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Fictions of Identity in Medieval France

Donald Maddox

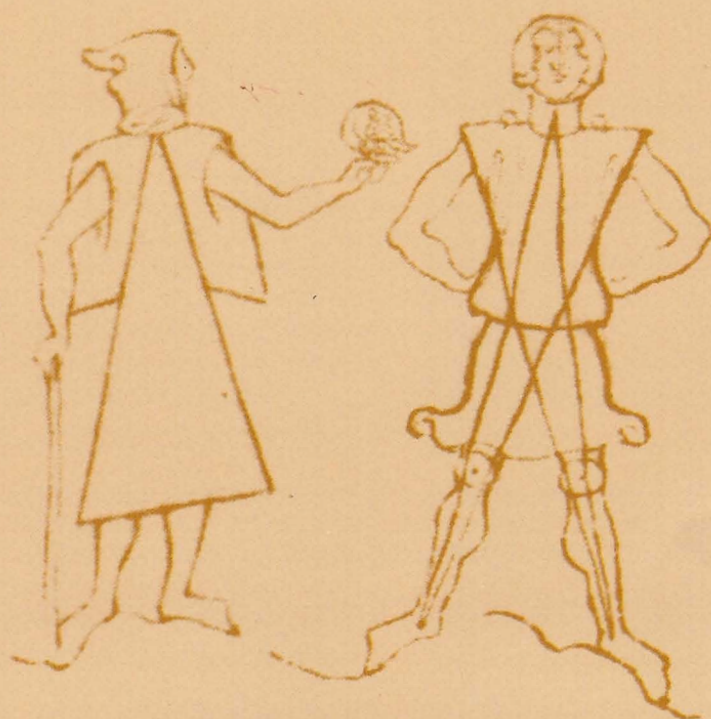
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Donald
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Paperback Re-issue

In this study of vernacular French narrative from the twelfth century through the later Middle Ages, Donald Maddox considers the construction of identity in a wide range of fictions. He focuses on crucial encounters, widespread in medieval literature, in which characters are informed about fundamental aspects of their own circumstances and selfhood. These always arresting and highly significant moments of "specular" encounter are examined in numerous Old and Middle French romances, hagiographic texts, epics, and brief narratives. Maddox discloses the key role of identity in an original reading of the *Lais* of Marie de France as a unified collection, as well as in Arthurian literature, fictions of the courtly tryst, genealogies, and medieval family romance. The study offers many new perspectives on the poetic and cultural implications of identity as an imaginary construct during the long formative period of French literature.

COVER ILLUSTRATION: a twelfth-century depiction of an encounter. Detail from *The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt*, edited by Theodore Bowie (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 85. Reproduced with the kind permission of Indiana University Press.

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