

# THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

BONNIE WHEELER, *Series Editor*

*The New Middle Ages* is a series dedicated to transdisciplinary studies of medieval cultures, with particular emphasis on recuperating women's history and on feminist and gender analyses. This peer-reviewed series includes both scholarly monographs and essay collections.

PUBLISHED BY PALGRAVE:

*Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*  
edited by Gavin R. G. Hambly

*The Ethics of Nature in the Middle Ages:  
On Boccaccio's Poetaphysics*  
by Gregory B. Stone

*Presence and Presentation: Women in  
the Chinese Literati Tradition*  
by Sherry J. Mou

*The Lost Letters of Heloise and Abelard:  
Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*  
by Constant J. Mews

*Understanding Scholastic Thought with Foucault*  
by Philipp W. Rosemann

*For Her Good Estate: The Life of Elizabeth  
de Burgh*  
by Frances A. Underhill

*Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in  
the Middle Ages*  
edited by Cindy L. Carlson and Angela  
Jane Weisl

*Motherhood and Mothering in Anglo-Saxon  
England*  
by Mary Dockray-Miller

*Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a  
Twelfth-Century Woman*  
edited by Bonnie Wheeler

*The Postcolonial Middle Ages*  
edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen

*Chaucer's Pardoner and Gender Theory: Bodies  
of Discourse*  
by Robert S. Sturges

*Crossing the Bridge: Comparative Essays on  
Medieval European and Heian Japanese  
Women Writers*  
edited by Barbara Stevenson and  
Cynthia Ho

*Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in  
the Later Middle Ages*  
by Laurel Amtower

*Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of  
Investiture*  
edited by Stewart Gordon

*Representing Rape in Medieval and Early  
Modern Literature*  
edited by Elizabeth Robertson and  
Christine M. Rose

*Same Sex Love and Desire among Women in  
the Middle Ages*  
edited by Francesca Canadé Sautman and  
Pamela Sheingorn

*Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages:  
Ocular Desires*  
by Suzannah Biernoff

*Listen, Daughter: The Speculum Virginitatis  
and the Formation of Religious Women in  
the Middle Ages*  
edited by Constant J. Mews

*Science, the Singular, and the Question of  
Theology*  
by Richard A. Lee, Jr.

*Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to  
the Renaissance*  
edited by Thelma S. Fenster and  
Clare A. Lees

*Malory's Morte Darthur: Remaking Arthurian Tradition*  
by Catherine Batt

*The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*  
edited by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski,  
Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Warren

*Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350–1500*  
by Kathleen Kamberick

*Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England*  
by Elizabeth Scala

*Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul*  
by Bonnie Effros

*Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire*  
by Anne McClanan

*Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images*  
edited by Désirée G. Koslin and  
Janet Snyder

*Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*  
edited by Bonnie Wheeler and John  
Carmi Parsons

*Isabel La Católica, Queen of Castile: Critical Essays*  
edited by David A. Boruchoff

*Homeropticism and Chivalry: Discourses of Male Same-Sex Desire in the Fourteenth Century*  
by Richard E. Zeikowitz

*Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225–1350*  
by Linda E. Mitchell

*Eloquent Virgins: From Thecla to Joan of Arc*  
by Maud Burnett McNerney

*The Persistence of Medievalism: Narrative Adventures in Contemporary Culture*  
by Angela Jane Weisl

*Capetian Women*  
edited by Kathleen D. Nolan

*Joan of Arc and Spirituality*  
edited by Ann W. Astell and Bonnie  
Wheeler

*The Texture of Society: Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries*  
edited by Ellen E. Kittell and  
Mary A. Suydam

*Charlemagne's Mustache: And Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age*  
by Paul Edward Dutton

*Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality, and Sight in Medieval Text and Image*  
edited by Emma Campbell and  
Robert Mills

*Queering Medieval Genres*  
by Tison Pugh

*Sacred Place in Early Medieval Neoplatonism*  
by L. Michael Harrington

*The Middle Ages at Work*  
edited by Kellie Robertson and  
Michael Uebel

*Chaucer's Jobs*  
by David R. Carlson

*Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture, and Cultural Identity*  
by John M. Ganim

*Queer Love in the Middle Ages*  
by Anna Klosowska

*Performing Women: Sex, Gender and the Iberian Lyric*  
by Denise K. Filios

*Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England*  
by David Gary Shaw

- Visual Culture in the German Middle Ages*  
edited by Kathryn Starkey and  
Horst Wenzel
- Medieval Paradigms: Essays in  
Honor of Jeremy duQuesnay Adams,  
Volumes 1 and 2*  
edited by Stephanie Hayes-Healy
- False Fables and Exemplary Truth in Later  
Middle English Literature*  
by Elizabeth Allen
- Ecstatic Transformation: On the Uses of Alterity  
in the Middle Ages*  
by Michael Uebel
- Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early  
Modern Cultures: New Essays*  
edited by Lawrence Besserman
- Tolkien's Modern Middle Ages*  
edited by Jane Chance and Alfred K.  
Siewers
- Representing Righteous Heathens in Late  
Medieval England*  
by Frank Grady
- Byzantine Dress: Representations  
of Secular Dress in Eighth-to-Twelfth  
Century Painting*  
by Jennifer L. Ball
- The Laborer's Two Bodies: Labor and the  
"Work" of the Text in Medieval Britain,  
1350–1500*  
by Kellie Robertson
- The Dogarossa of Venice, 1250–1500: Wife  
and Icon*  
by Holly S. Hurlburt
- Logic, Theology, and Poetry in Boethius,  
Abelard, and Alan of Lille: Words in the  
Absence of Things*  
by Eileen Sweeney
- The Theology of Work: Peter Damian and the  
Medieval Religious Movement*  
by Patricia Ranft
- On the Purification of Women: Churhing in  
Northern France, 1100–1500*  
by Paula Rieder
- Writers of the Reign of Henry II:  
Twelve Essays*  
edited by Ruth Kennedy and Simon  
Meecham-Jones
- Lonesome Words: The Vocal Poetic  
of the Old English Lament and the African  
American Blues Songs*  
by M.G. McGeachy
- Performing Piety: Musical Culture in Medieval  
English Nunneries*  
by Anne Bagnell Yardley
- The Flight from Desire: Augustine and Ovid to  
Chaucer*  
by Robert R. Edwards
- Mindful Spirit in Late Medieval  
Literature: Essays in Honor  
of Elizabeth D. Kirk*  
edited by Bonnie Wheeler
- Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles,  
Clothwork, and Other Cultural  
Imaginings*  
edited by E. Jane Burns
- Was the Bayeux Tapestry Made in France?:  
The Case for St. Florent of Saumur*  
by George Beech
- Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the  
Middle Ages*  
by Erin L. Jordan
- Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in  
Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middle*  
by Jeremy Jerome Cohen
- Medieval Go-Betweens and Chaucer's  
Pandarus*  
by Gretchen Mieszkowski
- The Surgeon in Medieval  
English Literature*  
by Jeremy J. Citrome

*Temporal Circumstances: Form and History in the Canterbury Tales*

by Lee Patterson

*Erotic Discourse and Early English Religious Writing*

by Lara Farina

*Odd Bodies and Visible Ends in Medieval Literature*

by Sachi Shimomura

*On Farting: Language and Laughter in the Middle Ages*

by Valerie Allen

*Women and Medieval Epic: Gender, Genre, and the Limits of Epic Masculinity*

edited by Sara S. Poor and  
Jana K. Schulman

*Race, Class, and Gender in "Medieval" Cinema*

edited by Lynn T. Ramey and  
Tison Pugh

*Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages*

by Noah D. Guynn

*England and Iberia in the Middle Ages, 12th–15th Century: Cultural, Literary, and Political Exchanges*

edited by María Bullón-Fernández

*The Medieval Chastity Belt: A Myth-Making Process*

by Albrecht Classen

THE MEDIEVAL CHASTITY BELT  
A MYTH-MAKING PROCESS

*Albrecht Classen*

palgrave  
macmillan



THE MEDIEVAL CHASTITY BELT  
© Albrecht Classen, 2007.

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2007 978-1-4039-7558-4

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

First published in 2007 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN™  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010 and  
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England RG21 6XS  
Companies and representatives throughout the world.

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-53627-6      ISBN 978-0-230-60309-7 (eBook)  
DOI 10.1057/9780230603097

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Classen, Albrecht.

The medieval chastity belt : a myth-making process / by Albrecht Classen.

p. cm. — (The new Middle Ages)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Chastity belts—History. 2. Chastity belts—Social aspects. I. Title.

GT2810.C53 2007

391.4'4—dc22

2007060036

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: April 2007

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
Introduction	1
1 The Chastity Belt: Fiction and Truth According to Scholarship and Popular Opinion. A Case Study of the History of Myth-Making: Introduction	7
2 Modern and Medieval Myth-Making	63
3 Another Myth: The <i>Jus primae noctis</i> , or the <i>Droit du cuissage</i> (Droit du seigneur)	147
4 The Nature of Myths Revisited	155
<i>Notes</i>	157
<i>Bibliography</i>	197
<i>Index</i>	219

*This page intentionally left blank*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to the many different libraries in North America and Europe that helped me find the relevant research material for this book. First of all, the Library of the University of Arizona proved to be, once again, a stellar research facility in every respect. I feel very fortunate to have this academic support right here in Tucson at the University of Arizona. I am also grateful to the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, the Library of the Universität Marburg, the Library of the Universität Freiburg, the Library of the Universität Innsbruck, the Library of the Universität Würzburg, the Cambridge University Library, and a number of other archives for allowing me to use their resources. Further, I would like to express my thanks to the Schloss- und Beschlägemuseum, Velbert (near Essen) for their help in securing photos of chastity belts. I am also happy to acknowledge the Hanns Schell Collection in Graz, Austria, for its generous offer to provide me, free of charge, with photos of their chastity belts.

I am most grateful to my friends and colleagues, Prof. Dr. Peter Dinzeltacher, Werfen/Salzburg, and Dr. Reinhold Münster, Würzburg, for providing me with so much inspiration and material important for my research. Prof. Dinzeltacher especially served as a superb sounding board for many of my questions and observations, challenging me along the way and helping me refine my arguments. Finally, my colleagues and students in the Department of German Studies, University of Arizona, provided me with a public forum to present my findings and to field their critical questions during our Lecture Series in October 2005. The Dean of the College of Humanities, Dr. Charles Tatum, helped me with a small travel grant in the summer of 2005, for which I am particularly thankful because I was not successful with other funding requests from my university. The German Academic Exchange Service provided me with a generous and most appreciated summer research grant in 2006 which made it possible to complete the work on this book in good time.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to publish my monograph on the chastity belt with Palgrave, and would like to express my thanks to Bonnie Wheeler, editor of the book series, "The New Middle Ages," for her enthusiastic support and acceptance of my work.

Last but not least, I dedicate this volume to the companion of my life, my wife Aiko, and to the most wonderful young man I know of, my son Stephan.