

Allegorical Bodies: Power and Gender in Late Medieval France, by
Daisy Delogu. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. Pp. 273.
ISBN: 9781442641877 (cloth).

TAKING AS HER starting point the question of why female allegorical figures came to represent France and the University of Paris in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Delogu uses gender as a critical lens to offer an innovative and impressive study of late medieval France. Over the course of an introduction, four chapters, and a coda treating Joan of Arc, Delogu examines allegory and metaphor and the ways in which Eustache Deschamps, Christine de Pizan, Jean Gerson, Jean de Montreuil, Alain Chartier, and Jean Juvénal des Ursins deploy and develop these tropes during a tumultuous historical period. She uncovers the fascinating links that bind female allegories, metaphor, and Salic Law, arguing persuasively that the three allow authors to find the stability missing because of Charles VI's illness. Moreover, they hold political significance, offering a response to threats from within and outside of the kingdom by creating a new concept of France and French identity based on birth or figurative kinship and shared history and beliefs.

In the first chapter, Delogu explores the traditions and definitions of allegory and metaphor, tying both to gender. Metaphor, she notes, depends upon similarities between terms, and the metaphorical body is masculine by default. Allegory, on the other hand, is characterized by the ability to bridge the past and the present and the discontinuity between form and meaning—qualities that correspond to medieval beliefs about women—which helps to explain why the figures representing France and the University of Paris are female. These allegories also serve a political function: they supply reason and sound judgment without threatening the king and invite the public to step into the masculine role of protector, defending France and the University of Paris.

The development of the distinctive idea of France and French identity is at the center of the second chapter, which focuses on works by Deschamps and Christine de Pizan. Delogu begins with a brief biography of each writer and then analyzes the author's use of metaphor and allegory. Organological metaphors in Deschamps's poems inscribe the king into a body politic that can function without its head, while the figure of France encourages sympathy and the hope for intervention. Christine de Pizan privileges France's maternity in *L'Advison Christine*, emphasizing the bond of natural love and the duties that children have toward their mother. Here, the kingdom replaces the king as an object of loyalty.

The third chapter treats Jean Gerson's metaphorical and allegorical depiction of the University of Paris. After tracing the history of the University's connections with French kings and providing Gerson's biography, Delogu looks at the University as *filie du roy* in the context of kinship structures. Focusing on *Contre Charles de Savoisy, Rex in sempiternum vive*, and *Vivat rex*, Delogu reveals that for Gerson, the University works to ensure good governance: it provides reason, maintains justice when the king is absent or incapable, and can lead the king and his subjects to salvation.

In her final chapter, Delogu demonstrates that discourses focused on gender helped to articulate conflicts surrounding Henry V's desire to pursue English claims to the French kingdom in the fifteenth century. The chapter begins with an examination of the creation of a myth of national identity based on Salic Law in Jean de Montreuil's writings. Delogu argues convincingly that for Jean de Montreuil, the question was not whether women were fit to rule, but how to guarantee French rule of the French. He thus used Salic Law to shape a collective French identity in order to defend the kingdom, whose vulnerability was figured in *Traité contre les Anglais* through language of sexual violence.

The second part of the chapter considers how the Treaty of Troyes provoked a reexamination of the principles of royal succession. The angry and righteously indignant figure of France in Alain Chartier's *Quadriologue invectif* uses the natural world to discuss moral, social, and political relationships, condemning certain conduct through the language of gender and non-normative sexuality. Delogu's careful reading of Jean Juvénal des Ursins' *Audite celi* uncovers the importance of the allegorical figures that appear: despite the peace talks taking place among France, England, and Burgundy, readers meet France, England, and Sainte Eglise. Delogu proposes that the choice allowed Jean Juvénal to refute the possibility of Burgundy's autonomy. All three writers in this chapter oppose the Treaty of Troyes through discourses of nature, whether natural law, natural love, or natural rights.

The coda that closes Delogu's book is fitting, since several authors she studies wrote about Joan of Arc. Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc* (1429) presents Joan as a Christian, a French loyalist, and a woman, with each identity reinforcing the others. Alain Chartier views Joan as an instrument of God in his *Epistola de puella* (1429) while highlighting her personal qualities to show her as strong and worthy. Jean Gerson's *Super facto* considers Joan in light of his beliefs about visions and prophecies, concluding that her deeds should be believed. Delogu expresses surprise that Jean Juvénal des Ursins says nothing about Joan, given his support for Charles VII. This silence, however, does not

mean that Joan was absent: Jean Juvénal selects events and images to bring Joan to mind. Delogu views both the allegorical figures that she examines and Joan as supplements or substitutes for the king, but while Joan cast doubt upon the male-female binary, the allegories' femininity encouraged readers to take on a masculine role. Finally, Delogu concludes, the simultaneous rise of Salic Law and allegorical figures of France as a woman is logical: both worked to shape a national identity and a masculine political subject.

This rich study provides a great deal of information and analysis, drawing together diverse authors and genres, and scholars from varied disciplines will find much value in Delogu's cogent arguments. Occasionally, gender fades into the background during discussions, but Delogu consistently ties it back in as she concludes each chapter. While some of the works that Delogu treats are well known, others are less so; in those instances, additional context would be a welcome complement to the summaries of the texts. With so much material, footnotes rather than endnotes would be an asset, making it easier to consult sources and find supplemental information. The volume's strengths far outweigh minor shortcomings, and it belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in gender, identity, and politics in France during the later Middle Ages. At a time when issues of gender and language remain incredibly relevant, Delogu offers productive ways to think about both, reminding us that literature and history are deeply intertwined.

Kristin Burr
Saint Joseph's University