



Affections of the Mind: The Politics of Sacramental Marriage in Late Medieval English Literature

Emma Lipton

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Affections of the Mind argues that a politicized negotiation of issues of authority in the institution of marriage can be found in late medieval England, where an emergent middle class of society used a sacramental model of marriage to exploit contradictions within medieval theology and social hierarchy. Emma Lipton traces the unprecedented popularity of marriage as a literary topic and the tensions between different models of marriage in the literature of the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by analyzing such texts as Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, and the N-Town plays.

Affections of the Mind focuses on marriage as a fluid and contested category rather than one with a fixed meaning, and argues that the late medieval literature of sacramental marriage subverted aristocratic and clerical traditions of love and marriage in order to promote the values of the lay middle strata of society. This book will be of value to a broad range of scholars in medieval studies.

"Emma Lipton has written one of those rare books that that make one rethink an entire set of distinctions—between public and private spheres, between communal and individual identities, between secular and religious ideals, between authorized desire and subversive practices. From her opening sentence framing medieval institutions in terms of modern debates on gay marriage to her thoughtful and readable analyses of how literary works complicate our assumptions about both past and present, she presents arguments that will be of interest to historians, sociologists, theologians and anyone researching the histories of marriage, family, gender, and sexuality." —**John M. Ganim, University of California, Riverside**

"Emma Lipton offers a look at sacramental marriage as it was employed by late medieval writers to explore questions of authority pertinent to the middle strata of society. This is an important and timely topic. Each chapter has something new to say about the text it explores. It should be of great interest to other medievalists, provoking a re-thinking of certain texts and strategies." —**Lynn Staley, Harrington and Shirley Drake Professor of the Humanities and Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Colgate University**

"Emma Lipton's well-balanced and illuminating study addresses the surprisingly neglected political consequences of sacramental marriage as manifested in the literature of late medieval England. In unpredictable readings of a range of well-chosen texts from Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* to the autobiography of Margery Kempe to the lesser studied *Traitié pour Essampler les Amantz Marietz* by Gower to the N-town plays, Lipton shows how sacramental marriage gripped the imagination of members of an emergent lay 'middle strata.' Although produced by the clergy, this unusually flexible doctrine, in her compelling argument, allowed these writers to challenge the privileges of both the clergy and the aristocracy and to articulate a specifically bourgeois identity grounded in horizontal rather than hierarchical ties." —**Elizabeth Robertson, University of Colorado at Boulder**

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