



# The Rape of Eve: The Transformation of Roman Ideology in Three Early Christian Retellings of Genesis

*Celene Lillie*

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## **The Rape of Eve: The Transformation of Roman Ideology in Three Early Christian Retellings of Genesis** Celene Lillie

Sex, violence, power, and redemption. In recent decades, scholars of New Testament and early Christian traditions have given new attention to the relationships between gender and imperial power in the Roman world. In this surprising work, Celene Lillie examines core passages from three Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi, *On the Origin of the World*, *The Reality of the Rulers*, and the *Secret Revelation of John*, in which Eve is portrayed as having been humiliated by the cosmic powers, yet experiencing restoration. Lillie compares that pattern with Gnostic savior motifs concerning Jesus and Seth, then sets it in the broader context of Roman cosmogonic myths at play in imperial ideology. The Nag Hammadi texts, she argues, offer us a window into symbolic forms of Christian resistance to imperial ideology. This groundbreaking study highlights the importance of the Nag Hammadi writings for our fuller appreciation of the currents of Christian response to the Roman Empire and the culture of rape pervasive within it.

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