



Empress and Handmaid: On Nature and Gender in the Cult of the Virgin Mary

Sarah Jane Boss

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Medieval images of the Virgin Mary for veneration usually showed a mother and child enthroned, bearing signs of regal authority. Yet modern images show her standing alone, without signs of authority or maternity. This work argues that this and other developments in the cult of the Virgin in western Christianity must be understood against the background of our changing relationship with "nature". The book offers a new assessment of the significance of the cult of the Virgin in Christianity. It also includes an original account of the development of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. The theoretical perspective is strongly influenced by the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, in its critique of domination.

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