



# Death and the Maiden (Routledge Revivals): Girls' Initiation Rites in Greek Mythology

*Ken Dowden*

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A remarkable number of Greek myths concern the plight of virgins – slaughtered, sacrificed, hanged, transformed into birds, cows, deer, bears, trees, and punished in Hades.

*Death and the Maiden*, first published in 1989, contextualises this mythology in terms of geography, history and culture, and offers a comprehensive theory firmly grounded in an ubiquitous ritual: pubescent girls' rites of passage. By means of comparative anthropology, it is argued that many local ceremonies are echoed throughout the whole range of myths, both famous and obscure. Further, Professor Dowden examines boys' rites, as well as the renewal of entire communities at regular intervals.

The first full-length work in English devoted to passage-rites in Greek myth, *Death and the Maiden* is an important contribution to the exciting developments in the study of the interrelation between myth and ritual: from it an innovative view on the origination of many Greek myths emerges.

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