

Adventures in Lifelong Learning

Tallent Hall, 900 Wood Road, Box 2000, Kenosha WI 53141-2000 Phone: 262-595-2793

Goddesses, Women, and Monsters In Greek Epic and Mythology

Thursday, May 30, 2019

Tallent Hall, Room 182 10 AM to 12 Noon

Greek epics usually feature notable men on whose deeds rest the fate of a nation: will Achilles relent in his wrath against Agamemnon? Will Odysseus overcome his pride in his own wit long enough to escape Poseidon’s rage? But when it comes to women, we tend to limit our thinking to cautionary tales like Arachne, who thought she was a better weaver than Athena, or the dichotomy between faithful Penelope keeping suitors at bay, and lusty Helen, whose beauty sparked the Trojan War.

And yet women in Greek epic and myth are doing so much more, although we rarely think of the full stories that inform their actions. Behind Penelope’s faithfulness is a clever woman well aware of the negative representations of women circling all around her, one who not only knows her husband’s tricky ways, but who facilitates his final trick in returning home. Helen famously calls herself a “slut” in most translations, but in the hands of a female translator, we see a challenge to both this word, and to systems of knowledge and thinking that inform such a choice. And in the story of Medea, the woman who famously killed her children to punish their father Jason, we see her actions more clearly when we understand the way in which she resists the expectations for Athenian women well before Jason’s betrayal. Although Medea is a human woman, her monstrous actions reflect the dangers presented by intimacy with female bodies. This danger is writ large in the metaphorically feminine functions of Scylla and Charybdis, the monstrous women who slow Odysseus on his way home, and reflects the dangers of all the bodies of human women he encounters, from goddesses to maids.



Whether you’ve read (and remembered) the Classic Greek epics and myths or not, this lecture will provide background information to demonstrate the stories or ideas that circulate about the figures of women, monstrous and human, in Greek culture.

Questions? Call Jo Ann Shea at 262-554-8081 or email to joaz44@hotmail.com

⌘ - - - - -

5/30/19 Greek Goddesses Member \$5 Guest \$10 *Deadline: 5/23/19*

Name _____ Check # _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Emergency contact name and phone _____ / _____

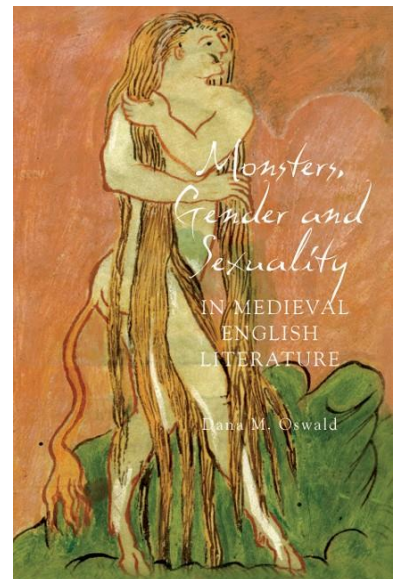
Deliver **cash** registration fee to Vanessa at the ALL office in Tallent Hall. **Checks** should be payable to UW Parkside/ALL; deliver or mail to Vanessa. **Credit card** registration fees must be submitted online. Watch for an email with the online registration **LINK** on or about the first Monday of each month.

Note: Members have preference in registering. There is a \$5 cancellation fee if you are unable to attend or need to request a refund.



Dana Oswald is Associate Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin - Parkside. She teaches courses on Epic and Mythology, History of the English Language, and early British Literature. Dana Oswald completed her Ph.D. in 2005 at The Ohio State University. She has published articles on monstrosity, gender, and sexuality in Old and Middle English literature, and on best teaching practices in the university literature and writing classrooms.

She is the author of the book Monsters, Gender, and Sexuality in Medieval British Literature. (Cover image, right)



Professor Oswald's current research project is on Maternal Bodies in Old English Literature, and she is currently working on chapters about the medical remedies and laws specific to childbearing and maternity.