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### **Abstracts**

#### **Oliver Auge and Felicia E. Engelhard, Ancient Goddesses in the Medieval Period: Allegorical Figures, Daughters of God or Divine Competitors?**

Despite the monotheistic claim of Christianity, ancient heritage persisted in the medieval worldview in the form of female deities who – as Barbara Newman was able to show – were integrated into the Christian faith and entrusted with certain divine tasks and functions. The aim of this article is therefore to quantitatively expand Newman's study by comparing the medieval perpetuation of the ancient goddesses Fortuna, Natura, Justitia and Diana, and to add other important aspects in order to illustrate the spectrum of female divinity during the Middle Ages. The antique goddesses were not only integrated, they even experienced a differentiation and cultural flourishing phase during the Middle Ages, as shown in the case of Natura and Justitia. Diana, on the other hand, did not receive theological appreciation and embedding in the divine order of Christianity but was degraded as part of the 'pagan folk cultures' and demonised in the context of the invention of witchcraft crime. The integration of ancient goddesses as shown by Newman must hence be seen in the context of the exclusion and suppression of the ancient traditions.

#### **Birgit Heller, Goddesses and Their Ambivalent Relationship to Women Through the Example of Hindu Traditions**

At the beginning of religious studies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, goddesses were primarily interpreted as mother goddesses. In connection with evolutionary

theories explaining both the origin of religion and the idea of god, the religious symbol of the mother was assessed to have been overcome by the symbol of the father. Nevertheless, there is plenty of historical evidence documenting that mother worship has always been only one of the many facets of goddess worship. According to another widespread assumption – mostly linked to theories of patriarchy – goddess worship is seen as the cause for the high social status of women. Research has shown that the relationship between goddesses and women is complex and ambivalent: on the one hand, goddesses can represent models for female identity but, on the other hand, they reflect normative gender roles and legitimise the given gender order. The variety of goddess symbols as well as their diverse connections with women are demonstrated within Hindu traditions. Central to the Hindu idea of the goddess is the concept of a cosmic female principle named Shakti; in regard to women as manifestations of Shakti different impacts on the perceptions and status of women can be observed.

### **Almut Höfert and Anja Hänsch, Goddess Times: the ‘Great Goddess’ in Scholarship and Religious Movements**

This article investigates into the manifold links between nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship and the neopagan feminist Wicca/Goddess movements originating from the second half of the twentieth century onwards. The analysis focuses on the variety of gender conceptions attached to ‘the Goddess’ ranging from binary to queer. In a first step, the idea of a prehistorical ‘Great Goddess’ figuring prominently within a presumed matriarchal society is traced back to nineteenth-century scholars. Furthermore, the article shows how the conceptions of the ‘Great Goddess’ are clearly delineated by several scholars (e.g. Robert Graves, Raphael Patai, Marija Gimbutas) in the twentieth century. Additionally, these scholars connected elements of what Zygmunt Bauman called “retrotopia” to the ‘Great Goddess’. The Wicca and Goddess movements picked up on these retrotopian elements elaborating further on them. Occasionally this has provoked conflict between historians/archaeologists on the one side and the religious movements on the other. Whenever religious movements claimed historicity for the retrotopical Goddess times, academia would object. Thus the contentions regarding the discourse on the ‘Great Goddess’ predominantly lie with the question of the Goddess times.

**Elissa Mailänder, “Writing to the Four Winds and Waiting for Mail”: Material Hermeneutics of Letters and Photographs as Memory Objects of the Reich Labour Service Generation (1939–2022)**

This article draws upon the private collection of Franziska Grasel, born in Austria in 1921. It focuses, in particular, on her archiving practices and the bequest of her private archive to a public collection in Vienna, through which she turned her personal documents into historical source material. The first section explores Franziska Grasel’s lived experience of National Socialism, including the role letters and photographs played in community-building in the Reich Labour Service and the significance Grasel and her friends paid to the objects that she collected and stored with great care. Part two considers the changed meaning of Grasel’s archive as it transitioned from private to public. While Grasel’s private archiving practices during and after National Socialism served as a personal attempt to preserve experience and memory through objects, her 2002 decision to bequeath her personal archive piece by piece to the Viennese archival collection *Sammlung Frauennachlässe* made it accessible to a wide audience. The third part reflects upon Grasel’s estate as a publicly accessible archive, shedding light on the way our work as historians gives her experiences and memories a voice and thereby contributes to passing on her legacy. Considering that Franziska Grasel’s well-preserved collection reflects the privileges of those who were part of the “Aryan” majority society, her archive raises epistemological as well as ethical questions about the ambiguous meanings of those objects.