

Abell

## Spiritual and Material Boundaries in Old French Verse

Contemplating the Walls of the Earthly Paradise

The Earthly Paradise was a vibrant symbol at the heart of medieval Christian geographies of the cosmos. As humanity's primal home now lost through the sins of Adam and Eve, the Earthly Paradise figured prominently in Old French tales of lands beyond the mundane world. This study proposes a fresh look at the complex roles played by the Earthly Paradise in three medieval French poems: Marie de France's *The Purgatory of St. Patrick*, Benedeit's *Voyage of Saint Brendan the Abbot*, and Guillaume de Lorris's *The Romance of the Rose*. By examining the literary, cultural, and artistic components that informed each poem, this book advances the thesis that the exterior walls of the Earthly Paradise served evolving purposes as contemplative objects that implicitly engaged complex notions of economic solidarity and idealized community. These visions of the Earthly Paradise stand to provide a striking contribution to a historically informed response to the contemporary legacies of colonialism and the international refugee crisis.



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