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Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts

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"It is impossible / That any clerk wol speke good of wyves." Behind the words of Chaucer's Wife of Bath lies a vast corpus of medieval misogynistic writings. These texts, which range from those of the Church Fathers to a rich array of vernacular literature, have had a profound effect on the status of women in the West. Despite the recent surge of investigations into women's situation, however, no one book has sought to collect the key voices of medieval antifeminism, let alone to present the voices sometimes raised, even at that epoch, in defence of women. This new volume meets the urgent need for a single and substantial sourcebook of these materials in modern translation, including an introduction, notes, and commentary. The accessibility of the better-known texts here (from Jerome to Walter Map; from Héloise and Abelard to Christine de Pizan and Chaucer) will be welcomed by those engaged in medieval and women's studies; the lesser-known writings concerning, for instance, the sexual "double standard", and women and the priesthood, will provide unexpected discoveries for specialists and beginners alike. The book also features a surprising range of early texts championing women--including material never previously available in translation.

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