KATHERINE G. MACCORNACK, *Mental Representation Theory in Old French Allegory from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.* Studies in French Literature, vol. 26. Lampeter, Dyved, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996. Pp. 184. ISBN:0-7734-88154. $79.95.

In her introduction, the author writes that her objective is to 'construct a viable hermeneutics to determine [the] meaning 'of that 'perplexing, paradoxical and problematic' genre, allegory. Before readers understand what MacCornack and her mentor, Fauconnier, mean by *espaces mentaux*, she argues that a 'division of the text into spaces and an analysis of the ways in which mental representation produces meaning in each will help to elucidate allegorical puzzles' (4). MacCornack next proposes a threefold division of allegory based on Gerard Genette's (*Figures,* 3 vols., 1969-72) homodiegetic narrator who is present in the story he tells and heterodiegetic narrator who is absent from the story he tells. Her structural model of allegory is comprised of a 'pretext' in which the author speaks, a 'text' in which the characters of the allegory appear and a 'metatext.' containing intertexts. These divisions are potentially useful, but only the section on pretext is strong and lucid enough to seem immediately applicable.

This brief sample epitomizes the strengths and weaknesses of MacCornack's book. Like the allegorical genre she and others have called simultaneously didactic and obfuscatory, MacCornack's study is instructive in its assemblage of the trenchant qualities of allegory and, at the same time, confusing and diffuse in its phraseology and organization. On one hand, MacCornack cites Fineman to teach us that allegory is a genre that 'desires interpretation' (26), is about interpretation and even engages in 'autoanalysis.' On the other, MacCornack's repeated statements of purpose obscure, rather than clarify, her real objective until page 33. Here the reader learns that 'The methodological purpose of this study is to consider the applicability of Fauconnier's Pragmatic Theory of communication to the definition and interpretation of a literary genre during the French Middle Ages,' and the 'current study undertakes the descriptive purpose to suggest a new way to visualize and comprehend medieval allegorical structure by considering the communicative structure determined by mental representation theory.'

MacCornack's desideratum, to make the reader visualize the structure and meaning of allegory, should render the twenty-five diagrams of allegorical structure at the end of the book an eagerly anticipated climax. Unfortunately, they shed little light on the structure or meaning of the *Romance of the Rose*, Huon de Mery's *Tournoiement de l'Antichrist* or Raoul de Houdenc's *Le Songe d'Enfer*, works they are meant to illuminate. Brief remarks on Chrétien's *Yvain* and his *Erec and Enide* and on Boethius's *Consolatio* serve as mere *exempla* of or exceptions to MacCornack's sometimes questionable statements, such as her assertion that dreams are the sole vehicles for allegory (a statement she retracts by referring to the *Consolatio*).

Perhaps the complexity of those theories MacCornack must explain in order to justify the intricate synthesis that becomes her method of interpreting allegory precludes any real demonstration of the efficacy of this method. The title and introduc-

tion suggest that MacCornack wishes to elucidate allegory by means of an instrument which she will synthesize to serve what she calls a 'descriptive purpose.' But the process of explaining the critical sources from which she is constructing that instrument sometimes obscures, and it subsumes her ultimate goals, rendering the book a critique of theories rather than of allegory, as the title implies.

Certainly, editing would have rendered the ideas more accessible. The material is often diffuse and repetitive and the language convoluted. The author quotes complex critical works in French, sometimes paraphrasing but nowhere fully translating them. Such practices direct this text to readers who already know and admire the critics quoted in it. The bibliography is sparse. It contains, for example, none of the major studies on dream literature or genre written in the eighties. It does not cite criticism published after 1987.

But there are strengths here too. MacCornack elevates our consciousness of the perspectives and voices in allegory. She directs our attention to signs that indicate alteration in points of view and degrees of narrative authority. MacCornack's readers may be sufficiently instructed and intrigued to hope that she will produce a second volume applying the tools she has forged to a perspicuous analysis of medieval allegory and allegories.

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