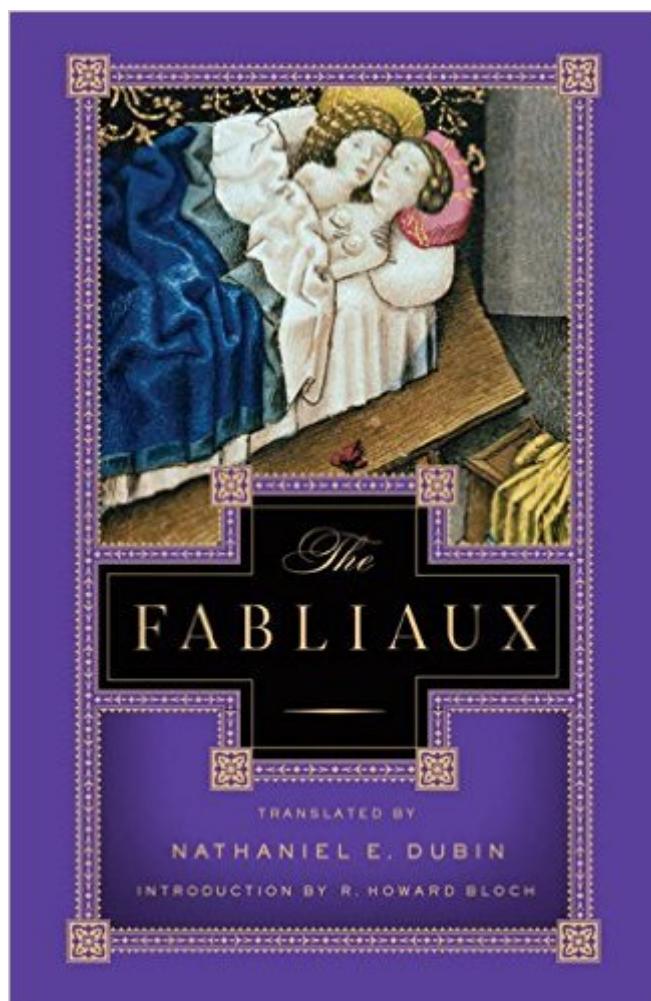


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The Fabliaux



Synopsis

Bawdier than The Canterbury Tales, The Fabliaux is the first major English translation of the most scandalous and irreverent poetry in Western literature. Composed between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, these virtually unknown erotic and satiric poems lie at the root of the Western comic tradition. Passed down by the anticlerical middle classes of medieval France, The Fabliaux depicts priapic priests, randy wives, and their cuckolded husbands in tales that are shocking even by today's standards. Chaucer and Boccaccio borrowed heavily from these riotous tales, which were the wit of the common man rebelling against the aristocracy and Church in matters of food, money, and sex. Containing 69 poems with a parallel Old French text, The Fabliaux comes to life in a way that has never been done in nearly eight hundred years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The fabliaux are an attempt to parody the more courtly formal literature, which is certainly more elegant but never truly represented the thoughts and feelings of the average peasant as did the fabliaux. The introduction points out that these tales were written from the later 12th through the early 14th century, but were largely forgotten from the 16th century to about 1830 when the first popular translation occurred. Before going further, I should note that the vast majority of these verse contain an abundance of explicit four-lettered words; if one were to be offended by these then one need go no further; assuming otherwise, please read on. The fabliaux might be compared to the rap lyrics of today which also appeal to baser instinct and use an abundance of explicit verbiage. These

verses were told by a jongleur or storyteller who expected to get paid for the telling as a modern actor would so expect. Some of the verses are attributed to particular individuals but many have no particular name attached. In keeping with the overall sexual theme of these works, the author translated exactly 69 verses although there are more. The verses are best appreciated when heard as opposed to read, but since few if any jongleur survive today, reading is the next best thing. I felt the authors use of a particular choice of words to complete a rhyme was magnificent, but do admit my French is, at best, sketchy. But for those so interested the French version of each fabliaux is given on the left hand page and the English translation on the right hand page for those wishing to compare the translation with the original. Assuming one is only reading the English translation, the book is approximately half as long as the stated pages.

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