The Subject of Violence

THE SUBJECT OF VIOLENCE

Arendtean Exercises in Understanding

Bat-Ami Bar On

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oA very thought-provoking work, an important contribution ...to reflection and criticism on the Chanson de Roland. Its importance goes beyond the Chanson or medieval French literature in general, and raises large questions about medieval civilization, and our own as well. O NLarry S. Crist oProbably the most sophisticated book ever written on the Song of Roland...It is at once a work of linguistic analysis, of literary theory, of literary history, and, finally, of history...This is a forward looking work of criticism which assesses the dynamic ways in which literature both describes and creates social institutions. O NR. Howard Bloch The twelfth-century Song of Roland played an essential role in the creation of the nation-state, argues Peter Haidu. This epic narrative transformed the independent and violent warriors of the feudal period into subordinate instruments of the nation-state by enforcing their subjection to the rule of monarchy. Haidu tracks this transformation in the Song employing a semiotics informed both by contemporary theory and by historical research into the bases of material production and the organization of military and political power. He locates the Song of Roland as a crucial step in the evolution of European violence from feudalism to the nation-state.

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