



Women at the Beginning: Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary

Patrick J. Geary

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In these four artfully crafted essays, Patrick Geary explores the way ancient and medieval authors wrote about women. Geary describes the often marginal role women played in origin legends from antiquity until the twelfth century.

Not confining himself to one religious tradition or region, he probes the tensions between women in biblical, classical, and medieval myths (such as Eve, Mary, Amazons, princesses, and countesses), and actual women in ancient and medieval societies. Using these legends as a lens through which to study patriarchal societies, Geary chooses moments and texts that illustrate how ancient authors (all of whom were male) confronted the place of women in their society.

Unlike other books on the subject, *Women at the Beginning* attempts to understand not only the place of women in these legends, but also the ideologies of the men who wrote about them. The book concludes that the authors of these stories were themselves struggling with ambivalence about women in their own worlds and that this struggle manifested itself in their writings.

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