

INTRODUCTION

IF HISTORIES OF modern languages education in Europe typically begin in the early modern period, this is because the primary materials on which their accounts are based only start to become plentiful around 1500. The situation of French education in England is different. From the mid thirteenth century there survive materials designed to teach French vocabulary to the English; by the turn of the fifteenth century, these have been supplemented by grammatical and conversation manuals as well as various specialist treatises. These materials build on a long tradition of Latin instruction in England and throughout medieval Europe; at the same time, they reflect the special status of French in late-medieval England. From the Norman Conquest of 1066 up to the fifteenth century, French was deployed in England alongside Latin and English to perform a broad range of written and spoken functions in the fields of the law, diplomacy and trade, entertainment and hospitality, and governmental, urban, manorial, and monastic administration. By 1400, few English men and women are thought to have spoken French from birth, but many of them will have wanted to become more proficient in the language. The materials produced to meet this desire make French the first modern European language for which records of teaching survive; the English learners who used them were the first modern linguists.

This volume presents parallel texts of two fifteenth-century manuals written to teach French to the English: the *Liber donati*, which combines commentary in Latin and French on grammar, spelling, and pronunciation with a lively series of model dialogues; and *Le Commune parlance*, an extended collection of dialogues. Together, these manuals provide valuable information about who among the medieval English learned French, what kinds of French they wanted, and how they acquired it. The manuals' interest in spoken French is especially telling. The model dialogues compiled in the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* show that, well into the fifteenth century, English learners might imagine using French not only to ask the way and the time, or to make a toast, but also to perform a range of more complex and specialized functions, both at home and abroad. These might include directing or welcoming travellers to a hostel, singing a French song, or comforting a crying child. While in later periods French would be pursued as a social accomplishment, or by those whose work required them to cultivate links beyond England, the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* show us that medieval French education also included learners of a humbler sort whose ambitions will sometimes have been more local, such as servants, artisans, and innkeepers. The model dialogues show us, furthermore, that late-medieval English women as well as men within these categories might be envisaged speaking French.

The *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* are transmitted together in one mid-fifteenth-century manuscript, now Cambridge, University Library MS Dd. 12. 23, from which they were edited for the Anglo-Norman Text Society by Brian Merrilees and Beata Sitarz-Fitzpatrick and Andres M. Kristol.¹ The French texts in this volume are adapted

¹ See *Liber donati: A Fifteenth-Century Manual of French*, ed. Brian Merrilees and Beata Sitarz-

from these editions. Merrilees and Sitarz-Fitzpatrick's and Kristol's apparatus have been checked against the manuscript and rejected readings have been restored where they are not obviously faulty and where MS Dd. 12. 23 is undamaged. This approach is consonant with recent attempts to destigmatize the forms of French used in England that are described below. Deviations from the manuscript and from the base editions are listed in the Textual Notes. The translations, which are new, seek to remain as close to their originals as possible without sacrificing the rules of English grammar. They have been done to foster access to the manuals' medieval French and Latin amongst readers less familiar with these languages.

This Introduction surveys the body of French teaching and reference materials to which the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* belong; at the same time, it outlines how the reception of these works in scholarship has been bound up with understandings of the currency of French in England. It considers the identities, aims, and locations of the medieval English teachers and learners of French as well as the methods that they pursued and their possible outcomes. Finally, it introduces the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance*; discusses what their compilation in MS Dd. 12. 23 can tell us about some of their users; and sketches the development of French instruction in early modern England. Many of the issues broached here are further developed in the Commentary and Notes.

The Teaching and Reference Materials and the Currency of French

As an instructed language, French achieved near parity with Latin in England far earlier than it did on the continent.² The earliest surviving text witnessing to the concerted study of French in England, Walter de Bibbesworth's *Tretiz de langage* (1240–1250), presents itself as an aid for an aristocratic mother who wished to instruct her children in the French vocabulary required to manage a country estate: French was the language in which business of this kind was conducted and discussed well into the later Middle Ages.³ The poem was frequently copied, receiving a new incarnation in the fifteenth century in the *Femina nova*. That work furnishes the *Tretiz* with a running translation and presents it with extracts from two French conduct texts and a French-English glos-

Fitzpatrick, Plain Texts Series 9 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1993); and *Manières de langage* (1396, 1399, 1415), ed. Andres M. Kristol, Anglo-Norman Texts 53 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1995), 1–36. Kristol takes the *Commune parlance* in MS Dd. 12. 23 as the base text for his *Manière de 1396*.

2 On this point, see Serge Lusignan, *Parler vulgairement: les intellectuels et la langue française au XIIIe et XIVe siècles* (Paris: Vrin, 1986), 91–127. On the relationship between Latin and French teaching in medieval England, see too Christel Nissille, “Grammaire floue” et enseignement du français en Angleterre au XVe siècle: les leçons du manuscrit Oxford Magdalen 188 (Tübingen: Francke, 2014), 15–95.

3 See Walter de Bibbesworth, *Le Tretiz*, ed. William Rothwell (Aberystwyth: Anglo-Norman Online Hub, 2009): <<http://www.anglo-norman.net>>; *The Treatise of Walter of Bibbesworth*, trans. Andrew Dalby (Totnes: Prospect, 2012); and *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, ed. Dorothea Oschinsky (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). An AHRC-funded project led by Thomas Hinton is preparing a new digital edition of the *Tretiz*. See <<https://tretiz.exeter.ac.uk>>.

sary.⁴ Alongside these and other vocabularies, there survive from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries three treatises on the spelling and pronunciation of French, the *Orthographia gallica*, *Tractatus orthographiae*, and *Tractatus ortographie gallicane*;⁵ dictaminal treatises and model letters;⁶ conversation manuals, or *manières de langage*;⁷ verb tables and verb lists;⁸ and two grammars: the *Donait françois* and *Donait soloum douce franceis de Paris*.⁹ The *Liber donati* collects elements belonging to several of these text types and the *Commune parlance* is one of the larger extant collections of model dialogues. In both works, the far-reaching influence of the orthographic treatises and of Bibbesworth's *Tretiz* can be detected.

The medieval French teaching and reference materials are well known to scholarship.¹⁰ Their interpretation has proven controversial. For William Rothwell, the advent of the *Tretiz* in the middle of the thirteenth century signalled the decay of French as a native language in England. After this point, Rothwell argued, French was acquired through formal study in order to serve the burgeoning requirements of the late-medieval English governmental and legal bureaucracies.¹¹ More recently, Richard Ingham has post-dated the decline of French in England by a century. Analysis of the French written in late-medieval England by Ingham and others demonstrates that, while the phonology of the language soon diverged from that of continental French varieties, its morphology and syntax continued to develop in step with or even in advance of continental

4 See *Femina*, ed. William Rothwell (Aberystwyth: Anglo-Norman Online Hub, 2005): <<http://www.anglo-norman.net>>.

5 See *Orthographia gallica*, ed. R. C. Johnston, Pain Texts Series 5 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1987); Mildred K. Pope, "The *Tractatus Orthographiae* of T. H., Parisii Studentis," *Modern Language Review* 5 (1910): 185–93; and E. Stengel, "Die ältesten Anleitungsschriften zur Erlernung der französischen Sprache," *Zeitschrift für neufranzösische Sprache und Literatur* 1 (1879): 1–40 (*Tractatus ortographie gallicane* at 16–24).

6 See James W. Hassell, "Thomas Sampson's Dictaminal Treatises and the Teaching of French in Medieval England: An Edition and Study" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1991). For a sample of the letters, see too *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions from All Souls MS. 182*, ed. Dominica Legge, Anglo-Norman Texts 3 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1941).

7 See *Manières*, ed. Kristol.

8 For an example, see Stengel, "Die ältesten Anleitungsschriften," 33–40.

9 See *Johan Barton: Donait françois*, ed. Bernard Colombat (Paris: Garnier, 2014); and Brian Merrilees, "Donatus and the Teaching of French in Medieval England," in *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays*, ed. Ian Short (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1993), 273–91 (*Donait soloum douce franceis de Paris* at 285–91).

10 The most recent repertories are in Andres Max Kristol, "L'Enseignement du français en Angleterre (XIIIe–XVe siècles): les sources manuscrites," *Romania* 111 (1990): 289–300; and Ruth J. Dean with Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts* (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1999), items 281–324.

11 See William Rothwell, "The Teaching of French in Medieval England," *Modern Language Review* 63 (1968): 37–46; "The Role of French in Thirteenth-Century England," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Society* 58 (1975–76): 445–66; "Language and Government in Medieval England," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 93 (1983): 258–70; and "The Teaching and Learning of French in Later Medieval England," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 111 (2001): 1–18.

Frenches until ca. 1350.¹² In consequence, Ingham argues, formal instruction in French was unnecessary before the second half of the fourteenth century; prior to this time, he suggests, French was learned by induction in early childhood in the preparatory Latin classes attended by boys destined for grammar school.¹³

Evidence that Latin was taught to the English through French survives in the form of explicit statements from authors such as Ranulph Higden and John Trevisa as well as in the English manuscripts containing Latin teaching texts that have been edited with their glosses by Tony Hunt.¹⁴ Hard evidence for the existence of the preparatory schools posited by Ingham is more difficult to find, but Serge Lusignan's work on the *petites écoles* that taught French reading and writing in Picardy may provide a parallel, and literary evidence for the instruction of young boys via French in a church school context exists in the fourteenth-century Middle English poem, *The Chorister's Lament*.¹⁵ Ingham's thesis that formal French instruction begins later also finds support in recent work demonstrating the literary—as opposed to purely pedagogic—purposes of Bibbesworth's *Tretiz*, which is rich in puns and other wordplay.¹⁶

It will be apparent that critical assessments of the French teaching and reference materials are bound up with understandings of the currency of French in late-medieval England: where and how is French used, by whom, and until when? The tendency among some earlier scholars to denigrate Anglo-French also continues to hold limited sway: were the English any good at French?

12 See, for example, Richard Ingham, "The Persistence of Anglo-Norman 1230–1362: A Linguistic Perspective," and Pierre Kunstmann, "Syntaxe anglo-normande: étude de certaines caractéristiques du XIIe au XIVe siècle," both in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England c.1100–c.1500*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), 44–54 and 55–67.

13 See Richard Ingham, *The Transmission of Anglo-Norman: Language History and Language Acquisition* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2012), 27–37; and "The Maintenance of French in Later Medieval England," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 115 (2014): 425–48. Where Ingham dates the advent of formal French instruction to the mid-fourteenth century, he resuscitates an aspect of the argument developed in Douglas A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely: The French Language in England, 1000–1600* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1991).

14 See Tony Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-Century England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991). For the relevant passages from Higden and Trevisa, see Albert C. Baugh and Thomas Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 6th ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 144–45.

15 See Serge Lusignan, *Essai d'histoire sociolinguistique: le français picard au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Garnier, 2012), 129–38. For a normalized text and translation of *The Chorister's Lament*, see *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. Celia Sisam and Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 184–85. On this poem, see too Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Maidie Hilmo, and Linda Olson, *Opening Up Medieval English Manuscripts: Literary and Visual Approaches* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 44–45.

16 See Thomas Hinton, "Anglo-French in the Thirteenth Century: A Reappraisal of Walter of Bibbesworth's *Tretiz*," *Modern Language Review* 112 (2017): 855–81; and "Language, Morality, and Wordplay in Thirteenth-Century Anglo-French: The Poetry of Walter de Bibbesworth," *New Medieval Literatures* 19 (2019): 89–120.

The question of competence has been all but settled.¹⁷ For some time now, researchers have been elucidating what Claude Buridant has called the “grammaire floue,” or fuzzy grammar of medieval French.¹⁸ Against the backdrop of this work, Anglo-French no longer seems as odd as it once did: in the Middle Ages, there was no standard French against which any regional form might be judged more or less aberrant.¹⁹ The orthographic treatises listed above describe how the English could adjust their French for rhetorical purposes in order to match that of their continental addressees, but insular spellings might sometimes be retained and letters having distinctly insular forms were still sent abroad.²⁰ Moreover, while the spelling manuals recognise the occasional benefits of matching one’s written French to that of one’s foreign addressees, their insistence on the maintenance of local forms in speech is marked.²¹ The insecurities suggested by Chaucer’s joke about his prioress’s French “of Stratford atte Bowe” (*Canterbury Tales*, I: 125) were certainly not ubiquitous.²² Indeed, where the teaching and reference materials present as “French” a form of the language that bears the marks of English influence, they frustrate any attempt to define clearly where French ends and English begins.²³

17 For the terms of the question, see William Rothwell, “Playing ‘Follow My Leader’ in Anglo-Norman Studies,” *French Language Studies* 6 (1996): 177–210.

18 See Claude Buridant, “Varietas delectat: prolégomènes à une grammaire de l’ancien français,” *Vox Romanica* 55 (1996): 88–125, at 111; and *Grammaire du français médiéval (XIe–XIVe siècles)* (Strasbourg: Éditions de linguistique et de philologie, 2019). See too Christine Marchello-Nizia, *La Langue française aux XIVe et XVe siècles*, rev. ed. (Paris: Colin, 2005).

19 See David Trotter, “Not as Eccentric As It Looks: Anglo-French and French French,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 39 (2003): 427–38; and “L’Anglo-normand: variété insulaire, ou variété isolée?” *Médiévales* 45 (2003): 1–13.

20 See David Trotter, “L’Anglo-normand en France: les traces documentaires,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 152 (2008): 893–905; Andres M. Kristol, “L’Intellectuel ‘anglo-normand’ face à la pluralité des langues: le témoignage implicite du MS Oxford Magdalen Lat. 188,” in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, ed. David Trotter (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), 37–52; and Serge Lusignan, “À chacun son français: la communication entre l’Angleterre et les régions picardes et flamandes (XIIIe–XIVe siècle),” in *Ile Journée d’études anglo-normandes: approches techniques, littéraires et historiques*, ed. André Crépin and Jean Leclant (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2012), 117–33.

21 See Andres Max Kristol, “Le Début du rayonnement parisien et l’unité du français au Moyen Âge: le témoignage des manuels d’enseignement du français écrits en Angleterre entre le XIIIe et le début du XVe siècle,” *Revue de linguistique romane* 53 (1989): 335–67; “La Prononciation du français en Angleterre au XVe siècle,” in *Mélanges de philologie et de littérature médiévales offerts à Michel Burger*, ed. Jacqueline Cerquiglini and Olivier Collet (Geneva: Droz, 1994), 67–87; and “Les ‘transcriptions phonétiques’ du *Femina* (Trinity College Cambridge, MS. B. 14. 40, vers 1415) et le français parlé en Angleterre à la fin du Moyen Âge: une tentative de réhabilitation,” in *Repenser l’histoire du français*, ed. Dominique Lagorgette (Chambéry: Université de Savoie, 2014), 107–38.

22 Cited from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); line numbering here and elsewhere is from this edition. On the Chaucerian phrase, see further William Rothwell, “Stratford Atte Bowe and Paris,” *Modern Language Review* 80 (1985): 39–54; and “Stratford Atte Bowe Re-Visited,” *Chaucer Review* 36 (2001): 184–207.

23 See further David Trotter, “‘Deinz certains boundes’: Where does Anglo-Norman Begin and End?” *Romance Philology* 67 (2013): 139–77. On the influence of English on French, see too Richard

Understandings of the extent to which French was used expand as more and different kinds of materials are taken into consideration. Evidence has long been available for the extensive and prolonged use of written French in legal, manorial, mercantile, monastic, and urban contexts.²⁴ Spoken French has now also been shown to have endured in England longer than was once thought. In particular, Ingham's research into the use of French in legal and manorial contexts suggests that the language was spoken as well as written in these milieux well into the fourteenth century.²⁵ Consideration of the dialogues presented in this volume can push the timeframe for the use of spoken French within England further forward still. The model conversations in the *Liber donati* are set in England, suggesting that, well into the fifteenth century, English learners might expect to deploy spoken French at home as well as in their travels beyond the Channel.²⁶

Teachers and Learners: Identities, Aims, Locations

The dialogues in the *Liber donati* also hold important information about the identities of the teachers and learners of French in late-medieval England. In its ninth dialogue, a man on his way to London is asked by a woman to take her twelve-year-old son with him and to secure an apprenticeship for him there. Calling the boy before him, the traveller begins a round of questioning:

- Mon fitz, avez vous esté a l'escole?
- Oy, sir, pur vostre congé.
- A quele lieu?
- Sir, a l'ostelle de Guilliam Scrivener.
- Beal fitz, qu'avez vous appris la en ycelle terme?
- Sir, mon maistre m'a enseigné pur escriier, enditer, counter et fraunceis parler.
- My son, have you been to school?
- Yes, sir, by your leave.
- In what place?
- Sir, at the house of Guilliam Scrivener.

Ingham, "Later Anglo-Norman as a Contact Variety of French?" and Eric Haeberli, "Investigating Anglo-Norman Influence on Late Middle English Syntax," both in *The Anglo-Norman Language and its Contexts*, ed. Richard Ingham (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 8–25 and 143–63.

24 See Helen Suggett, "The Use of French in England in the Later Middle Ages," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 28 (1946): 61–83. More recently, see too William Rothwell, "English and French in England after 1362," *English Studies* 82 (2001): 539–59; and Richard Britnell, "Uses of French Language in Medieval English Towns," and Rebecca June, "The Languages of Memory: The Crabhouse Nunnery Manuscript," both in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne et al., 81–89 and 347–58.

25 See Richard Ingham, "Mixing Languages on the Manor," *Medium Ævum* 78 (2009): 80–97; and "Investigating Language Change Using Anglo-Norman Spoken and Written Register Data," *Linguistics* 54 (2016): 381–410. On the use of spoken French by English sailors, see too Maryanne Kowaleski, "The French of England: A Maritime *lingua franca*?" in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne et al., 103–17.

26 See Rory G. Critten, "The *Manières de langage* as Evidence for the Use of Spoken French Within Fifteenth-Century England," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 55 (2019): 121–37.

- Good son, what have you learned there in that time?
- Sir, my master has taught me to write, compose, calculate, and speak French.

“Guilliam Scrivener” has been identified as William Kingsmill (fl. 1420–1450), one of the Oxford *dictatores*.²⁷ Working on the fringes of the late-medieval university, these men taught the subjects that the young boy claims to have mastered, namely *dictamen*, or letter-writing, and the forms required for basic business transactions; from the late fourteenth century, their instruction included spoken and written French as well as Latin.²⁸ The *dictatores*’ training also included a paralegal element. This too might be alluded to in the boy’s announcement of Kingsmill’s curriculum. One of the key verbs in the passage just cited is *counter*, which AND s.v. *conter* defines as “to (make a) count (set out plaintiff’s case at beginning of pleading)” as well as “calculate.” Although it may appear unlikely that a twelve-year-old boy should possess this skill, the promotion here of the instruction that he has received perhaps contained deliberate hyperbole.

The conversation in the *Liber* between the London-bound traveller and the boy suggests that Kingsmill’s instruction was designed for younger men on their way into practical careers beyond the university town. This assessment finds support in other representations of the *dictatores*’ students among the materials composed or collected by Kingsmill and his predecessor, Thomas Sampson (fl. 1370–1409). Thus a model letter contained in one of Sampson’s formularies shows a father writing to his son at Oxford, instructing him to give up his studies at the arts faculty and to commit himself to Sampson’s teaching: the father has managed to secure his son a job in aristocratic service to begin the following year, and the son should now prepare himself for his new position by learning to “*escrire et diter*” and “*bien et visement acompter, escrire et rendre come appent*” (write and compose, and do accounts well and prudently, and write and make a fitting payment). Another model letter describes the plight of a man who has been given a clerical position above his abilities. He writes to his brother asking him to put himself to learning writing, accounting, and composition, presumably also under the *dictatores*, so that together they can make a success of the appointment.²⁹ Chaucer may have fictionalized the type of young man taking the *dictatores*’ classes in the Miller’s Tale, where Absolon is described as someone who could “maken a chartre of lond acquitaunce [...] after the scole of Oxenforde tho” (I: 3326–29).

In T. A. R. Evans’s assessment, the *dictatores* “prepared their pupils for work as clerks at a very modest level,” the mixture of accounting, letter-writing, and basic legal skills taught suggesting “a training suitable for a local jobbing clerk who might combine

²⁷ See M. Dominica Legge, “William of Kingsmill: A Fifteenth-Century Teacher of French in Oxford,” in *Studies in French Language and Mediæval Literature Presented to Professor Mildred K. Pope* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1939), 241–46.

²⁸ See H. G. Richardson, “An Oxford Teacher of the Fifteenth Century,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 23 (1939): 436–57; “Business Training in Medieval Oxford,” *American Historical Review* 46 (1941): 259–80; and “Letters of the Oxford Dictatores,” in *Formularies which Bear on the History of Oxford c. 1204–1420*, ed. H. E. Salter, W. A. Pantin, and H. G. Richardson, Oxford Historical Society, n.s., 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), 329–450.

²⁹ These letters are cited from Richardson, “Letters of the Oxford Dictatores,” 407 and 371–72.

work for manorial officers with miscellaneous tasks for other local clients, conceivably in conjunction with some non-clerical occupation.”³⁰ As is shown below, this observation can be refined through consideration of the texts that accompany the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* in MS Dd. 12. 13, a book that transmits the manuals together. It also bears emphasising that the language skills taught in particular in the model dialogues might have prepared learners to take up opportunities further from home, for example in the northern French territories opened up by English military campaigning.³¹ Certainly, the *manières* model a very different kind of French to that exemplified in the materials assembled by the *dictatores* to teach written forms of the language. They have been found especially rich in the discourse markers typically used in speech and they show spoken French being used effectively in a wide variety of social situations.³²

The popularity of the Oxford *dictatores*’ teaching is indicated by the university’s decision to regulate it. In 1432, a statute was issued requiring students who had been “competently instructed only in grammar” and who were primarily engaged in learning “the art of writing, composing and speaking French, the drafting of charters and similar documents, the holding of lay courts, or how to plead in the English fashion” should henceforth be required to attend the university’s paying lectures in grammar and rhetoric. It seems there was some concern about the *dictatores* poaching the university’s students because the 1432 statute went on to declare that the teachers’ classes should not clash with the ordinary lectures in the arts faculty.³³ The publication of these rules makes Oxford the only medieval university known to have made official arrangements for the teaching of French. Nevertheless, the probability is high that instruction in business skills, including instruction in French, will also have been available elsewhere in medieval England at locations whose records have not yet been so thoroughly sifted.

30 T. A. R. Evans, “The Number, Origins and Careers of Scholars,” in *Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. I. Catto and Ralph Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 485–538, at 526, vol. 2 of *The History of the University of Oxford*, ed. T. H. Aston, 8 vols. (1984–2000).

31 See Rory G. Critten, “Practising French Conversation in Fifteenth-Century England,” *Modern Language Review* 110 (2015): 927–45; and Anne Curry, Adrian Bell, Adam Chapman, Andy King, and David Simpkin, “Languages in the Military Profession in Later Medieval England,” in *The Anglo-Norman Language and its Contexts*, ed. Ingham, 74–93.

32 See Andres Max Kristol, ““Que dea! Mettes le chapron, paillard, com tu parles a prodome!”: la représentation de l’oralité dans les *Manières de langage* du XIVE/XVe siècle,” *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 43 (1992): 35–64; and “Stratégies discursives dans le dialogue médiéval,” in *Philologia ancilla litteraturae: mélanges de philologie et de littérature françaises du Moyen Âge offerts au Professeur Gilles Eckard*, ed. Alain Corbelari, Yan Greub, and Marion Uhlig (Geneva: Droz, 2013), 127–47. The most recent work on the model dialogues attends to their sophisticated handling of oral registers. See Ashley Powers, “Pejorative Pedagogy: Structuring Social Hierarchies through Profane Language in the *Manière de langage* of 1396,” *Medium Aevum* 89 (2020): 78–92.

33 Adapted from the translation and paraphrase in Evans, “The Number, Origins and Careers,” 240–41. On the relationship between the university and the *dictatores*, see Martin Camargo, “If You Can’t Join Them, Beat Them; or, When Grammar Met Business Writing (in Fifteenth-Century Oxford),” in *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies*, ed. Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 67–87.

As recently as 1990 a new manuscript containing material associated with the Oxford *dictatores* was discovered in the city archives at Lincoln.³⁴

Teachers and Learners: Methods and Outcomes

The surviving teaching and reference materials give little explicit commentary on the methods of the teachers and learners of French who turned to them. Some aspects of their use can be inferred from their presentation in manuscript.³⁵ Rubrication and glossing highlight which parts of a manual might attract a reader's attention, for example. But even this evidence is not unequivocal: the significance of the glosses in the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* is difficult to discern (for details, see the headnote to LD.B.5). Other forms of manuscript evidence are variously suggestive. Some of the grammatical and lexicographic information in the *Liber* is presented schematically in MS Dd. 12. 23 and this layout helps us to see at a glance what language is being targeted. But the dialogues in both the *Liber* and *Commune parlance* are written out in continuous prose with no consistent system marking changes in speaker. Some words with which speeches begin, such as *ore* (now), *sir*, *hostiler* (innkeeper), and *dame* are sometimes rubricated, but then so are roman numerals and the capital letters that belong to the names of people, places, and titles.

Comparison with contemporary Latin instruction suggests that translation played an important part in medieval French teaching. Some of the surviving pedagogic materials are quite extensively glossed. The *Femina nova* has already been mentioned; to that text we might add a copy of the French *Somme le roi* in Oxford, Magdalen College MS 188 that is partly glossed in Latin and English. The Magdalen manuscript asks to be considered an instrument of French pedagogy because it opens with an anthology of teaching and reference texts, including the *Othographia gallica*. It may be that medieval French teachers used sample texts such as the trilingual *Somme* to point out to pupils the differences between, for example, the syntax of negation in French, English, and Latin. Such instruction may have been especially useful to learners since French syntax is otherwise the one area in the language curriculum not explicitly touched upon by the extant materials.³⁶

³⁴ See Andres Max Kristol, "Un Nouveau fragment de manière de langage: Lincoln, Linc. Arch. Off. Formulary 23," *Vox romanica* 49–50 (1990–91): 311–41.

³⁵ The manuscript presentation of the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* is addressed in greater detail in the Commentary and Notes. The significance of their compilation together in MS Dd. 12. 23 is discussed below.

³⁶ See Christel Nissille, "*Grammaire floue*," which has an edition of the trilingual *Somme*. See too Andres Max Kristol, "Comment on apprenait le français au Moyen Âge: ce qu'il nous reste à apprendre," *Acta Romanica Basiliensia* 8 (1998): 177–97; and "Le Ms. 188 de Magdalen College Oxford: une 'pierre de Rosette' de l'enseignement médiéval du français en Angleterre?" *Vox Romanica* 60 (2001): 149–67. Compare the trilingual text of *De Quatuordecim partibus beatitudinis* in Lichfield Cathedral MS 16, ed. Avril Henry and D. A. Trotter (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1994).

It is worth pointing out, however, that, as a group, the teaching and reference works also support more monolingual modes of instruction that will have been of special assistance to learners wishing to acquire spoken French.³⁷ For example, Johan Barton's *Donait françois* takes the form of a conversation or, perhaps, a drill. The text opens with the following repartee:

- Quantez letters est il?
- Vint.
- Quelles?
- Cinq voielx et quinze consonantez.
- Quelx sont les voielx et ou seront ils sonnés?
- Le premier vouyel est *a* et serra sonné en la poitrine, le seconde est *e* et serra sonné en la gorge, le tiers est *i* et serra sonné entre les joues, le quart est *o* et serra sonné au palat de la bouche, le quint est *u* et serra sonné entre les levres.
- How many letters are there?
- Twenty.
- Which?
- Five vowels and fifteen consonants.
- Which are the vowels and where are they to be sounded?
- The first vowel is *a*, which is to be sounded in the chest, the second is *e*, which is to be sounded in the throat, the third is *i*, which is to be sounded between the cheeks, the fourth is *o*, which is to be sounded on the palate of the mouth, the fifth is *u*, which is to be sounded between the lips.³⁸

Later in the text, the roles switch, and the students become the questioners.

Some sort of oral performance must also be anticipated where the sounds of French are at issue. The following lines from Bibbesworth's *Tretiz* seem designed to appeal to the children envisaged as the primary audience of the text, which promises to teach "le dreit ordre en parler e en respundre" (the correct manner of speaking and responding):

Vostre regarde est gracieuse
 Mes vostre eel est chaciouse.
 Des eus oustés la chacie
 E de nes le rupie.
 Meuz vaut la rubie par .b.
 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
 Qui taunt eut de la rubie.

³⁷ See Brian Merrilees, "Le Dialogue dans la méthodologie du français langue seconde au Moyen Âge," in *Le Dialogue*, ed. Pierre R. Léon and Paul Perron (Ottawa: Didier, 1985), 105–15; and Rory G. Critten, "French Didactics in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: Thinking Historically About Method," in *16th–18th Century Europe* (Oxford: Legenda, 2018), 32–51, vol. 1 of *The History of Language Learning and Teaching*, ed. Nicola McLelland and Richard Smith. Possible differences in learning patterns according to whether the target language is to be written or spoken would be a fruitful topic for further research.

³⁸ Cited from *Donnait françois*, ed. Colombat, 112. Translation mine.

Your gaze is gracious
 but your eye is bleary.
 You remove the rheum from your eyes
 and bogy [*le rupie*] from the nose.
 Rubies [*la rubie*] with a 'b' are worth more
 than is bogy [*le rupie*] with a 'p',
 For he who had a purse as full with rubies [*des rubies*]
 as the nose is with bogies [*des rupies*]
 would be most rich in precious stones
 having so many rubies [*la rubie*].³⁹

While the *Tretiz* might not originally have been written with the instruction of pragmatic French in mind, its integration into the *dictatores'* teaching materials suggests its adaptation for rote learning in that context. The boy whose questioning by a knight was cited above from the *Liber* goes on to demonstrate his knowledge of French by reciting a vocabulary list that is drawn in part from Bibbesworth's text (for details, see the notes to LD.B.10). This last citation should also alert us to a quality shared by many of the extant teaching and reference materials: they were meant to entertain as well as instruct. This is especially true of the model dialogues, in which comic French is deployed at once as a means of facilitating learning and as a type of the language that might itself be a target of instruction (as in e.g., CP.4.7 and CP.20).⁴⁰

The presentation of the model dialogues in unmarked, continuous prose in MS Dd. 12. 23 and elsewhere does not mean that they could not be acted out; our modern concept of what constitutes a "performance script" does not apply in the Middle Ages, where dramatic renditions will have been more reliant on memory and improvisation.⁴¹ The safest and most reasonable conclusion is that, like all good pedagogic materials, the medieval French teaching and reference works lent themselves to a variety of uses. Sometimes they might have been set as reading practice, with or without a translation component to the task; at others they might have been chanted or drilled, performed, or set as prompts for freer practice ("you've seen this; now produce something similar!"). In one of the few explicit statements offered by the manuals themselves on the topic of their use, the opening prayer in the *Commune parlance* addresses its readership as "toutz qui cesti livre regarderont ou enrememorunt" (all who will look in this book or commit it to memory). In the Middle Ages, memorization was conceptualized as a thoroughly dynamic process that included the redeployment of matter so learned in new contexts.⁴²

Other methods of teaching and learning will also have been pursued. Given the practical difficulties and expenses attending the provision of books, dictation must have been a pragmatic as well as a pedagogic measure. It seems likely that this practice added

³⁹ See *Tretiz*, ed. Rothwell, 1 and 3, ll. 43–52. Translation mine.

⁴⁰ See Emily Reed, "Incongruent Humour and Pragmatic Competence in the Late-Medieval *Manières de langage*," *Multilingua* 39 (2020): 239–67.

⁴¹ See Carol Symes, "The Medieval Archive and the History of Theatre: Assessing the Written and Unwritten Evidence for Premodern Performance," *Theatre Survey* 52 (2011): 29–58.

⁴² See *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, ed. Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

an extra impetus to the composition and copying of the French spelling treatises referenced above. Some instruction must have been entirely oral and have left little mark on the written record. This is especially likely in situations such as that imagined in Bibbesworth's *Tretiz*, or in the ninth dialogue of the *Liber*, where mothers take charge of their children's education—maternal intervention is one means by which girls as well as boys might have received the fundamentals of literacy in French as well as in Latin and English.⁴³ Finally, some learning will have taken place out of the direct purview of any teacher. In this last connection, it is salutary to recall the general observation of two historians of English language teaching that, before the nineteenth century, most learners of modern languages probably studied on their own.⁴⁴

Relying on the common-sensical given that good teachers are unlikely to set models that are far beyond the emulation of their students, we can deduce that medieval learners of French achieved impressive outcomes. The teaching and reference materials show French being used fluently and idiomatically in a wide range of spoken and written contexts. The realization that some non-noble English people possessed very good written and spoken French as late as the fifteenth century disrupts traditional language histories, which try to map the development of French and English onto the fortunes of France and England on the battlefields of the Hundred Years War. For when France is at its lowest ebb in the first half of the fifteenth century, desire for French amongst the English is not extinguished; instead, it reaches new heights. As Ardis Butterfield has pointed out, this development is thematized for users of the *Liber donati*, whose second dialogue contains a report of the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 that celebrates the English victory in French.⁴⁵

The challenging nature of the French teaching texts also speaks more broadly to the currency of French in late-medieval England. If there is not more extensive evidence for the instruction of syntax, it may be because the entry level of English learners of French was already quite high. It is certainly difficult to see much evidence of graded curricula amongst the surviving materials, which give the impression of being designed to polish existing skills rather than to introduce and practise new matter. Some rudimentary topics are treated; there are lists of the days of the week and numbers in LD.A.6 and LD.A.7, for example. But—as is outlined below—these lists are compiled alongside more challenging material with little to bridge the gap. While the basic lists may have responded

43 See Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “‘Invisible Archives?’ Later Medieval French in England,” *Speculum* 90 (2015): 653–73. On mothers' roles in the transmission Latin and English literacy, see too Michael Clanchy, *Looking Back from the Invention of Printing: Mothers and the Teaching of Reading in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018). Although the clientele of the *dictatores* is usually assumed to be made up of younger boys, Johan Barton addresses his *Donait françois* to “chiers enfantz et tres douceuz puselles, que avez fain d'apprendre” (dear boys and most sweet girls, who hunger to learn). See *Donait françois*, ed. Colombat, 110.

44 See A. P. R. Howatt with H. G. Widdowson, *A History of English Language Teaching*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

45 See Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 308–49.

to the needs of some learners, it seems that, for the majority, their existence met a desire for reference materials that might be consulted selectively in order to fill particular lacunae or as a jog to the memory.

The *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance*: Topics and Texts

The *Liber donati* falls into two broad sections. Part A, giving information on grammar, pronunciation, and lexis, breaks down into seven subsections:

- A.1. Personal and demonstrative pronouns and adjectives
- A.2. Pronunciation, spelling, and morphological notes
- A.3. Conjugated verbs with pronunciation, spelling, and morphological notes
- A.4. French infinitives with Latin equivalents
- A.5. Adverbs, prepositions, and other parts of speech with French equivalents
- A.6. Days of the week and feast days
- A.7. Cardinal and ordinal numbers

Part A of the *Liber* gives a richly detailed account of the kind of French that learners in fifteenth-century England might have wanted to acquire.⁴⁶ Where it models possible forms of the personal and demonstrative pronouns and adjectives, it shows the continuing validity of older French forms amongst the English even as it speaks to the variance characteristic of Middle French morphology in general (A.1). Its notes on the relationship between spelling and pronunciation suggest that guidance on this tricky topic was felt to be necessary among the English but the instructions offered stop short of excluding particular Anglo-French forms (A.2 and A.3). The model conjugations add to the picture developing in recent scholarship of the variety characterizing the morphology and syntax of the Middle French verb; the French frame in which the conjugations are couched is also valuable because it shows the development in England of a suite of grammatical terms in French that continental Frenches lacked (A.3). Finally, the word lists in Part A show a desire to collect and understand the specialized Anglo-French lexis of the law and finance (A.4) and to produce syntactically complex and nuanced phrases (A.5). For the reasons mentioned above and outlined below, the lists of the days of the week and feast days (A.6) and cardinal and ordinal numbers (A.7) are best viewed as memory aides.

Part B of the *Liber* gives a series of interconnected dialogues, which Merrilees and Sitarz-Fitzpatrick edit as one long text. In order to highlight elements of interest, the French text prepared for this volume presents the conversation in ten subsections:

- B.1. Salutations
- B.2. News from France
- B.3. En route to London

46 The information and arguments summarized in this paragraph are more fully developed in Commentary and Notes, below, 118-29.

- B.4. Securing lodging at an inn; provisions for horses
- B.5. A conversation with the lady of the house
- B.6. Further provisions for horses
- B.7. Paying the bill
- B.8. The market at Winchester
- B.9. A mother's request for help
- B.10. A would-be apprentice's French

These exchanges model the French needed to greet others, to take one's leave politely, and to extend invitations to food and drink (B.1); to share news from abroad (B.2); to ask the way (B.3); and to organize lodging for men and horses at an inn (B.4 to B.7). The final dialogues describe a market scene (B.8) and give the conversation cited above in which a mother attempts to secure a sponsor for her son (B.9). When the son must demonstrate his fitness for this support, he recites a series of vocabulary lists giving the French names for parts of the body, items of clothing, the social ranks of men and women, household objects, and weapons and armour (B.10).

Many of the basic language functions modelled in Part B of the *Liber* will be familiar to twenty-first-century language learners. The dialogues do not appear to be intended for beginners, however. Some of them are more complex by design. For example, the Agincourt report in B.2, mentioned above, mobilizes all the narrative tenses as well as the specialized language of warfare. But even the shorter dialogues in the *Liber* are often longer than they would need to be if their aims were limited to the functions listed above. For example, the conversation in B.3 in which two travellers agree to journey together has a comic digression on the woes of one speaker's long-suffering horse. The conversation in B.4 in which lodgings are secured is also extensive. Before that transaction is settled, one of the travellers recounts their pursuit by thieves on their way.

Another feature of the dialogues suggesting that they served learners who already had some French is the vocabulary that they model. This is often quite specialized, notwithstanding the differences between what might be considered everyday French now and in the Middle Ages. The focus on the vocabulary of horse husbandry is noteworthy (see *Liber*, B.4 and B.6); there are also long lists of specific words for cloth (B.8) and the parts of the body (B.10). These lists echo the glossaries of words compiled for the purposes of Latin instruction, which are often accompanied by French translations.⁴⁷ At the same time, they provide useful information about the kinds of situations in which individual users of the *Liber* might have expected to use their French. It is also apparent

47 For a survey, see Dean with Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, items 301–16. For an edited sample, see Tony Hunt, "The Anglo-Norman Vocabularies in MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 88," *Medium Aevum* 49 (1980): 5–24. One of the most popular Latin glossaries was Alexander Neckam's *De nominibus utensilium* of ca. 1180, on which see Rita Copeland, "Naming, Knowing, and the Object of Language in Alexander Neckam's Grammar Curriculum," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 20 (2010): 38–57.

that users of the manual were expected to want the *mot juste*. The *Liber* gives the sense that it will not be enough to get by with a few well-chosen words and phrases.

Parts A and B of the *Liber* circulated independently.⁴⁸ Part A is transmitted without Part B in a manuscript dating to the end of the fourteenth century: CUL MS Gg. 6. 44.⁴⁹ Subsections of Part A were also copied without the dialogues in CUL MS Ee. 2. 20; London, BL MS Harley 4971; and Oxford, Magdalen College MS 188.⁵⁰ Part B survives without Part A in one fifteenth-century manuscript: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS lat. misc. e. 93.⁵¹ Some subsections of Part A and Part B appear together in two fifteenth-century manuscripts: London, BL MS Additional 17716; and Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 14. 40.⁵² But MS Dd. 12. 23 gives the fullest text of this collocation, as is shown in the table below:

Manuscripts Containing Parts Combined in *Liber donati*

Manuscript	<i>Liber donati</i> , Part A							<i>Liber donati</i> , Part B
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	dialogues 1–10
MS Gg. 6. 44	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	
MS Ee. 2. 20					×	×	×	
MS Harley 4971						×	×	
Magdalen College MS 188						×	×	
MS lat. misc. e. 93								×
MS Additional 17716	×		×			×	×	×
Trinity College MS B. 14. 40	×					×	×	×
MS Dd. 12. 23	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×

When the scribe of the *Liber donati* in MS Dd. 12. 23 entitles the work retrospectively in an explicit (fol. 13r), he indicates that he conceives of his collocation of materials as a single work and provides evidence of one way in which the disparate teaching and reference materials might be used in combination. While the title *Donatus* had initially been reserved for the introductory Latin textbook attributed to the fourth-century grammar-

⁴⁸ This paragraph draws on *Liber donati*, ed. Merrilees and Sitarz-Fitzpatrick, 3–4.

⁴⁹ Described in J. H. Baker with J. S. Ringrose, *Catalogue of English Legal Manuscripts in Cambridge University Library* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996).

⁵⁰ MS Ee. 2. 20 is described in Baker with Ringrose, *Catalogue*; MS Harley 4971 is described at <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/>>; Magdalen College MS 188 is described in Nissille, *Grammaire floue*, 96–133.

⁵¹ Described at <<https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>>.

⁵² MS Additional 17716 is described at <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/>>. Trinity College MS B. 14. 40 is described at <<https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/>> (a digital facsimile of the Trinity manuscript can be viewed at this address).

ian Aelius Donatus, in the later Middle Ages, the name was applied to a wider range of language manuals.⁵³

The *Liber donati* enriches our sense of the abilities of the learners to whom Parts A and B of the work might be directed. It is helpful to be able to observe, for example, that the sometimes quite rudimentary materials presented in Part A of the *Liber* could be meant for the same learners to whom the complex and idiomatic dialogues in Part B were directed. Only the foolhardiest teacher or scribe would present an audience entirely incognizant of the linguistic information transmitted in Part A of the *Liber* with the conversations developed in its Part B. This suggests that the declensions, conjugations, and vocabulary lists in Part A of the *Liber* have been collected not for learning from scratch but to serve as references for generally competent users of French. The Latin apparatus of Part A can also be best understood by this reasoning. The *Liber* shows French recorded according to the prevailing academic conventions for language description. It does not prove that the *dictatores* taught French via the medium of Latin, as has been argued.⁵⁴ If the *Liber* were being used in a classroom situation, it would be quite possible for the teacher to translate the explanatory Latin *ex tempore* either into English or French. The Latin that provides the matrix for Part A maps easily onto the syntax of both modern languages.⁵⁵

The dialogues in the *Commune parlance* practise some of the functions modelled in Part B of the *Liber* and introduce new topics. The emphasis on the forms of salutation found in the *Liber* is also a feature of the conversations compiled in the *Commune parlance* (CP.10, CP.19). Other basic tasks are also practised, such as asking the way and the time (CP.4.3, CP.15, CP.18) and securing lodgings (CP.16). The inclusion of embedded word lists again indicates a desire for specialized vocabulary; here learners can find catalogues of French terms for the parts of the body (CP.2), household furnishings (CP.3), meat and poultry (CP.4.2), fish (CP.4.6), and livestock (CP.20: this list also includes some more fantastic animals). Professional occupations that medieval English learners of French might hope to take up are profiled. One conversation has learners visit a scrivener (CP.17); others feature apprentices or servants in situations that are often quite specific. One servant must excuse himself from work on the grounds of an injury (CP.6); an apprentice must defend himself against the accusation that he has risen late because he spent the night whoring (CP.7); another speaker who seems to be an apprentice finds a new master and negotiates his pay (CP.22). The language of the marketplace also features repeatedly (CP.4.6, CP.7, CP.14).

As in the *Liber*, the conversations in the *Commune parlance* model much more than the French needed simply to get by in the transactional situations that they treat. The most obvious examples of this tendency are the song and tale included as part of the long dialogue giving road-trip French (CP.4.4, CP.4.7) but even the briefest conversa-

53 See AND s.v. *donait* and DMF s.v. *donatus*.

54 See Christopher Cannon, "Vernacular Latin," *Speculum* 90 (2015): 641–53.

55 See further Rothwell, "The Teaching and Learning of French in Later Medieval England." On the languages of instruction deployed in medieval French teaching, see too the headnotes to LD.A.1 and LD.A.5 in the Commentary and Notes, below.

tions do more than just teach useful phrases. Decorum is frequently a matter of implied concern. For example, a trip to the workshop of a dubber, or renovator of old clothes, reminds learners of the importance of looking the part (CP.8). Elsewhere, as in the dialogue giving rise to the Agincourt report in LD.B.2, curiosity, rather than necessity, is a motivation for two conversations asking after matters on the continent (CP.10, CP.21). Several other dialogues are likewise only tangentially related to the professional and commercial purposes that more clearly dominate the conversations in the *Liber*. Some of these exchanges in the *Commune parlance* deal with potentially awkward situations, giving the French needed to comfort a crying child (CP.11) or turn away a beggar (CP.12), for example. Others put men of equal rank in more or less comfortable conversation with each other: a ditch-digger and a gardener compare their wages (CP.5); two stable hands abscond from work (CP.9); and two companions bicker about their bedtime arrangements at an inn (CP.13, CP.23).

As a group, the dialogues in the *Liber* and *Commune parlance* offer fresh insights into late-medieval social history, showing, for example, how arrangements were made to feed guests at an inn and how, and when, payments for lodgings might be collected (LD.B.5 and LD.B.7). They are especially interesting for the international connections that they trace, not only to France but also to Italy. The song and the tale told in the *Commune parlance* have Italian connections, as does the Parisian with whom a speaker falls into conversation (CP.21). A little Italian even makes its way into the model dialogues themselves (CP.10). The dialogic form of the model conversations means that learners might imagine the rich, connected world that they describe belonging to them. Consideration of the alternative phrases offered in the manuals confirms that their users were expected to practise both parts of the exchanges, which gave them the French to be lords and masters as well as servants and apprentices (see, e.g., CP.7 and CP.18).

The model dialogues are also a rich source for language history. They illuminate the pragmatics of medieval French where they demonstrate the alternating use of the two forms of the second person pronoun, *tu* and *vous*, in moments of tension or intimacy (see Commentary and Notes, n. 167, for details). They also demonstrate the pride that the medieval English could take in their French: the scribe of the *Commune parlance* ends his copying with the assertion that there is “nulle meliour en tout le France” (none, i.e., no language better in all of France) (discussed in n. 133). At the same time, the model conversations show French undergoing English influence (for discussion of examples, see, e.g., n. 87 and n. 137) and they show influence working in the other direction, where apparent anglicisms can be demonstrated to have French roots (see, e.g., n. 159). Especially interesting are moments where the ostensibly French lexis of the model conversations straddles the historical dictionaries (see, e.g., n. 89 and n. 102). That a twenty-first-century translator of these dialogues must look across the *Middle English Dictionary*, the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, and the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* demonstrates the more porous nature of the boundaries between medieval English and French as well as the continuing vitality of French in England, where the language kept on acquiring new words well into the fifteenth century.

The dialogues collected in the *Commune parlance* circulate in five manuscripts falling into two groups.⁵⁶ The version contained in MS Dd. 12. 23 is one of three copies belonging to Kristol's group B; the other two are in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale MS Nouv. acq. lat. 699 and London, BL MS Additional 17716.⁵⁷ Texts in this group share additions, substitutions, or omissions from the version of the dialogues preserved in Kristol's group A, which survives in Oxford, All Souls College MS 182 and London, BL MS Harley 3988.⁵⁸ Most significantly, the two A group copies conclude with a letter addressed to a patron from the author of the work, who signs his name Kirvynghon.⁵⁹ Kristol argues that the A texts represent an earlier version of the manual destined for a particular user, whereas the B texts adapt the work for a broader public.⁶⁰ As was the case with the *Liber donati*, the name that the scribe of the *Commune parlance* gives to his work in MS Dd. 12. 23 is significant insofar as it indicates the broad applicability of the French modelled (see AND s.vv. *commun* and *parlance*). The title may have had special currency amongst teachers and learners of French. In LD.B.10, the young boy who must display his language skills refers to his French both as a *commun langage* and a *maner de parlance*.

One final point might be made about the locations given for the model dialogues in the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance*. The *Commune parlance* places its conversations in a Parisian orbit: this is the destination of a lord who sets out for the city with his valet (CP.4), of an apprentice sent to market with his master's wares (CP.7), and of a pilgrimage suggested to an ill man (CP.20). It is also the hometown of a traveller met on the road (CP.21). Not all the manuscript copies of these dialogues share this continental focus (for details, see the Commentary and Notes). But in the *Commune parlance*, where speakers are securely located, they are situated on the continent.

By contrast, the dialogues in the *Liber donati* are set in England: here French is being imagined in use at home. It may be that the English setting of this dialogue reflects its author's unfamiliarity with the continent. Another possibility is that the conversations in Part B of the *Liber* modelled the sort of exchanges that English learners imagined having with French-speaking visitors to their own country. The dialogue form allows users to practice both sides of the conversations modelled, not only asking for but also giving directions (LD.B.3), renting out a room as well as trying to secure one (LD.B.4), offering dinner as well as ordering it (LD.B.5), and so forth. This last example, showing the ordering of food, is especially tantalizing because it features a conversation between an

56 This paragraph draws on *Manières*, ed. Kristol, xx–xxv (see esp. the table on xxiii).

57 For a digital facsimile of MS Nouv. acq. lat. 699, see <www.gallica.bnf.fr>. On MS Additional 17716, which also contains a partial copy of the *Liber donati*, see n. 52, above.

58 MS All Souls 182 is described in Andrew G. Watson, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts of All Souls College Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); the fullest published description of MS Harley 3988 is in G. Eyre and A. Strahan, *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: 1808–12).

59 See *La Manière de langage qui enseigne à bien parler et écrire le français*, ed. Jean Gessler (Paris: Droz, 1934), 87–88. MS Harley 3988 provides the base text for Gessler's edition. For extracts from this manuscript, see too *Manières*, ed. Kristol, 37–45.

60 See *Manières*, ed. Kristol, xxi–xxii.

innkeeper's wife and a traveller. While most of the protagonists in the model dialogues are men, the implication in this instance is that English women also needed to be able to speak French with incomers.

The textual history of the dialogues in Part B of the *Liber* is suggestive of an interest in their English location. Of the four manuscripts transmitting these conversations, two situate their action in and around Oxford and two are situated in the vicinity of London; a geographical inconsistency in the London group, to which Part B of the *Liber* belongs, suggests that these conversations adapt a copy of the Oxonian version (for details, see the notes to LD.B.3, LD.B.4, and LD.B.8). An interest in London is also in evidence elsewhere amongst the materials compiled in MS Dd. 12. 23. The next section of this Introduction considers what the other contents of the book can tell us about the profiles of the users of the *Liber* and *Commune parlance* and their particular interest in the medieval capital.

The *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance*: Manuscript Context

The most recent description of MS Dd. 12. 23 by James Freeman and the online facsimile of the book allow for the itemization of its contents as follows:

1. *Liber donati* (fols. 1r–13r)
2. Miscellaneous legal notes (fols. 13v–14v)
3. *Old Tenures* (fols. 15r–24v)
4. *Curia baronis* (fols. 25r–48v)
5. Miscellaneous calculations and astrological notes (fols. 49r–53r)
6. Treatise on law and procedure at the London Guildhall (fols. 53v–65v)
7. Account of miracles prompting the Magi to travel to Bethlehem (fol. 65v)
8. Statute of apprentices (fols. 66r–67r)
9. Wordplay on 'count' (fol. 67r)
10. *Commune parlance* (fols. 67v–87r)
11. A form of a bond by Guy Wikam of Wicheford (fols. 87v–88r)⁶¹

There are frequent changes in hand throughout the manuscript, which falls into four codicological units giving items 1–2, 3, 4, and 5–11. These units appear to have been compiled deliberately because the main texts that they contain have in common a connection to the Oxford school of William Kingsmill. Kingsmill's name is given in the *Liber donati*, as we saw above; a character by the name "Guilliam" (a French form of "William") also features in the conversations compiled in the *Commune parlance* (for details, see the headnote to LD.B.7). To these instances of self-citation, we can add moments where a "W. K." is brought in as one of the parties in the model legal forms compiled in *Curia baronis*. The inclusion of *Curia baronis* in MS Dd. 12. 23 further strengthens this manu-

⁶¹ For the facsimile and for Freeman's description, which updates the entry in Baker with Ringrose, *Catalogue*, see <<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-DD-00012-00023>>.

script's connection to Kingsmill because it is also included in another manuscript associated with the *dictator*, CUL MS Gg. 6. 44, which transmits the grammatical portion of the *Liber donati*. MS Dd. 12. 23 might reflect the desire of a learner to have a record of Kingsmill's teaching, perhaps because he had visited Kingsmill's classes. Alternatively, the book might have been put together by Kingsmill himself for use with his students. Although some of its texts were probably composed earlier, MS Dd. 12. 23 can be dated to the mid-fifteenth century because the year 1447 is given at the end of the list of cardinal and ordinal numbers with which Part A of the *Liber donati* concludes (fol. 7r).

The location of the *Liber's* dialogues in and around London indicates that this is one of the destinations that learners using Kingsmill's materials in Oxford or elsewhere might have had in mind. The treatise on law and procedure at the London Guildhall included in MS Dd. 12. 23 (fols. 54v–65v) confirms the London orientation of the book and the other texts that it compiles give a sense of what learners of French hoped to do there.

The inclusion of a copy of the Statute of Apprentices of 1405 in MS Dd. 12. 23 (fols. 66r–67r) is a further indication that the book was designed to serve learners who, like the twelve-year-old boy in the *Liber's* ninth dialogue, hoped to enter an apprenticeship in the capital. The 1405 statute attempts to limit the number of children apprenticed: the countryside is said to be emptying of labourers, leading to complaints from the gentry. It is stated that only parents having land or rents to the value of twelve shillings a year might apprentice their children, but the potential effectiveness of the legislation is open to doubt because the statute begins with an expression of frustration that similar legislation promulgated by Edward III and Richard II has failed to secure the desired outcome. The text also includes the key concession “que chescun homme ou femme de quel estat ou condicioun qu'il soit soit fraunk de mettre son fitz ou file d'aprendre lecture a quelconqz escole que lour pleist” (fol. 66v: that every man and woman of whatever estate they may be is free to put their son or daughter to learn *lecture*, i.e., basic literacy, in whatever school they wish).⁶² The text of the Statute of Apprentices in MS Dd. 12. 23 makes clear the official stance on training and employing apprentices. At the same time, it suggests the popularity of this career choice and the attractiveness of schools like those of the *dictatores* that showed learners how to find masters to train with.

As was noted above, where the *Commune parlance* locates its conversations, it situates them abroad; CP.7 giving a conversation between a master draper and his apprentice is clearly situated on the outskirts of Paris. Some users of the manual may have hoped to be apprenticed on the continent. The idea that a fifteenth-century apprentice might require French in London is not so far-fetched, however. The city was constantly inundated with foreign visitors who came to England for the purposes of diplomacy and business; its merchants cultivated links with the Low Countries, France, Italy, and, further afield, with Bavaria, the Baltic ports, and Constantinople.⁶³ Some of the traders

⁶² In citations from MS Dd. 12. 23, abbreviations are silently expanded. For a printed transcription of the Statute taken from the Statute Roll, see *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 2, 1377 to 1509, ed. T. E. Tomlins and W. E. Taunton (London, 1816).

⁶³ See Caroline M. Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200–1500*

coming from these regions will have spoken French at home; for others, French will have been a useful intermediary language.⁶⁴

Like the innkeeper and his wife, whom we meet in Part B of the *Liber donati*, English apprentices might also have found themselves needing French to interact with incoming travellers. CP.6 is suggestive of this eventuality where it situates its interaction between a master baker and his servant in a more vaguely identified international milieu. It is also worth pointing out that the versions of CP.7 compiled in London, BL MS Harley 3998 and Oxford, All Souls College MS 182 are less specific about where this exchange takes place, locating its apprentice *a l'overdure*, i.e., “in the shop,” or in the “open space (where the market was held)” (discussed in Commentary and Notes, n. 195). The interest in cloth and clothing that unites the *Liber donati* and the *Commune parlance* suggests that users of the book may have had a special eye on these trades (see LD.B.8, LD.B.10, and CP.3).

Another route that Kingsmill's students might have taken is indicated by the legal texts compiled alongside the French teaching and reference works in MS Dd. 12. 23. This collocation of materials confirms the Oxford University statute of 1432 cited above according to which the syllabi of the *dictatores* included the holding of lay courts and instructions for pleading in the English fashion. The *Old Tenures* (fols. 15r–24v) cover elementary property law, listing the commitments and complications that come with holding land according to various contracts, for example *par service de chiualer*, *par graunt seriantie*, or *en burgage* (fol. 15r–v: by knight-service; by grand serjanty, i.e., by rendering personal service to the king; or by burgage, i.e., in towns, by paying rent for the use of land held by the Crown).⁶⁵ The *Curia baronis* (fols. 25r–48v) broadens the scope of this basic legal education, giving the French and Latin forms used in *courtz de barons*, that is, in small claims courts where “plees pouront estre moenez cestassauoir de petitz trespassez quels ne sont mye encountre la pees nostre seigneur le Roy dont les dimagez n'ateignent mye a xl shillings” (fol. 25r: pleas can be brought, that is to say regarding small trespasses that do not break the peace of our lord the king and for which the damages do not exceed forty shillings).⁶⁶

One possibility is that Kingsmill's Oxford school prepared some of its learners for the more rigorous study of law at London's Inns of Court.⁶⁷ The man who signs himself “Mershfeld” at the end of the copy of the *Curia baronis* in MS Dd. 12. 23 (fol. 48v) may

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 84–117; and David Nicholas, *The Later Medieval City, 1300–1500* (London: Longman, 1997), 92–101.

64 See William Rothwell, “Sugar and Spice and All Things Nice: From Oriental Bazar to English Cloister in Anglo-French,” *Modern Language Review* 94 (1999): 647–59.

65 See AND s.vv. *sergantie*, *burgage*.

66 See Maureen Mulholland, “Trials in Manorial Courts in Late Medieval England,” in *Judicial tribunals in England and Europe, 1200–1700*, ed. Maureen Mulholland and Brian Pullan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 81–101. The version of *Curia baronis* in MS Dd. 12. 23 differs from that given in *The Court Baron*, ed. Frederic William Maitland and William Paley Baildon (London: Quaritch, 1891), 18–67.

67 See John H. Baker, “Oral Instruction in Land Law and Conveyancing, 1250–1500,” in *Learning the Law: Teaching and the Transmission of Law in England, 1150–1900*, ed. Jonathan A. Bush and Alain Wijffels (London: Hambledon, 1999), 157–73.

have pursued this trajectory. Later additions to the book demonstrate its continuing use in a legal milieu. These include notes on the use of common land (fols. 13v, 14v) and a form of a bond (fols. 184v–185r). That prospective students of the law should have needed French is not surprising insofar as French had been the traditional language of oral pleading in court at least since the turn of the fourteenth century; well into the fifteenth century, French was also used to write legal complaints, record trials, and draft and record legislation.⁶⁸ Even after a government statute of 1362 required the use of English in oral court proceedings, trials would still be recorded in French or Latin (that the 1362 statute was itself recorded in French neatly demonstrates the tenacity of the written language in legal and governmental contexts). While more of the debating might have taken place in English, it seems that the initial statement of a case—the “count”—continued to be delivered orally in French: so integral had French terms of law become to English courtroom procedure.⁶⁹

If they did not go on to train at the Inns, the students of the *dictatores* could still have pursued employment in the capital as specialized legal clerks. Kingsmill himself seems to have had experience of this kind of work. A. B. Emden assembles references to documents showing that, before coming to Oxford ca. 1420, the *dictator* had lived and worked as a scrivener in London.⁷⁰ Nigel Ramsey adds the information that Kingsmill was under-marshal of the King’s Bench there, until dismissed. Ramsey also gives a useful account of the overlap between the careers of men called scriveners, notaries, and attorneys in the late-medieval capital. The rapidly expanding market for legal documents in London left room for copyists to participate more actively in the making as well as the reproduction of royal petitions in particular.⁷¹ Since these petitions mirrored the formal oral proceedings of English courtrooms, they continued to be framed in French until the middle of the fifteenth century.⁷²

For historians of the law, the statute of 1362 marks the moment when legal French begins to become a more restricted code: when French is no longer used in extra-procedural speech, it starts to be reduced to the set of keywords and formulae now known as Law French.⁷³ An interest in this specialist language is indicated by the list of verbs compiled in LD.A.4, which matches Anglo-French legal and financial terms with their Latin

68 See J. H. Baker, “The Three Languages of the Common Law,” *McGill Law Journal* 43 (1998): 5–24; and Paul Brand, “The Languages of the Law in Later Medieval England,” in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval England*, ed. Trotter, 63–76.

69 See W. M. Ormrod, “The Use of English: Language, Law, and Political Culture in Fourteenth-Century England,” *Speculum* 78 (2003): 750–87.

70 See the entry for “Kyngesmyll, William” in A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A. D. 1500*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957–74).

71 See Nigel Ramsey, “Scriveners and Notaries as Legal Intermediaries in Later Medieval England,” in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Jennifer Kermode (Stroud: Sutton, 1991), 118–31.

72 See W. Mark Ormrod, “The Language of Complaint: Multilingualism and Petitioning in Later Medieval England,” in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain*, ed. Wogan-Browne et al., 31–43.

73 See J. H. Baker, *Manual of Law French*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Scolar, 1990).

equivalents. Sebastian Sobecki has shown that lexis of this sort will sometimes have been viewed by its English wielders less as French than as an expert register belonging within a more capaciously conceived Middle English.⁷⁴ The inclusion of this vocabulary amongst the French teaching and reference materials suggests that on other occasions the French connections of these words might be more starkly felt. For the users of MS Dd. 12. 23, who were instructed at once in basic legal forms and in the living, spoken French of the model dialogues, legal French can have been neither an entirely dead nor an entirely naturalized language.⁷⁵

Early Modern Developments

MS Dd. 12. 23 is one of the latest witnesses to the teaching of the Oxford *dictatores*. Their popularity wanes in parallel with the uptake of English in legal writing and the increasing complexity of the aspects of the law in which they offered instruction.⁷⁶ The earliest printed French teaching and reference materials were narrower in their scope. The dialogues printed by William Caxton at Westminster in 1480 (STC 24865), for example, are directed primarily to those whose interests lie in trade, who desire to “entreprise or take on honde / marchandise fro one land to anothir” (fol. 2r).⁷⁷

England remained vibrantly multilingual, and the availability of teaching in modern languages increased in the early modern period, when Dutch, Italian, and Spanish began to be instructed alongside French.⁷⁸ By the time that fuller manuals of French started to be produced again in the sixteenth century, however, many of the pragmatic reasons that had motivated medieval people to learn French no longer pertained. John Palsgrave’s monumental *Esclaircissement de la langue francoyse* (London, 1530; STC 19166) maintained the English lead on continental French attempts to describe French scientifically but its focus fell more narrowly on written French. In his *Introductorye for to lerne to rede to pronounce and to speke Frenche trewly* (London, 1533; STC 7377), Giles du Wes preferred to match a much shorter exposition of French grammar with model dialogues. But these exchanges modelled discussion of such highfaluting topics as the nature of the soul and the mysteries of the mass. Du Wes’s conversations are a world away from the more practically minded medieval dialogues in the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance*.

⁷⁴ See Sebastian Sobecki, *Unwritten Verities: The Making of England’s Vernacular Legal Culture, 1463–1549* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 43–69.

⁷⁵ Recent research stresses the supraregional appeal of French in written legal contexts. See Ada Kuskowski, “Lingua Franca Legalis? A French Vernacular Legal Culture from England to the Levant,” *Reading Medieval Studies* 40 (2014): 140–58.

⁷⁶ Various explanations for the cessation in the *dictatores’* activities have been offered. Compare Baker, “Oral Instruction in Land Law,” 172–73; Camargo, “If You Can’t Join Them,” 76–79; and Richardson, “Letters of the Oxford *Dictatores*,” 342–43.

⁷⁷ Cited from *Vocabulary in French and English: A Facsimile Edition of Caxton’s Edition c.1480*, intro. J. C. T. Oates and L. C. Harmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

⁷⁸ See John Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

The cultivation of French in England probably always entailed a degree of social aspiration; already in the 1320s, Ranulph Higden had complained of “vplondisshe men,” i.e., rustics, who busied themselves trying to speak French in emulation of gentlemen “for to be more i-tolde of.”⁷⁹ In the sixteenth century, this motivation began to predominate. In their prologues, Palsgrave and du Wes advertised their employment as tutors to the highest nobility and royalty: both men were employed by Henry VIII to teach his daughter, Mary.⁸⁰ With these developments in prospect, the *Liber donati* and *Commune parlance* remind us of a time when access to French instruction was less an attribute of class than an expected component of a foundational education.

79 Cited from the later fourteenth-century translation by John Trevisa reproduced in Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 144.

80 On the teachers’ differing approaches to this task, see Deanne Williams, “Mary Tudor’s French Tutors: Renaissance Dictionaries and the Language of Love,” *Dictionaries* 21 (2000): 37–50.