

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910821447003321
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Titolo	Written reliquaries : the resonance of orality in medieval English texts / / Leslie K. Arnovick
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Amsterdam ; ; Philadelphia, : J. Benjamins, c2006
ISBN	1-282-15496-6 9786612154966 90-272-9284-1
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (309 p.)
Collana	Pragmatics & beyond, , 0922-842X ; ; new ser., 153
Disciplina	820.9001
Soggetti	Dialogue in literature Discourse analysis, Narrative - Social aspects English philology - Middle English, 1100-1500 Literature, Medieval - History and criticism - Theory, etc
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Written Reliquaries -- Editorial page -- Title page -- LCC data -- Table of contents -- Acknowledgments -- List of Figures -- Preface -- Chapter 1 -- Reconstructing Spoken Performance in Medieval Texts -- A Joint Exploration in Oral Theory and Historical Pragmatics -- Theoretical Framework: Oral Theory -- Theoretical Framework: Historical Pragmatics -- Methodology: Defining Textual Concepts -- Methodology: Delineating Historical Data -- Conclusion: A Joint Exploration in Oral Theory and Historical Pragmatics -- Part I -- Oral Relics in Old English -- Chapter 2 -- Speaking Gibberish -- Charms -- Interpreting Gibberish -- The Performativity of Gibberish -- Word Magic -- Sounds Like Authentic Gibberish to Me -- The Functionality of Gibberish: Data from the Corpus of Charms -- Spirit Code as a Continuum -- Performative Gibberish: An Extended Example -- Conclusion: "O ineffabile" -- Chapter 3 -- Praying the Pater Noster -- The Christian Conversion of a Folk Tradition: Anglo-Saxon Charms -- The Functionality of the Pater Noster: Data from the Corpus of Charms -- Baptism and Secrecy -- Liturgical Tradition -- Private Devotion and Personal Exigency -- The Numinous -- Conclusion: A Hybrid Rite --

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Sommario/riassunto

Written Reliquaries: The resonance of orality in medieval English texts establishes the linguistic component of orality and oral tradition. The relics it examines are traces of spoken performance, artifacts of linguistic and cultural processes. Seven case studies animate verbal acts of making promises, quoting proverbs, pronouncing curses, speaking gibberish, praying Pater Nosters, invoking saints, and keeping silence. The study of their resonance is enabled by a methodological conjunction of historical pragmatics and oral theory. Insights from oral theory enlighten spoken traditions which in turn may be understood in the larger historical-pragmatic context of linguistic performance. The inquiry ranges across broad as well as narrow planes of reference to trace a complex set of cultural and linguistic interactions. In this way it reconstructs relevant discursive contexts, giving detailed accounts of underlying assumptions, traditions, and conventions. Doing so, the book demonstrates that an integrated methodology not only allows access to oral discourse in both Old English and Middle English but also provides insight into the fluid medieval interchange of literacy and orality.
