

**Nicholas Orme.** *English School Exercises, 1420–1530.* Studies and Texts 181. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2013, xi + 441 pp., \$ 95.00.

This book is a welcome contribution to the study of education in English grammar schools in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. The texts of Latin and English exercises which are here made accessible for modern scholarship were used for the teaching of Latin grammar in classrooms from about 1420 to 1530. They offer a wealth of new linguistic and pedagogical information which the small numbers of time-tables and curricula, and also the historical documents which have come down to us from this period, do not provide. The texts of the twelve collections contained in this book (eleven in manuscript and the earliest edition of one in print) supply first-hand evidence for the teaching of Latin as the target language and contain sentences and short prose passages in Latin or in both languages, English and Latin. They also indicate how classical Latin gradually came to be used in school texts and influenced the teaching in English grammar schools from about the last decade of the fifteenth century onwards. Many of the items are typical school exercises which give a close insight into applying grammatical rules, and into getting practice in translation and fluency in Latin by translating phrases, words of common occurrence, and sentences in the classroom. They were either invented by individual teachers or taken over from pre-existing collections of exercises, which were then revised as necessary. Some of the sentences are proverbial; others consist of verses and even riddles and tongue-twisters. Such sentences also occur as stray examples in grammatical treatises on accident and syntax to illustrate rules. Apart from teaching language, they can be considered unique historical documents in that they cover a large number of topics and events relating to English social and cultural history and also shed light on everyday life, wisdom, morals, behaviour, and attitudes of the time. They originate in schools in different geographical locations and mention places in various parts of England, as illustrated by a map included at the beginning of the book. Due to their layout, and neat and careful handwriting, most of the exercises probably represent transcripts of earlier work and reflect either the elementary end or a higher stage of the teaching of Latin, and were written by advanced pupils or by teachers, some of whom can be identified.

The present edition of texts by Professor Orme means that almost all of the seventeen collections of these exercises which have survived from this period (thirteen manuscripts and four collections in early print) are now available. The text of another manuscript, not considered here, was written in Kent about 1416 (London, TNA, MS C 47/34/13) and needs conservation in order to make further research easier. The following four collections are not included in Orme's book, but are considered in his discussion, namely the English part of the text of the manuscript referred to as Magdalen College, Oxford I (London, British Library,

Arundel MS 249, fols. 9r–16r), which has already been edited, and the three earliest editions of the printed collections of the *Vulgaria*. These go back to the grammarians John Stanbridge, William Horman, and Robert Whittington, and have also been made available either in modern editions or in facsimile reprints. The twelve collections in this book represent new editions of all the texts in question. Most of them are here edited for the first time, while others have been studied and edited earlier by Orme and are now presented in revised and supplemented editions.<sup>1</sup> The manuscripts are cited throughout the book by their place of origin and the printed collections by their author.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part consists of a general introduction covering important aspects of the collections, while the second comprises the editions which are preceded by a detailed introduction to each text. Finally, the book provides a bibliography divided into unpublished and published sources, an index to the introductions to the edited texts and another index listing important topics mentioned in the edited texts themselves. The introductions to the twelve collections give detailed information about their provenance, their physical features, and their origins. For collections in manuscript Orme discusses their possible copyists and sources, followed by remarks on their contents. The only collection included here that can be attributed to an author, i. e. John Anwykyll (d. 1487), the first master of Magdalen College School, Oxford, is entitled *Vulgaria quedam abs Terencio in Anglicam linguam traducta*. This work and also Anwykyll's grammar, *Compendium totius grammaticae*, illustrate the influence of the new form of teaching Latin on humanist lines; they had a wider impact than the exercises in manuscript due to their appearance in print. As a result of this edition of the *Vulgaria*, Anwykyll's collection of school exercises has at last been made available to scholarship.

The general introduction provides information about the collections from different perspectives. The use of single prose sentences to illustrate, learn, and repeat grammatical rules in Latin texts reaches back to antiquity. It can be traced in Ælfric's grammar (in the 990s) from the Old English period, and continues from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards in bilingual treatises. Orme also discusses the important topic of the terminology used for words, phrases, and illustrative sentences for translation in Latin and English. From the thirteenth century onwards *latinitas* became the standard term for a Latin sentence to be studied or composed in grammar school. The equivalent term in English was *a latin*, as recorded in the early fifteenth century. However, when the pupil had to

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<sup>1</sup> For the texts of four collections in manuscript (nos. 1, 3, 11 [in part] and 12), see Orme (1989: chs. 5–8). These go back to his earlier articles, as indicated by Orme in the present volume.

start from an English sentence to be turned into Latin, the vernacular is referred to as *an english*, a term used from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards. Towards the end of this century, the terms *Vulgaria* used as a plural noun in Latin and its English equivalent *vulgar* in the singular signify a word, a phrase or a sentence of Latin which had to be studied. In the sixteenth century the usage of the terms became inconsistent so that *vulgaria* or *vulgar* could both be used indifferently for signifying a piece of work either in Latin or English.

The sentences in these collections represent shared material when they were written by hand and also, probably to a large extent, when they appeared in early print, even though the printed collections are assigned to authors, i.e. to John Anwykyll, John Stanbridge, William Horman, and Robert Whittington, grammarians who are all known as teachers of classical Latin. It can, however, be shown that their collections continue medieval manuscript practice, both in their method of teaching and in the way they illustrate events and experiences of everyday life in and outside school in a lively and colloquial manner. These collections by individual teachers were influential in teaching in well-known schools such as Magdalen College School, Oxford, Banbury School and Eton College, and in schools taking over their curricula and methods well into the thirties of the sixteenth century, after which they were no longer published and went out of use. In this context it has to be noted that the compilers of the uniform grammar, introduced by royal command in 1540 and prescribed for use in all grammar schools in England, were aware of the role and usefulness of translation exercises and therefore continued this practice, as illustrated in the English part printed in 1542.

The collections of exercises in Orme's book are presented in a way which is helpful for the modern reader. They are arranged in roughly chronological order and each collection is given an Arabic number preceded by a paragraph sign. In turn each sentence or short prose passage is numbered in bold letters, printed on a separate line, and followed by its Latin or English translation, which is indented. Where only Latin sentences are given in the originals, translations in modern English are added by Orme in square brackets. He has translated sentences in Middle English which are difficult to understand into modern English and relegated his own translations to the footnotes, also words, phrases and sentences in the two languages, Middle English and Latin, and unusual spellings. Here he also draws attention to difficulties in the text due to scribes either miscopying manuscript or mishearing during dictation. By preserving erroneous translations by pupils of Latin sentences into English, the exercises reveal problems of language learning which grammar teachers had come across and had to correct when Latin was turned into English and vice versa. The following English sentence does not make sense because the pupil followed word order instead of taking account of the Latin grammatical structure: "I saw þe drunkyn whil þu

were sober”, which has been mistranslated from the sentence “Ego vidi te ebrius dum fuisti sobrius” (§2.56). It should correctly read: “I saw thee drunk while I was sober”, as explained and correctly given by the editor in a footnote.

Latin exercises arranged in pairs, each being an alternative translation of the same sentence, are exemplified in the collection numbered §6. In this case it is possible that a theme or even a verb was to be developed into a sentence in which the pupil had to use suitable vocabulary and apply Latin rules correctly. Orme suggests that the first sentence may have been the production by a pupil, while the second, presumably a model sentence, could have been that of the master or a skilful pupil. Moreover, the collections of exercises edited here suggest the principle of double translation. This method consisted in translating a passage from one language into another, and afterwards translating the same passage back into the original language, whereby not only the vocabulary and grammar, but also stylistic aspects of the target language in question were practiced (cf. Miller 1963).

Orme’s edition of these collections not only makes teaching material which has not yet been given much scholarly attention accessible in one volume, but provides an excellent insight into the practical work of language teaching and its methods and aims during the period in question. The exercises also draw attention to the problems pupils had with correctly applying grammatical rules when turning one language into the other. Apart from illustrating didactic and methodological points, they suggest that young native speakers of English, though familiar with their mother tongue, were being made aware of the rules of their own language and practised them at the same time in comparison with those of the foreign language Latin. The collections themselves, though they continue with more or less traditional methods of teaching, indicate a gradual change towards teaching Latin on humanist lines. In the following decades their publication in the new medium of print initiated further developments. Professor Orme’s edition provides us with an important textual basis for further research on formal education during this period.

## Works Cited

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