

S/HE:  
S/HE: An International Journal of Goddess Studies  
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**S/HE**



AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF GODDESS STUDIES

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Editorial

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**Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz, eds.**  
***Rediscovering the Marys: Maria, Mariamne, Miriam.***  
**(London/New York/Oxford/New Delhi/Sydney: T&T Clark, 2020)**

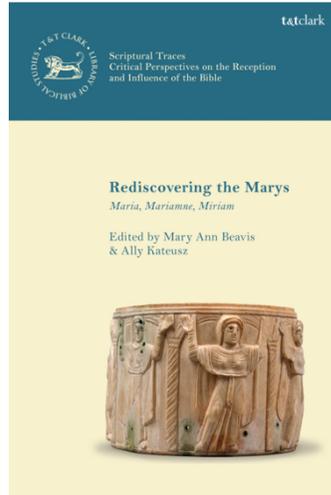
**Reviewed by Bojana Radovanović**

The present volume appeared in the series *Scriptural Traces: Critical Perspectives on the Reception and Influence of the Bible*, and was published under the *Library of New Testament Studies*. This collection of scholarly essays contains seventeen contributions, divided into three sections. In addition, the volume includes an introduction and an afterword written by both editors (Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz), in-text illustrations (some of which of exceptional provenance and dating from

Late Antiquity/Early Middle Ages), lists of figures, abbreviations, and contributors, references, index and index of Biblical references.

This volume falls within the research field of Mariamic studies – a relatively young scholarly domain addressing the reception of the Marys in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, as outlined by Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz in the Introduction. The *Rediscovering the Marys* aligns to the previous pioneering work by F. Stanley Jones and Deirdre Good, in which the foundations of this field of study have been laid.<sup>1</sup>

The first thematic section regroups the articles focused on textual sources covering the period of Late Antiquity and Early Christianity, and is largely knitted around the highly debated



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<sup>1</sup> F. Stanley Jones, ed., *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), and Deirdre Good, ed., *Mariam, the Magdalen, and the Mother* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

question of the identification of Mary in early Christian texts, as announced in Stanley Jones's edited volume, and pronouncedly addressed in Stephen J. Shoemaker's contribution.<sup>2</sup> This section delves into questions of Mary's identity and traces it back to the period encompassed by the first three centuries of the Christian era, up to the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. Marc Goodacre bases his deliberations in view of the century-long confusion arisen over the character of Mary Magdalene, and the flourishing of feminist hermeneutics. Goodacre meticulously dissects the textual proof and convincingly argues that Mary of early Christian gospels is not solely Mary Magdalene, but, as a literary character, assimilates the traits derived also from Luke's and John's portraits of Mary of Bethany, Martha's sister. Mary Ann Beavis examines the aspect of "the neglected figure" of Mary of Bethany (25), by drawing on her previous work and dedicating special attention to Mary's status as "apostle to the apostles" and holy myrrhbearer. In her contribution, Beavis encompasses Mary of Bethany traditions, ranging from Augustine and Hippolytus, to canonical, as well as apocryphal Christian literature. The ensuing question of particular significance the author raises is that of Mary of Bethany's interpretative role in Christian art. Judith Hartenstein embarks on a textual analysis of the Gospel of Mary and places it in the wider research strand enclosing the role of the text in early Christianity. The author questions the very implications of the title of the gospel and concludes that Mary may have been chosen as a heroine of the gospel not only because she was "generally known and accepted," but also, due to the fact that she may have represented the "accepted and useful disciple," thus implying the right of women to aspire to leadership and educational functions (45-46). The essay of Jo-Ann Badley questions Mary's role in the Acts and furthermore, explains why the answer to this question is worth pursuing. Badley concludes that Mary's role in the Acts "recalls her proleptic role in the gospel story" (56), and views her presence as enclosing the events between the baptism of Jesus by John and Jesus' ascension, thus underlining continuity within the wider narrative by her capacity to interpret

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen J. Shoemaker, "A Case of Mistaken Identity? Naming the Gnostic Mary," in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition*, ed. F. Stanley Jones (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 5-30.

God's actions. Anna Cwikla deepens a theme of the quest for the unspecified Mary in noncanonical texts, especially in the *Dialogue of the Savior*. Apart from the already presented possibilities in the scholarship, Cwikla pinpoints to another option which has not been utterly developed by now and suggests that Mary may not refer to a specific woman from the canonical gospels, adding that the question "which Mary," should be reframed to "why does it matter which Mary" (67). Kara J. Lyons-Pardue opens the intriguing question of Eusebius' suggestion that there may have been two Mary Magdalenes. From Eusebius' perspective, as Lyons-Pardue argues, the existence of two Mary Magdalenes is more plausible, as a consequence of a scribal error and due to several contradictions – one of which is, for example, related to the incongruity between Mary Magdalene in Matthew's Gospel who grasps Jesus' feet, and Mary Magdalene in John's Gospel who does not touch Jesus at all. In the following essay, Ally Kateusz analyzes the identity of Mary Magdalene in literary transmission, as well as in art history. Kateusz suggests that a specific variant in the Syriac second-century *Diatessaron* may constitute an early source of the widely attested phenomenon in scholarly circles, ascribing the image of Mary the Magdalene in the garden with the risen Christ to Jesus' mother. After a neatly-elaborative survey conducted on the four examples, the author convincingly pinpoints to the crucial role of a separate critical textual variant of *Diatessaron* – on the basis of the oldest Latin manuscript of John – in which Jesus' mother was placed in the garden with resurrected Christ.

Section two includes essays on social and religious history in diachronic perspective, and expands on questions relating to the role of the Marys in mission and leadership. Cornelia Horn focuses on the path traced by the scholarship of Marian traditions and especially by the recent edited collection on the intercessory role of Mary, Jesus' mother in Byzantium.<sup>3</sup> This chapter offers a new outlook of Mary's intercessory role in the scope of the role(s) early Christians assigned to her, as well as of the classification of Mary's authority. Upon a survey of selected hagiographical and apocryphal

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<sup>3</sup> Leena Mari Peltomaa, Andreas Külzer, and Pauline Allen, eds., *Presbeia Theotokou: The Intercessory Role of Mary across Times and Places in Byzantium (4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Century)* (Vienna: Verlag der ÖAW, 2015).

texts of Syriac and Arabic provenance, Horn argues that a concept of “mediation” comprises “the fuller range of her ‘diplomatic service’ on behalf of the interests of humankind” (101), as a more powerful image than the one associated with that of an intercessor emerges. Erez DeGolan and Miriam-Simma Walfish base their research on post-scriptural stories of the Hebrew Bible’s Miriam and New Testament’s Mary Magdalene in view of their leadership functions, by comparing the narrative strands about Miriam of Late Antique Rabbinic texts to those of Mary Magdalene in sermons of Pope Gregory the Great, and in the *Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea)*. The authors elegantly argue that both women were viewed as endowed with powerful leadership roles, and became models of femininity with “both positive and negative valences” (129) in the hands of their later male interpreters. Judith M. Davis elaborates further on Mary’s agency and her priestly heritage in the extracanonical “Marian biographies,” starting with the second-century *Protevangelium of James* and the seventh-century Pseudo-Maximus’ *Life of Mary*. After having exposed in detail on variegated sources, the author concludes that the secondary scholarship often overlooked other relevant material, such as icons and mosaics depicting Mary in deacon’s robes which emphasize Mary’s priestly authority. J. L. Manzo explores the story of Mary of Guadalupe and its powerful impact on the history of evangelization of Latin America. The author reports on the first apparition of Mary to Juan Diego in the mid-sixteenth century, and on the first public account of the event by Miguel Sánchez, a diocesan priest of Mexico City. The ensuing set of events – as the author delineates – culminating in the rise in the number of sermons being preached and published during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – have led to the evangelization of the Mexican people and recognition of Mary of Guadalupe as Patroness of Mexico, *Mediatatrix* and apostle to the Americas.

The final section offers an interdisciplinary, interreligious, and diachronic view of the Mariamic theme, and focuses on the reception history of the Marys in literature, art, and archaeology. Richard Freund’s contribution falls into the field of archaeology relating to the figure of Mary of Nazareth in the light of archaeological excavations undertaken in Nazareth, at the most important Biblical sites relevant for Freund’s research. The aim of

this chapter is to demonstrate the important role archaeological method has to play in the quest for identity of Mary of Nazareth, by combining and comparing the insights obtained from literary sources with those “unearthed” in archaeological excavations. The focus of Michael Rosenberg’s chapter is a passage in the Babylonian Talmud on death of the Biblical Miriam, described as miraculous, and argues that this account reveals Rabbinic relationship and similitudes to the versions of Marian Dormition narratives. The author stresses the import of the Rabbinic literature – which testified an increased interest in Miriam’s death in 400 CE – as an underexploited resource for the study of the Marian traditions in Late Antiquity. Ally Kateusz scrutinizes the motif discovered on the wall painting of Dier al-Surian monastery church in Egypt. The scene in question portrays Mary, the mother of Jesus on her deathbed, surrounded by women swinging censers, with a Great Angel standing by her side and twelve men sitting in the background. After an in-depth scrutiny, Kateusz argues that this painting most probably represents a scene from a lost Dormition narrative, which, in effect, stands for a prime source of the three main Dormition textual traditions that survive, whereas women with censers unveil female liturgical functions which later became restricted to men. The chapter composed by Deborah Niederer Saxon explores the role of Mary at four crucial moments in her life, as conveyed by ancient Christian and Muslim texts: at her young age, in the accounts of Annunciation and Nativity, and near the end of or just after Jesus’ life, when Mary is endowed with leadership function. This essay brings forth many interconnections that can open pathways for further reflection about the ways in which “Islamic tradition intersects Christian tradition” (213) through the role Mary, mother of Jesus played in Islamic and Christian texts, especially the extracanonical ones.

Jin H. Han diachronically investigates an interesting theme of smiling Virgin Mary, as opposed to Mary in grief frequently portrayed as *Mater Dolorosa*. The author opens a question if this way of depicting Mary, which has been rarely encountered until recent centuries, is to be viewed as a “modern pop-religious phenomenon encouraged under the twentieth- and twenty-first-century papacies of the Marian popes” (215). Han delves into the semantic development of this motif through text and art, and

observes that the instances of Mary's smile in literature correspond to the papal reflections on Mary's smile; a smile, which has been uncovering the human side of Jesus' narrative through the centuries. In the final chapter, Mary Ann Beavis assesses the work of Margaret Starbird on Mary Magdalene, and Starbird's impact on a wider audience. By assuming that Starbird's "mission is a personal, spiritual quest to restore the 'lost bride,' the sacred feminine, to Christianity" (227–228), Beavis offers a non-biased view of the author's work and her "mission statement," by accepting some points raised by her as legitimate and important enough to draw the scholars' attention to, since many of Starbird's arguments were grounded in scriptures, thus averting scholars that they should at least be aware of Starbird's work, instead of dismissing it.

In the concluding remarks, Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz summarize the content of this volume, outline the chapters' impact on the scientific and interdisciplinary study domains and relevant research fields, and present future avenues of scholarly endeavors announced by the inherent chapters.

A scholarly work of this kind was certainly much needed in academic circles and its impact will be visible in fields of Mariamic studies, Early Christian history, Church history, Biblical studies, feminist scholarship, and beyond, and indicate some potentially fruitful and inspiring directions for further research. Last but not least, it will undoubtedly be warmly welcome not only by experts, but by wider audience as well.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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B.A.(History) Master of Enterprise Innovation, Graduate Diploma Environmental Sustainability, Diploma of Education. Jennifer is author of the recent publication *Ancient Ways for Current Days – Women, Goddess and Communities of Peace*. She teaches Goddess Studies at a community level; she is Co-Convenor of the Gaia Temple of Melbourne and has a lifetime of interest in the subject matter of the book under review. merrymeetjenny@gmail.com

### **Mary Ann Beavis**

Dr. Beavis is Professor Emerita of Religion and Culture, St. Thomas More College, the University of Saskatchewan. She is the author of several books and many articles in the areas of feminist biblical interpretation, parable studies, goddess studies, and religion and popular culture. Her most recent publications attempt to reconstruct the experience of enslaved persons in early Christianity. She is the co-author of the Wisdom Commentaries on Hebrews and 2 Thessalonians.

### **Helen Hye-Sook Hwang**

Dr. Hwang is the researcher, writer, publisher, and advocate of Magoist Cetaceanism, the matriversal consciousness embodied in the socio-historical-cultural expressions of traditional Korea and beyond. After earning her MA and Ph.D. in Religion with emphasis on Feminist Studies from Claremont Graduate University, CA., she pursued M.A. degree at UCLA, CA. Hwang's authored and co-edited books include *Goddesses in Myth, History and Culture*, *Mago Almanac*, *The Mago Way*, *She Rises* trilogy, *Celebrating Seasons of the Goddess*, *She Summons*, *The Budoji Workbook*, and *Return to Mago E-Magazine*.

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Dr. Jordan is a Goddess scholar, birth-keeper, artist-researcher, community worker, and mother of two daughters. She is dedicated to an artful, relational, spirited scholarly pathway for women's thriving and wellbeing. Dr. Jordan completed her PhD in Education

at the University of British Columbia, her Master's degree in Women's Spirituality at New College of California, and held a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Paris 8, France, in Women's and Gender Studies. Her scholarship explores goddessing and women's spirituality through matricentric birthing threads, placental wisdom, the maternal gift economy, and feminist eco-arts. She publishes widely, including the anthologies: *Placenta Wit: Mother Stories, Rituals, and Research*, and *Pagan, Goddess, Mother* (Demeter Press).

### **Kaarina Kailo**

Dr Kailo is a writer, former professor of women's studies and self-made artist who illustrates her books, integrating color and visuality to science. She has published hundreds of articles regarding folklore, spiritual bathing, saunas and sweatlodges, modern matriarchal studies, Northern women's culture, gift economy and the bear religion. She has held positions as scholar in Canada and Finland, and as senior fellow of the Finnish academy. She has held art exhibitions in Kiiminki, Oulu, Jyväskylä and Lusto Forestry Museum, Punkaharju in Finland. Kaarina.kailo at gmail.com.

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Dr Lila Moore is a pioneering artist film-maker, choreographer and visionary theorist. She holds a PhD in Dance on Screen, Middlesex University, 2001, MA and M.Phil in Film and Fine Art, Central Saint Martins, Postdoc in Technoetic Arts, Planetary Collegium, and her articles were published in academic journals. She is a lecturer and dissertation supervisor for the Alef Trust, MSc degree in Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology, and recipient of the Outstanding Lecturer Award from the Department of Mysticism and Spirituality, Zefat Academic College. Her artworks are exhibited in curated exhibitions and archived by SIGGRAPH and Archive of Digital Art. cyberneticinstitute.com. cyberneticfutures.com.

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Bojana Radovanović was born in Belgrade, Serbia, where she finished her BA studies in Classical Philology, and her MA in

Classical Archaeology. After having worked at the Institute for History in Belgrade, she moved to Vienna, Austria, where she finished her doctoral studies and obtained her PhD Diploma in History with the topic of early medieval „language of heresy“ in Greek and Latin selected texts. She is currently in the second year of her Postdoctoral fellowship funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) at the Institut fuer Mittelalterforschung in Vienna on medieval dualist heresies. She is currently preparing her monograph and regularly publishes scholarly articles, as well as purely literary texts. Her research interests include: dualist heresies in the Middle Ages; historical and archaeological quest for the Great Goddess on the Balkans; pagan heritage of the medieval philosophical and theological concepts; dualist heresies in the Middle Ages; Slavonic apocrypha; inter-cultural transmission between Byzantium and the Latin West. Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands (bojana.radovanovic@ru.nl)

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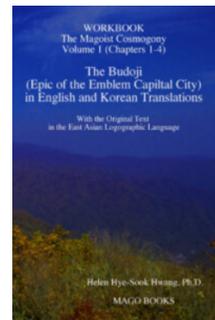
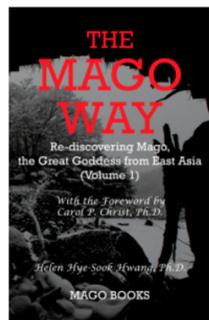
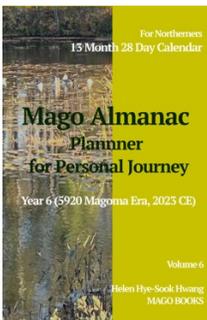
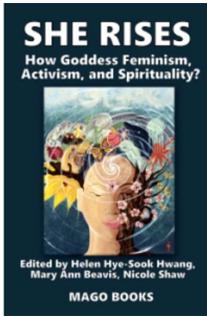
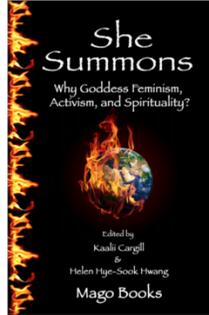
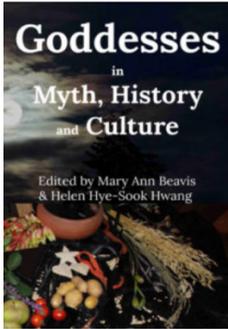


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