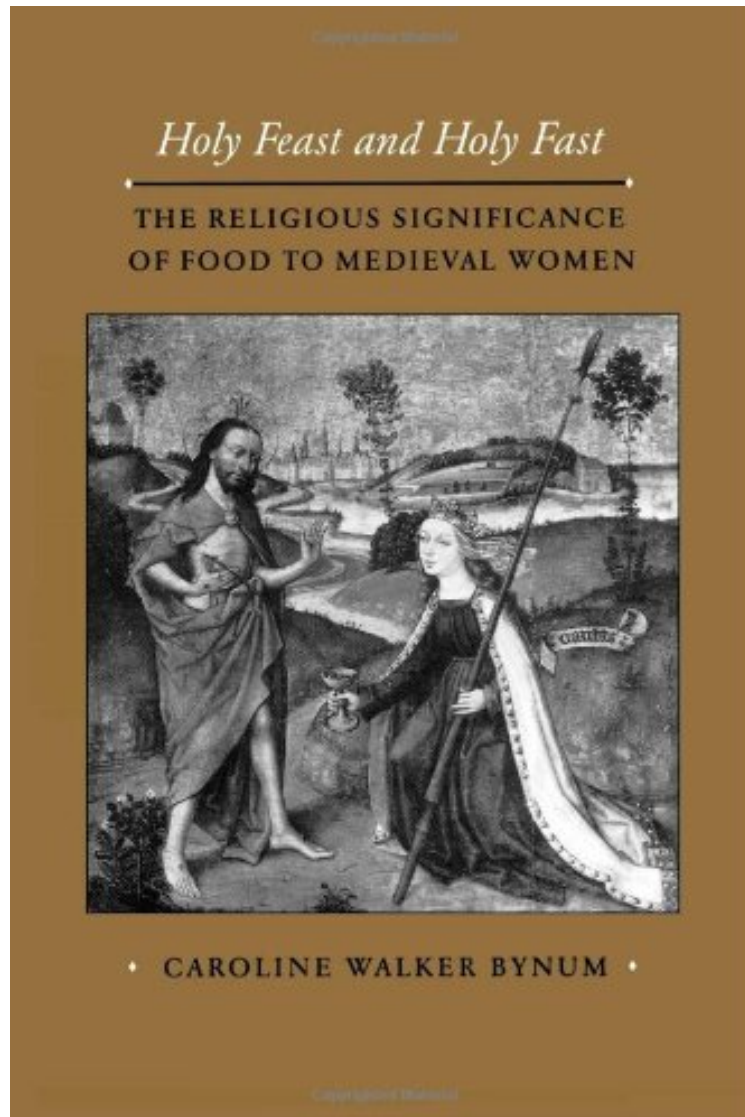


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## Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics)

Caroline Walker Bynum

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Caroline Walker Bynum : Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be

worth my time, and all praised Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Gender, Spirituality, Religious Practices, FoodBy Alicia CrumptonWow! I loved Bynum's writing approach - Background, Evidence, Explanation. She took a complex discussion and clearly presented the scholarship, history, and stories in a methodical and interesting way. The inclusion of plates (pictures) added to the materials she presented and the extensive use of footnotes provides an exceptional roadmap to additional sources for those topics where you want to read more. Bynum noted: "To religious women food was a way of controlling as well as renouncing both self and environment. . . food was flesh, and flesh was suffering and fertility. . . food that is Christ. . . becoming the suffering and feeding humanity of the body on the cross, the food on the altar." (p. 5). This book would appeal to historians and those interested in religious studies, women's studies, food studies, spirituality - the complexity and richness of the scope of this book provides a wonderful platform for a many perspectives to have an interest in it.23 of 29 people found the following review helpful. May I have ashes on that cheesecake, please?By saint eyebeatThis is a great read. I don't care if you're interested in history in general, history of the catholic church, history of western mysticism or just looking for something offbeat and interesting: This is a fascinating book! The history of mysticism and western intellectual tradition as it is intertwined with food is certainly there but for the reader seeking just plain bizarre to our modern eyes goes-on, that is in this text as well. In fact, for someone looking for a jump start to their imagination for their own writing, this book is a real bucket of volts. Go read it. Have fun. But, don't try it at home.0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Interesting material, good valueBy DV UtahExactly what I ordered - undamaged, unmarked with dust jacket and inside editing sheet.

In the period between 1200 and 1500 in western Europe, a number of religious women gained widespread veneration and even canonization as saints for their extraordinary devotion to the Christian eucharist, supernatural multiplications of food and drink, and miracles of bodily manipulation, including stigmata and inedia (living without eating). The occurrence of such phenomena sheds much light on the nature of medieval society and medieval religion. It also forms a chapter in the history of women. Previous scholars have occasionally noted the various phenomena in isolation from each other and have sometimes applied modern medical or psychological theories to them. Using materials based on saints' lives and the religious and mystical writings of medieval women and men, Caroline Walker Bynum uncovers the pattern lying behind these aspects of women's religiosity and behind the fascination men and women felt for such miracles and devotional practices. She argues that food lies at the heart of much of women's piety. Women renounced ordinary food through fasting in order to prepare for receiving extraordinary food in the eucharist. They also offered themselves as food in miracles of feeding and bodily manipulation. Providing both functionalist and phenomenological explanations, Bynum explores the ways in which food practices enabled women to exert control within the family and to define their religious vocations. She also describes what women meant by seeing their own bodies and God's body as food and what men meant when they too associated women with food and flesh. The author's interpretation of women's piety offers a new view of the nature of medieval asceticism and, drawing upon both anthropology and feminist theory, she illuminates the distinctive features of women's use of symbols. Rejecting presentist interpretations of women as exploited or masochistic, she shows the power and creativity of women's writing and women's lives.

"A rich, positive and thoughtful description of the way some medieval women managed to control and develop their own subjectivities and social roles."--"Women's of BooksAbout the AuthorCaroline Walker Bynum is Western Medieval History Professor EmeritaSchool of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study.