This study of illicit sexuality in medieval England explores links between marriage and sex, law and disorder, and property and power. Some medieval Englishwomen endured rape or were kidnapped for forced marriages, yet most ravished women were married, and many ‘wife-thefts’ were not forced kidnappings but cases of adultery fictitiously framed as abduction by abandoned husbands. In pursuing the themes of illicit sexuality and non-normative marital practices, this work analyses the nuances of the key Latin term raptus and the three overlapping offences that it could denote: rape, abduction, and adultery. This investigation broadens our understanding of the role of women in the legal system; provides a means for analysing male control over female bodies, sexuality, and access to the courts; and reveals ways in which female agency could, on occasion, manoeuvre around such controls.

Caroline Dunn is Assistant Professor of History at Clemson University.
STOLEN WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Rape, Abduction, and Adultery, 1100–1500

CAROLINE DUNN
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CONTENTS

List of tables and figure  page vi
Preface  vii
List of abbreviations  x

INTRODUCTION  1
1 LAWS AND LEGAL DEFINITIONS  18
2 RAPE  52
3 ABDUCTION AND FORCED MARRIAGE  82
4 ELOPEMENT  98
5 ADULTERY  120
6 RETALIATORY ABDUCTIONS AND MALICIOUS LEGAL PROCEEDINGS  161
CONCLUSION  192

Appendix i: Ravishment legislation  196
Appendix ii: Sources of ravishment cases  204
Bibliography  231
Index  254
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURE

TABLES

1.1 Classification of ravishment cases  
1.2 The language of abduction before 1285  
1.3 Proportion of references using and avoiding *raptus*  
1.4 Chronological variance in sexual intercourse terminology  
1.5 Chronological variance in sexual intercourse terminology, Court of King's Bench  
2.1 Proportion of rape cases alleging loss of virginity  
6.1 Types of abductions motivated by quarrels  
6.2 Social status of participants in property kidnappings

FIGURE

1.1 Chronology of ravishment cases
This book documents the traumas experienced by medieval victims of sexual assault and marital predation but celebrates women who found ways to outmanoeuvre cultural norms and legal constraints to marry or live with men of their choosing. The hardships that I have faced during the writing of this book are too trivial to mention in comparison to those endured by medieval victims of ravishment, but, nevertheless, this book would not have been possible without the assistance and support of diverse individuals and institutions, whom I wish to acknowledge now.

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Preface

England and Italy’, in *Regional Variations of Matrimonial Law and Custom in Europe, 1150–1600*, edited by Mia Korpiola (Leiden, 2011). I gratefully acknowledge permission to borrow from these earlier versions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise noted, all references to unpublished manuscripts are to documents in the National Archives, Public Record Office, London.


### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>Selden Society Publications</td>
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