



Image and Imagination: Picturing the Old French Epic

Sandra Malicote

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The first in-depth interdisciplinary study of word and image in the Old French chanson de geste, *Image and Imagination: Picturing the Old French Epic* examines the fascinating relationship between illumination and epic narrative constructed by the medieval understanding of the imagination. The study focuses on the epic cycle known as 'the geste of Saint Gille,' including *Aiol* and *Elie de Saint Gille*. The poems in manuscript were produced in the context of the opulent francophone Flemish courts of the mid-to-late thirteenth century. The manuscript (known as BNF fr 25516) is richly illuminated, and the study includes the popular *Beuves de Hanstone*, forerunner of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and the poem *Robert le Diable*, later becoming Meyerbeer's celebrated opera. Concluding with the comparative study of BNF fr 24403's epic treatment of the only illuminated version of Chretien de Troyes' first Arthurian work, *Erec et Enide*, and the Sancti Bertini version of *La Chevalerie Vivien*, the first dated collection of epics made for a prominent northern Bishop, this study introduces the hitherto little-explored world of medieval illumination and epic narrative poetics.

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