

Marija Gimbutas

Transnational Biography, Feminist Reception, and the Controversy of Goddess Archaeology

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Chapter 5

Searching for Old Europe

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5 Searching for Old Europe

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Gimbutas' vision of the matristic and Goddess-worshiping civilization of Old Europe fits rather neatly within the context of 1970s American feminism, particularly the strand of it that has since been dubbed "cultural feminism."¹ Deriving their ideas from radical feminist authors such as Adrienne Rich and Mary Daly, they aimed to reverse the traditional patriarchal understandings of masculinity and femininity, and rethink "feminine essence" as a source of women's empowerment.² The victory against patriarchy for them was achieved not by the eradication of the sex-class system, but in revaluing the traits associated with females.³ In an effort to rethink what it means to be a woman, feminists in this tradition looked back at the prehistory of human civilization, searching both for an explanation of the development of patriarchy, and for proof of the existence of an alternative social and ideological structure, where females were associated with power, strength, and creativity. Marija Gimbutas' work, which described the Great Goddess worship in Neolithic and Chalcolithic Europe and the social structure of these prehistoric societies, provided a scientific ground for the feminists aiming to deconstruct the historical universality of patriarchy. Her hypothesis of a harmonious, peaceful, and egalitarian prehistoric women-centered society of Old Europe became particularly important for the American feminist spirituality movement, or the Goddess movement, which flourished in the 1980s and the 1990s in the U.S.⁴

Although the correspondence between Gimbutas' work and cultural/radical feminist discourses of the same period is obvious, it has not been studied thoroughly by someone outside of the circles of the Goddess movement. One of the likely reasons for this is Gimbutas' hesitance to explicitly call herself a feminist and her wish to be seen primarily as a disinterested scientist.⁵ In this chapter I do not aim to put on Gimbutas the label of "feminism," that she herself refused during her lifetime. Instead, drawing on the insights developed in feminist new biography studies,⁶ I wish to contextualize her intellectual and life trajectory within the framework of the history of the American women's liberation movement from the 1970s to the 1990s and show the mutual influences between feminist thinking and Gimbutas' work. I propose that despite Gimbutas not calling herself

a feminist, the context of feminist activism and theorizing has constituted one of the most foundational backgrounds both to her work and to the reception of her ideas.

Moreover, employing insights from postcolonial studies and critical post-socialist studies, I bring to the forefront the role that Gimbutas' Lithuanian background and the Cold War context played in her work, as well as its reception within the American feminist spirituality movement. This movement has been criticized for its whiteness, Eurocentrism, and the appropriation of other cultures. In this chapter I argue that Gimbutas' self-fashioning⁷ as an heir to an authentic pre-Soviet Eastern European cultural tradition had a significant effect on the popularity of her work and persona in the feminist spirituality movement. In her work, Gimbutas brought the margins of Europe to the center of the narrative of the development of Western civilization – showing how, for example, the Lithuanian goddess-witch *Ragana* can reveal more about the roots of European culture than the currently globally dominant Anglo-Saxon cultural images. Subsequently, the Orientalized images of premodern Eastern Europe were claimed by the feminist spirituality movement in the U.S. in an effort to counter the accusations of cultural appropriation of other, non-Western cultures.

In this chapter I outline the genealogy of radical/cultural feminism and the development of the Goddess movement, focusing on the importance that the movement placed on narratives of prehistory. I position Gimbutas' works on Old Europe at the cultural moment of women's liberation in the U.S., and show the effect that they had on feminist audiences in the 1970s and the 1980s. Then I delve into the relationship between the Goddess movement and Gimbutas, demonstrating that by the late 1980s Gimbutas was familiar with radical feminist views and language politics and had this audience in mind when writing her last two books. Gimbutas used her Lithuanian heritage to fashion a certain scientific persona, which would be attractive for spiritual feminists in the U.S., but also, and most importantly, she continued her life-long endeavor of advocating for Lithuanian independence through showcasing the uniqueness and the wealth of the folk culture and traditions of her homeland. Gimbutas' work on Old Europe should be interpreted as a negotiation of the issue of European belonging of marginalized Eastern European nations, such as Lithuania, which, I believe, sheds new light on decolonial debates about cultural appropriation and Eurocentrism in feminism.

Feminists Rediscovering the Goddess

The 1970s was an important period for the feminist reconsideration of religion and spirituality in the U.S.⁸ Published in 1973, Mary Daly's seminal book *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* argued for the necessity for the women's movement to deal with the exclusively male imaginary of God in the Christian faith. While the majority of Second Wave

feminists were secular or atheist, due to their embeddedness in existentialist and Marxist philosophical traditions,⁹ the radical feminist philosopher and theologian Daly argued that the women's movement could not go around the apparently universal human desire for spiritual fulfillment. For Daly, the transformation sought by feminists could not stop at what she saw as merely formal changes within the male-dominated political and spiritual systems, such as voting rights or the ordination of women. The goal was to leave behind the ontological framework derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition and imagine the ultimate transcendence, or God, from a female point of view. In her call for feminism to be "not only many-faceted but cosmic and ultimately religious in its vision," Daly famously re-envisioned the feminist revolution as a change in consciousness and not primarily a fight for an institutional change.¹⁰

A similar line of thought was continued by other feminists, such as Adrienne Rich (1976)¹¹ and Susan Griffin (1978).¹² What characterized these works, later put under the umbrella term of "cultural feminism," was their commitment to the women-centered approach, the connection of feminism with environmental politics, skepticism towards technological progress, and the importance assigned to psychological and spiritual change.¹³ Reacting to the earlier tendency in radical feminism to transcend the "biology" of gender altogether and strive towards androgyny, cultural feminists wanted instead to reclaim femininity, reverse the predominant negative associations with womanhood and female power, and create a culture based on "female values" (presumed to be superior to "male values") of nonviolence and non-possession.¹⁴ The appearance of women's or feminist spirituality movement was a part of this "cultural" tendency in feminism. As feminist historians notice, starting with the late 1970s, feminist spirituality became a flourishing field of theorizing and activism, especially on the West Coast of the U.S., with a set of accompanying institutions, such as magazines, bookshops, publishing houses, as well as health centers.¹⁵ Feminists even had their own educational institutions – like The Woman's Building in Los Angeles, dedicated to feminist art education.¹⁶ At its peak, the movement was rather diverse: for some women feminist spirituality was primarily a catalyst for political and artistic activism and writing, for others it became a countercultural religious community.

Radical or cultural feminism and the feminist spirituality movement were criticized harshly by Marxist feminists¹⁷ and, later, post-structuralist feminists.¹⁸ It was the Marxist feminist historian Echols who invented the term "cultural feminism," to differentiate the more spiritual and women-centered feminism from the earlier androgynous political radicalism. Over the course of a couple of decades since its inception, the movement was criticized for its esotericism, inwardness, and apolitical tendencies, as well as the attachment of feminist struggle to the female anatomy, which eventually led some strands of radical feminism towards transphobia. The infamous book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*,¹⁹ which is seen as a landmark text in fueling transphobia among feminists, was written, for example, by Janice G. Raymond, who was a doctoral supervisee of

Mary Daly. Perceiving these tendencies, authors such as Donna Haraway distanced themselves from cultural feminism, with the famous phrase “I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.”²⁰ Judith Butler, similarly to Haraway, saw the movement as dangerously holding on to the ideas of the Golden Age and a certain gendered purity, which was not politically relevant and even detrimental in the contemporary postmodern world.²¹ With the rise of post-structuralist feminism with its focus on *gender* rather than *women*, radical feminism became marginalized, or even seen as “outside of the bounds of acceptable feminism.”²² However, many of its ideas, especially the reevaluation of femininity and the search for spiritual roots in native and folk cultures continue to be highly influential in women’s movements and produced extremely different interpretations globally.

One of the landmark texts in presenting the theoretical background for feminist spirituality was the collected volume *Womanspirit Rising. A Feminist Reader in Religion*,²³ which distinguished between the two strands of feminist engagement with religion, as they developed in the 1970s: one “reformist,” aiming at the transformation of traditional religions, while the other one more “radical” in its breaking with the tradition. The proponents of the latter strand, according to Christ and Plaskow, aimed to establish a new “revolutionary” belief system, referred to by a variety of names: witchcraft, neopaganism, womanspirit, or Goddess movement. Within this “radical” strand were authors such as Carol P. Christ, Naomi R. Goldenberg, Zsuzsanna Budapest, Starhawk, Merlin Stone, and others. The breaking with the Judeo-Christian tradition, implied in the creation of the Goddess movement, meant the need to look for an alternative “tradition” – to invent a new history and mythology which would ground the new spirituality in a different cosmology. Therefore, feminists in this new religious formation turned to “the prebiblical past in constructing new feminist spiritual visions.”²⁴ The widely quoted article by Christ “Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological and Political Reflections,”²⁵ encouraged a quest for new spiritual origins. Following Daly, in this text Christ argued that participating in religious rituals that are centered around the symbolism of the male God alienates women from their bodies and their identity as women. The symbolism of the female Goddess facilitates, on the other hand, regaining the sense of strength inherent in women’s bodies, and the belief in women’s own willpower. Therefore, Christ argued, Goddess symbolism must become the basis for feminist spirituality.

The interest in prehistoric Goddess worship meant that the feminist spirituality movement revised the nineteenth-century idea of prehistoric matriarchy, found in the writings of J.J. Bachofen, Friedrich Engels, and others, and gave this idea a feminist twist. The sculptor and art historian Merlin Stone argued that

far from the generally accepted idea that the Judeo-Christian religions rescued women from supposedly more barbarian and anti-women

societies, women have actually lost a great deal of status and physical and material autonomy since the inception of these and other male-worshipping religions.²⁶

According to Stone, knowledge about the existence of prehistoric Goddesses-worshipping and women-centered societies can help feminists both to understand the roots of today's patriarchal structures and provide a utopian future vision. As the argument went, if patriarchy was only a historical phenomenon of roughly the past 5,000 years, then contemporary feminist aspirations for a radical cultural change had a much better historical grounding. While the contemporary mainstream culture was not rich with positive representations of female power, the ancient, prehistoric, prebiblical societies, shrouded in mystery due to the lack of available information, could provide a utopian image of a society characterized by Goddess worship and female ascendency.

As the editors of the *Womanspirit Rising* volume noted, the relationship that contemporary feminists had with the ancient Goddess worship was rather paradoxical: although they were trying to break with patriarchal tradition and mythology of origins, they were also risking to establish a new romanticized and possibly distorted picture of the past.²⁷ The relationship with the prehistoric past was therefore a debated topic within the Goddess movement, ranging from metaphorical to more literal interpretations among participants. On the more metaphorical side of the spectrum was, for example, the radical lesbian feminist poet Adrienne Rich, who argued that the historical reality of Goddess worship and the existence of "matriarchal" societies is less important than the psychological aspect of the idea – the concept of beneficent female power.²⁸ According to Rich, even if the "Golden Age" of Goddess worship did not exist, the individual experience that every human being had in their infancy – that of a bodily and psychological dependency on their mothers – was already a strong enough reason for the existence of a universal archetype of woman's power and rule.²⁹

For thinkers like Rich or Carol P. Christ,³⁰ the actual historical "reality" of the prehistoric past was not as important as a certain feminist attitude and feeling that women had to acquire in approaching their individual and collective past. Although cultural feminists were critical of Carl Jung's work on "anima," his notion of archetype was a strong influence on thinking about the relationship with ancient Goddess worship.³¹ Jung believed that human consciousness carries inbuilt archetypes, or primal images, unchanging basic forms of perception, which are then projected onto the real world.³² Theorists of feminist spirituality employed Jungian ideas to argue that the images derived from ancient Goddess worship were alive in contemporary people's minds as archetypes and needed only to be triggered in order to inspire "remembering" the times before patriarchy. A contemporary reimagining of the prehistoric Goddess and women-centered spirituality would therefore facilitate women's empowerment and could serve feminist goals.

While the women's spirituality movement was dominated by people of white European descent, the issue of spiritual empowerment through the images of the ancient past was also a reoccurring theme in the work of Black feminists. In the famous essay "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," (1978) the radical feminist lesbian poet Audre Lorde wrote about the erotic power of women, which, according to her, was to be found in a "deeply female and spiritual plane."³³ While in this essay Lorde did not explicitly connect women's empowerment with the ancient spiritual images, she did so in the famous letter written to Mary Daly in 1979.³⁴ This open letter addressed the Eurocentrism of the feminist spirituality movement and its treatment of the prehistoric past. Lorde pointed out how Daly in her book *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*³⁵ did not include any examples of Black heritage among the numerous examples of the ancient Goddess worship. Lorde criticized Daly for taking interest only in the prehistory of Judeo-Christian white cultures, and ignoring the images of the Goddess from an African context.³⁶ For Lorde, it was important that the African ancient tradition of female ascendancy and Goddess worship would become a part of the "reservoirs of our ancient power" for contemporary feminists.³⁷

As the art historian Jennie Klein argues, Goddess spirituality became "the single most important idea to inform the radical politics of a number of artists working in the 1970s" (Klein 2009, 598), yet the Goddess in most of these accounts was metaphorical and symbolic. Only in neopagan circles, among such figures as the neopagan priestesses Starhawk and Zsuzsanna Budapest, the ancient Goddess tradition was understood not only as a literary tool, but as a historical legacy. Starhawk argued, for example, that modern feminist witchcraft *inherited* the tradition of the oldest world religion – Goddess worship. She encouraged women to rediscover witchcraft in its pre-Christian guise, as an "earth centered, nature-oriented worship that venerated the Goddess, the source of life."³⁸ This tradition, according to her, started in the Paleolithic and continued to be practiced after the rise of the patriarchal monotheistic religions. Following the understanding of witchcraft as it was first popularized by the British Egyptologist Margaret Murray,³⁹ Starhawk argued that witch-hunts in the Early Modern period in Europe were a fight of the Christian churches against the remnants of the ancient Goddess religion.⁴⁰ The persecution of witches, according to this popular narrative, forced the pagan Goddess religion to go underground, until it was revived again in the mid-twentieth century by neopagans and feminists.⁴¹ Another important figure in creating the modern Goddess spirituality, its separatist Dianic (women-only) strand, Zsuzsanna Budapest, also claimed to be following an ancient tradition of witchcraft as it was secretly practiced in her motherland Hungary.⁴² In neopagan feminist circles, thus, the historicity of Goddess worship was perceived as factual, and served as an important background out of which the new spiritual tradition could be rebuilt.

Sources of Pre-Her-Story

The interest in ancient Goddess worship naturally facilitated an increasing examination of the ancient past. The first author to delve into this history from a feminist point of view was the librarian Elizabeth Gould Davis, with her book *The First Sex*.⁴³ The book was initially widely read by feminists, and inspired one of the earliest “cultural feminist” texts “Mother Right. A New Feminist Theory.”⁴⁴ Later Gould Davis’ book was, however, criticized for its lack of scientific rigor and largely dismissed. Merlin Stone’s book *When God Was A Woman*⁴⁵ was received with much more appreciation. The sculptor and art historian Stone, an active participant in the feminist spirituality movement, described ancient Goddess worship and the violent rise of the patriarchal religious and political establishment, focusing on the Near and Middle East sources. Although Stone based her book on careful research, she was, like Gould Davis, an amateur prehistorian – not trained as a historian or an archaeologist, which meant that she had to rely in her research almost exclusively on secondary sources. Moreover, Stone supported her arguments with references to the works of some of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars,⁴⁶ who had rather conservative ideas on femininity and masculinity.⁴⁷ This, of course, contradicted the ideological goals of Second Wave feminists.

The timing of Gimbutas’ *Gods and Goddess* could have not been more perfect – published in 1974, it landed in the fertile soil of the growing feminist spirituality movement and filled in the perceived lack of scholarly information about prehistoric Goddess-worshiping. The place was also perfect – Gimbutas lived and worked in Los Angeles, the city that was arguably the biggest hub of the Goddess movement.⁴⁸ The narrative of the rise and fall of the women-centered and Goddess-worshiping societies of Neolithic Old Europe was based on primary sources and scholarly classification, analysis, and interpretation. Gimbutas herself had directed the excavations that produced many of the artifacts described in the book. The scientific authority that Gimbutas brought to the debate was therefore incomparable to Stone, Gould Davis, and others. Moreover, Gimbutas, unlike earlier scholars – the nineteenth-century predecessors of the idea of matriarchy – did not see the pre-patriarchal stage as more primitive than what followed afterward. Quite the contrary, the whole book, as I discussed in the previous chapter, was intended to show the cultural superiority of the matristic Goddesses-worshiping society in contrast to the later androcentric Indo-European civilization, and to depict and interpret its spiritual and artistic achievements.

Gimbutas’ work on Old Europe was instantly taken up by the emerging feminist art movement. In 1978, the feminist journal *Heresies* dedicated the whole issue to the topic of the Great Goddess, including artistic, philosophical, and historical explorations of the subject. One of the editors of the issue, the pioneer of the feminist art movement Mary Beth Edelson published an article, where she described a Goddess pilgrimage, inspired by

reading Gimbutas' *The Gods and Goddesses*.⁴⁹ In 1977, after studying the maps provided by Gimbutas, she undertook a journey to Hvar island, then a part of Yugoslavia, looking for traces of the prehistoric spirituality of Old Europe. On this island Edelson managed to locate a cave, which supposedly served as a place for Goddess rituals in the Neolithic period. In this cave she performed rituals in order to spiritually reconnect to the ancient past and recorded them with a photo camera.⁵⁰ Edelson explained her desire to visit a site of the prehistoric Goddess worship as an urge to physically experience the presence of the past, as it was somehow preserved in the materiality of a Neolithic site.⁵¹ Edelson's and other articles⁵² in this issue of *Heresies* were the first signs of the feminist interest in Gimbutas' work, which provided visual and material substance to the feminist desire to revive Goddess spirituality.

While Gimbutas did not belong to any feminist spirituality groups and denied any relationship with feminism, her works were promoting a message identical to that of the Goddess movement – that a society guided by “feminine values” was a happier and more advanced society than a patriarchy. While some prominent voices in the feminist spirituality movement were careful in arguing for or against the actual existence of prehistoric “matriarchies,” and saw this idea mostly as a metaphor for female empowerment, the work of Gimbutas advocated the actual *facticity* of the prehistoric Goddess worship and female social leadership. *The Gods and Goddesses* also provided an abundance of visual materials to inspire women-centered artistic imaginary. Finally, Gimbutas herself was an exemplary woman scholar, as if embodying the values of feminine leadership and almost witchlike wisdom that the feminist spirituality movement praised. According to Christ, Gimbutas' work was “radical and implicitly feminist”⁵³ and provided a “scientific,” factual background for the ideas of a prehistoric matrilineal society and the millennia-long worship of Goddesses. Gimbutas' findings and her scientific authority therefore gave a boost to the literal interpretation of the prehistoric Goddess worship.

Gimbutas' Role in the Goddess Movement

When in 1982 Gimbutas' book was republished with the originally intended title, as *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, 6500–3500 B.C.: Myths and Cult Images*,⁵⁴ her popularity among the feminist spirituality movement started growing rapidly. The same year the ecofeminist Charlene Spretnak included Gimbutas' article “Women and Culture in Goddess-oriented Old Europe” in the edited volume on women's spirituality.⁵⁵ A few years later another edited volume *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*⁵⁶ was published, featuring the same article by Gimbutas. In this volume, Gimbutas' text about the Goddess-oriented Old Europe was featured next to some well-known feminist thinkers, and critics of patriarchal social and religious structures, such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Alice Walker,

Susan Griffin, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Mary Daly, Audre Lorde, and others. Placed in the section “Our Heritage is Our Power,” Gimbutas’ text answered the need, as editors explained, for “a positive past with which feminists can identify, the search for new ways to imagine and speak about the sacred, the effort to redefine the self and transform a patriarchal world.”⁵⁷ Gimbutas’ narrative of Old Europe provided an image of a “positive past,” an egalitarian society, where women could make choices about their social and sexual life and obtain positions of the highest social and political authority.⁵⁸ Uncovering the positive female symbolism as encoded in the many manifestations of the prehistoric Goddess, Gimbutas participated, as Christ put it, in affirming the history of female power.⁵⁹ As the neopagan priestess and writer Starhawk explained in retrospect, Gimbutas’ work supported the feminist project of reclaiming the body, and argued that patriarchy, war, and violence were not necessarily a part of human nature, but rather an unfortunate historical development.⁶⁰

If in *The Gods and Goddesses* Gimbutas only hinted at the potential psychological and political effects of her work on Old Europe, her last two books *The Language of the Goddess* (1989)⁶¹ and *The Civilization of the Goddess* (1991)⁶² were written already in full belief that the recovery of the prehistoric Goddess religion could contribute to a positive change in contemporary consciousness. Although both books followed the scientific requirements of the discipline of archaeology, they were written for a broader rather than specialist audience, discussing the spiritual and political implications of a women-centered reimagining of the prehistory of Western civilization. The interpretation of archaeological materials provided in these books must have been quite counterintuitive for a reader unfamiliar with Gimbutas’ previous works or with the feminist spirituality movement, as the books took for granted the existence of a *gylanic* social structure in Neolithic and Paleolithic times.

Gimbutas borrowed the word “gylanic” (meaning that the society was presided by a queen-priestess, and worshiped a female Goddess)⁶³ from the author Riane Eisler.⁶⁴ Eisler’s popular book *The Chalice and the Blade* (1988) was in turn heavily influenced by Gimbutas’ work.⁶⁵ *The Chalice and the Blade* revised the history of civilization from the perspective of two competing systems – that of domination, characterized by “masculine” values of hierarchy, power, and domination on the one hand, and that of partnership, characterized by “feminine” values of care, equality, and creativity on the other hand.⁶⁶ Writing in 1988, Eisler argued that neither Communism nor capitalism can provide a solution to contemporary social, economic, and environmental dilemmas, and that the path forward lies in the revival of gylany, or a society based on the partnership between the sexes.⁶⁷ Both Eisler and Gimbutas preferred the word *gylany* over *matriarchy* to talk about a social system that is not patriarchal and is essentially egalitarian in terms of gender.⁶⁸ Matriarchy, they argued, could be misunderstood as a reversal of patriarchy, which was not the

case in Old Europe, because “men were not oppressed by women,”⁶⁹ wrote Gimbutas.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s Gimbutas established a close relationship with many people active in the feminist spirituality movement: ecofeminist Charlene Spretnak, writer and psychotherapist Patricia Reis, Buddhist teacher Joan Iten Sutherland (editor of Gimbutas *The Language of the Goddess*),⁷⁰ Joan Marler (editor of *The Civilization of the Goddess*,⁷¹ Gimbutas’ personal assistant and biographer), mythologist Miriam Robbins Dexter (editor of the posthumously published *The Living Goddess*),⁷² and others. Spretnak described the relationship between the feminist spirituality movement and Gimbutas in the following way: “we visited her, held gatherings to wish her well, expressed our gratitude, and offered other acts of friendship,” making it clear that Gimbutas was not a member of any of the Goddess worshippers’ groups, but rather an honorable guest.⁷³ Gimbutas was invited to give talks at the Goddess worshippers’ meetings, appeared on radio and TV shows,⁷⁴ in articles of countercultural publications,⁷⁵ and more mainstream newspapers.⁷⁶ The presentation of her *Civilization of the Goddess* drew a crowd of people to a church in Santa Monica in 1991, and Gimbutas received standing ovations after the ceremony.⁷⁷ Gimbutas had



Figure 5.1 Gimbutas became friends with many people involved in the Goddess movement. With Charlene Spretnak at Gimbutas’ house in Topanga. 1989.



Figure 5.2 At one of the women's spirituality events, with Joan Marler. Massachusetts, 1992.

personal friendships with the members of the movement, which grew into a support network during the last decade of her life.

To understand the character of veneration that Gimbutas received from the women participating in the Goddess movement it is revealing to analyze in more detail the interaction between Gimbutas and her fans at the "Goddess Weekend" event, which took place in Sudbury, Massachusetts in 1992.⁷⁸ As in other similar events of the feminist spirituality movement's circles, Gimbutas there gave a lecture about the matristic civilization of Old Europe and received questions from the audience. This was followed by a consciousness-raising circle, in which participants shared the stories of revelation, experienced while reading Gimbutas' work. At least two of the participants emphasized coming from an Irish Catholic background, and stressed that Gimbutas' work revealed to them the possibility to reconnect with their European roots. Because of Gimbutas' work they realized that behind the oppressive patriarchal Christian religion there was another, more ancient level of the European spiritual heritage, which was, in fact, empowering for women. To put it in the words of one participant, Gimbutas' work was truly inspirational for her in finding the sacredness and beauty of women and femininity. "I found my roots, I found my home, I can do my work, I am not alone," she shared emotionally.⁷⁹ Yet another participant – a second-generation Lithuanian – claimed to have found in Gimbutas' work her lost motherland.

Being feminists of a white European background, these women were grateful to Gimbutas for the possibility to realize that not everything

connected with the Western civilization and whiteness was oppressive and patriarchal. Their contributions to the consciousness rising circle revealed a powerful personal relationship with Gimbutas' work as a source of spiritual empowerment. For the movement, which was comprised mainly of women of white European background, Gimbutas' work provided a welcome rewriting of the history of Western civilization. Gimbutas argued that the roots of the European culture can be found in the historical layer of the gylanic Goddess-centered civilization, the values of which could provide a way out of the troubles of modern patriarchal societies. Finally, the change in consciousness, which Mary Daly advocated for in her powerful 1973 book, could be inspired by the deep past of European nations, and the feminists of the Goddess movement could reconnect to what they saw as their own cultural and historical background in a positive way.

The Language and Civilization of the Goddess

In her last two books, *The Language of the Goddess* and *The Civilization of the Goddess*, Gimbutas elaborated the literally black-and-white distinction between the Old European and Indo-European civilizations, as represented in their "diametrically opposed" symbolism, religion, and social system.⁸⁰ If in the chthonic Old European symbolism the color black was the color of life, Earth, and the fertility of moist soil, then in the sky-oriented Indo-European mythology black became the color of death.⁸¹ Similarly, if in the Old European cosmology snake was the symbol of vitality, life energy, and regeneration, in the Indo-European symbolism the snake became the symbol of evil, which was then carried into the Christian Paradise myth. This radical change in religious symbolism – from the one venerating goddess, femininity, nature, and earth, to the one venerating the male warrior sky god – reflected also the change in social structure which happened with the expansion of Indo-Europeans to the European continent in the fourth and third millennia B.C. The change, as Gimbutas argues, was violent and radical, and it was reflected in the foundational myths of the Indo-European civilizations. Nordic, Babylonian, as well as Vedic myths tell the allegory of the male god of sky and thunder, who kills the evil serpent and thus starts a new epoch.⁸² Feminists in the 1970s and the 1980s had interpreted this myth as an allegory of the literal overthrow of the previous gylanic social structure by patriarchy.⁸³ Gimbutas largely embraced this interpretation and supported it with her interpretation of archaeological evidence.

Gimbutas' goal in *The Language of the Goddess* and *The Civilization of the Goddess* was, however, not so much to analyze the violent rise of patriarchy, but to reconstruct the symbolism, worldview, and social system of the pre-patriarchal, gylanic civilization of Old Europe. This task, in Gimbutas' view, had not only a scholarly importance, but also, and primarily, a spiritual and therefore political contemporary importance. In line with feminist, environmentalist, and pacifist ideas, Gimbutas saw modernity, both in its

Western and Soviet guises, as leading humanity to self-destruction and the destruction of the environment.⁸⁴ She criticized the notions of *civilization* and *progress*, which took for granted the androcratic model of social organization, characterized by “hierarchical political and religious organization, warfare, a class stratification, and a complex division of labor.”⁸⁵ None of this was intrinsic to human nature, she thought, and did not represent a higher stage of development of human society. A hierarchical and oppressive social organization should rather be seen as a mistake that has been continuously sustained for 5000 years by the many forms of patriarchal rule.

Gimbutas argued that the earliest and foundational form of human spirituality was woman- and Goddess- oriented, and she aimed to prove it by a description and interpretation of a “myriad” of images and artifacts surviving from the prehistoric times. The Great Goddess was to be understood as a metaphor for the creative powers and mysteries of nature itself, of the cycle of life, death, and regeneration, which was central to the worldview of the prehistoric people.⁸⁶ This Goddess-centered spirituality resulted also in a social system, Gimbutas believed, which was beneficial for the flourishing of human creativity, and was not based on violence or oppression on the basis of sex or class. The Old European society, which believed in the Goddess as nature itself, lived in a harmonious relationship with the environment, and embraced the immanence of life.⁸⁷ The overthrow of this civilization by Kurgans, in Gimbutas’ eyes, was comparable to the violent conquest of the Americas by the European colonizers.⁸⁸

In her final works and speeches Gimbutas proposed that a change of consciousness could drastically change the contemporary world. If contemporary Western civilization would stop prioritizing the “philosophical rejection of this world”⁸⁹ and would embrace the chthonic and immanent spirituality of the Goddess, this could stop the march of the destructive modern technological “progress.” Echoing the ideas popular in the feminist spirituality movement and ecofeminism,⁹⁰ Gimbutas suggested that salvation from an apocalyptic environmental and militaristic-nuclear scenario lay in a fundamental spiritual and religious transformation. Humanity needed a shift from the transcendental religions, starting with the Indo-European sky gods and continuing with Judaism and Christianity, towards the religions of immanence, such as the religion of the Great Goddess in prehistoric Europe. Gimbutas argued that the gynancy of Old Europe, which centered the “feminine principle” in social and spiritual life, which celebrated the eternal circle of life and death, and lived in harmony with nature, was an alternative to the androcratic Western civilization.⁹¹

A reflection and affirmation of “our authentic European Heritage – gynanic, nonviolent, earth-centered culture”⁹² was, in Gimbutas’ words, the best answer to the pervasiveness of patriarchy. She believed that despite the overwhelming historical changes over millennia, the remnants of the Old European culture were still *alive* at some level in modern European societies, as much as they were preserved in folk culture and the individual

subconscious. Gimbutas presented, for example, a cross-cultural comparison of female deities (the Lithuanian and Latvia Laima, the Irish and Scottish Brigit, the Greek Artemis, etc.) and rituals devoted to them, arguing that these goddesses have roots in the Old European symbolism and “have nothing to do with the Indo-European pantheon of Gods.”⁹³ Gimbutas also emphasized that the worldview of Old Europe still lived in “the subconscious dream and fantasy world”⁹⁴ of contemporary people. With reference to Jungian psychoanalysis⁹⁵ and the work of Jung’s disciple Erich Neumann,⁹⁶ Gimbutas argued for the persistence of Goddess archetypes and “the feminine principle” as a part of collective human unconscious.⁹⁷ The survival of Goddess symbolism on the unconscious level meant that the contemporary people were still able to decipher, understand, and revive the spirituality of Old Europe, despite it being so radically opposed to the contemporary patriarchal worldview.

From Witch-Hunts to Stalinism

Gimbutas’ narrative of Old Europe challenged the universalistic narrative of Western civilization and its patriarchal aspects from a women-centered perspective. It also positioned the Eastern margins, including Gimbutas’ own homeland Lithuania, at the very center of this counter-narrative. In Gimbutas’ work, one of the most prominent examples of the oppressed European gylanic heritage was the figure of the witch. The witch for Gimbutas served as an illustration of how the positive female symbolism of the Old European spirituality was denigrated and reversed in the patriarchal Christian worldview and came to stand for the evil forces. Gimbutas argued that the earlier meaning of witch as a powerful pagan Goddess of death and regeneration “Killer-Regeneratrix,”⁹⁸ persisted in the hidden pagan tradition carried by women, the unconscious realm, and the folklore images. The most authentic images of the witch, according to Gimbutas, could be found in European folklore, as for example the Basque *Mari*, Irish *Morrigan*, Russian *Baba Yaga*, Polish *Jędzia*, and Lithuanian and Latvian *Ragana*. Lithuanian folklore had an especially important role in Gimbutas’ interpretation. She explained that the word *Ragana* in Lithuanian was etymologically connected with the word “regėti” (to see, to foresee) and “ragas” (a horn) – which revealed her prophetic powers and her connection with the symbolism of the Goddess of regeneration.⁹⁹ Gimbutas, who at times did not hesitate to call herself a sort of *Ragana*, as I have discussed in previous chapters, suggested that despite the negative connotations attached to the figure of witch in modern times, it continues to empower women.

Gimbutas’ preoccupation with the figure of the witch discursively connects Gimbutas with radical feminist narratives about the empowerment of women, and the past as a repository of female strength. As the religious studies scholar Cynthia Eller notices in her ethnographic research on the

feminist spirituality movement, the symbolism of the witch was widely employed by feminists, starting already with the 1970s.¹⁰⁰ Probably the first time the word “witch” entered Second Wave feminist vocabulary in an empowering way was as the name of the New York Radical Women (NYRW) action group. This anti-capitalist feminist direct action group called themselves W.I.T.C.H., supposedly meaning “Women’s International Conspiracy from Hell.” Their public interventions played with the popular misogynic imaginary of witches.¹⁰¹ While in this case the name was not employed in any spiritual sense, it was later taken up by the rising feminist spirituality groups, which took seriously the connection between witchcraft, magic, and paganism.¹⁰² The history of witchcraft also caught the attention of radical feminists, such as Daly and Andrea Dworkin.¹⁰³ Daly used “witch” both as a powerful metaphor for reclaiming women’s power, as well as a reference to the historical reality of women’s oppression and the genealogy of women’s resistance to patriarchy.¹⁰⁴

Echoing similar narratives popular among modern Goddess worshippers,¹⁰⁵ Gimbutas argued that the early modern witch-hunts were motivated by the desire of the Christian Church to eradicate the last traces of the prehistoric religion of the Goddess and limit women’s social power. In *The Language of the Goddess* Gimbutas dedicated a long passage to describe witch-hunts as a continuation of the conflict between the values of matristic Old Europe and Indo-European patriarchal culture. Furthermore, she connected the early modern witch-hunts with the atrocities of the wars and genocides of the twentieth century, in particular as they afflicted Eastern Europe. Gimbutas called the modern witch-hunts the “greatest shame” and the most “satanic” act of the Christian Church, which attempted to eradicate the legacy of the prehistoric Great Goddess worship, as it was carried on by female spiritual leaders and healers, accused to be witches. Gimbutas called the period of witch-hunts to be “the beginning of the dangerous convulsions of androcratic rule, which 460 years later reached the peak in Stalin’s East Europe with the torture and murder of fifty million women, children, and men.”¹⁰⁶ The patriarchal craving to annihilate the remnants of the gylanic beliefs, according to Gimbutas, led to the invention of the most exquisite tools of murder and torture already in the Early Modern period, which developed further and finally culminated in the totalitarian wars of the twentieth century, exemplified by the bloody rule of Stalin.

From the point of view of Gimbutas, who was used to writing about the developments that lasted millennia, the time distance of at least 460 years between the peak of the early modern witch-hunts and the violent Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe was rather insignificant, and represented the unraveling of the one and only phenomenon – perverse patriarchal rule, or, more precisely, its modern incarnation. In reiterating this narrative, Gimbutas invoked a discourse characteristic of radical feminism, which positioned the oppression of women at the core of all hierarchical and abusive relationships, both historically and cross-culturally. At the center of

this drama of human history were women, “the best and bravest minds of the time,” who fell victim to the violent march of patriarchal “progress,” wrote Gimbutas.¹⁰⁷ The historical period of modernity for Gimbutas was the period of “the dangerous convulsions of androcratic rule,”¹⁰⁸ resulting in the twentieth-century wars and mass atrocities. *The Language of the Goddess* therefore reiterated the much beloved narrative of the feminist spirituality movement, to whom the prehistoric Goddess worship persisted in modern times as an underground pagan movement. The history of witch burnings became part of the history of an ongoing fight for women’s power against the patriarchal system, which became directly connected with the twentieth-century political events.¹⁰⁹

Gimbutas, however, gave this narrative a particular twist – she included the Soviet Union into the self-destructive development of Western civilization and the project of modernity. In fact, Gimbutas represented the Stalinist crimes in Eastern Europe as the “peak” of androcratic rule, which had been developing (to a disastrous effect) since the Indo-European invasion in Old Europe. Gimbutas’ emphasis on Stalinism stood in contrast to the usual Western (feminist) discourses, which regularly employ the Nazi regime as an example of ultimate evil.¹¹⁰ The literary scholar Diane Purkiss notes that in radical feminist discourses witch-hunts are often compared to the Holocaust in order to stress the immorality and the deadliness of this historical phenomenon.¹¹¹ By choosing Stalinism to stand for the *ultimate* wrongdoing of patriarchy in her text, Gimbutas established the difference between the American feminist spirituality movement and the Western discourses in general, and emphasized her Eastern European background.¹¹² Although in predominant Western discourses Nazism is the embodiment of evil, Gimbutas proposed Stalinism as the example of the most immoral and wicked regime, thus implicitly portraying the oppression of Eastern European countries by Communism as an example of ultimate victimhood.

Gimbutas’ *Language of the Goddess* and *Civilization of the Goddess* (1989 and 1991 respectively) were written at the time of a major political turmoil in Eastern Europe, including Lithuania, Gimbutas’ native country. The year 1989 saw the fall of the Iron Curtain, and 1990 was the year of the declaration of the national independence of the Baltic States, which finally freed themselves from the Soviet Union. These events, as I will discuss more broadly in the next chapter, encouraged a radical rejection of the Communist system in Eastern Europe, and an embrace of the Western capitalist system. Differently from the majority of intellectuals and politicians with an Eastern European background at that time, Gimbutas did not demonstrate enthusiasm about the Western system or urge Lithuania to “catch up” with the West on the imaginary progress path of modernity.¹¹³ Despite her strong disgust towards the Communist rule, she wrote about the Stalinist regime as part of the same phenomenon – Western modernity – which, in its own turn, was just a manifestation of the 5000-year-long patriarchal rule. In this sense, Gimbutas’ approach was similar to Riane Eisler’s,

who argued, in her popular *The Chalice and the Blade* (1988), that “neither capitalism nor communism offers a way out of our growing economic and political dilemmas.”¹¹⁴ Writing in the 1980s and the 1990s, in the context of the so-called “postsocialist condition,” characterized by the disappointment with both the Western and the Communist systems among progressive groups,¹¹⁵ Gimbutas proposed that the only solution to the problems of modernity was a revival of Goddess spirituality and “feminine values.”¹¹⁶

Gylany – Bringing the Margins to the Center

In *The Language of the Goddess* and *Civilization of the Goddess* Gimbutas employed the methodology which she called archaeomythology, essentially meaning the use of myth and folklore for the interpretation of prehistoric materials. Archaeomythology was Gimbutas’ main tool in recovering the forgotten Goddess religion, as it was preserved in the folklore and traditions of various European nations. Moreover, Gimbutas thought, following the psychoanalytical theories of Jung and Neumann, that the archetypes of the early Goddess religion were also preserved in the subconscious of contemporary Europeans.¹¹⁷ The most important sources for the recovery of the ancient Goddess tradition were located, Gimbutas argued, on the cultural margins of Europe. According to her, the remnants of the Old European beliefs persisted mostly in the folklore and the subconscious of the peripheral European areas: “Basque, Breton, Welsh, Irish, Scottish, and Scandinavian countries or where Christianity was introduced very late, as in Lithuania.”¹¹⁸ She even argued that the small Basque ethnic group, located in the North of contemporary Spain, should be considered the last “living Old European” culture.¹¹⁹ The worldview of the peoples that were historically marginalized in the course of the development of Western modernity provided Gimbutas with the key to understanding the gylanic past.

Although Gimbutas argued that the remnants of the Old European spirituality can be traced across the folklore, myths, and symbols of many small European nations, her native Lithuania provided her with the richest resource for the reconstruction of the gynocentric European past. She explained, for example, that snake worship was part of the traditional village culture in Lithuania up until the twentieth century, and was a clear remnant of Old European symbolism.¹²⁰ While the Indo-European mythology (and connected Christian mythology) made the serpent a symbol of evil, in Old European mythology it was a benevolent creature, a symbol of vitality and regeneration.¹²¹ Lithuanian folklore also served as an example of the persistence of the worship of Mother Earth in Europe up until contemporary times.¹²² In the *Language of the Goddess* Gimbutas wrote,

In some nooks of Europe, as in my own motherland, Lithuania, there still flow sacred and miraculous rivers and springs, there flourish holy forests and groves, reservoirs of blossoming life, there grow gnarled

trees brimming with vitality and holding the power to heal; along waters there still stand menhirs, called “Goddesses,” full of mysterious power.¹²³

In the excerpt above, Gimbutas claimed her own motherland Lithuania to be an especially rich depository of the values of Old Europe, in fact, a living example of the Goddess- and women- oriented spirituality and worldview. In this way she also positioned herself as a part of the gylanic tradition of Old Europe, handed down from one generation of women to the next one throughout the centuries.¹²⁴

Gimbutas was not alone in her turn to the marginalized folk traditions in search of the women-centered prehistory. The anthology *Weaving the Visions*,¹²⁵ which contained texts from authors representing a variety of religious and ethnic contexts represents the context of similar ideas flourishing at the time.¹²⁶ The narrative of the suppression of the original matri-focal, Goddess-centered religion and culture in Old Europe, suggested by Gimbutas,¹²⁷ echoes in particular the work of the Chicana lesbian poet and writer Gloria Anzaldúa, published in the same volume.¹²⁸ Anzaldúa’s work on the Mexican folk religiosity, and the history of the spiritual colonization of Central America resembled Gimbutas’ work in tracing back the prehistoric women-centered culture.

Anzaldúa argued that the powerful Goddesses Creatrices of Mesoamerican cultures were demonized and appropriated first by the Aztec-Mexica culture and then even more diminished by Christianity, which reduced the all-encompassing nature of Indian Goddesses to the image of the *Virgin of Guadalupe*. Even in this reductive portrayal, *Guadalupe* remained a potent symbol of women’s spirituality in the Chicana imagination, according to Anzaldúa, connecting indigenous people to their ancient roots in the pre-patriarchal, prehistorical civilization.¹²⁹ This narrative echoed that of Gimbutas, who claimed already in *The Gods and Goddesses* that the Old European spiritual heritage manifests to some extent in the importance attributed to the cult of Virgin Mary in Catholic European countries.¹³⁰ For Gimbutas this signified that even after Christianization, European people found ways to continue cultivating the old beliefs, adapting them to the symbols and rituals provided by Catholicism. Echoing Anzaldúa’s decolonial writing in the Mesoamerican context, Gimbutas claimed that although the Old European Goddesses were appropriated and reduced first by the Indo-European and then by Christian religions, they survived to some extent in the folk traditions of the marginalized European people and could serve as a tool for empowerment.

Both Anzaldúa and Gimbutas argued against the understanding of ancient spirituality as “primitive” and inferior to the contemporary rational-scientific worldview. On the contrary, the ancient Goddess-centered spirituality for both authors was a source of resistance against the patriarchal notion of progress, and the imperialism related with it. Anzaldúa saw Western

modernity as the final step in suppressing the authentic spirituality of her people, while for Gimbutas it was the Soviet modernity that eradicated the leftovers of the traditional lifestyle and worldview in Lithuania and all across Eastern Europe. While Anzaldúa talked about the prehistoric religions of the people colonized by the European powers, for Gimbutas the roots of the Goddess worship were in Europe itself and were still detectible in its most marginalized corners. If Anzaldúa saw Europe and the Western civilization as the cause for the eradication of the indigenous women- and Goddess- centered civilization and spirituality, for Gimbutas, the history of Europe itself represented a story of the tragic eradication of gylanic heritage in the name of patriarchal progress. The indigenous European Goddess spirituality and women-oriented culture was, in Gimbutas' narrative, the first victim of the rise of patriarchy. The original and authentic culture of Old Europe was therefore not patriarchal, but gylanic, which placed the decolonial feminist solution to the ills of modernity at the very core of its inception – at the origin story of Western civilization.

The Uses and Abuses of Eastern European Heritage

In *Living in the Lap of the Goddess* (1995) Cynthia Eller showed, among other things, how the predominantly white participants of the feminist spirituality movement in the U.S. were concerned about cultural borrowing inherent in their religious practices.¹³¹ On the one hand, white women, who made up the disproportionate majority of the feminist spirituality movement, wanted to avoid Eurocentrism in their beliefs, and therefore took African, Asian, or Native American traditions to be as much their heritage as the European ones.¹³² Moreover, the striving to integrate diverse cultural traditions into the mold of the modern Goddess worship was motivated by the wish to stress the universal oppression of women, and the global pre-patriarchal tradition of Goddess worship.¹³³ On the other hand, borrowing from the traditions of the people who have been colonized and oppressed by the European powers caused debate inside the movement about the ethics of cultural appropriation. Can white women of European descent pick and choose from the leftovers of the spiritual traditions that have largely been eradicated by European colonialism and suffered as a consequence of Western “progress”? Being aware of this problem, and facing criticism inside and outside the movement, some spiritual feminists decided to turn to the tradition, which was supposedly authentically “theirs” – the pre-patriarchal European tradition of Goddess worship.¹³⁴

This position was advocated by the high priestess of Dianic Wicca,¹³⁵ Zsuzsanna Z. Budapest, whom Eller identifies as “the closest thing feminist spirituality has to a founder.”¹³⁶ Born Zsuzsanna Emese Mokcsay in 1940, Budapest took her pseudonym from the name of her hometown – Budapest, the capital of Hungary. Being of Eastern European origin, Budapest had a life trajectory that echoed that of Marija Gimbutas. Like Gimbutas, she

was forced to flee from Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe, except not during the Second World War, as Gimbutas did, but during the Hungarian Uprising of the 1956. Budapest eventually ended up in the United States, and after separating from her husband entered the feminist activist scene in Los Angeles in 1970.¹³⁷ Being passionate about neopaganism, in 1971 she founded the first feminist witches' coven, called the Susan B. Anthony Coven No.1,¹³⁸ and in this way essentially put the Goddess spirituality movement in motion. Budapest, in her self-fashioning as the founder and high priestess of feminist witchcraft, relied extensively on her Eastern European roots. Budapest claimed that she inherited the tradition of witchcraft from her mother Masika Szilagyi, who was allegedly an heir of the centuries' old tradition of Hungarian witchcraft. Budapest also referred to Hungarian folklore in her books *The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows* (1975) and *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (1989), which established the rituals of Dianic Wicca.¹³⁹ Referring mainly to her Eastern European roots helped Budapest avoid the blame of cultural appropriation, an issue, which was otherwise troubling the white women within the feminist spirituality movement. She insisted on turning back to "our own heritage," meaning the folklore of the European peoples.¹⁴⁰

Although Gimbutas was far from being a founder or a priestess of feminist neopaganism, her popularity within the Goddess movement was also derived to some extent from her emphasis on her Eastern European roots, and the construction of a romantic image of Lithuania as a land with a particularly authentic connection with the Old European gylanic heritage. As shown above, Gimbutas did not only use Lithuanian folklore in order to interpret the archaeological materials from the European Neolithic. She also presented an Orientalized image of modern Lithuania as a country, which managed to preserve not only premodern, but even prehistoric heritage, manifesting in a strong and authentic bond with the worship of the Goddesses and the exceptional respect for nature.¹⁴¹ By relying on such a picture of her "motherland," Gimbutas presented herself not only as a disinterested scientist/objective researcher, but also as an heir of the tradition of her own people, which she was restoring to life. For the feminist spirituality movement, therefore, Gimbutas was definitely not only a knowledgeable and impartial scientist to whom Goddess worshippers turned for the evidence of the prehistoric matristic civilization. By virtue of being ethnically Lithuanian, Gimbutas also supposedly had a personal connection to the gylanic European heritage. All of this made her into a figure which could be seen and venerated as a "crone" – someone who embodied wisdom and feminine power.¹⁴²

Gimbutas, as I have shown above, presented a narrative of the prehistory of the Western civilization in which the authentic indigenous Old European civilization was matristic, egalitarian, peaceful, and Goddess-worshipping, oppressed by the patriarchal invaders from the East. This narrative allowed the predominantly white feminist spirituality movement to reconnect with its

European heritage in a new way, without the “white liberal guilt”¹⁴³ about the atrocities caused by Western colonialism and modernization. Gimbutas constructed Lithuania (similarly to Hungary in the case of Budapest) as a marginalized and oppressed country, as a European periphery that both preserved the most authentic connection to gylany, and suffered under the most extreme “convulsions of androcratic rule.”¹⁴⁴ The “Europeanness,” represented by Gimbutas in the eyes of the feminist spirituality movement was not dominant or oppressive, but subordinate and marginalized. This made it much more relatable for the women in the feminist spirituality movement, who tended to empathize with the underdog, the oppressed, rather than the oppressor.¹⁴⁵

However, it is worth noting, that even while being historically marginalized and/or colonized by big neighboring Empires, countries like Lithuania or Hungary retained a cultural status associated with Western and European allegiance. As scholars of postcolonialism and postsocialism have noted, in the case of Soviet modern imperialism, contrary to the history of Western colonialism, it was the Communist occupants who were considered “barbaric” and “inferior” among the East Central European intelligentsia.¹⁴⁶ Gimbutas, descending from Lithuanian national intelligentsia therefore embodied the sort of *European* heritage with which the women in the feminist spirituality movement could identify due to perceived cultural similarity, but without guilt. Here was a truly European culture, which was allegedly unmarked by the history of ruthless colonization and exploitation of foreign lands. Instead, it was a kind of Europeanness, which was marginalized and oppressed, and furthermore, had an authentic relation to the premodern and pre-patriarchal tradition of Goddess worship. This resulted in maintaining and exaggerating the image of Lithuania as the idealized pre-modern European homeland among the Goddess movement.

Lithuania “Out of Time”

The documentary *Signs Out of Time*,¹⁴⁷ made by the neopagan priestess Starhawk and the Canadian film maker Donna Read, is a great example of how the romantic image of Lithuania, as constructed by Gimbutas, was taken up by the feminist spirituality movement at face value and reiterated to the extent where it became a figment of Orientalist imagination. The filming crew of the documentary visited Lithuania in 1999,¹⁴⁸ but the video materials selected for the final version could have as well represented Lithuania in the nineteenth century, before modernization. To enhance this effect, the voice-over of the documentary described Lithuania as “a land tucked away in north-east Europe, where remnants of an ancient world still linger, passed down through families.”¹⁴⁹ The documentary starts by showing a group of people celebrating the summer solstice, wearing a stylized traditional Lithuanian peasant attire. Other video fragments show the following imagery: a man and a woman plowing soil with a horse-drawn

plow; an old woman cutting grass with a hand-held sickle; village women signing folk songs; elderly ladies selling vegetables at a market. While the voice-over tells how the “common people of Lithuania” were an inspiration for Gimbutas’ work, the video shows the Skansen-style Dzūkijos folklore museum¹⁵⁰ and the traditional household items displayed in a wooden peasant house. The documentary does not feature any Soviet or post-Soviet architecture, no modern city life, almost no modern technology. The unrealistically “ancient” imagery presented in the documentary confirms the image of Lithuania promoted by Gimbutas – as a premodern land, where the spiritual connection with Old Europe still lingers. The documentary by Starhawk and Read reproduced therefore the images typical of Western orientalism towards Eastern Europe, as lagging behind the West in terms of modernization.¹⁵¹

An important role in promoting this Orientalized image of Lithuania was played also by Joan Marler, a participant in the feminist spirituality movement, Gimbutas’ editor and close personal assistant in the last years of her life (1987–1994).¹⁵² In her hagiographic biographical essays Marler depicted Gimbutas as being imbued with nearly magical characteristics, which were supposedly a part of her Lithuanian heritage. Marler wrote, for example, that as a child Gimbutas received a “prophesy” from her mother, that she would “give something very important to the world, which will keep people from becoming ill.”¹⁵³ In Marler’s writing, Gimbutas appeared to be an heir of healing powers, transmitted through her mother, similarly to the autobiographical narrative promoted by Budapest. Gimbutas, according to Marler, was not simply representing Lithuanian culture – she *embodied* the “Lithuanian soul” – meaning that Gimbutas inherited the values of the gylanic Old Europe culture. Marler’s biographical writing on Gimbutas echoed closely the theory of the universal mythic structure of a “hero’s journey” by Joseph Campbell.¹⁵⁴ Her work presented Gimbutas as a struggling heroine, who persisted in her endeavors, fighting against all odds and evil forces. Gimbutas, in Marler’s narrative, came out of her allegorical journey triumphantly, with an important message that she had deciphered from the prehistoric materials – the message that had the power to “heal” contemporary society, even to save humanity from self-destruction.¹⁵⁵

There is an interesting detail that appears in the (auto)biographical narratives of both Budapest and Gimbutas. Namely, the pagan spirituality that they both encountered in their youth is represented not necessarily as something practiced in their (middle-class) families, but as transmitted via the servants of the household. Servants, who would come from peasantry, were the actual believers in the Fates, as in the case of Gimbutas, or the carriers of the knowledge of witchcraft, as in the case of Budapest. As Marler narrated it, Gimbutas was first touched by the symbolism of Lithuanian folklore due to her encounter with the working Lithuanian peasant women, who were singing “authentic, very ancient” songs. Her early knowledge of and interest in pagan folk beliefs were also derived from the peasant household servants.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, Budapest claimed to have inherited Eastern European folk wisdom from her mother, who got initiated into the ancient Hungarian witchcraft tradition by a peasant household servant.¹⁵⁷ The tendency in both Gimbutas' and Budapest' (auto)biographical narratives to attribute the continuity of the matristic Old European culture to peasants reflects the fascination that Eastern European interwar nationalist intellectuals had with "authentic" peasant culture.¹⁵⁸

Old European heritage that was described in Gimbutas' works, and eagerly appropriated by the feminist spirituality movement as its "sacred history,"¹⁵⁹ relied on an Orientalizing image of Lithuania, which in turn was partly derived from the Eastern European nationalist idealization of peasant culture, characteristic to the interwar period. Gimbutas' narrative of Old Europe repositioned the Eastern margins of Europe, including Lithuania, at the very core of the story of Western civilization. In a somewhat decolonial move Gimbutas subverted the hierarchies of power and value inherent in the center and periphery dualism and aimed to reevaluate Lithuanian folk culture and heritage, together with other marginalized European folk cultures, as the source of the authentic spiritual renewal. It was however, eventually romanticized and turned into an Orientalizing picture of a "paradise lost," losing sight of post-socialist political and ideological intricacies, and most problematically, without the awareness of the history of local ethnic-nationalisms.

Constructing the Old European Heritage

In this chapter I have read Gimbutas in the context of radical and cultural feminism, and in particular in the context of the American Goddess spirituality movement from the 1970s until the 1990s. In her works Gimbutas developed a distinct political vision, which was women-centered, environmentalist, and pacifist. While she always resisted the label of feminism, Gimbutas argued for no less than what Mary Daly suggested to be the ultimate goal of a radical feminist revolution – the overcoming of the imaginary of a single male God and a transformation of consciousness. The efforts of the so-called "cultural feminists" to reimagine the world, to retell the history of humanity, and undo the deeply seated patriarchal structures inside their own thinking cannot be easily dismissed, because they still inform contemporary feminism. Gimbutas' works are a part of this heritage and should be critically reread with an eye for the possibilities for a new feminist interpretation. Gimbutas' attention to marginalized cultures, her resistance to patriarchal narratives, especially the critique of the narrative of progress and civilization, and obviously, her criticism of the male-centered view of the prehistory of "the Western civilization" are worthy of continuous feminist attention.

Bringing Gimbutas to the center of a feminist historiography in this chapter I have emphasized the ambiguous relationship that the Goddess spirituality movement has with "their" white European cultural background. In particular

I aimed to shed light on the imaginary relationship with the (former) state-socialist Europe within the discourses and politics of this feminist strand. Gimbutas was a particularly attractive figure for the feminist spirituality movement, since she provided an emphatically feminist narrative about the matrilineal European past, thus reversing the usual patriarchal story of the development of the “Western civilization.” Her theory of Old Europe provided a number of symbolically and spiritually important materials, including visual ones, for feminists of white European descent within the feminist spirituality movement. Due to Gimbutas’ work, these feminists felt that they could find elements of empowering gylanic past in “their” cultural heritage – the prehistoric Europe civilization – and thus avoid charges of cultural appropriation.

However, the picture of Old Europe has been constructed by Gimbutas from a particular (Lithuanian) location on the geographical, historical, and economic European margins – the so-called post-socialist “New Europe.” Her theory of a matrilineal past and, in particular, her hypothesis about the continuity of archetypal and folklore images of women’s strength in twentieth-century Lithuanian culture, must be read as a part of an ongoing negotiation of Eastern European belonging to Europe. In her later books, written around the fall of the Iron Curtain, when the Eastern European nations regained national independence, Gimbutas rewrote the mainstream Western (pre)historical narrative, making space for the history of post-socialist Europe and emphasizing the fundamental Europeanness of Lithuanian culture. Gimbutas’ idealized picture of Lithuania, as a particularly authentic resource for the reconstruction of matrilineal Old European symbolism, was taken up by the women’s spirituality movement in an Orientalizing way, perpetuating stereotypes about Eastern Europe as lagging behind on the road of modernity. Following this observation, I do not argue however, that Old European heritage, as described by Gimbutas, does not “belong” to the American feminist spirituality movement and therefore was “appropriated.” Instead I propose that any heritage, feminist or non-feminist, is always to some extent constructed from a contemporary perspective. The notion of “Europe” in Gimbutas’ Old Europe has to be denaturalized with attention to Eastern European political sensitivities in the context of the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Notes

- 1 Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Linda Alcoff, “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 13, no. 3 (1988): 405–436.
- 2 Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976).

- 3 Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 6.
- 4 Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000).
- 5 Saja, "Geresnio gyvenimo ilgesys. M. Gimbutienė. [Longing for better life. Marija Gimbutas]"; Joan Marler, *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas* (Manchester: Knowledge, Ideas and Trends, 1997).
- 6 Paula R. Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- 7 Jo Burr Margadant, ed., "Introduction: Constructing Selves in Historical Perspective," in *The New Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: UC Press, 2000), 1–32.
- 8 The history of Western feminism's involvement with religion goes back at least to the late nineteenth century, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton initiated the writing of "The Woman's Bible," which challenged the misogyny of Christian religious orthodoxy. At the time her book was repudiated by other suffragists as detrimental to the women's cause and rediscovered only with the Second Wave. See Christ and Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising*, 19.
- 9 Rosi Braidotti, "In Spite of the Times. The Postsecular Turn in Feminism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 6 (2008): 3.
- 10 Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 29.
- 11 Rich, *Of Woman Born*.
- 12 Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, Reissue edition (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2016).
- 13 Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*.
- 14 Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 72.
- 15 Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*.
- 16 Jennie Klein, "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s," *Feminist Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 575–602.
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- 19 Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1979).
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- 24 Christ and Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising*, 11.
- 25 Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," *Heresies* 5, no. The Great Goddess (1978): 8–13.
- 26 Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: A Harvest/HBJ book, 1976), 2.
- 27 Christ and Plaskow, *Womanspirit Rising*, 11.
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- 29 Rich, 73.
- 30 Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," 1978.
- 31 Naomi R. Goldenberg, "Dreams and Fantasies as Sources of Revelation: Feminist Appropriation of Jung," in *Womanspirit Rising. A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1979), 219–227.
- 32 Carl Gustav Jung, *Archetipai Ir Kolektyvinė Pasqmonė (Die Archetypen Und Das Kollektive Unbewusste)* (Vilnius: Margi raštai, 2015).
- 33 Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 87.
- 34 Audre Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 94–97.
- 35 Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978).
- 36 Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," 94.
- 37 Lorde, 96.
- 38 Starhawk, "Witchcraft and Women's Culture," in *Womanspirit Rising*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1979), 259–268.
- 39 Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- 40 Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance. A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, 7.
- 41 Historical research in the 1980s and 1990s disproved this narrative, but it continued to be popular among radical feminist and the Goddess religion in particular. See Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History. Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 42 Cynthia Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 56.
- 43 Elizabeth Gould Davis, *The First Sex* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971).
- 44 Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 252–253.
- 45 Stone, *When God Was a Woman*.
- 46 The British archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes, the British historian of religions E.O. James, the English poet and classicist Robert Graves, the Scottish social anthropologist Sir. James Frazer, the British archaeologists James Mellaart and Sir. Arthur Evans, the French social anthropologist Robert Briffault, and others.
- 47 Jacquetta Hawkes, for example, the pioneering woman to study archaeology and also an important influence to these writers, held conservative views on gender roles and saw women as the force of resistance against social change. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*, 358 (Hutton 2001, 358).
- 48 Klein, "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s."
- 49 Mary Beth Edelson, "Pilgrimage/See for Yourself: A Journey to a Neolithic Goddess Cave, 1977, Grapceva, Hvar Island, Yugoslavia," *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* 5 (1978): 96–99.
- 50 Edelson, 96–99.
- 51 Edelson, 96.
- 52 Mimi Lobell, "Temples of the Great Goddess," *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics* 5, no. The Great Goddess (1978): 32–39.
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- 58 Marija Gimbutas, "Women and Culture in Goddess-Oriented Old Europe," in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 64.
- 59 Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," in *Womanspirit Rising. A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1979), 277.
- 60 Starhawk, "Marija Gimbutas' Work and the Question of the Sacred," in *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*, ed. Joan Marler (Manchester: Knowledge, Ideas and Trends, 1997), 522.
- 61 Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1989).
- 62 Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe*, ed. Joan Marler (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1991).
- 63 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, xix.
- 64 Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future* (Cambridge, MA: HarperOne, 1988).
- 65 Riane Eisler, "Rediscovering Our Past, Reclaiming Our Future: Toward a New Paradigm for History," in *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas*, ed. Joan Marler (Manchester: Knowledge, Ideas and Trends, 1997), 335–349.
- 66 Eisler later became a professor at the California Institute for Integral Studies – currently a major academic hub for people involved in the Goddess movement: Starhawk, Carol P. Christ, Mara Lynn Keller, and others. The religious studies scholar Cynthia Eller indicates Eisler as one of the "moderate" proponents of the narrative of prehistoric women-centered civilization, as *The Chalice and the Blade* aimed to present a less clearly "gendered" understanding of different social structures, and talked more about dominator vs partnership model, which could possibly be separated from masculinity and femininity. Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 156.
- 67 Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*.
- 68 Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*, 324.
- 69 Gimbutas, 324.
- 70 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989.
- 71 Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*.
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- 74 Starr Goode, *The Goddess in Art: An Interview with Marija Gimbutas*, VHS video (Santa Monica, CA, 1983).
- 75 More precisely such publications as *ReVision*, *East-West*, *Snake Power*, feminist magazine *Ms*.
- 76 Leslie, "The Goddess Theory"; Lefkowitz, "The Twilight of the Goddess."

- 77 Lollie Ragana, *Voice of the Goddess: Marija Gimbutas* (Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica City TV, 1991), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-k34hX-ty4iw&t=33s>.
- 78 The event was recorded by Joan Marler in three audio cassettes, which are currently held at the Marija Gimbutas Collection at the Opus Archives and Research Center. The summary here is my own. See Marler, *Marija Gimbutas. Women and the Goddess Weekend*.
- 79 Marler.
- 80 Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*, 396.
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- 83 Stone, *When God Was a Woman*; Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
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- 86 Gimbutas, 222.
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- 90 Charlene Spretnak, "Introduction," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Feminist Movement*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (New York: Doubleday, 1982), xi–xxx; Starhawk, "Marija Gimbutas' Work and the Question of the Sacred."
- 91 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 320; Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*, 324.
- 92 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, xxi.
- 93 Gimbutas, 111.
- 94 Gimbutas, 320.
- 95 C. G. Jung, Gerhard Adler, and R. F. C. Hull, *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).
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- 97 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 320.
- 98 Gimbutas, 210.
- 99 Gimbutas, 209–210.
- 100 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*.
- 101 Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 76.
- 102 Zsuzsanna Budapest, *The Feminist Book of Lights and Shadows*, 1976; Starhawk, "Witchcraft and Women's Culture."
- 103 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 55. The interest in the history of witchcraft, and especially the history of the persecution of witches by the Inquisition never really disappeared from feminism. For a Marxist feminist analysis see for example Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York and London: Autonomedia and Pluto, distributor], 2004).
- 104 Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 63.
- 105 Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*.
- 106 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 319.
- 107 Gimbutas, 319.
- 108 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989.
- 109 See Cynthia Eller, "Relativizing the Patriarchy: The Sacred History of the Feminist Spirituality Movement," *History of Religions* 30, no. 3 (1991): 286. Also see Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon*.

- 110 Mary Daly, for example, in her controversial work *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) compared the systematic violence against women in the U.S. health system with the tortures practiced in Nazi death camps. See Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*.
- 111 Purkiss noted that radical feminists have claimed in a few instances that the number of the victims of the witch-hunts is approximately nine million, which is higher than the approximate number of the victims of the Holocaust. Purkiss argues that this not only contradicts historical facts, but also encourages a competition of victimization, as if feminists wished to argue that “women” have historically suffered more than any other group, such as Jews. See Purkiss, *The Witch in History. Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations*, 17.
- 112 The so-called memory war between the Eastern and Western European interpretations of twentieth-century history, which nowadays takes place at the level of the European Union policy-making, is well depicted in the work of the Estonian international relations scholar Maria Malksoo, see for example Malksoo, “Nesting Orientalisms at War,” in *Orientalism and War*, ed. Tarak Barkawi and Ketih Stanski (Oxford University Press, 2013), 176–195. See also the work of the historian Timothy Snyder, who aims to reframe the Western historical imaginary of the Second World War atrocities, by treating the crimes committed by the Soviet Union at the same level of importance as those committed by the Nazi Germany, see *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*.
- 113 Marija Gimbutienė, “Profesorės Marijos Gimbutienės kalba pasakyta Vytauto Didžiojo Universitete 1993 birželio 11, suteikiant jau Garbės Daktaro vardą [The speech by Marija Gimbutas given at the ceremony of her inauguration to the Honorary Doctorate at Vytautas Magnus University],” in *Laimos palytėta: straipsniai, recenzijos, pokalbiai, polemika, laiška, vertinimai, prisiminimai*, ed. Austėja Ikamaitė (Vilnius: Scena, 2002), 15.
- 114 Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*, 158.
- 115 Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).
- 116 Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1989); Marija Gimbutienė, *Senoji Europa* [Old Europe] (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1996).
- 117 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 320.
- 118 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989.
- 119 Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess*, 348.
- 120 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 135.
- 121 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 121.
- 122 Gimbutas, 159.
- 123 Gimbutas, 320.
- 124 Gimbutas, 111.
- 125 Plaskow and Christ, *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*.
- 126 The first anthology *Womanspirit Rising* was focused almost exclusively on the Judeo-Christian contexts and issues. The second volume aimed to fix this blind spot by covering some of the diversity of the ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds of American feminists.
- 127 Gimbutas, “Women and Culture in Goddess-Oriented Old Europe.”
- 128 Gloria Anzaldúa, “Entering into the Serpent,” in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 77–86. Anzaldúa’s piece “Entering into the Serpent” was reprinted from her autobiographical book *Borderland/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderland / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

- 129 Anzaldúa, "Entering into the Serpent," 77–79.
- 130 Gimbutas, *The Gods and Goddesses*, 200.
- 131 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*.
- 132 The awareness of Eurocentrism within the mostly white feminist spirituality movement was most likely a result of the poignant critique expressed by Black feminists. One of the well-known examples of such critique is the open letter to Mary Daly written by the Black lesbian radical feminist Audre Lorde, where she criticized Daly for employing only "white, western-european, judeo-christian" images of the goddess for the goal of feminist empowerment, and not acknowledging the value of African spiritual heritage, see Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly."
- 133 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 18.
- 134 Eller, 77.
- 135 "Dianic" refers to the separatist strand of contemporary witchcraft which is practiced by women and worships female goddesses.
- 136 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 55.
- 137 Eller, 55.
- 138 Susan B. Anthony was an important social reformer, anti-slavery activist, and feminist in the nineteenth-century U.S. Naming the coven after her was meant to signal the unequivocally feminist character of Budapest's neopaganism.
- 139 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 55–56.
- 140 Eller, 79.
- 141 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 320.
- 142 In the feminist spirituality movement, crone is one out of the three aspects of the Goddess and an aspect of women's life which represents wisdom and maturity. The image of a crone is intended to contradict the negative images of old women in popular culture and thus empower women to age with pride. See for example Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess," 1978.
- 143 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 79.
- 144 Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*, 1989, 319.
- 145 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 73.
- 146 David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 121.
- 147 Donna Read and Starhawk, *Signs Out of Time* (Belili Productions, 2004).
- 148 Information about the documentary was taken from the official web page of the filmmakers. See Belili productions, *About Signs Out of Time*, accessed 29 August 2019, <https://www.belili.org/marija/aboutSIGNS.html>.
- 149 Read and Starhawk.
- 150 Skansen was the first open air folklore museum established in Sweden at the end of the nineteenth century as a part of the Romantic project to preserve the folklore tradition quickly vanishing with the advancement of modernization. There have been many museums of this kind established, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe. Read more in Hans Ruin, "A Home to Die in: Hazelius, Skansen and the Aesthetics of Historical Disappearance," in *History Unfolds: Samtidskonst Möter Historia: Contemporary Art Meets History*, ed. Helene Larsson (Stockholm: Pousette: Art and Theory Publishing, 2017), 136–147.
- 151 On the notion of Eastern European lagging behind and the Orientalization of Eastern Europe in Western discourses, see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 152 Marler wrote a number of biographical essays about Gimbutas, see Joan Marler, "The Life and Work of Marija Gimbutas," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*

- 12, no. 2 (1996): 37–52; Joan Marler, “The Circle Is Unbroken: A Brief Biography,” in *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas* (Manchester: Knowledge, Ideas and Trends, 1997), 7–25; Joan Marler, “Marija Gimbutas: Tribute to a Lithuanian Legend,” in *Women in Transition: Voices from Lithuania*, ed. Suzanne LaFont (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), 113–132; Joan Marler, “Gimbutas, Marija Birutė Alseikaitė,” in *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary Completing the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Ware (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 234–236. She also initiated the publication of one of the biggest books of tributes to Gimbutas, collecting articles from various disciplines as well as different countries, see Marler, *From the Realm of the Ancestors*. Marler also advised the makers of the documentary *Signs Out of Time*.
- 153 Joan Marler, “Introduction,” in *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas* (Manchester: Knowledge, Ideas and Trends, 1997), 1–6.
- 154 The schema of the mythic narrative was summarized by Campbell in the following way: “a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.” In Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), 23.
- 155 Gimbutas and Campbell held correspondence and admired each other’s work. Currently Marija Gimbutas’ Collection (meaning her personal library, or a part of it) at the OPUS Archives is held together with the private library of Campbell. The busts of Gimbutas and Campbell decorate the entrance to the archive, representing, in the words of the librarian, the feminine and masculine elements. Joseph Campbell and Marija Gimbutas Libraries, OPUS Archives and Research Center, Pacifica Graduate Institute, Santa Barbara.
- 156 Marler, “The Circle Is Unbroken: A Brief Biography,” 9.
- 157 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 55–56.
- 158 See Tomas Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania* (London: Routledge, 2009). I also elaborate on it in Chapter 2.
- 159 Eller, *Living in the Lap of the Goddess*, 151.

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