

THE TREATISE
Le Tretiz
of
WALTER OF
BIBBESWORTH

Translated from the Anglo-Norman by

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*with the Anglo-Norman text as established by William Rothwell
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[37]

Preface (MS G)

Le tretiz ki munseignur Gauter de Bithesweth fistt a madame Dyonise de Mountechensi pur aprise de langage. E ço est a saver de primeretens ke home neistra ou tut le langage par sa nature en sa juvente, puis tutle fraunceis cum il encurt en age e en estate de husbondrie e manaungerie, com pur arer, rebingner, waretter, semer, searchler, syer, fauger, carier, muer, battre, ventre e mouwere, pestre, brescer, bracer, haute feste araer. Puis tut le fraunceis des bestes e desoyseaus, chescune assemblé e par sa nature apris. Puis trestuit le fraunceys des boys, preez e dé pastures, vergers, gardins, curtilages ové tut le fraunçais des flurs e des fruz qui i sunt e tut issint troverez vous le dreit ordre en parler e en respundre qe nuls gentils homme coveint saver. Dounc tut dis troverez vous primes le fraunceis e puis le engleise amount.

Dedication (MS T)

Chere soer, pur ceo ke vus me priastes ke jeo meyse en escrit pur vos enfaunz acune aprise en fraunceis en breve paroles, jeo l'ay fet souloum ce ke jeo ay apris e solum ceo ke les paroles me venent en memorie, ke les enfaunz puent saver les propretés dé choses ke veent e kant deyvent dire moun e ma, soun e sa, la e le, e mey e ge.

Preface (University Library, Cambridge, MS Gg.1.1)

The language learning handbook made by my lord Gauter de Bibbesweth for madame Dionisie de Montchensi: specifically, from the time of a man's birth, with the whole vocabulary of his childhood; then all the French of his coming to adulthood and of his practice of husbandry and estate management, as in ploughing, re-ploughing, ploughing fallow land, weeding, hoeing, reaping, mowing, carting,¹ stacking, threshing, winnowing and grinding; kneading, malting,² brewing, holding a High Feast.³ Then all the French of beasts and birds, each in its kind collected and taught; then all the French of woods, croplands and pastures, orchards, gardens, courtyards, with all the French of their flowers and fruits. Thus you will find the proper way to speak and answer that every gentleman needs to know. You will see the French first, and the English just above it.

Dedication (Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.2.21)

Dear sister,

Since you have asked me to put in writing for your children a phrase book to teach them French, I have done this as I learned the language myself and as the expressions came back to my mind, so that the children will know the correct names of the things they see, and will know when to say *mon* and *ma*, *son* and *sa*, *la* and *le*, *moi* and *je*.

1. Anglo-Norman *carier*, 'carry corn from the harvest field to the stackyard' (see *OED* 'carry v. 1. b').
2. Near-homonyms: Anglo-Norman *brescer*, 'roast, malt'; *bracer* 'brew'.
3. At Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Assumption (*AND*).

Femme ke aproche sun teins
 De enfaunter moustre seins
 Quant se purveit de une ventrere
 4 Qui seit avisé cunseillere.
 E quant li emfez serra neez
 Coveint k'il seit maylolez,
 Puis en berce le cochez
 8 E de une bercere vous purveez.
 Le enfant comence a chatener
 Einz k'il sache a peez aler.
 E quant il baave de nature,
 12 Pur ces dras sauver de baavure
 Dites dounc a sa bercere
 Ke ele lui face une baavere.
 E quant comence de aler
 16 De tay se veet espaluer,
 E pur maine e pur blesure
 Garszoun ou garce li deit suire,
 Qu'il ne cece ne ne chece.
 20 Ensi coveint il bone pece.
 E quant il encurt a tele age
 Qu'il prendre se poet a langage,
 En fraunceis lui devez dire
 24 Cum primes deit sun cors descrivre
 Pur l'ordre aver de 'moun' e 'ma',
 'Ton' e 'ta', 'soun' e 'ça', 'le' e 'la',
 Qu'il en parole seit meuz apris
 28 E de nul autre escharnis.
 Ma teste ou moun chef:
 La greve de moun chef.
 Fetes la greve au laver
 32 E mangez la grive au diner.

Woman who is near her time shows that she is about to give
 birth⁴
 When she sends for a midwife, one who will be a careful guide.
 When the child is born he must be wrapped.⁵
 Then lay him in a cradle and get a nurse.⁶ 8
 The child begins to crawl before he can walk on his feet.
 He naturally dribbles;⁷ to protect his wraps from the dribble
 You should tell his nurse: 'Make the child a bib.'⁸
 When he starts to walk he is likely to dirty⁹ himself with mud;¹⁰ 16
 In case of knocks and hurts a boy or girl must follow him
 For fear he stumbles or falls: this is needed for a good while.
 When he reaches the age at which he can learn to talk
 You must tell him in French how to name his own body first of
 all, 24
 To grasp the rules of *moun* and *ma*, *ton* and *ta*, *soun* and *ça*, *le* and *la*,
 To be better taught in speech and not made fun of by others.¹¹
 My head (*ma teste ou moun chef*), the crown of my head
 (Make the parting¹² when you wash, eat the fieldfare for dinner);¹³ 32

4. English gloss (verb) *belitter*.
5. English gloss *swathe*, or (noun) *swathclut*, i.e. swaddling-cloths.
6. English glosses *rocker*, *rockster*.
7. English gloss *slaver*.
8. English glosses *slavering clout*, *breast-clout*, *drivelling-clout*. In French 'dribble' (n.) and 'bib' are near-homonyms, *baavure* and *baavere*.
9. English gloss *file* (see *OED* 'file v.²'), cognate with the adjective *filthy*.
10. English glosses *clay*, *fen*.
11. In manuscript T grammatical gender is mentioned in the dedication. Verses 25–28 were evidently added to the version represented by G because the dedication does not appear in that version.
12. The same French word *greve* covers 'crown' and 'parting'. For the first sense the English gloss is *shode*; for the second, the gloss is *shed* (see *OED* 'shode; shed n.¹').
13. Near-homonyms: Anglo-Norman *greve* 'parting', *grive* 'fieldfare, thrush' (*Turdus spp.*, esp. *T. pilaris*).

Jeo ai les chevez recercillez.
 Moun toup, vous prie, estauchez.
 En vostre chief vous avez toup,
 36 E serencez de lin le toup,
 En la rue juez au toup,
 En la lute desrenés le toup.
 Il i ad moun hanepel,
 40 Moun frount e ma cervele,
 Moun haterel ou mes temples.
 E les mousters dist hom temples.
 Vostre regarde est graciose,
 44 Mes vostre eel est chaciouse.
 Des eus oustés la chacie
 E de nes le rupie.
 Meuz vaut la rubie par .b.
 48 Ki ne fet le rupie par .p.,
 Car ci bource eut tant des rubies
 Cum le nes ad des rupies,
 Mult serreit riches de pirie
 52 Qui taunt eut de la rubie.
 De le oile est sauf la purnel
 Si le pauper seit bon e bel.
 En les pauperes sunt les cilz.
 56 Amount les eus sunt les surcilz,
 E ausi avez vous par reisun
 Deus nariz e un tendroun.

I have curly hair;¹⁴ please trim my foretop¹⁵
 (You have a foretop on your head, you comb a top of flax,
 You play top in the street, in a fight you win a tup).¹⁶
 Here is my scalp,¹⁷ my forehead and my brain, 40
 My nape and my temple (and they call churches temples).¹⁸
 Your look is kindly, but your eye is bleary;¹⁹
 Wipe the rheum²⁰ from your eyes and the snot²¹ from your nose
 (Ruby with a *b* is worth more than *rupie* ‘snot’ with a *p*: 48
 If a purse had as much in rubies as the nose has in snot,
 The man with so many rubies would be rich in precious stones.)
 The pupil of the eye²² is safe if the eyelid is good and healthy;
 On the lids are the lashes;²³ over the eyes are the brows; 56
 Your nose should have two nostrils²⁴ and a septum,²⁵

14. English glosses *crisp locks*, *crisp hair*.
15. i.e. forelock. English glosses *evese my cop* (see *OED* ‘cop n.²’), *shear my top* (see *OED* ‘top n.¹ I. 1. a’). The obsolete English verb *evese* ‘cut the hair’ is related to the noun *eaves*.
16. A tup (a ram) was the standard prize for a wrestling bout. The first three senses of Anglo-Norman *toup* were shared with Middle English *top* (see *OED* ‘top n.¹ I. 1. a, I. 2. a, I. 2. b’). The fourth sense corresponded to Middle English *tup* ‘ram, male sheep’, but the scribe who wrote the English glosses in manuscript G did not understand the line, taking the word as *top* ‘yarn’ (see *OED* ‘top n.² I. a’; cf. Rothwell 2005, p. 14 note 97).
17. English glosses *brain-pan*, *harn-pan* (see also *OED* ‘pan n.¹ 6’).
18. Homonyms in Anglo-Norman and soon to be so in English (see *OED* ‘temple n.²’); here, however, the gloss for the anatomical sense of Anglo-Norman *temple* is *thunwang*.
19. The paradox (surely one’s look is the same as one’s eye?) is emphasized by the rhyme in French, *graciously* ‘kindly’ and *chaciously* ‘bleary’. For the latter, English glosses *goundy* and *+spaduuous*; see *OED* ‘spade n.³’.
20. English glosses *gound*, *+spaduing*; see *OED* ‘spade n.³’.
21. English glosses *meldrop*, *+nose-dropping*.
22. English gloss *apple of thine eye*. ‘Apple’ had this meaning in English until quite recently (see *OED* ‘apple n. 7. a’)
23. English gloss *hairs*.
24. English glosses *thirls*, *nose-thirls*.
25. English gloss *gristle*.

Mes war ki la chouue
 60 Ne touche vostre jouwe.
 Vous avez la levere e le levere,
 La livere e le livre.
 La levere, c'est ke enclost les dens,
 64 Le levere ki boys se tent dedeins;
 La livere sert de marchaundie,
 Le livere nous aprent clergie.
 En la bouche amount est palet,
 68 Tasterés vos chose orde ou nette.
 E les dames sunt ententives
 Pur bien laver lur gingives,
 E l'encheisun est bien certaine
 72 Ki eles le funt pur bone aleine.
 Le col, la gorge e le mentoun
 Dunt le fraunceis est commun.
 Dedens la gorge est le gargate
 76 E plus parfunt si gist rate.
 E si ad derere le wen au col
 A chescune sage e au fol.

And beware the jackdaw doesn't peck your cheek.²⁶
 You have lip and hare, pound and book:
 The lip is what encloses the teeth, the hare stays in the woods, 64
 The pound serves as merchandise,²⁷ books teach children
 knowledge.²⁸
 The mouth, on the palate's²⁹ advice, will say if wine is good and
 clean.
 Ladies are careful to wash their gums well,
 And the reason is clear: they do it for sweet breath.³⁰ 72
 The neck, the throat and the chin, for which the French is well
 known:
 In the throat is the larynx,³¹ and lower down lies the spleen,³² 76
 And at the back of the neck is a ligament³³ (every wise man and
 fool has one).

26. Near-homonyms: Anglo-Norman *choue* is 'jackdaw', *joue* is 'cheek'. The English glosses for jackdaw are *co*, *co-bird* (see *OED* 'co'; chough'), cognate with the Anglo-Norman, which is borrowed from Frankish. See Sayers 2010a.
27. Anglo-Norman *marchaundie*, soon to be borrowed into English if it was not already (see *OED* 'merchandy').
28. Of these four the first two are homonyms distinguished only by gender (*la levere* 'lip', *le levere* 'hare') and so are the last two (*la livere* 'pound', *le livere* 'book'). Anglo-Norman *clergie* had already been borrowed into English in the sense of 'knowledge, book-learning' (see *OED* 'clergy II. 5').
29. English gloss *above the mouth*. The Anglo-Norman *palet* was soon to be borrowed into English as an anatomical term and with its associated meaning 'sense of taste' (see *OED* 'palate n. 1, 2').
30. English gloss *ande*. Lines 71–72 are not in manuscript T.
31. English gloss *throat-boll*.
32. Anglo-Norman *rate* apparently 'spleen' (certainly this is the meaning in modern French), inserted out of order to rhyme with *gargate* 'larynx'. The English gloss is *midred* which means 'diaphragm, midriff' according to *OED*.
33. Anglo-Norman *wen*, *vendon*. The English glosses are *faxwax*, *paxwax* (see *OED* 'fix-fax, paxwax'). The parenthesis is for the sake of the rhyme, *col* 'neck', *fol* 'fool'. Lines 75–78 are not in manuscript T.

Desouz la launge est la fourcele,
 80 'Os fourché' fraunceis l'apele.
 E n'est pas mester tut a descrivere
 Du fraunceis ki chescun seit dire,
 Du ventre, dos ne de l'escine,
 84 Espaul, bras ne la peitrine :
 Mes jeo vous frai la mustreisoun
 De fraunceis noun pas si commun.
 En chef devant est la fontayne,
 88 La souveraine levere e la suzaine.
 En la buche sunt messeleres
 E dens foreins, si tu les quers.
 Au col avez un fossolet.
 92 Desouz la lange e le filet.
 Chescun orail si ad molet.
 Par kakenole est cervele nest,
 E pur certefier la parole
 96 Conestre coveint la kakenole.
 Desouz le orail est le gernoun.
 A l'espaule avez blazoun.

Below the tongue is the collarbone,³⁴ which the French call *os*
fourché. 80
 And it's no use listing all the French words that everyone knows,
 The belly,³⁵ back and backbone, shoulder, arm, chest;
 I'll set out for you the French that's not so common.
 In the first place come the fontanelle,³⁶ the upper and the lower lip; 88
 In the mouth are the molars and the front teeth,³⁷ if you look for
 them;
 On your neck you have a hollow;³⁸ under the tongue is the
 frenum;³⁹
 Each ear has its lobe; the brain is enclosed by a meninx,⁴⁰
 And to be sure of a man's word you must know the back of his
 head.⁴¹ 96
 Under the temple is the sideburn; in your shoulder you have a
 blade,⁴²

34. Anglo-Norman *furcele*; English gloss *cannel-bone*. The meaning is not certain in either language. Compare Anglo-Norman *kanel*, *eskanel* 'shinbone' at line 148.
35. English gloss *womb*.
36. English gloss *molde* (see *OED* 'mould n.², head-mould¹').
37. English glosses *wang-teeth*, *foreteeth*.
38. English glosses *dalk*, *neck-hole*.
39. English glosses *+skale*, *fylet* (evidently already borrowed from Anglo-Norman *filer*: see *OED* 'fillet n.¹ 4. c' and Rothwell 2005, p. 17 note 127), *strynge* (see *OED* 'string n. I. 2. a').
40. English glosses *rim of the brain*, *rim of herns* (see *OED* 'rim n.²'), but also *+herespon*, which perhaps means '[outer] ear' (see *OED* 'ear n. III. 16. a').
41. A proverb (not in manuscript T) introduced to play on related senses of the Anglo-Norman word *kakenole* 'meninx; back of the head'. You need to know a man from all sides.
42. English gloss *shoulder-bone*.

Desouz le bras avez ascel.
 100 Parmi le char gist le escl.
 Desouz la mountayne surd le broil.
 En bace tere ad bon soil.
 Entre pledours sourt le toil.
 104 Le vent de bise mult greve le oyl.
 Après le aust si chet le foil.
 Après gele si vient remoil.¹
 Cestes paroles ensi vous coil
 108 E l'emcheisun dire vous voil
 Pur meuz acorder en parlance
 E descorder en variaunce.
 Des espaules issent les braz.
 112 Coustez ne meins ne lerrum pas,
 Mes entre le bras e la mein
 Si est trovéla kouue de la mein,
 La paume dedeinz, la clay dehors.
 116 E le poyne c'est la mein enclos.
 E un poiné ki avez en mein
 C'est la mein trestut plein.
 E ambesdeus les meins pleins
 120 En Frauncze apel hom galeins.
 Kar meuz vodroie petite poiné
 De gengevere bien trié
 Ki ne ferroie cent galeins
 124 De filaundre tut pleins.
 Une coste de une costee
 Adam en out Deus enosté
 Quant dame Eve primes fist.²
 128 Ne porte charge pur quei il gist.

1. T adds: Par deray cheet sovent duyl.
2. For 125–132 T has: Une coste de mé costez (*a rib of my side*) La premiere femme (*dame Eve*) ad oustez. Par venteresse en ventre (*windoustre in womb*) Payn de fourment entre.