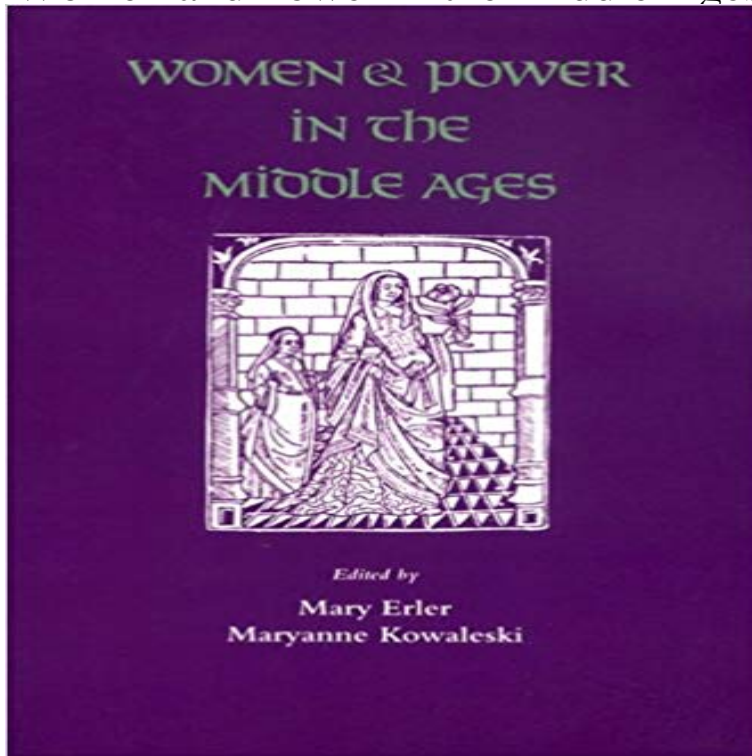


Women and Power in the Middle Ages



Power in medieval society has traditionally been ascribed to figures of public authority?violent knights and conflicting sovereigns who altered the surface of civic life through the exercise of law and force. The wives and consorts of these powerful men have generally been viewed as decorative attendants, while common women were presumed to have had no power or consequence. Reassessing the conventional definition of power that has shaped such portrayals, *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* reveals the varied manifestations of female power in the medieval household and community?from the cultural power wielded by the wives of Venetian patriarchs to the economic power of English peasant women and the religious power of female saints. Among the specific topics addresses are Griseldas manipulation of silence as power in Chaucers *The Clerks Tale*; the extensive networks of influence devised by Lady Honor Lisle; and the role of medieval women book owners as arbiters of lay piety and ambassadors of culture. In every case, the essays seek to transcend simple polarities of public and private, male and female, in order to provide a more realistic analysis of the workings of power in feudal society.

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