



Romancing the Cathedral: Gothic Architecture in Fin-de-Siecle French Culture

Elizabeth Emery

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Romancing the Cathedral explores the late-nineteenth-century French passion for Gothic architecture, particularly the cathedral. Though maligned in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and vandalized during the French Revolution, by World War I the cathedral was considered the genius of the French nation, a privileged and patriotic work of art that surpassed such other national artworks as Wagner's operas and the Parthenon. However, the moment at which the Gothic style finally reached near-universal acclaim in France also coincided with one of the most anti-clerical periods of French history, the years surrounding the separation of church and state.

Taking this contradiction as a starting point, Elizabeth Emery explores how the cathedral's popularity stemmed from its semantic richness as well as its glorification in the works of such writers and artists as Emile Zola, J.-K. Huysmans, Marcel Proust, Paul Claudel, Claude Monet, Auguste Rodin, and others. Using their works as a springboard, Emery examines the ways in which they responded and contributed to prevailing discourses about the cathedral. Interdisciplinary in nature, Romancing the Cathedral will appeal to those interested in Gothic art and architecture, European cultural studies, medievalism, and French literature."

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