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MARÍAS. ENTRE LA ADORACIÓN Y EL ESTIGMA

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Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch

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Marías. Entre la adoración y el estigma originated in the seminar “Between adoration and stigma: mothers, virgins, and prostitutes.” This event was an extra activity of the course “Analysis and interpretation of the image,” taught in the Art History and History Bachelors at the Universitat de València. In addition, the writers of this book are members of the research group “Apes. Estudis de Cultura Visual de la Universitat de València,” which included this seminar as a part of their Educational Innovation Project (2019-2020).

The book’s writers study “the visual depiction of women, whose behaviors have been codified as models of Christian morality” (9) from a gender approach. Patriarchal society has led to a concrete place, purpose, and view of women in the Christian tradition, which these authors want to break. From these premises, this book defends a new view towards artistic visibility with the purpose of “unlearning the dominant discourses that allocate a place to the women in western culture” (9). To this aim, the discourse gets organized into an introductory chapter and four essays. All of them have adoration and stigma that are shown in the visibility of some women of the Christian tradition as a unifying thread.

First, “La construcción del género en los modelos femeninos de la tradición cristiana” by María Ángeles Martí Bonafé works as an introduction. In this part, the project’s coordinator exemplifies succinctly the methodological approach of the book from the visual depictions of Sara, which derives from the biblical story of the visit of the three angels to Abraham in Mambré (Gn 18, 1-15). Concretely, Dr. Martí emphasizes “the importance of the women in the genealogy of the historical construction of Israel’s people” (13).

The second chapter, “Virgen, mujer y madre. La maternidad cristiana en la visualidad mariana” by María Elvira Mocholí Martínez, focuses on the medieval artistic visuality of Eve and the Virgin Mary, women connected by motherhood. From the beginning of Christianity, there are prejudices about the negative value of women, especially towards Eve. Through visuality, the author studies the typological connections between Eve and the Virgin Mary. It should be pointed out that this essay provides a new interpretation of the Virgin Mary that emphasizes her function in redemption.

Esther González Gea also deals with motherhood in her essay “Madres redentoras. Supervivencia y destino de la Piedad en el arte y la cultura popular.” Topics like pain, piety, care and mourning got traditionally assigned to the feminine gender. The author approaches these topics based on religious images that influenced the height of the “typology of the mother with her son/daughter” (42), especially in the 19th century. In this way, she shows the repercussion of these images in the generic idea of motherhood that prevails nowadays. Her essay on the western visual tradition of piety until contemporary art offers an interpretation that breaks with the accepted gender models.

On “La pureza resignificada. De la imagen del *ángel del hogar* a la *mujer finisecular*”, Raquel Baixauli Romero reflects on the concept of purity based on the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The author argues that the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie used Immaculate’s attributes to transfer them to the social idea of the feminine gender. Based on the creation of this ideal woman or *home’s angel*, the author renews the meaning of “purity as a physical and moral quality connected to the feminine gender” (66) from nineteenth-century visuality.

The last chapter, “Amante estigmatizada, ¿madre adorada? María Magdalena en *Born this Way* (Lady Gaga, 2011)” by Elena Monzón Pertejo studies the meanings that Mary Magdalene acquires in the music clips *Judas* and *Bloody Mary* of the album *Born This Way* (2011) by Lady Gaga. The author explains the origins of Mary Magdalene’s visuality as a sinner and defends the concealment of Mary’s Magdalene role as a wife, mother, or lover. Her essay proves how the weight of the Christian tradition constitutes influencing the connection between Mary Magdalene and sin.

Therefore, this book presents topics such as motherhood, prodigious conception, piety, purity, sin, leadership, prostitution, and devotion from Middle Ages to the present visuality. With Eve, the Virgin Mary, and Mary Magdalene as the protagonist, the authors break the stereotypes of feminine gender and their relation to concrete concepts. With no doubt whatsoever, this book provides new approaches for the research of religious and women’s visuality.