



Greed: The Seven Deadly Sins (New York Public Library Lectures in Humanities)

Phyllis A. Tickle

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Grasping. Avarice. Covetousness. Miserliness. Insatiable cupidity. Overreaching ambition. Desire spun out of control. The deadly sin of Greed goes by many names, appears in many guises, and wreaks havoc on individuals and nations alike. In this lively and generous book, Phyllis A. Tickle argues that Greed is the Matriarch of the Deadly Clan, the ultimate source of Pride, Envy, Sloth, Gluttony, Lust, and Anger. She shows that the major faiths, from Hinduism and Taoism to Buddhism and Christianity regard Greed as the greatest calamity humans can indulge in, engendering further sins and eviscerating all virtues. As the Sikh holy book *Adi Granth* asks: Where there is greed, what love can there be? Tickle takes a long view of Greed, from St. Paul to the present, focusing particularly on changing imaginative representations of Greed in Western literature and art. Looking at such works as the *Psychomachia*, or *Soul Battle* of the fifth-century poet Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, the paintings of Peter Bruegel and Hieronymous Bosch, the 1987 film *Wall Street*, and the contemporary Italian artist Mario Donizetti, Tickle shows how our perceptions have evolved from the medieval understanding of Greed as a spiritual enemy to a nineteenth-century sociological construct to an early twentieth-century psychological deficiency, and finally to a new view, powerfully articulated in Donizetti's mystical paintings, of Greed as both tragic and beautiful. Engaging, witty, brilliantly insightful, *Greed* explores the full range of this deadly sin's subtle, chameleon-like qualities, and the enormous destructive power it wields, evidenced all too clearly in the world today.

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