



Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England

Corinne Saunders

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This work explores and untangles the theme of rape, and its counterpart ravishment, in Anglo-French cultural tradition between the disintegration of the classical world and the Renaissance. Tracing debate and dialogue across intellectual and literary discourses, Corinne Saunders places Middle English literary portrayals of rape and ravishment in the context of shifting legal, theological and medical attitudes. The treatment of rape and ravishment is considered across a wide range of literary genres: hagiography, where female saints are repeatedly threatened with rape; legendary history, as in the stories of Lucretia and Helen; and romance, where acts of rape and ravishment challenge and shape chivalric order, and romance heroes are conceived through rape. Finally, the ways in which Malory and Chaucer write and rewrite rape and ravishment are examined. Dr CORINNE SAUNDERS is Lecturer in Medieval Studies, Department of English, University of Durham.

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