

*Charles d'Orléans in England: 1415–1440.* Edited by Mary-Jo Arn. Pp. x + 231. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000. Hb. £45.

*Canon, Period, and the Poetry of Charles of Orleans: Found in Translation.* By A. E. B. Coldiron. Pp. viii + 224. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000. Hb. \$47.50.

In 1440, Charles d'Orléans, father of Louis XII and great-uncle of François I and Marguerite de Navarre, left England for Blois. Captured at the battle of Agincourt (although with the leisure to pack marmalade and candy for the trip), he had spent twenty-five years as a prisoner, made friends with various noble guardians, collected books, conducted love affairs, and written poetry. When he returned to France he took his library and his French verse but left behind a companion volume in English, *Fortunes Stabilnes* (MS Harley 682, recently edited by Mary-Jo Arn). Either Charles wrote this himself, as most scholars now believe, or we owe thanks to an unknown fifteenth-century translator. Many of the English poems have French parallels. Are such pairs also translations? Or did Charles sometimes remember a conceit or structure and rethink it in the other tongue? Do we need a better word for carrying words not across times or places but from one set of neurons to another in the same head? 'Autophorics'? 'Ipsetranslatio'? And is the person who ipse-translates himself quite the same as the person who wrote the 'original'? For that matter, is a duke who writes today quite the same man as the duke who wrote yesterday? A nanosecond can make a difference to personality, if only a nano-difference.

These and other questions are provoked by two fine new books on Charles. Each should intrigue those interested in translation – not just translation from one language to another, but from one conventionally designated period to the next. Charles' work is divided among English, French, and Latin, and also hovers between the end of one age and the

start of a new aesthetics, as well as a new way, some say, to imagine inwardness.

If Arn's smart introduction is right to say that there is much still to do on Charles' life, writings, and context, then this volume offers exemplary demonstrations of how to do it. Michael Jones revisits the Siege of Orléans (1428–9) and the illegality, in feudal terms, of this English assault on a prisoner's lands: one sees here, says Jones, a 'friction' between 'the "internationalism" of chivalry ... and the narrower more pragmatic outlook of "national" self interest'. William Askins gives an account of Charles' relation to his brother Jean d'Angoulême – a fellow-prisoner and bibliophile – and the by no means always harsh treatment the pair received from the often urbane and literate noblemen in whose charge they found themselves. If indeed Charles wrote the English poems attributed to him, says Askins, the connections he formed during his captivity would repay attention. In an essay based on valuable archival research, Gilbert Ouy provides more context for the brothers' manuscripts, including the means by which Charles obtained rare works by Jean Gerson that were smuggled to him by the monks of Greyfriars. Ouy's detective work is awe-inspiring, although he may exaggerate when he insists that unless we locate a manuscript in the 'family of books' copied by a particular scribe or in a particular scriptorium, that manuscript, because isolated, 'will reveal nothing'. Sometimes, after all, even literary archaeologists must work with mere shards and traces.

Arn's own essay, 'Two Manuscripts, One Mind', will particularly interest readers of this journal, for it explores how a single poet with one mind (I would say one brain, for a poet may be of two minds) produced both the French BN MS fr. 25458, and the English BL MS Harley 682. What motivated Charles to make his English manuscript? It seems to have been carefully assembled and copied toward the end of his captivity as a final summation of his work in English. The French book is arranged by genres; the English version 'tells a coherent story of love and loss'. Thanks to spaces left blank for further versifying, the impressive French manuscript acquired more lyrics by Charles and others, including his wife, Marie de Clèves. The collection left in England, however – presumably on purpose, now that he was home and disinclined to write in English – remained as it had been in 1440. As Arn puts it, the French volume 'was a living album, whereas Harley 682 was, from the moment of its creation, a souvenir'.

Claudio Galderisi writes on Charles' poetry as 'passetemps' in every conceivable sense. To believe, as Galderisi says all poets do, that poets can write fully and from the heart in only the one language they love seems a little sentimental, but his is an evocative, if elusive, essay. John

Fox ingeniously explicates the wordplay in Charles' macaronic verse, tracks the subtle shifts in some of his refrains, and confirms the identity of one recipient of the verse as the poet's then wife, Bonne d'Armagnac. As Charles aged, says Fox, he became fascinated by words as words, not scrupling to invent his own. The duke's macaronics are not easy to follow ('Oblesse, oblesse que porrar obler / All hevy thought that bryngith in distres', for example), so it is good to have Fox as guide. Also good to have is his argument that even scholarly editors have distorted Charles' poetry by imposing complete refrains on rondel stanzas that lack them in the manuscript. The essay thus contributes to the current rethinking of editorial practices, and to the paradox that even as we doubt the existence or value of a capital-'A' 'Author', we more fully believe in the virtue of retrieving an original textual presentation.

Rouben Cholakian asks 'Is the invented narrator in Charles d'Orléans' poetry a split personality?' That is, are there 'two distinct poetic personae' in this compellingly introspective poet, one the 'introspective and forlorn' prisoner sunk in 'merencolie' and the other, now liberated into the sweet pleasures of Blois, 'an active viewer of and participant in le monde vivant?' Although many have thought so, argues Cholakian, Charles continued even after 1440 'to use the poetic vision as an exercise in self-scrutiny', and verse as a self-administered talking cure. Never a descriptive poet, Charles continued to focus on his inwardness:

Dedens mon livre de pensee  
 J'ay trouvé escripant mon cuer  
 La vraye histoire de douleur,  
 De larmes toute enluminee.

Some will think here of Du Bellay's Roman poetry.

What of other princely poets? A. C. Spearing compares dreams in the Scottish James I's *Kingis Quair* and Charles' Harley 682, a volume he says might justly be called *The Duke's Book*. What particularly interests Spearing is how 'the universal truths conveyed by allegory and myth come to be reprocessed through inward experience into the histories of individual lives'. He makes a good case, yet those individual histories may have so much power because re-imagined in a collective dream-world. Charles' dream of flying with Venus and receiving her 'kercher of pleasaunce' certainly repays attention, even if one does wonder just what is going on when Charles awakes from his encouraging venerel dream with 'a gret pese of pleasaunce' in his hand. For Spearing, what he holds symbolizes 'the role of the natural desire for sexual pleasure'. Sure.

Derek Pearsall traces Charles' connections with William de la Pole, the future Duke of Suffolk whom Joan of Arc defeated at the siege of Orléans and whose head was removed by Yorkist sympathizers in 1450. 'Suffolk has not been well treated by history, nor by Shakespeare (which often amounts to the same thing)', says Pearsall, but this cultivated nobleman, in charge of Charles from 1432 to 1436, offered his prisoner 'a model of the learned courtier-poet, accomplished in two languages'. Pearsall shows the relevance of this relationship to the Bodleian Library's MS Fairfax 16 (c. 1450), a collection of Chaucer and Chaucerian poetry that includes a short lyric sequence of amatory complaints and epistles. It has been attributed to Suffolk, but on thin evidence, and Pearsall suggests that we should call it the 'Fairfax sequence'. Those who track the prehistory of the English sonnet sequence should take note.

Janet Backhouse studies the illuminations in the British Library's Royal MS 16 F.ii, famous for its picture of Charles leaning longingly from his Tower window and then leaving for France and freedom. As its many Yorkist touches indicate, this splendid manuscript was made for Edward IV, and its French manner, Backhouse suggests, could mean an origin in the Calais of the early 1480s. Next, in this well-arranged collection, we move to a new century and a new technology with Jean-Claude Mühlethaler's study of another set of Charles' poems: the captivity ballades published by Antoine Vérard in 1509. Mühlethaler, too, is struck by Charles' sense of inwardness, noting the role of prison in the emergence of 'une subjectivité susceptible d'exprimer une expérience individuelle'. Mühlethaler's skepticism about current views of subjectivity's history is refreshing, for the birth of a modern sense of interiority has been located, just to note the sites of which I am aware, in Ovid's *Tristia*, twelfth-century romance, the Petrarchan sonnet, Du Bellay's *Regrets*, Montaigne's *Essais*, Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, and the Romantic reaction to historical change. Probably the first Paleolithic hunter to tell a disbelieving tribe that a lion had stolen his kill spent some time pondering the disjunction between his own inward memory and his friends' public scoffs. It seems reasonable, however, to think that writing in prison and in two languages would promote intensified introspection. Mühlethaler's demonstration that Vérard perceived Charles' turn inward and that 'Dès l'aube des temps modernes, on a été sensible aux effets autobiographiques dans les poésies du prince captif' is useful proof that early readers, too, could recognize the duke's striking ability to mix the traditional and the personal.

The prize of this collection is Anne Coldiron's essay on Charles' career in English scholarship. Charles was not forgotten in Renaissance

England, and yet, although as a dead white male aristocrat the Duke 'would seem to have been a nearly perfect candidate for high canonicity', historians of English literature have largely ignored him. Why? Coldiron has several suggestions, all with embarrassing implications for English professors (I would add the difficulty posed by Charles' post-Chaucerian and pre-Tudor English). Charles' lyrics, she points out, can seem on the one hand generically old-fashioned to anyone more at ease with Petrarchan sonnets than with courtly fixed forms, and, on the other hand, almost Elizabethan in their playful self-consciousness. Even more damaging are two widespread if unconsciously held assumptions: first, poems originally conceived in French should know their place – France – and not try to muscle their way onto English reading lists; second, much of Charles' English poetry is translation, and therefore unoriginal, and therefore somehow not real poetry. Neither assumption looks reasonable when stated so baldly, but each seems still to operate below the surface of our postmodern chatter.

A version of Coldiron's essay reappears in her beautifully written brief study of Charles. The introduction explores the disruptive relevance of Charles' poetry to our notions of canon, interiority, period, translation, and *translatio*, and also seconds David Wallace's acerbic words on the 'Anglocentricity' of much current Anglo-American scholarship (compare the apocryphal headline: 'Fog over Channel; Continent cut off'). The first chapter notes differences between the abstract personification-happy French poems and the concrete metaphor-happy English ones, unpacks some remarkable puns in such phrases as 'My ledy hert is lightid vnto tyn' (Coldiron herself can pun, as witness her remark that Charles 'paroles himself from the prison of one langue'). The next chapter traces Charles' construction/perception of more than one multilingual inward yet performative self – a version and anticipation of Shakespeare's 'perjured eye/I' – that can see and say things differently depending on the language of the moment. Coldiron is particularly provocative on what she calls Charles' 'envoi(x)': the concluding section of a poem in which the Duke is able 'not only to flatter, to beg, to say farewell, or reprise a theme, but also to roll the credits – to heighten interest in the English "I" and in the poem itself', and thus 'serve lyric subjectivity' and 'construct an especially writerly poetic subject'. Even Charles' heart can shift its cardiac behavior in response to whichever language it hears in the nearby throat: 'The French speaker and heart engage politely in conversational sparring; the English speaker and heart engage in a rough verbal tussle, gloves off.'

After a version of her essay in Arn's volume, Coldiron describes the 'ordinatio' and 'politics of selection' in Grenoble MS 873, the elaborate

*Translation and Literature* 11 (2002)

French-Latin volume that an aging Charles ordered made and that 'burst[s] out of coterie mode' to promote itself as a monument able to outlast bronze or marble and win lasting fame for its author. Safely home, Charles was able to include lyrics that would have once appeared impolitic and to introduce a patriotism that works in tension with the book's implied cosmopolitanism. Coldiron concludes with a brilliant demonstration that Charles' innovative English poetry, arguably the first lyric sequence in English, anticipated the manner and interests and even something of the structures (but not, despite his Italian mother, the Petrarchism) of later poets, thus showing the limits of our periodization and its terminology. It was the multiple ways in which Charles lived liminally between cultures, nations, languages, statuses, Coldiron thinks, that enabled him to think and write so unexpectedly.

Coldiron is a humane and amusing writer who can, for example, call the proximity of 'vous' and 'suis' a 'wish-fulfillment by syntax'. No wonder she admires Charles, an extraordinary poet capable not just of charm but also of hauntingly complex phrases: his 'woeful life', he says, 'shertith me more nerre than doth my skyn'. If his woeful life shirtd him inside his own skin, he might be consoled to know how well Coldiron, from a great cultural distance and in yet another version of English, has re-shirtd him with understanding and sympathy.

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