



# **The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography (Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society)**

*Gabrielle M. Spiegel*

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Postmodernism has challenged historians to look at historical texts in a new way and to be skeptical of the claim that one can confidently retrieve "fact" from historical writings. In *The Past as Text* historian Gabrielle M. Spiegel sets out to read medieval histories and chronicles in light of the critical-theoretical problems raised by postmodernism. At the same time she urges a method of analysis that enables the reader to recognize these texts simultaneously as artifice and as works deeply embedded in a historically determinate, knowable social world. Beginning with a theoretical basis for the study of medieval historiography, Spiegel demonstrates her theory in practice, offering readings of medieval histories and chronicles as literary, social, and political constructions. The study insightfully concludes that historians should be equally aware of the discursive nature, literary modes, and ideological investments of such texts and the social circumstances to which they were applied and by which they were generated. Arguing for the "social logic of the text," Spiegel provides historians with a way to retrieve the social significance and conceptual claims produced by these medieval or any historical writings.

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