

Tibor Órsi. 2006. *French Linguistic Influence in the Cotton Version of Mandeville's Travels*. (Segédkönyvek a Nyelvészet Tanulmányozásához [Resource Books for the Study of Linguistics] 57). Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó. 197 pp.

In this book, Órsi studies the Romance lexis found in an English prose translation of a French prose work. Specifically, he scrutinises Michael Seymour's 1967 edition for the Early English Text Society of the Cotton version of *Mandeville's Travels* and George Warner's 1889 edition of the Anglo-French Insular version of the same text. The Defective version is a closer English translation of the Insular version temporally and textually but is omitted from consideration because no critical edition of it was available before 2002. Two other versions are consulted: the Paris version in French and the Egerton version in English. For every Romance lexical item, Órsi examines the etymology offered by various reference works, primarily the *Middle English Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary* along with their French counterparts. Moreover, his collation of the Insular and Cotton versions shows that Romance correlatives are frequently not cognate, suggesting that the French original exerted less direct influence on the translation than has been realised—'a major innovation' (backcover). Snippets of the discussion reproduce material already published by Órsi.

The volume is through-paginated so that the first of its fourteen chapters opens on page 7. This and the second chapter justify the selection of the *Travels*, survey the literature on Mandeville, and outline the transmission history behind the versions as it is presented in that literature. Órsi's methodology and theoretical framework are next detailed further (chapters 3 and 4), with him addressing both the dating of borrowings and the distinction between Latin and French borrowings into English. The terms 'etymological motivation' and 'lexical disagreement proper' are introduced to describe Insular-Cotton correlatives that respectively share an etymological root (*anz-annuelle*) or have nothing in common (*se glorifiant-reioyssen*). The possible channels by which a Romance item could have found its way into English are sketched out.

The remainder of the book, bar chapters 7, 13, and 14, takes the reader encyclopaedically through the Cotton version's Romance lexis.

For every item discussed, Órsi deduces its probable route into this version from the various reference works' proposed etymology and dated attestations. The order is as follows: earliest attestations by semantic, morphological, and historical subclass (chapter 5), most frequent borrowings (chapter 6), unique attestations (chapter 8), learned phrases with adjectives by semantic subclass (chapter 9), synonymic pairs as translations of single items (chapter 10), phrases grouped by their grammatical properties (chapter 11), and further examples of lexical disagreement (chapter 12). The use of the English noun *isle* and its French counterpart *île* characterises the *Travels*. Chapter 7 investigates the relationship of this noun with English *island* and Latin *insula* to propose that a special sense 'region, land' survives in the proper name *Île-de-France*. Two annotated sample passages from the Cotton version help the reader develop a sense of the level of French influence. They make up chapter 13, while chapter 14, the conclusion, consists of thirteen paragraphs, each a summary of a preceding chapter. A bibliography constitutes the exclusive backmatter.

It is evident from the wealth of information given and richness of detail provided that Órsi has invested many a working hour in the preparation of the volume; yet the bibliography fails to reflect the depth of his scholarship. For example, while it is true that the *Travels* remain comparatively under-researched, detailed etymological word-studies of parallel textual traditions do exist, including literary traditions where both the French source and the English translation are in prose. A notable example is the *Somme le Roi* with its two translations: the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* and the *Book of Vices and Virtues*. Also pertinent are the descriptive models of the translation process and the typologies of lexical nativisation that have come out of the examination of newer materials.

Instead of taking methodological and theoretical inspiration from studies of either kind, in addition to the dictionaries, Órsi consults general surveys of the history of the English language such as David Crystal (1988), Celia Millward (1989), and Thomas Pyles and John Algeo (1993). Practically no journal article is listed in the bibliography. It is probably for the same reason that Órsi at once introduces new terminology for well-known phenomena, such as 'lexical disagreement proper' for a textual scholar's 'substantive difference,' and presumes other new terminology, such as 'the traditional philological method' (p. 7, backcover), to be readily familiar to his readership.

The volume, then, would have benefited from fuller development of the sections devoted to previous studies, corpus, and methodology, even if much of this information *is* present between the lines as the materials are currently structured. Also helpful would have been the addition of an index of the lexical items discussed and the provision of stronger justification for the sub-classifications invoked in the central chapters. Finally, it needs clarification whether the term ‘the French original’ (pp. 55, 81, 84, 130, 188, backcover, et passim) refers to the presumed archetype, one of the 31 manuscripts of the Paris version, an eclectic edition, or some other text of the *Travels*, for a substantive difference may have entered the tradition at any point in the stemmatic transmission.

Nevertheless, Órsi’s meticulousness and critical approach have combined to bring out an array of discrepancies between the currently available reference works, especially in relation to their discrimination between Romance varieties and their dating of the first attestations. He successfully rectifies several inexact etymologies, and it clearly transpires that a detailed comparative study of translated texts and their sources can, with the above provisos, recognise lexical items as nativised that might otherwise too readily be labelled as foreign on account of their morphotactic and phonotactic structure. For example, the derivation of *arberye* and *herberi* from a shared root (pp. 39-41) is convincing, and interesting in view of the date of the *Travels* is the finding that the word-order noun-adjective is preferred in learned phrases whose French element seems to have entered English before the Cotton translation was produced (p. 130).

To sum up, the volume essentially presents an annotated, selective collation of the French and English versions of *Mandeville’s Travels*, which etymologists, dictionary-makers, and other specialists will stand to profit from consulting. However, the claim that ‘the book makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of the vocabulary and the development of the English and French languages’ (backcover) constitutes an overstatement.

*Jacob Thaisen*

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

*References*

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- Millward, Celia. 1989. *A Biography of the English Language*. Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Pyles, Thomas and John Algeo. 1993. *The Origins and Development of the English Language*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.