

Examining the concept of inspiration in the light of modern psychology, M. Cailliois explains this heretofore untouchable miracle as the unsung achievement of the subconscious mind, the eventual reward which the writer reaps from his seemingly unproductive application: 'Les caprices du sort ne favorisent pas une folle tête et jamais inventeur ou artiste ne bénéficia d'un bien subit qu'il n'avait pas depuis longtemps conçu, convoité et essayé d'atteindre.'

M. Cailliois does not pretend to present in this small volume the final form of his thought. It is only an essay, but a provocative one. And esthetic convictions are welcome, however debatable, in the midst of the preponderately noncommittal nature of criticism today.

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Alexander J. Denomy: "The heresy of courtly love." New York, McMullen, 1947. 92 pp.

This lecture given at Boston College epitomizes the three profound studies of Fr. Denomy which were published in "Medieval Studies" between 1944 and 1947, namely 1. 'An inquiry into the origins of courtly love,' ms VI (1944), 175-260; 2. 'Fin'Amors: the pure love of the troubadours, its amorality and possible source,' ms VII (1945), 139-207; 3. 'The "De Amore" of Andreas Cappellanus and the condemnation of 1277,' ms VIII (1946), 107-149. The inquiry makes clear that the Provençal troubadour had a thought pattern which is incongruous to a Christian society: A beloved lady, though arousing sensuous love and condoning adultery, ennoble the lover and develops virtues in him; she is always superior to him and therefore not easily approachable. Thus she is bound rather to nourish his ever unsatiated desires than to yield to them as a reward. This thought pattern or skeleton framework can be found in Arabic culture only, says Fr. Denomy, where the philosopher Avicenna, in contradistinction to all Christian and even Moslem mysticism, uses feminine beauty as a stepping stone for reaching Divine beauty, 'sexual love as an aid in approaching the divine' (p. 30), under the condition that the rational elements in love keep the sensuous and animal instincts at bay. The Bedouin tribe of the Banou Odrah practised a daring 'platonic' love of this kind and Ibu Dawoud taught it as Ibn Hazm sang it. With these threefold Arabic elements it must be conceded that Fr. Denomy gives the so-called 'Arabic theory' of the origin of troubadour lyricism together with A. R. Nykl's "Hispano-Arabic Poetry" (1946) the strongest support it ever had.