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Deborah McGrady, *The Writer's Gift or the Patron's Pleasure? The Literary Economy in Late Medieval France*. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2019. xiii + 321 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$85.00 CDN (hb). ISBN 978-1-4875-0365-9. \$85.00 CDN (eb). ISBN 978-1-4875-1845-5. \$85.00 CDN (PDF) 978-1-4875-1844-8.

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King Charles V of France ("Charles the Wise," r. 1364-1380) famously commissioned a number of large-scale translations of learned works. Under his patronage, scholars enriched the royal library with French versions of Aristotle's *Politics*, *Ethics*, *Economics*, and *On the Heavens*; Augustine's *City of God*; John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*; Bartholomew the Englishman's encyclopedia *On the Properties of Things*; and other works of history, natural philosophy, and what we might today term "political science." His son and successor Charles VI did not share his father's intellectual aspirations, even before the onset of his debilitating mental illness in 1392; in the darker years of the turn of the fifteenth century, the reign of Charles V quickly became a site of writerly nostalgia. But how, if at all, did Charles V's unprecedented form of patronage alter the literary economy of late medieval France? Though Charles V's campaign of translations is often alluded to in modern scholarship, its impact on late medieval literary activity has remained largely unexplored. Since Léopold Delisle's foundational study of Charles V's library, published more than a century ago,^[1] more recent studies have tended to focus on the linguistic character of the translations,^[2] on codicological or art historical studies of presentation manuscripts,^[3] or on the work of individual translators.^[4] Until now, few have considered in any systematic way what Charles V's commissions might show us about either the king's or the writers' conception of the writer-patron relationship.

Deborah McGrady's rich, meticulously researched, and lucidly written monograph addresses this surprising gap in modern studies of late medieval book communities. She shows that the decades surrounding Charles V's translation project constitute a crucial moment of change in medieval patronage practices, characterized by a tension between spontaneous artistic expressions freely offered by the poet and transactional commissions undertaken for the pleasure of the patron. Setting her textual analyses in conversation with anthropologically-informed notions of the gift (Marcel Mauss), clientelism (Verena Burkolter), and sacrifice (Georges Bataille), McGrady reads words, images, and book-objects as instruments for "the literary and visual reworking of the royal commission as the writer's gift" (p. 251).

The Writer's Gift or the Patron's Pleasure? begins with a much-needed, full, modern study of Charles V's commissioned translations, which McGrady snappily dubs the "*Sapientia* project" (p.

26). The argument draws upon a broad range of materials, including translators' payment contracts, the architecture of Charles's library in the renovated Louvre palace, and translators' prefaces and other paratextual materials offering the authors' own spin on the monarch's commissions. In later chapters, McGrady brings these commissioned translations into conversation with contemporary courtly poetry. The poets—whether they be unaffiliated with the royal court (Guillaume de Machaut), minor officials who react negatively to the cultural change between the reigns of Charles V and his less literarily-inclined son Charles VI (Eustache Deschamps), or later advocates for a return to Charles V's model of elite patronage (Christine de Pizan)—offer different models of writerly engagement. McGrady shows that while the royal translators promulgated an ideal of partnership with their patron, these vernacular poets more actively resisted the subservient role into which a clientelistic patronage relationship might have placed them. McGrady deftly demonstrates that the story these writers tell is not the tale of a smooth transition from an older model of author-patron relations to a newer one, but a tale of tension and resistance, rivalry and constant renegotiation.

In the introduction, "Rethinking Literary Patronage in a Medieval Context," McGrady lays out the terms that will be crucial to her understanding of late medieval patronage relationships—archaic gifting, clientelism, commodity, conspicuous consumption—in preparation for a reading of literary activities in the context of an emerging consumerist economy. McGrady mentions, but does not pursue as an interpretive thread, Arjun Appadurai's notion of the "social life of things" (p. 9). On the one hand, this seems a missed opportunity, as it would have complemented McGrady's other approaches to the question of how book-objects forge variously interpreted social relations. On the other hand, McGrady is here thinking about books less as *things* than as labor and as relational objects. In so doing, she makes a strong case that even though Charles V prioritized Latin learning rather than vernacular poetry, his activities "redefined the vernacular literary community" (p. 11).

Chapter one, "King Charles V's *Sapientia* Project: From the Construction of the Louvre Library to the Books He Commissioned," expands upon the introduction's discussions of changes in economic structures and elite consumption practices in the latter half of the fourteenth century. Here, McGrady engages in a detailed examination of how Charles V constructed the intellectual identity of his collaborators/translators, both figuratively (forming their job descriptions via contracts) and literally (through the built space of the Louvre library in the Tour de la Fauconnerie). This well-documented and eminently readable account will quickly become a go-to resource for literary scholars.

In the second chapter, "The Writer's Work: Translating Charles V's Literary Clientelism into Learned Terms," we see how the translators themselves presented this clientelistic relationship. McGrady reads the translators' characterizations of their task, and of their patron's support, that are embedded within the texts they produced for the king. She argues that they present their commissions as unsolicited gifts, forging a sense of partnership by welcoming the monarch into their "learned sodality" (p. 68); and that in so doing, they lay the foundations for the new identity of "secular intellectual" (p. 67). There has long been a need for a comprehensive study of Charles V's translators and their metadiscourses on the act of writing. This chapter makes important strides in that direction, though we must note that this is only a beginning. In addition to the prefaces McGrady discusses (chiefly those of Denis Foulechat and Raoul de Presles), there remain rich stores to be mined, including the translations of Jacques Bauchant, Jean Corbechon, and Jean Daudin. Still, McGrady's insight into the value of these paratextual accounts of literary

transactions is refreshing and necessary. As she ably demonstrates, neither illustrated presentation scenes nor translators' prefaces are as transparently formulaic as they might seem.

McGrady turns in chapter three to Guillaume de Machaut, a writer in whom Charles V took no apparent interest. She makes a convincing case for reading works produced throughout Machaut's long poetic career (ca. 1330-ca. 1372) as evidence of the changing patronage and commissioning practices that are crystallized in the discussion surrounding the *Sapientia* project. In Machaut's works of the 1340s and 1350s, such as the *Jugement du Roy de Navarre* and the *Confort d'Ami*, as well as in the slightly later *Fonteinne Amoureuse*, McGrady uncovers a critique of the coercive potential of commissioning practices. She reads his late *Prologue* (ca. 1372), which is contemporaneous with the *Sapientia* project, as a radical reclamation of the poet's "gift" as independent of patronage relationships. She argues, however, that later manuscripts of Machaut's collected works, especially those produced for the circle of the late king's brother the duke of Berry, depict a more submissive poet as "visual correctives to Machaut's narratives" (p. 130). This rewarding turn to manuscript evidence provides a neat illustration of how McGrady's sensitivity to text, image, and material culture allows her to tease out a fuller picture of the literary economy.

Chapter four, "Eustache Deschamps on the Duties and Dues of Poetry," uses the works of a famously forthright (and downright irascible) poet as a window onto the cultural shift that occurred upon the premature death of Charles V and the accession of the young Charles VI. McGrady argues that Deschamps's efforts to speak truth to power construct "a new model of literary exchange [...] in which poetry functions as a dangerous gift" (p. 162). She argues that the transition from Charles V, who was so receptive to writerly construction of a learned sodality with the monarch at its center, to Charles VI, who divested in edifying literature in favor of pure entertainment, marks an important turning point in Deschamps's writerly stance. This is the one moment in the book where this reviewer found the strongly historicized reading to be potentially reductive. To pinpoint the accession of Charles VI as a moment when Deschamps's expressed attitudes about patronage change belies McGrady's own careful reading of Deschamps's confoundingly voluminous corpus: the supposed new model in reaction to Charles VI already occurs in poems composed at the end of his father's life, and therefore could not have been composed in response to anything the young Charles VI did. So, while McGrady's evidence of competing patronage-models within Deschamps's corpus is compelling, the transition in royal power cannot account for the phenomenon entirely. Still, this chapter lays essential groundwork for anyone with the fortitude to continue pursuing the question.

The last two chapters are devoted to the career of Christine de Pizan. In chapter five, "The Pursuit of Patronage: From Christine de Pizan's Troubled Dealings with Louis of Orléans to Marketing Nostalgia," McGrady identifies in some of Christine's earlier narratives a positive view of clientelism as that which could "assure the common good" (p. 179). McGrady details Christine's search for an intellectual successor to Charles V within the royal family: while Charles V's younger son Louis of Orleans styles himself as his father's intellectual heir, this is ultimately a dead end. Christine then seems to have found a patron in Charles V's younger brother, the duke of Burgundy, who commissions a biography of the late king. However, as McGrady writes in chapter six, "The Curse of the Commission: Christine de Pizan on Sacrificing Charles V's Biography," the death of the duke of Burgundy, before the biography is complete, exposes the precarity of both the clientelistic and the gifting models. McGrady cleverly uses the lens of sacrifice—as the removal of a commercially valuable thing from circulation—to examine both the biography itself (in how it accounts for the commission and for the death of its original patron)

and the Burgundian presentation copy. Discussion of the latter (pp. 239-40) provides a stellar example of McGrady's skillful attention to the materiality of the medieval codex.

Concluding with Christine de Pizan, who was only a child when her father worked for Charles V as an astrologer and physician, McGrady wraps up her volume on a note of nostalgia—more specifically, with a meditation on the political uses of nostalgia for a past age of rule, for a past literary economy, and for an artistic ideal, one that perhaps never was. Her brief conclusion, in which she looks to medieval notions of the “writer's gift” as a potential way to renew contemporary engagements of literature in the political sphere, is as optimistic as Christine's rosy recreation of Charles V's reign—and not, one hopes, in vain. As for what follows the conclusion, my only other quibble with this book is a truly minor one: the rather bare-bones index left this reviewer unable to find quickly the delicious passages that she wished to savor again. Still, *The Writer's Gift or the Patron's Pleasure?* is a delight, and a genuinely valuable contribution to our understanding of the much-mentioned but little-studied patronage practices of the most famous Valois kings.

NOTES

[1] Léopold Delisle, *Recherches sur la librairie de Charles V* (Paris: Champion, 1907).

[2] Most notable are the works of Serge Lusignan, especially *Parler vulgairement: Les intellectuels et la langue française aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1986).

[3] These include the works of Anne D. Hedeman, *The Royal Image: The Illustrations of the “Grandes Chroniques de France,” 1274-1422*, California Studies in the History of Art, 28 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) and Claire Richter Sherman, *Imaging Aristotle: Verbal and Visual Representation in Fourteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[4] Nicole Oresme, as the “biggest name” among Charles V's stable of translators, has received the most attention. Beyond Lusignan's already-cited work, see Joan Cadden, “Charles V, Nicole Oresme, and Christine de Pizan: Unities and Uses of Knowledge in Fourteenth-Century France,” in Edith Sylla and Michael McVaugh ed., *Texts and Contexts in Ancient and Medieval France* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 208-44. See also Charles Brucker's extensive work on Denis Foulechat; including the introductions to his editions of *Policratique* as well as his article “Pour une typologie des traductions en France au XIV^e siècle,” in *Traduction et adaptation en France à la fin du Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance. Actes du colloque organisé par l'Université de Nancy II, 23-25 mars 1995*, ed. Charles Brucker (Paris: Champion, 1997), 63-79. On Jean Corbechon, see Baudouin Van den Abeele, Heinz Meyer, and Bernard Ribémont, “Éditer l'encyclopédie de Barthélémy l'Anglais: vers une édition bilingue du *De proprietatibus rerum*,” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales* 6 (1999): 7-18; Bernard Ribémont, “Jean Corbechon, traducteur encyclopédiste au XIV^e siècle,” *Cahiers de recherches médiévales* 6 (1999) 75-98. On Jean Golein, see the work of the “Équipe Golein” at the University of Helsinki, including the findings published in “Remarques sur la traduction de Jean Golein du *De informacione principum*,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 95 (1994): 19-30.

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