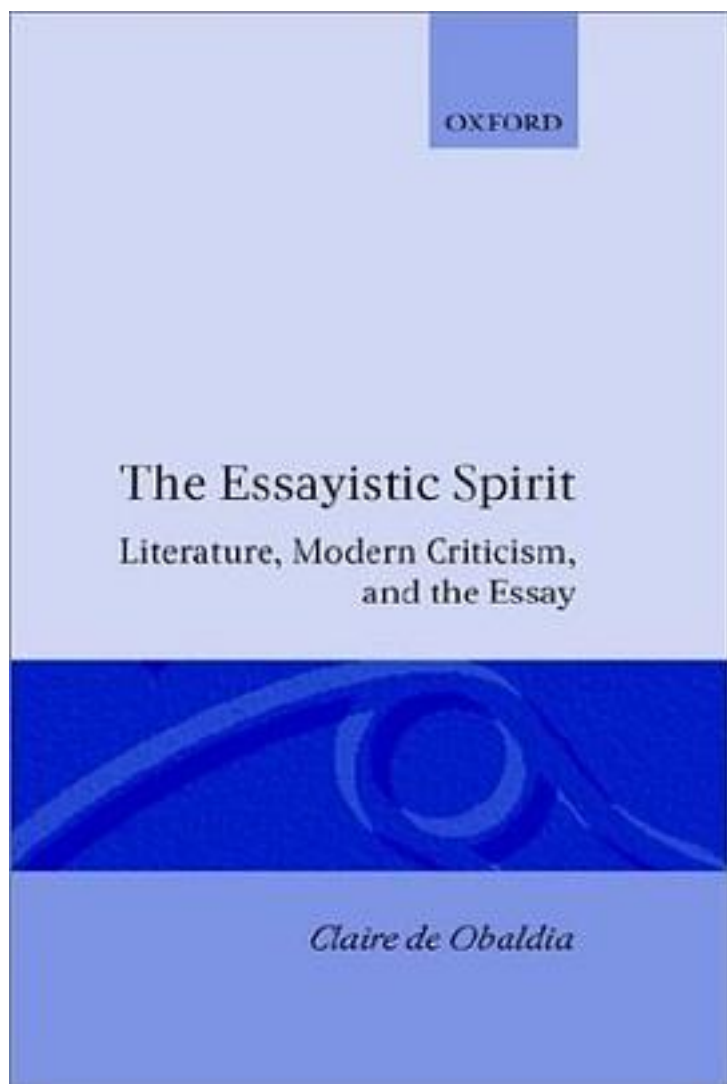


The Essayistic Spirit



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Despite the recognition of a 'great tradition' of essayists who have been admitted to the literary canon, the genre remains underrated and somewhat neglected in literary studies. Clare de Obaldia's wide-ranging study argues that to relegate the essay in such a way is to ignore the fact that our 'modern' conception of literature is fundamentally essayistic, that ours is a typically essayistic age, and that all texts are implicitly regarded as essays. The general perception of the essay as a short, fragmentary form that hovers between philosophy (or science) and literature - the cognitive and the aesthetic - has often led to its being overlooked. The Essayistic Spirit explores both the creative potential of the essay and the limits of essayism on the borders of philosophy, literature (especially the novel) and criticism, by referring our post-romantic conception of literature and literary history back to Montaigne's Essais, and to a whole related tradition of philosophical scepticism. This comparative study draws on a range of writings including those of Montaigne, early German Romantics, Lukacs, Adorno, Derrida, Hartman, Barthes, Proust, Broch, Musil, Bakhtin, and Borges.

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