

Re-Membering the Feminine

Course Description

https://retreat.pacifica.edu/re-membering-the-feminine/?utm_content=247552414

“Myths, fairytales, and sacred texts are replete with stories of the amputated and sacrificed feminine. From Medusa to the Handless Maiden, from Iphegenia to Jephthah’s daughter, the feet, hands and heads of women and girls are routinely disposed of, often with narrative alacrity. In the fairytale of The Red Shoes, Karen, the orphaned girl, approaches the executioner and pleads with him to cut off her feet at the ankles. The lines that follow this horrific request are revealing. ‘...and the executioner chopped off her feet with the red shoes, but the shoes danced with the small feet across the field into the deep forest.’”

The objective psyche reveals itself in the world of myth and fairytale. In this particular tale, what has been cut off, still lives, albeit in the “deep forest” of the unconscious. This pattern of feminine amputation and sacrifice that is found throughout myth, fairytales and sacred stories from around the world, speaks to a psychic splitting in the collective unconscious. Yet these archetypal dismemberments live on, as obvious as the appropriation of Medusa’s severed head by Gucci, a contemporary fashion designer.

What do these dismembered appendages reveal to us about what has been split off within our own psyche, as well as from collective consciousness, for centuries? Consigned to the deep woods of the unconscious, what if this dismembered feminine could talk? What wisdom might she have to share? Is it possible to learn from The Handless Maiden how to collectively grow our own hands back and what is required of us to do that? Is it possible that our personal and possibly, collective individuation is dependent on precisely this?

This series will bring together Jungian scholars, authors, and teachers to work with particular myths, fairytales, and sacred stories from the perspective of discovering the inherent wisdom of the split-off archetypal feminine who has been relegated to the deep forest of the collective unconscious. The focus of these learning sessions will be on identifying what has been split off and understanding the symbolic and critical relevance of what this has to offer for all genders with regards to the personal and global challenges we face today.

Week One: May 9th



From Patriarchal Sacrifice to the Sacred Feminine: Re-membering the Goddess Sati
Alka Arora, Ph.D.

In Hindu mythology, the goddess Sati set herself on fire to protest her father's snubbing of herself and her husband Shiva, who was the target of her father's disapproval. The medieval practice of sati, in which women of select upper castes were expected to throw themselves upon their husbands' funeral pyres, was named for goddess Sati's sacrifice. While the practice of sati has been banned in India, it lives on symbolically in Indian and Indian diasporic women – and has resonance for women across the globe – as women are expected to sacrifice themselves on the altar of patriarchal culture.

In this presentation, I ask how contemporary women across cultures can reclaim Sati as the goddess who protested father-rule rather than one who killed herself for the sake of her husband. Knowing that she would be reborn, Sati may not have been seeking to self-extinguish as much as to claim autonomy around who she loved and how she lived her life. Indeed, when Sati was reincarnated as Parvati, her marriage to Shiva came to represent in Indian culture an ideal, equal relationship between the feminine and masculine. Today, how might we sacrifice not ourselves but our longing for approval and our need to be 'good' according to the dictates of patriarchy, so that we can be reborn as authentic and free?

While this presentation focuses on feminine myths, the ideas explored are relevant for people of all genders who wish to challenge patriarchal conditioning and reclaim their wholeness.

Learning Objectives

After completing this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Understand the Hindu myth of Sati through a feminist lens
- Re-evaluate their relationship with the myth of sacrifice
- Develop resources for connecting to the sacred feminine within

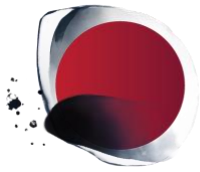
First Session Recording:

<https://youtu.be/KChnIIPvLsw>

Raw Notes:

Confidentiality

Timothy P. Dukes



- Do not share anyone's story.

Sati the truth teller.

- She was a Goddess, she knew if one form was taken away, she would take another one.
- She was reborn as Parvati, the mountainous one.
- Stepping into the fire of change, allow a part of to self die in order to take on a new form.

Questions

- What needs to die within you in order for something new to be born?
- Ideas about sacrifice?
- Ways you have to sacrifice your need for....?
- What are ways in which you are trying to be a good...?
- Your obedience to authority?
- Your ideas and dreams?

Reflections

- Conditioned to be attuned and to read the room.

Sacrifice

- Give up something of high value in exchange for something of greater value.

Questions

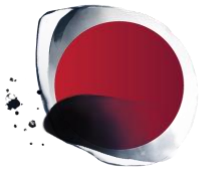
- What is of more value to you and more sacred than your obedience?
- Societal approval?
- Being good in a patriarchal culture?

Response

- Raised in a Narcissistic household and you fight to learn even a scrap about yourself.
- Would not sacrifice the truth and doing the right thing.
- Greater value is your integrity and your core self.
- Threshold to draw students who can meet me in depth.
- Rest into my original medicine and give what I am here to give.
- Original and unique.
- What is the greater good here?

Conclusion

- Sacrifice of that which doesn't serve us.
- Accepting my authentic self as good enough. It doesn't have to be something new.
- When was the last time you danced for no one other than yourself?



- Note: not just a gathering of women.

Insight

- The sacrifice that I would offer, as a male, is to place on the fire the identification that I am separate from the feminine — realizing that I have never been separated from her so to seek her in the form of the other is delusionary. I am what I am looking for.

Week Two: May 16th

Forbidden Dances of “Dangerous” Women: Re-memembering the Myth of Salome and the Fairytale of The Red Shoes

Loralee M. Scott, MFA

“There is a mystery of incarnation in dance that has no analogue in the other performing arts...it would be more accurate to call it the staging of a transfiguration...It is, or seems to be, finally a higher order of attention”

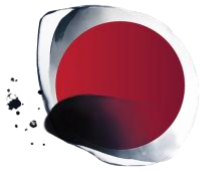
— Susan Sontag, *Dancer and the Dance*

“Perhaps too there is a joy before God that one can call dancing. But I haven’t yet found this joy.”

— C.G. Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 217

They were both young girls from long ago whose stories live on in the collective unconscious. One, an orphan girl who is complicit in her own dismemberment as she begs the executioner to cut off her dancing feet at the ankles and then proceeds to “kiss the hand that guided the axe.” The other, a young girl who has carried the patriarchal projections of the sexualized assassin, responsible for the beheading of John the Baptist. One dismembered, the other dismembering, their stories have been packaged within a patriarchal culture as cautionary tales, but if we peel back the layers of projections and cultural complexes, do we find a deeper story and if so, what wisdom does it have to offer us today?

This session will bring the seminal work of Carol Gilligan and Judith Herman together with a post-Jungian amplification of *The Fairytale of The Red Shoes* and an examination of C.G. Jung’s encounters with Salome in the pages of *The Red Book* to explore themes of self-agency, individuation, and women’s continued struggle to own their bodies for themselves. We will explore the ways in which the archetypal feminine has been misappropriated within Jungian psychology and the degree to which the premature and often traumatic



sexualization and silencing of young girls continues to be normalized and unconsciously influences healthy psychological development and women's individuation. We will work with these themes against the contemporary backdrop of a mental health crisis that is particularly prevalent among adolescent girls.

Learning Objectives:

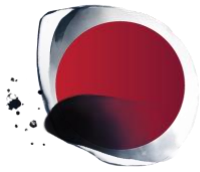
1. To distinguish the influence of internalized cultural complexes on healthy ego development/individuation
2. To identify the unconscious projections embedded within traditional models of individuation.
3. To specify the necessity of integrating feminist theory into post-Jungian models of individuation

Second Session Recording:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_pw4J9FHqU

Notes

- Speak with the soul utterance: "speak through our vulnerability with strength."
- What must die in order for what is new to emerge.
- "The most subtle obstacles in coming to wholeness is the roles we play and the convictions we hold about ourselves." -
- Becoming whole. The inner persona that we need to release in ourselves.
- For something new to emerge, something must be let go of.
- It is a dance and less of a linear progression. If we insist that it transform to a rigid scientific form we can pretty much guarantee that the luminosity of the creative unconscious will partner with us.
- Tarzan effect. A necessary letting go.
- How can I take the people in the audience on a journey with me.
- Coniunctio.
- Two steps forward and one step back.
- It takes time and be generous of ourselves.
- Recognize where we are?
- Self-sacrifice can become self-abandonment.
- Situating authority outside of ourself as compared to inside of ourself.
- Culturally acceptable persona at the expense of our authentic self.



- "That which cannot be named is disturbing."
- Story structures psyche.
- Women must rewrite the world.
- We must set sail for the margins.
- Meta Narrative: is a lens, not a
- Is what you are seeing the actual feminine or a projection?
- Woodman: "Don't talk about being true to myself until you ask, what voice am I listening to?"
- Projected feminine, the authentic, or transformative feminine.
- Transmogrified Feminine: Baba Yaga. Generative male projection?
- Models don't represent the girls experiences.
- Complex ensures that the past will seek to remain our future.
- Complex works to completely narrow the lens.
- Complex seeks to remain invisible.
- "Neural psychology of the unconscious."
- Freudian Unconscious and Cognitive Neuroscience: From Unconscious Fantasies to Neural Algorithms — Vesa Talvitie
- "We don't have time..." A constant refrain of I can only be here for you in an incomplete way. Subjects herself the tyranny of time and Kronos.
- Red shoes: symbol of our orientation to the world.
- Our stories are telling us. We think we are telling the story.
- Good possibility that the observation is symbolic, the creative unconscious is always at play.
- Who in your life is asking about the Red Shoes.
- Look after each other's red shoes.
- See us for who we authentically are.
- "Whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative to where the focus of your consciousness may be."- Joseph Campbell
- What we don't integrate internally we will find ourselves working with it in the outer world.

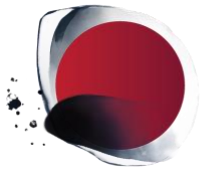
Reference

When women were birds." Terry Tempest Williams

Week Three: May 23rd

The Visual Poetics of the Dismembered Feminine in Greco-Roman Myth

Emily Lord-Kambitsch, Ph.D.



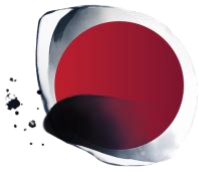
“If there is a ‘propriety of woman,’ it is paradoxically her capacity to deappropriate unselfishly: body without end, without appendage, without principal ‘parts.’ If she is a whole, it’s a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble [...]”

Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa” (Transl. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen), 1976

Roman philosopher and politician Marcus Tullius Cicero in his *De Inventione* tells a story of the Greek painter Zeuxis, whose task it was to paint the infamously beautiful Helen of Troy. Zeuxis could not find a single female model with the requisite physiognomy. Instead, he used five different models, whose features he mixed and matched in order to create Helen. This reconstitution came as a result of a process I call “visual dismemberment” of the women who from Zeuxis’ perspective by themselves could not aspire to supreme beauty, but who in their constituent parts could combine to form the ideal.

This session will begin by exploring the theme of dismemberment as a mode of visual and eroticized poetics in mythic tales of the feminine from Greco-Roman literature. In genres from Greek comedy (Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*) to Roman love poetry (Ovid’s *Amores*) women’s bodies appear “dismembered” in that they are represented as parts in isolation. Whether ruined/maimed or intact, women’s body parts form a narrative sequence, constructed not from the embodied self-awareness of the female character in question, but from the roving gaze of a male viewer/voyeur. Modern perspectives on visibility, narrative, and the feminine from Laura Mulvey (“*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*”, 1975) and Susan Sontag (*On Photography*, 1977) will provide a framework for analyzing three literary case studies of mythic women who suffer the fetishizing, dismembering gaze of patriarchal violence: Daphne, Philomela, and Galatea.

The legacy of Mulvey’s and Sontag’s observations, alongside Hélène Cixous’ call to women to write their own narratives in “*The Laugh of the Medusa*” (1976) will bridge the ancient context and our own, in which there is a movement among women writers to cast these mythic women afresh (for instance, Nina MacLaughlin’s *Wake, Siren: Ovid Resung*, 2019). The session will allow space for discussion on the role of poetics in re-membering the dismembered feminine. In what ways are we still primed to consider the “dismembered feminine” as “normal” (such as, for instance, clothing advertisements that “dismember”



women's bodies through framing)? Can we find examples of contemporary women's revisioning of these mythic dismembered women through narrative poetics that do not rely on (eroticized) visual dismemberment?

Content warning: strong themes of bodily violence in contexts of sexual assault and domestic abuse.

Learning Objectives:

1. To apply ideas from modern feminist theory to understand the dismembering poetics of Greco-Roman mythic texts.
2. To discuss applications of "visual poetics of dismemberment" that we practice unconsciously or have become unconsciously attuned to in the narratives we tell, or consume.
3. To observe examples of contemporary poetics of the re-membered feminine.

Third Session Recording:

<https://youtu.be/GRVtDopSLxQ>

Notes

- Remembrance is right alongside dismemberment.
- Principle parts, woman seen as a collection of parts, diminishes the woman.

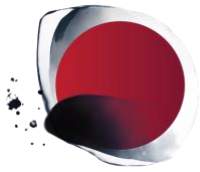
Week Four: May 30th

Preview for this week:

I hope to be able to show parts of these 3 performances related to Manamanaikalua's story during the presentation, but if you can, please watch them before—for your own wonder and pleasure!

Hula Mu'umu'u - by Keola & Moanalani Beamer

Keola Beamer & Moanalani Beamer (Kumu Hula - Hula Source) present the "Hula Mu'umu'u, Mo'olelo (Story Telling) and Mele (Music) at its absolute finest. Hawaiian oral history informs us that this ancient story actually took place at the coast of Kahakuloa on the Island of Maui. PBS Hawaii flew an entire film crew to Kahakuloa to film at the exact place where the "Hula Mu'umu'u" was born. All this for a 30 second segment highlighting



Moanalani's hula. Mahalo nui, (Thank You) PBS Hawaii.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qmf1wrKdzEg>

Holo Mai Pele - by Hālau o Kekuhi

NB: The Manamanaialuea episode is from 14:30 - 18:22

Every culture has its defining myth: Hindus have the Mahabharata, the Greeks the Homeric Odyssey. For native Hawaiians, perhaps no myth is more central than the story of the Fire Goddess Pele and her enduring rivalry with her sister Hi'iaka. Six years ago, the renowned dance company Halau O Kekuhi began the ambitious undertaking of assembling and recreating the legend for modern audiences, translating it to the contemporary stage by combining the traditions of Hawaiian chant and hula with innovative elements of Western theater.

<https://oiwi.tv/oiwitv/holo-mai-pele/>

Pi'i Ana A'ama - by Academy of Hawaiian Arts

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_00I8V9rLE

Forth Session Recording :

<https://youtu.be/RQJQj73XL1w>

Notes: This is a gift from the sacred indigenous culture

- Dispossession and dismemberment. Reconnect in respectfully and in culturally responsible and respectfully ways being aware of the silent voices.
- Engaging with indigenous stories in a non-indigenous context.
- Kuleana: Responsibility and right and privilege.
- Kupuna: Voices of the ancestors. A three way. How does our work benefit the native Hawaiian community.
- Reimage the space to include all the voices.
- Mana Wahine: female power.
- Second Sight: Ike, to see, know, recognize, perceive, be aware, understand, knowledge, awareness, recognition, vision, receive divine revelations.
- *rare — the narrative of women bonding in story.

Ola Hou 'O Manamanaialuea Ē Maile Kaku, May 2023



The Inner Shore

What does the Mu'umu'u inspire, activate, stimulate in each of us, in our own individual worlds?

1) To whom does the Mu'umu'u, the maimed woman, chant on my own inner shore?

- Gather the words / phrases / images / sensations you've jotted down.
- They are the seeds for the chant that the Mu'umu'u has sent forth from her shore to yours.
- Create a poem, song, chant, or drawing out of them.
- What does this co-created chant say?

If you feel like sharing any co-creations, I'd love to read them:

Jennifer.Kaku@my.pacifica.edu

2) Is there a maimed woman on my own inner shore (whatever my sex/gender)? (I suggest there might be a maimed woman inside of us whatever sex/gender we identify with.)

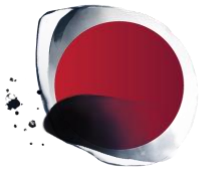
- What are her strengths, her skills, her resources, her powers?
- What gives her joy? What empowers or might empower her?
- Can she (be allowed) to dance, to inspire love, affection, creativity?

In the story, recognition of the goddess or the divine is the key to healing and transformation. Recognition is triggered via a gift received spontaneously from the goddess/the divine.

As you imagine / witness / embody / dwell with the Mu'umu'u on your inner shore, you notice a gift or a sign that comes to you out of nowhere. Amplify it.

- What is it? What are the multiple connections it evokes?
- Can you connect it to a Source of divine / sacred / elemental / creative energy?
- Do you recognize that Source?

Image Courtesy of: Simon Berger [@8moments](#)



DR. TIMOTHY DUKES

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