



A New History of Medieval French Literature (Rethinking Theory)

Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, Sara L. Preisig

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Is it legitimate to conceive of and write a history of medieval French literature when the term "literature" as we know it today did not appear until the very end of the Middle Ages? In this novel introduction to French literature of the period, Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet says yes, arguing that a profound literary consciousness did exist at the time.

Cerquiglini-Toulet challenges the standard ways of reading and evaluating literature, considering medieval literature not as separate from that in other eras but as part of the broader tradition of world literature. Her vast and learned readings of both canonical and lesser-known works pose crucial questions about, among other things, the notion of otherness, the meaning of change and stability, and the relationship of medieval literature with theology.

Part history of literature, part theoretical criticism, this book reshapes the language and content of medieval works. By weaving together topics such as the origin of epic and lyric poetry, Latin-French bilingualism, women's writing, grammar, authorship, and more, Cerquiglini-Toulet does nothing less than redefine both philosophical and literary approaches to medieval French literature. Her book is a history of the literary act, a history of words, a history of ideas and works?monuments rather than documents?that calls into question modern concepts of literature.

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