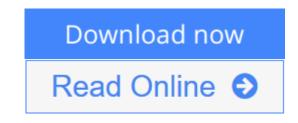


# **Virgins: A Cultural History**

By Anke Bernau



Virgins: A Cultural History By Anke Bernau

In the Middle Ages it was believed that only a virgin could charm a unicorn out of hiding; but far from being a quaint, anachronistic concept, virginity remains a central value in Western culture. Typing "virgin" into Google results in more than one million hits and includes everything from the Anti-Nicene Fathers to advertisements for free teen virgins, displaying a range of current cultural preoccupations with virginity. This lively, wide-ranging examination of a phenomenon that has touched many aspects of our culture names different archetypes and facets of the concept of virginity. Examples include the Medical Virgin—exploring what exactly virginity is and how to reliably identify one; the Religious Virgin—from the Madonna to the American Christian Right's insistence on sexual abstinence before marriage; the Popular Virgin of Gothic fiction and modern day horror films; the Political Virgin—virginity's intimate connection with money and power; and the Monstrous Virgin, as embodiment of what is ultimately unknowable and of violence, excess, and death.

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#### Virgins: A Cultural History By Anke Bernau Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #4555367 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Granta UK
- Published on: 2007-11-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 6.25" w x 1.00" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 272 pages

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Review

"An engaging history . . . an entertaining, informative treatment of a still puzzling subject." —Lionel Shriver, author, *We Need to Talk About Kevin* 

"Fascinating . . . manages to convey a muddled strand of cultural history with admirable calm and perspicacity." *—Metro* 

"This well-researched book examines the changing concept of virginity, from the Virgin Mary to modern abstinence education." —*The Daily Telegraph* 

"This is a lively and wide-ranging examination of a phenomenon that has touched many aspects of our culture." *—Evening Standard* 

"With humor, the author reveals how even in our let-it-all-hang-out western culture, virginity remains a hot topic." *—Sunday Herald* 

"Terrifying yet captivating." -Bust

About the Author

Anke Bernau's other works include Medieval Virginity.

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