

argues that the legal framework became increasingly strict in the late Middle Ages, an evolution that is particularly visible in the laws and statutes from late medieval Ghent. After this discussion of the legal framework of marriage-making and abduction, I will shift my focus to the judicial records, which provide insight into the actual practice of abduction with marital intent. Chapter 2 outlines the social profile of abductors and abductees and zooms in on the perpetrators and their motives for using abduction as a tool to force marriage. It complicates the common portrayal of abduction as either a conflict between a man and a woman or one between a pair of lovers and the woman's family. Chapter 3 looks at the abductee and revolves around the legal and social importance and meaning of her consent. It analyzes narratives on consent and coercion in court and studies the impact of an abduction on the abductee. The final chapter examines how authorities reacted to and dealt with abductions after they had occurred and how they tried to restore the familial and societal balance that had been broken by the act of forcing a marriage that was not agreed upon by all parties who would have been involved in the normal process of marriage-making.

Focussing on different parties' actions and involvement allows me to consider and bring together multiple medieval perspectives on marriage-making, abduction, and consent. By looking at abduction and marriage-making within middling and upper social groups in different cities in the Low Countries and as they are recorded in a varied and diverse body of legal and administrative sources, this book examines abduction with marital intent as a much more multi-layered phenomenon than it has been represented before. This work reveals that the complicated relationship between consent, marriage, and the family in the Low Countries can only be understood in relation to women's property rights and the unique powers of urban middling groups to make law.

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