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978-0-521-11134-8 - The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800

Katherine Binhammer

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THE SEDUCTION NARRATIVE IN BRITAIN, 1747-1800

Eighteenth-century literature displays a fascination with the seduction of a virtuous young heroine, most famously illustrated by Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and repeated in 1790s radical women's novels, in the many memoirs by fictional or real penitent prostitutes, and in street print. Across fiction, ballads, essays and miscellanies, stories were told of women's mistaken belief in their lover's vows. Katherine Binhammer surveys seduction narratives from the late eighteenth century within the context of the new ideal of marriage-for-love and shows how these tales tell varying stories of women's emotional and sexual lives. Drawing on new historicism, feminism and narrative theory, Binhammer argues that the seduction narrative allowed writers to explore different fates for the heroine than the domesticity that became the dominant form in later literature. This study will appeal to scholars of eighteenth-century literature, social and cultural history, and women's and gender studies.

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