

Review

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E. Einhorn. *Old French: A Concise Handbook*. London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974. XVI + 193 pp. ISBN 0 521 20343 0 hard covers; 0 521 09838 6 paperback.

Teachers of medieval French—to say nothing of students making their first contact with the subject—have long felt the need of an introductory manual which does not try to do two things at once, to the detriment of both; for such manuals as attempt to cover this ground tend to do so in the context of an introduction to the historical phonetics of French.

Dr. Einhorn is something of an innovator in attempting in this admirably clear and well-produced¹ volume a strictly synchronic description of Old French in its "classical" late twelfth century form—of necessity somewhat normalized—keeping firmly in his sights the requirements of the English-speaking student desirous of coming to terms with Old French texts; in doing so, he has systematically eschewed diachronic considerations (the Preface specifically states that "a knowledge of Latin is not essential," and there are only the rarest references to Latin etymons),² as well as refraining from carrying his analysis into the realms of linguistic theory.

In nine chapters Dr. Einhorn sets out the main features of the Old French declensional and conjugational systems, completed by five appendices listing such useful material as Declension Classes, Enclitic Forms, weak and strong Perfects, Vocalic Alternation, Irregular Verbs; six further chapters are devoted respectively to adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, numerals, verb usage, word order and versification³;

¹Misprints are remarkably few; the present reviewer has noted only: §7.1 (line 18), jugez for jugiez; §9.2, [i'ö] for [ü'ö], §11.2, somtimes for sometimes, and p. 179 (line 7), L. Whitehead for F. Whitehead.

²The Preface also, and rather less realistically, states that the reader "may not be versed in French," a claim repeated in the introductory note to the Glossary, which includes "forms which would present difficulties to those with no knowledge of Modern French." Ambitious as this may appear, it is probably fair to say that Dr. Einhorn's treatment of the subject places it well within the scope of a reader with no more than a reasonable reading knowledge of Modern French.

³Each of the first ten chapters concludes with short practical

exemplification throughout is provided from a selection of some twenty-six texts (bibliography, pp. 178-9).⁴ A final chapter identifies—necessarily somewhat superficially—the salient distinguishing features of the main Old French dialects. As final exemplary material, Dr. Einhorn reprints a sixty-five line extract from *Yvain*, forty lines of *La Conquête de Constantinople*, and three stanzas from the *Châtelain de Coucy*. A very succinct bibliography⁵ is followed by a useful glossary listing words occurring not only in the three texts but also those quoted in the main body of the volume.

The simplicity and clarity of the presentation, happily free from recourse to the hermeticism which has become so fashionable in linguistic studies, and the well-chosen exemplifying material suggest that the student who has worked his way—better, been taken—through this volume will find himself not only well equipped to engage on a rewarding study of Old French literary texts, but also possessed of a sound basis from which to proceed to the study of other aspects of the medieval language, far beyond the scope of the present work. Dr. Einhorn appears to have gone a very long way to overcome one of the major obstacles facing the student making his first acquaintance with the subject, and this excellent manual seems assured of a warm welcome from teacher and taught.

The following remarks on points of detail are put forward as suggestions which might be worth consideration when the time comes for a revised edition.

§6.2. Given that *t* and *d* are (rightly) held to have disappeared from the sound system before "the" later twelfth-century pronunciation of Francien [which] has been taken as a standard" (§5), it seems open to doubt whether their systematic introduction into quoted texts is anything

exercises, with keys provided pp. 168-173.

⁴One assumes that it is the desire to use non-dialectal—i.e., normalized—material that has led to the use of such outdated editions as Studer's *Mystère d'Adam*, Paris's *Vie de Saint Alexis*, Clédât's *Chrestomathie* and Foerster's *Yvain*.

⁵Although M.K. Pope's *From Latin to Modern French* is a compulsory reference work for researcher and teacher, it is at best doubtful whether it would act as other than a violent disincentive to the beginner to whom this volume is addressed.

The second edition (1970) of Fox & Wood's *Concise History . . .* is to be preferred, while Ph. Ménard's greatly augmented *Syntaxe de l'ancien français* (1973) entirely supercedes the earlier version quoted.

Among the anthologies there should have been found room for A. Henry's excellent *Chrestomathie de la littérature en ancien français*.

but confusing and misleading. A similar criticism could be made of the systematic notation by ei of the diphthong <Ē, only regional at the same period (cf. §12.1).

§8.1. The statement that final stem consonants [serf + s > sers] "could be effaced or modified" does not seem felicitous. (A similar comment on consonants "disappearing" is made in §73.)

§8.3. The reader who takes at face value the assertion that "final unvoiced consonants were sometimes voiced before a weak e, e.g., vif /vive" is likely to achieve a remarkably distorted view of the facts.

§9.3. Lists only one triphthong: the error is corrected by implication in §12.1 and §12.2.

§11.3. Failure to distinguish between the two Old French vowels [e] and [ɛ] has led to a very misleading statement, which §39.9 does nothing to rectify (cf. also §207).

§50. It would have been helpful to point out that equivalence was stated in the form ausi . . . com(e).

P. 32 (cf. Appendix A, 7). Given the early frequency of fole(s), it is doubtful whether fol justifies its inclusion in a list of class III adjectives.

§76. While, from a certain synchronic standpoint, it can be correct to state that while "the infinitive normally uses the unstressed stem . . . but at times the stressed stem is adopted, e.g., boivre," such an unqualified and unexplained statement can only be mystifying (and no less so for the comment on p. 171 referring to the "unusual use of stressed stem for infinitive"). Here was surely a clear case for Dr. Einhorn to make an exceptional reference to all verbs <Lat. -ere.

§88.1 (a). The wording is confusing.

§99.1, 99.2. (Omission of relatives.) Unfortunately expressed.

§111, 115, 120, 121. Little justification for classifying aucun, augues, autretel, auquant as rare; telui (§118) might have been so shown, as in §137.

§141. Given the general (but not universally followed) principle of using graphies with u for velarised l (aucun, auquant, aunues, autre . . .) the (rare) spelling alsi and alsiment are unhelpful, especially when they feature in the Glossary with no reference to ausi, ausiment.

§142, 144. The reference to fortement, brievement is misleading in its implication that these were (frequent) twelfth century forms.

§143. The listing of tandis as an example of the adverbial s (especially following a reference to the extension by analogy of the "characteristic s") is most misleading.

§150.1. If si as a particule de liaison is not treated here, a reference to §157 is clearly necessary.

§151. This section on Adverbial expressions seems to require considerable amplification.

§152. What grounds justify the claim that onques is an exception to the principle that an adverb in initial position causes inversion?

§157.1. The particule de liaison is here treated as a conjunction. It is incorrect to allege that si introducing a main clause after a subordinate has any element of stress. Given the frequency of si in this usage, and its role in the patterns of word-order so fundamental to Old French syntax, a fuller treatment is necessary.

The specific meaning of et si is not stated.

§187. Given that Old French admitted only stressed pronoun forms, including reflexives, in collocation with the infinitive, the listing of (se) dormir, (se) merveillier etc. for (soi) dormir is unfortunate. This remark also applies to the Glossary.

In the phrase Venue me sui de toi plaindre, it is far from certain that the author intended soi venir (cf. Ménard, Manuel de syntaxe . . ., §149, Rem. 3).

A comment on the durative connotation of soi dormir, soi seoir, soi tairir etc. would not have been out of place.

§190. (Agreement of verbs.) Some more detailed mention is required than the quoted line (from Cligés) of the frequent Old French syntagma of a complex subject + singular verb.

§193. "Where re applies to a dependent infinitive, it can be prefixed to the main verb" could be more clearly and more accurately stated.

§208. What lies behind the statement that the rhymes moi:roi, espee:trovee are really assonances?

P. 165. Although the complex stems of voloir are in fact quoted, they do not reappear in the Glossary, where there is no mention of vost, vot, vout, etc.

But, as can be seen, these are small points, mostly occasioned, it would seem, by over-conciseness, and do little to delete from the unquestionable merit of this valuable manual.

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