



Eleanor of Aquitaine, Courtly Love, and the Troubadours (Greenwood Guides to Historic Events of the Medieval World)

ffiona Swabey

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The author offers an accessible overview of the vibrant personal and intellectual developments in the medieval court and monasteries during Eleanor of Aquitaine's lifetime. Primary documents, biographical material and thematic chapters bring this unique period to life.

Eleanor of Aquitaine lived in a remarkable age. The 12th century saw significant advances in both the intellectual and emotional spheres. Scholars explored new areas of philosophy and science and also began to reflect on relationships and what it meant to be human and an individual. For the troubadours and the writers of the new romances, who composed in vernacular language, the focus of their works was the expression of personal feelings and the image of the feminine. Women had had more significant parts to play in the first millennium than in the second, because with the militarization of Europe and the emergence of universities, from which women were excluded, they lost much of their influence. This created an imbalance in society and it is within this context that Eleanor's life should be reviewed.

The period is sometimes called the Twelfth Century Awakening due to the outpouring of extraordinary intellectual inquiry and discovery. Cathedral schools and universities, Islamic influence on European thought, the classical revival, vernacular literature, and Gothic architecture all exerted powerful pulls on the era's culture and politics. Accounts of Eleanor of Aquitaine's life provides a rare glimpse into women's lives during the medieval period, and though an admittedly extraordinary figure, we are able to draw some general conclusions about marriage and motherhood. Troubadours and courtly love, which revolved around declarations of service, devotion, and passion, and an emerging sense of the self. Thematic chapters hit the major topics, laying them out in clear and easy-to-follow writing. Nineteen biographical sketches bring to life the topics, and 15 primary documents, including songs, letters, and poems provide a close-up glimpse of how the people of the time saw their own world. Genealogical tables, maps, chronology, and a timeline provide useful and information quickly. The book concludes with an annotated bibliography and an index.

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