

Origins of the Magdalene Laundries: An Analytical History

Rebecca Lea Mccarthy



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The convents, asylums, and laundries that once comprised the Magdalene institutions are the subject of this work. Though originally half-way homes for prostitutes in the Middle Ages, these homes often became forced-labor institutions, particularly in Ireland. Examining the laundries within the context of a growing world capitalist economy, the work argues that the process of colonization, and of defining a national image, determined the nature and longevity of the Magdalene Laundries. This process developed differently in Ireland, where the last laundry closed in 1996. The book focuses on the devolution of the significance of Mary Magdalene as a metaphor for the organization: from an affluent, strong supporter of Jesus to a simple, fallen woman.



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