



SHE

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S/HE



AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF GODDESS STUDIES

Mission Statement: *S/HE: An International Journal of Goddess Studies* is a web-based, peer-reviewed international scholarly journal committed to the academic exploration, analysis and interpretation, from a range of disciplinary perspectives, of Goddesses and the Female Divine in all religions, traditions, and cultures, to be ancient, historical, or contemporary. The journal is a multi-disciplinary forum for the publication of feminist scholarship in Goddess Studies and for discussion, comparison, and dialogue among scholars of differing feminist perspectives.

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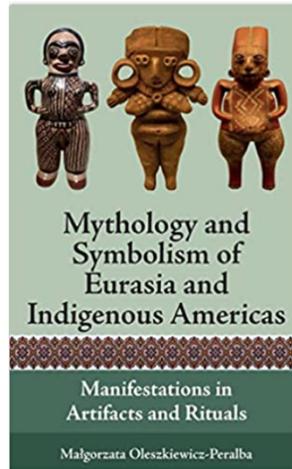
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Małgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba,
*Mythology and Symbolism of Eurasia and Indigenous
Americas: Manifestations in Artifacts and Rituals*
(New York: Berghahn Books, 2023)

Reviewed by Lisa R. Skura

I am lucky enough to live in a place with both the deer and elk, the subject matter of chapter one in this book, and so this text immediately won my heart and became a touchstone in my life. As a mythologist, artist, weaver, spinner, and goddess scholar, as well as a devotee of Marija Gimbutas, I believe this book is brilliant and I am grateful for the scholarship that Dr. Małgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba offers us. Oleszkiewicz-Peralba continues the work of Gimbutas by demonstrating how the ancient symbolism of goddess religions has survived in the folk-art of many cultures around the world. Oleszkiewicz-Peralba helps expand our worldview back to one of wholeness rather than our current restrictive androcentric worldview.

Oleszkiewicz-Peralba not only clarifies the work of Gimbutas, but also brings our attention to other places these symbolisms are hidden, including headdresses, hairdos, embroidery, and in the weaving of Kilim rugs. I have books about the embroidery motifs of goddesses, as well as books about the symbolism of Kilims, but Oleszkiewicz-Peralba has electrified and resurrected the significance of these symbols in a profound way for me. The symbols seemingly lost to an androcentric world view are being recovered to reclaim the sacredness of the female body, the earth, the animals, the cosmos, as well as each other. We are currently paying the price for thousands of years of devaluing and suppressing the divine feminine, the female body, the earth, the animals, the plants, as well as fresh water and air that is life.



This text by Oleszkiewicz-Peralba is also significant since many male scholars, who are still considered the cornerstones of academic study, have insisted that women have contributed nothing to culture. Sigmund Freud for example, claimed that women braiding their own pubic hairs was the only thing that women contributed to culture. Oleszkiewicz-Peralba counters this male biased scholarship, by pointing out in chapter four how the symbols of life have survived in the symbols used in weaving and embroidery. Oleszkiewicz-Peralba also discusses the survival of the apron as an empowering symbol of flowering female sexuality in this chapter. Although the apron might seem a humble and simple item of clothing, it is a powerful symbol of female empowerment and agency. It gives new meaning to the ubiquitous hero myths of our androcentric culture, that we now find everywhere, which usually involves the defeat of the non-obedient monstrous feminine by the hero in epic literature. Both Hercules and Perseus are said to kill Amazon queens and steal their belts, which many scholars interpret as the defeat of matriarchal tribes and the ascent of patriarchy. This same misogyny is being demonstrated in the United States by a corrupted Supreme Court that has just taken the aprons and belts from half the population of the United States.

The male hero's journey popularized by Joseph Campbell is the dominant framework of "success and progress" used in our modern world, an androcentric journey that promotes the individual at the expense of the collective. This narcissism justifies the use of violence to suppress female bodies, suppress divine feminine power, as well as to rape the earth at whatever cost, and to gain power even if this means nuclear annihilation. It is ironic that this text uses a multitude of examples of ancient and modern Ukrainian art to demonstrate the survival of the symbols of life and female empowerment, yet even now Vladimir Putin wages war and imposes his will against the peaceful country of Ukraine.

Oleszkiewicz-Peralba even touches on the use of psychedelic plants in chapter one and discusses the mythology of the female shaman, the deer, the connection to the peyote plant, as well as the Ayahuasca plant as a loving serpent mother that embraces the children of the earth. In my dissertation I discuss how male ethnobotanists create the neologism *entheogen*, which assumes all psychedelic plants facilitate a male divine experience, even when

evidence suggests that for tens of thousands of years, the divine female was worshipped. I use the term *entheagen*, which changes the male divine experience to a female divine experience.

Oleszkiewicz-Peralba's scholarship is an important contribution to recognizing and resurrecting the ancient symbols that once valued the female body and the earth. True immortality is accepting life and death as natural cycles rather than trying to defeat death, dominate women's bodies, and/or conquering the world. The equidistant cross symbol of the great cosmic weaver symbolizes equality for all people, as well as the valuing of the female body and the earth. Centuries of male ideology of "transcending" the earth has resulted in billionaires competing to demonstrate their prowess by launching grotesque phallic rocket ships for no reason except to practice leaving this planet after it becomes inhabitable. We must reclaim all the appropriated symbols of the divine feminine and this text is a great place to start the journey.

CONTRIBUTORS

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 Benigni

Helen Benigni (Ph.D. Indiana University of Pennsylvania) is a published author and a Full Professor in English at Davis and Elkins College in Elkins, West Virginia. For several decades, Helen has been teaching classes in Comparative Mythology with an emphasis on Goddess studies. Her books, *The Myth of the Year* (University Press of America, 2003), *The Goddess and the Bull* (University Press of America, 2007), and *The Mythology of Venus* (University Press of America, 2013) incorporate the research findings of archaeoastronomers to determine the myths associated with the cycles found on the ancient calendars of the Greeks and the Celts. Identifying the goddesses of the matri-local cultures of the ancients with the seasons represented by the lunar, solar and stellar bodies has been a major endeavor in the study of archetypes, with an emphasis on the feminine archetypes of the celestial realms. Helen's research with the Hellenic Studies Center in Washington D.C., her many trips to ancient sites, and her collaborative efforts with scholars in mythology, astronomy, archeology, and art have led to her discovery of the presence of the Goddess in the night sky and the continued renewal of the Goddess in contemporary times.

Carolyn Lee Boyd

Carolyn Lee Boyd's essays, short stories, memoirs, reviews, and poetry have been published in a variety of print magazines, internet

sites, and book anthologies. Her writing explores goddess-centered spirituality in everyday life and how we can all better live in local and global community. In fact, she is currently writing a book on what ancient and contemporary cultures have to tell us about living in community in the 21st century. She would love for you to visit her at her website, www.goddessinateapot.com, where you can find her writings and music and some of her free e-books to download.

Lilian Broca

Lilian Broca, BFA, Concordia U., Montreal, MFA Pratt Institute, NY, taught studio art at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Her work was featured in over 70 exhibitions worldwide. Among many distinctions, Broca was the subject of a retrospective exhibition at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle in 2001, collaborated on the book *A Song of Lilith* with esteemed Canadian author Joy Kogawa in 2000, and was the recipient of the Lorenzo il Magnifico Gold Medal at the 2003 Florence Biennale. Broca's art works were awarded First Prize in International Mosaic Exhibitions in San Francisco, Chicago and San Diego. The book *The Hidden and the Revealed: The Queen Esther Mosaics of Lilian Broca*, (Gefen Publishing House, NY, Jerusalem), was launched in 2011. The book *Heroine of a Thousand Pieces: the Judith Mosaics of Lilian Broca* was published in 2015. Two award winning documentaries on the artist are: *Return to Byzantium: The Art and Life of Lilian Broca*, 2012 and *Mary Magdalene in Conversation with Lilian Broca*, 2022.

Susan Hawthorne

Susan Hawthorne, Ph.D. has been researching and writing about prehistory and ancient history since the 1970s. She is a radical lesbian feminist poet, novelist, theorist and co-founder, with Renate Klein, of Spinifex Press. She is the author/editor of 29 books of fiction, poetry and non-fiction. They include her novels *The Falling Woman* (1992) and *Dark Matters* (2017). Her poetry books include *The Sacking of the Muses* (2019), *Lupa and Lamb* (2014), *Cow* (2011) and *The Butterfly Effect* (2005). *Cow* (2011) was a finalist for the Audre Lorde Lesbian Poetry Prize (USA) and the Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize in the NSW Premier's Literary

Awards. In 2017 she was winner of the Penguin Random House Best Achievement in Writing in the Inspire Awards for her work increasing people's awareness of disability. She is Adjunct Professor in the School of Humanities at James Cook University Townsville.

Helen Hye-Sook Hwang

Dr. Hwang is the researcher, writer, publisher, and advocate of Magoist Cetaceanism, the matriversal consciousness of cetacean veneration 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. She, with Mary Ann Beavis, co-founded *S/HE: An International Journal of Goddess Studies*. 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 Volume 1*, *The Budoji Workbook*, and *Return to Mago E-Magazine*.

Louis Lagana

Prof. Louis Laganà is an Associate Professor of Art and currently, he lectures part-time on *The Arts for Health and Wellbeing* at Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta. He also lectured extensively on *Psychology and the Arts*, *Psychoanalysis and Art* at the Psychology Department and on the *History of Image Making* at the Digital Arts Department, University of Malta. Prof. Laganà is also an art historian, art critic, curator and practicing artist. He specializes in Modern and Contemporary Art History, Primitivism, Prehistoric Art and Jungian Aesthetics. He contributed many articles in learned journals and newspapers.

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LaChelle Schilling received her Ph.D. in the Women's Studies and Religion program from Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California and currently is a professor of English at Pikes Peak Community College in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Her publications include co-authored journal articles and book chapters, including “Finding our Agency and Awareness in the Seeds of Life” in *She Rises* (2019) and “The Cosmic Dance of Kali and the Black Hole” in *South Asian Studies: Bridging Cultures* (2020).

Deepak Shimkhada received his Ph.D. from Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California and currently teaches at Chaffey College as an adjunct professor of Asian art after having retired from Claremont McKenna College in 2011. He is the author of many journal articles and several book chapters. His edited volumes include *Nepal, a Shangri-La? Narratives of Culture, Contact and Memory* (2022); *Nepal: Historical Study of Hindu Kingdom* (2022); *South Asian Studies: Bridging Cultures* (2020); *Nepal: Nostalgia and Modernity* (2012); *The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess: Goddess Traditions of Asia* (2008); and *Himalayas at the Crossroad: Portrait of a Changing World* (1987). He is president of Indic Foundation. For his full bio please visit www.deepakshimkhada.com or https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepak_Shimkhada

Lisa R. Skura

Dr. Lisa R. Skura is an artist and mythologist who earned her Doctor of Philosophy in Mythology with emphasis in Depth Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute, in Carpinteria, California. Lisa also has a Bachelor of Science in Design from Buffalo State University, in Buffalo, New York. Dr. Skura is a spinner and weaver of both textile and text as well as a tarot scholar and creator, an empathic energy healer with a deep connection to crystals, and a voracious reader and collector of books. Dr. Skura believes bridges of love are essential to the healing of humanity and the world.

Francesca Tronetti

Dr. Francesca Tronetti is the Refugee School Impact Grant Coordinator at the Erie Multicultural Community Resource Center, where she runs an ESL program for refugee children in middle and high school. She is also an adjunct at Cherry Hill Seminary. She writes articles on ancient Goddess cultures and contemporary

American Paganism for Return to Mago online magazine. She is interested in American Folk Magic Traditions of Appalachia and the Pennsylvania Dutch and developed a course on the subject. A published poet, author, and fiber artist, she hosts a weekly community radio program on green living and self-care. She lives in Northwestern Pennsylvania and studies American mythological creatures and legends.

Anna Tzanova

For over 30 years, Anna has been a dedicated student of world spiritual traditions, as well as ancient and contemporary healing modalities. She has worked with individuals and groups teaching yoga, meditation and Art in Healing classes; leading support groups, as well as facilitating variety of wellness workshops in hospitals, studios, private and corporate settings. Anna practices and embodies what she continues to learn. She is an artist, researcher, nutritional consultant, activity therapist, intuitive energy healer and a mother. After 33 years living in North America, she has returned to her roots, residing now in Bulgaria.

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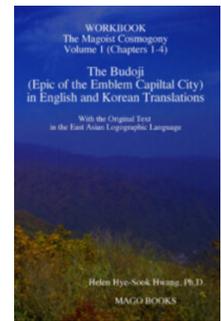
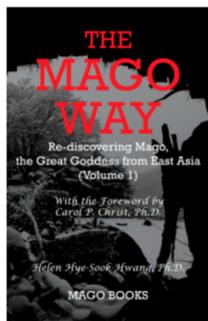
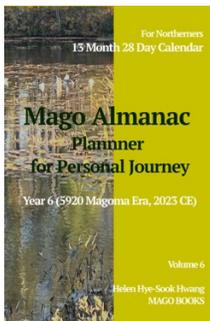
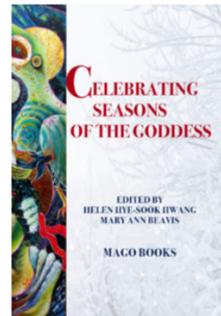
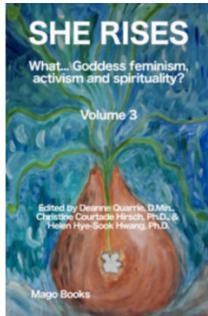
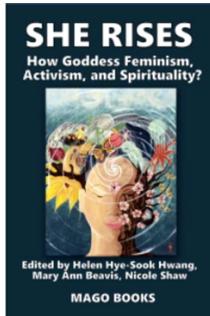
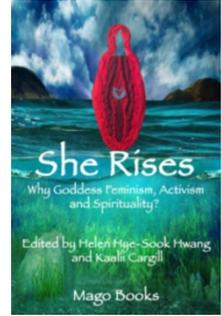
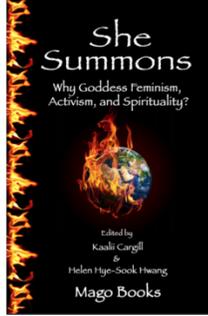
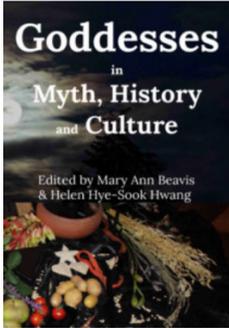
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