

# MYTHS

## Shattered and Restored

Proceedings of the Association  
for the Study of Women and Mythology

Volume 1



*Edited by*  
Marion Dumont and Gayatri Devi

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## To Patricia Monaghan

Across time and space, we place this book in your hands today. Without you it would still be just a shared dream. We honor your tireless dedication to goddess scholarship in all its forms and remember you in so many ways: as researcher, author, editor, poet, mentor, advisor, co-conspirator—but most of all, as our friend.



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## FOREWORD



Why, in a time when there are many women's studies and gender studies departments, are these articles from Association for the Study of Women and Mythology (ASWM) events worthy of presentation in a separate volume under the general topic of goddess studies?

Goddess spirituality is the most radical expression of women's studies. The inclusion of the feminine divine is more necessary than ever, because the patriarchal, competitive, warlike masculine divine in most religions has been overemphasized. Our received heritage of warrior gods has nothing to do with the human necessities of love, connection, healing and reframing our relationship with our planet, whereas the goddess archetype is associated with life-affirming spiritual beliefs, connection with the human family, and the nurturance of others and our planet. These beliefs can run very deep in the psyches of modern women and men.

It is necessary to re-integrate study with belief.

Our studies are not only about equal pay or status but also about the deepest sources of inspiration for new and restorative ideas and actions that support those ideas.

For some women, it is important to work within traditional religions and to bring about change from that perspective. But it is also important to carve out space to inspire new perspectives and scholarship. Goddess studies foster the creative impulse of all people who are hungry for a new paradigm, one that integrates experience and belief with scholarly pursuits.

Such scholarship does not belong only to the academy. There are independent scholars, artists and performers who contribute to research and to our understanding of the importance of goddess- and woman-oriented

scholarship. ASWM events and publications exist to nourish this broad community of scholars.

It is not possible to introduce this volume or series without acknowledging the immeasurable contributions of ASWM co-founder Patricia Monaghan. Through decades of social change, she never lost the vision of a community that would foster new types of scholarship that reflect women's experiences. When she discovered in Sid Reger another scholar who held the same vision, she insisted that they create an organization that would both recognize foremothers and assist emerging scholars, and thus ASWM was born.

Patricia was a great teacher, inside and outside of the academy. Her intelligence and energy were brought to bear in all of her many projects. She was always generous with her time, and she encouraged students everywhere. She also encouraged colleagues, remembering in her brilliant mind and huge heart what was important to them, from their largest dreams to small details about their lives. Patricia also presented me with the 2012 Sarasvati Book Award for *Sacred Display*, co-authored with Victor Mair. As if the award were not enough, Patricia presented me with a box of Fannie May chocolates – a favorite of my family throughout my childhood, as Patricia knew. The memory of her kindness is as sweet as the chocolates.

Those of us who continue to support goddess scholarship believe that this volume will please Patricia, if she is looking over our shoulders today.

Miriam Robbins Dexter, Ph.D.  
Los Angeles, CA



## INTRODUCTION



Today's history becomes tomorrow's myths. This exceptional collection of essays is a valued contribution toward contemporary feminist and womanist efforts to re-cover the *herstory* of mythology and to ensure that today's herstory is not forsaken in tomorrow's myths. This anthology reflects the mission of the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology (ASWM) to elucidate aspects of the sacred feminine through scholarly and creative explorations in the fields of women's spirituality, goddess studies and women-centered mythology. The writings presented in this volume serve to strengthen and support the circle of women and men who share a scholarly passion for sacred myths by and about women.

Mythology is the branch of knowledge or field of study of the important stories we tell ourselves that enable us to gather meaning in our daily lives. Imaginative analogues to our lived experience, myths are cultural and spiritual stories that arise out of humanity's experience of life on earth. Myths speak to a deep and real desire in us to understand our context here on earth while yearning to comprehend our connection to our ancestors and our roots, to share experiences that transcend binaries and boundaries, and to envision the future from a liminal present. Myths allow us to see ourselves as both timeless and historical beings. Through awakening belief, mythic stories afford us an opportunity to participate in a non-material realm, a realm of sacred, creative power, whose intimations we experience in our encounters with ourselves and with the world around us through a multitude of modalities, such as ritual, art, storytelling and dance. They are the threads that link our present with our past and serve to shape our future.

The twelve essays in this collection explore various facets of myths that specifically address the cosmic as well as the immanent arrangement

and situatedness of the sacred feminine, from historical to contemporary times, and its implications for women's lives everywhere. They range from discussions of archaeomythology and its methodological contributions to understand and interpret the sacred feminine from their cultural matrices to detailed explorations of specific foundational women-centered myths such as those of Demeter and Persephone, Ariadne and the Labyrinth, the black Madonna, Artemis and Sakti/Devi. These essays also explore the power and capacity of myths to directly institute change in our personal lives, by means such as reconceptualizing healthcare through curanderismo or grounding a feminist and spiritual model of power sharing and sacred sisterhood through the stories of collective female deities.

Our opening essay, "Archaeomythology as Academic Field and Methodology: Bridging Science and Religion, Empiricism and Spirituality," by Mara Lynn Keller provides an overview of Marija Gimbutas and the field of archaeomythology as it relates to goddess studies and feminist mythology. The work of Marija Gimbutas has been instrumental in providing support for a contemporary, feminist interpretation of myths that allows for the inclusion of women and women's worldview. Keller provides an overview of Gimbutas's archaeomythology methodology and its impact on practitioners of feminist spirituality and mythology studies: "As the next generations of researchers apply similar epistemological approaches and practical methodologies to infer sacred symbols and mythic narratives from the material artifacts of ancient peoples, we will benefit from clarifying our understanding of this relatively new academic field and its distinctive methodology."

Joan Cichon, in her essay "Archaeomythology from Neolithic Malta to Modern Poland: Apprehending the Material and Spiritual Realities of Ancient and Present-Day Cultures," elaborates on the methodology of archaeomythology as it applies to three different cultural matrices. In discussing goddess-related historical and current phenomena in Malta, Turkey and Poland, Cichon demonstrates, in particular, archaeomythology's ability to create a "gestalt that makes sense of a variety of data" as opposed to proving or disproving individual details.

In "Honoring the Web: Indigenous Wisdom and the Power of Place," Arieahn Matamonasa-Bennett discusses the "cocreative" influence of geography on the "metaphoric mind" or "nature mind" of indigenous and earth-based communities to heal "soul wounds" that result from a damaged relationship to one's place in the world. Matamonasa-Bennet discusses productive ways

to incorporate the wisdom of the metaphoric mind of the indigenous people in mythology studies: “A value that indigenous people around the world share is that they must preserve their stories, languages, customs, songs and philosophies, because these sustain life—the life of individuals, the life of families, the life of communities and the life of our planet. Stories are particularly important, because they integrate ancestral wisdom and hold the essence of people’s spiritual being through time and place.” Matamonasa-Bennett argues that, insofar as myths speak to certain fundamental human experiences accessible through rituals, ceremony and artistic expressions, particularly story-telling or “medicine,” they sustain life and have the capacity to redress the spiritual wounds brought by our disconnection from place and nature.

In imaginative forms, through narratives and poems, myths often contain historical, cultural and spiritual truths that have survived the passage of time. Today, women are re-evaluating and re-presenting myths in order to reclaim aspects of truths that have been suppressed by a predominantly male-populated field of study. In “Ariadne, Mistress of the Labyrinth: Reclaiming Ariadnian Crete,” Alexandra K. Cichon retells and reinterprets the myth of Ariadne’s labyrinth from a Jungian mythological perspective, in the process debunking the patriarchal narratives of Ariadne as Minos’s daughter and Theseus’s lover. Cichon’s analysis contextualizes the Ariadne myth that was meshed with the myths of a Dionysian great mother or moon goddess prevalent in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor regions, drawing attention to the transboundary formulations of key goddess myths.

Likewise, Mary Beth Moser in “Wild Women of the Waters: Remembering the Anguane of the Italian Alps” leads us through an entire folk and myth cycle pertaining to these water deities of the Italian Alps and their immanent presence in the lives of villagers from antiquity to modern times. In Moser’s treatment of the myth, we see the applied meaning and value of mythic deities to influence the full life cycle of a woman from birth to death and spiritual regeneration.

The work to reclaim female deities intentionally for women is continued in Denise Saint Arnault’s “Artemis as Protectress of Female Mysteries: Modern Worship in the Dianic Tradition in America,” in which she discusses the relationship between Artemis myths and mysteries and the feminist goddess religious practitioners of the Dianic tradition. Artemis, although identified with wilderness in mainstream mythology, is specifically a deity of girls and women, as exemplified in the accounts of her temples, extant

literature, symbols and rituals. Arnault describes how the specific female mythic energy associated with Artemis is indispensable to Dianic followers because it allows women to celebrate the unique body and biology of women as a complete gender that transcends the male-female binary.

The cultural cross-pollination of myths is explored in April Heaslip's "Securely Attached: Brazilians and their Black Madonnas," which discusses the syncretic worship of Yemanjá and Nossa Senhora Aparecida in Brazil to chart the complex give-and-take that occurs when myths and meanings fuse across cultures and evolve with time and material, historical changes. Heaslip's discussion posits the Black Madonna of Brazil as a female protectress in the goddess tradition through the hybrid identity of the Yemanjá/Madonna.

The cross-cultural scope and power of myth to effect deep soul healing and psychic integration is discussed in Natasha Redina's "Weaving Cross-cultural Narratives: Curanderismo and Psychotherapy." After providing a succinct overview of the complex practices of curanderismo, Redina argues that the ritual praxis embodied in curanderismo helps those suffering from psychic wounds to heal themselves by helping them to connect with archetypal processes and emotions in the manner in which we understand the benefits of psychotherapy in the Western world.

Continuing the cross-cultural approach to goddess and mythology studies, in "The Goddess and the Myth of Citizen Rights," Gayatri Devi and Savithri Shanker de Turreil demonstrate the timeless power of myths to reframe, re-energize and re-interrogate established and hegemonic narratives about the status of women within mainstream patriarchal Indian ethos. The authors discuss Indian tribal activist Mahasweta Devi's retelling of the myth of Draupadi in her short story "Draupadi" from the Indian national epic *Mahabharata* to challenge the mythic grounds of women's abjection through the counterpoint of a goddess myth.

The archaeomythological investigation into goddess myths is continued in Joan M. Cichon's "Demeter and the Eleusinian Mysteries: Ancient Origins and Modern Impact," in which the Eleusinian mysteries are read as an amalgamation of goddess cults of ancient Crete and the patriarchal religion of Mycenae and the Greek mainland. Drawing upon a rich trove of mythological and linguistic sources, Cichon's analysis demonstrates the enduring significance of the Demeter-Persephone myth for women to access the great solidarity of daughter-mother, soul and its home dyad across all

cultures and all times. As Cichon's inspired reading of the myth affirms, most women, unlike Persephone, live the myth backwards: They live in the world of fathers and Hades most of their lives and have to travel back to reunite with their mothers.

Our experiences and the forces that shape our lives evolve into the myths that inform future generations. In Alexis Martin Faaberg's "The Three Faces of Persephone: Cup, Demoted Sproutling and Disembodied Psychosis," the original representations and later appropriations and interpretations of the Persephone figure are viewed through a feminist lens. Faaberg argues that the Persephone myth is one of the earliest examples of a myth of female community and that the abduction and rape of Persephone is a downgrading of this female community in preference for the patriarchal order of marriage. Faaberg cautions that contemporary interpretations of Persephone's return to Demeter from Hades see it as rebirth, with perhaps intentional or unintentional sanctioning of violence against women as intrinsic to their self-discovery. Myths help us to maintain our connection between the material and the spiritual; they are important in helping us to celebrate the mundane and the sacred. Faaberg writes, "Women's spirituality is the lens by which women experience religion. Most often, these experiences are rooted in the daily rituals in which family, maternal bonds, food, dance and song coalesce into a spiritual life."

The mythos of a sacred female collective fittingly bookends this collection of essays. The myth of a sacred female collective and the personal, social and spiritual implications of conceiving self and a deity as composed of an integrated yet well-defined sisterhood as opposed to a monolithic divinity is explored in Dawn E. Work-Makinne's "Deity in Sisterhood: The Collective Sacred Female in Germanic Europe." Discussing the European tradition's sacred goddess collectives, such as Deae Matronae, the Norns, the Dísir, Drei Heiligen Jungfrauen, et al., Work-Makinne points out that collective divinities appear to belong selectively to the domain of goddesses and that male god collectives are a rarity. Work-Makinne's analysis posits interesting connections among the values of cooperation, consensus and power sharing as opposed to domination, oppression and submission.

These essays highlight the importance of women's scholarly contributions to mythology, which allow for a more holistic representation of humanity's experience and the meaning found in our myths. Myths from Malta, Crete, India, Brazil, Italy, Poland, North America, Mexico and Germany are highlighted in this anthology. And, although we cannot claim a wider cultural

representation, we are grateful for these insightful conceptual and pragmatic analyses that will prove to be a valuable resource for scholars of women's spirituality and goddess studies.

We also note with distinct pleasure that all of these essays speak to the profound personal experience and intentional, conscious valorization of these myths by the authors in their personal lives. Thus, these essays are not merely intellectual exercises. They model transformative scholarship at its personal and intellectual best. Through the authors' commitment to academic excellence and authentic analyses and their willingness to engage with the personal, we are given to understand the power of myth to heal and restore both communal and personal peace and psychic balance. It is not surprising that in these essays we find important implications for the empowerment and celebration of contemporary women and their worlds. As Joan M. Cichon asserts in her remarkable essay, "Demeter and the Eleusinian Mysteries: Ancient Origins and Modern Impact," "Writing this article has been a great blessing for me. I was able to uncover evidence linking Demeter to Bronze Age Crete, which was very satisfying to the archaeomythologist part of me, and I finally was able to deeply relate to the myth. I believe these two events are connected. . . . Confirming through my own research the myth's ancient roots was immediately healing."

The essays in this collection affirm the central role of feminist spirituality in women accepting and acknowledging our sacred origins and ongoing divine guidance in everyday life.

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# ARCHAEOLOGY AS ACADEMIC FIELD AND METHODOLOGY: BRIDGING SCIENCE AND RELIGION, EMPIRICISM AND SPIRITUALITY

*Mara Lynn Keller*



The archaeologist Marija Gimbutas investigated the material culture of Neolithic Europe and discovered a mythic spiritual culture created by the indigenous peoples of Neolithic Europe. Gimbutas identified settlement patterns, household goods, burials and ritual equipment of the place and time she named Old Europe, which developed from ca. 7,500 to 3,500 BCE. From this empirical base in archaeology, she was able to decipher symbols used for spiritual communication. She interpreted the patterns of symbols in Old Europe as a goddess-centered mythology that represented powers of nature and the cosmos. Gimbutas named the research work she was doing *archaeomythology*, designating both a field of academic inquiry and a methodological approach, connecting scientific archaeology with the humanistic study of mythology. For further support for her mythological interpretations, she drew upon knowledge gleaned from the fields of linguistics, the history of religion and folklore.

As the next generations of researchers employ complex epistemological approaches and practical methodologies to infer sacred symbols and mythic narratives from the material artifacts of ancient peoples, we will benefit from clarifying our understanding of this relatively new academic field and its distinctive methodology. I first provide an introduction to Gimbutas's archaeomythology as academic field and methodology. Second, I discuss the underlying assumptions of archaeomythology as articulated by the archaeomythology scholar Joan Marler, and I survey the growth of

archaeomythology since Gimbutas's death in 1994. Third, I provide an elaboration of the methodology of archaeomythology, noting its overlap with spiritual feminist hermeneutics. I close with some comments on the usefulness of archaeomythology for scholars of goddess studies, women's spirituality, and religious studies, which are my primary areas of research.<sup>1</sup>

## **I. Gimbutas and the Creation of Archaeomythology**

Marija Gimbutas founded the academic field of archaeomythology in the latter part of the 20th century with a series of books published between 1974 and 1999: *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, *The Language of the Goddess*, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe*, and *The Living Goddesses*. Her discoveries continue to inspire the work of many scholars today.<sup>2</sup> After completing extensive work on the Bronze Age cultures of the Baltic region, Gimbutas began to excavate the cultural remains of Neolithic Europe.

To her surprise, and in sharp contrast to her earlier study of Eastern European Bronze Age societies with their proliferation of bronze weapons and warfare, Gimbutas found in the Neolithic settlements of southeastern Europe a lack of weapons used for war and a preponderance of female figures decorated with enigmatic markings. Once the more scientific labors of archaeological survey, excavation, restoration, dating and assemblage had been completed, she turned to the task of deciphering the symbolic signs carved, painted or incised on the archaeological artifacts.

Gimbutas's publication in 1974 of *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe: 7000–3500 BC: Myths and Cult Images*<sup>3</sup> broke new ground for post-World War II archaeology, inferring from the archaeological record the mythologies and cosmological orientations of Old European and early Indo-European societies. Marler, a colleague, friend and biographer of Gimbutas, noted that Gimbutas first "began to develop a multidisciplinary approach to the study of prehistory during her student years in Lithuania" for her Master's thesis on Baltic prehistory (written 1940–1942) and that Gimbutas drew upon "archaeology, linguistics, mythology, ethnography, and the study of historical sources."<sup>4</sup> At that time, and into the 1980s, combining the sciences and humanities was largely shunned by elite academics as not being serious.



Gimbutas's next book meticulously analyzed the signs and symbols on the figurines, pottery, house models and grave goods of Old European peoples, symbols that were repeated over and over again through generations and across millennia, in patterns related to their usage. From her careful analysis of these signs and symbols, Gimbutas argued that she had discovered a proto-language of symbolic communication that she called "the language of the Goddess."

Given the disciplinary limitations of archaeology in the United States and England at that time, Gimbutas decided to name her multidisciplinary approach *archaeomythology*. In the introduction to *The Language of the Goddess*, published in 1989, she asserted, "This volume is a study in archaeomythology, a field that includes archaeology, comparative mythology and folklore."<sup>5</sup>

In *The Language of the Goddess*, Gimbutas summarized her process for understanding the Neolithic symbolism as a complex system of meaning. The symbols "constitute a complex system in which every unit is interlocked with every other in what appear to be specific categories. No symbol can be treated in isolation; understanding the parts leads to understanding the whole, which in turn leads to identifying more of the parts."<sup>6</sup> The symbols are hieroglyphic or abstract (shaped, for example, like M, V, X, Y, tri-lines, triangles and meanders) or representational (for example, stylized breasts, pregnant bellies, vulvas, phalluses, water birds, snakes and bears).

As she studied the symbolic imagery of Old Europe, Gimbutas came to understand that these markings were connected to nature and to the people's sense of the divine within nature. "Symbols are seldom abstract in any genuine sense," she explained. "Their ties with nature persist, to be discovered through the study of context and association. In this way we can hope to decipher the mythical thought which is the *raison d'être* of this art and basis of its form."<sup>7</sup>

Gimbutas proposed that the Old European symbols represented the forces and functions of nature embedded in the lives of women and men, in plants and animals and insects, in mountain, forest, sea, sun, moon, stars and all the myriad elements of nature and the cosmos. She interpreted the religious symbolism of Neolithic Old Europe as implying spiritual beliefs in a goddess or goddesses of birth and nurture, death and regeneration,

and in a god or gods as consort and life-giving stimulus to the life-giving powers of the goddess(es).

About the connections of Old European symbols to the term *Goddess*, the ecofeminist philosopher, cultural historian and women's spirituality scholar Charlene Spretnak explained:

After decades of study of the ritually placed art and artifacts and the symbol system of the pre-Indo-European cultures of southeastern Neolithic Europe, Gimbutas used the term *Goddess* to refer to the diverse visual and folkloric imagery of metaphor and symbol behind which lies a complex of concepts expressing an awareness of embeddedness, participatory consciousness, and the immanence of the sacred. . . . Encompassing the cosmological drama of the changing seasons, the bounty of the land, and the cycles of endless regeneration, "The Goddess in all her manifestations, [Gimbutas concluded], was a symbol of the unity of all life in Nature."<sup>8,9</sup>

Gimbutas did not restrict her focus to a single geographical region but kept expanding the scope of her studies. She discovered that the symbols she was studying had "systematic associations in the Near East, southeastern Europe, the Mediterranean area, and in central, western, and northern Europe." Furthermore, through these cross-regional studies, Gimbutas concluded that the symbols and their associations demonstrated "the extension of the same Goddess religion to all of these regions as a cohesive and persistent ideological system."<sup>11</sup>

In her magnum opus, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe*, published in 1991 and edited by Marler, Gimbutas noted again that the econometric focus of archaeologists caused them to ignore and miss the significance of the religious dimensions of ancient cultures.

Previous books on Neolithic Europe have focused on habitat, tool kits, pottery, trade, and environmental problems, treating religions as "irrelevant." This is an incomprehensible omission since secular and sacred life in those days were one and indivisible. By ignoring the religious aspects of Neolithic life, we neglect the totality of culture.

Archaeologists cannot remain scientific materialists forever, neglecting a multidisciplinary approach. . . . Neolithic social structure and religion were intertwined and were reflections of each other.<sup>12</sup>

Again, Gimbutas insisted that a multidisciplinary approach to the religious aspects of ancient culture is indispensable if one hopes to understand an ancient people's patterns of belief. "A combination of fields—archaeology, mythology, linguistics, and historical data—provides the possibility for apprehending both the material and spiritual realities of prehistoric cultures."<sup>13</sup>

But even more controversial than her use of multiple disciplines to study religion implied by the archaeological record was Gimbutas's claim to have discovered a goddess-centered civilization in old Europe. Moreover, she claimed this civilization was peaceful, egalitarian, artistic and prosperous.

Archaeologists and historians have assumed that civilization implies a hierarchical political and religious organization, warfare, a class stratification, and a complex division of labor. . . . I reject the assumption that civilization refers only to androcratic warrior societies. The generative basis of any civilization lies in its degree of artistic creation, aesthetic achievements, nonmaterial values, and freedom which make life meaningful and enjoyable for all its citizens, as well as a balance of powers between the sexes. Neolithic Europe was not a time "before civilization." . . . It was, instead, a true civilization in the best meaning of the word.<sup>14</sup>

This was a metanarrative that many of Gimbutas's colleagues found too extraordinary to accept.<sup>15</sup> The idea of a goddess-revering civilization at the root of European culture seemed preposterous to many, and it was mocked by some archaeologists and some religious scholars. Why is unclear. The challenge of the evidence for a peaceful, artistic, matristic and goddess-centered civilization in early Europe—which counters the long-prevailing assumption that universal male dominance, primary male gods, warfare and empire-building have always been the dominant ways of life—was too much for some to acknowledge even as a possibility.

While some of us welcomed Gimbutas's work enthusiastically, others made a concerted effort to distort and dismiss her work, as argued convincingly by Charlene Spretnak in "Anatomy of a Backlash: Concerning the Work of Marija Gimbutas."<sup>16</sup> Perhaps those who feel in harmony with Gimbutas's theory have internalized more of a pre-Indo-European cultural inheritance while those with an opposing view have internalized more of the Indo-European cultural inheritance. For whatever reasons, this conflict has been surprisingly deep and sharp, echoing what Gimbutas referred to as a "clash between these two ideologies and social and economic structures of cultures."<sup>17</sup>

In *The Civilization of the Goddess*, Gimbutas presented voluminous evidence that supported her claims.

Old Europeans had towns with a considerable concentration of population, temples several stories high, a sacred script, spacious houses of four or five rooms, professional ceramicists, weavers, copper and gold metallurgists, and other artisans producing a range of sophisticated goods. A flourishing network of trade routes existed that circulated items such as obsidian, shells, marble, copper, and salt over hundreds of kilometers.<sup>18</sup>

This monumental work was illustrated with hundreds of images depicting dynamic symbols and mostly female and animal figures. Many figurines artfully merge the human female form with animal forms, and therefore are considered supernatural and divine.

Using comparative mythology, Gimbutas discerned contrasting symbolic, ideological and social systems for Neolithic Old Europe and Bronze Age Europe. Her conclusions remain controversial.

The clash between these two ideologies and social and economic structures led to the drastic transformation of Old Europe. These changes were expressed as the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal order, from a learned theocracy to a militant patriarchy, from a sexually balanced society to a male-dominated hierarchy, and from a chthonic goddess religion to the Indo-European sky-oriented pantheon of gods.<sup>19</sup>

Archaeomythology was again the methodology for Gimbutas's last work about Old Europe and its cultural survivals, *The Living Goddesses*. This book discussed links between Old European religion and folkloric survivals in present-day European cultures. Gimbutas died on February 2, 1994. *The Living Goddesses* was published posthumously in 1999, edited and supplemented by her student and colleague, the linguist Miriam Robbins Dexter, also of the University of California at Los Angeles, where Gimbutas was a professor of archaeology from 1963 until her retirement in 1989. Dexter acknowledged that Gimbutas's work was controversial, "for she was an original thinker and strong in asserting her hypotheses. . . . She realized that the interpretation and interconnection of data are what lead to understanding and to a deep scientific contribution."<sup>20</sup>

Gimbutas's final four books founded the multidisciplinary academic field and methodology of archaeomythology. Although she used the scientific archaeological methods of her day, and whenever possible the most technologically advanced methods for dating artifacts, Gimbutas clearly acknowledged that her methodology was not strictly empiricist but also required interpretation, using intuition and artistic sensibilities. Gimbutas's research on the Goddess civilization of Neolithic Old Europe documented the "cohesive and persistent" symbol system of a "goddess religion" that stretched from Anatolia to the British Isles. She traced its transformation by the invasions of nomadic Indo-Europeans from northeastern Europe, which resulted in the mixture of these disparate cultures into the hybridized historical societies of Europe.

## **II. Archaeomythology and Its Working Assumptions**

Marler conceptualized several of the "working assumptions" of the growing field of archaeomythology in her "Introduction to Archaeomythology," published in 2000. Each of these statements is significant, for they elucidate presuppositions that inform the process of archaeomythology.

- Sacred cosmologies are central to the cultural fabric of all early societies.
- Beliefs and rituals expressing sacred worldviews are conservative and are not easily changed.

- Many archaic cultural patterns have survived into the historical period as folk motifs and as mythic elements within oral, visual and ritual traditions.
- Symbols, preserved in cultural artifacts, “represent the grammar and syntax of a kind of meta-language by which an entire constellation of meanings is transmitted.”<sup>22, 23</sup>

Together, these working assumptions provide a doorway and framework for the exploration of the spiritual beliefs and practices of ancient peoples.

In postmodern cultures of today that focus so intently on human constructs and language, it can be difficult for us to comprehend the embeddedness of ancient peoples in nature and their curiosity about the cosmos. But when approaching prehistorical cultures, it is plausible to assume that “sacred cosmologies are central to the cultural fabric of all early societies,” as Marler stated in her first point above. Living as an integral part of the fabric of nature, Neolithic peoples were much more in tune with the elements, plants, animals, seasons and celestial sources of light than are urbanized and modernized people today.

Regarding Marler’s second working assumption for the field of archaeomythology, that “beliefs and rituals expressing sacred worldviews are conservative and are not easily changed,” we can provide several significant reasons for this. Beliefs and rituals were often created to secure survival. As Jane Ellen Harrison wrote in her 1913 work, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, “other things may be added to enrich and beautify human life, but, unless these [survival] wants are first satisfied, humanity itself must cease to exist. These two things, therefore, food and children, were what men [*sic*] chiefly sought to procure by the performance of magical rites.”<sup>24</sup> Today we realize that rituals also serve the crucial need of creating group bonding, and therefore, again, have staying power. Rituals and beliefs that advance human survival become religious imperatives and are passed from one generation to the next.

This is one of the major reasons why religious conflicts are often so intransigent—they are tied to the differently perceived survival needs of different peoples. People come to explain the world to themselves in ways that become traditions, and then these traditions are sometimes held as if they were absolutely necessary to personal and group identity, to well-being

as well as survival, as defined by one's own family or clan. Scholars of mythology argue, however, that these are not the only reasons why humans have created religious beliefs and practices.

Some religious beliefs and rituals have been created to respond to and engage with a felt sense of the sacredness and awesomeness of life, the powers of nature and all that is. People tell sacred stories or myths to explain life itself and their place in creation. They invent rituals to make manifest the mythos of divinity within material experience.

Marler's third point is that "many archaic cultural patterns have survived into the historical period as folk motifs and as mythic elements within oral, visual, and ritual traditions." This is affirmed by folklorists and historians of religion. We know that archaic cultural patterns persist in popular customs such as Christmas and Halloween, in fairy tales and even astronomy, as well as in the popularity of antiquities internationally. To state this point another way, folk motifs and mythic elements provide us with clues regarding earlier beliefs that have remained alive for long periods of time in popular culture, because of their survival value and also because of their connection to sacred cosmologies and traditions that express and renew people's spiritual feelings—including intense feelings of love, wonder, fear of the unknown, desires for healing, approaching and reconciling with death, and more.

What of Marler's fourth working assumption? Archaeomythology holds that "symbols, preserved in cultural artifacts, 'represent the grammar and syntax of a kind of meta-language by which an entire constellation of meanings is transmitted' (Gimbutas 1989, xxv)"? This claim is plausible, again, because religious symbols presuppose a spiritual realm of reference and values. The invisible dimension beyond the material realm, for most of human history has been deemed essential to people's survival, well-being, identity and connection with others, with nature and with the divine. This view was corroborated by the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his *Interpretation of Cultures*. Geertz saw the sacred stories and rituals of religion as infused with a set of cultural symbols and that "sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos—the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their world view—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order."

These four working assumptions of Gimbutas's archaeomythology, as articulated by Marler, generate a framework that allows for both material and spiritual aspects of an ancient culture to be perceived and (to some extent) understood. It opens possibilities for the researcher to trace both material and spiritual changes from one era to another, from one place to another.

Eventually, Gimbutas's work was embraced by the Women's Spirituality Movement that emerged from the popular uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s during the era of the Vietnam War. Starr Goode, a feminist activist in Los Angeles, described the larger cultural context of the time: The year 1968 was a "tumultuous year, with the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, the ongoing slaughter in Vietnam, [and] the military draft of students."<sup>27</sup>

[In 1969] the [UCLA] campus became a combat zone of demonstrations over the War, People's Park, the near daily tear gas, the National Guard on street corners, curfews, mass arrests, a student shot to death. . . . We wanted the opportunity to learn how to protect ourselves from male violence. What passion we had, what a totality of commitment to our vision of a better world!<sup>28</sup>

The LA Goddess Project that Goode initiated with friends produced special events for the publication of *The Language of the Goddess* in 1989 and *The Civilization of the Goddess* in 1991, which was documented on video as "Voice of the Goddess: Marija Gimbutas."<sup>29</sup> Another documentary of Gimbutas lecturing, this time at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco in 1990, was produced by psychologist and cultural historian Ralph Metzner: *Marija Gimbutas: World of the Goddess*.<sup>30</sup> Metzner is also the author of *The Well of Remembrance: Rediscovering the Earth Wisdom Myths of Northern Europe*. He drew upon Gimbutas's theory of Old European societies and their hybridization with Indo-European tribes to construct his fascinating discussion of the mythology of northern Europe.

Religious scholar and goddess theologian Carol P. Christ and religious scholar Naomi Goldenberg gathered several colleagues together and edited a collection of articles celebrating and defending Gimbutas and her work.



A special section titled “The Legacy of the Goddess: The Work of Marija Gimbutas” was published in 1996 in the leading feminist journal for religious studies, the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*.<sup>31</sup>

In order to honor Gimbutas’s breadth of scholarship and advance the development of the field of archaeomythology, Marler edited *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*, a Festschrift published in 1997 and to which 56 colleagues, representing a wide range of disciplines, contributed. To welcome the publication of this book, Marler and I produced the international conference, “From the Realm of the Ancestors, Language of the Goddess,” also sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies, where I was serving as director of the women’s spirituality, philosophy and religion graduate program. Other events celebrating the life and work of Gimbutas and this Festschrift took place, most notably at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

In 1998, Marler launched the Institute of Archaeomythology (IAM). It has “sponsored numerous international exhibitions, symposia, and other events on archaeomythological themes in collaboration with universities, academies, national museums, and other institutions located in the geographical area of Old Europe and beyond.”<sup>32</sup> Marler, Dexter, the linguist and cultural scientist Harald Haarmann and other colleagues of Gimbutas have continued to grow the field of archaeomythology through international conferences, books, articles, courses in colleges and universities, and the open-access, online *Journal of Archaeomythology*.<sup>33</sup> Marler and Haarmann have written many articles and produced several books. Haarmann’s most recent work, published in 2014, is titled *Roots of Ancient Greek Civilization: The Influence of Old Europe*.

The documentary *Signs Out of Time: The Life and Work of Marija Gimbutas*, created by filmmakers Donna Read and Starhawk, premiered in 2004. It projected the view that “determined and courageous, Marija Gimbutas stayed true to what she saw, amidst ridicule, criticism, and controversy. If her theories are correct, then reverence for the Earth, peace, and cooperation are the very underpinnings of European civilization.”<sup>34</sup> Since 2004, the video has been distributed to colleges, universities and libraries in 48 states plus the District of Columbia in the United States and to countries on all of the habitable continents of the world. This is a testimony to the widespread appeal of Gimbutas’s work around the world.

### **III. Archaeomythology Methodology and Goddess Studies**

In this third section, I discuss the methodology of archaeomythology and how it overlaps with the women's spirituality methodology of spiritual feminist hermeneutics. Although I am a serious student of archaeology, I am not an archaeologist. My academic training has been in philosophy and religion, and I am primarily a women's spirituality and goddess studies scholar. I discuss the methodology of archaeomythology with a view toward its use in tandem with women's spirituality, goddess studies and religious studies more generally.

In 1999, Joan Marler hosted a conference on the beautiful western Greek island of Madouri about Archaeomythology: Taking the Disciplines Deeper. We were a gathering of archaeologists, linguists, religious scholars, folklorists, anthropologists, philosophers, artists, poets and others who were interested in creating new ways of bringing archaeomythology as methodology into our own disciplines.

As a woman of European heritage, I am interested in using archaeomythology research for deepening my knowledge of our goddess- and god-revering ancestors. When conducting field research about ancient myth and religion in Greece and Crete, I visit archaeological sites and museums repeatedly. I study the pertinent archaeological site reports and other archaeology texts written by the primary excavators, take relevant courses in archaeology, and talk with archaeologists in my areas of interest. I combine this archaeological knowledge with studies of mythology, with attention to linguistics, folklore and history of religions. I study the Bronze Age Linear A script of Crete and the Creto-Mycenaean Linear B script, and also Homeric and Attic Greek. I use the multiple disciplines that archaeomythology draws upon, for example, for my studies of the prepatriarchal, pre-Mycenaean cultures of ancient Crete, as well as my studies of the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone. I also teach the methodology of archaeomythology to my students at the California Institute of Integral Studies when teaching my courses on "The Goddesses of Prehistory: An Archaeomythology" and "The Goddess and God Civilization of Ancient Crete."

I have learned much from the archaeomythology research of Gimbutas, Marler, Dexter, Haarmann and several doctoral students whose dissertation committees I have chaired. A primary example is the dissertation written

by Joan Cichon, who applied an archaeomythology methodology in the research for her study, “Matriarchy in Ancient Crete: A Perspective from Archaeomythology and Modern Matriarchal Studies.” She documented that the primary deity in ancient Crete was a mother goddess of nature; argued that ancient Crete was a woman-centered society; and correlated her archaeological findings with the definition of matriarchy provided by philosopher Heidi Goettner-Abendroth, the founder of modern matriarchal studies, on the economic, social, political and cultural levels.<sup>35</sup> Cichon concluded that Bronze Age Crete was a matriarchy.<sup>36</sup>

Haarmann’s *Interacting with Figurines: Seven Dimensions in the Study of Imagery* (2009) is another significant application of archaeomythology methodology to the empirical and mythological study of prehistoric imagery. “Figurines serve as a *lingua franca* in social interactions that enhance the sustainability of communal life and as an expression of a matrix of established values and beliefs by which people with a similarly tuned mindset are interconnected.”<sup>37</sup> Haarmann is intrigued by the social and symbolic significance of figurines as visual metaphors in cultures past and present. The earliest figurine yet discovered is the “Venus of Hohle Fels” in southwest Germany; it is 35,000 years old.

In light of this breadth and depth of research, I have elaborated the following methods for conducting archaeomythology research in tandem with women’s spirituality and goddess studies. As a methodology, archaeomythology does the following:

1. Starts with archaeological survey and discovery of material artifacts, their scientific measurements, material analysis and determination of dates and chronological sequences.
2. Analyzes artifacts with respect to stature, stance, size, placement, sex and gender, class, race, age, costume, gesture, attributes, symbols and relationships of persons, animals, plants, deities and/or environments to determine specific characteristics as markers for the probable identity, status and role of each.
3. Identifies ritual equipment and practices in local contexts, using specific criteria to identify findspots as primarily religious or nonreligious in function; associations with place; cosmological conjunctions; regional religious customs; and cross-cultural comparisons of religious practices in neighboring regions or countries.

4. Distinguishes women, men and other genders, priestesses and priests, goddesses and gods, mythical creatures, and rituals for birthing, sacred marriage, healing, death and burial, and planting and harvesting.
5. Uses linguistics to discover contemporaneous and/or later language terms, inscriptions, and/or literary texts that imply plausible and probable meanings of the artifacts, noting linguistic similarities, survivals or reversals of meaning from earlier eras and cultures to later ones.
6. Compares archaeological data with later historical data, mythologies and folklore, looking for continuities, discontinuities, parallels and differences in ritual practices and spiritual beliefs from one time and place to another.
7. Interprets symbols as part of a complex system of meanings and as keys for inferring sacred stories and spiritual meaning, using steps such as those specified by Gimbutas: analysis of the archaeological data, association, seeing the parts and the whole, and engaging intuition and artistic sensibilities to infer symbolic and mythological significance.
8. Turns preliminary hypotheses, with sufficient warrant, into theories that interconnect both material culture and spiritual culture.
9. Distinguishes different truth claims regarding empirical material data, on the one hand, and mythological, spiritual or religious truth claims, on the other, recognizing that distinct epistemologies are at work in science or religion and in empirical quantitative research or qualitative humanistic research.
10. Renders compelling interpretations of the material data that are consistent with the empirical data and are strengthened by the convergence of archaeology and mythology and related disciplines, drawing inferences that are more plausible and probable than competing interpretations that may be more narrowly scientific or more narrowly religious/mythological.

These ten methods within an archaeomythology methodology serve to bridge the epistemological gulf between scientific archaeology and religious mythology. They respect deeply the material evidence provided by scientific methods, and at the same time these methods engage intuition,

aesthetics and perhaps also a spiritual sensibility in the process of arriving at an interpretation of the empirical data.

The archaeomythology researcher acknowledges her or his own agency in the interpretation of the data. He or she may admit that knowledge is a social construct with political implications in the present.<sup>38</sup> And so, she or he will provide, at the outset and along the way, the researcher's socially situated standpoint, research interests, religious or spiritual biases and other influences on one's perceptions of the scientific data. They may consider that interpretations of the archaeological evidence could be enriched by the researcher cultivating a sense of interrelatedness among humans, nature, the cosmos and the source of all life (however that might be understood), especially when dealing with other cultures that seem to express a sense of the interrelatedness of all beings, such as those with more animistic, immanent and transcendent spiritualities.

Here is where we find a bridge to another methodology, that is, the one I most often use in doing research in religious studies. Goddess studies and women's spirituality are emergent fields of academic study that overlap with religious studies, women's studies, ethnic studies and ecofeminist philosophy and activism. Women's spirituality seeks a sense of the sacred in ancient and contemporary cultures, especially as created by women, for women, for children and men, for the larger society and for the larger environment.

#### **IV. Women's Spirituality, Goddess Studies and Spiritual Feminist Hermeneutics**

As a professor of philosophy, religion and women's spirituality, I consider what is contributed to the study of a prehistorical era or ancient historical era when it is explored from a primarily spiritual and religious orientation. What if I or others in goddess studies and women's spirituality use prayers and meditations, dreams and rituals, arts and divination, or the guidance of ancestors or other spirit guides or divinities to engage with the religious practices and spiritual experiences of ancient peoples? Can this more subjective approach be included in the methodology of archaeomythology? I am not sure. Maybe. Probably not. But then, even Einstein acknowledged kinesthetic feelings and dream images that suggested to him ideas for relativity and quantum physics.

I propose that women's spiritual practices and ways of knowing engage us in a *spiritual feminist hermeneutics*—a spiritual and political mode of interpretation. It is spiritual because it seeks to connect with a sense of the sacred and the divine. It is spiritual also because it looks to the dimensions of life that can be experienced but not adequately named, dimensions that are mysterious and ineffable but nonetheless offer wellsprings of providence, grace, healing, love and life itself. It is feminist because of its explicit interest in the lives and contributions of women in a more complete and truthful way, in personal and historical perspectives. It seeks to understand gender and gendered relations in societies past and present; it employs standpoint theory; and it seeks to transform social relations to become more equitable and just. Standpoint theory holds that a more complete understanding of an intended reality is possible if the standpoint of the researcher and of the subjects of research are acknowledged. And it is a hermeneutics because it sees the act of interpretation as a dialectic between text or artifact and the researcher. Although hermeneutics seeks to understand the text in its own context (with the help of language studies and historical studies), it also seeks to find its value for the present day.

Women's spirituality and goddess studies generally foreground the dimension of the researcher's self. Because in the past women were so often excluded from the creation or focus of research, we emphasize the importance of including oneself explicitly in one's research. This approach overlaps with the approach called *participatory research*, a practice developed in women's studies since its inception in the late 1960s and early 1970s; it is recently becoming more widely adopted in academia,<sup>39</sup> including archaeology. A spiritual feminist hermeneutics is participatory, because the researcher includes herself or himself as an active, self-reflexive agent in the search for knowledge. In participatory research, it is understood that both the researcher and the co-researchers (the subjects of the research) will be influenced and possibly benefited (or perhaps harmed) emotionally, politically and/or spiritually.

Women's spirituality and goddess studies research is usually also *transdisciplinary*, because these fields draw upon multiple disciplines, the researcher is a pivotal agent in the process of discovery; the researcher's standpoint becomes part of the unfolding research process; and these studies intend that the research may be transformative of self, others and the larger culture.<sup>40</sup> Finally, instead of being intraparadigmatic, transdisciplinary

research is meta-paradigmatic, which is to say that, instead of staying within a single discipline of knowledge, it draws upon several disciplines and so must consider how the different disciplines can work together.<sup>41</sup>

What happens when the women's spirituality and goddess studies or religious studies researcher includes herself or himself explicitly in the design of the research project and the interpretation of its findings? What if the research is undertaken because of the interests of the researcher in the social, political and religious problems of the researcher's culture? Or with the researcher's express desire for discovering something that will be inspiring, empowering, enlightening, healing and/or transformative of self and culture? Here we move beyond the useful constraints of science that work to minimize or exclude researcher bias. Instead, we desire to honor the passion and compassion that connect us to our subject and guides our work. It is research for humanistic, socially just and spiritually illuminating purposes.

*A transdisciplinary, participatory, spiritual feminist hermeneutic* provides us with a methodology to develop a larger and more accurate picture of past cultures' religious practices and their spiritual significance. It seeks to understand what knowledge and insight they can impart to our lives today. It draws upon multiple disciplines, depending on the topic of inquiry, and can include one's own spiritual beliefs, practices and nonempirical modes of knowing, such as empathy, intuition and body wisdom.

A transdisciplinary, participatory, spiritual feminist hermeneutics overlaps with archaeomythology. Both seek to understand the subject of the research within its own context. But in addition, a transdisciplinary, participatory, spiritual feminist hermeneutics seeks to understand the research data as filtered through the persona of the interpreter, using reflexive self-awareness. Women's spirituality and goddess studies are informed and shaped by various liberatory movements not only for women and men around the world but also for indigenous, postcolonial, queer, working class, ecological and other movements for social justice at work today. They also intend the possible spiritual and social transformation of the researcher, co-researchers and readers.

All of this methodological complexity comes to bear for me professionally and personally in my study of the religious myth of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis in Greece. I am primarily interested in the role that the myth and religious rites of the Mother and Daughter Goddesses played



in the spiritual awakening, integration and transformation of individuals within the larger community. Here, my study of ancient Greek literary works, artworks, religion and politics is complemented by the use of archaeomythology. Yet it would not feel accurate to say that my methodology is archaeomythology alone, because my primary focus and my beginning point is not archaeology.

I begin with the myth of Demeter and Persephone as recorded in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* of archaic Greece, and I move from there to an exploration of temples, shrines, other archaeological artifacts, epigrapha (texts engraved in stone), linguistics, literature, cultural history and art history to discover how the mythos of the Mother and Daughter Goddesses, their separation and reunion, was re-enacted at Eleusis. Finally, I re-enact the nine-day rite of initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries. As Joseph Campbell stated, “A ritual is the enactment of a myth. By participating in a ritual, you are participating in a myth.”<sup>42</sup> My feeling for the myth is generated primarily by its resonance with my own life story and how it brings insight and healing. This has been my guiding thread and my inspiration—along with the love I experienced in my relationship with my mother, whom I choose to honor with this work. I hope my interpretations will have both material and spiritual value for other women and men and for our world today and the future. My research into goddess religions of the past converges with the rituals I co-create with others in my own time and place, to invite us to open more fully to the mysteries of birth, sexuality, death and rebirth.

Mine is a personal and communal spiritual approach, an embodied spiritual feminist approach that is transdisciplinary, participatory and interpretive. It engages the sciences and social sciences to assist my religious studies. I want my research to *find as much relatively objective scientific data as possible*, and I want to *interpret the empirical data in a way that honors the integrity of the past and that also speaks to me deeply, in ways that are relatively subjective*. My epistemology addresses the challenge of interfacing science and religion by seeing objectivity and subjectivity along an epistemological continuum, with some knowledge being *relatively objective* (like counting fingers and measuring rainfall) and some knowledge being *relatively subjective* (like dreaming, remembering and loving), with the purely material/objective pole and the purely energy/subjective (nonmaterial, ideational or ideal) pole of the spectrum



as vanishing boundary points in human knowledge. A spiritual feminist hermeneutic can bridge the gulf between science and religion, empiricism and spirituality.

I embrace archaeomythology as both field and methodology as an invaluable dimension of my work in women's spirituality and goddess studies. It is part of my spiritual feminist hermeneutics methodology.

One of the reasons Gimbutas's work has such power for me and others today is that her analysis provides a window into a prepatriarchal egalitarian goddess and god civilization that I can honor. And it explains what happened when indigenous Old Europeans were colonized by Indo-Europeans, resulting in the hybridization of the Old European culture and the Indo-European culture during the Neolithic and early Bronze Ages in Europe. It also proffers an important perspective on the cultural dynamics of our own era.

Today we see ongoing struggles between the value systems of a more egalitarian, matristic, partnership ethos and a more hierarchical, patriarchal, dominator ethos; between the goals of sexual egalitarianism and sexual hierarchy; between earth-honoring religions and sky- or heaven-oriented religions; between peaceable cultures and militaristic cultures. In many ways, the political struggles within the world today reflect the desire among diverse populations for decolonization from the dominator values of many of the Indo-European and other colonizers of the globe, with their traditional cultural constructs of male dominance, monotheistic male gods and militarism. Many of us hope and work for a genuinely postcolonial, postpatriarchal world.

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## Endnotes

1 I delivered an earlier version of this article for the panel on “Archaeomythology in Theoretical Elaborations and Multi-Cultural Applications” at the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology conference on Creating the Chalice: Imagination and Integrity in Goddess Studies, in San Francisco, California, May 12, 2012. Many thanks to colleagues Paula Bahn, Lisa Christie, Miriam Robbins Dexter, Joan Marler and Charlene Spretnak for helpful feedback.

2 The publisher had insisted that “gods” needed to come first in the title, even though Gimbutas explained there were many more goddesses compared to gods in the archaeological record of Old Europe.

3 Joan Marler, “Archaeomythology,” *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*, ed. by Joan Marler (Manchester, CT: Knowledge, Ideas & Trends, 1997), 140.

4 Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), xviii.

5 *Ibid.*, xv.

6 *Ibid.*, xviii. See also Joan Marler, “Archaeomythology in Theoretical and Multi-Cultural Contexts” for the panel on “Archaeomythology: Theoretical Elaborations and Multi-Cultural Applications” at the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology conference on Creating the Chalice: Imagination and Integrity in Goddess Studies, in San Francisco, May 12, 2012; in this volume.

7 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 321.

8 Charlene Spretnak, “Anatomy of a Backlash: Concerning the Work of Marija Gimbutas,” *Journal of Archaeomythology* 7 (2011): 25–51.

- 9 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, xv.
- 10 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, xv.
- 11 Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*, ed. J. Marler (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), x.
- 12 Ibid., viii; see also 396–401.
- 13 Ibid., viii.
- 14 Ibid
- 15 Ibid., viii, 401; 396–401.
- 16 Marija Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses*, ed. and supp. by M. Robbins Dexter (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), xix.
- 17 In addition to Gimbutas’s final four works, see Joan Marler, “The Beginnings of Patriarchy in Europe: Reflections on the Kurgan Theory of Marija Gimbutas,” *The Rule of Mars: Readings on the Origins, History and Impact of Patriarchy*, ed. C. Biaggi (Manchester, CT: Knowledge, Ideas & Trends, 2005), 53–75.
- 18 See E. G. Guba and Y. S. Lincoln, “Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research,” *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 105–117.
- 19 Nanno Marinatos, *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image, and Symbol* (University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 10.
- 20 Ibid
- 21 Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 13.
- 22 Ibid., 12.
- 23 Ibid., 16.
- 24 Ian Hodder and Scott Hutson. *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 240.



25 Ian Hodder, *The Archaeological Process*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 83.

26 Ibid., 242. See also Ian Hodder, "Introduction: A Review of Contemporary Theoretical Debates in Archaeology," *Archaeological Theory Today*, ed. Ian Hodder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 1–13; S. Hamilton, "Lost in Translation? A Comment on the Excavation Report," *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 10 (1999): 1–8; Lynn Meskell, "The Interpretive Framework," *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Lynn Meskell, "Postscript," *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

27 Renfrew and Bahn, 16.

28 See, for example, Neil Price, *The Archaeology of Shamanism* (London: Routledge, 2001); Marina L. Moss, *The Minoan Pantheon: Towards an Understanding of its Extent*, BAR International Series 1343 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2005); Debbie Hershman, "In the Beginning: Prehistory and the Origins of Myth," *Beauty and Sanctity: The Israel Museum at 40* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2005); Joan Bretton Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007); Anna Lucia D'Agata, M. B. Richardson and Aleydis van de Moortel, *Archaeologies of Cult: Essays of Ritual and Cult in Crete* (Athens: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2007).

29 Charlene Spretnak, "Anatomy of a Backlash: Concerning the Work of Marija Gimbutas," *The Journal of Archaeomythology* 7 (2011): 31–36; Joan Marler, "Interview with Ian Hodder," *Journal of Archaeomythology* 3 (2007): 14–24; Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion: Themes in Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2004), 57.

30 See, for example, Marianne Ferguson, *Women and Religion* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994).

31 See, for example, Sharon R. Steadman, *Archaeology of Religion: Cultures and Their Beliefs for Negativism toward Gimbutas* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009). Oddly, the publicity blurb for Steadman's 2009 book states that "Steadman fills an empty niche in the

offerings on how archaeology interprets past religions with this useful textbook” (italics added). Accessed January 4, 2016. [www.barnesandnoble.com/w/archaeology-of-religion-sharon-r-steadman/1015748355?ean=9781598741544](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/archaeology-of-religion-sharon-r-steadman/1015748355?ean=9781598741544).

32 See, for example, Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion: Themes in Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2004); and Evangelos Kyriakidis, ed., *Archaeology of Ritual* (Los Angeles: The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2007).

33 See also Lynn Meskell, “Goddesses, Gimbutas and New Age Archaeology,” *Feminisms in the Academy*, ed. Domna C. Stanton and Abigail J. Steward (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 199–247; Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris, eds., *Ancient Goddesses: The Myths and the Evidence* (London: British Museum Press, 1998); Timothy Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion: Themes in Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2004); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005); and Kit W. Wesler, *Archaeology of Religion* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012).

34 Charlene Spretnak, “Anatomy of a Backlash: Concerning the Work of Marija Gimbutas,” *Journal of Archaeomythology* 7 (2011): 25–51. For other responses to Gimbutas’s critics, see Carol P. Christ, “A Different World: The Challenge of the Work of Marija Gimbutas to the Dominant World-View of Western Culture,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1966): 53–66; Naomi Goldenberg, “Marija Gimbutas and the King’s Archaeologist,” *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*, ed. J. Marler (Manchester, CT: Knowledge, Ideas & Trends, 1997), 67–72; and Mara Lynn Keller, “Gimbutas’ Theory of Early European Origins and the Cultural Transformation of Western Civilization,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1966): 73–90.

35 Miriam Robbins Dexter, *Whence the Goddesses* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 34–41.

36 Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*, ed. J. Marler (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 396–401.

37 *Ibid.*, viii.

38 Ian Hodder, ed., *Archaeological Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

39 See the cultural transformation theory created by cultural historian and economist Riane Eisler in her works *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); *Sacred Pleasure, Sex, Myth and the Politics of the Body: New Paths to Power and Love* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1995); and *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Publishers, 2007).

40 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, xxv.

41 Joan Marler, "Introduction to Archaeomythology," *ReVision: A Journal of Consciousness and Transformation* 23, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 2. I have reconfigured these working assumptions into a list, so the ideas can more easily be considered individually and as a group.

42 Jane Ellen Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual* (New York: Henry Holt, 1913), 50.

43 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

44 Spretnak, 25–51.

45 Marija Gimbutas, *The World of the Goddess* (video, with Ralph Metzner, Green Earth Foundation, 1993.) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMutw5CNiRQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMutw5CNiRQ).

46 Ralph Metzner, *The Well of Remembrance: Rediscovering the Earth Wisdom Myths of Northern Europe* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1994).

47 Joan Marler, "Cultivating Sacred Ground," *Foremothers of Women's Spirituality: Elders and Visionaries*, eds. M. Robbins Dexter and V. Noble (Amherst and New York, NY: Teneo Press, 2015), 99.

48 *The Journal of Archaeomythology* is published by the Institute of Archaeomythology: [www.archaeomythology.org/publications/the-journal-of-archaeomythology/](http://www.archaeomythology.org/publications/the-journal-of-archaeomythology/).

49 See *Reclaiming Quarterly*. [www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/gimbutas/gimbutas1.html](http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/gimbutas/gimbutas1.html). As director of the Women's Spirituality graduate program of the California Institute of Integral Studies, I produced

the West Coast Premiere gala for *Signs out of Time: The Story of Archaeologist Marija Gimbutas* (video, 2004), by Donna Read and Starhawk, narrated by Olympia Dukakis. It can also be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=whfGbPFay4w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whfGbPFay4w).

50 Heide Goettner-Abendroth, "The Deep Structure of Matriarchal Society," *Societies of Peace*, ed. H. Goettner-Abendroth (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education, 2009), 17.

51 Joan Marie Chichon, "Matriarchy in Ancient Crete: A Perspective from Archaeomythology and Modern Matriarchal Studies," PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 2013. This dissertation is open access at ProQuest.com.

52 Harald Haarman, *Interacting with Figurines: Seven Dimensions in the Study of Imagery* (West Hartford, VT: Full Circle Press, 2009), 12.

53 Helen E. Longino, *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

54 See John Heron and Peter Reason, "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm," *Qualitative Inquiry Journal* 3, no. 3 (1997): 274–294; and Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman, *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies* (Albany: State University of New York, 2008).

55 See Alfonso Montuori, "Gregory Bateson and the Promise of Transdisciplinarity," *Cybernetics and Human Knowing* 12, nos. 1–2 (2005): 147–158.

56 Alfonso Montuori, "Five Dimensions of Applied Transdisciplinarity," *Integral Leadership Review* 12, no. 4 (August 2012).

57 Joseph Campbell, "The First Storytellers." *The Power of Myth* (video, 1988), by Bill Moyers. <http://billmoyers.com/content/>

58 I use this term to contrast the global North West (the United States, Canada and Europe) with the global South or global East (Asia).