Abstract

The Paston letters form one of only two surviving collections of fifteenth-century correspondence, in their case especially rich in letters from the women of the family. Clandestine love affairs, secret marriages, violent family rows, bickering with neighbours, battles and sieges, threats of murder and kidnapping, fears of plague: these are just some of the topics discussed in the letters of the Paston women.

Diane Watt’s introduction seeks to place these letters in the context of medieval women’s writing and and medieval letter writing. Her interpretive essay reconstructs the lives of these women by examining what the letters reveal about women’s literacy and education, life in the medieval household, religion and piety, health and medicine, and love, marriage, family relationships, and female friendships in the middle ages.

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