1. Record Nr. UNINA9910451941503321

Titolo History in the comic mode [[electronic resource]]: medieval

communities and the matter of person / / edited by Rachel Fulton,

Bruce W. Holsinger

Pubbl/distr/stampa New York, : Columbia University Press, c2007

ISBN 0-231-50847-6

Descrizione fisica 1 online resource (770 p.)

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Disciplina 940.1

Soggetti Middle Ages

Civilization, Medieval

Individuality - Europe - History - To 1500

Identity (Psychology) - Europe - History - To 1500

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Human body - Social aspects - Europe - History - To 1500

Soul - Social aspects - Europe - History - To 1500

Electronic books.

Europe Religious life and customs Europe Social conditions To 1492

Lingua di pubblicazione Inglese

Formato Materiale a stampa

Livello bibliografico Monografia

Note generali Description based upon print version of record.

Nota di bibliografia Includes bibliographical references and index.

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Sommario/riassunto

In this groundbreaking collection, twenty-one prominent medievalists discuss continuity and change in ideas of personhood and community and argue for the viability of the comic mode in the study and recovery of history. These scholars approach their sources not from a particular ideological viewpoint but with an understanding that all topics, questions, and explanations are viable. They draw on a variety of sources in Latin, Arabic, French, German, Middle English, and more, and employ a range of theories and methodologies, always keeping in mind that environments are inseparable from the making of the people who inhabit them and that these people are in part constituted by and understood in terms of their communities. Essays feature close readings of both familiar and lesser known materials, offering provocative interpretations of John of Rupescissa's alchemy; the relationship between the living and the saintly dead in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons; the nomenclature of heresy in the early eleventh century; the apocalyptic visions of Robert of Uzès; Machiavelli's De principatibus; the role of "demotic religiosity" in economic development; and the visions of Elizabeth of Schönau. Contributors write as historians of religion, art, literature, culture, and society, approaching their subjects through the particular and the singular rather than through the thematic and the theoretical. Playing with the wild possibilities of the historical fragments at their disposal, the scholars in this collection advance a new and exciting approach to writing medieval history.