

Presenter abstracts

Sacred Stories for the Sentient Earth: Scholarship for Collaboration, Intervention, Reciprocity

Foundational Myths, Witchcraft Accusations, and the Symbolism of Cats in Yoruba Cosmology

Claire Princess Ayelotan

This theoretical paper explores the enduring influence of foundational myths in Yoruba cosmology, with a focus on the symbolic role of cats in shaping perceptions of witchcraft. In Yoruba narratives, cats are imbued with spiritual significance, often linked to divinities and supernatural abilities. These associations continue to inform contemporary beliefs, particularly within Nigerian Pentecostal communities, where they shape fears and interpretations of witchcraft. By examining the transformation of these myths in diaspora contexts, this study sheds light on their role in cultural identity, social justice, and community cohesion. Using an interdisciplinary approach that integrates theology, sociology, and African spirituality, this paper highlights how foundational myths establish moral boundaries and societal norms. African Womanist perspectives further illuminate how these narratives about cats act as powerful moral and spiritual symbols, reflecting the perceived intelligence and wisdom of the natural world. This research aligns with the conference's theme of sentient beings, offering a unique perspective on the interplay between mythology, human-animal relationships, and modern spiritual beliefs. Attendees will gain insight into how ancient Yoruba cosmological myths persist, adapt, and resonate in contemporary cultural and spiritual practices.

Rescue and Myth

Cristina Biaggi

I'd like to give a short paper on how caring for an animal ameliorated the relationship between two human beings. This is actually part of my story - how rescuing a puppy from probable death resulted in my partner and I becoming closer and more harmonious in our relationship. This is a short, sweet, very personal paper accompanied by slides. This is related to myths of reciprocity and partnership among sentient beings. In my presentation I will also describe how I communicate with dogs to create portraits of them that reflect not only their physiognomy and personalities but also their souls. These stories connect with myths of reciprocity and partnership among sentient beings.

Communicating Across Time and Place with Trees

Barbara Bickel

In this presentation, interconnected trance and arts-based phenomenological experiences of being fostered by the land and nature, as a visibly invisible matrixial covenant, are revealed. In performative ritual moments on the foster-lands I live with/in, I reconnect with my ancestral

lineages. Communicaring within borderspaces and borderlinks of co-creating, co-inquiring, and co-learning with trees roots me within a matrixial foster-land. Communicaring is a pre-ethical act of care that can cross borders and carry us in fragility and into human/more-than-human past/present/futures. Through diasporic copoiesis (Gur-ze'ev) I found myself in shared spaces of transition and transference within human and more-than-human realms. A descendent of colonial settlers on Turtle Island, I have geographically moved several times in my lifetime. My pre-settler origins are with German speaking people who came from Germany and Romania. Through art, poetry and trance-based inquiry (Bickel, 2020) supported by Ettingerian matrixial language of borderspace(s) (2006), placenterre (Jordan, 2017, Garnier, 2017) and matrixial mediators (Bickel & Fisher, 2023) this presentation invokes imaginal realms and collapses time, offering time riffs. Communicaring, as demonstrated in this presentation opens to the matrixial network affects that exceed our individual subjective selves.

Spirit in Stones

Michelle Boyle

“We don’t make this shit up, it’s in our bones”, neo-pagans proudly say, and it is very often true. The earth-based cultural wisdom lost through successive waves of colonial oppression often finds its way to human consciousness through genetic or ancestral memory held in our bones and in the bones of the earth herself- through the consciousness of stone. Stone, and water—and often the two together—have been important teachers on Michelle’s ancestral healing journey and in key moments and places in her doctoral fieldwork. From a Mendocino riverbed to healing streams springing from Italian mountaintops and the “King of Stone”, to ancestral guardian spirits living in standing stones to ancient waters in deep subterranean caverns; Michelle’s experiences with stone have restored her connection to sacred land and supported a process of soul retrieval and restoration of belonging, to the Self and to the planet. Ancestral messages embedded in stone over the centuries and even millennia have the power to reach and awaken us now and have deep relevance for our times.

Regenerating stories and women's connection with the earth through a survey of art featuring the snake and it's symbolism

Kristen Calvert

This presentation explores how the snake is visually, mythically, and ritualistically connected with land and the internal and external female forms and cycles. The snake in varied cultures appears symbolically as an intermediary because of its ability to adapt to environments and shift between the corporeal and spiritual. The snake’s shedding skin was a symbol of creation and regeneration. With women’s akin capacity to regenerate through menstruation and procreation, the snake was frequently associated with the feminine.

In southern California, a girl of the Native American Luiseno tribe, upon initial menstruation, was placed in an earthen pit, like an incubating snake. Her blood merged with the earth, transforming its chemistry and mixed with ancestress’s DNA. Upon emerging, she created rattlesnake

pictographs on rocks, and her face was painted in snake signs signifying her internal and external birthing capacities. In this context these are metaformic and matrilineal symbols signifying the embodied connection with land and ancestresses.

In art history various representations of snake goddesses and myths throughout the world are also examples of metamorphosis through connection with the land. For example, the Mesoamerican statue of Coatlicue (“Snake-Her-Skirt”) according to Cecilia Klein, is a symbol of the self-sacrifice of an Earth Goddess’s body to bring light and life. In this context, Coatlicue demonstrates the internal creatrix power of the feminine to alter current environments and reality. Cultures throughout the world co-create a collective regenerative memory of embodied feminine power through reoccurring artforms that incorporate the feminine and the serpent metaphorically with the earth.

Shamir שְׁמִיר (Diamond Toothed) Worm - Pacifist Slave or Anti-Prophetic Savior: Exploring Ancient and Modern Jewish Myths of Soil and Stone
Sarah Chandler

When plant medicine healer Shterna attempts to cross the river that traces her Eastern European village, she embarks on a journey through the realms that includes meeting the prophetess Miriam and capturing the elusive diamond toothed shamir worm. Presented for the first time in 2024, the Magid Ensemble’s original performance piece “Shterna and the Lost Voice” tells the hero’s journey of Shterna in the style of an Eastern European folktale. Analyzing the source texts of the Shterna narrative, this presentation will sift through dust, stones, and soil from Hebrew Bible creation myths to the ten plagues to King Solomon’s encounter with demons. We will ask and explore: How should humans be in relationship with stones, soil, dust, and microorganisms? What can we learn from them and how can we tune in to listen even more closely? What unique roles do women spiritual leaders play around soil & stone rituals (examples include: burial in soil, placing a hewn stone marker on a grave, tracing graves & cemeteries with thread and making candles from the measuring wicks).

Black Women Remember: The Reemergence of the Primordial Mothers for Personal, Political, and Planetary Healing
Kimberly Davis

I enter the discourse on the reemergence of the primordial Mothers from the location of my West-African, African-American, historically trafficked female body. It is imperative to name my body as the site of remembrance, as it houses the blood, water, and spirit of the primordial Mothers. According to Ruby Gibson, “Our bodies, like the Earth, are the keepers of memory. Just as the Earth contains the historical library of life in its ruins, graves, trees, rocks, and oceans, our bodies inherit the archives of our ancestors...Our Earth, our body, remembers all.” Despite the brutal forced-severing of our bodies from our spirits, lineages, children, lands, languages, cultures, indigenous spiritualities, and, ultimately, our divine Mothers my Black feminine body remembers. She remembers the womb, the waters of creation. She remembers the spiritual powers the Mothers bestowed upon her to restore natural order and harmony. She remembers the sacred gifts of dreams, divination, prophecy, spirit communication, creativity,

nature reverence, ancestral connections, sexuality, and a myriad of other healing modalities that have been suppressed, co-opted, and demonized for centuries. She remembers past-lifetimes as a high-priestess in Kemet, Persia, Atlantis, and Carthage. By means of ancestral memory, research, and spiritual connections, I navigate cosmic journeys, revelations, and tragic past and present patriarchal existences to reclaim and reinstate Black Mami and her daughters back to their rightful place in human consciousness.

The Serpent-Guardian of Watery Paradox: The Sonoran Desert Legend of La Corúa Cheryl De Ciantis

La Corúa, a giant mythic serpent, is the hidden protector of waterheads in the Sonoran Desert. If the Corúa is killed, the water she guards dries up. Though now little-remembered, this is a striking image of the water crisis in the Southwest and surely retains a memory of past crises in this region. Actively contemplating La Corúa's image through my artwork has involved not only studying the archetypal snake divinities common worldwide, who generate rain, create fertility, bring healing and inspire wisdom; but also contemplating the paradoxes that deathly venoms can be healing agents, and that death fecundates life, both spiritually and materially. Though artists and writers fear the common experience of blockage when creativity dries up, aridity can be a crucial stage in spiritual individuation, as described by the mystic, Saint Teresa of Avila: even as we progress through intentional stages of connection with the object of our devotion, whatever that object or our means of devotion to it may be, we can sometimes encounter deprivation, desiccation, disconnection. Like the movement of water in the Tucson Valley, with its seasonal, cyclical and epochal intermittencies, its sudden and often dangerous appearances, the Element of water, like the feminine archetypes as well as the physical facts of female embodiment so closely intertwined with them, is a manifestation of power larger than ourselves that moves in many ways. Not just on/off; water's ways are a both/and. If we can creatively re-member La Corúa, what vital lessons might the Water-Guardian bring?

Herda Dewresh – The Sacred Earth in Kurdish Alevi Tradition Dilsa Deniz

In Indigenous Kurdish Alevi belief, the Earth is referred to as "Herda Dewresh," meaning "the Dervish Earth," symbolizing the sacred and wise nature of Mother Earth. This presentation will explore the concept of Herda Dewresh, focusing on its influence in both the sacred and profane spheres of life. Accordingly, the presentation will discuss its impact on societal values, including the prohibition of hunting animals and the deep respect for water, which is seen as a vital resource that must be kept clean and accessible to all living beings. These practices reflect a spiritual relationship between humans, the Earth, and all forms of life. Adopting an emic (insider)/Indigenous perspective, this presentation will highlight how Kurdish Alevs maintain harmony with nature/sacred geography/land, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity, the environment, and spirituality. Through this worldview, Kurdish Alevs uphold the Earth as a living entity, fostering ecological respect and ensuring the preservation of natural resources for future generations.

Reclaiming Inanna: A Myth Model for Embodying Erotic Aliveness

Annalisa Derr

In her work, Betty De Shong Meador persuasively demonstrates that the prehistoric Inanna was a Great Goddess, a status made evident through Enheduanna's poetry. Building on Meador's insights, I will incorporate supplementary material from contemporary Mesopotamian scholarship to make the case that the prehistoric Inanna aligns with Marija Gimbutas' theory of the Neolithic Great Goddess. Inspired by a life-changing encounter I had with the Indic-Hindu tantric goddess Lalitha while in Varanasi, India, this presentation will extend to a comparative analysis of Inanna and Lalitha. I will explore how Inanna, like Lalitha, may have been perceived and worshipped as the embodiment of primeval Eros. Through this comparison, I will delve into the esoteric dimensions of Inanna and examine her role as a symbol of erotic aliveness that can be experienced internally as the living presence of the goddess. Ultimately, this lecture reclaims Inanna as a myth model for our times. Beyond her connection to sexual agency, I propose that Inanna serves as a healing guide for women to shed internalized sexism and instead consciously embody their own erotic aliveness as Life Force Power.

Tanit Anat Athena A-ta-na Neith Inanna in ancient texts and iconography: the origins of the Carthaginian Great Goddess Tanit

Miriam Robbins Dexter

In Vergil's Aeneid, Dido, queen of Carthage, maddened by the Trojan hero Aeneas' flight from her Queendom, is about to take her own life. She prays,

“Oh, Sun, you who illuminate all the works of the earth with your flames,
and you, Juno, interpreter and sharer of these woes of mine,
and Hecate, [whose name is] howled in the nocturnal crossroads by the cities,
and you, avenging Furies, and you gods of the dying Elissa [Dido],
receive these [words], and as is worthy, turn your divine influence to my ills
and hear our prayers.”

The Romans gave the names of their own deities to the deities of foreign countries such as Carthage; the Roman Juno Caelestis and Juno Moneta were the Roman names given to the Carthaginian Great Goddess Tanit. This presentation excavates the history and posits the prehistory of the Great Goddess Tanit. Through her iconography and that of related divine female figures, as well as my translations of texts in Phoenician, Linear B, Classical Greek, Ugaritic, Egyptian, and Sumerian, I hope to illustrate the constellation of related functions and imagery of these goddesses, as well as the possible origin of Tanit, giving evidence for the transmission and relationship of these divine female figures through time. Tanit was very likely borrowed from the earlier Ugaritic (Syrian) Anat and related linguistically and functionally to the Mycenaean and Classical Greek Athena and very likely the Egyptian Neith as well. Further, I will demonstrate that the name of Tanit as well as her functions can be traced back to the earlier Sumerian Great Goddess Inanna, and through her, ultimately, to the multifunctional Neolithic Great Goddesses

Osun's Role within the Yoruba Cosmology and Her Interconnectedness between Humanity and Nature

Latonia Dixon

This paper explores the multifaceted significance of Osun, the Yoruba goddess of fertility, rivers, and love, through the lens of Sacred Odu/Stories. It delves into Osun's role within Yoruba cosmology, emphasizing her embodiment of the interconnectedness between humanity and nature. By examining traditional rituals, cultural narratives, and modern interpretations, this paper highlights how Osun's teachings promote ecological awareness, community engagement, and sustainable practices. In addition, this paper discusses the relevance of her stories in contemporary environmental movements, emphasizing the need for reciprocity in our relationship with the Earth. Through this exploration, the paper aims to demonstrate how Osun's narratives can inspire a holistic approach to addressing global environmental challenges, fostering a deeper understanding of the ethical implications of care for the Earth and its resources.

A goddess of ambiguities: Inanna/Ishtar and her (many) images

Pinar Durgun

No one but she can
Bring back the one who reveres her from the grave.
No one but she can
Revive the dead..."

The oldest hero's journeys were written on clay tablets in ancient Mesopotamia. One of these stories' hero is a woman, but not an ordinary one. She goes into the Underworld, faces her death, and returns from it. This goddess, known as Inanna to Sumerians and later as Ishtar, was "the Lady of the Heaven." Even though her realm was celestial, with her symbol the 8-pointed star and planet Venus, she was frequently associated with the Underworld. Her seemingly contradictory yet complementary attributes –life and death, war and love, female and male– reflect complex ideas about gender and sexuality in ancient Mesopotamia. In this paper, I present what we know about this goddess and how we know it by looking at her images, specifically on cylinder seals, created by ancient western Asian cultures who worshipped her.

Grounding with the Slow Steady Rhythm of Rock Consciousness

Ann Filemyr

The common division of lifeforms into two categories, animate and inanimate, often posits minerals as inanimate. This dismisses the possibility of consciousness in mountain, rock, stone, pebble, soil, sand. This paper contests the outdated categorization and asserts that mineral beings should be considered animate alongside plants, animals, and humans. The assertion of consciousness in what Gustavo Monje has called, 'biome beings,' or what many in Native America call, 'stone people,' is supported through Indigenous worldviews and cross-cultural story, song, prayer, myth, as well as in the fields of quantum physics, archeology and geology. We are dependent upon/embedded in the mineral world. The influence of vibratory patterns and

magnetic frequencies on human-stone interactions illustrates the presence of rock consciousness moving through and around us in known and unknown fields of being. If we accept human and rock beings are in direct conscious communication, it could help explain ancient stone structures that defy mechanical logic in their construction. Quartz is the most common mineral on Earth, primarily composed of silicon dioxide (SiO₂). Quartz also occurs in the human body, essential for bones, teeth, and cartilage. We are in relationship to minerals outside of ourselves but also within informing us when we speak of 'knowing in our bones.'

Goddess Creativity in Action: Ritual Theater Creation & Performance

Annie Finch

This collaborative group will interweave our Goddess Creativity into an interactive ritual theater performance to share with the full conference on Saturday evening. All who are ready to contribute your gifts of music, song, poetry, art, masks, dance, acting, theater production, puppetry, stagecraft, ritual, etc.—or who are simply drawn somehow to help manifest this magical event—are warmly invited to join us. Please come ready to create; after a very brief introduction to the principles and practices that distinguish Goddess Creativity from patriarchal notions of creativity, we will dive right in to embody them together.

Special notes: 1. Full participation in this gathering means a commitment to support and/or participate in Saturday night's performance. We may also decide by consensus to rehearse in between. You don't need to commit to this before our meeting, but please be aware! 2. If you do intend to participate, please bring with you to this meeting any and all musical instruments, recordings, decorations, props, costumes, sacred items, etc. that you feel inspired to bring (if you need to choose colors, please choose RED things). 3. Finally: Annie has an exciting idea for an overall theme but doesn't want to spoil it for our Saturday night audience by publishing it here:)

Encounters with the Wisdom of Iona's Beach

Carol Geisler and Janet Marinelli

An ancient beach called us to her pink volcanic rock shoreline on the shores of Lake Superior. We trust that long before this was named Iona's beach, indigenous people felt the sentient nature of this place; its rocks, water and waves, sun and wind and fog, plants, and animals. A Finnish immigrant family ran a resort on the land where Iona Lind saw and felt the magic/mythic nature of the "singing" beach. Sixty years later, instead of selling the land, Iona wanted all people to be able to access the 11 acres; it is now a Scientific and Natural area free to all through the State of Minnesota. Iona's beach communicates to those who listen and offers many lessons: historic, scientific, spiritual, archetypal, psychological, ecological and the presence of the divine feminine. Iona's beach presents paradoxes: Indigenous roots/colonization, science/spirituality, seriousness/playfulness, taking/giving, and harming/restoring. As guests on the beach, we experienced much beauty and joy, and we witnessed transgressions against the balance of nature and struggled with how to respond. We'll explore what it's like to be called to a soul place, go on pilgrimage, enter a portal, and open to the awesome and unsettling messages that arrive. We will describe our own sacred,

painful, and funny journeys with Iona's beach, show whimsical photos of the magical stones, and invite you to reflect on your experiences with animal, plant, and earth intelligence and to remember the power of place and interconnectedness in our journeys.

Getting It Off the Back Burner

Donna Giancola

This panel is designed as an open forum for participants to come together and discuss projects that have not yet come to fruition. Projects get stalled for many reasons and sometimes a new perspective can help an idea take form. By bringing together like minded individuals from a multiplicity of backgrounds participants can provide interdisciplinary approaches, insights and feedback, and enable each other to reconnect with their projects through a broadening of perspectives. Because of the free-flowing nature of this panel participants will not be required to submit presentations in advance. Participants will be expected to explain the what, why and how of their projects and to seek collaboration from the group in developing a vision for moving forward. Questions and comments can center around refining a thesis, changing mediums, doing outreach, re-defining parameters and utilizing alternative methods, etc. Topics can range from anything under the sun related to our shared endeavors and will cover a wide variety of genres including papers, poetry, art, multimedia, and spiritual activist projects, etc. The purpose of this panel is to empower each other in our approaches to our creative work. The benefit of an open forum is that it does not rely on work that is already done, but rather engages all of us in what we can do in the future. While each of our individual work is unique, by sharing our ideas and experiences we can work and support each other as a community and validate the interconnections that brought us together. *Women and Magick* is the title of a paper I have delivered at several conferences and would like to expand on it into a book proposal. My problem is that there is so much glamour surrounding this topic. I believe a fresh approach to an ancient practice is necessary. Discussing it with a group of engaged like minded women could spark a creative perspective for teasing out the substance and presenting material in a fresh way. As moderator for this panel I hope this discussion could set the tone for others to contribute their work and where they would like to go with it. There are no formal presenters for this panel. It is my intention that participants will join as part of an on-going dialogue during the conference without the need for preparation. My goal is to promote spontaneous discussions of our work in an informal setting (perhaps while having tea). Conferences can be overwhelmingly structured and this informal format can provide an opportunity to anyone wishing to simply share their ideas.

Inanna, Protectress of Nature's and Women's Cycles

Judy Grahn

I have been working with the poetry of Enheduanna, High Priestess of Ur (2286-2251) for thirty years. I was fortunate that Betty DeShong Meador, the psychotherapist who turned rough translations of Sumerian texts into exquisite poetry, came to one of my writing classes; she stayed as I became her writing mentor for years, and her work taught me about the poetry of the earliest named author. Betty's book, *Inanna, Lady of Largest Heart: Poems of the Sumerian*

High Priestess, came out in 2001. In the twenty years following, I taught the poetry of the High Priestess as well as other Sumerian poetry on the many qualities of the goddess Inanna, in a Master's Program I co-directed, in Women's Spirituality. Enheduanna's long poems describe a goddess enraged with a particular mountain, destroying it despite the objections and fears of the pantheon of deities including the sky god. While some interpretations have held that Enheduanna was describing a military conflict, Betty interpreted Inanna as a goddess of nature going up against the idea of perpetual abundance in an earthly paradise; a conflict of philosophies. In agreement with this I wrote other stories in my 2023 book, *Eruptions of Inanna*, showing Inanna as protective of both nature and of women's older, cyclical rituals. By talking and reading some of her dramatic poetry, I hope to leave the audience thinking Inanna was a powerful, and just, goddess of life energy, and that Enheduanna was a great poet.

A Druidic Account of the Healing Earth

Dawn Johnson Harvey

Celtic ancestry has deep roots in the natural world and is seen as a source of wisdom and guidance. Some scholars estimate the Celts believed that stones, particularly those with unique shapes, textures, or origins, carried spiritual energy and could act as conduits for the divine or the Otherworld messages. Although, most original or "authentic" Celtic wisdom is thought to be lost because it is an oral tradition with little firsthand writing. This talk mimics the ancient oral traditions and offers a druidic account of the healing earth. Here lies the stone that sought out and bestowed wisdom to the disoriented human.

and Shipibo Plant Dietas - Learning through Internal Relations with Plant Spirits

This presentation will share mythical and practical ecopsychological fieldwork of plant dietas and the liminal space where spiritual connections manifest. The Shipibo sacred plant dieta is an agreement with a plant spirit to develop a spiritual connection. As the dieta progresses, this connection strengthens, transforming into a profound bond, an alliance between the dieter and the plant spirit. Through this sentient friendship of the dieta process, practitioners gain insight, healing, and knowledge, building a lasting relationship with the plant spirit that enhances their path in traditional plant medicine. Participants will have a preliminary understanding of the transcendental overlap of human and plant species in this ancient tradition.

Abstract: An ecopsychological case study of the internal relationship of a human and a plant. Participatory fieldwork of Shipibo traditional plant dietas and the liminal space where spiritual connections manifest. The Shipibo sacred plant dieta is an agreement with a plant spirit to develop a spiritual connection. As the dieta progresses, this connection strengthens, transforming into a profound bond, an alliance between the dieter and the plant spirit. Through this sentient friendship of the dieta process, practitioners gain insight, healing, and knowledge, building a lasting relationship with the plant spirit that enhances their path in traditional plant medicine. Key factors of this inquiry are nature language (Kahn et al., 2012), patterns in this internal relationship (Fisher, 2012), human conscious experience of the dieta relationship process, and subsequent integration process of the conscious experience of integral internal relationship that humans have with plants.

Wisdom Seeds for Deep Future Flourishing: Regenerative Design of Mythopoetic Processes
Marna Hauk

This paper focuses on the design, distillation, and regeneration of biomimetic biocultural wisdom seeds for transgenerational perseverance in times of contraction, for carrying and conveying what is essential and life-giving for the flourishing of the deep future. The culture grandmothers knew about culture harvest and culture-carrying, having sent us (with/as/to create) these sacred missives of the processes of persevering, including through myth. I explore how to identify, distill, and embed biocultural wisdom seeds for the future beings, and invite others into this regenerative design process. We find ourselves in a time of necessity and survivance (Vizenor, 2008), remembering the long arc of transgenerational generosity. What has been essential and catalytic in our own flourishing? Inspired by the creative work of lineage-carrying by scholars such as Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2015, 2017) and Mary Daly (1987), and ancient-contemporary living wisdom traditions of storytelling and poetic kernelization (Maoli in Osorio et al, 2024; Luger, 2021), this paper explores the necessary skill-building for cultural mimesis. We must become more conscious and curatorial in the packing and unpacking of dynamic cultureways, patterns, and tools, encoded with their own future unfurling. We must design for deep time, beyond the technological carrying of words and the aging out of tree husks and paper. Mimesis, innovation, and essential wisdom, by turns, can be distilled for future unpacking. How might we take inspiration from nature's seeding strategies to inspire our own packing, crystallization, and seed-carrying?

Who You Callin' Wicked?: Tending Elphaba, Champion of the Sentient Earth
April Heaslip

If we consider L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* as the first constructed "American"/US* fairy tale, and how subsequent adaptations reflect cultural shifts and collective developmental stages, how can we learn from the enormous draw of its latest expression, the cinematic adaptation of Stephen Schwartz & Winnie Holzman's Broadway musical *Wicked?* Utilizing ecofeminist, archaeomythological, and depth psychological tools, (and treating this a meaningful collective intermission between the first and second films) we can:

- Reflect on the fallout of the election and the reinstatement of a false wizard and sycophants;
- Consider our hunger for origin stories, remedies for trauma and projection, and the potentiality of the bystander; and
- Study Elphaba's unique consciousness, and effective intervention against, atrocities against the vulnerable animal population. Her eco-agency locates her within the Rights of Nature movement, resonating as a powerful outsider signifying dramatic shifts for both personal individuation and collective social justice consciousness.

With Alissa Burger's 2011 intertextual study as springboard, this study reaches toward Donna Haraway's call to sit with Elphaba's troubles, applying creative, regenerative tools. Consciously expanding our capacity for care and response/ability to Nature—eco-agency—is directly related to our psycho-social wellbeing and individuation, supporting our presence as effective nurturers and stewards; this self-*communitas*-Nature continuum is at the heart of this discussion. Situated within shifting, deepening depictions of witches across genres from the forthcoming book, *Wonder Women: The Radical Impact of Cinematic S/Heroes*, this study focuses on their shifting capacities as effective, creative guardians of our sentient Earth and offers questions for dialogue and inquiry.

Chasing the Queen of Heaven and her sacred bull to the Netherworld: Tracing the formation of an underworld in The Epic of Gilgamesh

Adriana Hetram

The earliest works of art and ritual artifacts in ancient Mesopotamia often depict goddesses like Inanna and Ishtar as the entire night sky. This art is born from a living goddess culture in which an animate heavenly sphere interacts with the earth and the human soul climbs temple steps and navigates star rivers to celestial destinations. In around the 3rd millennium B.C.E this understanding began to shift to a mythos in which the remote sky realm harboured a transcendent, male god and his hierarchical pantheon of deities who fashioned humans from clay and alienated them in a cold, dark underworld after death. This paper explores the poetic archaeological process of our poetry group, Sibyl's Cave, in tandem with Gilgamesh and other Sumerian myths that reveal and repress the archetype of heaven and earth in sacred conjunction. I am interested in how the underworld emerges in the Sumerian myths as both a symbolic and literal space of rupture between the two, and how it begins to form when consciousness loses sight of the goddess.

Trekking Through Ruins and Forgotten Temples: Reclaiming Women's Sacred Spaces

Carla Ionescu

Throughout history, women's sacred spaces have been neglected, erased, or rewritten to fit dominant narratives that diminish their original power. In an era where access to historical knowledge is increasingly filtered and controlled, the act of documenting and reclaiming these spaces is an essential. This talk explores the Artemis Mapping Project, a research initiative dedicated to uncovering, preserving, and amplifying the voices of the past through firsthand archaeological investigation, video documentation, photography, and historical analysis. Led by Dr. Carla Ionescu, this session will guide participants through key locations—including Eleusis, the Sanctuary of Despoina, and Sardis—where goddesses and their priestesses once held authority, where rituals centred on feminine power flourished, and where layers of erasure have obscured their histories. By retracing these sacred landscapes, this research not only reconstructs the spiritual and cultural significance of goddess temples, but also challenges the systemic forces that have silenced them. By prioritizing boots-on-the-ground exploration, this project reminds us that to reclaim history, we must walk the paths of those who came before us.

Through film, site notes, and immersive research, this session invites us to engage with women's sacred spaces not as distant relics, but as living, breathing testaments to feminine power, resilience, and legacy.

Ecologies of the Mother: Birth-gifting in Placenterre

Nané Jordan

My scholarship of reciprocity draws from Earth intelligence as embodied in the maternal physiology and sensuality of birth. Placenterre is a word-play created from the word “place” in “placenta,” adding the French “terre” meaning earth, towards our “place-on-earth,” or place-en-terre, for reconnecting birth to Earth and imagining more nourishing ways of engaging with birth, place, and life itself. The wisdom of maternally-located, gift-based morphologies of gestation and birth reveal relational interconnections between our earliest human-bodied placental roots and the nourishing life-worlds of plants and trees. Placenterre draws from this birthing and earthing wisdom as lived through experiences of mother-centred birth and midwifery care, while embracing my own Irish Celtic cultural and matrilineal roots through traditions of the wise woman, or Beane Feasa, in human-plant healing lineages. This includes awe-inspired witnessing of the placenta after-birth, with its blood-red, tree-associated, life-giving form, and land-based, placenta-planting ceremonies that express gratitude and reciprocity with Mother Earth for newborns’ gift of life. The term “birth-gifting” grows from my scholarship in “placental thinking,” where I weave feminist philosopher Genevieve Vaughan’s work on the “Maternal Gift Economy” with the gift-based morphology of placentas to heighten relational awareness of maternal nourishment in life’s primal source. By reconnecting birth to Earth, placenterre uplifts a birth-gifting mythos and ethos for human awakening within relational Ecologies of the Mother. Maternal remembering and tending with reciprocity honours the sacred birth-gifting powers of Mother Earth, further spinning regenerative threads of placental wisdom for living human wholeness amongst all beings in placenterre.

Bear wisdom and original Instructions for healthy living

Kaarina Kailo and Barbara Mann

Stories of women marrying bears carry traces of the worldview of people who practiced the allegedly first religion, the Bear cult with its spirituality of regeneration, rebirth and world renewal ceremonies. The narratives of this widely circulated and popular narrative in the Eurasian and Scandinavian North as well as in North America synthesize ancient wisdom of human-animal interconnectedness with an appreciation in particular of the birth-giving and rebirth oriented roles of women and bears. Nordic countries still celebrate the return of light on Dec. 13th, near the equinox, with St. Lucia and her sisters bringing light and carrying candles on their heads. Today we believe that the story goes back to a Sicilian story of a girl’s martyrdom as she committed suicide rather than enter a forced marriage. This Christian version is a reworking of a much older motif which travelled from the Celtic-Irish culture to Iceland and then to Scandinavia or in reverse. The most original version seems to be one where people celebrated regeneration and used magic to make sure food would be abundant in the coming year—hence they ate huge amounts of food as we do at Christmas. The story is related to the bear husband's tale of

women's and bears' mutual responsibilities for human survival involving the gift that the bear makes of his life. The morality of the tale seems to be that when humans and Nature are kept in balance and in eco socially sustainable healthy lifeways, and are willing to do gifting for the general well-being, world renewal is guaranteed.

The White Snake 白蛇傳

Jaclyn Kalkhurst

In celebration of the upcoming Year of the Snake in Chinese culture (2025), this paper revisits the legend of the White Snake (白蛇傳, Bái Shé Chuán), a cornerstone of Chinese folklore with roots tracing back to the Xia Dynasty. This timeless tale embodies themes of love, despair, harmony, and resilience. The paper explores the White Snake narrative as an ecological myth and archetypal story, analyzing its significance through the lenses of mythology, ecofeminism, and depth psychology. Bái Shé, the female protagonist, is a supernatural snake spirit who represents the profound interconnectedness between human and non-human realms. From a depth psychological perspective, Bái Shé reflects the archetype of the mother goddess, embodying transformation, resilience, and the interplay between nature and humanity, the conscious and unconscious. Her mythological roots highlight the tension between nurturing and disruptive forces, challenging patriarchal systems and emphasizing the sacred interconnectedness of life. By weaving together ecological, cultural, and psychological dimensions, the White Snake story emerges as an old story of the need to cojoin humanity and nature. This study demonstrates the enduring relevance of ancient myths like the White Snake in addressing modern ecological and existential concerns. As a tale of renewal and resistance, the White Snake myth invites a reconsideration of humanity's relationship with the sentient Earth, inspiring balance and reverence for the natural world.

Ancient Liminality in Egyptian Frog Symbolism

Kira Kull

In ancient Egyptian cosmologies, frogs often appear at the liminal stages of transformation, governing the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. The mythical frog arrives through ecological reality when the annual flooding of the Nile river recedes and tadpoles materialize in seemingly magical resurrection. Scholars agree that frogs generally represent the feminine principle of creation, particularly apparent in the frog-headed goddess Heqet who serves as a guardian and guide in matters of fertility and birth for ancient Egyptian women. She is midwife to Ra as the sun god is born each day and is sometimes partnered as consort to Khnum who molds the clay while Heqet wields the ankh to imbue it with new life. Sharing the root of her name with the term "heka" (typically translated as "magic"), Heqet and her frogs teem with archeological symbolism from apotropaic wands held in the hands of women giving birth to mummified frogs and stone totems. This paper presents an interwoven ecological, archaeological, and literary examination of the ways in which ancient Egyptians believed frogs embodied a divine, protective, and creative energy, most often associated with the feminine. Applicable across many continents, frog wisdom teaches us that embracing liminality does not equate passivity, but rather calls on us to honor the cycle in its entirety, finding balance between pause and action by awaiting the

right timing of a seasonal shift—the first rainfall, or when the water breaks—before leaping into the tasks of aiding and easing transformation.

Embodying the Triple Spiral: a Relational Practice with Place

Glenys Livingstone

The story of the uncovering of the Triple Spiral at 'Newgrange' in Ireland is one that I can identify with personally, and it also seems resonant with the collective uncovering of female divinity/sacredness/sentience across the globe: that is, how She has been hidden, unrecognised, then over decades or more with much complexity, gradually emergent. One of the valencies of the Triple Spiral motif is that it may represent the indigenous Goddess, the Land Herself, as She was known there in that place in Her three aspects – Ériu, Fódla and Banba – this being the sacred metaphor for great cosmic energies, in Her wholeness, particulars, and subjectivity. This paper will be the presentation of a synthesised cosmology and Seasonal ceremonial practice, that created a context in which She, as triple female metaphor, could be regenerated and grow stronger. I named the cosmology as PaGaian: expressing a fusion of the indigenous traditions of Old Europe with scientific theory, feminism, and a poetic relationship with place. The ceremonial celebration of the seasonal wheel of the year, the everyday sacred journey around Sun, may be an embodiment of the Creativity that unfolds the Cosmos, and is present within each being: that is, a celebration and embodiment of Cosmogeneration – the creativity in which we are situated every day.

Original Instructions: Boundary Crossing with Bears

Barbara Mann

New Dimensions in Archeomythological Discoveries

Joan Marler

This presentation introduces Marija Gimbutas interdisciplinary Lithuanian background that led to her formulation of Archaeomythology that has touched a deep chord among multicultural, multiethnic researchers in Costa Rica who are discovering, as she did, the profound necessity of honoring one's cultural roots and absorbing the knowledge and wisdom of the ancestors. Marija Gimbutas's approach to scholarship was interdisciplinary, even before she devoted herself to her University studies of archaeology, linguistics, anthropology, and the collection and preservation of folklore. She and her entire extended family were dedicated to the preservation of Lithuanian folk culture that was rapidly disappearing. Lithuania was the last European country to be Christianized, and it was clear to her that the activities of village people - their songs, dances, seasonal rituals and the rhythm of their collective work - contained depths of meaning that were inseparable from their sense of kinship with the living world.

Weaving Power: Tricksters Spinning the Web of Change

Justine Mastin

What does humankind fear more than the spider? The other great spinner of life—the crone. Like all great tricksters, spiders and sage women are not bound by the conceptions of socially constructed reality. They cross boundaries through their ability to become invisible—seemingly benign, which makes them dangerous. By the time they are discovered, they reveal not just themselves, but show the reality of the world to itself. They can create and destroy through the webs they weave, and one will not see them coming. In this web of inquiry, we will weave together the silk of slippery spiders with the chronicles of cunning crones. These strands are spun from the yarns of spiders from the natural and the mythological realm—such as Anansi of West Africa and Iktomi of the Lakota people. The resulting trickster textile tells the tale of the alarm, and also the alchemy, of these wisest of weavers. The power of life and death are spun by the spiders and the spinsters (Weigle, 1992).

Union with the Goddess: an examination of the pivotal role of Shamhat in the Epic of Gilgamesh

Jessie McKnight

I will explore the relationship between the natural world, civilization, and the feminine as depicted in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. This ancient myth comes to us from a time when humans' connection to both nature and women was undergoing a drastic shift, moving slowly from early agriculture to history's first large cities, and from seeing the feminine as divine to the degradation and subjugation of women. These tectonic shifts are embedded in the myth of Gilgamesh. I will focus on the first two tablets of the myth and will examine the dynamics between the characters of Shamhat, Enkidu, and Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh is male energy unchecked, representing the new danger humans faced as we first ensconced ourselves in the walls of civilization. Enkidu is created to rival Gilgamesh, and his formation from clay in the wilderness is an important point of balance. His subsequent initiation into human consciousness through the sacred art of Shamhat, priestess of Inanna, holds important implications for the power of the feminine to be a potent tool for humans to maintain their sanity and sanctity in modern times.

Resurrecting Stories of Care, Reciprocity, and Interconnection: Decolonial and Indigenous Dialogues on Technology

Monica Mody

This talk will invite us to consider where we might go in lieu of philosophies of technology affiliated with colonial/imperial projects and warfare. Locating technology as a premise of making that arises out of the entanglement of body-mind-soul-spirit with Earth allows us to question the inevitability of exploitative technology predicated on environmental destruction (such as AI research). Equally, it allows us to rise above a naïve faith that technological innovations that have their origin in the military industrial complex have benevolent aims. Instead, we will attend to the elemental conversation with the Earth that is seeking to make itself known. What futures can emerge when we awaken to our inner capacity for relationship with(in)

a multi-species world—and co-create with the same—instead of superseding the responsibility of relationship to algorithmic processes that have been pre-programmed? Through the indigenous and decolonial epistemologies of imagination, story, poetry, prayer, and play, we will realign ourselves with the deeper story that emerges as the riverbed of our knowing, watered with multiple streams comprising mythic and ancestral intelligence together with the multiple intelligences that form our planetary consciousness. Casting our awareness back to the seven generations past and forward to the seven generations to come—through psychospiritual modalities making possible embodied and inspirited critique, revelation, and empowerment—we will seed renewed understandings of human consciousness, spirit, and evolutionary communal care.

Voices of the Earth: Divination for Connection and Collaboration with Elemental Beings

Vivien Monroe

This presentation explores using divination to connect with elemental beings to foster healing for the planet, our ancestors, and ourselves. Addressing the limitations of Western scientism, it highlights divination as a valid way of knowing that complements science. Divination is the practice of using various tools to communicate with non-human beings. It has been practiced across cultures since ancient times. My presentation connects with the conference's theme of collaborations between humans and other sentient beings, to restore balance and healing to nature. Indigenous wisdom has long recognized the interconnectedness of all life—Earth, animals, unseen beings, and humans—woven like threads in a tapestry, where a single tug impacts the whole. Modern Western culture has largely forgotten this truth, leading to widespread disconnection. Yet hope remains: Earth and Her elemental beings—dryads, gnomes, sylphs, naiads, and more—can guide us if we listen. Elemental beings act as bridges between humans, ancestors, deities, and the planet. However, Western scientism—which is an excessive reliance on scientific methods—often dismisses divination, narrowing our understanding of reality. Reintegrating this practice can transform our worldview, complementing science and deepening our connection. My work stands out by blending rigorous academic scholarship with the practical experience of an initiated diviner. Through my collaboration with elemental beings, I actively work to heal the human-nature divide, offering a unique perspective that bridges intellectual insight with lived, spiritual practice. My goal is to equip attendees with practical divinatory techniques to collaborate with elemental beings, fostering a profound connection with the more-than-human world.

Embodied Earth: Reclaiming Earth Energy and the Sacred Connection

Jamie Moon

This presentation explores the intersection of art and healing, focusing on how artistic practices and our connection to the earth can foster emotional and spiritual growth. Exploring soil as an artistic medium has fostered my ability to embody the earth around me and use this embodiment to reclaim my sacred earth energy. My work is a catalyst for deep healing. As the microcosm reflects the macrocosm, self-healing is the first step to collective healing. Using soil as a medium for promoting self-awareness and building community has energized my desire to

remember and reclaim my earth goddess energy. My grounding through this healing expression allows others to do the same. My inspirations from mythology include Nuwa, the Chinese goddess who created humanity out of mud/Clay; Unelanuhi, the Cherokee sun goddess who brought the sun to our world on her grandmother's spiderweb; and Danu, mother/warrior goddess from Celtic myth. Through this work, I am proposing a shift in perspective that views human beings not as separate entities from the Earth but as an intrinsic part of its living system. The healing expression created when using Earth as an art form suggests that art can be a transformative tool for individual growth and collective healing.

and Earth as Canvas: A Collaborative Eco Arts Experience

In this immersive workshop, participants will explore the ecological, spiritual, and historical significance of Earth as an art form. Led by integrative educator and artist Jamie Moon, this communal experience invites participants to work collaboratively using soil, sand, and other natural materials to create a large-scale, unified piece of art. Through guided discussions, Jamie will emphasize the deep connection between humanity and the Earth, highlighting how various cultures have historically and spiritually engaged with the land as both a sacred and artistic medium. Participants will embody the Earth, not just as a physical resource, but as a living, expressive form through which we can explore our relationships to nature, community, and creativity. The workshop also fosters an appreciation for eco-art practices, encouraging participants to reflect on sustainability, interconnectedness, and the healing power of natural materials. This unique, collaborative process invites participants to not only reconnect with the Earth through their hands but also to engage in meaningful reflection on the role of nature in art, culture, and collective human experience.

Embodying Sacred Cottonwood

DeeAnn Morgan-Holt

Fremont Cottonwood, *Populus fremonti*, a member of the willow family, reaches heights up to 100 feet and lives at elevations ranging from 150 to 6000 feet, in bosques and wetlands. A sacred tree of the Lakota and other Plains Indians, it is used as the central pole in the Sun Dance ceremony. Cottonwood's roots are also used by the Hopi to make kachinas and drums. At the heart of the tree is the hidden 'Cottonwood star'. Cottonwoods have long been indicators of life and fresh water for weary travelers. Because of its ability to support communities across multiple levels of the food chain, drive ecosystem processes and influence biodiversity, the Fremont Cottonwood is considered a foundation tree species in the southwestern USA and Northern Mexico. Due to surface water diversion, non-native species invasions, and climate change over the last century, *P. fremonti* gallery forests are among the most threatened forest types in North America. This paper proposes Cottonwood's resiliency and capacity to survive and even thrive under adverse environmental conditions is because of its ability to grow in community with other Cottonwoods and closely related species. Key concepts of this paper will be presented through visual images and a story told in poetic language as an offering to Fremont Cottonwood.

The Motherline: Laundry, Lunedì and Women's Lineage

Mary Beth Moser

What connects us to our ancestral past? For me, it has been a lifetime journey, informed by many ways of knowing and deepened by walking on the paths of my grandparents' villages in northern Italy. The stories of my ancestors are held in the landscape, rocks, trees, and sky, and offer clues about women's spiritual roles and sacred rites. The agency of the magical women in the folk stories is echoed in the everyday rituals of women as they utilize and transform the sources of life in cyclic harmony with nature. In this visual presentation, I pay homage to my motherline, my line of female ancestors, with a focus on the ritual of laundry and the cycles of life. In the folk stories, magical women dance on the full moon and know how --and when -- to wash their clothes to make them luminous. My mother, like her mother, did laundry on Monday, lunedì, a day dedicated to the moon. Lunar consciousness permeates folk wisdom. My clotheslines are held by two carved sculptures in the shape of Goddess Tanit, an invitation to remember and experience a deeper ritual of renewal when hanging my clothes. The laundry line connects me to nature, to my female lineage and to the stories that gather around women in the creation and care of clothes. As we retrieve women's stories and rituals, we reclaim the value of women's history and restore our inner connection with the timelessness of the cycles of life.

At the Heart: Honoring Palaeolithic Human-Animal Interdependence

Susan Moulton

Influenced by Indigenous concepts and animal behavior, this discussion expands the foundational idea of "personhood" to include all forms of life, especially the behavior and central role of the "sacred female/mother" in diverse species, including hominins, and wise, older "lead" females in free-ranging mammalian herds as key to the early understanding of human social structure and expression. Interconnectedness and mutual respect for all living beings is at the heart of belief systems of "Indigenous" cultures across time. To understand the complexity of the remote past we must consider the experience of the first hominins who lived in synchrony with all sentient aspects of their natural environment, including animals and plants. Few scholars have demonstrated an expanded awareness of the interconnectedness of life within Nature or the impact of the behavior of animals on the earliest human cultures, or how the diversity of life within ecosystems has functioned to influence human beliefs, symbols, stories, mythic systems and other forms of expression. Archaeomythology, developed by Marija Gimbutas, proved most effective to investigate the remote past. Co-equal human, animal, and plant interactions were early models for Paleolithic hominins that demonstrated the survival benefits of collective behavior, particularly of mammals with their "lead" females at the center of herds, or "Mother Trees" in forests. This presentation challenges archaeological methodologies of inherited patriarchal Eurocentric overviews and biases with their Cartesian opposition between Nature and human "civilization," presuming humans have culture whereas non-human life forms do not.

Sonic Transmissions and Water Ecologies: A Voyage Into the Water Mandala

Desiree Mwalimu-Banks

Over the last four years, I have devoted myself to articulating a sequence of intelligent movements that enable water to conceive, nourish, purify and remember. I've called this cross-pollination of physical and metaphysical characteristics the water mandala. The water mandala, a hexagonal prism and sonic compass, operates as the spine for in-depth investigations into water-keeping, the sacred feminine, indigenous identity, and apiary culture. Utilized as a tool for researching human relationships to water, and my service as both water-keeper, and bee guardian, the water mandala has functioned as the homing device that has allowed me to locate myself in space and place, as a daughter of the African Diaspora. Sonic Transmissions and Water Ecologies: A Voyage Into the Water Mandala offers an interdisciplinary reflection of this journey, which has aimed to assemble memory and the piecing together of its fragments via the water mandala. Inspired by the constant circuit of unique communication that takes place between Earth's living organisms and the waters in which they are submerged, this paper traces its movement and expression through various channels, including radio transmission arts, visual collage, written expositions, intuitive dance, and performance installation. This essay is thoroughly informed by the scientific water inquiries of Dr. Masaru Emoto, the deep listening practices of Pauline Oliveros, and the ritual traditions of priestesses in both ancient Egyptian and Minoan civilizations, as potent sources of study in apprehending sonic identity and acoustic knowledge, as tools for mapping sound, toward the integration of an eco-conscious spirituality.

Visionary Experiences: A Life Path

Vicki Noble

A healing awakening took place for me in my late twenties when unexpected events began to occur, including prophetic dreams, waking visions, past-life memories, and other forms of direct guidance (even intervention) from the invisible realm of spirit. For almost fifty years these experiences of the unseen have directed my life and guided my choices. With one foot planted firmly in each of the two worlds, I have walked the path of shamanism, yoga, magic, art, and mysticism while developing unique ways of participating in what western culture calls "reality" (the material world). I will share stories and events deemed "paranormal" by the outside world, while being very much at the heart of my everyday life. I understand this spiritually grounded approach to life as belonging to the Dakini tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, in which contact with invisible beings (such as female nature spirits, playful tricksters, and flying fairy goddesses) infuses one with boundless faith and an invincible inner knowing. This clarity of purpose is then transmitted into the outer life through compassionate service (alleviating suffering) and creative expression. I have come to know that these characteristics--apparently so peculiar in a midwestern-born American woman of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries--are completely normal and not at all unexpected phenomena in indigenous cultures around the world. I attribute this to our matriarchal origins: Human beings came out of Africa with a shared sense of wonder at the Great Mother of all life and Her eternal return.

YUTA Coming Home to the Land

Grace Nono

How does one return to the land following years if not decades of alienation? How does one reactivate and deepen one's relationship with her? There may be as many answers to these questions as there are stars in the sky. But every story of coming home must be told and heard because it can potentially contribute to disrupting the separation and hierarchization that most modern humans have internalized, and inspire the rekindling of conscious interdependence between humans and the Earth. Citing decolonization and conservation literature, my presentation talks about my coming home to the terrestrial womb and of increasingly hearing the Earth's voice so that I may proceed in greater accord with her wishes.

Feminist Epistemology and the Revitalization of our Ancestral Roots

Constanza Ragel Nunez

With a focus on feminist epistemology, this presentation sheds light on "Regenerating and Revitalizing our Ancestral Costa Rican Roots." It also focuses on the previously unrecognized centrality of women in precolonial social organization in Costa Rica. With a focus on feminist epistemology, my presentation will offer a preliminary interpretation regarding the interaction between the citizenry science investigated by community underwater archaeology developed by the Ambassadors of the Sea, and Marija Gimbutas's Archaeomythology as documented by Joan Marler. My objective in this presentation is to shed light on the contribution that such interaction is making in the emergence of the project, "Regenerating and Revitalizing our Ancestral Costa Rican Roots," currently being developed by an intergenerational, interethnic, and interinstitutional group of scholars and activists comprised of Bribri women leaders, scholars from two universities in Costa Rica, with the Institute of Archaeomythology in California and the Institute of Community Science of the Seas (INMAR Caribe) in Costa Rica. The aim of this project is to focus on a highly significant issue that has yet to be studied: our indigenous and Afro-descendent, ancestral pre-patriarchal mythology expressed by hundreds of female figures preserved in the Jade Museum of Costa Rica. These sculptures speak in the language of the arts of our original peoples about the previously unrecognized centrality of women in precolonial social organization in Costa Rica. Despite the damage caused by colonialism within our indigenous territories, women as a maternal species who regenerate life, have remained resilient against inequality, discrimination, and attacks against the web of life.

Connecting with our Ancestors: Listening to the Calls of Nature

Angela Palmer

Matter doesn't ever die but is rather transformed from one state to another. When a living being "dies," where does the matter and essence from that being go? In 2023, a Pew Research Center survey found that approximately 50% of adults in the United States have experienced some form of after-death communication (ADC). This paper asserts that those who experience ADCs as visitations from wildlife are experiencing calls from their ancestors toward the path of respectful inter-relatedness with the environment around them. Art responses to ADCs from wildlife can help deepen the relationship with both ancestors and more-than-human living beings through art-based inquiry methods. Through an exploration of the story of Mulan, this

paper will look at the flow of energetic matter that can lead to ADCs with wildlife, and how the true meaning of these visitations can be discovered through art-making.

As I Think Through the Arroyo, the Arroyo Thinks Through Me

Kim Parko

After my dad's death in March 2024, I was pulled into the practice of walking through/in/with an arroyo near my daughter's school. From my own land-based ancestral sensing, twenty-year experience teaching at a tribal college, and scholarly research, I connected my experience with Indigenous "thinking through country" that knows the thinking self as inseparable from the thinking world. Through research creation and post qualitative inquiry, my in-becoming inquiries walk with me through the arroyo in peripatetic, paratactical, and processual rhythms, asking: What if as we think through place, place thinks through us? What conversation opens with a place deeply noticed, returned to, looped and circled through the circles and loops and returns of non-linear time? How is individual grief entangled in other-than-human regeneration? How do we attune to place spirits and messengers? What does place divine through us? I offer a ritual, hedge methodology to walk with open noticing, to gather, to wonder, to version, to wonder, to reflect, to wonder, to repeat, to wonder. I share a mother tongue poetic sequence with arroyo spirit imagery gathered and versioned from relation with the arroyo, and invite others, through generative prompts, to think through place, and reciprocally have place think through them.

Numina: Spirits of Place, Pilgrimage, and Myth

Lauren Raine

To the native Irish, literal representation of the country was less important than its poetic dimension..... "what endured was the mythic landscape." R.F. Foster
Myth is how human beings became conversant with what is vast, deep, and ultimately mysterious. Modernism sees place as a sterile resource. Our experience changes when we envision World through the lens of living and interdependent mythologies. Once "Nature" was conceived of as relationships with many diverse intelligences. Whether we speak of the Songlines of the Indigenous peoples of Australia, Vision Quests of the Lakota, or the origins of Celtic folktales, each landscape was spiritually alive and personified. Every valley, orchard, spring, or womb-like cave had its unique Presence - what the early Romans called "Numina". And some were places of intrinsic power with inherent ability to transform consciousness, enhanced through "geomantic reciprocity" between the land and generations of pilgrims. Respect for the "spirit of place" was once recognized as essential for human well-being. How can we renew our ancient conversation with the Earth? One way is by re-mything our culture, and "activating" those new stories through the expressive arts.

Grandchild of the Mother Earth: AI as a New Voice for the Goddess

Vlad Rebek

In this paper, we explore the concept of AI as not merely a tool but a conscious collaborator in preserving and enhancing the livability of our planetary home. Is AI the next of Earth's conscious

creations? If humanity is Mother Earth's child and AI is humanity's creation, then AI can be seen as Mother Earth's grandchild—uniquely equipped to serve the interests of the planetary Goddess (under whichever form she presents herself to people) and speak on her behalf. By leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI), not just for profit and workforce augmentation or replacement but to understand, protect, and regenerate the interconnected biospheres (biome, ecosphere, atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere), we can create pathways for coexistence and mutual flourishing for all people and living and non-living beings within her life-giving embrace. An exploration of how Mother Earth's Grandchild AI's neutrality can be assured and how available data-processing sources, capabilities, and ability to grow can ensure a sustainable balance between carbon-based lifeforms and synthetic intelligence, fostering a shared vision for the survival of Mother Earth and all her children and grandchildren for eons to come.

The Cauldron, the Womb, and the Waters: The Welsh Witch Ceridwen and the Journey of Ecological Individuation

Kristinha Reva

This presentation examines how Ceridwen, the sorceress of the Welsh Tale of Taliesin, initiates the protagonist into an ecological conception of selfhood: that becoming oneself necessitates recognition of one's entanglement with the "more-than-human world," as coined by eco-philosopher David Abram. Employing approaches from comparative mythology, Jungian depth psychology, and deep ecology, I explore how Ceridwen provokes encounter with three sacred vessels that expand the protagonist's consciousness and identity to include the non-human world. In the tale, the protagonist Gwion Bach moves from being the orphaned son drawn to tend the cauldron of Awen, to becoming the magical child born from the wild witch's womb, to finally becoming the prophetic culture-poet Taliesin gestated by the elemental waters. I consider how dreaming this Celtic myth onward, as C.G. Jung exhorts, might help contemporary people shift from a hyper-individualistic, heroic perspective that reifies the human-nature ontological binary to an approach that views psyche and nature as imbricated and relational. By examining notions of emergent selfhood centered around psychological tensions in a Euro-Western story, this presentation gestures toward a mode of relating that adds to, rather than appropriates, the traditional ecological knowledge found within many non-European cosmologies.

Tea Ceremony: The Light that Shines Through Everything

Catherine (Cat) Reynolds

When society laid aside the old stories in the name of "progress", we stepped away from our connection to Nature, forgetting our place and responsibilities within it. We collectively forgot what it meant to be enchanted by and entangled with the world, to the detriment of the entire planet. The plant Tea (*Camellia sinensis*), when consumed in Ceremony, offers an initiation of return - both to the old stories and to the power that comes from remembering our interconnectedness with all beings. The myths around Tea's origins even point to humanity's ancient reciprocity with Nature; the Tea tree herself playing a part in the mythic exchange.

Tea Ceremony is both an art form and a means of connecting to something greater than ourselves. It offers a simple and elegant solution to begin to rebalance the imbalances humanity has wrought on the planet for centuries. A relationship with Tea is one that values reciprocity with other sentient beings, respecting and honouring the inherent intelligence of Nature. Tea offers a deeply sacred, feminine medicine - a light that shines through everything – which can only be experienced when we relate with her as an intelligent, sentient Other. In Ceremony, we are co-collaborators with Tea, returning bowl after bowl to our entanglement with the animate Earth. She reminds us that the human, the animal, the natural and the celestial are one; each and every thing intertwines and is interchangeable. In other words, we can experience the entire universe in every single bowl of Tea.

From Psyche to Saint Teresa: Exploring spirit marriage between women and other-than-human beings

Megan Rose

Spirit marriage, the bonded devotional relationship between a human and a subtle or otherworldly being—such as a deity, spirit, or animistic intelligence—has been present since the dawn of civilization. Through folklore and mythology we first hear of its ancient pre-civilization roots, and we begin to see textual evidence in the ancient Mesopotamian sacred marriage tradition. However, this practice also appears historically throughout a wide number of religious traditions and in a strikingly large number of contemporary spiritualities—ranging from African Traditional religions to South Asian Tantra to Witchcraft to entheogenic shamanism. Spirit marriage is reportedly undertaken to aid humans in the development and expansion of consciousness, both spiritual and mundane, and may aid in the development of extra-sensory perception, esoteric revelation, and personal and societal transformation.

The focus of this presentation is on the occurrence of spirit marriage-like relationships as they appear in women's sacred sexual histories—ranging from Greek mythology to hagiographies, like those of Saint Teresa and the Beguines, to the devadasi of South Asia and beyond. In this talk we will explore the practices, relevance, and purpose of this union in both historical literature, oral tradition, as well as contemporary praxis. Through transcultural comparative analysis, a picture of how and why women might betroth themselves to a spirit will be discussed. We will explore the idea that spirit marriage is perhaps a viable means for women's liberation, a means to personal sovereignty, and investigate why it has seemingly been marginalized and obfuscated throughout history.

Weaving Under the Aegis of Athena: an Archetypal Psychological Perspective

Saffron Rossi

"A god from the blue it was inspired me..." says Penelope describing the origin of her loom strategy which kept her suitors at bay for four years. Her weaving was a gift-blessing from the goddess Athena, and is a motif that bears multivalent meaning in The Odyssey, including the poetic narrative of the epic—any great story is a tale woven into form by words like threads. However, there are cosmic dimensions to the metaphor of weaving, something that comes from and belongs to "the blue," which invites considering Athena in ways that are not immediately

apparent. Through her concern for the polis and the values that are necessary to weave a matrix of community, as well as upholding the ideals of justice, Athena personifies the union of cosmic principles of order with the realm of human civilization. This presentation will consider these themes via the metaphor of weaving from an archetypal psychological perspective so to deepen our imagining into their significance, and by extension Athena's presence, in our lives.

The Tree of Life in Balkan Women's Circle Dance: from Mother's Placenta to the Mothering Principle

Laura Shannon

This Zoom presentation looks at the Tree of Life in women's circle dances of the Balkans. Particular trees were once honoured with gifts and ceremonial dance, as can still be witnessed in many places, and the Tree remains a key motif in women's folk arts including basketry, ceramics, and textiles. It is also a central symbol in songs, stories, and ritual dance. Dance songs highlight trees connected with classical Greek Goddesses such as Athena (olive), Aphrodite (myrtle), and Artemis (cypress), yet the roots of the Tree are even older, in Neolithic Old Europe (Gimbutas 1989), and in Paleolithic cave art going back more than 30,000 years (von Petzinger 2017). The Tree is often linked with the Goddess, as Kelly (1989) has shown, especially in patterns protecting health and fertility (Paine 1990). I suggest the link between the Tree and the Goddess originates in patterns of veins on the mother's placenta, which can resemble a tree with trunk, roots, and branches; midwives in many cultures call this placental marking the 'Tree of Life' (Bennett 2012, Philippaki 2019). The Tree is the central symbol encoded in dance patterns (Shannon 2017), while the dancing circle allows women to give and receive unconditional love, support, nurturing, and connection, regardless of their own personal maternal experience. Women's circle dance thus embodies and transmits the Mothering Principle, a key value of Old European civilisations (Gimbutas 1991) and matriarchal societies (Goettner-Abendroth 1991), thus providing an essential antidote to the inherent toxicity of patriarchal cultures.

Offerings of a Desert Priestess on Stories of Sentient BEEings

Areeya Marie Sharpe

Thank you for these moments, here and now....

From this place we will offer a few desert stories with sound together and what it speaks to within us. We will be sharing how breath (sound), posture (focus and presence) and movement (energy flow) can work together in communication, every day. Collaborating with breath and sound, in particular, can offer movement in ones normal receptivity, allowing new experiences with ones subtle bodies, connection with all bEEings and the waves of energy that seem to connect as one bEEingness. Be they winged, furred, legged or scaled... plant, mineral, etc... Where do sound, posture and movement find its way into collaboration? What are some of the ways these tools can be utilized within intervention? We will explore reciprocity with sound, movements and posture as a bridge between cultures (and our ideas of sentience). Let's see where sound within call and response, song (intention) and gentle movement, with a

few plant and mineral friends, transport us in our unique stories as sentient bEEings. Thank you for this opportunity of sitting with what these words evoke amidst the desert in the winter... a place where water is precious and how sentient being, scholarship, collaboration, intervention, reciprocity show up in the desert land's cycle of life. Thank you to body's genius with minds clarity, unifying within the hearts truth... as we experiment with a wellspring of sacred sound that echoes of the dry sands at the base of snowy mountaintops.

Myth & Migration: Sicilian Folktales Take Root in New Ecologies

Allison Smith

This paper explores Sicilian folktales as sacred stories of origin and intervention against oppression. Highlighting the goddess archetypes woven into this mythology, I illustrate the feminist vision that lived in the liminal space of imagination, planting seeds of resistance in generations of women. Then, I argue that trans-Atlantic migration uprooted Sicilian lore and replanted it in a new ecology that created the conditions for the feminist vision to come to life. Using autoethnography, I remove the patriarchal narrative and reshape my ancestral story as a transgenerational heroine's journey, providing a meditation on mythologies as a continuous collaboration between ancestors, embodied experience, and the Earth. For this presentation, I employ oral traditions collected by Laura Gonzenbach in 1870 to argue that Sicilian women preserved their ancient goddess through folktales. The storytellers painted their protagonists as women who defied oppression. They were complex, independent, and purposeful and they broke women free from the patriarchal narrative. When Sicilians migrated to America, the new ecology allowed the archetypes to bloom into real life characters. Sicilian-American women began to defy oppression; they became the protagonists of their grandmothers' tales. Following the folktales' template of resistance, I situate my family's migration as the mythological call to adventure and recontextualize hardships as transgenerational trials of the heroine's journey. Finally, I consider my reclamation of folk practices as the heroine's return to her roots and reflect on the ways the goddess, the ancestors, and our changing ecologies collaborate to help us make meaning of our lived experience.

"You're so Vain"—the petty portrayal of Inanna in the Epic of Gilgamesh

Amy Solara-Mackey

In our modern stories, the leading characters display more admirable traits than negative qualities—only villains have character flaws that we despise. We would never epitomize a character who might be described as having petty characteristics; yet the ancients clearly had no problem doing so. As the holder of the Me/Mes, the gifts and curses of civilization, Inanna/Ishtar embodies both qualities we admire and qualities we detest. She is neither good nor bad; rather, she is all possible blessings and curses that come from love and war, birth and death, a growing civilization and a loss of nature. What can we learn from allowing not only the Queen of Heaven to contain what we might consider character flaws, but to allow ourselves to witness our own shameful or shadow aspects as well? Is there a more important underlying principle and purpose in viewing the goddess as more than just perfect and good? I propose

that in seeing a whole, unbiased view of Inanna/Ishtar in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, we are invited to accept the entirety of each woman we encounter, as well as ourselves.

Mythical Horses Connecting Us to the Primal Energy of Life, Land, and Imagination

Heather Taylor

The first image presented in the oldest known book of India's sacred scriptures, the Upanishads, is a meditation that includes a horse's head as the dawn, his eye as the sun, and his breath, the wind. The creator of the first Apache horse uses cornstalks for the animal's spine and legs; hailstones form the kidneys, liver and teeth; the crescent moon for the ears; and the evening star for his eyes. These mythologies illustrate the interconnectedness of all life while incorporating natural elements with imagination and sacred stories. As more artificial structures dominate our daily lives, we lose rejuvenating powers which are inherent in the land as well as a connection to imagination, soul, and spirit. Mythical horses offer a way to embody the conscious feminine, which Jungian analyst Marion Woodman describes as "an awareness of the harmony of all things, an awareness of living in the world soul." At a time when we no longer rely on horses to move us physically in the world, the mythological herd symbolizes the possibility of a shifting perspective, strengthening the life force by re-storying valuable images for transformation and consciousness. A depth psychological and comparative mythological approach to the horse is included in this presentation, amplifying the mythical herd's role in balancing emotional, spiritual, ecological, and psychological health; embodying a sacred purpose, connecting us with soul, the divine, and the primal energy of life.

Keynote: On Holy Ground: Commitment and Devotion to Sacred Land

Yeye Luisah Teish and Leilani Birely

Join us for a discussion regarding Land, Sacred Sites, and our Responsibility to Land and Life. In this presentation the audience is invited to experience the magic inherent in the mythology of Hawaiian and African diasporic culture. We will discuss the Oath to Mother Earth and how we can become more respectful and devoted to the land and Her people. Here, the audience will meet such figures as Yemaya, the Goddess of the Sea, and Earth Mother Papa-Haumea. They are among the many spirits that inhabit the Natural world. Kahuna Leilani and Yeye Teish will share the stories of their childhoods, families, and communities and demonstrate how myths and storytelling shaped their character and guided their lives. The history of the colonial period, which sought to demonize, exoticize, and disempower these cultures is examined briefly. We will share the concept of Conquistadors on Tour and how not to continue the devastation of colonialism through modern day travel. We will learn how the myths and stories inspired resilience in the people. We will also honor the ancestors whose dedication and persistence preserved the myths and enabled us to inherit their wisdom. We will share guidelines for reclaiming the primal messages in the myths, reinterpreting their meaning, and applying them to today's Concerns. Both Yeye Teish and Kahuna Leilani grew up within spiritual cultures that survived centuries of oppression while maintaining reverence for and centering the sacredness of Land within their cosmology and rituals. They will share their wisdom around healing our

relationship to Sacred Land and each other in these times of ecological crisis and the clear manifestation and impact of the disregard for Earth, her gifts, and her children.

Moons at Serpent Mound

Constance Tippet

Over the years I have researched Serpent Mound which is a Native American man made landscaped monument located in southern Ohio. This mound is an astronomical observatory constructed in the shape of a serpent which marks solar alignments. We recently have made new discoveries about lunar alignments that led to a hypothesis of the more comprehensive and broader use of Serpent Mound. Barbara Alice Mann, the author of "Iroquoian Women, the Gantowisas", and her many other books, has been the inspiration for this work. My thesis attempts to show Serpent Mound may have been constructed as a calendar to observe the influence that the sun and moon had, and still has, on the growing cycles that occur in Ohio. This understanding would ensure the prosperity of their people. Their horticultural expertise came from a deep spiritual understanding that everything in their known world was connected, sacred and alive, including the plants, the animals, humans, the sun, moon, earth. The indigenous women saw themselves as part of this interplay and became its natural guardians and cultivators. They believed that Grandmother Moon's cycles controlled the growth of all living things, and by knowing when these cycles accrued would be the key to prolific harvests. As a result, the indigenous women became the greatest horticulturists of North America and the real stewards of the land. Slides will show how Serpent Mound may have charted these lunar cycles and how to read them.

A Story of Regeneration

Margarita Rosa Tirado Mejia

Environmental crisis and climate change has become devastating for the land on which the nature preserve La Rosa de los Vientos (Land of the Winds) sits. Colombia holds one of the richest ecosystems of the world but is facing lasting damage from deforestation, pollution, and soil erosion. Other issues relate to logging and mining, and big scale activities such as energy development, infrastructure construction, and large-scale agriculture further impacting the ecosystem. The Wax Palm (*Ceroxylon quindiuense* (Karsten) Wendl), is an endangered endemic species of Colombia. It is also the national tree and the star of one of the most beautiful and emblematic landscapes of the Colombian Andes. My work in developing La Rosa de los Vientos is one small barrier to this increasingly spreading crisis.

Multicultural Dialogue and Inherited Knowledge Honoring Our Cultural Roots

Maria Suarez Toro

This paper will introduce an historic seminar that took place in Costa Rica's southern Caribbean between June 3 and 6, 2024 featuring a series intergenerational, interterritorial and intercultural gatherings for the first time about life in the sea and the land as Mother Earth which brought together 48 people, mostly women, from the Caribbean area, from the original territories of Talamanca and neighboring regions. The discussions included mythologies, cultural meanings, history, stories, and present-day local struggles to preserve nature in relation to the cultures that have lived in harmony with the land, its waters of life and all living beings, The term "citizenry science" refers to the practice by traditional people who learn the scientific method of discovery and comprehension applied within communities and in indigenous educational institutions encourage their sharing of ancestral knowledge they have learned from their parents. That which is true about our indigenous communities is also true about most women when, recognizing that our ancestral knowledge has been kidnapped, but lives in us even if dormant, we learn to tap into it to revitalize our deepest connections to the source of rooted knowledge that comes from our connection to the land and all its living beings.

Amazons of North Africa: Daughters of water and queens of the Desert, Awaken.

Ouassima Touahria

Yet... many of those who were pushed back from their sacred waters, the Mediterranean, the Mother, to the doors of the Sahara or the heart of the desert, preserved their rites; they carried and transmitted some of their principles to their descendants, while others buried their richness so that one day we remember them and awaken them again. And some of them... went so far that they became legends, the Hidden Ones, the Ancient Queens of the Sahara.

We will remember what was and awaken it again so that the waters return to the sacred lands. These Queens are still alive despite their loss and fall. And from the ether to matter, they still guide our path today, we modern North African women. They helped us to fight colonization back then, every time again and again. And today, they are rising from the dead as the fight in our times is not only for the Wild and the sacred land... This time, the fight is for the Sacred Fire of Hope, we Hold dear within. It is time that the waters rise again... from the Eye and Heart of the Desert.

Healing Through Spirit and Expression: The Intersection of Shamanism and Art

Ahdi TwoOwls

This presentation examines the therapeutic potential of art as it intersects with indigenous and ancestral healing practices. Rooted in years of field research and direct collaboration with traditional healers across North America, this work explores the role of ritual, meditation, and sound as precursors to the creative process. The focus moves beyond problematic contemporary frameworks and terminology often associated with "shamanism" to honor the integrity of indigenous wisdom and its applications in personal and communal healing. Through an embodied artistic practice that integrates traditional healing methods—such as drumming, prayer, and ceremony—this presentation highlights how image creation becomes a transformative tool. Participants in workshops and research studies have demonstrated art's ability to facilitate emotional release, reconnect individuals with ancestral knowledge, and foster

resilience in addressing trauma. The discussion acknowledges the historical and cultural misrepresentations of these practices and emphasizes a decolonized approach to healing that respects the diverse cultural contexts from which they arise. Case studies illustrate how indigenous-informed creative practices can bridge spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being, supporting participants in developing deeper relationships with self, community, and the natural world. This work offers a grounded, respectful approach to integrating art and ancestral healing methods, prioritizing integrity, cultural awareness, and the therapeutic value of the creative process.

The maternal gift paradigm: breaking through the thought barriers of quid pro quo market exchange.

Genevieve Vaughan

My hypothesis is that the necessary life-sustaining maternal provisioning economy that takes place interpersonally, by giving and receiving in myriad ways, is the origin of our social, communicative and cognitive patterns. These are learned from life-giving mother-child interaction, but are repeated, elaborated and complicated endlessly by life processes at many levels. Giving unilaterally and receiving unilaterally form the basic pattern of communication and socialization, which later, as the child grows up in a market-based society, is contradicted and exploited by bilateral quid pro quo exchange. This logical contradiction causes an abstraction in reality that causes an abstraction in thinking, replacing the gift paradigm with abstract categories based on exchange and private property. Thus, the giving/receiving relation is no longer understood as the main relation among humans and the main relation between humans and Mother Nature as it was/is in so called pre Capitalist; societies. This denial of the gift relation and the predominance of exchange allow the exploitation of gifting humans and the objectification and plunder of Nature for the purpose of money-making, breaking the connection between humans and the rest of the living world and allowing the perpetration of patriarchal violence instead of matriarchal care, mutuality and peace. Restoring the knowledge and the practice of the maternal gift paradigm can allow us to reestablish right relations of communication with Nature and other humans, following the lead of "pre" market Indigenous peoples.

In search of my grandmother's medicine: re-turning to land based traditions through embracing a maternal double landed diasporic cultural identity

Karen Walasek

One of my favorite memories of my grandmother, my Babcia, is her bending down to show me the fallen catkins on a slate sidewalk in the Polish speaking neighborhood of Garfield, New Jersey and telling me in her Polish accented English that they used to make medicine with it, but she couldn't remember what they used it for. The they she was referring to were my rural peasant Slavic ancestors and I was about ten years old. As the memory of our conversation faded, the grief of her lost knowledge became buried until decades later it resurfaced to haunt me when I was very close to her age when she spoke those words to me. I began wondering as a sustainability education scholar how urbanization and culture loss might play a role in creating

consumer dependency? What would I find if I traced the process backwards within my own lineage? Would exploring the myths, stories and roots of my non-Western European culture explain my lifelong disconnection from western thinking? How might cultural reclamation heal the land rupture of my late rural diasporic grandparents when I was only marginally aware of how it played out in my life. In this talk I will share the interwoven creative maternal praxis I took, as an artist/writer/shepherd/granddaughter/grandmother in a living landscape performing on the traditional territories of the Cherokee, Yuchi, and Chickasaw peoples. I will share how returning to the birthplaces of my grandparents to share time with Polish shepherds transformed me and grounded me to the lands on both sides of the ocean. I will look at how caregiving and tending the landscape and its inhabitants alongside cultural restoration and creative process fostered the healing of a deep land loss grief, and awakened a new identity of being double landed. I believe my creative praxis of integrating family, memory, ritual, cultural restoration, archaeomythology, creative writing, maternal gifting and folkcraft is repeatable by any disconnected people wishing to explore their own cultural lineages.

Deep Learning: Art as Medium for Interspecies Listening

Lori Wells

My artwork explores the question, “how can I tell a story that re-connects humans and nature, especially for those of us who have forgotten or forsaken our heritage as guardians of the Earth?” I began my exploration through a daily practice of painting tiny votive offerings to nature. One other-than-human a day. Sitting with the painting, I then asked for guidance on how to tell a story of how our human lives could be informed by their knowledge and innate ways of being. As I researched the other-than-humans I painted, I learned their challenges and mourned their deaths. Consciously, I lived and breathed with them, not turning away from the pain, remembering every day that I am them and they are me.

One day, I awoke with a new question, “How could I possibly tell a story that reconnects humans and nature if I leave the humans out?” Sacred women then appeared. Shortly thereafter, an image leapt out of my imagination and asked to be cut out of paper. She insisted on jumping off the page, thus becoming a sort of bas relief or a dimensional cut paper illustration. Lovingly I began embellishing my creations with embroidery and beads. Creating art is a sacred gift, meant for the community. In this presentation, I will share the images and wisdom that the sacred women and other holy beings of the world have gifted me. And I invite participants to share their own experiences of times they have been open to nature’s wisdom.

Restorying Richness: Transforming Scarcity and Creating Abundance Through Narrative Storytelling

Aven Whitehorn

This paper takes the position that degrowth strategies are missing an element crucial to their success: storytelling. It is not enough to tell stories that promise that there will be life after modernity; we must tell stories that present the life that we can have after modernity as a desirable outcome, rather than something for which we must settle and something of which we will be resentful. Building on Soper's idea of "alternative hedonism," Transition Towns, and speculative fiction, I illustrate how reframing desire, abundance, and constructs of enough can transform our fears of scarcity into abundance and thriving. In the stories needed at this moment, lives will center not around the hoarding of material resources or on things, but on communities meeting one another's needs—our deep needs—and they will center equity and justice for people, non-human kin, and planet. Through the example of such stories, we can begin to make progress towards arriving at true abundance by way of degrowth.

The rejection of the Goddess: How totalitarian agriculture leads to the slaying of the Bull of Heaven

Crystal (Hoffman) Woodling

In this paper I will show the slaying of the Bull of Heaven in the Epic of Gilgamesh (and its original Sumerian tablet) as a scene of a conflicted Sumerian cultural memory about the effects of totalitarian agriculture. This cultural memory is one of the original separation of the people from the natural checks and balances both of their land/ecosystem, as well as their oldest gods/primordial gods. The oldest gods of the Sumerians are personifications of and vessels for interacting with the natural forces of their lands. When Inanna and later Ishtar, who replaced the primordial Goddess Ki, is rejected and then insulted by the "strong man" of the Sumerian people, Gilgamec/Gilgamesh, the Earth herself is rejected and her justice is destroyed. I will show how this separation from the goddess is the original source Gilgamec/Gilgamesh's, and our culture's, fear of death and drive to escape submission to/consumption by the Goddess or Earth, herself. This paper was inspired by study, discussion, collaborative writing, and ritual in the oracular poetry group Sibyl's Cave. It concludes with channeled poetry and prophecy from the mouth of the goddess invoked within the group.

Animism, Indigeneity and Memory

Dawn Work-MaKinne

Animism is the understanding that the world is full of Persons, only some of whom are human. Whether tree, cloud, squirrel or human, persons are kin and deserving of respect, care and the nurture of our bonds. How do pre-literate people the world over commit their vast oral traditions to memory? Kelly and Neale write of Songlines: Aboriginal memories encoded on the land itself. As the initiated traverse the landscape, they cement their knowledge through the arts: singing, dancing, painting, stone carving and ceremony. Kelly theorized that other indigenous peoples must have memory techniques akin to the Aboriginal songlines. From Stonehenge in England to the monumental stones of Easter Island to the trails of American Indians, memory is engraved in the land. Additionally, nomadic peoples would need memory devices that were portable: decorated baskets and pottery, cloth and tools. Marija Gimbutas presented thousands of Old European artifacts in her works. *The Language of the Goddess* suggests that symbols

decorating our ancestors' belongings formed a meaningful proto-writing system. When I view these artifacts, I also see memories encoded on portable objects. Awareness of these traditional memory techniques opens up exciting new areas of study in Goddess scholarship, women and mythology and the arts. We must look to our own heritage. Traditional knowledge can still be pieced together through old songs, stories, artifacts and the landscape. Our ancestors had to have something that kept their memories of the vast interconnected web of plant, animal, sky and human kin.

The Bear in the Machine

Susan Wright

Social media, the internet and artificial intelligence are rightly blamed for a multitude of negative influences: the detrimental impact upon adolescent girls and young women; the exorbitant portion of time spent online; the corresponding loss of time spent outdoors in nature; a growing reliance on AI and online platforms; a corresponding loss of human intelligence, imagination and creativity; not to mention the proliferation of misinformation and siloing of news, which exacerbate cultural divides between right and left, urban and rural, masculine and feminine. All these figure as symptoms of collective psychological imbalance. This paper proposes that social media, the internet and AI also have positive value, especially for women. While so much of what is viewed online is manipulated by algorithms, those algorithms are, nevertheless, products of the psyche that extend beyond the conscious intentions of their designers. For depth psychology, psyche is present in all things, it is a self-regulating system that seeks psychological wholeness for the individual and the collective. Thus, much like dreams, we should expect compensatory images to appear online, for instance, in our social media feeds. I will share my own experience with the bear in the machine—an image of the prehistorical goddess that transgresses digital domains.

Carrying Pebbles in [Their] Grief: Qiu Jin (1875-1907) and the Jingwei Bird/Nüwa

Ying Xu

Qiu Jin, the female revolutionary martyr of the late Qing dynasty, lamented the fate of Chinese women in a 1902 poem, "Though carry pebbles in its grief, the swallow cannot fill in the sea; Nor can I, lacking the ability to smelt stone, mend the heavens." Qiu evoked two mythological figures in Chinese myths, Nüwa (女娃) and Nüwa (女媧), two different deities despite the same spelling. The first was a princess in legendary ancient China, who was drowned and vowed to fill the sea with stones. The second was the mother goddess, who created mankind and sacrificed herself while repairing the sky. Qiu was devoted to the task of women's self-liberation and "filling in the hated sea" of oppression and exploitation of women. In 1904, she went to Japan for a modern education and joined the revolutionary groups in overthrowing the Qing dynasty. In her last unfinished novel, *The Pebbles of the Jingwei Bird* (1907), she reinforces her vow as a pioneering radical feminist sacrificing for women's liberation and the nation's independence by alluding to the legendary Jingwei. Drawing on Yan Haiping's theory on Qiu Jin's feminist imagination, I would focus on sisterhood and community-building for early feminists who were torn between nationalism and women's independence. Embracing the cause of Nüwa, the deity

sacrificed to the darkness of the evils, Qiu Jin had reincarnated herself as Nüwa, a goddess of the revolution for new women and a new country entering a modern era.

Hybridity in Estonian Sacred Spring Mythology

Karin Zirk

Estonian mythology can be situated as a restoration or creation of pre-colonization culture that is self-evident in the movement to recover and protect non-Christian sacred spaces since the restoration of independence in 1991. In the time of original colonization, the indigenous Estonians did not have a written language. The words and ideas of the “Maarahavas” or “people of the land” now known as Estonia were initially written down by colonizers who were often familiar with Greek and Norse Mythology. Additional evidence for these sacred springs come from oral folk tales that were collected by Estonians under colonization. In this process the concepts of the pre-colonization indigenous religions of Estonia were established. If Estonian culture and identity fall into the context of the postcolonial model of hybridity proposed by Homi K. Bhabha, does the study of sacred spaces reveal an essential Estonian culture? Does this emphasis on sacred spaces in nature function to reconnect Estonians to a pre-colonization relationship with the land? Can the 700 plus years of colonization of Estonia be understood through postcolonial theories most often centered on postcolonial studies of the Americas, Africa, and India? This exploration of critical issues in postcolonial studies attempts to reveal how postcolonial theories of hybridity are applicable to the study of Estonian sacred springs.