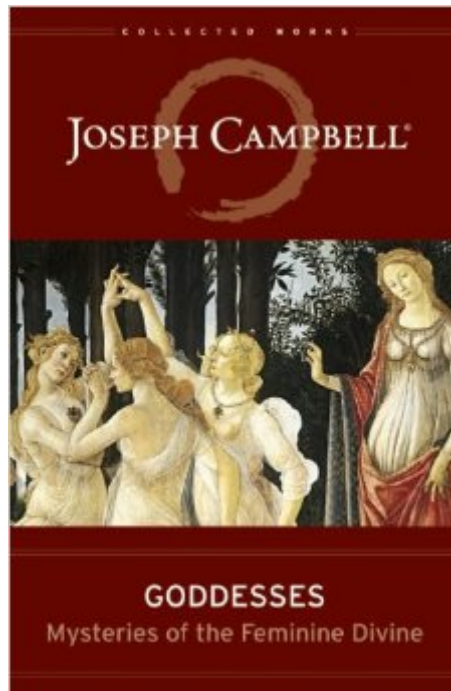


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# Goddesses: Mysteries Of The Feminine Divine (Collected Works Of Joseph Campbell)



## Synopsis

Joseph Campbell brought mythology to a mass audience. His bestselling books, including *The Power of Myth* and *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, are the rare blockbusters that are also scholarly classics. While Campbell's work reached wide and deep as he covered the world's great mythological traditions, he never wrote a book on goddesses in world mythology. He did, however, have much to say on the subject. Between 1972 and 1986 he gave over twenty lectures and workshops on goddesses, exploring the figures, functions, symbols, and themes of the feminine divine, following them through their transformations across cultures and epochs. In this provocative volume, editor Safron Ross—a goddess studies scholar, professor of mythology, and curator of collections at Opus Archives, which holds the Joseph Campbell archival manuscript collection and personal library—collects these lectures for the first time. In them, Campbell traces the evolution of the feminine divine from one Great Goddess to many, from Neolithic Old Europe to the Renaissance. He sheds new light on classical motifs and reveals how the feminine divine symbolizes the archetypal energies of transformation, initiation, and inspiration.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Being raised Catholic, with the "old man in the sky God" presided over by an exclusively male priesthood; I often felt as if something was missing. How could the God of unconditional love only be male and only choose men to lead "HIS" Church? If God loves us without condition and if we

are indeed made in the image and likeness of God, where was the God in whose image I was made? Furthermore, wouldn't women, then be equally worthy to lead God's Church? While the veneration of Mary somewhat satisfied these longings, she still wasn't God. These questions eventually led me on the search for a feminine image of God that I could call my own, and one that I intuitively knew could be found. Gratefully, I was not the only one troubled by the exclusively male God of the Western religious traditions and have found much comfort in the research that has been accomplished in uncovering the abundant examples of the Feminine Divine in cultures and religions across epochs, including Her presence in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In, *Goddesses – Mysteries of the Feminine Divine*, by Joseph Campbell, I have found another worthy resource in my on-going exploration of the Feminine Divine. Whereas some of the conclusions Campbell presents have since been refuted, this collection provides a worthy addition to the study of the Feminine Divine, and unlike many books written on this topic, Campbell presents this topic in a way that is accessible to anyone. In this collection of previously unpublished lectures given to lay audiences in the 1980s, the reader will get an overview of the research contemporary to the time.

Joseph Campbell is a well known scholar of mythology who has taught a number of years at the University level and has authored numerous books. His material is gold as far as I am concerned. At the same time as being scholarly his style is also highly readable and enjoyable. Read this and you will get lots of information. Beware though because this book may well change your perspective on things. Change it did. Many scholars such as Margaret Murray and Marija Gimbutas have stated that in man kind's beginning there was a world wide religion that revered the Goddess. Now perhaps that was an overstatement but there were places that venerated the Goddess. Three such areas were identified South Eastern Europe plus Greece and Mesopotamia, South East Asia and part of Central America. These three areas had mastered agriculture and planting. The societies tended to be settled into communities and there was at the time no threat of invasion or violence. The Goddesses' reign lasted from the Paleolithic to Neolithic times. The Earth was seen as the mother. From her came all life and at the end all life returned to her. You did not have to be awesome to pick some fruit. Women were cultivators, admired for their beauty. Men were idolized based on how they performed their tasks. In the houses one would find figurines or Venus statues, These could be goddess statues or fertility votives. Men had their rituals in underground caves which were highly representative of the Goddesses' womb. The sun was a feminine sign as was the lion and the cat and the snake. The sun radiated on the earth and represented freedom from time and space. Lions were royalty and serpents represented wisdom and life force. For the male representation it was the

bull. The bull was lunar.

As someone who is doing research on the goddess and understanding the portrayal of women in culture, I was a bit disappointed in this book. There is very impressive literature circulating about the Goddess, despite biases, which I feel covers much better the subject than Campbell. I find that his writing covers only as much as the surface might bring back - it doesn't seem that he tried to challenge himself to see if this information connected, or even if it made sense in this interpretation. I am aware he mentioned that, at the time, very little scholarship had been done on the feminine in history outside of the stereotypical 'man was hunter and superior, woman was pregnant sex-baby machine and thus inferior' mode of thinking in archaeology, etc. Campbell's infatuation with myths is both positive and detrimental. In a world that is struggling out of the cultural desecration and dehumanization of 'prehistoric people' thanks to Christian dogma, Campbell's dedication to myths are a welcome respite when you are attempting to understand the evolution of faith and the continual borrowing/amalgamation of beliefs over time. Yet, where Campbell fails is in his inability to separate himself and his message from his myth. He makes grand generalizations and has a negative, perplexing tendency to say that X means Y without really showing the in-between or X process of how he got there. During reading, I wondered if he was trying to create a link between Judeo-Christian beliefs and 'pagan' religion/cultures, as while he does note the Semitic cultural desecration of the neighboring deities as troubling, did not seem to go further than was necessary into understanding how far-ranging this mentality became in Western civilization.

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