



# **Looking for Mary Magdalene: Alternative Pilgrimage and Ritual Creativity at Catholic Shrines in France (Oxford Ritual Studies)**

*Anna Fedele*

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**Winner of the Award for Excellence in Religion: Analytical-Descriptive Studies from the American Academy of Religion**

Anna Fedele offers a sensitive ethnography of alternative pilgrimages to French Catholic shrines dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene. Drawing on more than three years of fieldwork, she describes how pilgrims from Italy, Spain, Britain, and the United States interpret Catholic figures, symbols, and sites according to theories derived from the international Neopagan movement. Fedele pays particular attention to the pilgrims' life stories, rituals and reading. She examines how they devise their rituals, how anthropological literature has influenced them, and why this kind of spirituality is increasingly prevalent in the West. These pilgrims cultivate spirituality in interaction with each other and with textual sources: Jungian psychology, Goddess mythology, and "indigenous" traditions merge into a corpus of practices centered upon the worship of the Goddess and Mother Earth, and the sacralization of the reproductive cycle. Their rituals present a critique of Roman Catholicism and the medical establishment, and question contemporary discourse on gender.

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