

how several subversive themes—transvestism, feminism, sexual identity—are present in this body of work, despite the fact they have been long ignored by critics of medieval Hebrew literature.

—Michelle Hamilton, *UC Irvine*

Elizabeth Robertson and Christine M. Rose, eds., *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. (The New Middle Ages, 20.) New York: Houndmills, Eng.: Palgrave, 2001. Pp. 453.

In this substantial and significant volume, *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, editors Elizabeth Robertson and Christine Rose have assembled thirteen sophisticated essays bracketed by an Introduction and an Afterward. Four of the thirteen essays are adaptations of previously published work, and the volume is divided into four thematic sections. According to Robertson and Rose, the book has two purposes: first, to investigate the repercussions that representations of rape create in, especially, female readers, and, second, to consider how this violence shapes social formations and female subjectivity. As the collection ultimately argues, the problem of representation is itself an expression of the violated female body and “its various functions within Western society” (4, *emph.* Robertson and Rose).

The brilliant opening chapter of Part I, Christine Rose’s “Reading Chaucer Reading Rape,” is not only a rigorous reading of Chaucer’s simultaneous use and erasure of rape, particularly in the *Canterbury Tales*, but also a careful reading of Chaucerian critical history that refuses to aestheticize the sexual violence so prominent in Chaucerian texts. Rose calls for a kind of double reading that both recognizes Chaucer’s use of rape as a trope to talk about something else (usually moments of conflict between men) and that recognizes the violated female body at the heart of that trope. Mark Amsler’s “Rape and Silence: Ovid’s Mythography and Medieval Readers” demonstrates how medieval mythographers consistently allegorized Ovid’s rape narratives, thus eliminating the sexual violence embodied in these tales. Monica Brzezinski Potkay’s “The Violence of Courtly Exegesis in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*” asks the provocative question, “Must romances create the threat of rape?” (97), and finds that “*Gawain* uses the theme of rape as a trope for its own poetics” (98) in order to critique that courtly hermeneutic through Lady Bertilak and Morgan Le Fey, who themselves subject Gawain to a rape-like experience that shatters his social and psychological integrity.

In “Part II: The Philomel Legacy,” the mute Philomel, unable to declare her violation, is seen to be a foundational narrative in Western aesthetics. Excerpted from *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, 1993), E. Jane Burns’ “Raping Men: What’s Motherhood Got to Do with It?,” concentrates on the Old French retelling of the brutal tale of Philomel and Procne demonstrating how, on one hand, the conventional social roles of supporting wife and nurturing mother enable sexual violence while, on the other, women’s work and women working can unite to redefine socially and narratively the discourses that facilitate a culture of rape. “The Daughter’s Text

and the Thread of Lineage in the Old French *Philomena*,” by Nancy A. Jones, historicizes *Philomena* within the discussion of aristocratic medieval women and juxtaposes the exogamous marriage practices of the French aristocracy with *Philomena*’s evocation of women’s textile and textual work. “‘O, Keep Me From Their Worse Than Killing Lust’: Ideologies of Mutilation and Rape in Chaucer’s *Physician’s Tale* and Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*,” by Robin L. Bott, looks at the transformation of the Virginius – Virginia story in Chaucer and Shakespeare. In both “enemies attack fathers through their rapable daughters to expose these fathers and their patriarchal society to potential contagion that is abated only by the destruction of woman” (190). Karen Robertson’s provocative and historically nuanced “Rape and the Appropriation of Progne’s Revenge in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, or ‘Who Cooks the Thyestean Banquet,’” argues that like Lucrece, Lavinia’s rape exposes the violence at the heart of family rule and the ruling family. Like Virginia, she is murdered to eliminate the father’s shame of rape; and like Philomel, she suffers the loss of her tongue and hands so that she cannot testify to the truth of her abuse. In Shakespeare’s removal of Progne from the narrative, *Titus Andronicus* supports Tudor prohibitions against women’s anger and buttresses gendered Elizabethan legal notions sanctioning male vengeance.

Part III, “Law, Consent, and Subjectivity,” takes on more generally the subject of rape. Anne Howland Schotter analyzes “Rape in the Medieval Latin Comedies” and finds that these infrequently discussed medieval Latin works explore the “tension between the defense of rape and the promotion of consent” (243) that was part of the development of new marriage patterns among the aristocracy and in legal thinking about matrimony. Christopher Cannon’s reprinted article “Chaucer and Rape: Uncertainty’s Certainty,” addresses Chaucer’s release of a charge of *raptus* in the case of Cecily Chaumpaigne. Cannon sees in both the legal documents surrounding the Chaumpaigne case and in Chaucer’s writing a persistent concern with rape as both an epistemological and ontological problem, while “Chaucer’s writing shows him to have defined such grayness with precisely the situational and philosophical specificity we have lacked” (257). In “Public Bodies and Psychic Domains: Rape, Consent, and Female Subjectivity in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*,” Elizabeth Robertson argues that *Criseyde*’s “indeterminate subjectivity” is refracted through the classical models of Lucrece (who is raped) and Helen (who is abducted): *Criseyde* is the subject of both forced coition and abduction. Amy Greenstadt’s “‘Rapt from Himself’: Rape and the Poetics of Corporeality in Sidney’s *Old Arcadia*” reads in parallel the ravishing effects of both feminine beauty and poetic art upon the masculine subject in Sidney’s *The Arte of English Poesie* and *Old Arcadia*.

Part IV, “Reading Rape: The Canonical Artist, the Feminist Reader, and Male Poetics,” focuses upon Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen*. According to Susan Frye’s “Of Chastity and Rape: Edmund Spenser Confronts Elizabeth I in *The Faerie Queen*,” in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queen* Spenser opposes Elizabeth I’s conscious appropriation of “chastity as a political conception that maintained her autonomy from the male interests surrounding her” (354). Returning to the concept of ravishment, this time in Spenser, Katherine Eggert’s “Spenser’s

Ravishment: Rape and Rapture in *The Faerie Queen*” argues that, “As opposed to figuring poetry as genital rape, a tool for single-minded exposure, penetration, and comprehension of a feminized scene, *The Faerie Queen* also, if only intermittently, hints at poetry as a vehicle for rapture, a suffusion of delight that suspends the quest and admits a multiplicity of both erotic and epistemological pleasures” (382). The pairing of Frye’s and Eggert’s accounts of *The Fairie Queen* is one of the most provocative of the anthology and offers fruitful pedagogical possibilities.

Christopher Cannon’s Afterword brings *Representing Rape* to a satisfying conclusion while at the same time incisively questioning the efficacy of retrospectivity itself. Cannon’s answer is that analyzing the event of rape in its discursive expressions and often subterranean social and literary connections after the fact necessarily returns us to the prior, even founding, cultural moments of gender inequity in West. The essays in *Representing Rape* indeed demonstrate that feminist historicist analysis is itself a political practice that intervenes in the structures of representation that have otherwise hidden, dispersed, and excused the violence against women that is rape. *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* is essential reading both for specialists in medieval and Early Modern literature and for those concerned with feminism and the question of violence.

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Constance H. Berman, *Women and Monasticism in Medieval Europe: Sisters and Patrons of the Cistercian Reform.* (TEAMS Documents of Practice Series.) Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002. Pp.134 (ISBN 1 58044 036 3).

This collection of primary source material on women and monasticism is a part of a series from TEAMS that presents sources on a single topic or theme for classroom use. It brings together primary sources in order to show how women were involved in the Cistercian reform movement and that these women were often more visible and active than we may have imagined.

Berman presents primary source material from convents all over Europe documenting women’s activities both as Cistercian nuns and as patrons of female religious houses. More importantly for the study of female monasticism is that this the first collection of documents in one volume that addresses Cistercian women and their place not only in the Cistercian order but also within the study of female religious in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a whole.

Berman’s introduction points out that the history of monastic women’s role in the great reform movements of the High Middle Ages is only beginning to be written (2). Many scholars have neglected religious women’s history for this period usually claiming that the surviving evidence does not provide enough information to gain any insight into the lives of these women. However, over the past few decades a number of scholars have drawn attention to these women and their active participation in the reformed orders. Most have re-