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The Political Valence of Charles d'Orléans's English Poetry

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Life dealt Charles d'Orléans (1394–1465) a tough hand. In 1407, the day before his thirteenth birthday, his father was brutally murdered by their cousin, Jean de Bourgogne; the death of his mother in 1408 was followed by that of his first wife in 1409; he was taken prisoner at Agincourt in 1415 and spent almost twenty-five years in captivity in England, during which time his second wife died. On his return to France in 1440, his attempts to reassert his political influence met with limited success, and his removal to Blois in the early 1450s is usually interpreted as a disappointed but decorous withdrawal from public life.¹ Aurelians on both sides of the Channel and beyond have typically focused on these misadventures and read Charles's poetry as reflecting on them; this personal and public career, it has been reasoned, must have had an effect on the writing the duke produced.² Critics such as Mary-Jo Arn, A. E. B. Coldiron, Denis Hüe, and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler have contested the tendency to read Charles's verse against the backdrop of this—or indeed any—version of his life story.³ But it dies

1. See, e.g., Pierre Champion, *Vie de Charles d'Orléans, 1394–1465* (Paris: Champion, 1911), 380. For an alternative view, see Philippe Contamine, "Les derniers mois de la vie de Charles d'Orléans d'après un document inédit," *Bulletin de l'Association des Amis du Centre Jeanne d'Arc* 10 (1986): 19–30.

2. In this connection, see in particular N. L. Goodrich, *Charles of Orleans: A Study of Themes in his French and in his English Poetry* (Geneva: Droz, 1967). Somewhat more recently, see Rouben Cholakian, *Deflection/Reflection in the Lyric Poetry of Charles d'Orléans: A Psychosemiotic Reading* (Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 1984); and Albrecht Classen, *Die autobiographische Lyrik des europäischen Spätmittelalters* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 269–345.

3. See Mary-Jo Arn, "The English Poetry of Charles of Orleans," *Dutch Quarterly Review* 8 (1978): 108–21; A. E. B. Coldiron, *Canon, Period, and the Poetry of Charles of Orleans: Found in Translation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), esp. 39–75; Denis Hüe, "Charles d'Orléans, livre de sable et autres plaisirs minuscules," in *Lectures de Charles d'Orléans: Les ballades*, ed. Denis Hüe (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 7–15; and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, *Charles d'Orléans, un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité* (Paris: Garnier, 2010), esp. 7–14.

hard.⁴ The following essay attempts to find a middle way between these two groups of readers, to blend their apparently conflicting approaches in order to arrive at an explication of the political valence of the duke's poetry.

An interest in the relationship between the poet's life and his work need not always be the product of an inappropriately Romantic imagination. Indeed, I shall argue, this interest is often encouraged by Charles's texts themselves, and there are important critical gains to be made by playing into the dramatic appeal of the duke's English self-representation in particular. I do not propose to claim that Charles's bilingual verses in any way reveal their author's innermost thoughts, however. I am in full agreement with Michel Zink's assertion that writing of this sort would be profoundly unprincely.⁵ Instead, I perceive in the duke's literary work the desire to craft two substantially different public identities, one French and one English. My primary focus here will be on the English verse, which I read as an attempt on the part of its author to effect a personal rebranding of the kind that J. A. Burrow has identified as the goal of Thomas Hoccleve's *Series* (1419–21).⁶ In order to make the case for this reading of the duke's poetry, I will begin by offering a detailed analysis of the dissimilarities between Charles's English and French personae. I will then move on to consider what might have motivated the poet to present himself so differently in the two major collections of his work produced in England. In so doing, I draw liberally on the work of Mary-Jo Arn, whose editions and critical accounts of Charles's texts are invaluable for their careful elucidation of the historical, material, and linguistic conditions that shape the poet's work; my argument is also informed by the scholarship of A. E. B. Coldiron, who, in her analysis of the duke's self-publication strategy at the close of his career, has already

4. For newer readings of the French poetry as pathetic autobiography, see Mechthild Albert, "En la chambre de ma pensée: Interiorität und Subjektivität bei Charles d'Orléans," in *Außen und Innen: Räume und ihre Symbolik im Mittelalter*, ed. Nikolaus Staubach and Vera Johantewage (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2007), 265–77; Rouben Cholakian, "Le monde vivant," in *Charles d'Orléans in England (1415–40)*, ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2000), 109–21; and Jean-François Kosta-Théfaine, "La douleur du poète, celle d'un prince: Autour des balades de Charles d'Orléans," in Hüe, *Lectures*, 95–107.

5. See Michel Zink, "Mis pour meuir ou feurre de prison: Le poète, leurre du prince," in *Guerre, pouvoir et noblesse au Moyen Âge: Mélanges en l'honneur de Philippe Contamine*, ed. Jacques Paviot and Jacques Verger (Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), 677–85. "Le poète affecte la transparence et paraît ne rien dissimuler," Zink concludes, "mais c'est pour mieux taire les pensées du prince" (The poet affects transparency and appears to hide nothing, but this is in order to conceal the thoughts of the prince more effectively) (685). All translations in this essay are my own, including the translations of Charles's French poetry given below.

6. Burrow argues that Hoccleve wrote the *Series* after a period of madness in order at once to effect and to prove his "reassumption . . . of a social role proper to a man of fifty-three" (J. A. Burrow, "Hoccleve's *Series*: Experience and Books," in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. Robert F. Yeager [Hamden, CT: Archon, 1984], 268).

done much to highlight Charles's awareness of the political implications of his writing.⁷ My aim is to demonstrate that a more accurate biographical reading of Charles's English poetry can give us a better sense of its potential significance as a work of fundamentally public verse, while at the same time helping us avoid falling into the critical error that George Kane memorably termed the "autobiographical fallacy."⁸

TWO PERSONAE, ONE POET

Shortly before his release from captivity in the autumn of 1440, Charles d'Orléans ordered the production of two manuscripts to contain the French and English poetry that he had composed to date.⁹ He is keen to announce himself as the author of both the resulting codices, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS fr. 25458, which contains his French verse, and London, British Library MS Harley 682, which contains the English texts. Thus in the French version of the allegorical narrative that opens both these books, the poet loses little time before having himself introduced as "Charles, Duc d'Orlians" (114),

Ce jenne filz . . .
Qui est sailly de la maison de France,
Creu ou jardin semé de fleur de lis.

(165–67)¹⁰

7. See Coldiron, *Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 112–44, and "Toward a Comparative New Historicism: Land Tenures and Some Fifteenth-Century Poems," *Comparative Literature* 53 (2001): 97–116. My numerous debts to Arn are detailed in the notes that follow.

8. See George Kane, *The Autobiographical Fallacy in Chaucer and Langland Studies* (London: Lewis, 1965).

9. Arn has argued convincingly for Charles's authorship of the English verse but her claim is not universally accepted. See Mary-Jo Arn, "Charles of Orleans and the Poems of BL MS Harley 682," *English Studies* 74 (1993): 222–35; and William Calin, "Will the Real Charles of Orleans Please Stand! or, Who Wrote the English Poems in Harley 682?," in *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly*, ed. Keith Busby and Norris J. Lacy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 69–86. What is most important for my argument, however, is that the duke wanted to be personally associated with the verses preserved in his English book. Arn has demonstrated the poet's direct involvement in the production of Harley 682 in an analysis of his French and English manuscripts. See Mary-Jo Arn, "Two Manuscripts, One Mind: Charles d'Orléans and the Production of Manuscripts in Two Languages (Paris, BN MS fr. 25458 and London, BL MS Harley 682)," in Arn, *Charles d'Orléans in England*, 61–78.

10. "This young boy / Who sprang from the house of France, / [and] Grew up in the garden sown with the lily flower." For ease of reference, the French text is cited by poem title or number (where given) and line number from the unique modern single-volume edition of Charles's French verses, *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle: A Critical Edition of BnF MS. fr. 25458, Charles d'Orléans's Personal Manuscript*, ed. John Fox and Mary-Jo Arn (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010). My reading of the French poems is indebted to the notes and the modern French

Harley 682 is lacking its opening quire, so the English text that probably paralleled this section is lost; nevertheless, within the opening lines of the codex as it has survived the author's identity is likewise clearly marked as "the duk that folkis calle / Of Orlyaunch" (5–6).¹¹ Although Charles is eager to associate himself directly with the verses preserved in both his French and English books, the way in which he portrays himself changes across these collections. This has not escaped critical notice. N. L. Goodrich, for example, observes that the English poetry is frequently more pessimistic in outlook than the corresponding French text, and that the English poet's feelings of self-doubt are more pronounced than those of his French counterpart, particularly with regard to the effectiveness of his writing.¹² Arn has argued that Goodrich's reading of Charles's poetry is limited by her interpretation of his verse as sentimental autobiography,¹³ but a general contrastive overview of the duke's French and English work has not been reattempted since the publication of Goodrich's study.¹⁴ Before proposing a reason for Charles's decision to present himself differently in his French and English verse it will be useful first to provide an updated account of how and where the poet's self-representation diverges in these texts. Some two thirds of the English poetry preserved in Harley 682 is paralleled by French material in MS fr. 25458, and my focus will be on these bilingual verses, beginning with an extended look at the two versions Charles produces of the allegory that opens both collections of his poetry. Here and throughout his corpus, I will argue, the dissimilarities that may be perceived between the duke's French and English personae are systematically planned to suit the requirements of at least two different audiences.

glosses in *Charles d'Orléans: Ballades et rondeaux*, ed. Jean-Claude Mühlethaler (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1992), and *Charles d'Orléans: Le Livre d'amis: Poésies à la cour de Blois (1440–1465)*, ed. Virginie Minet-Mahy and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler (Paris: Champion, 2010).

11. The English text is cited by poem number (where given) and line number from *Fortunes Stablnes: Charles of Orleans's English Book of Love*, ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994). I do not always follow Arn's punctuation and capitalization. Charles repeats his self-naming in the English text at 2720, 3044, and 4788, and in the French text at *Retenue* 405–6, *Requeste* 181, *Quittance* 375, and Co3: 82.

12. See Goodrich, *Study of Themes*, 35–65. See also the earlier comments in John Fox, "Charles d'Orléans, poète anglais?," *Romania* 86 (1965): 433–62; and *The English Poems of Charles of Orleans*, ed. Robert Steele and Mabel Day, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1941–46), 2:42–46.

13. Arn, "English Poetry," 112–19.

14. With the exception of Arn, who provides a brief but useful overview of the differences between Charles's French and English personae (*Fortunes Stablnes*, 93–95), recent critics of the duke's bilingual verses have tended to focus their attention on individual pairs of poems. This is the case in Coldiron, *Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 14–75 (see Coldiron's description of this procedure at 29); and Susan Crane, "Charles of Orleans: Self-Translation," in *The Medieval Translator*, vol. 8, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Amsterdam: Brepols, 2003), 169–77.

Despite the loss of a considerable part of the beginning of Harley 682, differences between Charles's French and English self-presentations are perceptible in the parallel versions of the allegory that open his two books. In the French text of this introductory section, which critics since Champion have called the *Retenue d'Amours*, the poet tells how one Valentine's Day morning he was tricked by his guardian, Jennessé, into attending Love's court, where he was struck by Beauté's arrow and initiated into Amours's service. Over the course of these lines, Charles abandons his initial resistance to Amours's mastery and swears to abide by his commandments, finally turning over his heart to him as surety. The allegory concludes with a mock-legal letter of homage—given the title *Copie de la lettre de retenue* in MS fr. 25458—in which Amours outlines the details of the agreement he has made with his new vassal and orders his officers to assist him. This is where the English book opens; its first line now corresponds to line 401 of the *Retenue*, where the *Copie de la lettre de retenue* begins. Analysis of the points at which the two texts of the letter of homage diverge reveals a fundamental disjunction between the duke's French and English self-representations. In MS fr. 25458, the author is presented as a newly inducted servant of Love who assumes this role with alacrity and acumen in the balade cycle beginning directly after the *Copie de la lettre de retenue*. In Harley 682, by contrast, this induction is obstructed by the inclusion of extra text and by the elaboration of a relationship between Charles and Cupid that affords the poet's English narrator little room for personal growth. Indeed, in stark contradistinction to the corresponding French verses, the English poetry following the introductory section in Harley 682 is characterized by its narrator's emotional immaturity and by the overwhelming narrowness of his outlook.

A difference between the French and English letters of homage occurs in the opening lines of these texts. In the English version, Cupid is careful to describe Charles's entry into his service as a choice that Charles has made of his own free will. The French reads

Et lui avons assigné sur noz rentes
 Sa pension en joyeuses attentes
 Pour en joir par noz lectres patentes
 Tant que vouldrons.

(409–12)¹⁵

The English text gives

And we haue him assignyd on oure rent
 The fayrist penciouun afir his entent

15. "And we have assigned him from our income / His pension in joyful expectations / So that he may enjoy them by our letters patent / For as long as we shall wish."

Forto enyoy bi oure lettir patent
While he good lust.

(9–12)

When Cupid subsequently records the receipt of Charles's heart, the English text likewise affords its author a greater degree of agency. In the French text, Amours records that

Avons voulu en gage recevoir
Le cueur de lui, lequel de bon vouloir
A tout soubzmis en noz mains et pouvoir,
Pour quoy tenus
Sommes a lui par ce de plus en plus.

(437–41)¹⁶

In the English version of these lines, however, we are told that Charles left his heart of his own accord and that the symbolic importance accorded to this gesture by Cupid has been agreed upon by the duke. The English God of Love's gratitude is also more enthusiastically expressed:

For sewrte more, he leuys in morgage
His hert, without disdayne of corage,
Not to refuse in thenkyng it bondage—
The more biholde
Ar we to hem, god wot, a thousand fold!

(37–41)

Here and throughout this passage, Cupid expresses his orders indirectly, suggesting an uncertainty as to precisely how much power he can wield over Charles that clearly differentiates him from Amours in the French text (cf. 191–200). This cupid also shows himself more willing to help his vassal than is his French counterpart: he promises to advance the duke and reassures him in lines that have no equivalent in the French letter that he will honor his part of their contract (14–15, 51–52).

Cupid's conciliatory treatment of Charles continues in the narrative verse section that follows the letter of homage in Harley 682 (56–202), where in MS fr. 25458 the opening allegory concludes. Cupid twice repeats his promise to help the duke here (133–34, 158–59) as well as giving him some extra tips on wooing (136–55). Indeed, it is clear from the conversation between the poet and Cupid played out in this passage that Charles's English narra-

16. "We have been pleased to take as surety / His heart, which with good will / He has submitted entirely into our hands and power / For which reason bound / Are we to him by this ever more."

tor still has much to learn. Even after he has received the letter defining his relationship with Cupid, Charles continues to rebel against his new master, protesting tetchily at his treatment of him—"This may y not deserue, in myn entent!" (83)—and making a request whose nature betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the economics of courtly love. He asks Love,

Me forto graunt, as of yowre nobill grace,
To sewe, aftir my childisshe ynnocense,
As for myn hert an othir to purchase,
Whereas ye haue betake myn for a space.

(92–95)

Love must have a store of hearts to bestow, he reasons; it would be unfair if he were to hoard them up for himself (98–104). Wouldn't it make most sense if, in exchange for his heart, Charles were given that of his lady (105–11)?

Stern-faced, Cupid responds to Charles's request with a speech in which he quickly starts to sound more like an exasperated father than the fearsome deity in the French text (cf. 251–60):

The god Cupide as therwith lokid sad
And to me seide, "Ahim, what wanton hyt!
I wende right well atamyd ben thou had,
But well y fele as now thou lakkist witt,
For this y woll thou knowe: how that hyt sitt
The forto like in what is my plesere;
And where as that thou seidist to me here
How y a thousand hertis take to on
As forto kepe, y gesse y do it well.

(112–20)

Ladies pick the hearts that they want, he concludes, and the rejects are left with him (121–25).¹⁷

Far from empowering Charles's English self-representation, then, the more reciprocal relationship established between the poet and Cupid in the English text appears to stall its narrator's maturation. At the point when his French counterpart is ready to embark on his first cycle of balades, the English poet continues to require guidance in the basics of *fin'amours*. It is far from clear that the English God of Love will be the most efficient executor of this instruction: Cupid's repeated offers to help Charles risk limiting the English poet's capacity for independent action, and where this cupid

17. Compare Arn's comment that "The God of Love's tone here is one of impatience; he is tired of dealing with this unruly, childish beginner and speaks like an irritated parent" (*Fortunes Stabiles*, 439).

stresses his new subject's rights and benefits, he plays to Charles's intractability rather than tackling it head-on. Thus by replacing the tough love dealt out by Amours in the French text with the English God of Love's ineffective blandishments, the poet ultimately denies his English persona the opportunity to grow up. Indeed, there is no mention made here of the illustrious line of lovers which in the French text Amours expects Charles to live up to—"Ses devanciers, dont contens nous tenons / Tresgrandement" (his predecessors, with whom we hold ourselves contented / Most greatly) (415–16)—and the English poet's apparently permanent infantilization is confirmed in the closing lines of the letter of homage. Whereas in the *Copie de la lettre de retenue* Charles is told that his vocation is to be "A toutes gens bon exemple d'amer" (to all people a good example of loving) (445), in the English version of the same passage the potential audience of the duke's performance of love conduct is restricted to "yong folk" (46).

The transformative power of the rude awakening described in the *Retenue d'Amours* and realized in the first balade sequence in the French manuscript is considerably weaker in Harley 682, where the stunting of Charles's persona at the opening of the English collection affects the nature of the poetry he goes on to write. Herein lies one of the major differences between the two books the duke produced in England: whereas the texts recorded in MS fr. 25458 at this point were distributed across various sheets of parchment in a fashion that would facilitate the incorporation of the verses that Charles and members of his poetic circle went on to write after the duke's repatriation, Harley 682 appears to have been conceived of as a finished work from the outset, intended to be read, as Arn has asserted, "not as simply a collection of lyrics" but rather "as a whole: a major work in the form of a *dit*."¹⁸ Over some six thousand lines it tells the story of its narrator's enamourment, bereavement, retirement from love, and final return to love service. The English book is much more closely organized around a coherent narrative and a consistently articulated persona than is MS fr. 25458, which serves as a record of the increasingly social nature of the duke's writing.¹⁹ As A. C. Spearing notes, the disposition of the poems of Harley 682 appears to have been "planned to give the impression of telling the story of a specific inner life," making the author's development of his English persona a

18. Arn, "Two Manuscripts," 77. For a detailed analysis of the composition of MS fr. 25458, see Mary-Jo Arn, *The Poet's Notebook: The Personal Manuscript of Charles d'Orléans (Paris Bnf MS fr. 25458)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

19. On this aspect of MS fr. 25458, see Jane H. M. Taylor, "Courtly Gatherings and Poetic Games: 'Coterie' Anthologies in the Late Middle Ages in France," in *Book and Text in France, 1400–1600: Poetry on the Page*, ed. Adrian Armstrong and Malcolm Quainton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 15–20; and Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme*, esp. 37–52.

focal point of readers' interest.²⁰ An important aspect of this design is that Charles's self-representation as an inexperienced and testy youth in the opening section of the English book is carried over into the poetry that follows.

After dispensing his extra tips on wooing, the English God of Love finally departs "forto disport" (161), but it still takes some time for Charles to start writing poetry. When he notices that his lady, Bewte, is in the company of Disdayne and Daungere, he decides not to approach her directly, opting instead to write her a "bill" (175) laying out his case. He withdraws to an arbor in order to collect his thoughts, which come to him "even liche as hit were a swarme of bene" (193) and which he fears he lacks the "speche and konnyng" to order (198–99). Hope is duly summoned and emerges in the guise of a hurried tutor. Pen and paper in hand, he dismisses Charles's protestations of insufficiency and tells him to get down to business: "O tewche! . . . As thou kanst, do on!" (200). It is under these rather inauspicious conditions that the first English balade cycle finally begins. The differences in tone between the French and English poetry noticed by Goodrich and others are in operation here, but I shall suggest that they are best understood as a product of the differing modes of self-portrayal that the poet exercises in his French and English books. Moreover, as will be seen, Charles injects a comic element into his English self-representation—something that Goodrich and her predecessors missed—thereby encouraging an ironic reception of his descriptions of his love pains.

The text of Harley 682 is closely paralleled by MS fr. 25458 until roughly line 4000 of the English work. Differences between the poet's personae in these two bodies of writing can often be traced to words and phrases in the decasyllabic English verse that are absent in the typically octosyllabic French lines.²¹ Thus, for example, the English poetry is frequently rendered graver by the incorporation of adjectives such as "derk" (B22:869), "derkid" (B11:527; B45:1608; R40:3713) or "trowbely" (B48:1711), which have no equivalent in the French text; the adjective "nakid" is likewise employed,

20. A. C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 226.

21. There has been some disagreement regarding the order in which the French and English versions of Charles's poetry were written. Steele claims that the English verse precedes the French, but Hans Meier has plausibly argued that the converse is often true. See Steele and Day, *English Poems*, 1:xxvi–xxvii; and Hans H. Meier, "Middle English Styles in Translation: The Case of Chaucer and Charles," in *So Meny People, Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Mediaeval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, ed. Michael Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh: Middle English Dialect Project, 1981), 372–75. It is also possible—and safest to assume—that both the French and the English versions of any given bilingual poem were being written and rewritten at the same time. This is the view adopted by Coldiron and I subscribe to her approach here (see *Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 43 n. 10).

where a similar word is absent in the French, in order to emphasize either the poet's simplicity (B22:861) or his vulnerability (B14:626; B26:974). A common feature of the English verse that also contributes to highlight the English persona's depressive tendencies is his marked readiness to imagine his own death in passages that have no French equivalent:

That nyght or day hit wondir doth me thynke
How y haue leyd this many yere agoo
Without an hert, *sechyng my pittis brynke*

(B20:796–98)

Si m'esmerveille main et soir
Comment j'ay vesqu tant de jours
Depuis sans cueur

(B18:7–9)²²

Fortune, *dost thou my deth conspyre?*
Onys let me pese, y pray thee hertily!

(B40:1410–411)

Fortune, vueilliez moy laisser
En paix une fois je vous prie

(B40:1–2)²³

As for the gyft ye haue vnto me geve . . .
Which shall be quynt to yow *if so y lyue*

(R20:3419–22)

Pour le don que m'avez donné . . .
Qui vous sera bien guerdonné

(Ch24:1, 4)²⁴

Charles's self-confidence likewise frequently appears to be at a lower ebb in his English verse:

Of gyft y dar not axe so gret a thing

Of yow, *bicause y knowe me not worthe*

(B1:219–20)

Que me donnez en octroy don si
grant

Je ne l'ose dire ne demander

(B1:17–18)²⁵

That hit is this ye do right well aduert

Mi lady dere, to me, *yowre scomfited knyght*

(B4:308–9)

Qu'il soit ainsi bien le me fist
aprandre

Ma maistresse, mon souverain desir

(B4:15–16)²⁶

And als y wott in grace of hir mercy
She doth me holde, *all be y not worthi*

(B42:1477–78)

Et si pense que, la sienne mercy,
Elle me tient son servant et amy

(B42:6–7)²⁷

22. "Thus I wonder morning and night / How I have lived so many days / Since without a heart."

23. "Fortune, please leave me / In peace for once, I beg you."

24. "For the gift that you have given me / For which you will be well rewarded."

25. "That you grant me such a great gift / I dare neither to speak of nor ask for it."

26. "That it is so, well was I taught by / My mistress, my sovereign desire."

27. "And so I think that, in her mercy, / She considers me her servant and friend."

In particular, the English poet worries about the quality of his poetry at several moments where the French poet does not:

My greef to playne, <i>albe y not konnyng</i> ,	Se si a plain vous vois mes maulx disant,
Loue causith this <i>my naked wordis fle</i>	Force d'Amours me fait ainsi parler
(B1:211–12)	(B1:9–10) ²⁸

O goo, thou derke, fordullid, rude myture And say for trouthe—forwhi hit is no lese— That y haue chose withouten departure As for my souereyne lady and maystres	<i>No French</i>
(B39:1406–9)	

Wherefore that y, withouten more respite,	Pource tantost, sans plus prendre respit,
Wol make a bill in maner of request	Escrire vueil en forme de requeste
...	...
To shewe him (<i>rudely as y kan endyte</i>)	lui moustrant par escript
What paynys feele ther is (and smal profit!)	Les maulx qu'ay euz et le peu de aprouffit
In pursewyng of Lovis hard conquest	En poursuivant l'amoureuse conqueste
(2692–93; 2697–99)	(<i>Songe en Complainte</i> 153–54; 158–60) ²⁹

These last remarks assume an added resonance in the context of Cupid's comments on the importance of eloquence in wooing gentlewomen in Harley 682 (140–46) and the English poet's repeated praise of his lady's articulacy, an attribute that the French poet stresses less forcefully or omits in his catalogs of the beloved's virtues. Charles praises his lady's "well ensewridnes of word and chere" (B9:445), for example, whereas in the French text the poet restricts himself to commentary on the beloved's "accueil humble, plain de maniere lye" (friendly welcome, full of joyous manner) (B9:6), and the effects of the lady's eloquence are stressed again later in the English collection (B19:762–65), whereas in the corresponding French text this quality goes unmentioned (B20:1–4).³⁰

28. "If I am telling you of my suffering in such detail / It is because Love's force makes me speak thus."

29. "That's why straight away, without tarrying any longer / I will write in the form of a request / showing him in writing / The suffering that I have had and the little profit / In pursuing the amorous conquest."

30. Regarding the English narrator's worrying about the quality of his writing, see too Col-diron's comments on the parallel versions of B10. The English speaker of this text, Coldiron observes, "seems less optimistic about the possibilities, effects [and] even the use of speech at every stage" (*Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 33).

The compound effect of these added details in the English verse is that Charles's self-representation in Harley 682 consistently appears needier and more inclined to melodramatic displays of self-pity than his French counterpart.³¹ This impression is reinforced elsewhere in the bilingual verse where the differences between the duke's parallel texts are more pronounced. In many instances the rendering of individual phrases and even whole lines of text differs substantially across the two versions. Where this occurs, the English poet often gives his case a bleaker turn. What the French poet refers to as his "desir," for example (B16:10), the English poet calls "my grevaunce" (B16:683); where the French poet complains to his lady that he suffers "Quant a mon gré je ne vous voy souvent" (when I do not see you often as I wish) (B20:13), the English poet presents his separation from his lady as definitive ("syn that y am absent") (B19:774); and where the French poet commands his mistress not to forget him (B54:1–10), the English poet seems to know that she has already begun to do so (B54:1877). Similarly, the emotional intensity of the situation described by the English poet often appears greater than that described by his French counterpart. Whereas the French poet claims that his heart suffers "de maulx doloireux / Plus d'un cent, non pas un ou deux" (smarting pains / More than a hundred, not one or two) (B24:4–5), for instance, in the English text Charles complains of the "grevous gret a has / —Not on or twayne, they passe a thousand bras!" (B24:919–20).

Sometimes the same balade is given different refrains in its French and English manifestations, substantially altering the sense of the poem and providing an even clearer impression of the disparity between the characters of Charles's two personae. In French, a poem about waiting with the refrain "Car trop ennuie qui attent" (For he suffers too much who waits) (B52:9, etc.) becomes, in English, a poem about absence, with the refrain "For whoo that absent is, is woobigoon" (B52:1819, etc.). Where the French poet keeps a wish list in the hope that "De mille l'un puist avenir" (Of a thousand one of them might be realized) (B49:8, etc.), for the English narrator a similar list is a source of guilt and anxiety as he repeatedly frets that it might be misappropriated "Thorugh false conspire of sum vnhappy wight" (B49:1725, etc.). Finally, there is the exclusively amorous nature of the English poet's concerns. This gives an almost obsessive thematic unity to Harley 682. None of the public and political poems included in MS fr. 25458 at this point are present in the English book and a part of the verse exchange between the duke and Philippe de Bourgogne preserved in MS

31. Compare Arn's conclusion that the narrator of the English poetry is "more emotional, at times more demanding, and occasionally more foolish than his French counterpart" (*Foetunes Stabiles*, 95).

fr. 25458 (B129, B130) appears to have been rewritten for Harley 682 as yet more love poetry (B111, B113).³²

The differences between Charles's French and English personae perceptible in the parallel bodies of verse are also in evidence in the roughly 2000 lines of poetry in Harley 682 for which MS fr. 25458 provides no equivalent. For instance, the significantly darker English text of the opening balade cycle contains four additional mourning poems on the death of the lady: B58, B59, B60 and B74. However, it is important to note that there are also several moments in both the paralleled and the unique English text where the duke presents himself as a comic figure. The clearest example of the humorous and self-ironizing aspect of Charles's English writing occurs in the second dream narrative in Harley 682 (4736–5351), for which there is no surviving French text, and which Arn has analyzed in detail.³³ In this passage, which prepares for the final balade cycle in the English book, the poet falls asleep and is visited by Venus, but he fails to recognize her until he has made a comically inappropriate attempt to kiss her (4756–98). The dream vision continues in this vein and Arn has not been the only scholar to note the Chaucerian overtones in Charles's self-presentation as a bumbling dreamer in this section of his work.³⁴ The narrator's incompetence and misplaced enthusiasm for Venus ties in well both with the depiction of the English poet as a clueless but demanding adolescent at the opening of Harley 682 and with the fact that, throughout the English collection, Charles's physical desires are frequently allowed to emerge, bathetically undercutting the courtly tone for which he appears to be aiming. In the course of lamenting his mistress's absence, for example, the English poet lets out a wish "That y ne may now stroke yowre sidis pleyne" (B11:524) where the French poet more decorously restricts himself to looking forward to the time "quant

32. Coldiron ("Towards a Comparative New Historicism") points out Charles's deployment of the language of contemporary tenancy agreements in the English versions of these texts; Crane ("Self-Translation") demonstrates that both the French and English versions of these verses testify to and explore the overlap between the languages of love and politics in court cultures. Read in the context of the English collection as a whole, I would suggest, the English versions of these works may also be interpreted as making an important contribution to the poet's self-representation as an inwardly focused lover whose self-expressive gestures slide—often somewhat awkwardly—between a variety of registers and styles.

33. Arn, "English Poetry," 116–19. On the comic vein in Charles's French verse, see in particular Mühlethaler, *Un lyrisme*, e.g., 89–103.

34. See also Julia Boffey, "Charles of Orleans Reading Chaucer's Dream Visions," in *Medievalitas: Reading the Middle Ages; The J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Ninth Series, Perugia, 1995*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), 43–62. For a discussion of some of the crucial differences between Charles's and Chaucer's personae, see A. C. Spearing, "Dreams in *The Kingis Quair* and the Duke's Book," in Arn, *Charles d'Orléans in England*, 134–44. For the reasons Spearing outlines, Charles's English persona should more properly be called quasi-Chaucerian than simply Chaucerian.

reveoir pourray / Vostre gent corps plaisant et gracieux" (When I will be able to see again / Your noble, pleasant and graceful body) (B11:5–6). Elsewhere in the English text the poet begs a "kis" (B13:609) and praises his lady's "round pappis white / Yowre sidis streight and armys to" (ep. 5767) in passages where the corresponding French verses are less explicit (cf. B13:28–29; Co2:80–82).³⁵ Finally, in what is perhaps the most extreme example of this tendency, the inclusion of a three-word phrase in the English version of the envoy to balade 24 makes the difference between, in the French collection, an artfully abstracted reflection on the heart's sufferings and, in the English, a hymn on sexual frustration. Where the French reads

Amour, faites moy si eueux
Que mettez mon cueur en liesse.
Laissiez Dangier et Dueil tous seuls
Ou purgatoire de Tristesse

(B24:25–28)³⁶

The English text gives

O make me, Loue, *so happe to purchase*
Thou-wotist-what, to sett me in gladnes
Or, Antropos, thou brest my lyvis lase
Only to spel me this in heuynes

(B24:940–43)

Indeed, Charles repeatedly appears less self-controlled in his English poetry. He frequently has recourse to (often quite strange) colloquial expressions there that are not present in the French verses:

Not long agoo y hyed me apase
In secret wise myn hert forto counsayle . . .
To which he saide me, "*Nay, sett there a nayle!*"
Speke me no more therof, y hertly pray"

(B6:350–51, 354–55)

N'a pas long temps qu'alay parler
A mon cueur tout secrettement . . .
Mais me dist bien fellement:
Ne m'en parlez plus, je vous prie.

(B6:1–2, 5–6)³⁷

Thus with "No forse!" *my care y cast to ground*,
Which y endewre for my fayre lady small

(B18:754–55)

Pour ce je metz du tout a Nonchaloir
Les tresgrans maux que me faites sentir

(B19:21–22)³⁸

35. Arn notes the increasingly eroticized description of the relationship between the poet and his lady in the latter sections of the English book (*Fortunes Stabilnes*, 530).

36. "Love, make me so glad / That you put my heart in joy / Leave Danger and Sorrow all alone / In the purgatory of Sadness."

37. "Not long ago I went to speak / To my heart in complete secrecy / But he said to me quite evilly: / Speak to me no more of this, I beg you."

38. "For this reason I deliver up entirely to Indifference / The great pains that you make me feel."

Myn hert, if so that y good tidying here,
 To telle hit thee, what woll pou geue me? Say!
 They mowe be suche þat y wolde bye hem
 dere;

They mowe ben suche y sett not by an ay.

(B33:1191–94)

Se je vous dy bonne nouvelle,
 Mon cuer, que voulez vous donner?
 Elle pourroit bien estre telle

Que moult chier la vueil acheter

(B33:1–4)³⁹

In these instances, Arn suggests, Charles betrays himself as a non-native speaker of English; the poet's deployment of these phrases, she asserts, "seems more typical of a foreigner attempting to add immediacy to his second-language poetry than of an Englishman who would have been aware of the courtly idiom and the nuances which separated one situation, one class, or one expression from another."⁴⁰ Taking a more positive view of the duke's second language acquisition, however, it seems equally possible that these expressions were employed as part of a conscious attempt on the part of the poet to develop his self-representation in the English poetry as a comically inept and overeager lover.⁴¹

Critics have responded in a variety of ways to the differences between the authorial personae staged in the parallel texts of the duke's French and English poetry. For readers such as Eleanor Prescott Hammond and Theo Stemmler, the clear disjunction between the authorial voice that speaks the poems in Harley 682 and that which delivers the French verse known unquestionably to have been written by the duke constituted an important argument against Charles's authorship of both bodies of verse.⁴² In response, those who advocate for the duke's authorship of the English poems have championed the enhanced emotionality of the verses in the Harley manuscript as proof of their authenticity; Robert Steele went so far as to claim that the "roughness" and "real feeling" that characterizes these poems suggests that many of them were composed before their more polished French analogues.⁴³ The question of why Charles chose to write in English at all has remained a pressing one, however, since many readers in fifteenth-century England understood French and often appear to have preferred

39. "If I tell you a piece of good news, / My heart, what will you give? / It might well be such / That I will pay dearly for it."

40. Arn, "Poems of BL MS, Harley 682," 225.

41. Coldiron's analysis of the parallel texts of B10 provides an eloquent illustration of Charles's aptitude for word-play and his propensity to neologize. See too Coldiron's comments on the deployment of colloquial language in B6 and its effect on the relationship between the speaker and heart elaborated in the English version of this poem (*Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 34–37, 66).

42. See Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1927), 214; and Theo Stemmler, "Zur Verfasserfrage der Charles d'Orléans zugeschriebenen englischen Gedichte," *Anglia* 82 (1964): 468–72.

43. Steele and Day, *English Poems*, 1:xxvi.

reading in that language.⁴⁴ Goodrich suggests that after almost twenty-five years in England, Charles found he could express himself more accurately in English than in his native tongue, and John Fox posits that he felt at greater liberty to give vent to his suffering in a language that his friends and family back home would not be able to understand.⁴⁵ But neither of these views has won general acceptance.⁴⁶

Among the scholars cited thus far, it is Coldiron who comes closest to the answer that I would like to propose to the question of what motivated Charles to produce Harley 682. Her work on the late collection of the duke's poetry that is now Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale MS 873 is of particular relevance here.⁴⁷ Produced under the poet's direction and completed circa 1461, the Grenoble book contains parallel versions of many of the poems preserved in MSS fr. 25458 and Harley 682, but they have been translated into Latin here (facing-text French versions are also included) and they are presented in an order that appears designed to stress the importance of the political role played by the duke in the closing decades of the Hundred Years' War. Accordingly, Coldiron argues, Grenoble MS 873 is best interpreted as an effort made by the poet at the close of his career "to reshape the poetry he had been writing all his life, to place it in a new, specifically political, moral, and patriotic context, and to make that new shape and context permanent for a cosmopolitan readership."⁴⁸ While Coldiron asserts that the English poetry serves a private function in which "the energy of translation is directed towards a poetics of the interior, of the self,"⁴⁹ her analysis of the bilingual Grenoble manuscript demonstrates that Charles was keenly aware of the relationship between his book and his public image in that codex, and I would like to suggest that a similar sensitivity to this connection is also evident in his earlier work. My argument here departs from a highly suggestive comment made in passing by Arn in a revised version of her essay on the duke's two manuscripts. Discussing the rewriting of the French Burgundy poems as love verses in Harley 682, Arn notes that "À la lumière de la position de Charles en Angleterre, très surveillé et toujours suspecté, il n'est pas étonnant qu'il ait choisi de présenter son personnage poétique comme un amant courtois bredouillant, sans per-

44. Coldiron provides a brief review of the copious literature on this topic (*Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 21–22). For a newer account of the status of French in fifteenth-century England, see Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 308–49.

45. Goodrich, *Study of Themes*, 172; and Fox, "Poète anglais?," 446.

46. On the rejection of autobiographical readings of Charles's poetry, see the comments in my opening paragraph and the works cited in n. 3, above.

47. Coldiron, *Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 112–44 and 191–200.

48. *Ibid.*, 144.

49. *Ibid.*, 29.

sonnalité et sans succès.”⁵⁰ The possibility that Charles wrote his English verse with the intention of affecting the way in which he was perceived by his captors awaits a thorough treatment. Indeed, one of the most recent critics to treat Charles's English poetry categorically denies it. In her monograph on late-medieval prison writing, Joanna Summers rejects the idea that the duke's poetry might have a political aspect: “unlike the other texts I discuss,” she asserts, “Charles does not construct a politically favourable autobiographical identity in order to persuade his audience, but rather an ironic pseudo-autobiographical lover in order to entertain.”⁵¹

Summers's refusal to see any political agency in Charles's writing is reminiscent of a time when it was common practice to downplay the duke's public achievements. Enid McLeod notes that, while several fifteenth-century chroniclers made frequent reference to the duke and his political and military engagements, more often than not he is passed over by nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians; the reason McLeod advances for this neglect remains telling: “it almost seems,” she writes, “as if their knowledge that he was also a poet inclines them not to take his other capacities seriously.”⁵² McLeod's study is designed to correct this imbalance as at every juncture she stresses the duke's political and military activism; indeed, for at least one contemporary scholar she went too far in this.⁵³ Nevertheless, both McLeod's biography and Pierre Champion's monumental *Vie de Charles d'Orléans* provide ample evidence of the duke's involvement in political life in France and in England, even if on occasion they accord him differing measures of success. Historians are now beginning to uncover the importance of the public and political roles played by Charles on both sides of the Channel.⁵⁴ For some literary critics, however, the idea that the lyricopoetic and political vocations are fundamentally incompatible apparently still holds currency. Ironically, this may well have been a prejudice that Charles hoped his contemporaries would share. But why would Charles

50. “In light of Charles's position in England, closely watched and always the object of suspicion, it is not surprising that he chose to present his poetic persona as a mumbling and unsuccessful courtly lover who lacked a strong personality” (Mary-Jo Arn, “Manuscrit français, manuscrit anglais: De la ductilité du propos poétique,” in Hûe, *Lectures*, 30).

51. Joanna Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 107. The “other texts” include Thomas Usk's *Testament of Love*, the *Kings Quair*, and George Ashby's *A Prisoner's Reflections*.

52. Enid McLeod, *Charles of Orleans: Prince and Poet* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), vii.

53. Cecily Clark, “Charles d'Orléans: Some English Perspectives,” *Medium Ævum* 40 (1971): 254–55.

54. On the duke's early involvement in peace negotiations between England and France, see Michael K. Jones, “‘Gardez mon corps, sauvez ma terre’—Immunity from War and the Lands of a Captive Knight: The Siege of Orléans (1428–29) Revisited,” in Arn, *Charles d'Orléans in England*, 9–26. On his public and political activities in his final years, see Philippe Contamine, “Les derniers mois.”

have wanted his readers to overlook his history of political involvement in the late 1430s when Harley 682 was being compiled? In order to answer this question, I propose here to sketch out an alternative biography of the duke, one that highlights his political acumen and takes seriously contemporary accounts of the potential threat he posed to English interests in France. In so doing I hope to define a context in which Charles's self-presentation as "an ironic pseudo-autobiographical lover" could have precisely the kind of political valence that Summers finds lacking in his English poetry.

"CONSIDERING THE GRETE SUBTILITE AND
CAUTELEUX DISPOSITION OF THE SAID DUC OF
ORLIANS"; OR, TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE
LITERARY BIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES D'ORLÉANS

As I have already noted, Charles's childhood was dramatically cut short by the assassination of his father, Louis d'Orléans, on November 23, 1407.⁵⁵ Louis was the brother of Charles VI of France and his murder by his cousin, Jean de Bourgogne, is a key moment in what Bertrand Schnerb has called "l'une des plus formidables crises du pouvoir que la monarchie française ait eu à subir avant 1789" (one of the greatest crises undergone by the French monarchy before 1789).⁵⁶ It forms the subject of a monograph by Bernard Guenée, for whom it assumes the proportions of "un des plus importants événements de l'histoire de France" (one of the most important events in the history of France).⁵⁷ Its significance was not lost on contemporary chroniclers. Writing in the 1440s, Enguerran de Monstrelet presents the assassination of Louis d'Orléans as a moment that changed the course of history. After this, he asserts, "le Roy, tous les princes de son sang et généralement tous son royaume, eurent moult à souffrir et furent en grant division l'un contre l'autre par très longue espace, et tant que icellui royaume en fut moult désolé et apovry, comme cy-après pourra plus pleinement estre veu par la déclaracion qui mise sera en ce présent livre."⁵⁸

55. The material presented here is not new; unless otherwise mentioned, I draw all the historical and biographical information given here from Champion's *Vie*. My "alternative" biography is intended to highlight the incompleteness of accounts of Charles's life that ignore the available testimony regarding his military and political experience.

56. Bertrand Schnerb, *Les Armagnacs et les Bourguignons: La maudite guerre* (Paris: Perrin, 1988), 11.

57. Bernard Guenée, *Un Meurtre, une société: L'assassinat du duc d'Orléans, 23 novembre 1407* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 15.

58. "The king, all the princes of his blood and, generally, all his kingdom, had much to suffer and were greatly divided against each other for a very long time, such that this kingdom was greatly ruined and impoverished, as hereafter may more plainly be seen from the declaration that will be put down in this present book" (*La Chronique d'Enguerran de Monstrelet en deux livres avec pièces justificatives, 1400–1444*, ed. L. Douët-d'Arcq, 6 vols. [Paris, 1857–62], 1:154–55).

Affairs of state of the highest order were thus thrust upon Charles at an early age when, following the death of his mother, Valentina, at the end of 1408, he was formally recognized by Charles VI as the head of his family on December 10 of that year. Meanwhile, the pressing matter of achieving justice for Louis's murder had been aggravated by Jean de Bourgogne's open admission that he had ordered his cousin's killing. In a sermon he commissioned the famous theologian, Jean Petit, to deliver before the court in Paris on March 8, 1408, Jean de Bourgogne had the assassination presented as retribution for a variety of misdeeds popularly attributed to Louis—from dabbling in black magic to prolonging the papal schism.⁵⁹ Although Valentina went on to have these accusations repudiated by the Abbé de Cerisy on September 11, news of Jean's dramatic military victory over a rebellious faction at Liège in the following October made the king reluctant to confront Jean directly about the murder of his brother, and Louis's public rehabilitation appeared to have been postponed indefinitely. In March 1409 the king forced Charles and his brothers to make peace with Jean, but the next five years were marked by an intense struggle for power between Jean de Bourgogne and rival elements who clustered around the young duke and his new father-in-law, Bernard d'Armagnac (Charles's first wife, Isabelle, died in childbirth in 1409; on August 15, 1410, Charles celebrated his marriage to Bernard's daughter, Bonne). Charles's attempts to mobilize his allies' distrust of Jean in order to obtain justice for his father's death achieved at least partial success. He was denied the satisfaction of seeing his relative defeated on the battlefield, but he did obtain a formal condemnation of Jean Petit's sermon from the University of Paris on February 23, 1414, and at the celebration of Louis d'Orléans's obsequies in Notre-Dame Cathedral on January 5, 1415, Jean Gerson delivered a eulogy in which Jean de Bourgogne was lambasted for bringing unrest to France through the unjust murder of the king's brother.⁶⁰

Although the wisdom of Charles's military decisions during these years has been questioned,⁶¹ it is evident that by the time of his capture at Agincourt on October 25, 1415, the duke's experience of life on both the political stage and the battlefield was considerable for a man his age (Charles would celebrate his twenty-first birthday on November 24 of this year). As Arn points out, if he was made commander of the forces of Agincourt, as at least two contemporary chroniclers claim, this was in recognition of capaci-

On the influence of the murder on Monstrelet's conception of fifteenth-century French history, see George T. Diller, "The Assassination of Louis d'Orléans: The Overlooked Artistry of Enguerran de Monstrelet," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 10 (1984): 57–68.

59. See Champion, *Vie*, 53–55; and compare McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 44–45.

60. See Champion, *Vie*, 131; and compare McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 101.

61. See Champion, *Vie*, 92; and McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 75.

ties he had already acquired.⁶² It should come as no surprise, then, to discover that the duke's political activities continued during his imprisonment. While it is no doubt highly probable that a significant portion of the duke's poetry would not have been written had it not been for his lengthy imprisonment—indeed, it is inconceivable that the English verse would have been produced at all had not Charles been forced to spend such a great portion of his life *outré-Manche*—it would nevertheless be inaccurate to represent Charles's imprisonment as a period during which he could do little else but write poetry. From the beginning of his time in England, Charles was constantly busy with attempts to secure his own release and that of his brother, Jean d'Angoulême, who had been sent to England in 1412 as surety against debts that the duke had incurred in England during his military standoff with Jean de Bourgogne. As early as April 1416 the Agincourt prisoners appear to have been involved in negotiations for their release between Henry V and Emperor Sigismund during a visit the latter made to England toward the end of that month.⁶³ And January 1417 sees Charles and his fellow prisoner, Jean de Bourbon, engaged in plans to send another of the Agincourt captives to France in order to arrange a peace agreement that would speed their repatriation.⁶⁴

In the same year, the death of Charles VI's oldest son, Jean, led to a significant change in Charles's standing in France: the duke now became next in line to the throne after the infirm king's adolescent son, Charles (b. 1403). By this time Charles VI and his wife, Isabeau of Bavaria, had lost four male heirs—Charles (d. 1386), Charles (d. 1401), Louis (d. 1415) and Jean (d. 1417)—and although the new dauphin would go on to become Charles VII, the future of the French royal family must at this moment have seemed highly precarious. It was probably in response to the sharp rise in the potential value of the duke to the French cause that Henry V tightened his prisoner's security before he embarked on his second invasion of France in August 1417, transferring Charles from Windsor to the substantially more isolated setting of Pontefract Castle in Yorkshire. Henry continued to worry about the duke's safekeeping even here, however, and about the possibility that he might be engaged in a plot against him. In a fragment of a letter dating to around 1418, the king warns his addressee to keep a close watch over Charles. It appears that the duke's keeper at this time, Robert Waterton, had been in the habit of entertaining his ward at his family home in Methley. Henry is concerned that Charles has abused his captor's trust:

Furthermore I wold that ye comend with my brothre, with the Chancellor, with my cosin of Northumberlond, and my cosin of Westmerland, and that

62. See Fox and Arn, *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans*, xxxi.

63. See Champion, *Vie*, 164–65; and compare McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 138–39.

64. See Champion, *Vie*, 166–67; and compare McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 140.

ye set a gode ordinance for my North Marches, and specially for the Duc of Orlans, and for alle the remanant of my prisoners of France, and also for the K. [ing James] of Scotelond; for as I am secrely enfourmed by a man of ryght notable estate in this lond that there hath ben a man of the Ducs of Orlance in Scotland, and accorded with the Duc of Albany that this next Somer he schal bryng in the mamnet [puppet, in reference to Margaret] of Scotlond to sturre what he may. And also that ther schold be founden weys to the havynge away specialy of the Duc of Orlans, and also of the K. as welle as of the remanant of my forsayd prysoners that God do defende. Wherefore I wolde that the Duc of Orlance be kept stille withyn the Castil of Pontefret, with owte goyng to Robertis place or to any othre disport, for it is bettr he lak his disport then we were disceyved. Of all the remanant dothe as ye thenketh.⁶⁵

On October 1, 1419, Henry wrote from Gisors (Normandy) to the Bishop of Durham on the same topic, commanding him that “yee see and ordeyne that good heed be taken unto the seure keping of our Frensh prisonners withynne our reame of England, and in especial of the Duc of Orlens. . . . For their eschaping, and principally the saide Duc of Orlens, might never have been so harmful ner prejudicial unto Us, as hit might be now, if any of them escaped, and namely the saide Duc of Orlens, whiche God forbede.” The king continues with a set of instructions to be conveyed to Waterton that indicate that he considered the duke’s escape a real threat: “And therefor, as We trust, you seeth that Robert Waterton, for no trust, faire speche, ner promesses that might be maad unto hym, ner for noon other manner cause, be so blynded by the saide duc, that he bee the more recheles of his keypyng, but that, in eschuyng of alle perils that may falle, he take as good heed unto the seure keypyng of his personne as is possible.”⁶⁶ Although it remains unclear whether Charles was ever in direct contact with the Scots while at Pontefract, it seems that Henry had good reason to be mistrustful of his prisoner. In 1422 the duke was involved in secret negotiations pertaining to his claims to the Italian territory of Asti—negotiations in which he had expressly been forbidden to engage without the king’s knowledge—and there are records to suggest that he managed to pursue a secret correspondence with his half brother, the Bastard of Orleans, during this period.⁶⁷

Henry’s distrust of the duke must indeed have run deep if, as Monstrelet reports, his last orders included the command to postpone Charles’s release

65. Reproduced in *Original Letters Illustrative of English History: Including Numerous Royal Letters; From Autographs in the British Museum, and One or Two Other Collections*, ed. Henry Ellis, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London, 1825), 1:1–2. The opening of the letter has been lost. The dating of the letter to 1418 is Ellis’s.

66. Reproduced in *Foedera, conventiones, litterae*, ed. Thomas Rymer, 2nd ed., 20 vols. (London, 1727–29), 9:801.

67. See Champion, *Vie*, 179–80; and compare McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 282–83.

at least until his son attained his majority. In Monstrelet's *Chronique*, the dying king is given the following words: "Et si gardez que vous ne délivrez de prison beau cousin le duc d'Orléans, le conte d'Eu, le seigneur de Gaucourt, ne Guischart de Chissay, jusques à ce que beau filz Henry aura son aage compétent, et des autres, faites en comme bon vous semblera."⁶⁸ While there is no firm evidence that this order was ever given in this context, Monstrelet's account is supported by a copy of Henry V's will discovered at Eton College in 1978, in which Henry specifically mentions that Charles and the Count of Eu should only be released upon the order of his successor.⁶⁹

Duke Humphrey cites the late king's will some eighteen years later in the heated discussion that preceded Henry VI's decision to free Charles in the autumn of 1440. Humphrey's comments at this juncture provide us with a useful indicator of how Charles was seen at this time, at least in some quarters, and of the ways in which his public image was being manipulated in the English context. Humphrey writes to Henry in early 1440 to remind him that his father "peysing gretly so many inconveniencies and harmes that might falle oonly by [the duke's] deliverance" had explicitly ordered the postponement of Charles's liberation "unto tyme that he had accomplished fully his conquest in his royaume of France."⁷⁰ Given the current military situation, Humphrey asserts, that time was still a long way off. In the same document, Humphrey alludes to the suggestion that Charles might be released as one of the many bad ideas put to the king by Humphrey's archrival, Cardinal Beaufort; indeed, he complains, by allowing Charles to treat with Philippe de Bourgogne, the Cardinal had already facilitated the healing of a breach between the houses of Orleans and Burgundy that had resulted in a redoubling of English losses on the Continent. Henry's response to Humphrey's warning appears to have been to commission him to write the report that still survives in which the duke sets out in much greater detail his argument against Charles's premature release. Given the indisposition of the French king and Charles's proximity to the throne, Humphrey argues here, it is likely that Charles would quickly assume a leading role in the government of his country upon his repatriation, perhaps installing himself as regent, facilitating the unification and strengthening of France at great cost to Henry's interests on the Continent.

68. "And so be sure that you do not deliver from prison [my] good cousin the Duke of Orleans, the Count of Eu, Lord Gaucourt nor Guischart de Chissay until [my] good son Henry has attained his majority, and with the others, do as you see fit" (Monstrelet, *Chroniques*, 4:110–11).

69. Reproduced in Patrick Strong and Felicity Strong, "The Last Will and Codicils of Henry V," *English Historical Review* 96 (1981): 92.

70. Reproduced in *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France During the Reign of Henry the Sixth, King of England*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, 2 vols. (London, 1861–64), 2.II:447.

This is particularly probable, Humphrey asserts "considering the grete subtilite and cauteleux disposition of the said Duc of Orlans, which is so well know to all my said Lordes conseil."⁷¹ Charles's release would have a negative effect on the morale of the English in Normandy, Humphrey continues, the duke would not keep his oath to respect Henry's authority, and the liberation of so great a prisoner at this time would make England look weak on the European stage.

It should be clear from Henry V's letters and from the documents written by duke Humphrey that Charles's reputation for "faire speche" and reports of his "cauteleux" or wily disposition contributed significantly to his captors' reluctance to release him. It is undoubtedly more than a matter of coincidence that Charles's self-presentation in his English work seems to function to counteract precisely these aspects of his reputation: in his English poetry, Charles goes to considerable lengths to portray himself as a thoroughly naturalized, quasi-Chaucerian lover, whose self-confidence is low, whose powers of self-expression are limited, and whose focus is inward-looking to the point of self-obsession. On internal and external grounds it seems likely that Charles knew Chaucer's poetry by the early 1430s (the duke's familiarity with the works of Chaucer may have owed something to his connection with William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk, who served as Charles's custodian in the period 1432–36, and who had married Alice Chaucer, the poet's granddaughter, in 1430).⁷² Among Chaucer's fifteenth-century followers it is not too great a stretch to suggest that the duke was conversant with the work of Thomas Hoccleve, perhaps the greatest self-spinner of the fifteenth century. Charles could have encountered Hoccleve either in his hugely popular *Regiment of Princes* (1410–13) or in his *Series*, and the duke's attempt to construct a textual identity that would directly affect his public image might have been inspired by Hoccleve's demonstration of the opportunities for self-fashioning afforded by writing and self-publication in English.⁷³

71. Reproduced in Rymer, *Foedera*, 10:765.

72. See Arn, *Fortunes Stablines*, 41 n. 106. On the literary tastes and connections of the Suffolk household, see Derek Pearsall, "The Literary Milieu of Charles of Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and the Authorship of the Fairfax Sequence," in Arn, *Charles d'Orléans in England*, 148–50.

73. There are, of course, important differences between the cases of these two poets. For instance, divergences between these writers' work that may be traced to the disparity between their social positions have been analyzed perceptively by Robert Epstein in his "Prisoners of Reflection: The Fifteenth-Century Poetry of Exile and Imprisonment," *Exemplaria* 15 (2003): 159–98. Both Charles and Hoccleve write as subjects who suffer under Lancastrian rule, however, and Charles's literary reaction to his situation bears comparison with the model of authorial conduct established by his less illustrious English predecessor. More work might usefully be undertaken on the coincidence of these poets' oeuvres.

WHO WERE CHARLES D'ORLÉANS'S ENGLISH
READERS IN THE 1440'S AND 1450'S?

It is often the case in the fifteenth century that texts that appear to have been designed to effect a change in the public perception of their author are subsequently reused in ways that suggest that this intention was either missed or deemed to be of secondary importance by late medieval readers. The moralized tales compiled as sections three to five of Hoccleve's *Series*, for instance, appear to have enjoyed a life of their own, independent of the frame provided for them by their author in the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* that introduce this work.⁷⁴ Likewise, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1432–38), which several modern critics have called an “autohagiography,” manifestly did not succeed in its attempt to cultivate a local following for its protagonist; instead, the unique surviving copy of the text seems to have been adapted for use in lay instruction.⁷⁵ Something similar may have happened to Charles's English poetry. While Coldiron's examination of Harley 682 has demonstrated that the book continued to be read well into the sixteenth century, we have no way of gauging how the texts it contains affected Charles's reputation among his first readers.⁷⁶ All that the manuscript evidence allows us to say with any degree of certainty is that Charles's English book was immediately popular in at least one quarter: the fragments that are now Cambridge, University Library MS Additional 2585 (1) and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hearne's Diaries 38, ff. 261–64 (the Hearne Fragment, formerly Rawlinson K 38/42) are clearly derived from Harley 682 or a related exemplar, and their copying has been dated to the period 1440–50.⁷⁷ It is also highly likely that Charles circulated several of his English poems prior to their collection in Harley 682; it is possible that this was done in order to take the edge off the poet's public image in the way that I have indicated.⁷⁸

74. See Rory G. Critten, “‘Her Heed They Caste Awry’: The Transmission and Reception of Thomas Hoccleve's Personal Poetry,” *Review of English Studies* 64 (2013): 393–407.

75. On the failure of the *Book* as autohagiography, see Katherine J. Lewis, “Margery Kempe and Saint Making in Later Medieval England,” in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2004), 195–215. On the deployment of the *Book* in lay teaching, see Kelly Parsons, “The Red Ink Annotator of *The Book of Margery Kempe* and His Lay Audience,” in *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo (University of Victoria Press, 2001), 143–216.

76. Coldiron, *Canon, Period, and the Poetry*, 78–85.

77. Arn argues that these two fragments were originally part of the same book but notes several differences between the ways in which they were treated by their early readers (*Fortunes Stabiles*, 122–23).

78. We can safely say that at least some of the French poetry in MS fr. 25458 was circulated before the 1430s: the balade exchange between Charles and Jean de Garancières (B116, B117), for example, must predate Agincourt, where Garancières died. On the likelihood that

Claims such as these are necessarily speculative, and in the final instance the decision to release Charles was most probably prompted by changes in the political landscape beyond the prisoner's immediate control. Charles's release must have appeared a more attractive option to Henry VI and his advisors in the wake of the Treaty of Arras (1435), for instance. While this historic agreement between the houses of France and Burgundy gave the English a further incentive to sue for peace it is also possible that the king's council hoped to reignite the old rivalry between these two camps by sending Charles back to the Continent. Given that the duke was freed from prison around the time that his English book was compiled, however, it seems pertinent to think about the link between his desire to anthologize his French and English poetry and the negotiations going on about this time regarding his release. A final clue regarding the way in which Charles may have hoped to use his poetry to affect his public image may lie in the afterlives of his French and English books. While the duke took MS fr. 25458 back to France with him, Harley 682 was left in England. Numerous hypotheses have been advanced to explain Charles's relinquishing of his English book so soon after its commission. Steele, for instance, suggested that the duke's scribe did not release the codex because he had not received payment; somewhat more plausibly, Arn and William Askins have proposed that the duke left behind his English book as a gift to one of his former jailers.⁷⁹

In the contract detailing the conditions of the duke's liberation, Charles was ordered to return to his Insular prison if, at the end of a year, he had not succeeded in securing a lasting peace between England and France.⁸⁰ Perhaps the duke determined that it would be in his best interests not only to ingratiate himself with his acquaintances in England but also to prepare the case for his defense should his mission in France be unsuccessful—as it indeed turned out to be. Who would be surprised at the political failure of a man as awkward and inexperienced as Charles's self-representation in Harley 682? Who would think it worthwhile to insist upon his return? Although more work needs to be done on the Insular circulation of Charles's French poetry during the later fifteenth century, it appears that upon the removal of MS fr. 25458 from the country, Harley 682 was the major poetic representation of the duke in England until the completion of London, British Library MS Royal 16 F II in the last quarter of the fifteenth century.⁸¹ The

individual poems in Harley 682 were circulated before their inclusion in this manuscript, see Arn, *Fortunes Stabilnes*, 68–69.

79. Steele and Day, *English Poems*, 1:xvi; Arn, "Two Manuscripts," 78 n. 31; and William Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers," in Arn, *Charles d'Orléans in England*, 41.

80. The text of this agreement is reproduced in Rymer, *Foedera*, 10:782–86.

81. Codices such as London, British Library MSS Harley 7333 and Lansdowne 380 testify to the circulation of Charles's poetry in England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (although Harley 7333 contains only one poem attributed to the duke). The origins of Royal

persona Charles develops over the course of his English book may have been designed not only to speed his release but also to still the concerns of those who were uneasy about Henry VI's decision to allow him to return home, such as Robert Reppes, a correspondent of John Paston I. Writing to Paston on November 1440 about Charles's impending liberation, Reppes reports that "the Duk of Orlyawnce hath made his ooth vpon the sacrement, and vsyd it, neuer for to bere armes ayenst Englonde, in the presence of the Kyng"; "God yef grace the seide lord of Orlyaunce be trewe," he prays, "for this same weke shall he toward Fraunce."⁸² Charles's self-portrayal in Harley 682 discourages just such anxiety.

16. F. ii lie outside of England, as do those of British Library MS Harley 6916, another book of Charles's French works now housed in an English collection. Kathleen Sewright has recently argued that Lansdowne 380, a manuscript long thought to have been produced in France, is actually an Insular production that may bear witness to the circulation of a depoliticized version of Charles's French book in England prior to his release from captivity. See Kathleen Sewright, "An Introduction to British Library MS Lansdowne 380," *Notes* 65 (2009): 659–61. On Royal 16. F. ii, see Janet Blackhouse, "Charles of Orléans Illuminated," in Arn, *Charles d'Orléans in England*, 157–63.

82. *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Norman Davis and Richard Beadle, 3 vols. (Oxford University Press, 2004–5), 2:22.