Transcription: Mary Beard on Venus, Inanna and power

There's a long history in the world of, as it were, controlling women. Where women and the feminine principle is associated with the irrational, the wild, what goes on outside the civilised world, whereas the male principle, that's all about rational thought, control, and running things. One central question is whether sex, desire and the power of the woman lies at the very centre of civilisation.

What these images show us is just how wrong it is to sort of pigeon-hole Venus or Inanna in the bedroom, that these goddesses have power and control and influence for good and bad over every aspect of human life. Power is not just men in suits. Political power, power and the power of women also exists and is embedded in religion, in culture, in art, in how we look at things and in desire.

There is of course a big paradox here, because these images of feminine power that we look at and admire or are frightened of, perhaps, they are most of them the creations of male artists, painters and sculptors. In some ways, we're always committed to seeing female power through the eyes of a man. It makes us rethink the nature of power as much as we rethink the nature of the feminine.