

Book Reviews

Violin-Wigent Anne, Miller Jessica & Grim Frédérique, *Sons et sens: la prononciation du français en contexte*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013, xviii + 368 pp., 978 1 58901 971 3 (paperback)
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Obviously sounds and sense usually go together, and pronunciation *out* of context may require some guesswork: is *couvent* a noun or a verb, is *files* the plural of *fil* or of *file*? A plausible explanation for the book's title is therefore that, apart from foreshadowing an introduction to the teaching of French phonetics and phonology, the latter being the study of how sounds make sense, it gives teachers the chance to point out how *sons* and *sens* are pronounced differently. The sub-title hints at the use of a 'communicative' methodology to do this: students are invited to study pronunciation by talking about it, as well as by talking about other topics, an approach different from the older way of teaching the subject, which rarely contextualises, or puts in a wider frame, what is being learned. Some older lecturers, used to rummaging in one of Passy's textbooks every year in search of an examination passage, or requiring their students to engage in the less than engaging task of transcribing from the IPA one of the old chestnuts like 'Trois grands médecins', or even the story of what Diogenes said to Alexander on that famous occasion, may argue that the tools they use do introduce students to some aspects of the Francophone world, given that words inevitably refer to things. However, the idea behind the book under review is to integrate in a thoroughgoing way the study of French pronunciation and of all things French, or at least a lot of them.

The panoptic slant used by the authors in the fifteen thematic chapters of this book can be hinted at by listing a sample of some of the topics covered: the French education system, cooking, comic strips, Canada, Christmas and other holidays, slang and informal language, accents (regional and social) and dress. *Verlan* is included as well, clearly a good idea given the continuing currency and indeed productivity of this area of lexis in informal French, as well of course as the insights it affords into French syllable structure. There are even examples of *verlan* on the book's jazzy attractive front cover. As the authors state in their preface, each chapter has a theme which is associated with practice in one area of pronunciation – except presumably the first, which introduces the parts of the vocal tract and has pronunciation exercises that feature French place names. The title of this chapter is 'La géographie de la France et du corps humain', which exemplifies the book's relentlessly jolly style and illustrates the fusion

of phonetics and French themes already alluded to. Sometimes the association between subject and phonetic topic seems tenuous, or at least escaped this reader; for example, the chapter called ‘Vos profs de fac sont-ils BCBG ou bobo?’, which is about acronyms and abbreviations in general, focuses on how French consonants are pronounced.

The book gives an up-to-date account of French phonology with respect to nasal vowels (only three of them are used in transcriptions), mid-vowels and liaison (sensibly, not much optional liaison is recommended). Intonation and stress are also covered, and *enchaînement* is shown in the phonetic transcriptions, as are consonantal assimilations. All of these topics are given a lucid treatment. Examples of language that are *français familier* are clearly flagged.

This is a lively and accessible textbook, using a wide variety of exercises, and the inclusion of audio-visual materials gives the teacher the option of using listening comprehension and dictation; the latter is rather unfashionable these days, but good performance in dictation is seemingly the most reliable indicator of competence in the language. This seems plausible given the grammatical function of much French spelling. The authors claim that the book is unique in its structure, and certainly no comparable volume comes readily to mind. It will complement, or be complemented by, Penny Sewell’s wholly audio-visual *La prononciation française pour de vrai* (see my review in *French Studies* 65:1, 2011, p. 135). The book’s jolliness, referred to above, may well endear it to advanced school pupils and first-year undergraduates; beyond this level, at least in the UK, I would guess that students might feel that, like their teddy-bear, the text is a little too close to the early years for comfort. But the book deserves to do well in its niche.

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Wissner Inka, *La Vendée dans l’écriture littéraire: analyse du vocabulaire régional chez Yves Viollier*. (Bibliothèque de linguistique romane, X.) Strasbourg: Éditions de linguistique et de philologie, 2013, x + 409 pp., 979 1 0914 6008 8 (relié)
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L’intérêt pour les mots régionaux dans la littérature d’expression française continue depuis une trentaine d’années à inspirer plusieurs travaux. L’ouvrage que voici, tiré d’une thèse de doctorat soumise aux universités de Bonn et de Paris IV, fait l’analyse de mots régionaux dans l’œuvre d’Yves Viollier, écrivain vendéen publié au cours des XX^e et XXI^e siècles dont certains romans ont par ailleurs servi à la compilation d’autres ressources telles que Rézeau (2009) et, huit ans plus tôt, le *Dictionnaire des régionalismes de France* (Rézeau 2001). L’analyse, présentée sous forme d’articles lexicographiques, emprunte certains acquis de la lexicographie différentielle (exemplifiée entre autres par le DRE, le *Dictionnaire historique du français québécois* et le *Dictionnaire de la Suisse romande*), notamment la réalisation d’enquêtes de vitalité et la prise en compte du discours