

Meret Fehlmann:
Ancient Goddesses for Modern Times or New Goddesses from
Ancient Times?

The feminist spirituality movement is centred around the conviction of a cult of a primordial great goddess who was later, i. e. in (proto-)history, split into the many goddesses we know of the Greek and/or Roman pantheon.

This movement took some of its influences for its vision of Antiquity from the work of older classicists like Jane Ellen Harrison. Around 1900, Harrison was convinced that the myths of ancient Greece reflect upon a conflict between an older goddess-centred religion and the male-dominated gods of Olympus. Another inspiration can be found in the work of archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes who proposed a new understanding of ancient Greece and Crete in the 1960s. She no longer considered them opposed forces but deeply interdependent. The meeting of these two societies resulted in the blossoming of a new culture that emphasizes and respects both male and female principles. Last but not least, the voluminous work of the imaginative writer Robert Graves was responsible for some of the notions in the feminist spirituality movement – especially the great goddess in her three aspects as maiden, mother and crone. These are some of the major sources of inspiration of the feminist spirituality movement that started as a result of the second wave feminism of the late 1960s and 70s but was soon enriched by spiritual elements – sometimes flowering into a goddess(es) cult.

My presentation will focus on the images of ancient Greece and Crete in the work of the exponents of feminist spirituality. In specific, I will take a closer look at the work of one of the important figures of this spiritual movement, Carol P. Christ, who occasionally labels herself “a founding mother of the goddess”. Not only did her books widely popularise these notions of antiquity, she also has organized “life transforming” journeys to places she considers to be sacred to the great goddess in Crete for nearly twenty years.

Keywords:

[Feminism](#), [Goddess-worship](#), [Greece](#), [Literature](#), [Popular Culture](#)

Index:

Archaeology:

- [Caroline Tully \(U. Melbourne\): “The artifice of Daedalus: Modern Minoica as Religious Focus in Contemporary Paganism”](#)
- [Helga Vogel \(FU Berlin\): “‘The Goddess is alive!’ – Goddess Feminism and Archaeology: the Case of Çatal Höyük”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Balkans:

- [Nemanja Radulović \(U. Belgrade\): “The Role of Gnosticism in Neo-Bogomilism”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Christianity:

- [Anne Kreps \(Yale-NUS College, Singapore\): “The Essenes in Southern Oregon”](#)
- [Nemanja Radulović \(U. Belgrade\): “The Role of Gnosticism in Neo-Bogomilism”](#)
- [Franz Winter \(U. Vienna\): “The Use of Ancient Gnostic Texts in Modern Esoteric Movements: the Case of Samael Aun Weor”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Essenes:

- [Anne Kreps \(Yale-NUS College, Singapore\): “The Essenes in Southern Oregon”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Feminism:

- Lily A. Bonga (Crete): “Mother-Goddess Misconceptions”
- Meret Fehlmann (U. Zürich): “Ancient Goddesses for Modern Times or New Goddesses from Ancient Times?”
- Kathryn Rountree (U. Tasmania): “Transforming Goddesses: Neo-Pagan Projects of Revival and Reinvention”
- Caroline Tully (U. Melbourne): “The artifice of Daedalus: Modern Minoica as Religious Focus in Contemporary Paganism”
- Helga Vogel (FU Berlin): “‘The Goddess is alive!’ – Goddess Feminism and Archaeology: the Case of Çatal Höyük”

[back to top](#)

Index:

Germany:

- [Helga Vogel \(FU Berlin\): “‘The Goddess is alive!’ – Goddess Feminism and Archaeology: the Case of Çatal Höyük”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Goddess-worship:

- Lily A. Bonga (Crete): “Mother-Goddess Misconceptions”
- Meret Fehlmann (U. Zürich): “Ancient Goddesses for Modern Times or New Goddesses from Ancient Times?”
- Kathryn Rountree (U. Tasmania): “Transforming Goddesses: Neo-Pagan Projects of Revival and Reinvention”
- Caroline Tully (U. Melbourne): “The artifice of Daedalus: Modern Minoica as Religious Focus in Contemporary Paganism”
- Helga Vogel (FU Berlin): “‘The Goddess is alive!’ – Goddess Feminism and Archaeology: the Case of Çatal Höyük”

[back to top](#)

Index:

Greece:

- [Meret Fehlmann \(U. Zürich\): “Ancient Goddesses for Modern Times or New Goddesses from Ancient Times?”](#)
- [Kathryn Rountree \(U. Tasmania\): “Transforming Goddesses: Neo-Pagan Projects of Revival and Reinvention”](#)
- [Caroline Tully \(U. Melbourne\): “The artifice of Daedalus: Modern Minoica as Religious Focus in Contemporary Paganism”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Italy:

- [Kathryn Rountree \(U. Tasmania\): "Transforming Goddesses: Neo-Pagan Projects of Revival and Reinvention"](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Latin America:

- [Franz Winter \(U. Vienna\): "The Use of Ancient Gnostic Texts in Modern Esoteric Movements: the Case of Samael Aun Weor"](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Literature:

- [Meret Fehlmann \(U. Zürich\): “Ancient Goddesses for Modern Times or New Goddesses from Ancient Times?”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Music:

- [Linda Simonis \(Ruhr-U., Bochum\): "Neo-Gnosticism in Contemporary Popular Music: Current 93 and Nox Aurea"](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Neo-Gnosticism:

- Matthew Dillon (Rice U., Houston): “Unearthed Rituals, Recollected Theologies, Mnemohistory and the Role of Scholarship in Contemporary ‘Gnosticism(s)’”
- Nemanja Radulović (U. Belgrade): “The Role of Gnosticism in Neo-Bogomilism”
- Linda Simonis (Ruhr-U., Bochum): “Neo-Gnosticism in Contemporary Popular Music: Current 93 and Nox Aurea”
- Franz Winter (U. Vienna): “The Use of Ancient Gnostic Texts in Modern Esoteric Movements: the Case of Samael Aun Weor”

[back to top](#)

Index:

Neo-Paganism:

- [Ethan Doyle White \(U. College London\): “The Revived Cult of Antinous”](#)
- [Hubert Mohr \(U. Basel\): “Online Temples – a New Cultic Form of Neo-Ancient Cyberpaganism”](#)
- [Nemanja Radulović \(U. Belgrade\): “The Role of Gnosticism in Neo-Bogomilism”](#)
- [Kathryn Rountree \(U. Tasmania\): “Transforming Goddesses: Neo-Pagan Projects of Revival and Reinvention”](#)
- [Caroline Tully \(U. Melbourne\): “The artifice of Daedalus: Modern Minoica as Religious Focus in Contemporary Paganism”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

New Age Religion:

- [Anne Kreps \(Yale-NUS College, Singapore\): “The Essenes in Southern Oregon”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

New Media:

- [Matthew Dillon \(Rice U., Houston\): “Unearthed Rituals, Recollected Theologies, Mnemohistory and the Role of Scholarship in Contemporary ‘Gnosticism\(s\)’”](#)
- [Ethan Doyle White \(U. College London\): “The Revived Cult of Antinous”](#)
- [Hubert Mohr \(U. Basel\): “Online Temples – a New Cultic Form of Neo-Ancient Cyberpaganism”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

North America:

- [Anne Kreps \(Yale-NUS College, Singapore\): “The Essenes in Southern Oregon”](#)
- [Kathryn Rountree \(U. Tasmania\): “Transforming Goddesses: Neo-Pagan Projects of Revival and Reinvention”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Occultism:

- [Nicholas Marshall \(Århus U.\): “Robes and Gowns: the Relationship between Scholarship and the Occult in the 20th Century”](#)
- [Pavel Nosachev \(NRU./St. Tikhon’s, Moscow\): “The Dazzling Darkness of Paganism: the Theme of Antiquity in the works of Evgeniy Golovin”](#)
- [Franz Winter \(U. Vienna\): “The Use of Ancient Gnostic Texts in Modern Esoteric Movements: the Case of Samael Aun Weor”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Popular Culture:

- [Meret Fehlmann \(U. Zürich\): “Ancient Goddesses for Modern Times or New Goddesses from Ancient Times?”](#)
- [Linda Simonis \(Ruhr-U., Bochum\): “Neo-Gnosticism in Contemporary Popular Music: Current 93 and Nox Aurea”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Queer Culture:

- [Ethan Doyle White \(U. College London\): "The Revived Cult of Antinous"](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Reception of Scholarship:

- [Matthew Dillon \(Rice U., Houston\): “Unearthed Rituals, Recollected Theologies, Mnemohistory and the Role of Scholarship in Contemporary ‘Gnosticism\(s\)’”](#)
- [Nicholas Marshall \(Århus U.\): “Robes and Gowns: the Relationship between Scholarship and the Occult in the 20th Century”](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Russia:

- [Pavel Nosachev \(NRU./St. Tikhon's, Moscow\): "The Dazzling Darkness of Paganism: the Theme of Antiquity in the works of Evgeniy Golovin"](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Traditionalism:

- [Pavel Nosachev \(NRU./St. Tikhon's, Moscow\): "The Dazzling Darkness of Paganism: the Theme of Antiquity in the works of Evgeniy Golovin"](#)

[back to top](#)

Index:

Turkey:

- [Helga Vogel \(FU Berlin\): “‘The Goddess is alive!’ – Goddess Feminism and Archaeology: the Case of Çatal Höyük”](#)

[back to top](#)