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Daisy Delogu, *Allegorical Bodies: Power and Gender in Late Medieval France*. Toronto, Buffalo, and New York: University of Toronto Press, 2015. viii + 273 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$75.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9781442641877; \$75.00 U.S. (eb, epub). ISBN: 9781442622814.

Review by Kathy M. Krause, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Daisy Delogu has written a fascinating, elegant, and original study of the gendering of metaphor and allegory in late medieval political writing in France. It is also a rather surprising study, since so much has been written already about the use of allegory in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century French literature as the literary device par excellence for writers such as Guillaume Machaut, Christine de Pizan, and Jean Froissart. Even so, Delogu uncovers as yet unexamined aspects of the use of both metaphor and allegory in the political writings of the later Middle Ages. In so doing, she contributes important new insights to our understanding of the development of French political identity during the Hundred Years' War, a period long recognized as a pivotal moment in the construction of the "idea" of France as a nation. Not incidentally, she also offers astute readings of key texts, both well-known, such as Christine de Pizan's *Advison Christine*, and less so (e.g., Jean Gerson's sermons, or Jean Juvenal des Ursins' *Audite Coeli*) as well as a broader analysis of the fundamental role(s) played by gender in both the allegorical discourse and politics of the era.

The book is divided into four main chapters, an introduction, and a "coda" that also serves as the book's conclusion. The introduction begins with the paradox that inspired the study: "just as real women were being excluded from royal succession in the name of what might be considered a proto-nationalistic policing of boundaries [via the (re)invention of Salic Law], the kingdom itself was being imagined [through the allegorical figure of La France] as a woman" (p. 4). Delogu then lays out the main historical and theoretical contours of the book: the Hundred Years' War and the move from metaphor to allegory as a way of conceptualizing the French body politic, from corporeal metaphors of the kingdom to allegorical representations of "La France;" a move made necessary by the problematic figure of King Charles VI, whose mental illness led to absences from rule that "effectively deprived France of its head, while preventing the possibility of obtaining a new one" (p. 6).

Chapter one, "Allegory is a Woman," lays out the main theoretical concerns of the study, providing a concise overview of the question of allegory and its relationship to metaphor, particularly in late medieval literature. What makes this discussion something other than another rehashing of a familiar topic is the focus on the historical circumstances of the rhetorical developments, in particular Charles VI's "absences" and Isabeau de Bavière's role as regent, as well as Delogu's unpacking of the gender of the allegorical figures of France and the University as something other, more than simply a reflection of grammatical gender, "... the presence of female allegorical figures in post-Rose literature must be understood as a conscious choice, rather than a default" (p. 30). The female gender of the allegorical figures, who "conform to dominant models of medieval femininity: courtly beloved, damsel in distress, cherished mother, and dutiful daughter," permits the construction of a "male public that is asked to imagine itself and to behave in conventionally masculine terms, to adopt the masculine roles of protector and safeguard of feminine frailty and virtue" (p. 30). The broader rhetorical discussion of metaphor and

allegory which follows in this chapter is perhaps a bit too concise for reading comfort, but it leads to a key insight about the role of gender in the construction of the two figures (France and the University) and is worth quoting *in extenso*:

“The metaphorical body is an unmarked one, and as such may be considered a masculine body, since the universal or the general always corresponds to the masculine. If allegory were no more than extended metaphor, if the metaphor of the body politic were simply to stand up and begin speaking and acting, then the allegorical figure of Kingdom and University would likewise be a masculine one. However, such is not the case. In the passage from metaphor to allegory we observe a shift from the masculine to the feminine, from the universal to the particular, and from the intimate to the alien” (p. 36).

The chapter concludes with a broader look at allegory, from Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose* to Christine de Pizan, that provides an effective introduction to the texts Delogu will engage with in the following chapters.

The material of chapter two (“From *douce France* to *dame renommée*: Figuring the French Body Politic”) is defined primarily chronologically as it examines Eustache Deschamps and Christine de Pizan’s responses to Charles VI’s troubled reign; first Deschamps’ innovative depictions of France as an active allegorical figure (rather than the “silent object of previous poets’ apostrophes,” as Delogu neatly puts it) and then Christine de Pizan’s *Advison Christine*, in which, Delogu cogently argues, Christine deploys the image of France as mother in such a way as to provide an archetype both for political community, through the imaginary bonds of kinship among the members of the realm created by France’s maternity, and for political action by “allowing the kingdom to replace the king as the focal point of the French people’s loyalty” (p. 47).

The discussion of Deschamps’s wide, and diffuse, poetic production allows Delogu to further develop her ideas about the move from metaphor to allegory and the ensuing gendering of the political and poetic discourse on France. I found her arguments compelling and convincing, but in several places was left, as the French say, “sur ma faim,” wanting—even needing—more. In particular I wanted more developed citations from Deschamps in order to better situate the phrases referred to in Delogu’s analysis. In addition, her intriguing conclusions at the end of the Deschamps section, about the lack of posterity for the masculine representations of the kingdom [in the twinned *chansons royales*, nos. 387 and 388] versus the success of feminine figures, deserve greater exploration. She argues that the male figures “put into question an essential component of masculine chivalric identity” and so “may have provoked unease among Deschamps’s reading public” whereas the feminine figures inspired “compassion and protectiveness in a masculine (knightly) public, while confirming their own strength and power” (p. 66). It is a topic she returns to, albeit not explicitly linking back to Deschamps, when she considers Joan of Arc in the book’s coda; a further fleshing out of the topic here would have set up her arguments in the coda even more effectively.

The section on the *Advison Christine* provoked a series of marginal queries on my part, asking questions such as, “where in the poem do we find this?” or “what are the other examples of this figure?” In other words, as with the discussion of Deschamps, I found myself wanting more extensive quotations and more detailed examples. In many cases, the answers to my queries actually were found in the endnotes, and this highlights one of the few weak(er) points of the University of Toronto Press’s otherwise exemplary production values. This book’s arguments would have been extremely well served by having footnotes rather than endnotes, as the notes contain significant supplementary material that bolsters and furthers the arguments made in the text proper. Flipping back and forth between text and notes is just sufficiently annoying that I wrote my marginal queries before thinking to check and see if there was a note and if it answered my question. Let me thus warmly encourage those who read this review to consult the book’s notes, as well as to plead (mostly in vain, I realize) for the return of footnotes.

That said, Delogu's analysis of the *Advision* is full of keen insights that highlight Christine de Pizan's masterful deployment of rhetorical tropes. Particularly compelling to this reviewer were her arguments about Christine's use, and reworking, of Aristotelian poetics in such a way as to counter Thomas Aquinas's dismissal of poetry, thereby allowing her to claim for poetry, and for herself as poet, the right to address "the highest philosophical, moral, and theological subjects" (p. 81).

Chapter three ("Jean Gerson and the University of Paris") moves from literary texts to a selection of Jean Gerson's sermons as Chancellor of the University of Paris, and from the allegorical figure of France to that of the University. This was entirely new territory for this reviewer, and I was fascinated by Gerson's logic in promoting the University as the faithful "daughter of the king." Showing the same mastery of texts and intertexts as in her analysis of the literary works, Delogu unpacks Gerson's creation of the University as allegorical figure: where Deschamps and Christine de Pizan use the figure of France to supplement, and even replace, an absent king, Gerson constructs the allegory of the University as the king's daughter so as to promote her/it as a more trustworthy counselor to the king than his biological relatives. As in her analysis of the *Advision*, Delogu clearly appreciates and demonstrates to her readers the great rhetorical skill, even audacity, shown by Gerson. However, my understanding would have benefitted from a bit more background, not on Gerson himself so much, but rather on his sermons: their initial audience(s), the manuscript context in which they have been transmitted (who was reading them in the Middle Ages), etc.

With chapter four ("Envisioning the Body Politic before and after the Treaty of Troyes"), we move chronologically, rather than "generically," to the years immediately surrounding the signing of the Treaty of Troyes in 1420.[1] The first part of the chapter examines Jean de Montreuil's use of the Salic Law—he was the first to systematically and explicitly exploit Salic Law to argue that the throne of France could not be inherited by a woman nor through the female line. Rather than focusing on the exclusion of women, Delogu demonstrates how Jean de Montreuil used Salic Law to "define, proclaim, and diffuse," a myth of national identity as part of a "nationalist agenda." Deftly juggling the multiple versions (in both Latin and the vernacular) of two of Jean's major works, the *Traité contre les Anglais* and *A toute la chevalerie*, the analysis focuses on the use of gendered language and imagery to portray Edward III's efforts to rule France as "unnatural" and the imposition of English rule as "gendered, sexual violence perpetrated against a body politic whose integrity and masculinity is thereby threatened" (p. 139). This section sets up the remainder of the chapter, which considers two elaborate political (and allegorical) dream visions composed in the wake of the Treaty of Troyes that build upon Jean de Montreuil's rhetoric: Alain Chartier's *Quadrilogue Invecitif* and Jean Juvenal des Ursin's *Audite Coeli*. The pairing of the two texts allows Delogu to bring out the innovations in form effected by both authors, as well as their adaptation of previous conventions of allegory and dream vision to their historical circumstances, in a post-Treaty of Troyes landscape.

The combination of attention to rhetorical and poetic form (with associated close readings of the texts) and to political circumstances and aims is a key element of Delogu's study. If at times in the middle chapters it appears that the attention to gender, and gendered bodies, has been somewhat muted, the last chapter of the book, the Coda ("What to say about Joan of Arc?") not only returns gender to front and center (How can it not when the subject is Joan?), it also reveals just how much about gender the texts and the analysis have been all along. As the preceding comment may already have made clear, this reviewer found the "Coda" the analytical "cherry on top" of an already impressive book. In a short eleven-pages, Delogu offers remarkably fresh insights into Joan of Arc's career, via Christine de Pizan, Jean Gerson, Alain Chartier, and Jean Juvenal des Ursins. As the list of authors suggests, this allows her to draw together a variety of threads of her study, and to come to some important conclusions: "The 'both/and-ness' of Joan, her incarnation of a semantic multiplicity, invites us to think about her in relation to the praise of allegory. As we have seen, the foreign or the strange, the alien or Other, the incommensurability of form and meaning, are characteristics of what I discussed with regard to chapter one in terms of the structure of allegory or the allegorical condition. For many of her contemporaries,

Joan enacted the most dangerous possibilities inherent in allegory--those of perversion and of violence” (p. 176). It is an elegant and revelatory, and so a fitting, closing to this most excellent study.

I hope the preceding remarks have conveyed some of the richness of Delogu’s study, as well as the ways in which it will be extremely useful reading for a wide range of disciplines, not only to medievalists or literary scholars or historians of the Hundred Years’ War. Let me end by citing just one example of how the book is already having an impact: in a forthcoming essay in *Medieval Feminist Forum*, Theresa Earenfight comments, “Delogu has done something important that has been sorely needed for a very long time: she has put queens into political theory. [...] Hers is a political theory regarding monarchy that takes gender theory very carefully into account and crafts a far more complex analysis that puts women front and center in the discourse on “nation” and “state.”[2] I could not agree more.

#### NOTES

[1] The Treaty of Troyes of May 21, 1420 between Henry V of England and Charles VI of France proclaimed Henry as the heir of to the throne of France (he was engaged to marry Charles VI’s daughter Catherine) and excluded the French dauphin, the future Charles VII) from the royal succession.

[2] Theresa Earenfight, “Where Do We Go From Here? Some Thoughts on Power and Gender in the Middle Ages,” *Medieval Feminist Forum* (Special Issue “Beyond Women and Power: Looking Backward and Moving Forward,” ed. Kathy M. Krause) 51.2 (2016): 116-131.

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