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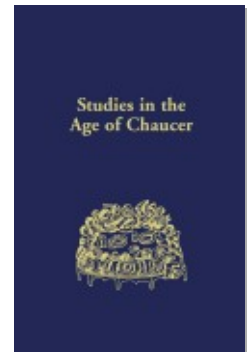
Reason and the Lover by John V. Fleming (review)

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selectively. I was unable to find an entry for the form *laneuoyz* (69.10, .11), and I suspect that the proper gloss for the form *hosyng* (233.12) is "housing" rather than "hosing;" but otherwise I found nothing with which to quibble.

Fisher and his colleagues refer to their anthology as a "first step" toward fulfilling Chambers and Daunt's desideratum of "a collection of all the official documents in the English tongue, from the time of the Conqueror to that of Henry VI" (p. xi). One hopes that they will take the remaining steps as well, but in the meantime they have filled what their research has indicated is the most pressing need.

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JOHN V. FLEMING, *Reason and the Lover*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University press, 1984. Pp. xii, 196. \$20.00.

In many of the speeches of the *Roman de la Rose*, as Rosemond Tuve noted in *Allegorical Imagery*, "we could not hope to put a finger exactly on where Jean starts and stops believing in what he has his creatures say in this tissue of ironies and sincerities, truths and monstrosities." It is Fleming's thesis that there is one major exception to this uncertainty, in the long speech of Reason to the lover. The unequivocal position on the moral centrality of this speech that he took in *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* is here backed up by a study of its Boethian and Augustinian roots; roots that link it to the most authoritative Christian traditions of the Middle Ages.

Anyone who takes issue with such traditions is necessarily a heretic, and the first part of the book is devoted to a lively refutation of what Fleming names the "Ithacan heresy," since it was from there that the sharpest attacks on his original work emanated. He is delightfully blunt about what the term means within literary discourse: "It means other people's reading texts in ways with which we disagree." It is notorious, however, that heretics are rarely won over by argument, and it will be interesting to see whether Fleming's aggressive defense of his own orthodoxy is going to shake the faith of his opponents.

Fleming finds his case for rejecting the limitations that have been ascribed to Reason on the grounds of her ancestry. Like Boethius's *Philosophia*, she speaks as a philosopher, not a theologian, but that does not cut her off from theological significance. Reason, for Alain de Lille, is "the power of the soul by which the soul moves to the contemplation of things heavenly"; it was universally accepted that man was made in the image of God. Moreover, Fleming argues that Reason's "direct lineal ancestress" is not so much *Philosophia* as the Ratio of Augustine's *Soliloquia*. Guillaume de Lorris had drawn a Lady Reason indebted to the Bible and Boethius, but Jean de Meun takes the further, distinctly Augustinian, step of remodeling Cicero (his Reason's favorite overt authority) into Christian patterns. A number of other Augustinian texts are called on to support this view, along with Aelred's *De spiritali amicitia*—a work that Jean translated.

In itself this evidence is overwhelming. Problems emerge, however, when one turns to the poem. Even Fleming admits that he finds "no escape from the uncomfortable fact that Jean de Meun repeatedly and entirely consciously invites us to mistake his poem by making rather less of Lady Reason than we should." The arguments he uses to demonstrate how Jean signals his ironic intentions are less satisfying.

Two examples must suffice to indicate the kind of unease that remains after Fleming's exposition. One is this: "The *obvious* source of Reason's doctrine of friendship is Cicero's *De amicitia*. The covert source is Aelred's Augustinian reworking of Cicero, the *De spiritali amicitia*. It is the latter which informs the passage with its special significance, a significance we can hardly doubt that Reason and her poetic creator Jean de Meun, fully intend" (p. 82).

Grant that Reason and Jean intend it, and that they, and Fleming, have read their Aelred: but what about the vast majority of readers of the *Roman*, in the thirteenth century or now, who have not? Irony is a rhetorical figure that depends on author and reader both knowing more than is stated, or something other than is stated. If there is no hint to the reader—nothing to show the *dishonesty* of Iago, for example—how can Jean hope to communicate any serious meaning through his silence? Fleming proves Jean's familiarity with Aelred, but he does not attempt the impossible task of proving a widespread familiarity with it among his early readership such as the *argumentum ex silentio* demands.

The second example relates to a passage where, Fleming argues, Jean does insert just such a hint to the reader. The lover is arguing that he will never find friends of the kind described by Cicero, even if he searches

“jusqu’an Quartage” (line 5348). “Here, in a single topographic noun, is the only ‘textual’ evidence of his supertext,” writes Fleming (“supertext” being his useful coinage for an authoritative source of sufficient privilege to control meaning). He sees the work *Carthage* as constituting a reference to Augustine’s *Confessions*: “Veni Carthaginem, et circumstrepebat me undique sartago flagitiosorum amorum.” If the lover seeks in Carthage, in other words, he will find nothing but a frying pan (*sartago*) of unholy lusts. But given the absence of any overt Augustinian context, could any reader have picked up such a specific allusion? Even Augustine has plenty of other references to the city, and to a reader of the vernacular *Roman* the connotations of the name might well be very different — as a place as exotic and unfamiliar as “Timbuctoo,” on the edge of the known world, as the author of the near-contemporary *Aucassin et Nicolette* envisaged it. The minute detail of the discussion of this whole passage of the poem seems to demand that the reader have the complete works of Augustine open in the other hand.

The closing section of the book (on Petrarch’s reading of the *Roman* and analogous strategies of Augustinized Ciceronianism in the *Secretum*) is similarly intriguing and problematic. “The evidence we must examine is of course implicit, indirect, and even covert.” Fleming is indeed careful to distinguish between arguments that seem to him conclusive (as certainly many of them are) and those that are more tentative; but his readers’ own distinction between the two categories may not be quite the same as his. The suggestion of an allusion to Augustine’s “Sero te amavi” from book 10 of the *Confessions* in the first words of Veritas in the *Secretum* is of this kind (pp. 170-71): the link depends on Petrarch’s word *species* alluding to Augustine’s word *pulchritudo*. It may be that the lack of conviction that this instils is the result of overcompression of the argument, but such lapses may lead to a more generalized skepticism of response.

Apart from the coda on Petrarch’s Augustinianism, the book focuses exclusively on the debate of Reason and the lover. The implications of the rehabilitation of Lady Reason, Fleming notes in the last couple of pages, “are in many ways greater for those vast stretches of Jean’s poem from which the Lover banishes her than for the dialogue that has been the focus of my book.” He finds such implications “rather obvious,” and one can guess the lines they would follow. One is nonetheless left pondering a question that Fleming would, I suspect, not admit to exist. For readers of medieval literature outside Princeton (and not just in Ithaca) there is a distinction to be made between works such as *The Divine Comedy* and *Piers Plowman*,

which are concerned with an anagogical reading of human action, and works such as the *Decameron* and *The Canterbury Tales*, which are concerned just as much with exploring the varieties of human action in themselves. The Princetonians close the gap by arguing for Boccaccian and Chaucerian ironic orthodoxy, but for most readers the key question remains whether the *Roman* belongs to the first group or the second. If it belongs to the first group, Fleming is, simply, right. If it belongs to the second, he may still be right, but that would finally be irrelevant. Reason's rationality would coexist with the quest for the Rose in the same way *The Parson's Tale* coexists with the Miller's, or Shakespeare's Octavia with Cleopatra, as one of a series of perspectives, resisting closure. The poem's resistance to any single interpretation is paradoxically witnessed to by Fleming's book, for the great *querelle* of the *Roman* is clearly far from over.

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JOHN M. GANIM. *Style and Consciousness in Middle English Narrative*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983. Pp. ix, 177. \$23.00.

This book is a useful contribution to the study of medieval English narrative. It contains several chapters on *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Siege of Thebes*, and *The Testament of Cresseid*, and it focuses on "the ways in which the medieval narrative poet structures a world for his audience" (p. 14). The author starts with a consideration of the fact that the texts were originally delivered to listeners rather than readers. He attempts to qualify Auerbach's famous analysis of the relationship of poet and audience with the question of the dramatization of the reader in the poetic text.

His interpretation of *Havelok* and *King Horn* is sensitive and suggestive, although he has a penchant for abstract and sometimes speculative statements. He rightly states that the reduction of the narrative technique to that of a ballad produces a "mechanical system of shorthand" narration which the audience was supposed to "fill in" (p. 42). Ganim further shows how the figures act in a historical vacuum. But he somewhat misinterprets