

Reading Medieval French An Extended Bibliography

For our final session together before Christmas, I've brought together the disparate sources that we've referenced over the past few weeks into one monstrous document. For reasons of space, I've had to be selective in terms of material to reference, and there will of course be sources that I'm not even aware of that would very much deserve a place in this list. If you're aware of anything that is missing from this list, please do let me know (e.mills4@exeter.ac.uk) and I'll get on it!

Reliable editions (and translations) of medieval French texts

Few would dispute that medieval French texts have become more accessible over the past few decades: while the emergence of parallel-text editions and translation series has aroused legitimate concerns regarding whether they misrepresent the original text, they have indisputably made medieval French less intimidating, more widespread, and — crucially — more affordable.¹ If you're looking for an edition of a particular medieval French text, these publishing houses are good places to start.

- **Lettres gothiques.** This long-running [series](#), from the French publisher Livre de poche, now numbers over 50 volumes and takes in many of the key texts from medieval French literature. Volumes in this series typically include parallel-text translations into modern French.
- **Honoré Champion.** The French publishing house has several series: the traditional (in every way) 'Classiques français du Moyen Âge', and the more recent (but similarly-named) 'Moyen Âge' *série* within the 'Champion classiques' imprint. The latter series alone has facing-page translations into modern French. For a full list of titles, see [here](#) (p. 1 for the 'Classiques français', and p. 163 for the 'Champion classiques'). Champion has also taken over the rights to the [Société des anciens textes français](#) series.
- **Droz.** The independent Swiss [publisher](#) has a wide range of medieval French texts (although they have been somewhat slow to embrace parallel-text editions).
- **Anglo-Norman Text Society.** ANTS, as it's known, publishes two main series. The first, the Annual Text Series, are the green hardbacks, and over the years have included editions of key texts in Anglo-Norman (of which a full list is available [here](#)). The Plain Text Series, as the name suggests, is given over to editions of shorter texts, often single-manuscript editions of less traditionally 'literary' texts (list [here](#)); nevertheless, it's not uncommon to see a Plain Text edition becoming a standard point of reference. ANTS works very closely with the Anglo-Norman Dictionary, and many of ANTS' editions have since appeared, in a somewhat-rudimentary digital form, on the AND Textbase.
- **French of England Translation Series.** The ever-active 'French of England' project at Fordham University has recently begun to produce accessible translations into modern English of key texts in Anglo-Norman. Often keyed into existing Anglo-Norman editions, they're a useful point of

¹ Simon Gaunt offers a useful counterpoint to the overenthusiastic embrace of parallel texts: 'The ubiquitous "parallel" text now used for teaching Old and Middle French texts, for example, was intended to help students with the language of the original, but increasingly, as most teachers recognize, it has displaced the original. [...] But in giving our students 'easy access' to medieval texts through translations, are we not in fact missing the point of our pedagogy? Shouldn't it in fact be *difficult* and *challenging* to access a different culture and isn't being confronted with the alterity of a strange language part of this process?' Simon Gaunt, 'Untranslatable: A Response', in *Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory*, ed. by Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 243-55 (p. 254).

reference, although citation in the original is often preferable. A list of titles in the series is available [here](#).

- **ARLIMA.** I'm cheating a bit by including the [Archives de littérature française du Moyen Âge](#) on this list, since it's primarily a reference bibliography organised by text, but if it's a quick double-check of a quote that you're after, it's often worth looking in the *éditions anciennes* section for a given text.

Dictionaries

Most of the major dictionaries of medieval French are now available online. To give the four most useful examples:

- **Anglo-Norman Dictionary.** The AND is a comprehensive, English-language dictionary, drawing on a vast corpus of citations from texts written in the French of medieval England. Having been in development since the mid-1970s, it's an absolutely essential resource if you're working with anything Anglo-Norman. It's also useful for continental French, and is cross-referenced to other major dictionaries, although the spellings are necessarily Insular in form: the first-person singular possessive pronoun is listed under the *mun2* headword in the AND, but *mon1* in the DMF. (The numbers, incidentally, correspond to different headwords — in the AND, *mun1* is given over to the affirmative particle of the same spelling.) The forthcoming update, which may well be available by the time you read this, will enhance the Dictionary's value for historical linguistics, as it will integrate for the first time date of MS and text into entries.
- **Dictionnaire du moyen français.** After the AND, the DMF is likely to be your next port of call for any questions relating to word-meaning. As we've discussed in our sessions, it has its limitations: most obviously for English-speakers, entries and documentation are written in (modern) French, which can complicate matters if you haven't had the opportunity to learn much modern French. If this is the case, I'd suggest using it in conjunction with a reliable bilingual dictionary such as [WordReference](#) (or, if you have access to it through an institution, [Oxford Dictionaries](#)). The DMF is particularly helpful in offering multiple possible matches for a single search string, and in taking into account (through its lemmatiser) the vagaries of later medieval French orthography.
- **Dictionnaire étymologique de l'ancien français.** Not for the faint-hearted! This [dictionary](#) is distinctive in that it orders its entries by etymon, rather than by lexeme in OFr, and aims to illustrate 'the origins of words and the evolution of their meanings'. It's nevertheless very useful, particularly for investigation of the relationships between French and Latin.
- Frédéric Godefroy, **Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de toutes ses dialectes, du IX^e au XV^e siècle** (Paris: Vieweg, 1881). Godefroy's monumental eight-volume dictionary has largely been superseded by the DMF and AND, but remains useful as a supplement, and is accessible online [here](#).

Grammar, syntax, phonology and morphology

Options abound! *Entre autres* ...

- E. Einhorn, **Old French: A Concise Handbook** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974). Many of the 'grammar focuses' throughout the first part of this course were adapted from this text. An oldie but a goodie, this is perhaps the single best book to recommend if your modern French is

limited, as it assumes no knowledge of either Latin or modern French. This does come at a cost, however: it is incredibly dry, and takes a grammar-focused approach that can be alienating if studied in isolation. It also, as the name suggests, focuses exclusively on Old French, and more specifically on the Old French of the later 12th century; if you work on later material, beware getting too hung up on the finer details of cases and juxtaposed obliques!

- Frédéric Duval, **Le Français médiéval**, L'Atelier du médiéviste, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009). This is an exceptionally useful volume, geared towards the specific market of historians who need to acquire a reading knowledge of medieval French for practical reasons.
- **Old French Online**. This [resource](#), put together by the University of Texas' Linguistics Research Center, has an impressive level of detail, and is in many ways a more accessible version of Einhorn. The reading exercises are particularly handy to practise your skills with, as they allow you to view translations of individual words without 'giving the game away' and resorting to a full-text translation.
- Wendy Ayres-Bennett, **A History of the French Language Through Texts** (London: Routledge, 1996). An excellent volume that combines close reading of, and commentary on, French texts (from 842 to the present day) with overviews of key linguistic features. The broad scope of this text also ensures that Middle French isn't given short shrift, with 15 texts treated that originate between the mid-15th and mid-16th centuries.
- Christiane Marchello-Nizia, **La langue française aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles** (Paris: Armand Colin, 1997). I haven't been able to get my hands on this myself, but it looks like a useful overview of later medieval French, adopting a similar grammar-focused approach to that of Einhorn.
- Karin Ueltschi and Claude Thomasset, **Pour lire l'ancien français** (Paris: Armand Colin, 2012). A slim volume that begins with a useful analysis of 'la phrase' in medieval French, before returning to the more traditional terrain of parts of speech (verbs, nouns, and so on). Also contains a number of exercises. In French.
- Ian Short, **Manual of Anglo-Norman**, 2nd edn., Occasional Publications Series, 8 (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 2013). The main use of the MAN is in the fields of 'phonology and morpho-syntax' (p. 15), with the vast majority of its 180-odd pages devoted to a phoneme-by-phoneme breakdown of its key features; while there's much to be gleaned in there, its sheer depth can be somewhat intimidating for the uninitiated.² Where the volume really comes into its own for the non-specialist is in its conspectus (pp. 45-46) — possibly the most useful two pages on the distinctiveness of Anglo-Norman ever written — and its introduction (pp. 17-44). The Introduction walks the reader through the development of Anglo-Norman in an accessible manner, and offers exemplary consideration of its longer-term impact on the development of English.

Palaeography and manuscript studies

In addition to the standard introductions to Latin palaeography, I'd recommend, from a French-specific perspective, the following work, which offer both an overview of key features of French palaeography and an opportunity to put them into practice:

- Geneviève Hasenohr, 'Écrire en latin, écrire en roman : réflexions sur la pratique des abréviations dans les manuscrits français des XII^e et XIII^e siècles', in *Textes de dévotion et*

² An example, from p. 91: 'In addition to regular *lui* : *amdui* Bestiaire. 3105, Philippe de Thaon also employs what appear to be monophthongised rhymes in /i/, all feminine and sharing the same phonetic environment.' Yikes.

lectures spirituelles en langue romane (France, XII^e-XVI^e siècle), ed. by Marie-Clotilde Hubert, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 801-32. In French, but a fascinating article that attempts a typology of abbreviations in medieval French texts. Offers the intriguing hypothesis that Anglo-Norman scribes were the principal cause of the growth in use of abbreviations ...

- *Interactive Album of Medieval Palaeography*, <paleographie.huma-num.fr>. Features an option to search by language and / or date, and to get live feedback on your transcriptions, but the comparative age of the site means that the images are a little small.
- *French Renaissance Palaeography*, <paleography.library.utoronto.ca>. Covers texts in French from 1300 to 1700, and is equipped with partial transcriptions against which you can check your work.

Florilegia and collections of 'study extracts'

Recent years have seen a proliferation of 'study books' of Old and Middle French, with various aims that range from illustrating linguistic change to simply providing something 'interesting and entertaining'. Here's a selection:

- Jane Bliss, *An Anglo-Norman Reader* (Cambridge: Open Book, 2017). Jane Bliss has been a fixture of the Anglo-Norman Reading Group in Oxford, and this florilegium of extracts from existing editions of Anglo-Norman texts — accompanied by facing-page translations into English — reflects her long-standing engagement with the literature of the French of England. I personally had a few minor gripes about this when I [reviewed it](#), but it is freely available as a [PDF](#) from the publisher's website, and worth a read.
- Joëlle Ducos, Olivier Soutet and Jean-René Valette, *Le Français médiéval par les textes : Anthologie commentée* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2016). A parallel text-and-translation compendium, covering texts from 842 to 1500 and offering (in French) valuable linguistic footnotes that illustrate key grammatical points in action (although it isn't particularly amenable to searching by linguistic feature). The volume is unusual in having two separate (albeit interconnected) introductions: the *introduction linguistique* presents a broad-brush overview of the evolution of French throughout the medieval period, while the *introduction littéraire* asks questions surrounding periodisation, the notion of 'literature', and modern generic classifications.
- *Vernacular Literary Theory from the French of Medieval England: Texts and Translations, c. 1120 - c. 1450*, ed. and trans. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Thelma Fenster and Delbert Russell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016). If you work on Anglo-Norman material and are looking for further practice, this is quite simply the best place to go. This volume was designed as something of a companion to the earlier *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520* (1999), and true to form, it focuses on a more specific corpus of material than Bliss's work: specifically, on 'textual self-consciousness and strategies interpellation of audience and circumstance' (p. 4). The extracts (taken predominantly from prologues and epilogues) are each presented in a new edition, accompanied by an introduction and notes. The notes themselves are content-related, rather than explications of grammatical points, but the close correspondence between text and English translation makes identifying features of the French original fairly straightforward. (Helpfully, it's also available on [JSTOR](#).)

