

Arn, Mary-Jo, *The Poet's Notebook: The Personal Manuscript of Charles d'Orléans* (Paris BnF MS fr. 25458) (Texts & Transitions, 3), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; hardback; pp. xx, 202; 30 b/w illustrations, 8 b/w tables, CD; R.R.P. €80.00; ISBN 9782503520704.

This codicological study of Paris BnF MS fr. 25458 was conceived by Mary-Jo Arn as the foundation for a planned edition of the poetry of Charles d'Orléans. The edition will replace the extant version, edited by Pierre Champion between 1923 and 1927, but much of the scholarship in the current study already displaces Champion's work. The book examines, in minute detail, the physical composition of what Arn calls the poet's 'notebook': a manuscript, originally unbound, whose production Charles oversaw for a period of some 30 years, from the time when he was a prisoner in England, to his death in France in 1465. Arn describes an intensely personal object, which is both a record of the life of the Duke of Orléans, and a rare insight into the activities of poets, limners and scribes in late medieval manuscript production.

Arn's monograph is underpinned by an understanding of Charles as a thoroughly bicultural author and consumer of literary works. Her preface situates her study of the duke against the currents through which other studies have passed, many of which are still in need of revision: she responds to and decisively dispels nineteenth- and early twentieth-century romantic visions of the exiled poet. More importantly, Arn raises several problematic issues for modern scholars of Charles' writings, namely, the dating of his lyrics and their numbering in the BnF manuscript, which the study convincingly redresses.

The first chapter describes the manuscript's physical composition, with Arn taking into account its ruling, decorations, numbering, marginalia, as well as what these indicate about its scribes. To consider the evidence in more detail, she breaks up the production of the volume into strata, examining individual copying stints. Her own book is divided along the same lines, and each chapter focuses on one of four copying stints before an analysis and conclusions are offered in a sixth and final chapter.

Chapter 2, which focuses on the first copying stint, paints a picture of the distinctly bicultural world in which Charles lived while a prisoner in England. It begins with a consideration of the duke's writing practices, and outlines his various trips to London, where he might have done 'business' with books (p. 56). Arn here contests studies that date the first stint to after 1440, the date of Charles' return to England (pp. 59–60). She also considers the original layout

of the manuscript, divided between *ballades* and *complaintes*, and *chansons* and *caroles* (p. 68).

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 Arn examines features of the manuscript's French production. She is able to glean a surprising amount of detail from various aspects of the second stint: that Charles himself copied a number of the poems; that he travelled frequently and took the book with him; and, from the lack of order in certain quires, that the manuscript was at this stage unbound (p. 99).

Arn's descriptions of the third and fourth stints evoke Charles' court at Blois as a hub of poetic composition. She emphasizes the dukedom as an administrative and creative centre of 'writing and written word' (p. 129). Chapter 4 supplies a list of the lyrics in the second and third stints identified in Charles' hand, and Chapter 5 reviews the dating of the English lyrics.

Chapter 6 ('Implications of this Study') offers some suggestions as to what scholars might take from detailed codicological analysis of this sort. In her introduction, Arn queried modern editorial interpretations of medieval 'time', and how best to relay the text or texts of a medieval manuscript to a modern audience: either as a 'snapshot' of the copied page, or in chronological order of composition or of copying (p. 12). Here, she concludes that 'arranging' and chronicling the production of Charles' poems changes considerably the critical interpretation of his corpus (p. 149). One of her most intriguing finds is Charles' interest in categorizing his lyrics according to 'associative structure[s]' rather than verse form (p. 150).

Arn's monograph is supplemented with a number of tables, all of which attempt to convey the manuscript as book rather than as text alone. The information here is dense and detailed. It is repeated in the CD-ROM that accompanies the book, with which it can be ordered and viewed as the user dictates. Arn's reassessment of numbering and chronology is complicated. The disc offers readers a way of coming to terms with that material, and visualizing the ways in which it might be interpreted. Slightly dizzying in the complexity of its contents, the CD nonetheless offers a practical sense of the various chronologies possible, and the utility of meticulous studies of this kind in understanding a range of relationships in late medieval literary and book production.

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