



Death Comes to the Maiden: Sex and Execution 1431-1933

Camille Naish

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In 1791, the French *femme de lettres* Olympe de Gouges wrote that 'as women have the right to take their places on the scaffold, they must also have the right to take their seats in government'. This book explores the issues of female emancipation through the history of female execution, from the burning of Joan of Arc in 1431 to the events of the French revolution.

Concentrating on individual victims, the author addresses the sexual attitudes and prejudices encountered by women condemned to death. She examines the horrific treatment of those denounced as witches and reveals the gruesome reality of death by hanging, burning or the guillotine. In an attempt to uncover the historical truth behind such figures as Joan of Arc, Anne Boleyn, Manon Roland and Charlotte Corday, she goes beyond biography to consider their deaths in symbolic terms. She also considers writers such as Genet, Yourcenar and Brecht and their treatment of the tragic, sacrificial and erotic aspects of female execution.

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