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Literatures of Medieval France

Introduction to the 2011- 2012 lecture

This year's lecture series has the same name as last year's - "The humble and the humiliated. Medieval narrative of abasement". It is the continuation of the 2010-2011 lectures that have not yet been brought to a conclusion. Following our thorough introduction and a few illustrations from various texts, much still remains to be discussed.

Honor, humility, and humiliation are closely linked but also opposed through the particularly strong tensions characteristic of medieval society, founded on honor yet subject to a religion of humility based on a scene of humiliation, the Passion of Christ. Furthermore, the story or narrative, with its changing points of view, amplifies the horror of a humiliation that exists only as a sign and from a certain perspective. This was our introduction.

Having already discussed humiliation in the insanity of romantic love or the insanity of the love of God, we will now examine, through poems, romances, and chronicles, the humiliation of the poor, the ill, and the old, romantic and sexual humiliation, and finally, chivalrous humiliation, emblematic of the medieval world but related to all the others.