



# Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech (Early Modern Literature in History)

*J. Catty*

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The word 'rape' today denotes sexual appropriation; yet it originally signified the theft of a woman from her father or husband by abduction or elopement. In the early modern period, its meaning is in transition between these two senses, while rapes and attempted rapes proliferate in literature. This age also sees the emergence of the woman writer, despite a sexual ideology which equates women's writing with promiscuity. Classical myths, however, associate women's story-telling with resistance to rape. This comprehensive study of rape and representation considers a wide range of texts drawn from prose fiction, poetry and drama by male and female writers, both canonical and non-canonical. Combining close attention to detail with an overview of the period, it demonstrates how the representation of gender-relations has exploited the subject of rape, and uses its understanding of this phenomenon to illuminate the issues of sexual and discursive autonomy which figure largely in women's texts of the period.

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