

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910780055603321
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Titolo	Discourse and dominion in the fourteenth century [[electronic resource]] : oral contexts of writing in philosophy, politics, and poetry // Jesse M. Gellrich
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Princeton, N.J., : Princeton University Press, c1995
ISBN	1-282-75221-9 9786612752216 1-4008-2166-5 1-4008-1171-6
Edizione	[Course Book]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (319 p.)
Disciplina	302.2/242/042209023
Soggetti	English literature - Middle English, 1100-1500 - History and criticism Oral tradition - England Politics and literature - Great Britain - History Written communication - England Discourse analysis, Literary Oral-formulaic analysis Philosophy, Medieval Great Britain History 14th century Historiography Great Britain Civilization 1066-1485 England Languages
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 (p. [273]-296) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- CONTENTS -- Preface -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction -- Chapter One. Vox Literata: On the Uses of Oral and Written Language in the Later Middle Ages -- Part One: Philosophy -- Chapter Two. The Voice of the Sign and the Semiology of Dominion in the Work of Ockham -- Chapter Three. "Real Language" and the Rule of the Book in the Work of Wyclif -- Part Two: Politics -- Chapter Four. Orality and Rhetoric in the Chronicle History of Edward III -- Chapter Five. The Politics of Literacy in the Reign of Richard II -- Part Three: Poetry -- Chapter Six. The Spell of the Ax: Diglossia and History in Sir

Sommario/riassunto

This wide-ranging study of language and cultural change in fourteenth-century England argues that the influence of oral tradition is much more important to the advance of literacy than previously supposed. In contrast to the view of orality and literacy as opposing forces, the book maintains that the power of language consists in displacement, the capacity of one channel of language to take the place of the other, to make the source disappear into the copy. Appreciating the interplay between oral and written language makes possible for the first time a way of understanding the high literate achievements of this century in relation to momentous developments in social and political life. Part I reassesses the "nominalism" of Ockham and the "realism" of Wyclif through discussions of their major treatises on language and government. Part II argues that the chronicle histories of this century are tied specifically to oral customs, and Part III shows how Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Chaucer's Knight's Tale confront outright the displacement of language and dominion. Informed by recent discussions in critical theory, philosophy, and anthropology, the book offers a new synoptic view of fourteenth-century culture. As a critique of the social context of medieval literacy, it speaks directly to postmodern debate about the politics of historicism today.
