

Eloquent Virgins: The Rhetoric of Virginité from Thecla to Joan of Arc (The New Middle Ages)



The tales of the virgin martyrs inevitably emphasize the torture and mutilation of beautiful young women. To the modern reader, these popular texts seem like exercises in sadism, but while they could be made to function as vehicles for active misogyny, they also provided Medieval women such as Hildegard of Bingen and Joan of Arc with role models who helped them to shape their own extraordinary destinies. This book explores the ability of the virgin body to generate contradictory meanings, both repressive and liberating, depending on who told the tale and how it was told.

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