing Asia~ Europe ~Africa.

Reconfirmed in the stories of our kids, grandkids, great grandkids, and kindred spirits, are a reprise of the song of all living creatures - -

*\*Unconscious beliefs of homo sapiens sapiens African ancestors*

*\* Learned experiential beliefs in our preconscious-consciousness conveyed by our grandmothers and everyone they nurtured everywhere - -today resisting violent dominant world culture of killing, raping, poisoning . . . working for a world of caring – sharing –healing whose eternal song is birthing, blossoming, harvesting, seeding, renewing life in a green world created by everybody where everybody thrives.*

Bio: **Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum's** degrees in History are from UCB where she was Lecturer during the Free Speech movement. Assistant Professor of History at San Francisco State during the historic student strike, after she was fired she was active in the women's liberation movement of Italy, While lecturing and publishing internationally Lucia taught Women's Spirituality at California Institute of Integral Studies, where she is now Professor Emerita . In self-description, she is "great grandmother~ feminist cultural historian~ story writer~ 92-year old outlier~ nonviolent cultural and political revolutionary."

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### **Bowman, Jessica: Riding the Spiral: Social Justice, Mystic Creativity and Goddess Consciousness**

As feminist scholars we have an obligation to work actively and work collaboratively to address the prevalent social issues of our time; especially the oppression of marginalized peoples. One vehicle to do so is the use of art and creativity as a personal and collective mystic practice allowing the sacred to infuse every aspect of the purpose, process and product one chooses to give rise to on behalf of the crusade. Art generated in this manner is a powerful and peaceful form of activism and can act as a catalyst for personal, community, and social transformation impacting awareness and prompting social change in profound ways. This form of activism is intentionally used as an alternative to change initiated through violent means. Goddess consciousness acts as the cauldron for this alchemical process to occur by adding a deep reverence for the Divine Feminine, the ability to understand the capacity and elements of myth to support the process along with a critical analysis of social and political structures. Goddess consciousness is also offering service in the role of priestess, the promise of magic, the invitation for intuition, and the essential circles of women that embody radical other ways of knowing. Every act of kindness and every form of peaceful activism with the collective support of others makes a difference. Every seed planted, every ritual, and every sacred act makes a difference.

**Bio: Jessica Bowman** holds a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology, a Master's Degree in Women's Spirituality and Creative Expression and holds California Single Subject Teaching Credentials in Social Science and English along Administrative Service Credentials. She is an Associate Superintendent for a rural high school district focusing on support for underrepresented students. Jessica is also an artist, healer and seeker. She is a doctoral student at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

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### **Derr, Annalisa: Invoking Inanna: Female Bodily Wisdom of Cyclical Renewal as the New Societal Model**

Many women in the West today have lost a connection to their unique feminine biology, and therefore their body's cyclical wisdom. In this paper, I reimagine the myth of Inanna's descent as a woman's menstruation journey. In doing so, I aim to illustrate the importance of honoring the psychological and bodily experience of women, demonstrate how women's biology is an obvious and direct correlation to the cycles of nature, and underscore the absolute importance of finding ways of integrating the psychology of death and renewal into our human-women and men's-lived experience and societal framework.

**Bio:** A Mary Magdalene devotee, **Annalisa Derr** was initiated into the Magdalene Mysteries during her 2014 Mary Magdalene pilgrimage in France. Annalisa is an actress,

ritual theater creatrix, Divine Feminine healer, and doctoral candidate at Pacifica Graduate Institute. She has a fully integrated approach to mind- body-soul work that allows others a direct experience of the Divine Feminine. Information regarding upcoming workshops and ritual performances can be found at [annalisaderr.com](http://annalisaderr.com).

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### **Devi, Gayatri: Mothering as an Imaginary of Political Peace: Mothers of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement and the Democratic Process**

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement founded by three African American activists, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in the wake of the 2013 shooting death of Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who shot Martin to death, gained a new political momentum when nine mothers identified with the BLM -- Mothers of the Movement -- addressed the nation at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia on July 26, 2016. During their speech, the mothers emphasized the power of their voices as mothers to help heal the seemingly unbridgeable divide that exists between the African American community and the police. The speech of the mothers stressed a resolution to end the racial strife and targeted deaths of young African American men and women through a discourse that engaged both an ethics of "right" and "human rights," as well as an ethics of "care," particularly "maternal care and compassion" in rebuilding relationships between the white and black communities torn by racial strife and police brutality. In this presentation, I will discuss how feminist and matriarchal discourses of "rights," "care" and "compassion" might come together to provide our elected political leaders with a template of allyship to the racial healing and social justice demanded by the Mothers of the Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement.

**Bio: Gayatri Devi** is Associate Professor of English at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania where she teaches English and Women and Gender Studies courses. She serves on the boards of the PASSHE Women's Consortium, and also the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology.

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### **Finch, Annie: Among the Goddesses: Interactive Writing Ritual for Healing and Justice**

This interactive writing ritual is designed to provide participants with closure and catharsis as we synthesize the gifts of the 2017 ASWM program, through imaginative transformation. We will open by invoking goddesses of chaos, loss, mourning, justice, transformation, and peace. After the invocation, participants will be guided in a three part writing ritual of naming, releasing, and healing, designed to shift our stories into narratives of power. Our final group ritual will weave sacred dance, circling, drumming, and chanting with the words we have written, offering a focused and inspiring doorway out of the conference into the rest of the world. Please bring writing implements and any ceremonial attire you desire.

**Bio:** Annie Finch is a poet, writer, and performer. Her many books of poetry and poetics include *Spells: New and Selected Poems*; *Eve*; and *Among the Goddesses*, awarded the 2010 Sarasvati Award in Poetry from ASWM. Her column on woman-centered spirituality appears regularly in *The Huffington Post*, and she is currently completing her next book, *A Witch's Way*. Subscriptions to Annie's *Spells* and *Poetry Witch Musings* are available at [anniefinch.com](http://anniefinch.com).

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### **Focht, Caralie: The Butch Goddess: A Queer Reading of Exodus 2-6**

Queer voices are on the margins in the academy as well as the Church; consequently, lesbians have often been silenced in discussions about God and the Bible. Therefore, this presentation is an attempt to add to the scant group of lesbian voices in biblical scholarship by conducting a lesbian-focused, queer-ideological reading of Exodus 2-6 and 14 in hopes of creating a conversation that is familiar and welcoming to the lesbian community. In these chapters, the nature of the relationship between Moses, Yhwh, Pharaoh, and Israel is difficult to pin down as a result of the constantly shifting dynamics among them. Through the methodology of queer reader-response criticism, I will address their relationships from the position of butch/femme dynamics as they existed in the 1940s and 1950s lesbian bar culture. Based on the history of the lesbian community in the United States, this reading is one that could potentially and readily be mapped onto the text by a lesbian reader.

I have chosen Moses, Yhwh, Pharaoh, and Israel rather than focusing on the women in the text because lesbians are rarely main character even in today's media. Because a queer-ideological approach is already a free reading, I have chosen to utilize the male characters as women in order to fully capture the history of the lesbian experience rather than attempting to reclaim minor characters in the text. In a lesbian-focused, queer ideological reading of the Bible, lesbians should have the lead role.

**Bio:** I am a PhD student in the Hebrew Bible program within Emory's Graduate Division of Religion. I earned a Bachelor of Social Work from James Madison University and Master of Divinity from Vanderbilt Divinity School. My main research interest lies in identifying presence of traumatic events in the Hebrew Bible. I am particularly focused on traumas that affect individuals. Additionally, I am interested in queer ideological approaches.

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### **Giancola, Donna: Women, Land, and Eco-Justice**

This paper seeks to contribute to the eco-feminist dialogue concerning the still-present need for global advances in the status of both women and nature. Beginning with a cross-cultural (East-West) comparative analysis of ancient myth, I propose to revive a dynamic "biophilic" ethics of interconnectedness and eco-justice. An examination of modern relationships between women and land leads us to conclude that our

institutions and practices are woefully destructive. This situation is symptomatic of the fundamental oppression inherent to the dominant patriarchal paradigm. Practices

embedded and deeply rooted within societal customs, traditions, and attitudes frequently prevent women from equal access to land and deny women the right of being recognized as producers. By reclaiming our ancient Goddess myths and indigenous sense of sacredness, we can heal some of the schisms of planetary oppression. Respecting women's rights to land and their relationships with the earth, and encouraging women's ownership of land is a pragmatic, double-pronged step towards changing destructive thinking patterns about women and our planet. This paper contends that increasing women's access and title-tenure to land is a solution towards empowering women, adjusting ideologies, and promoting global and ecological sustainability.

**Bio: Dr. Donna Giancola** is associate professor of Philosophy and director of Religious Studies at Suffolk University, Boston. She has co-authored *Her Underground*, an eco-feminist novel, and a philosophy textbook, *World Ethics*. She has written numerous articles on comparative philosophy, feminism, and eco-feminism, and has presented in national and international forums, including Boston, Hawaii, Oxford, India, and most recently, Bangkok. Currently, she is working on a women and spirituality sourcebook, *In the Eyes of the Goddess*.

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#### **Heaslip, April: Re-Initiating Psyche: The Academy as Sisterhood**

The unconscious reinforcement of patriarchy by women against other women is often insidious and confusing. Taking a variety of forms such as the "mother wound," fostered competitiveness between women, and subtle shaming, these aggressive acts undermine female power and agency. Recovery from the patriarchal realm of the wounded masculine requires receptivity as well as action; infusing academic relationships and activity with the returning feminine and healing masculine requires a multi-layered recovery plan.

The myths of Psyche and other Mediterranean sister-brides—where projection of the shadow turns sister colleagues into evil queens traumatized by the phallacy of scarcity and the narcissistic need for attention/approval—offer pathways and clues for reimagining healthy professional sisterhood predicated on self-awareness, self-care, and sovereignty. By re-mythologizing the abuse and betrayal suffered at the hands of other women, as well as the development of healthy boundaries and self-containment, social justice becomes an embodied, sacred personal act.

**Bio: April Heaslip** is a doctoral candidate in Mythological Studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute and holds a masters in Social Ecology (Goddard College). Her dissertation "Regenerating Magdalene: Psyche's Quest for the Archetypal Bride" considers the impact of the resurgence of the divine feminine as healing agent for psyche,



communitas, and Gaia. Her teaching and research focus on applied ecofeminist mythology as cultural animation and the creative power of bricolage.

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### **Hobbs, Priscilla: Finding Demeter: Re-Imagining the Myth of Motherhood for Millennials**

American culture has a shaky relationship with mothers. Politically, women, especially those in a more right-leaning/conservative communities, are either taught that pregnancy is a necessary by-product of sex and/or that their access to contraceptives is limited. They are taught that their body isn't entirely their own. Socially, our culture has built an economic infrastructure around the ritual Baby Shower and the consumer goods necessary to baby's comfort and survival. Medically, we treat pregnancy as a medical ailment. With all the emphasis on birthing, we overlook the most essential element: the mothers. Support for mothers is limited and constantly under threat by politicians. Media mothers are likewise troubling: they are either still children, inept/crazy, or absent. The few mothers who reflect the genuine struggles of mothers may struggle with single-parenthood, or overwhelming careers, but not on the mother herself.

This paper proposes to explore archetypal motherhood from the perspective of and for Millennial mothers. By deconstructing the myth of Demeter and Persephone, this paper argues that American has created a generation of Persephone-mothers who want to be Demeter-mothers, but that this is in direct conflict with the prevalent media narrative. By validating the goddesses as viable archetypal images of motherhood, it is the hope of the author to initiate a constructive dialogue about the institution of motherhood and how to reestablish a healthy relationship with the archetype.

**Bio: Dr. Priscilla Hobbs** is an associate dean and instructor at Southern New Hampshire University, where she teaches classes in the general Humanities and World Mythology. She is the author of *Walt's Utopia: Disneyland and American Mythmaking*, in which she explores American historical and cold war mythologies through the lens of the map of Disneyland as a mythological text. A graduate of Pacifica Graduate Institute, she is currently exploring her own relationship with her daughter through the myth of Demeter.

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### **Inoescu, Carla: The Myth of Athena/Medusa - Justice and War: The Duality of Women's Roles in Patriarchal Politics**

The original version of the myth of Medusa portrays the creature as a beautiful woman who is maimed, raped, and murdered by an assortment of male Gods. Today, both in film and graphic art, Medusa has been altered pejoratively as a hideous creature with hair made of snakes and a gaze that transforms anyone who meets its horrors into

stone. This contemporary notion of Medusa as a monstrous creature is the distorted creation of men that society persists on accepting and internalizing, void of any dissent.

Athena is often depicted as a goddess of justice and social order. From her androgynous figure, to her vigilant defence of Athenian men, and her heritage as a goddess of wisdom, historians have hailed Athena as the epitome of female virtue. As Athena was absorbed into the classical Greek pantheon, she was the only one of the old goddesses who was elevated and respected, and she became part of the new ruling trinity along with Zeus and Apollo.

This paper will present the duality of the Athena/Medusa myth by drawing on evidence from ancient myth and ritual symbolism, as well as modern film and graphic art. Both goddesses are associated with female wisdom, which is depicted in Medusa with her serpent locks and Athena with her serpent-fringed aegis. Medusa, as wise crone, holds the secrets of sex, divination, magic, death and renewal. Athena, the eternal maiden, is linked with the new moon and presides over the female qualities of courage, strength and valor. The name Medusa can also be translated to Metis, who was the consort of Zeus and mother to Athena. This supports the argument that Athena and Medusa were once the same deity, and this mythical duality illustrates the dimensions of the leadership roles women occupied in conversations of justice, social order and political violence.

**Bio: Dr. Carla Ionescu's** research centers on the influential nature of Artemis both in the Greek world and in Ephesus. Her work provides evidence which suggests that Artemis is the most prevalent and influential goddess of the Mediterranean, with roots embedded in the community and culture of this area that can be traced further back in time than even the arrival of the Greeks.

Currently Dr. Ionescu is teaching at York University in the Department of Humanities. She is in the process of submitting her dissertation for publication, and presenting at conferences in Toronto, Minnesota and Quebec City in the spring.

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### **Levart, Lisa: Art, Activism and the Goddess**

Social movements around the world have long used creative activism to spread their messages to a wider audience. Here in America, as the feminist art movement arose in the early 1970s, innovative artwork was created that heighten the awareness of the female perspective. During this period, feminist artists such as Judy Chicago, Ana Mendieta, Mary Beth Edelson, and Louise Bourgeois, to name just a few, also began to reclaim the Goddess in their artworks. Their political art brought into focus both the lack of representation of women artists in the mainstream, male dominated art world, and the devaluation of the feminine in our patriarchal society.

Marie Wilson, the visionary feminist who founded the White House Project, a not-for-profit organization that promoted women's leadership from 1998-2013, famously wrote: "You can't be what you can't see." Ms. Wilson's words were addressing the lack

of female leaders, but she could have been addressing the dearth of the female representation in our patriarchal religions. In this presentation, I will discuss and project a powerpoint presentation that includes the artwork of various artists in America – myself included - that have used Goddess imagery as an affirmation of female power and independence. As the teacher and author Carol P. Christ wrote in her essay “Why Women Need the Goddess; “The strength and independence of female power can be intuited by contemplating ancient and modern images of the Goddess.”

**Bio:** Since 2001, **Lisa Levart** has traveled across America creating portraits of women who are part of the rapidly growing Earth-centered, spirituality movement. Using these evocative images, Levart has created a site specific, multi-media installation that has been seen in a variety of venues throughout the United States. Goddess on Earth, a book of her photographs, was released, winning a Gold Nautilus Book Award. Lisa’s new series of Goddess portraits Mythica is a finalist in the International Julia Margaret Cameron Awards For Women Photographers.

Lisa’s photographs have appeared in numerous publications including Fast Company, New York Magazine, Oprah Magazine, Time Magazine, The New York Times and The Washington Post, and been featured in exhibitions worldwide Lisa lives in Nyack, New York and is a frequent contributor to the Huffington Post. For more information on Lisa Levart, please visit [www.GoddessonEarth.com](http://www.GoddessonEarth.com)

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### **McFeely, Megan: The Feminine and Mystical Journey Towards Wholeness**

Gaia, the web of Life, interconnects all things in a concert of Oneness. As the embodied expression of this, women have a deep capacity for empathy, relating to other, and the ability to feel into and receive information from the field, an asset that has insured our effectiveness and survival. This capacity to respond to the needs of another, nurtures communities and relationships, but there is a shadow side. Our natural tendencies, in collusion with cultural expectations, impel women to look outside themselves to what others want and expect, to define who we are. As a result, we have been disconnected from the earth, our soul, and our own knowing, which has had a perilous impact on us all. The new sisterhood is to be born through the reclaiming of Self, a treacherous journey inward towards wholeness, which is the only thing that can bring life back into balance.

**Bio: Megan McFeely**, producer/director of *As She Is*, has been on a journey for more than 25 years exploring, both inwardly and outwardly, this question: “What is my authentic nature as a woman?” She recently screened her film at Library of Alexandria in Egypt, to an audience of 200 women change agents from 20 different countries. In 2016, the film won Best Debut Documentary Filmmaker at the Female Eye Film Festival in Toronto. [www.as-she-is.org](http://www.as-she-is.org)

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## **Mody, Monica: The Borderlands Feminine: A Feminist, Decolonial Framework for Remythologizing the Goddess in South Asia/Transnational Cultures**

While goddesses in the religious life of India are attributed with power, autonomy, and primacy, Indian women themselves often remain subject to norms and violence regulating their social roles and conduct. On the one hand, the Vedic caste patriarchy gradually grafted itself onto autochthonous, folk traditions that worshipped the great mother. The mother goddess turned into a subservient spouse of the male deity. Ways of living based on female and earth-centered practices that transmit knowledges down female lineages were gradually sidelined. British orientalist and missionaries invented Hinduism during the colonial period, codifying and further entrenching brahmanical patriarchy. On the other hand, anti-colonial nationalism turned women into bearers of a nationalistic morality, which—while claiming to revere woman as goddess or as mother—narrowed the primacy, scope, and sphere of their spiritual participation. Postcolonial India remains rife with nationalist discourses.

Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory reveals a liminal zone in between and bridging oppositional binaries, be they myth and history, the imaginal and the real, the old and the new, the past and the present. It is here that I propose to synthesize self-affirming, complex images of the feminine for the South Asian/brown transnational imaginary using poetry and autoethnography. The borderlands consciousness makes it possible to create a new mythology of the goddess within and without, engaging in a politics of memory that challenges (neo)colonizing, (neo)nationalistic, patriarchal cultural and religious systems. A decolonial re-membering of a feminine-centric culture requires the imagination and the intellect to be inservice together to seek and create alternatives towards justice.

**Bio:Monica Mody** is a Ph.D. candidate in East-West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies from Ranchi, India. She holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Notre Dame, and a B.A., LL.B.(Hons.) from the National Law of India University. She received the 2013 Social Justice and Community Service Grant at CIIS for her research highlighting the strategic role of hope in adivasi (indigenous) social movements, and has co-authored a handbook of diverse teaching practices for the Office of Diversity. She was a part of the 2015-16 Standing in Our Power Transformational Leadership Institute for women of color. [monica.mody@gmail.com](mailto:monica.mody@gmail.com)

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## **Nasri, Kamal: The Role of Mythologies in Empowering Male/Female Social Status: A Study of Monstrous Narratives and their Functions in Algerian Mythology**

Dealing with mythology in contemporary society is one of the challenges that whetted my appetite especially to embark on a multidisciplinary field and ponder elements that are in relation with the current scope of study. Hitherto, this is possibly a topic that was pondered quite repeatedly but differently. Mythology, gender and power

distribution are a paradigm that can construct a whole study and include cumbersome investigations. The attempt would be to determine how these tripartite intersect and how they affect each other in a social context such as the Algerian one.

The research avenues in hands are part of a doctorate thesis which falls under the banner of three distinct yet interconnected scholarly arenas: Mythological functions, Gender within Algerian mythology, and finally the myth of education. The second chapter of this work focuses on scrutinizing gender roles and power relations, and how they are employed in mythology. Moreover, as it explains the relationship between mythological summons and gender bias performed by laypeople.

According to charter myth, gender changes through sociological functions, are clearly exposed through paralinguistic devices and strengthened by monstrification techniques. These changes are made in form of binaries such as: gods and goddesses, heroes/ heroines and monsters both males and females. Yet, these binaries are reflected rigorously through language, where biased representations are pulled out of texts and sustained by blind agents, forming of women and men an opposed dichotomy, either empowering or disempowering one another. As a result, prologues of either misogynist or misandry contexts are created and perpetuated from ancient times to our present, forming new types of mythologies and shaping realities.

Key words: Mythology, Gender, Power distribution, Charter myth, Etiological Mythology, Myth's functions, Monsters, Monstrification.

**Bio: Mr Kamal. Nasri** is a Doctoral candidate in the Department of English at the Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem

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### **Şóetán, Olúsegun: Òşòròmònígà: Manifestation of Àje in Nollywood Films.**

Nollywood, the largest film tradition in Africa, is, undoubtedly, the most circulated and most consumed popular culture in Sub-Saharan Africa, if not the entire African continent. It is a tradition that celebrates African identity and culture. Beyond the slapstick jokes and dark humor that the industry celebrates, it is notoriously known for representing traditional African religious beliefs and mythology. Especially, Nollywood films (re)constructs images of mythical figures and sacred entities such as àje in their narratives to suit archetypal cultural classification and manifestations of the different life forces. In Nollywood, àje assumes a diabolical connotation that describes the astral and material forms that the “women of the night” inhabit to enact “cosmic causation (Theresa Washington, 22). Often times, àje are stereotyped as a brutal malevolent cult that seeks the destruction and disruption of the cosmic balance. This paper, therefore, contests the erroneous representations of àje in Nollywood, and argue that àje is a complicated referent that cannot be fitted into a single defamatory definition. Reading through a spectrum of Yoruba films, including Yekini Ajileye's *Kòtò Ayé* (1993) and *Àbení*

Agbon (2008), I underscore the importance of àje in postcolonial African epistemological enunciation.

**Bio:** **Olúsegun Şóetán** teaches at the Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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### **Stone, Mary Louise: Empowered Leadership from a Motherline in the Americas**

Native civilizations offer immense diversity, yet a submerged thread of linkage reemerges today—empowered leadership from a Motherline of the Americas. Even for non-indigenous people, cultures that greeted arriving Europeans and survive today affect our land, spirit, and people. Respect and partnership lead to a direct method: listening to Indian people with another way of thinking about the world and organizing society.

What comprises a Motherline of the Americas? Can we reinforce it? For three characteristics among my colleagues of Peru’s and Bolivia’s Titiqaqa plateau, Mother deities emerge, and daily prayer to the Mother Pachamama creates a sense of spiritual interrelationship. Second, significant women’s roles in gender-balanced societies appear. Titiqaqa women guide and bond cultures through their ritual textile designs that display key social principles, and nurture society through seed genetics while men complement in public speaking—in flexible roles. Third, inclusive communities result from power-sharing and solidarity.

Selected examples of Mother deities, women’s roles, and inclusive communities also include North American Haudenosaunee as well as Keres Pueblos, Mesoamerican Juchitán Oaxaca, and Amazon basin Shipibo people. These Motherline qualities reemerge in the wider society in urban women’s organizations in Mexico City and Lima, and in Ecuador’s and Bolivia’s plurinational constitutions.

Modern people may not farm or create textile art. Yet nurturing families and friends through teaching and herbal remedies sound familiar, and guiding society with these long-lived values is needed. How do we fulfill these roles today—or not?

**Bio.** After cross-cultural teaching in New Mexico, **Mary Louise Stone** lived twelve years in communities around Lake Titiqaqa in Peru and Bolivia. She consulted on community-run tourism with villages, universities, and with Duke University, NC. After her MA thesis “The Andean Mother: Weaving a Culture of Reciprocity,” Stone completed her dissertation on the “Ancient Andean Mother: A Cosmic Portal through Five Millennia” in 2015, which received ASWM’s Kore Honorable Mention.

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**Wolfstone, Irene: Indigenous Matricultures in North America**

My purpose is to shift the focus of feminist scholars from European matricultures to the indigenous matricultures of Turtle Island. **Matriculture** refers to cultural traditions that value the maternal, in its literal and metaphoric meanings, and elevate mothering for its creative contribution to cultural continuity (Passman, 1993). Heidi Goettner-Abendroth (2013), leading theorist of matriarchal studies, posits that “maternal values as ethical principles pervade all areas of a matriarchal society,” creating an attitude of care-taking, nurturing, and peacemaking in a cultural paradigm that is much broader than anthropology’s concepts of matrilineal kinship and matrilocality. **Rematriation** (Muthien, 2011) is the contemporary movement by indigenous cultures to reclaim and reconstruct their matricultures - a movement that follows from the deconstruction of patriarchy and colonialism.

Matriculture is embedded in indigenous language and cosmology; the English language may not be adequate to express nuanced meanings. Terms such as goddess, god, deity, religion, matriarchy, marriage and property are relevant to discussion of European matricultures; however, they are not a good fit for discussions related to decolonizing the indigenous matricultures of North America. I draw on the Inuit cosmology of *sila* and the ‘indweller’, Sedna, to illustrate this point.

As feminist scholars, we need to create deep alliances with indigenous sisters, learn their languages, study the ancient symbols embedded in their textiles and pottery. As we observe their struggle to rematriate, we wonder if the settler culture, too, has the adaptive capacity to reclaim matriculture as a climate change adaptation to ensure cultural continuity.

**Bio: Irene Friesen Wolfstone** lives with sacred land in Pinawa, Manitoba, where she maintains The Great Mother Garden. She holds a Master of Arts in Integrated Studies from Athabasca University and intends to pursue doctoral studies on the linkage between matriculture and food sovereignty. She treasures her relationships with her children and grandchildren. She explores the concepts of natality and matriculture at [www.terramandala.ca](http://www.terramandala.ca).

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### **Work-Makinne, Dawn: Sibyl of the Rhine: Hildegard von Bingen as a Northern Wisdomkeeper**

Perhaps known best today for her transcendent women’s music, Hildegard of Bingen was a Renaissance woman several hundred years before there was a Renaissance. A twelfth century abbess and theologian, prophet, physician and philosopher, visionary and scientist, composer and painter, she was known throughout Europe for her erudition. Though thoroughly steeped in her Christian tradition, she expressed the divine in an earthy manner as *viriditas*, green vigor, an immanent, fecund, moisture-laden force. She wrote and sang of the female Holy Wisdom and the Lady Justice. Her creation stories do not begin in both fire and ice, but in a fiery light, in a fierce poetic vision. The Old Norse pre-Christian religious stories (The Poetic and Prose *Eddas*, and the Sagas) that we have today were written down by Christian monks in Iceland, in the

thirteenth century. I argue that we can also include Hildegard in our lineage of Germanic wisdomkeepers; in her devout Christianity sings forth images of the holy earth and the female divine. I argue that we need not simply ignore the Christian mystical tradition as part of our heritage in the study of women and mythology. Leaving out the wisdom of one such as Hildegard impoverishes our study. In her own time, she was called the 'Sibyl of the Rhine,' and she was known for her powerful visions. Placing them in the context of earth wisdom renews their power and gives them a new *viriditas*, a new and green vigor.

**Bio: Dawn Work-MaKinne** is an independent scholar of Germanic women's religious history. She holds a Ph.D. in Women's Studies in Religion from the Union Institute and University; her dissertation won both the Union Institute Sussman Award and the ASWM Kore Award for Best Dissertation. Dawn continues to teach on Germanic religion and holds a faculty position with the Women's Theological Institute. She is working on her first book.

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### **Wouk, Judith and Hadassah Nechushta: Justice for Hidden Heroines**

The Hebrew Bible, a foundational societal myth, vilifies many women who are, in fact, strong role models. Their voices were suppressed because they happened to be on the side that did not write the history. "[L]etting a character enter us in the place where our own identity is 'open behind', finding one's own story in the story of one's people" (Race MoChridhe) can "illuminate individual and collective ways of thinking, acting and being" to "inspire conversations about solutions" to issues of "war, violence, exploitation and suffering". This panel contains two related papers on the theme of Biblical women reframed.

Judith Maeryam reframes the story of the Biblical Delilah (Judges 13—16), said to have caused the downfall of the strongman/judge Samson. After a brief discussion of Samson's experience with his mother, his wife, and a sex worker from Gaza, she moves on to Delilah, the only one named, with whom Samson fell in love. Delilah is said to have betrayed Samson for money. Her story can be read in quite a different way, however, as a strong independent woman who is not identified with/ruled by, any man.

Hadassah Nechushta reframes the Biblical Queen Nechushta, the last Queen Mother of Judea (2 Kings 24) and adds how she experiences her in her life. Nechushta was brought up in an environment of domestic violence, by a cruel father who married her off to a cruel king by whom she had a cruel son. After being exiled, she returned to give healing and nourishment to her people, while continuing to worship the Hebrew Goddess Asherah and keeping Her sacred symbols. Says Hadassah: "I feel her spirit with me always !!!!!"



Hadassah and Judith will reclaim the legacies of Delilah and Nechushta from a feminist point of view from those who want to demonize them, so that they can finally receive justice and the recognition they deserve.

**Judith Maeryam Wouk** is an initiate in the Kohenet Jewish Priestess program. She is a retired Canadian Federal Public Servant who can now indulge in her passion for feminist research, drumming, and peace.

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### **Zagel, Laura: Black Mother Within: Retrieving Our Selves from Racism and Sexism Through the Black Madonna**

Patriarchal cultures that consider themselves white comfortably perpetuate racism and sexism, projecting all their unwanted “otherness” onto dark-skinned cultures and women. The truth is all people originated from Africa, as DNA studies and archeology have confirmed. There is also religious evidence; European Black Madonnas have garnered fierce devotion throughout the common era. Black Madonnas are more than a Christian syncretization of African goddesses. They are archetypal, eliciting a deep emotional response to worship a black-skinned female that counters conscious oppressive beliefs. Lucia Birnbaum has written they captivate Europeans because they represent our collective African values of justice, equality, healing, sharing and vision that remain largely unconscious.

Jung’s concept of the shadow, that unconscious part of the psyche consisting of characteristics we don’t recognize in ourselves both positive and negative, is *psychological* DNA evidence of our African heritage. White patriarchal culture has repressed its legacy of worshipping a dark mother, the shadow becoming the repository of this knowledge. Fred Gustafson and other depth psychologists see the Black Madonna as a compensation for this projected shadow, the dark feminine that refuses to be oppressed. As She remains un-integrated, a power structure reigns that justifies war, enslavement, and plunder.

While social change on a collective level is the goal, this presentation will show that *individually* unlocking the Black Madonna’s mysteries and acknowledging repressed African values is the key to this change. Central to depth psychology is the integration of the personal shadow; one must accept as theirs those undesirable qualities it contains as well as discover unknown strengths that have been projected onto others. Because of her archetypal nature, the Black Madonna is a symbol for healing this racist and sexist culture, bringing together shadow integration and Goddess veneration.

**Bio: Laura M. Zagel**, LCSW received her M.S.W. from Columbia University and her M.Div. from Yale University. In private psychotherapy practice for adults and adolescents since 1994, currently in Rockland, Maine, she has consulted for public schools, local agencies and hospitals, providing inpatient and outpatient psychotherapy. With a deep interest in women’s and adolescent girl’s psychology, she

has presented workshops and presentations on these subjects for the NASW Maine Chapter, the C.G. Jung Center, Brunswick, Maine, ASWM 2014 Conference in San Antonio, TX, and the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement's 2015 Conference in Rome, Italy.