



Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance (Studies in Renaissance Literature)

Alex Davis

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Chivalry and Romance in Renaissance England offers a reinterpretation of the place and significance of chivalric culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century and explores the implications of this reconfigured interpretation for an understanding of the medieval generally. Received wisdom has it that both chivalric culture and the literature of chivalry - romances - were obsolete by the time of the Renaissance, an understanding epitomised by the figure of Don Quixote, the reader of chivalric fictions whose risible literary tastes render him absurd. By way of contrast, this study finds evidence for the continued vitality and relevance of chivalric values at all levels of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century society, from the court entertainments of Elizabeth I to the civic culture of London merchants and artisans. At the same time, it charts the process by which, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the chivalric has been firstly exclusively identified with the medieval and then transformed into a virtual shorthand for 'pastness' generally. ALEX DAVIS is lecturer in English, University of St Andrews.

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