1st GATHERING ECO-Mythology

ONLINE, APRIL 2023

A Meeting of Artists, Researchers, Activists and Authors

TALKS, EXPERIENCES, STORIES AND SHORT STORIES.

Thresholds and Pathways in the Strait of Gibraltar

Where Europe meets Africa, where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic, where the 'old world' once met the 'new world', we come to explore the connection between myth and earth energies.

The story of the Greek Heracles can be found in the ancient name for the Strait of Gibraltar: Fretum Herculeum. The myth still lives on today in the widely used symbolism of the pillars of Hercules which are the portals of the Strait, one being the Rock of Gibraltar and the other, Jebel Musa in Morocco. Jebel Musa, the mountain of Moses, is curiously named after the great biblical prophet who is said to have gone on a pilgrimage to look for the one who was more knowledgeable in God's ways than himself. It is there, we are told in sacred Sufi stories, where the mountain meets the sea at the confluence of two waters, that Moses found the one he was looking for; El Khadr, the Green man.

In this talk, Karmit will explore how the convergence of cultures across both sides of the Strait, over the thousands of years of human history, has created a 'braiding' of the stories that are attached to the various landmarks on both the European and African continent. She will share her research and experiences with these stories as invitations for land based creative practices to access local ecological systems. She will talk about the Oral Tradition as a socially engaged art-form that helps us perceive into relationships in natural systems through images and imagination. .

Karmit EvenZur

Karmit EvenZur is a social artist creating live, place based ritual events to ignite social imagination around kinship systems, memory and territory. With a background in European shamanism and earth energy systems of knowledge, she works primarily with stories and textiles, making objects that act

as mediators for body informed, place based creative practices. Karmit teaches storytelling at the School of Storytelling at Emerson College in the South East of England.

Some notes:

There is another example I'd like to share, that I didn't have time to talk about, and it is of the story of Heracles that connects with the local landscape of the Strait - It is the story of the wrestling match between Anteus the giant and Greek hero Heracles. We find this story both in Greek mythology as well as in Amazigh (Berber) legends, and it tells about the time Heracles went to gather the apples of the Hesperides as part of the 11th labor, and passed through the land where Anteus or Anti in his Amazigh name, was settled. Anteus, it is told, loved to wrestle those who passed through the land and always killed them. But Heracles held the knowledge of how to overcome Anteus - he knew that the key to the giant's power was his contact with his mother, Gaia, and that by lifting him off the ground he would be drained of that power. Thus Heracles managed to kill Anteus, and it is said that the giant was buried in the mound of the M'zora stone circle, in the North West of Morocco. This legend was told to the Roman general Quintus Sertorius who arrived in Tingis (Tangier, Morocco) in 81 BC. The locals showed him the huge mound and he had it dug up only to find, to his great amazement, an enormous skeleton.

We find this story at the meeting point of the Amazigh and the Hellenic cultures, originating back in the days of the Greek expansion into Western Africa in the 5th century BC. Some interpret it to represent the Hellenic colonisation of 'Lybia'/North Africa in Greek mythology. Heracles takes away the power of Anteus by separating him from the ground, knowing that his mother, Gaia, is the source of his potent life-force. We find at the base of every colonial endeavor, a process of intentionally separating people from the land, from their source of belonging and power. And so, at this time of that we find ourselves in, a time of a great need of decolonization on every level, I was led to do some work and find ways to retell this story, to retrace Heracles steps and allow 'Anteus to touch the ground again', and regain his power. I believe that this kind of metaphoric enactment, on a somatic level can rewire us on a personal as well as a collective level.

Links

- https://www.earth-speaks.net/
- https://www.instagram.com/earthspeaks/?hl=en
- https://www.instagram.com/karmit_evenzur/?hl=en
- Storytelling Beyond Words School of Storytelling Uk

References

 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eK2WLaSHo6We1dkYNfb5FL2v3UGKnlvrd3Z necSorbg/edit