DESCRIPTION

This important new book, by one of the leading social historians in France today, analyses the changing meaning of rape through numerous case studies across the centuries.

The book begins with a history of the relative tolerance of sexual violence in early modern France, and the tendency to condemn the victims by enveloping them in the shame of the act. It then traces the changing legal attitudes to sexual violence at the end of the eighteenth century, and the slow recognition of the role of moral violence in rape in the nineteenth century. Vigarello also stresses the importance of the new medical jurisprudence and the introduction of forensic psychiatry into the courtroom.

But despite the increased number of convictions in the nineteenth century, it was only after the campaigns conducted by feminists in the twentieth century that the true gravity of rape as a crime against women's integrity was fully recognized. As a result, acts of sexual violence are no longer assessed in terms of the risk of debauchery, but in terms of the risk of 'psychic murder' and inner damage.

A History of Rape is a valuable resource for students and scholars of social history, and anyone interested in changing attitudes to sexuality and sexual violence
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Georges Vigarello is Professor in the University of Paris-V and Director of Studies in the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

FEATURES

An important new book by one of France's leading social historians Examines a very topical and relatively neglected subject - the history of rape Traces the changing social and legal attitudes to sexual violence from the sixteenth century to the present day.

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