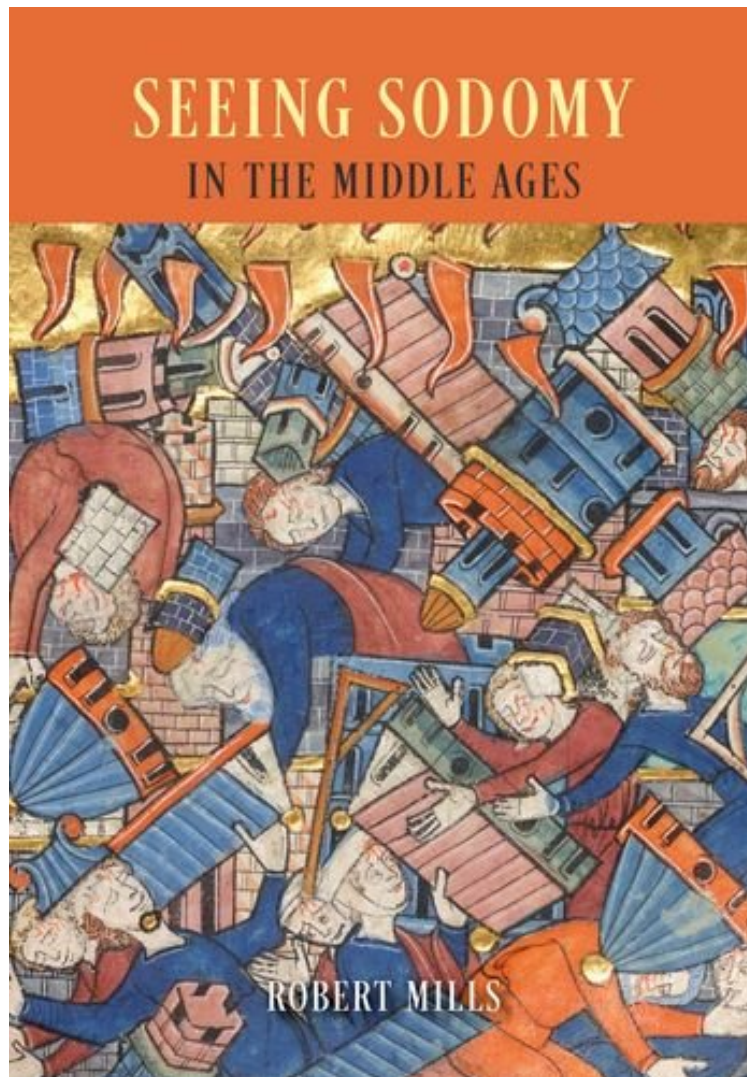


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Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages

Robert Mills

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Robert Mills : Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A thorough study, possibly too much soBy Wayne DynesThis book opens new perspectives for studying sexual variation in the Western middle ages through art, though literary sources are invoked as well. There are chapters on the Bible Moralis, Ovid, the capitals at Vzelay, and some medieval frescoes. Some topics are missing, notably the representations of passionate male friendships. The drawback is that the whole is overladen with an intense carpet of postmodern theory. The book would greatly benefit from drastic shortening, relegating the "Theory" to a journal article.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, some sexual and gendered behaviors were labeled sodomitical or evoked the use of ambiguous phrases such as the unmentionable vice or the sin against nature. How, though, did these categories enter the field of vision? How do you know a sodomite when you see one? In *Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages*, Robert Mills explores the relationship between sodomy and motifs of vision and visibility in medieval culture, on the one hand, and those categories we today call gender and sexuality, on the other. Challenging the view that ideas about sexual and gender dissidence were too confused to congeal into a coherent form in the Middle Ages, Mills demonstrates that sodomy had a rich, multimedia presence in the period and that a flexible approach to questions of terminology sheds new light on the many forms this presence took. Among the topics that Mills covers are depictions of the practices of sodomites in illuminated Bibles; motifs of gender transformation and sex change as envisioned by medieval artists and commentators on Ovid; sexual relations in religious houses and other enclosed spaces; and the applicability of modern categories such as transgender, butch and femme, or sexual orientation to medieval culture. Taking in a multitude of images, texts, and methodologies, this book will be of interest to all scholars, regardless of discipline, who engage with gender and sexuality in their work.

"Masterful. . . . Mills uses the concept of sodomy as a sharp needle through which to stitch meticulous analyses of visual, literary, and historical sources into a rich tapestry that depicts lives and experiences that breached medieval social norms. . . . This sensitive, imaginative work is bound to become a classic among studies of premodern gender and sexuality."