Julie Singer, *Representing Mental Illness in Late Medieval France: Machines, Madness, Metaphor.* Series Gallica, 43. Woodbridge, UK and New York: D. S. Brewer, 2018. xii + 360 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. $99.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-84384-512-6.

Review by Nadia Margolis, University of New England.

The subject of mental illness in France during the later Middle Ages, as treated most stimulatingly in this book, centers on the mental illness of King Charles VI, *Le Bien-aimé*, and later *Le Fol*. The micro- to-macrocosmic effects of Charles's madness throughout France's body politic would be dissected as no previous royal affliction, by chroniclers, poets, political theorists and polemicists, as well as by physicians. Though scholars and popularizers have previously written on King Charles's madness and its cultural-historical context,[1] the timing as well as the approach of Julie Singer's latest book render it all the more meaningful to us nowadays, for the aura of global madness must have permeated the late-medieval French consciousness much as it does ours, at least analogously. The main difference is that King Charles VI *began* as a good prince--refined, educated, humane and genuinely interested in remedying his kingdom's deficiencies--thus potentially a worthy successor to his father, Charles V *Le Sage*. Then, only four years into his personal reign, aged about twenty-four, he was out riding with his companions when he suddenly fell victim to a fleeting yet murderously paranoid bout of what modern physicians and psychologists have diagnosed as either schizophrenia, poisoning, porphyria, or even sarcoidosis.[2] These debilitating attacks of alternating melancholy and frenzy would increase and intensify throughout his life, forcing him to spend most of it in helpless torment, ruling in name only. Brilliant but power-hungry relatives vied to rule in his place, casting a turbulent yet depressing shadow over all levels of society and government, its damaging effects reverberating well beyond his death, arguably prolonging the Hundred Years War by some two extra decades.[3]

Singer introduces her book as "a culturally contextualized reading of metaphor, one that sheds light on the uses of scientific language in non-scientific discourses" (p. 1). Her critical methodology blends literary theory and history in a clear, responsible fashion. No stranger to exploring scientific models for literary texts,[4] Singer also astutely begins by surveying the two more familiar approaches to mental illness, the medical and legal, as prerequisites to understanding how late-medieval pathology, and legal thought, defined the mind and mental illness. This is especially valuable, even when treated briefly, because, as she asserts, while information on these aspects is comprehensive enough up through the thirteenth centuries, it remains "largely in the shadows" for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (p. 3). Tracing such definitions from the usual ancient medical authorities, Aristotle and Galen, Singer points to each

one's separate models: heart-centered and brain-centered, respectively, as existing in a desirably irresolvable conflict. This non-reconciliation also combines with notions of function (what is "normal"? [p. 13 n.50]) and dysfunction (what is madness?) in relation to social convention, as Sander Gilman has explored (p. 12). Because late-medieval European thinkers took the "medicalization" of mental illness (p. 11)--a view based on physiological rather than moral causes--as a serious goal, they required new ways of thinking about, and discussing these complexities. The existing Aristotelian-scholastic methods no longer sufficed. Definitions of such terms used to describe Charles's condition as *fol* (modern-French *fou*) and "melancholy," provided by encyclopedists (e. g., Isidore of Seville, Bartolomaeus Anglicus as translated by Jean Corbechon) required greater precision and dimension. Accordingly, late medieval thinkers and writers--whether poets, political theorists, moralists or physicians--resorted to imagery and metaphor, often sparked by the encyclopedists' descriptions of such inorganic phenomena as metallic oxidation, to grasp mental illness comprehensively.

Singer's first chapter explores how late-medieval French authors used metallic metaphors, especially rust and dullness, to illustrate human cognitive and other mental dysfunction by merging the inorganic with the organic. The argument then proceeds to the development of mechanical imagery for understanding the mind ("engine" versus *engin* ["wit, ingenuity"]), such as wheels, clocks and wine presses, for instructing the (usually ruling-class) reader-viewer about Fortune's ways and the Cardinal Virtues--yet not for other personal or moral attributes (p. 78). Key voices compared here include Guillaume de Deguileville, Machaut's *Voir Dit*, Philippe de Mézières, Le Franc's *Estrif de Fortune et Vertu*, and Gervais du Bus's *Roman de Fauvel*. Christine de Pizan's Clock of Temperance, in her unique princely-conduct manual, *L'Epistre Othea* (texte-glose-allegorie 2), a text noted in other contexts by Singer, deserves mention here as a visual and didactic example. It is also a rather unique clock. Likewise, Fortune's constantly turning wheel (though only one, whereas Machaut explicates five wheels), both visual and verbal, to power her vast universal-historical *Mutacion*, both works influenced by and adding to the above-mentioned texts. But Singer rightly emphasizes the effectiveness of visual representations of Fortune cranking her wheel and the clocks regulating the Cardinal Virtues (Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude), as part of the so-called New Iconography, in the miniatures illuminating manuscripts of these works, some of which she reproduces in her book. Overall, science and technology, if still unable to treat mental illness directly, their concepts enhanced by literary and artistic appropriation, certainly helped the king's contemporaries better understand his condition.

Chapter two treats the education of princes at the court of Charles V, seen as ways of staving off or remedying the "rusty" wisdom of the time by updating its interpretations (p. 21). Not surprisingly, this education involves the mirror-for-princes didactic genre. Like metals and machines, the mirror (half shiny metal, half glass) functions as both concrete object and didactic metaphor/perceptual tool: distortions, narcissistic pitfalls and all. Expanding upon his father John the Good's policy, Charles V fostered learned treatises and translations as more than mere adornments to his famous library, which would eventually become the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Such translations, by imparting a contemporary moral-political spin, functioned as *translatio studii*-to-*translatio imperii* capsules, glorifying their patron's policies while transmitting ancient wisdom. Among the major translations Singer discusses are Nicole Oresme's of Aristotle's *Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Economics*, exemplifying the king's broader humanistic program to reconcile ancient pagan ideas with Christian learning, especially in teaching the Cardinal Virtues. However, this chapter's central text is, quite rightly, Vincent of Beauvais's *De eruditione filiorum*

nobilium, translated by Jean Daudin, replete with rust metaphors, and analyzed at length. Inspired by Vincent, Jean Golein and Gilles of Rome employ metallic metaphors (e.g. ductility-docility, symbolizing teachability) to warn against youthful error. Additional princely manuals followed, also influenced by Vincent, targeting the dangers of idleness and stupidity for the young prince: such as Christine de Pizan's *Fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* and Jean Gerson's *Claro eruditori*. Prudence, as active implementation of Sapience, mitigated by the other Virtues, emerges as the (inevitable pun intended) crowning political virtue for Charles V's era, yet without adequately advising the would-be tutor on what to do with a hopeless, stubborn oaf. For Oresme, Aristotle, and Vincent, rust was a form of effeminacy, while Daudin's Vincent was concerned more about moral than mental rust. Denis Foulechat's translation of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* further develops this use of rust metaphor to signify intellectual or moral decay.

Chapter three dedicates itself to the convergence of two alternatingly organic and inorganic commonplaces, those of the body politic and of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's dream-statue. Best known in Daniel 2 (esp. 27-45), this statue's members comprised four metals, from its head of gold to feet of mixed iron and clay, only to be destroyed in the end by a boulder having detached itself from the mountains. Only the Jewish exile Daniel can interpret this troubling dream. He unequivocally warns Nebuchadnezzar against the sin of pride by foreseeing that his kingdom will first become divided by inner weaknesses then destroyed by a boulder representing God's eternal power over earthly kingdoms. The king's heedless response (erecting a huge golden statue of himself to be revered by all) results in his self-destruction and madness. Singer demonstrates that, once medieval biblical commentators linked this metal dream-statue with the body politic, this led contemporaries to attribute King Charles's illness to an oxidized mind, as it were. Singer focuses the first part of her analysis on Foulechat's translation of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* as an unprecedented apotheosis of the organic, even medical, body-politic metaphor of the state. The *Policraticus*'s symbolism functions more physiologically than anatomically, likened to clockwork or a turning wheel rather than static body-part analogies. It would galvanize (yes, another metallic metaphor springs to mind) political prose and poetry throughout the later Middle Ages, in the works of authors treated in this book and many others. Singer devotes the rest of her chapter to studying the body politic in Guillaume de Deguileville's highly influential *Pèlerinage de l'âme*, with interlaced references to Oresme's translations of *De Moneta* and of Aristotle's *Politics*, French biblical commentators, and Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*. Singer's political-iconographical treatment of Guillaume's pilgrimage, focusing on artistic versus scientific or moral ideas of proportion as well as machines and rust, builds upon Michael Camille's in his *Gothic Idol*. She considers the multiple versions of Guillaume's pilgrimage, especially her comparative reading of Jean Galopes's prose reworking, which integrates the body politic and metallic metaphors to transform the Old Testament account of Nebuchadnezzar's statue into a political tool. Galope's version proved as culturally relevant to the mad king's son Charles VII's entourage (even Galope's own, more English milieu, his version commissioned by the Duke of Bedford) as it had been to the reign of the king's grandfather, John the Good, Guillaume's patron.

The very replete Chapter four, titled "Le fer en la playe," ("the [iron] knife in the wound") seems to form the book's structural and heuristic apogee. Here, Singer supplements her guiding inorganic and organic themes of rust, machines, and the body politic with magic and sorcery as additional components in the king's contemporaries' explanations of his illness--either euphemistically or weaponized--the "wound" to the head afflicting the total French body politic (p. 174). As Singer traces representative authors' recurring interpretations of his story, King

Nebuchadnezzar cumulatively emerges as archetypal royal "signifier of madness in the late medieval West" (p. 210). If sorcery was blamed as a possible cause, magic was considered as a curative source, thereby contributing the additional conflict of science and superstition in the search for a remedy. Such trends and perspectives found greatly diversified expression, whether in poetic, religious, chronicle, or political-theoretical modes. Much as the *Policraticus* and Guillaume's pilgrimages served as the anchoring texts in the previous chapter, so Philippe de Mézières's *Songe du viel pèlerin*, Froissart's chronicles, and Pierre Salmon's *Dialogues* take center stage here. Singer comparatively analyzes these three texts alongside passages from the *Songe veritable*, Jean Petit, Christine de Pizan, the peasant Jehan Jourdain, Jean Gerson, the *Jeu des eschaz moralisés* (this last cites from Ferron's atypically straightforward translation, without explanation, instead of Vignai's famous glossed one), Honorat Bovet's *Apparicion*, and Eustache Deschamps. Although all of these authors have lately benefited from increased scholarly attention, Singer's methodology never fails to provide fresh insights on each. Even though Singer offers perceptive readings of Christine: her *Fais et bonnes meurs*, *Corps de Policie*, and other works pertinent to princely education, the king's illness, resultant collective melancholy, and especially the primacy of the head in body politic, this chapter could have gleaned still more from her, e.g., as in the *Mutacion*, for the varied medieval views of Nebuchadnezzar. Indeed, Christine refers to him several times, for example, when she equates Fortune's apparition to her dreaming I-narrator with that of the dream-statue to "Nabugodonosor" (1: 74-75), and elsewhere in anodyne, chronicle fashion (2: 164-5, 236, 237) likely cribbed from the *Flores chronicorum* and *Histoire ancienne*) as part of her universal history of Fortune's influence. Contrastingly, we see Nebuchadnezzar invoked as a prideful king punished by expulsion and madness in the slightly later *Advision* (1.24), probably presaging Charles VI's insanity. Like our first example from the *Mutacion*, this *Advision* reference reflects Christine's direct, engaged reading of Daniel or a translation of it, rather than passively pasting in from a compilation. In sum, the late medieval reading of Daniel's Nebuchadnezzar celebrates the prophetic power and mission of royally-commissioned exegetes and commentators, including translators, who read current events and glossed them with early wisdom, thus making them new metaphorical exempla to save France from future boulders.

Chapter five convincingly approaches Alain Chartier's *Livre de l'Espérance* as "medieval France's most novel treatment of mental illness" (p. 243), responding to his previous political works as well as to those of other pseudo-autobiographical writers like Boethius, Machaut, and Christine. Medieval authors such as Pseudo-Aristotle, Evrart de Conty, and Bartholomaeus extolled Melancholy as a positive (creative, intellectual stimulus, linked to prudence and wisdom) condition, with sadness arising as an inevitable side effect. Chartier's melancholic reading method equates with visionary dreaming, (much like Christine's in the prologue to her *Cité des Dames*). His *Espérance* is an unfinished prosimetrum allegory, transpiring within a restricted architectural space (p. 264, passim), which also serves as mental landscape. Its protagonist, the *Acteur*, is overcome by Melancholy and her equally depressing attendants to the point of suicidal thoughts as his reason and memory rust over. Roused by Nature, *Entendement* opens the rusty door, allowing *Acteur* to be healed by the Three Virtues (namely *Foy* and *Espérance*), recovering his reason and other faculties.

Singer's Epilogue reflects on Chartier's influence. His *non challance* is a sin of apathy, not the carefree mindset connoted in modern French. For Charles d'Orléans, melancholy exists as more of a remedy to despair, stoically reconciling past and present. He composes in the prison of Nonchaloir, whose rust symbolically immobilizes Fortune's wheel as it immobilized him below for so long: his literal quarter-century imprisonment in lieu of kingship. Eminently sane despite

multiple tragedies but never crowned, he is the reverse-Charles of his uncle, Charles VI. Finally, this epilogue assesses Chastelain's *Exposicions* as rewriting Chartier's language of corrosion and other aspects, yet never acknowledging him.

Singer enriches her textual analysis by reproducing miniatures from manuscripts of some key authors' texts. Her bibliography is excellent; the index a bit spare but accurate and thus useful.

NOTES

[1] Fully cited by Singer, p. 83n1: Richard C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue* (New York: AMS Press, 1986) ; Françoise Autrand, *Charles VI: la folie du roi* (Paris: Fayard, 1986); Bernard Guenée, *La folie de Charles VI* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 2004). More popular than scholarly, thus uncited: Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1978); Anne Denieul-Cormier, *Rois fous et sages de la première maison des Valois: 1328-1498* (Paris: Perrin, 1974) [trans. *Wise and Foolish Kings: The First House of Valois, 1328-1498* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979)]--the first engaging and intelligent with some inaccuracies, the latter sensational-novelistic and often inaccurate.

[2] For example, see Hutan Ashrafian, "Charles VI of France and Henry VI of England: Familial Sarcoidosis in the Hundred Years' War," *Sarcoidosis, Vasculitis and Diffuse Lung Diseases* 33 (2016): 416–17. https://www.google.com/search?q=charles%20vi%20of%20france%20illness&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-1-m (last accessed 30 May, 2019).

[3] It also furnished the backdrop to historical novels and poems. For example, the accomplished romantic Prosper de Barante's dramatic *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne* (1824), presents a poignant tableau of the mentally incapacitated Charles, abandoned by queen and court, now sequestered and cared for by his mistress, dubbed La Petite Reine. This moved the poet Rilke, whose *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910) portrays Charles mindlessly perusing the illuminated manuscript of an historical poem, the *Chemin de lonc estude* by Christine de Pizan, a key source author for Singer's book. See Nadia Margolis, "'Each…according to…his intention: Three Phases of Christine de Pizan's Literary Influence," *Florilegium* 18.1:97-121.

[4] See Julie Singer, *Blindness and Therapy in Late Medieval French and Italian Poetry* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2011).

Nadia Margolis
Independent Scholar
margolisnadia@gmail.com

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