

FEMINISMS IN A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE 2009

**Spirituality, Religiosity and Secular Lives:
Feminist Challenges for Theory and Practice**

Post-graduate course, IUC Dubrovnik, May 25-29, 2009

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

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EDITORS: Rada Borić, Renata Jambrešić Kirin & Ulla M. Vuorela

EDITOR ASSISTANTS: Ivana Ćuk & Heini Nyman

LAYOUT: Susan Jakopec

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Course directors:

Rada Borić, Centre for Women's Studies, Zagreb, Croatia
(zenstud@zamir.net)

Renata Jambrešić Kirin, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb,
Croatia (renata@ief.hr)

Ulla M. Vuorela, University of Helsinki & University of Tampere, Finland
(Ulla.M.Vuorela@uta.fi)

Course assistant & contact person:

Ivana Ćuk, Centre for Women's Studies, Zagreb, Croatia
(zenstud@zamir.net)

Course description:

What appears as “pure” secularity may in fact carry traces of religious heritage or manifest a spiritual dimension that does not meet the eye immediately. How do our strivings for empowerment converse with our transcendental aspirations? Are there spiritual dimensions to our pursuit of knowledge? How do we draw the line between knowledge and faith? Do we see spirituality and religious experiences as incompatible with feminist politics?

What about knowing the Other across religious and ideological difference? Are religious boundaries insurmountable in our meeting with the Other? How do we relate to the Other across religious and spiritual boundaries? What is the meaning of silence or of speaking out in our secular encounters? Has modernity become a straightjacket for excluding spiritual and religious dimensions of understanding? How do we address the multiplicity of New-Age spiritual and bodily quest for vital connections to force/power/energy?

How do we know the “Other” when s/he belongs to a different denomination, faith, or subscribes to a different ontology? What about categorical exclusions, for instance when dealing with theoretical frameworks that are not immediately our own? Can we talk of “categorical Occidentalism/orientalisms” in our relationship to competing theories? Do we have inspiring experiences from crossing categorical/spiritual/religious boundaries?

Our questions are particularly inspired by Durre Ahmed, one of our guest speakers, who challenges our “received wisdoms” about modernity, fundamentalism and Islam. Ahmed brings in the importance of Jungian readings of myth that provide us with multilayered sense of self and argues against the literal in our interpretations of religion(s). Apart from the literalities of our religions we call upon critical thinking in science and modernity as faith or as dogma, our adherence to “facts”.

PROGRAMME

Monday, May 25

- 16:00–17:00 RADA BORIĆ, ULLA VUORELA & RENATA J. KIRIN: welcome address; self-presentation by all participants
- 17:00–17:45 ULLA VUORELA, University of Tampere, Finland: Introduction to the course
- 17:45–18:45 IRENA ATELJEVIĆ, Wageningen University, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Transmodernity: In the Search for Universal Spirituality
- 19:00– Welcome party

Tuesday, May 26

- 09:15–10:00 DURRE S. AHMED, Center for the Study of Gender and Culture, Lahore, Pakistan
Penetrations: Modernity, Fundamentalisms and Islam (pt. I)
- 10:00–10:15 ---- COFFEE BREAK ----
- 10:15–11:00 DURRE S. AHMED
Penetrations: Modernity, Fundamentalisms and Islam (pt. II)
- 11:00–11:45 Discussion, chair: Ulla Vuorela
- 11:45–16:00 ---- LUNCH BREAK ----
- 16:00–16:40 JALEH TAHERI, University of Lund, Sweden
The Implications of Zero-Sum Gender Definitions in Contemporary Iran: An Investigation of the Crisis in Masculinity

- 16:40–17:20 JANA KRISTOFORYOVA, Masaryk University, Czech Republic
Islamic feminism and women's movement in Euro-American context
- 17:20–18:00 JUDITH SAMSON, University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands
"Marian Feminism" in the movement for a new Marian dogma: Mary Co-redemptrix
- 18:00–18:40 MARTINA BITUNJAC, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany
Iranian Women between Revolt and Religion

Wednesday, May 27

- 09:15–10:15 IVA GRGIĆ, University of Zadar, Croatia
The long lost love of St. Augustine
- 10:15–11:15 SIMONA DELIĆ, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, Croatia
Casuistic European Traditional Ballads about St Catherine of Alexandria: the comparative approach
- 11:15–11:30 ---- COFFEE BREAK ----
- 11:30–12:10 OLGA ZAYTSEVA, University of New Mexico, USA
Transcendent love, morality and sacrifice: How discourses of spirituality shape gender roles in Russia
- 12:10–12:50 TATIANA TIAYNEN, University of Tampere, Finland
Empowerment Through Magic? In the Margins of the Soviet Dominant Discourse
- 12:50–16:20 ---- LUNCH BREAK ----

- 16:20–16:50 SUVI TUOMINEN, University of Tampere, Finland
Life in Lintula Greek Orthodox convent – ethnography of everyday life
- 16:50–17:30 ILONA RAUNOLA, University of Joensuu, Finland
Spirituality, religiosity and secular lives: three studies, several cases
- 17:30–19:00 ---- BREAK ----
- 19:00– Evening of Talents

Thursday, May 28

- 09:15–10:15 MARINA MILADINOV, Theological Faculty “Matthias Flacius Illyricus”, Zagreb, Croatia
Bodily Fluids in the Construction of Late Medieval Gender
- 10:15–10:55 IVANA PRAŽIĆ, University of Belgrade & Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), Yogyakarta, Indonesia
In search for “the Tionghoa body” in post-New Order Indonesia: Some challenges to transnational feminist practices from within postcolonial perspectives
- 10:55–11:10 ---- COFFEE BREAK ----
- 11:10–12:10 STINE SIMONSEN PURI, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
Dance as a spiritual embodied practice. Exploring the relevance of religion and sensuality through dance – a methodological journey
- 12:10–12:50 LORA TOMAS, University of Zagreb, Croatia
Therigatha or the conception of women’s nirvana
- 12:50–17:00 ---- LUNCH BREAK ----

- 17:00–17:40 MÄRTA SALOKOSKI, Helsinki University Institute of Development Studies, Finland
Spiritual dimensions of breastfeeding. A discussion based on Finnish immigrant mothers' experiences
- 17:40–18:20 ZINKA MUJKIĆ, Theological faculty “Mathias Flacius Illyricus”, Zagreb, Croatia
Tertullian and women
- 18:20–19:00 LAMIJA KOSOVIC, University of Sarajevo, BiH
Framing spiritualization through purple lenses of posthuman woman

Friday, May 29

- 9:15–10:15 MELITA RICHTER, University of Trieste, Italy
Between Religion and Stigma: Jewishness in Eva Grlić's Life
- 10:15–11:15 BELMA BEĆIRBAŠIĆ, Weekly news magazine DANI, Sarajevo, BiH
Gender and nationalism: Biopolitical dimension of the traumatic body
- 11:15–12:00 Feedback / evaluations

ABSTRACTS

DR DURRE S. AHMED

Chairperson and Senior Research Fellow, Center for the Study of Gender and Culture, Lahore, Pakistan

E-mail: duresahmed@yahoo.com

Penetrations: Modernity, Fundamentalisms and Islam

The talk is a feminist perspective of the psychology of Islamist masculinity and its expression(s) in the contemporary global/ political context. It builds on the premise that the roots of psychological extremism are inherent to western modernity's philosophical discourse, and the distorted internalisation of modernity into 'high' and 'low' Islamism. Both 'high' and 'low' Islamists exhibit distinctly modern features similar to what feminists call a hegemonic masculinity: a hypermasculinism, intense misogyny and psychopathological attitudes to gender. Located within the post-psychoanalytic critique of modernity, the talk will also explore aspects of the symmetrical psychodynamics underlying contemporary global paranoia which can be summed up by the idea 'you are with us or against us'.

Thus, the talk will develop the notion of 'fundamentalism' as a phenomenon intimately linked to the experience of Western European modernity, which itself is expressed through a 'mind-set' that (post)Jungians call 'Cartesian-Christianism'. This, in turn, is deeply linked to patriarchal, heroic-masculinism, and permeates the global resurgence of religious fanaticism through the prisms of colonialism and now globalisation. Through this distortion, Islamist resurgence can be seen as an unconscious Cartesian-Christianist-Islamism. The fact of global 'terrorism' (political Islam, suicide bombings) is thus a consequence of penetrations: psychologically, the penetration of Western European (Cartesian-Christian) modernity, literally the penetration of homophobic/ homoerotic dialogue/ battle/ violence into a language of war.

From a feminist critical perspective, then, Islamic (and other) fundamentalisms represents hyper-masculine expressions which artificially negate spiritual tendencies in favour of logo-centric supremacist thought. Consequently, the talk will point to feminist and cultural spaces to counter hyper-masculine, misogynist tendencies and clear a ground that is conducive to a more balanced 'feminine imaginary'.

DR IRENA ATELJEVIC

Wageningen University, Landscape Centre, Socio-Spatial Analysis,
The Netherlands

Email: irena.ateljevic@wur.nl

Transmodernity: In the search for universal spirituality

The current financial and economic cataclysm exposes other crises that hang over the heads of everyone: the climate, energy, and food crises and more. All of them go back to the crisis in the dominant paradigm. The situation of general chaos raises metaphysical questions about the meaning of the human being within the group of beings in evolution. At the moment the “everything goes” of the postmodernists is silenced. Whether they like it or not, there are things that have to have value, there is meaning that must be preserved, otherwise we drown in the coarsest cynicism, an expression of deep disdain for life (Boff, 2009).

It is in this context that transmodern way of thinking is emerging, as our hope for a desperately needed and newly reconstructed vision, after the endless postmodern (albeit necessary) deconstructions of modernity in which intellectuals engaged for the last few decades. transmodernity is described as the *planetary* vision in which humans are beginning to realize that we are all (including plants and animals) connected into one system, which makes us all interdependent, vulnerable and responsible for the Earth as an indivisible living community (Ghisi, 2001; 2008). In that sense this paradigm is actively tolerant and genuinely democratic by definition, as the awareness of mutual interdependency grows and the hierarchies between different cultures dismantle. It is also essentially postpatriarchal in a sense that women’s visions and intuitions are to be recognized as indispensable in order to invent together innovative urgent solutions. This is radically different from the (preceding and necessary) (post)modern feminist movements that fight for women’s rights only. Rather it is about a joint effort of men and women to fight for the better world of tomorrow by rejecting values of control and domination. It is also essentially postsecular in a sense that redefines a new relation between religions and politics in a way that re-enchants the world towards a new openness to spiritual guidance as a basis for “private” behavior and “public” policy, whilst rejecting religious divisions and dogmas. It is open to the transcendental, while resisting any authoritarian imposition of religious certainty. In doing so it tries to rediscover the sacred as a dimension of life and of our societies.

BELMA BEĆIRBAŠIĆ, M.A.

Weekly news magazine DANI, Sarajevo, BiH

E-mail: belma@bhdani.com

Gender and nationalism: Biopolitical dimension of the traumatic body
(abstract missing)

MARTINA BITUNJAC, M.A.

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany & La Sapienza, Rome, Italy

E-mail: martina.bitunjac@gmx.de

Iranian Women between Revolt and Religion

Iranian women played as organizers and participators of massive demonstrations and protests a significant role in the 1979 Islamic Revolution, that toppled the Shah's Mohammad Reza Pahlavi monarchal regime. Anyway, the exceptional circumstance of a Revolution did not change the unjust social and political life of women.

In contrast: Ayatollah Khomeini, the initiator of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, imposed the women's dress-code and ordered women to wear the veil (hijab) in all places, he eliminated women from the judiciary, forbade women to participate at sporting events, he legalized polygamy, privileged men in the Family Law and pushed women forceful back to the domestic sphere. Violence against women was legitimated by the Islamic Law respectively the Sharia: women were tortured in prison, because they showed 'too much' hair in the public, virgin girls and women were raped from policeman, to exclude them- as they thought- from heaven, as a punishment for 'adultery' women were stoned to death and so forth. The limit of women's rights and the systemically discrimination of women became a state affair, legalized by the religion respectively the Islamic Laws.

Nevertheless women, thirty years after the Iranian Revolution, still desire to resolve the 'women question' (mas'ale-ye zan) and to break their subordinate position in the centuries-old conservative-Islamic patriarchy. The feminization is especially present in art, cinema and literature. But also in the political sphere women attract attention, like for example the Iranian presidential candidate Azam Teleghani, the Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi and many other women, who fight for human rights in Iran (Mehrangiz Kar).

DR SIMONA DELIĆ

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb, Croatia

E-mail: simona@ief.hr

Casuistic European Traditional Ballads about St Catherine of Alexandria: the comparative approach

An attempt is made in the paper to interpret the casuistic nature of traditional European ballads about St Catherine of Alexandria - a saint-intellectual - whose life and *passio* are located by the legend in the IV century. This is a poetic genre with the characteristic transgressive nature that belongs to the so-called canonical favoured tradition and was part of the infamous European globalised past (passed on, for example, during the Crusades), but which resists unambiguous interpretations. The ballads about St Catherine place very contradictory demands of identification with the personage before the reader and/or listener, with diverse outcomes in individual branches of European ballad tradition. Nevertheless, it is impossible to generalise some universal topos of St Catherine's representation, not even in any of the separate branches of the tradition; instead, shaping of that personage depends on the individual concepts of the individual narrators and/or on varying sub-types of the traditional plot that have been diffused by these European traditions throughout the many centuries of the life of these ballads. The ballads and romances that have been most successful poetically are those that have accepted the call for spiritualisation of the main character. However, in certain of their performances and sub-types in the Croatian and in the Spanish tradition, these poems are shaped as anti-intellectualistic and anti-elitist, and even as racist cases that duplicated ideological conflicts that they were called upon to annul, revealing the 'scandal of the exempla' (Gelley), all the ambivalence and fissures of the 'unruly exempla', and their openness to ideological manipulations.

LAMIJA KOSOVIC, M.A.

Center for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies, University of Sarajevo,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

E-mail: lami.kosovic@gmail.com

Framing spiritualization through purple lenses of posthuman woman

is an exploratory paper, one that is inclined to transgress the rigid boundaries of Enlightenment and structural frameworks of language in order to embrace new and affirmative currents in the production of subjectivity; the currents that consist of Deleuzian processual dynamics of human and non-human bodies in “coagulation” or assemblage with each other. In this respect, the paper takes as its subject the framing of the spirituality through color and movement of Bilal’s posthuman woman character in *Immortel* film. This is done in order to explore Bilal’s artistic production of sensations, affects, intensities, which in itself contributes to the production of posthuman consciousness and spirituality beyond the burden of the past.

JANA KRISTOFORYOVA, M.A.

Masaryk University, Faculty of Social Studies, Brno, Czech Republic

E-mail: kristofo@fss.muni.cz

Islamic feminism and women’s movement in Euro-American context

Islamic feminism would seem a contradiction in terms to many Westerners. Status of women in Islam is generally presented as subordinate, dependent, not equal, second-rate etc. This presentation concentrates on women’s movement in the context of Islam. In this chapter I would like to summarize the most important principles and their implications for women’s status in Islam. I will bring together perspectives of three Muslim feminist authors – Wadud (2006), Mernissi (1992) and Barazangi (2004). These authors are trying to reformulate the view on the Muslim woman in accordance with principles of gender equality, gender democracy and human rights in general.

Paper presented here is the part of dissertation project called Islamic feminism as social movement. The topic is explored from qualitative perspective that concentrates on everyday life of the actors and put the stress on the meaning making process. Methodology of the research is influenced by Grounded theory approach defined by Strauss and Corbin (1999). Method

of content analysis of the three books and one article followed by open coding of the notes from the data has been chosen for analysis of Islamic feminist literature.

My hypothesis is based on the assumption that feminism of secular western societies and its counterpart from Muslim societies have the same foundation in human rights and equality of sexes. Feminism of Muslim authors aims at patriarchal structure of the society, its rules, norms and symbolic domination of masculinity. So does western feminism. Let me present the most important arguments and interpretations of Islamic feminist authors.

Structure:

1. the main arguments of Islamic feminist authors (Mernissi, Wadud, Barazangi, Muller), common perspectives and basic arguments, example of hijab
2. methodology of the research (research questions, epistemological questions about researching other religion, research techniques, data)
3. case studies (women's movement examples)

DR MARINA MILADINOV

Theological Faculty "Matthias Flacius Illyricus", Zagreb, Croatia
E-mail: marina.miladinov@yahoo.com

Bodily Fluids in the Construction of Late Medieval Gender

Despite its outspoken otherworldliness and piousness, late medieval society was exceedingly keen on presenting graphic details related to the body, as well as curious about its functioning, particularly in regard to its sexual functions. It was due to the fact that it was dominated by deep belief that all disturbances in health were related to sinfulness and that, in general, human body reflected its owner's chances of salvation. As a material sign of that, bodily fluids were seen as particularly revealing and were therefore often used in various circumstances to diagnose the sanctity or the sinfulness of the person emitting them. Moreover, they were related to the theory of bodily humours, which was likewise used to form moral judgments, often gender-related. The fluid that was charged with greatest symbolic significance was blood, especially menstrual one, which served a variety of purposes in polemic writings, thus revealing the extent of power that was attributed to it. However, some of the equally interesting, yet less prominent bodily fluids

were breast milk, tears, pus, and semen. This paper uses a number of written sources – medical treatises, polemics, hagiography, and accounts pertaining to the witch craze and anti-Semitic violence – in order to enable conclusions about the way in which bodily fluids served to construct gender in late medieval society.

ZINKA MUJKIĆ

Theological Faculty “Matthias Flacius Illyricus”, Zagreb, Croatia

E-mail: zinkam0@gmail.com

Tertullian and women

The trend among today’s scholars of christianity is to emphasize the positive attitudes of church writers toward women. Here, Tertullian is an exemplary taken among many other church fathers and authors who wrote about women and who influenced christian thought throughout centuries. He is one of those church writers who laid a groundwork for orthodox christian belief, and for Western culture in more general sense. He was often accused for misogyny. The goal of my paper is to present his thought refering to his original works: *De Cultu Feminarum* and *De Virginibus Velandis*. These works address women’s outward appearance in relation to their spirituality and their position in society.

IVANA PRAŽIĆ, M.A.

University of Belgrade, Serbia & Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), Yogyakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: iprazic@gmail.com

In search for “the Tionghoa body” in post-New Order Indonesia: Some challenges to transnational feminist practices from within postcolonial perspectives

I find that all the (groups of) issues broadly framed within the topic of *Spirituality religiosity, and secular lives: feminist challenges for theory and practice* envisaged to be discussed in this year’s Summer School at the IUC well address theoretical and methodological limitations, conceptual and ideological uncertainties, as well as persistent, though in no way coherent, ontological restructuring(s) that I see at work in my personal/academic journey in Indonesia.

Therefore, I would like to present my thus far undertaken quest for the topic of my prospective dissertation in order to illustrate what kind of methodological/disciplinary, theoretical, ideological, and otherwise political impediments my subjectivity keeps imposing on my “presence” in Indonesia, as well as to reflect upon the genealogies that I see at work in structuring those impediments. Although these impediments and limitations emerge from and in my racialized and otherwise gendered/politicized body that I “bring into the field,” so to speak, I have also discovered that ideological agenda of engaged activist writing aimed at “political empowerment” might prove to be problematic in my (academic) quest. Indeed, I intend to discuss what I perceive as dangers inherent in uncritical adherence to both concept and practice of “empowerment,” as well as its potentially hegemonizing effect within the postcolonial social and religious context. I would also propose theoretical and practical challenging of the mentioned concept/practice from within postcolonial theoretical perspectives and writing/cognitive practices that I have thus far encountered in certain transnational feminist texts.

I would foremost wish to present how I perceive that theoretical, methodological, conceptual *and* ontological uncertainties contextualizing my subjectivity at (academic) work here could be creatively deployed by expanding on Saba Mahmood’s theoretical/ideological framework developed in her *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2005), to which I intend to pay special attention in my presentation.

Finally, I deem it important to present my current social surrounding – post-New Order Indonesian (Javanese) society – through giving a brief overview of changing practices, policies, as well as politics of to the Indonesian citizenship central ideology of *Pancasila*, with a special reference to those changing policies aimed at regulating the Tionghoa (i.e. “ethnic Chinese”) citizen(ship)s in present-day Indonesia.

My presentation will include slides from the topographic focus of my ongoing research – *Kelenteng Sam Poo Kong* in Semarang (Central Java), as well as screening of a short documentary related to inter-faith marriages in present-day Java produced by the Center for Religious and Cultural Studies in Yogyakarta (www.crcs.ugm.ac.id).

ILONA RAUNOLA, PH.D. CANDIDATE

University of Joensuu, Faculty of Humanities, Finland

Finnish Language and Cultural Research

E-mail: ilona.raunola@joensuu.fi

Spirituality, religiosity and secular lives: three studies, several cases

Women are pioneers in the field of new-religiousness. The process of turning towards spirituality can be first seen especially among women, in both religious and spiritual behaviour and thinking. The turn can be also seen as part of women's liberation from often patriarchal hierarchies and limits in religions. Women take the power to themselves to think and act creatively inside more unlimited religions and spiritualities. I have studied women's religiosity and spirituality with respect to age and status in three different contexts: an *individual worldview study*, with *Ilomantsi-project* and *Lightprayer activity (Valorukous-toiminta)*.

In my presentation I will introduce my findings so far and concentrate the latest study within Lightprayer. My viewpoint is inspired by women studies. I am interested to examine gender issues in different levels and feminisms: among teachers of each religion-tradition, among participants and the transsendential aim. In addition the fourth level might be researcher her/himself: the position of constructing information, also my implicit and explicit motives.

DR MELITA RICHTER

University of Trieste, Italy

Between Religion and Stigma: Jewishness in Eva Grlić's Life

The Jewishness in writing of Eva Grlić is not a predominant determinant, although majority of significant developments in her life result from the fact that Eva was a Jew, whose both parents were Jewish.

She was born in a suburb of Budapest in 1929 by Katalin Klingerberg, daughter of a wealthy family of Jakab Klingerberg and young Ješua Oskar Izrael, born in Novi Pazar of Sandžak, who had come to Budapest from Sarajevo.

In her early childhood Eva experienced the harmonious co-existence of plural identities in her own family that united the heritage of Hungarian

Ashkenazi and Bosnian Sephardis. She learnt about flexibility and easiness of moving among different cultural patterns, among different languages and cities, she adopted when very young the sense of the word „mixed“, and the mental map of urban life.

Despite this multicultural heritage, Eva will experience soon the difference of religious belonging (marginal feeling for her) and the stigma, which signed profoundly her existence and that of her family.

Like with majority of women authors, Eva's narrative is closely connected with the question of identity. She does not understand it or live it as a fixed, given category. Her view of identity is close to that of Hannah Arendt who starts from the standpoint that just by living and acting we learn *who is who*, just on the basis of written traces of a life story. Eva's identity is unquestionably linked to the group she belongs to by birth and it finds its verbal expression in the narrative of her own life story.

Eva Grlic writes to save a time of the struggle for bare sustenance from oblivion and to save victims of Holocaust from oblivion. But also in order to save her own life from the shadow of History.

MÄRTA SALOKOSKI, PH.D. CANDIDATE

Helsinki University Institute of Development Studies, Finland

E-mail: marta.salokoski@helsinki.fi

Spiritual dimensions of breastfeeding. A discussion based on Finnish immigrant mothers' experiences.

Apart from the obvious connection between the religious and breastfeeding in Mary the mother of Jesus, pictured as breastfeeding her child in Catholic iconography, breastfeeding in today's world is rarely connected with spirituality. In the European past it was, however, very much an activity regulated by religious authority, and, in a sense, as long as other ways of feeding than with breast milk were highly risky, a certain awe and a notion of sanctity has been connected with the lactating mother with child. Modernity has changed all that; bottle fed infants survive in favourable conditions, mother's milk has become an option from having been a condition of survival. Promotion of breastfeeding still goes on and strives at diminishing the cultural, social and institutional obstacles to breastfeeding that still abound in

modern society. This activity and the discussions about breastfeeding centre on the contemporary mother giving birth in the culture she was born in. A substantial group of mothers is forgotten –those with a refugee or emigrational background, performing their mothering task after painful departure from where they have their roots and after a usually difficult settlement in a completely new culture. There, new norms and expectations are to be coped with in mothering. The cultural currency a mother carries with her either not at all valid, or is that only in a closed circle of family and compatriots from the country or region of origin.

The paper discusses this cultural currency and its relation to religious ideologies and practices in the country of origin of immigrant mothers. It presents some preliminary findings of a study on breastfeeding among three immigrant groups; Somalis, Russians and Vietnamese in which I analyse the encounter between the ‘other’ mother with Finnish culture and the Finnish health system, focussing on how the encounter influences ideas and practises of breastfeeding. I focus on one aspect of this study; how breastfeeding links up with the religious world view current in the immigrant mother’s background. I present religious practices for promoting and regulating breastfeeding in the Somali and Vietnamese mothers’ background. I claim that for understanding the cultural linkages of breastfeeding one needs to take into account the religious dimension, which usually is forgotten.

By recognising this dimension, greater cultural sensitivity would be possible in health official’s dealings with immigrant mothers. The paper addresses the lack of culturally sensitive analyses of the drop in breastfeeding in immigrant populations, hitherto mostly explained crudely as an aspect of “acculturation”. It seeks to identify factors generally not considered in the discussion of fluctuating breastfeeding trends, taking “the other” from the margins into the focus of attention.

At this point I am interested particularly in alternative cultural definitions of ‘good’ mother’s milk to the ‘western one’, in religious male involving rites for promotion of breastfeeding in Vietnam, and in Sufi practices for helping the milk flow in the Somali Muslim heritage.

JUDITH SAMSON, PH.D. CANDIDATE
University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands
E-mail: j.samson@maw.ru.nl

***“Marian Feminism” in the movement for a new Marian dogma:
Mary Co-redemptrix***

In the devotion to the *Lady of All Nations* in Amsterdam the claim for a new Marian dogma (a truth contained in divine revelation which is pronounced by the Pope) stands central. The proclamation of this new fifth dogma (the others being “Mother of God”, “Perpetual Virginity”, “Immaculate Conception” and “Assumption”) is aimed at empowering the Virgin Mary by officially according her the title of “Co-redemptrix” (co-sufferer). That means that human salvation would not have been possible without her who suffered along with Christ. The demand for this dogma was first pronounced in the 1950s and recently experienced a revival through the global movement “Vox Populi” which is lead by Prof. Mark Miravalle and collects signatures to send to the pope in favor of the dogma and through the devotion of the *Lady of All Nations* in Amsterdam.

Between 1945 and 1958 the Dutch Ida Peerdeman experienced visions of the Virgin Mary under the new title of the *Lady of All Nations*. The messages resemble those of Fatima and are mostly of apocalyptic nature focusing on political and moral decay. The only way a world catastrophe can be prevented is, according to the *Lady*, the proclamation of this dogma which would give Mary more power in her fight against Satan. Further, the new title (which is visualized by a revolutionary icon depicting Mary alone in front of the cross as a Christ-like figure) is meant to reconcile people of all different nationalities, ethnicities and even religions (that is why Mary assumed the new title instead to point out her all inclusivity). This interpretation is especially emphasized by the international missionary community *Family of Mary Co-redemptrix* (Pro deo et fratribus) which takes care of the Amsterdam chapel and since 1997 organizes (inter)national prayer days in different countries which draw thousands of people.

At the same time the messages of the *Lady of All Nations* and the discussion of the new dogma focus on the so-called dangers of secularism and one of its prominent phenomenons: feminism. By some Catholic groups feminism is seen as having a destructive effect on the identities of women, families and therefore society as a whole. To counter this allegedly negative effects

of secular and theological feminism, a new form of so called authentic feminism is developed with the help of the dogma of *Mary Co-redemptrix*. A parallel is drawn between the importance and strength of Mary and the dignity of women as (biological and spiritual) mothers which needs to be restored. At the same time this line of reasoning defends the dogma against arguments that it could be used by feminists to support the claim for female priests (which does not seem to happen at all in practice) or that it would establish Mary as a Goddess.

The question for me is: how can we bring the different forms of feminism (secular, “liberal” theological, “conservative” theological...) in dialogue with one another? How can we deal with these phenomena from a feminist anthropological position in a critical yet non-judgmental way?

STINE SIMONSEN PURI, M.A.

University of Copenhagen, Denmark

E-mail: stinep@hum.ku.dk

Dance as a spiritual embodied practice. Exploring the relevance of religion and sensuality through dance – a methodological journey

My interest in the above topic is closely related to my research on the Indian classical dance, Bharatanatyam. Bharatanatyam is a temple dance deriving from Southern India, which today mainly is practiced by women from the Indian middle class at dance institutions around urban India. The dance is a mix of abstract movements and devotional items, where the dancer both represents/embody and praise different Hindu gods and goddesses.

As I approached the dance from an anthropological perspective, I participated as an apprentice in dance classes as part of my participant observation. Initially the methodology was primarily thought of as a form of entrance to the field of dancers, whom I was to interview about the significance of the dance for them as women. However, learning the dance became crucial for understanding the spiritual lives of the dancers – as well as its implications for their secular lives. By incorporating the dance moves I as a researcher also incorporated an embodied knowledge of the object of devotion, namely the Hindu gods and goddesses, a knowledge which was first of all relational in the sense that the gods and goddesses only became alive in one’s personal relationship to them. A relationship characterized by love.

I came to the field assuming that the dance “modelled” the dancers into particular gender categories. Actually I came to realize that the dance gave the dancers an opportunity to explore both their femininity and masculinity as they embodied both female and male characters, both human and divine. The dancers clearly expressed a sense of empowerment through the dance, an empowerment which was conceptualized as a development of a spiritual practice, through which one can explore the divine within, which goes beyond gender categorizations.

I argue that spiritual practices differ from religion in the sense that they are personalized and embodied practices of perceiving the divine, rather than a system of religious thought and customs. It may even be argued that the study of spiritual practices potentially opens up to a more feminine conceptualization of divinity, when employing a methodology that brings in bodily practices as well as emotional experiences.

When this is said, spirituality in India is also a politicized concept, connected to secularism, which in India manifests as religious pluralism rather than religious neutrality. As the dance is conceptualized as a spiritual practice, Bharatanatyam creates a space in which the modern Indian woman can explore the relevance of religion to her own life as well as her own sensuality, in a non-controversial manner and setting.

JALEH A. TAHERI, PH.D. CANDIDATE

University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan & University of Lund, Sweden

E-mail: jaleh.taheri@gmail.com

The Implications of Zero-Sum Gender Definitions in Contemporary Iran: An Investigation of the Crisis in Masculinity

Embedded within the feminist and post-colonial debate are the problematic issues of gender polarities: male verses female, male over female, etc. With male identity consistently defined as the opposite or negation of the feminine, we see the growth of masculinized states and societies through the effects of colonialism and modernization projects. Due to the masculinization of the public sphere, feminist movements, both in the West and abroad, find their outlets of access and agency (to move out of the private sphere and into the public) defined in male terms. Hence, the implications of empowerment movements, in some fashion, equate to a feminine

invasion of the masculine. Such movements are seen (and are within the current definitions of gender) as delegitimizing and undermining the masculine identity and, consequently, larger structures of power based on the notion of being “male”. This paper will investigate the current situation in Iran as an example of this phenomenon through a brief definition of the complementarity and polarity of the definitions of gender roles from within Persian culture and Islam. The goal is to understand how the current “feminine” invasion of the public sphere over the past couple decades has resulted in the current “crisis of masculinity”. Therefore, this paper will illicit the problems of defining gender as a zero-sum game especially when it comes to women’s access to positions of power.

TATIANA TIAYNEN, PH.D. CANDIDATE

University of Tampere, Finland

E-mail address: tatiana.tiaynen@uta.fi

***Empowerment through Magic? In the Margins of the Soviet
Dominant Discourse***

This paper is empirically based on the life story and long-term communication with an elderly woman, Elizaveta, who has been all her life living in a Karelian village located on the Russian Karelian Finnish borderland. Although magic and religion were seen as “backwardness” within the Soviet hegemonic discourses, they still survived in the margins of it. Also because the Soviet policy longer prioritized the industrial development at the expense of agriculture, the urban population was subjected to a more strict ideological control than the rural one, allowing the survival of traditional magic. Elizaveta’s narratives provide a rich empirical material for an exploration of how the values of the Soviet modernity might have been combined with the traditional magic, and what an impact some peculiar transnational encounters (the Finnish occupation of Elizaveta’s village during the Continuation War (1941-1944) between the Soviet Union and Finland) might have had on the self, particularly from the religious perspective, “religion as practiced”; when Orthodox symbolism was combined with praying in the Finnish language, the way she was taught in a school organized by the Finnish authorities. Recently, Elizaveta has encountered the new religious practices, those of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the relatively modern religious movement, both her daughters (who reside in the urban area, in Petrozavodsk and St Petersburg) became involved soon after collapse of the

Soviet system. Elizaveta seems to consciously negotiate between “traditional” and “modern” magic and religion practices and perceptions, which are syncretically combined for explaining and acting within the social realities. They might be rather seen as the means of generating the spiritual dimension of Elizaveta’s life, which might be seen as a source of empowerment, but also vulnerability in varying contexts.

LORA TOMAS

University of Zagreb, Croatia
E-mail: saikamala@hotmail.com

Therigatha or the conception of women’s nirvana

Therigatha or the poems of the first buddhist nuns is the only religious text in the world written by women. It is therefore a subversive element in the histories of world religions, and sets up an alternative history of its own.

The forming of the first nuns’ order was then a controversial issue, since women were not regarded as free individuals but were in every respect dependant on men. It was not common for a woman to go on a spiritual quest so when a few of them decided to do so, Buddha agreed reluctantly (as historical sources say) and came up with 8 rules by which he made them subaltern to monks. These rules apply to all nuns in the world even today, though certain changes and improvements have been made. They disempower the nuns, and since they cannot achieve high rankings in the buddhist hierarchy as monks can, the nuns have no social influence and lose the financial support to the nunneries, which are subsequently rapidly disappearing.

In my paper I compare the Therigatha with the Theragatha or the poems of the monks, to look for differences in male and female perspectives on attaining Buddhahood – the nuns and monks talk about their backgrounds, family ties, their lives before ordination, relationships and friendships on the Way, what they think of Buddha, how they feel about their bodies, others’ bodies, the unenlightened world, their doubts and in the end, about the moment of Enlightenment.

The differences are very obvious when both texts are read simultaneously. For nuns the struggle only begins with enlightenment, because they have to survive in the forest alone, exposed to bandits, rapists, unfriendly monks

and despised by society. For monks, the struggle ends with enlightenment. They become fully recognized and revered. Nuns tend to internalize the notion that everything is temporal, monks tend to project it on women's bodies and the outer world. Nuns build relationships with other nuns. These friendships become very important to them. They are thankful for Buddha's teachings but don't find him relevant to their own paths. Monks, on the other hand, want to achieve enlightenment alone and praise even Buddha's physical beauty.

It is important to emphasize that, in the end, it should be irrelevant for the Path whether a person is of a male or female sex, and that the basic buddhist teachings include the premise that we should not identify with anything, let alone sex. Why a basic buddhist concept isn't included in the buddhist practice remains an open question.

SUVI TUOMINEN, PH.D. CANDIDATE

University of Tampere, Finland

E-mail: suvi.j.tuominen@uta.fi

Life in Lintula Greek Orthodox convent - ethnography of everyday life

(abstract missing)

OLGA ZAYTSEVA, M.A.

University of New Mexico, USA

E-mail: zaytseva@unm.edu

Transcendent love, morality, and sacrifice: How discourses of spirituality shape gender roles in Russia

This study uses phenomenological interviews of Russian women to explore the perceived nexus between “love,” discourses of spirituality and religiosity, and gender norms. The interviewees insisted that the differences between men and women go beyond the realm of physiology or social construction and include a vital spiritual component. Thus, the constructs of “femininity” and “masculinity” were considered not only central to the processes of individual subjectification and subjection, but also served as a segue into the transcendent. The participants valorized the distinctiveness of Russian Orthodoxy and the unique role of women in their religion. They deemed “spirituality” and “love” interconnected and, echoing Dostoevsky’s perspective, viewed “love” as a means of finding inner peace and understanding the universe.