



The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory

Bruce Holsinger

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The Premodern Condition identifies and explains a surprising affinity for medievalism and medieval studies among the leading figures of critical theory. Drawing on a wide range of philosophical, literary-critical, and sociological works produced within the French *nouvelle critique* of the 1960s, Holsinger argues for reconceiving these discourses, in part, as a brilliant amalgamation of medievalisms.

Holsinger shows that the preoccupation with medieval cultures and practices among Bataille, Derrida, Lacan, Barthes, Bourdieu, and their cohorts was so wide ranging that it merits recognition as one of the most significant epiphenomena of postwar French thought. Not simply an object of nostalgic longing or an occasional source of literary exempla, the medieval epoch was continually mined by these thinkers for specific philosophical vocabularies, social formations, and systems of thought.

To supplement its master thesis, *The Premodern Condition* also contains original essays by Bataille and Bourdieu—translated here for the first time into English—that testify in various ways to the strange persistence of medievalisms in French postwar avant-garde writings. What results is an important and original work that will be a touchstone for specialists in medieval studies and critical theory alike.

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