



Marrying Jesus in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe: Popular Culture and Religious Reform

Rabia Gregory

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The first full-length study of the notion of marriage to Jesus in late medieval and early modern popular culture, this book treats the transmission and transformation of ideas about this concept as a case study in the formation of religious belief and popular culture. *Marrying Jesus in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe* provides a history of the dispersion of theology about the bride of Christ in the period between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries and explains how this metaphor, initially devised for a religious elite, became integral to the laity's pursuit of salvation. Unlike recent publications on the bride of Christ, which explore the gendering of sanctity or the poetics of religious eroticism, this is a study of popular religion told through devotional media and other technologies of salvation. *Marrying Jesus* argues against the heteronormative interpretation that brides of Christ should be female by reconstructing the cultural production of brides of Christ in late medieval Europe. A central assertion of this book is that by the fourteenth century, worldly, sexually active brides of Christ, both male and female, were no longer aberrations. Analyzing understudied vernacular sources from the late medieval period - including sermons, early printed books, spiritual diaries, letters, songs, and hagiographies - Rabia Gregory shows how marrying Jesus was central to late medieval lay piety, and how the 'chaste' bride of Christ developed out of sixteenth-century religious disputes.

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