

THE JOY OF LOVE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Joy in literature and culture remains a little-studied subject, one sometimes even viewed with suspicion. Here, Lucie Kaempfer reveals its place at the crux of medieval discourses on love across the philosophical, spiritual and secular realms. Taking a European and multilingual perspective stretching from the twelfth century to the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth, she tells a comparative literary history of the writing of love's actual or imagined fulfilment in medieval Europe. Kaempfer attends to the paradox of the endlessness of desire and the impossibility of fulfilment, showing the language of joy to be one of transcendence, both of language and of the self. Identifying, through close analysis of many arresting examples, a range of its key features – its inherent lyricism, its ability to halt or escape linear narrative, its opposition to self-sufficient happiness – she uncovers a figurative and poetic language of love's joy that still speaks to us today.

LUCIE KAEMPFER is an independent scholar specialising in the history of emotions and in comparative and cross-cultural approaches to medieval European literature. Her previous publications cover topics including Chaucer, emotion, medieval romance and translation.

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THE JOY OF LOVE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

A European Literary History

LUCIE KAEMPFER



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