

The Perception of Virginity in the Middle Ages

Chris Dixon, University of Wales Trinity St David

Virginity has had an obsessive importance for people – particularly men - throughout history. It is a subject which has caused behaviour which ranges between the adulation for the purity and sanctity of the virgin and the most shocking attitudes of misogyny, discrimination, abuse and cruelty towards women.

Virginity and Religion

For Christians (and to an extent Muslims) the mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the concept of parthenogenesis is a cornerstone of their faith. The sin of Eve has its ultimate forgiveness in the virtue of Mary.

One importance of virginity is therefore the enduring virginity of devout Christians (male as well as female) who lead their lives as clerics, monks or nuns in a state of celibacy. This was a state of grace widely respected. Also admired were royal virgins, for example Queen Elizabeth I or King Edward the Confessor (modern historians offering alternative reasons for his not producing an heir), and public

figures such as Joan of Arc. There existed a number of other women or girls who resisted attempts at seduction or rape and lost their lives as a result. Many of these became sanctified as Virgin Martyrs.

Virgin Martyrs

'The Golden Legend', written by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genova in 1275 is a hagiography of 'The Lives of the Saints'.¹ Professor Robert Mills has discovered at least thirteen virgin martyrs' biographies in 'The Golden Legend' who underwent violence or rape. Four are forced into brothels, four suffered attempts at forced marriage and several others suffered actual rape attempts.² What these stories reveal is conflicting and opposite perceptions of virginity and virgins. There exist disrespect, abuse and violence of the virgin but, after her death, the veneration of the sanctity of the Virgin Martyr.

Perhaps the most well known of so called 'Virgin Martyrs' was Joan of Arc (1412-

¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *'The Golden Legend'*, Translated by William Caxton (1483), Edited by F.S.Ellis (1931), Fordham University, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume2.asp#Lucy>, [Accessed: 10th April 2022].

² R.Mills, 'Can the Virgin Martyr Speak', in *Medieval Virginites* ed. By A.Berhau et al, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp189-191.

1431). A peasant girl, she experienced 'visions' and 'hallucinations' at the age of 13

which she interpreted as communication from God. She decided at that point to

resolve to remain a virgin and it was as 'La Pucelle' (the Maid) that she chose to

refer to herself. Although she was ultimately tried for heresy, the veracity of her

claim to be a virgin was considered to be of major importance. At her trial of

rehabilitation (25 years after her execution), her squire 'Jean d'Aulon' testified that:

The said Maid was seen, visited and privately looked at and examined in the secret parts of her body, but after they had seen and looked at everything which ought to be looked at in such a case, ... [it was] related to the king that she ... was certainly a true and entire main, in whom could be found no corruption nor mark of violence.³

It is not known if the women who examined Joan had any experience as midwives.

One of the accusers, the Duke of Bedford, was watching through a peephole.

Professor Kelly reminds us that 'in the hagiographical tradition ... virgins often

possess unusual gifts, including extraordinary eloquence, imperviousness to pain,

and prophetic and visionary powers.'⁴

Ælfric of Eynsham, writing in the second half of the tenth century also produced a

³ Kelly.K.C, '*Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages*', London and New York Routledge (2014), pp17-18,38-9.

⁴ Ibid, p39.

'Lives of the Saints' in which he listed at least twelve names associated with the legends of virgin martyrs.⁵

Bridal Virginity

For medieval men, the most important aspect of virginity was the requirement at marriage that their brides be virgins. This was probably based on a social importance for preservation of the bloodline – a powerful human instinct. Only by a guarantee of virginity could a man be sure the first born child would really be his own. Medieval history is full of examples of the way in which the bride's virginity was to be tested and the punishments to be exacted if she was found not to be a virgin or had been falsely accused.

These practices, often based on ignorance, superstition, deeply rooted gender discrimination or disrespect had their origins in religious texts, the law or cultural traditions.

⁵ Cubitt.C, 'Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth and Eleventh Century England', in *Gender and History*, Volume 12, No.1, pp1-32, Wiley Online Library (2000), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-0424.00170>, [Accessed 8th April 2022].

Throughout the medieval period, women were not only regarded as inferior to men but actually 'owned' by men. A girl was subject to her father until marriage when she was given over to her husband. It is to our shame that this practice is still honoured today by the tradition of the bride's father 'giving her way' at a wedding ceremony. If a girl's father died before her marriage, she was under the control of a brother or an uncle. If a woman became a widow, she was regarded as being controlled by a brother-in-law or possibly by one of her own sons.

This led to the perception of virginity being a commodity owned by the bride's father and being ceremoniously transferred to the husband.

The importance and significance of female virginity has manifested itself from antiquity.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the 'Laws of Sexual Morality' deal with the situation where a husband 'detests' his bride by 'charging her with shameful conduct', i.e. not being a virgin. The bride's parents take the 'evidence of her virginity to the elders at the city gate'. The evidence is 'a cloth' so presumably a blood stained sheet or

clothes'. If it is found that the bride was not a virgin, then she is 'stoned to death with stones because she has done a disgraceful thing'. If, however, the husband is wrong in his accusation he is fined one hundred shekels '*which is given to the father of the young woman*' (italics mine).⁶

What is particularly shocking about this practice – dating from earlier than 1000 BCE – is not just the exaggerated difference between the punishments but that it is the father of the bride rather than the bride herself who is compensated for the false accusation.

Over 3000 years later, this practice has not yet died out in some places in the world.

In a report by 'Radio Free Europe' about life in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, nineteen year old Rokhsana was stoned to death by Taliban militants in the province of Ghor, Afghanistan. Her offence – not being a virgin. This occurred in October 2015.⁷

There are many examples of similar practices in the medieval period.

⁶ The New King James Bible, Deuteronomy 22:13-21.

⁷ Afifa Sakhil, 'Virginity or Death for Afghan Brides', Radio Free Europe, 2015, <<https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-virgin-brides-punishment/27409971.html>>, [Accessed: 10th April 2015].

Testing for Virginity

By the thirteenth century it was already understood by some physicians that the presence of blood at first intercourse is not a reliable indicator of virginity. The physician Guilielmus de Saliceto commented on the difference between the consistency of 'virginal' and 'menstrual' blood.⁸ Perceptions of proof of virginity – even by the medical profession – became increasingly bizarre. Here are some examples reported by Professor Kelly.⁹

From the author of *De Secretis mulierum* (A woman's secrets) comes this

recommendation:

If a man wants to determine if a particular woman is a virgin, he should examine her urine. The urine of virgins is 'clear and lucid, sometimes white, sometimes sparkling'.

De Saliceto claims that 'a virgin urinates with a subtle hiss, and indeed takes longer than a small boy'.¹⁰

In *De passionibus mulierum* the fifteenth century physician Niccolo Falucci claims that:

'A woman is covered with a piece of cloth and fumigated with the best coal, if she is a virgin she does not perceive its odour through her mouth and nose; if she smells it, she is a virgin. If she takes it in a drink, she immediately voids

⁸ Kelly, pp 28-9.

⁹ *ibid*, p29.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p29.

urine if she is a virgin. A corrupt woman will also urinate immediately if a fumigation is prepared with cockle. Upon fumigation with dock flowers, if she is a virgin she immediately becomes pale, and, if not, her humour falls on the fire and other things are said about her'.¹¹

The effects of failing to be able to prove virginity on the wedding night led to some astonishing 'remedies' by which, it is said, a woman can fake virginity (generally by producing blood). For example, from *De virginitate restituenta sophisticæ*, this remedy is suggested:

'The day before her marriage, let her put a leech very cautiously on the labia, taking care lest it slip in by mistake; then blood will flow out here, and a little crust will form in that place. Because of the flux of blood and the constricted channel of the vagina, thus in having intercourse the false virgin will deceive the man.'¹²

There were two other situations in which a women might be called upon to prove her virginity. The first was in a situation in which she accused a man of rape.

The extent to which the scales of justice weighed heavily against the virgin accuser can be evidenced by some examples of medieval law reports.

Professor Kim Phillips, from Auckland University recounts the story from the late thirteenth century of a young virgin by the name of Rose who was forcibly abducted and raped. She was kept prisoner for 21 months before managing to escape. She

¹¹ Kelly, p29.

¹² *ibid*, p32.

raised the 'hue and cry' (a claim for townspeople to assist in the arrest of a suspected felon), and eventually brought her case for felony against her attacker.

The offence of rape, at this time, was more one of abduction or theft and eventually, after a lengthy legal process, the attacker was ordered to pay compensation of ten pounds largely for the 'theft of her virginity'. It is not known to whom this compensation was paid – the victim or her father.¹³

A further example, perhaps more shocking, was the story of an rape case from 1321 in which the alleged victim was an 11 year old girl. During the trial, she made a mistake in her testimony by saying that the rape had occurred on a Sunday when she had earlier claimed that it happened on a Wednesday. The accused was therefore discharged and the girl was sentenced to pay huge damages to the rapist. Unable to pay, she was then imprisoned (but later pardoned because of her age).¹⁴

More examples include a case from 1330 when a rape victim had become pregnant.

The court determined that the conception indicated that she must have taken

¹³ K Phillips, 'Four Virgins' Tales: Sex and Power in medieval Law', in *Medieval Virginites* ed. By A. Berhau et al, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp81-2.

¹⁴ Skoda.H, *The Medieval Women who spoke out against sexual violence*, History Extra (2021), <<https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/medieval-women-spoke-against-sexual-violence-middle-ages/>>, [Accessed: 12th April 2022].

pleasure in the sexual act and she was therefore disbelieved and sentenced to imprisonment herself.¹⁵

Included in the Welsh laws of Hywel Dda (Howell the Good) from the tenth century

(The 'Iorwerth' Text), law #50 states that:

If it happens that a woman says that a man has raped her, and the man denies it ... let her take the man's penis in her left hand and put her right hand upon the relics, and let her swear to those relics that he penetrated her with that penis by rape upon her'¹⁶

It is hard to imagine how women from this time could ever consider subjecting

themselves to this repeated sexual abuse. In modern English legal practice, an

alleged rape victim (or victim of any sort of physical assault) cannot be subjected to a

cross examination by the accused acting in person (it has to be carried out by a

lawyer appointed by the court).

The other situation in which a virgin may be required to prove her virginity is where

she seeks an annulment of her marriage for non-consummation based on her

husband's alleged impotence. She must be able to prove her virginity.¹⁷

These examples all tend to suggest that women, and particularly virgins' were not to

¹⁵ Skoda, <<https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/medieval-women-spoke-against-sexual-violence-middle-ages/>>, [Accessed: 12th April 2022].

¹⁶ Jenkins.D (edited and translated), Texts of the Tractate on The Law of Women, in *The Welsh Law of Women*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017, p193.

¹⁷ Jenkins, p193.

be trusted – their word was rarely taken as evidence.

Women's Perception of Virginity

The misogynistic and heavily unbalanced nature of the relationship between the genders may well have been caused by the fact that, with very few exceptions, all the texts, laws, medical writings, and religious commentaries were by men as was the administration of justice whether in the secular or ecclesiastical courts.

This fact did not escape the attention of Geoffrey Chaucer (c1340-1400). In 'The Wife of Bath' (Prologue), the eponymous 5 times married Alysoun says:

For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
That any cleark wol speke good of wyves,
But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,
Ne of noon oother woman never the mo.
Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?
By God, if women hadde written stories,
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
The wolde han written of men moore wikkednesse
Than al the mark of Adam may redresse.¹⁸

Alysoun had had five husbands (three good and 2 bad) and she speaks with admiration of virgins – but says no-one had the right to say she should be one. In this extract she claims that no men ever speak well about women (except saints).

¹⁸ Chaucer.G, *The Wife of Bath (prologue)*, online by Harvard University, 'Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website, Section 3.1 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', ll 6880696, <<https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/wife-baths-prologue-and-tale-0>>, [Accessed: 12th April 2022].

Her reference to 'who painted the lion' is to the Aesop Fable in which a man claims proof of his superiority over a lion by reference to an artwork in which a man is shown subduing a lion. The lion retorts that if the artwork had been painted by a lion, it would have shown a very different picture. Similarly, if women had written the stories, they would have revealed the wickedness of men.

A work by Kathryn Philips, a young poet writing in the early 17th century illustrates some of the advantages of virginity from a woman's perspective. She says:

A married state affords but little ease:
The best of husbands are so hard to please.
This in wife's careful faces you may spell,
Tho' they dissemble their misfortunes well.
A virgin state is crown'd with much content,
It's always happy as it's innocent.
No blustering husbands to create your fears
No pangs of childbirth to extol your tears
No children's cries to offend your ears
Few worldly crosses to distract your prayers
Thus are you freed from all the cares that do
Attend on matrimony and a husband too.¹⁹

The most comprehensive autobiography of a woman dating from the early fifteenth century is that by Margery Kempe. The book records in detail the life of a married

¹⁹ Burt.R and Archer.J (eds), *The Enclosure Acts – Sexuality, Property and Culture in Early Modern England*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press 1994), Online, pp237-8, <
[https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Enclosure Acts/FRWbDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=sustained+virginity&pg=PA237&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Enclosure_Acts/FRWbDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=sustained+virginity&pg=PA237&printsec=frontcover)>, [Accessed April 12th 2022].

woman who, despite much criticism, becomes a visionary and holy woman. She could not read or write and dictated the text to friends or family. The manuscript was lost sometime between the end of the fifteenth century until it was rediscovered in a country house in England in 1934.²⁰

Virginity – The Monster

We have seen how virginity can be perceived by men as wondrous, attractive, desirable, admirable and mystic. For some, virginity can inspire fear – even terror and can be seen as monstrous. There are myths and spiritual beliefs about a malevolent power of a virgin's genitals. These are sometimes associated with the head of Medusa with the pubic hair representing the snakes. The horror of this links to the fear of castration and also a barrier to entry.²¹

Professor Juliet Dor writes about this in an essay about an extraordinary ancient type of carving known as a Sheela-na-Gig. This is a grotesque and deformed sculpture of a naked woman with very prominent oversized genitals. Dating from the twelfth to

²⁰ Kempe.M, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, (UK: Penguin Classics , 2019).

²¹ Dor.J, 'The Sheela-na-gig: An incongruous sign of sexual purity', in *Medieval Virginites* ed. By A.Berhau et al, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp38-9

the seventeenth century they can be found in England, Wales and especially Ireland.

They are obscene in the extreme but have been considered by some as

representing virgins.²²

The Welsh Lawcodes

In medieval Wales there existed an extensive resource of written law. This was

generally referred to as 'Cyfraith Hywel' (The Law of Hywel). Hywel Dda (Hywel the

good) (c.880 – 948) was king of Deheubarth (South West Wales) and was held in

high regard for his wisdom, compassion and justice. The laws are available in about

40 manuscripts which date from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries – so well

after the life of Hywel. The manuscripts are grouped into three main collections

known as 'Iorwerth', 'Blegywryd' and 'Cyfnerth'. The names are of the lawyer or

jurist compiling the redactions of the law texts. There is no direct or contemporary

evidence confirming the establishment of the laws by Hywel himself. He is said to

have gathered together the most learned men in Wales for a conference (perhaps at

²² Dor, pp33-49.

Whitland) at which the basis for the laws was established.²³ The preamble to the

Blegywryd redaction includes this detail:

‘Hywel the Good ... summoned to him from every commote of his kingdom six men who were practised in authority and jurisprudence ... to the place called The White House [Whitland] on the Taf in Dyfed ... And at the end of Lent the king selected from that assembly the twelve most skilled laymen of his men and the one most skilled scholar who was called Master Blwgywrd to form and interpret for him and for his kingdom, laws and usages...’²⁴

The lawcodes are similar in concept to the English Common law but differ in one

important respect. Whereas English law tended to focus on punishment of the

offender, the Welsh (and other Celtic lawcodes such as Irish or Breton) were more

concerned with compensation for the victim.

Importantly, the lawcodes contain separate sections (tractates) dealing specifically

with the Law of Women which include the status, responsibility and rights of virgins.

Although such recognition is welcome, it is nevertheless the case that the status of

women under these law codes was markedly inferior to that of men.

²³ Cyfraith Hywel, *Hwyel Dda, Tractates and Sections, Prologues*, < <http://cyfraith-hywel.cymru.ac.uk/en/canllaw-traethigau-rhaglithiau.php>>, [Accessed 19th April 2022].

²⁴ Wikipedia ‘Cyfraith Hywel’, citing ‘The Laws of Hywel Dda (The Book of Blegywryd) by Melville Richards, < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyfraith_Hywel#Manuscripts>, [Accessed 19th April 2022].



Image of Hywel the Good from the thirteenth century Latin manuscript.

National Library of Wales: <<https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/manuscripts/the-middle-ages/laws-of-hywel-dda#?c=&m=&s=&cv=12&xywh=-402%2C-1037%2C5636%2C4793>>

There are defined several types of payment which are extensively referred to in the laws. The two most important are *galanas* and *sarhaed*. *Galanas* generally referred to the compensation payable for homicide (although its meaning was originally much wider).²⁵ The literal meaning of the word is 'feud' and it is probable that the intention was that by punishing murder by compensation the practice of family feuds leading to multiple killings would end. There was no capital punishment for murder – although there was for theft in certain circumstances! *Sarhaed* means 'insult and this was compensation for injury either to the person or to a person's honour. The calculation of the amounts to be paid for compensation was based on the status of the victim. In the case of women, the status was linked to the status value of the responsible man in her life. This was her father before marriage, her brother or brothers and her husband after marriage. The status value for the woman was limited to half or a third of that of the man.

Virginity was critically important at the time of marriage. Marriage (whether or not it

²⁵ Jenkins, p4.

was sanctified by a church ceremony) involved a system of exchange of wealth in which one of the commodities being exchanged was the maiden herself. Her value and her rights virtually disappeared if she were to be found not to be a virgin.²⁶

The asset of virginity was deemed to belong not to the maiden, nor to her family but to her feudal lord. When the virginity was lost (by marriage, intercourse before marriage or rape), a fee was payable to the lord. This was called *amobr* and in different circumstances could be deemed payable by the husband, the girl's family, or if she has effectively given herself to a man, by the girl herself.²⁷

When a marriage is consummated (generally on the wedding night), the husband becomes liable for a payment to his wife called *cowyll*. This literally means 'a cowl' and possibly originally consisted of a headdress because whereas virgins wore their hair loose, the consummation of the marriage meant that the *morwyn* (maid) has become a *gwraig* (woman) and thenceforth is expected to wear a head covering.

²⁶ Jenkins, p9.

²⁷ Ibid, 'The Iorwerth Text, p 191.

There are conditions which have to be satisfied before the *cowyll* is given. The wife must stipulate how she wants the payment to be made and the request must be made 'before she rises from bed the next day'.²⁸ The value of the *cowyll* is specified in some detail in some of the texts. It varies depending on the status of the girl's father. For the daughter of a king it is eight pounds, one pound for the daughter of a *gwrda* (nobleman) and four score pence for the daughter of a villein.²⁹

Other payments defined in the laws are *argyfrau* (dowry) and *agweddi* (woman's entitlement on separation). The values specified in the laws are sometimes strange. For example, the *agweddi* entitlement for the wife of a *breyr* (freeman) is 'six bullocks whose horns are as long as their ears'.³⁰

There are three situations where the treatment of virginity is vitally important. Firstly on the wedding night the husband was entitled to expect his wife to be a virgin. If she were discovered not to be so the husband could repudiate the marriage and claim compensation in the form of *sarhaed*. The problem, of course, was how to

²⁸ Jenkins, p199.

²⁹ *ibid*, p191

³⁰ *ibid*, The Cynherth Text, p157.

ascertain if his new wife was a virgin or not. According to the Latin Redaction if the husband finds his bride to be 'deflowered' but notwithstanding this has intercourse with her and sleeps with her until morning his wife loses no part of her rights. But if after discovering his wife not to be a virgin he approaches the wedding guests (who have remained as witnesses) and claims his bride is a *twyll morwyn* (false virgin), then she may lose her legal rights. If on the next day he 'makes trial of her' and she denies it (not being a virgin), what happens depends upon her age. If she is mature (has breasts, pubic hair and has started menstruating) then seven of her near relatives including both her parents must swear to confirm her virginity. If, after this, she is held to be 'deflowered' for certain then her shift (nightgown) is cut in front and behind and a year old steer is handed to her by its greased tail. It remain in her hand, she is entitled to keep it as her compensation. Otherwise she takes nothing.³¹

It is not certain what this bizarre test was intended to achieve. It may have been just a humiliation for the false virgin or possibly a deterrent for future false virgins. There

³¹ Jenkins, Latin Redaction A, p175.

is no evidence that the test was ever carried out in practice.

The second situation is where a virgin claims she has been raped. The law is very specific about how this should be verified. The man may deny the allegation but he has to find fifty witnesses (no slaves or aliens) who will swear on oath to support him.

Then:

‘if it happens that she legally charges him let her take the man’s penis in her left hand and put her right hand upon the relics, and let her swear to those relics that he penetrated her with that penis by rape upon her, and that he caused shame and insult to her, and to her kindred and to her lord’.³²

There is one rare example of a situation in which a virgin’s word would be accepted although the circumstances are hard to imagine happening in real life.

‘Whoever should abduct a virgin and before he has intercourse with her she asks him, “What will you give me?”, and he specifies how much he would give her ... though he try to deny it afterwards, if she charges him, she is to be believed’.³³

The reason is that she was taken to a place where there were no wedding guests – therefore no witnesses.³⁴

Lastly, the laws offer three reasons why a wife may leave her husband legally and

³² Jenkins, The lowerth Text, p193.

³³ Ibid, p189.

³⁴ ibid

without losing any of her entitlements. The first is that he is leprous, the second that he has bad breath and the third that he is impotent. In the latter case, the law requires it to be proved in this way:

‘A white sheet newly washed is stretched under them, and the man goes onto it to have intercourse with her and when his desire comes let him ejaculate it upon the sheet. And if he can do that so that it is seen upon the sheet, it is sufficient for him ... but if he cannot do that, she can part from him and take all that is hers.’³⁵

It can only be imagined who the witnesses were for the verification of that test!

To a certain extent, the existence of laws specifically dealing with the rights of women and virgins could be welcomed. It must nevertheless be accepted that the vast areas of discrimination against women and the humiliating and disrespectful treatment of virgins makes these law codes into a historical record of shame.

Conclusion

There is no simple answer to the question of how virginity was perceived in the middle ages. On the one hand there existed the continuation of the attitudes derived from religious texts from antiquity in which the virginity of brides was regarded as so

³⁵ Jenkins, The lowerth Text, p201.

important that the humiliation and punishment for brides allegedly discovered not to be virgins was extreme. At the other end of the scale there existed admiration, veneration and adulation for the virgin, especially those that committed their lives to God. Virginity was often treated as a commodity owned not by the maid herself but by her kin or overlord. Women were subjected to the most degrading and humiliating tests for their virginity, the tests often relying on quite unreliable evidence.

The study of medieval attitudes to virginity makes for a great deal of uncomfortable reading. In the twenty first century we should now be able to take comfort from the fact that the prejudices and discriminations evident in history are now things of the past. Sadly, we are not yet in the position of being in a position to do so.

Chris Dixon - 2114844

University of Wales, Trinity St David

April 2022

Bibliography

Bernau. A, Evans. R and Salih. S (Editors), *Medieval Virginites*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

Cubitt. C, 'Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth and Eleventh Century England' , in *Gender and History*, Volume 12, No.1, pp1-32, Wiley Online Library (2000), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-0424.00170>, [Accessed 8th April 2022].

Phillips. K, *Medieval Maidens*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

Owen. M and Jenkins. D (Editors), *The Welsh Law of Women*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017).

Kelly. K, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages*, (Abingdon: Routledge: 2014).

Kempe. M, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Translated and edited by B.A.Windeatt), (UK: Penguin Random House UK, 2019).