conclusions, she has caused a paradigm shift in the way archaeologists view their own discipline. I feel that Juliette Wood has not addressed such issues, nor has she taken into account the highly regarded work of biblical archaeological scholars (Ruth Hestrin, Judith Hadley, John Day, for example) which while researching goddesses of the period brings to the fore the possibility that anti-goddess polemic is the basis of much Western religious tradition. The fall-out from this kind of scholarship cannot be swept away from gender politics.

Some women grasp and convert goddess material into a religion of their own, others attempt a popular synthesis, and much of this must bear criticisms such as those by Juliette Wood. Until recently goddess research has not been an academic subject that found its way to the public. It is books like *The Concept of the Goddess* with its brilliant material that will help remedy this situation.

Asphodel

Asphodel (Pauline) Long received a degree in Theology at London University in 1983 at the age of 62. In 1996 she was the first Sophia Fellow at the University College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth. She is a founder member of the European Society of Women in Theological Research. She is the author of In a A Chariot Drawn by Lions: The Search for the Female in Deity *(The Women's Press, London. 1992). Asphodel has been called a grandmother of the Goddess Movement in Great Britain.*

Ancient Goddesses: The Myth and the Evidence. Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris (eds.). British Museum Press 1998.

"The idea of an original Mother Goddess in prehistory is surrounded by an intense controversy, but one in which neither side speaks to the other. In entering the debate on the nature of female divinity in ancient European and Mediterranean societies, this book is intended to bridge the gap between the two camps, shedding light on areas of prejudice and showing that in this fascinating area of study we still have more questions than answers." (p. 6)

This opening paragraph of the introduction sets the scene for ten archaeologists and historians to provide specialist material and insights into their areas of Goddess study, which gives us a most valuable and interesting book. But its own premise of a Goddess Movement that sees the "nature of female divinity" as a single "original Mother Goddess" which the scholars can and largely do disprove is irritating and detracts from our enjoyment. We propose that for Goddess people generally the term 'the Goddess' describes all aspects of female divinity, Goddesses singular and plural: academic determination to impose a monotheism on us is misplaced and counterproductive.

Joan Goodnick Westenholtz, in an illuminating and fascinating account of goddesses of the ancient near east prefaces her discussion with the assumption that modern writers "bent on 'recovering' a postulated Goddess-centred religion have assumed there is just one archetypal Goddess ..." (p. 63); she suggests that such writers have

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tried to force all ancient goddesses into this preconceived mould. Her excellent account is set in this context, which appears to me unfortunate.

Elizabeth Shee Twohig provides a splendid survey of megalithic tombs in North-west Europe but contextualises it into disproving a "Mother Goddess" element. She admits that there are evidences of representation of females in, for example, Northern France in the later neolithic period (p. 168). But it does not appear necessary for her to re-iterate so forcefully that, whether or not these figures were worshipped as goddesses, they do not represent a single Mother Goddess.

On the other hand some writers go straight into their discussions without bias, notably Mary E. Vouyatzis, whose "From Athena to Zeus" provides "an A-Z guide to the origins of Greek goddesses", and Miranda J. Green whose paper on "Some Gallo-British Goddesses" maintains this author's usual highly lucid and accessible scholarship. Miranda Green makes the point that, since there is lively archaeological debate about the validity of using the word 'Celtic' to describe the culture of the European Iron Age (p. 180) she has decided to stay with purely geographical nomenclature. Her arguments, descriptions, and illustrations are all satisfying and stimulating and provide us with a wealth of information.

A survey by Karel van der Toorn of female divinities in early Israelite religion brings forward the goddesses Anat and Asherah, either or both seen as the consort of Jahweh in the period referred to. That the early Hebrew religion was not monotheistic but worshipped a divine couple, male and female, has now gained pretty standard acceptance among scholars, although with reluctance from those with a religious background. The author discusses the mystery of the many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of female figurines found on territory that comprised the land of Israel, and while not opting for them all to be goddesses he proposes that they may be "cult images used for devotional or prophylactic purposes" (p. 94).

Crete, Egypt, and Malta are discussed in some depth by the editors, by Fekri A. Hassan, and by Caroline Malone respectively. Once again, much interesting information and excellent illustrations are provided.

It is impossible here to give sufficient time and attention to the first two papers of this book, which discuss the matter of goddesses

from a political perspective. Ruth Tringham and Margaret Conkey focus their attention on the work of Marija Gimbutas, while Lynn Meskell discusses the implications of the discoveries—both in the sixties and currently—at Catal Huyuk. Both discussions assert that the work of Gimbutas and of Mellaart (at Catal Huyuk) have been pivotal to the Goddess Movement, creating a set of assumptions as its framework. Over-simplification and essentialisation of this structure form the basis of the critique by Tringham and Conkey: they argue that Gimbutas tends to treat the whole of European prehistory as a homogeneous unit from the point of view of religious and social organisation (p. 23), whereas in fact new studies in archaeology based in a gendered framework show wide variations of "roles, relations, ideologies and identities" (p. 22). These must be set against Gimbutas's view of the society of Old Europe where "the roles and symbolic place of men and women are set and fixed" (ibid). They call for openness to accept that, valuable as has been the work of Gimbutas, it is time to incorporate it and to move on: feminist archaeology is changing the old 'certainties' and Gimbutas has played her part in breaking them down. Today's researchers proceed with less certainty than Gimbutas herself: everything is ambiguous and must be tested: there are no "proven facts".

Lynn Meskell takes a similar view, providing, on the way, a thoroughly informed and sympathetic account of goddess ideas associated with the site of Catal Huyuk, and giving some account of alternative explanations. She is concerned to discount emphasis on a "Mother Goddess" and believes that "invoking the 'Goddess' as an empowering modern construction is positive for many people whereas claiming archaeological validity for ancient gynocracy, social utopia and a single 'Mother Goddess' at Catal Huyuk may be seen as problematic and dangerous" (p. 55). We should not rest our desires for the future on an imagined golden age of the past, but rather our aims for social change should be based on "fundamental humanity by which we have learned the lessons of our own recent history and reached realisations about our future" (ibid).

As a 'Goddess person' over a period now touching three decades, I welcome this new feminist archaeology. Gimbutas and Mellaart were of their time; they broke down enormous barriers, and they helped put the idea of female divinities on the map of today's consciousness. We are enormously grateful to them as we struggle on. Many of us—perhaps the majority—never felt that the story had to be of the single mother-goddess. Rather there was, and still is, work to do to show that the idea of divinity has not always been totally male, and that females have been and are divine too. This book provides us with marvellous accounts of such divinities and a treasury of illustrations. Thought-provoking and controversial in its analyses, its actual material is outstanding. I just do hope that sooner or later the scholars will stop transposing onto us their own (mistaken) views as to what Goddess people actually believe, and start asking us instead.

Asphodel

Daniel Cohen comments:

I would like to add to Asphodel's review by conjecturing why the archaeologists misinterpret the Goddess movement.

In the first place it seems that they perceive 'the goddess' and 'goddesses' as being opposing notions. They do not see the dance that

occurs, with the same person referring to 'the goddess' in one sentence and 'goddesses' in the next. Textual scholars are more flexible in this. For instance, Hilda Ellis Davidson, in *Roles of the Northern Goddess,* has no problem using both phrases in adjacent paragraphs, and neither does David Kinsley in his book *Hindu Goddesses.* And (even if the titles were chosen by publishers, the authors accepted this) *The Book of the Goddess* (edited by Olson), *The Concept of the Goddess* (edited by Billington and Green) and *The Faces of the Goddess* by Motz all have titles mentioning 'the Goddess' with text devoted to many goddesses.

It is always useful to have material centred on the particularity of individual goddesses, and in many cases it may well be that the deities of an ancient pantheon were only considered separately, not as a unity. But that need not prevent us from also seeing them as facets of one (though we are not required to). Long before the current Goddess movement, Dion Fortune, a follower of the Western Mystery Tradition, said "All the gods are one God, and all the goddesses one Goddess." Indeed, much the same idea occurs in the great speech of Isis in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* nearly two thousand years earlier.

I also find the archaeologists frequently referring to 'the Great Mother' or 'the Mother Goddess', much more often than people in the Goddess movement. So where do these ideas of one universal goddess who is the Great Mother come from?

I suggest that these notions are most often found in the writings of archaeologists of an earlier generation, from (approximately) the 1930s to the 1960s. Modern archaeologists are entitled to object if people follow these earlier views without taking into account current views. But it seems to me that, to a large extent, they are projecting their disagreements with their earlier colleagues onto a movement whose understanding of goddesses is much subtler and less rigid than they make it out to be.

Daniel Cohen

Daniel Cohen recently took early retirement from his post as a professor of Pure Mathematics at London University. He has been a pagan for over twenty years, and has been co-editor of Wood and Water *for over fifteen years. He is particularly interested in developing positive responses by men to feminism. His published work includes a series of stories based on classical (and other) myths, rewritten to show male heros acting in the service of the Goddess.*