



Chaste passions : medieval English virgin martyr legends /

Winstead, Karen A. (Karen Anne), (

1960-),

editor,

translator.

<https://id.oclc.org/worldcat/entity/E39PCjtC7FGrdfhHVfJgfJwbv3>

legends (literary genre)

Legends.

Legends.

Légendes.

Monografía

Virgin martyrs make up one of the largest categories of medieval saints. To judge by their frequent appearances in art and literature, they also figure among the most venerated. The legends of virgin martyrs, retold in various ways through the centuries, illuminate trends in popular piety, values, and literary tastes. *Chaste Passions* contains sixteen English virgin martyr legends, each of a different saint and each translated into colloquial, modern English prose. Faithful in tone and meaning to the originals, Karen Winstead's lively translations allow contemporary readers to appreciate why virgin martyr legends thrived for hundreds of years. Winstead presents the tales in chronological order, tracing the effects of the composition and tastes of the audience on the development of the genre. The virgin martyr, Winstead tells us, escapes the confining female stereotypes—demure maiden or disruptive shrew—prevalent in writings of the period. Because nearly all of the texts were written by men but addressed to women, they exhibit a fascinating interplay between male views of so-called women's literature and the demands of their intended audience. Familiarity with this widely read genre is essential to a full understanding of medieval culture, and *Chaste Passions* is an excellent introduction to these often racy, sometimes comic, tales

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Título: Chaste passions medieval English virgin martyr legends edited and translated by Karen A. Winstead

Editorial: Ithaca Cornell University Press 2000

Descripción física: 1 online resource (201 pages) illustrations

Bibliografía: Includes bibliographical references

Contenido: Saint Juliana Anonymous, ca. 1200. -- Saints Agatha, Lucy, Justine, and Barbara The South English Legendary. -- Saint Anastasia The North English Legendary. -- Saint Cecilia Geoffrey Chaucer. -- Saint Christine William Paris. -- Saint Eugenia The Scottish Legendary. -- Saint Winifred John Mirk. -- Saints Margaret and Petronilla John Lydgate. -- Saints Agnes and Dorothy Osborn Bokenham. -- Saint Katherine Anonymous, ca. 1420. -- Saint Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins Anonymous, ca. 1485

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ISBN: 9781501711589 electronic bk.) 150171158X electronic bk.) 0801435692 9780801435690 0801485576 9780801485572

Materia: Christian women saints- Legends Christian women martyrs- Legends Virginity- Religious aspects- Christianity- Legends Christian legends- England Saintes chrétiennes- Légendes Martyres chrétiennes- Légendes Légendes chrétiennes- Angleterre Virginité- Aspect religieux- Christianisme- Légendes BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY- Religious. RELIGION- Christian Church- History. RELIGION- Christianity- History. LITERARY CRITICISM- Medieval. Christian legends. Christian women martyrs. Christian women saints. Virginity- Religious aspects- Christianity. Legende. Anthologie. Igreja (história) Mulheres (aspectos religiosos) Santos (biografia histórica) Cristianismo (história)

Materia Geográfica: England. <https://id.oclc.org/worldcat/entity/E39PBjpYDdYvBpjXV6WpybK68C> England.

Autores: Winstead, Karen A. (Karen Anne),) (1960-), editor, translator. <https://id.oclc.org/worldcat/entity/E39PCjtC7FGrdfhHVfJgfJwbv3>

Enlace a formato físico adicional: Print version Chaste passions. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 2000 0801435692 (DLC) 99059377 (OCoLC)43060432

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