

Jean de Drosay. *Éléments de la grammaire quadrilingue, 1544–1554.*

Ed. Alberte Jacquetin-Gaudet. Textes de la Renaissance 185; Traités sur la langue française 17. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013. 424 pp. €39. ISBN: 978-2-8124-1144-1.

In 1544, the French jurist Jean de Drosay (Ioannes Drosaeus) published *Elements of a Quadrilingual Grammar* (*Grammaticae quadrilinguis partições*), an introduction to Latin, French, Greek, and Hebrew aimed at an audience of younger students. The book (reprinted in 1554) is interesting in many respects. The idea of combining four languages in one manual breathes the spirit of the Reformation. Yet rather than being a pioneering or particularly novel grammar, Drosay's work offers an enlightening snapshot of mid-sixteenth-century grammaticography. So, for instance, we see that Drosay devoted hardly twelve pages to Hebrew, the study of which was still in its infancy, whereas he allotted Latin seventy-one pages. The grammar falls into four main chapters, viz. "orthographia," "prosodia," "etymologia" (morphology), and "syntaxis," although this last part is confined to Latin syntax. Between the plentiful tables and schemes, the author has inserted several interesting comments, many of which make clear that he regarded grammar as a first stepping stone toward a full

command of the languages under study. Having studied the relevant sections of the grammar (Drosay stresses that not all parts are to be learnt by heart), students will familiarize themselves with exceptions and linguistic intricacies by reading good authors in the respective source languages.

The title page of the work under review promises an *édition critique* of Drosay's grammar. However, what it does offer is not a critical edition in the common sense of the word. Instead, the editor offers a high-quality facsimile reproduction of Drosay's grammar accompanied with a fine French translation and well-documented explanatory footnotes — a decision that is to be applauded. There is, to be sure, no urgent need to offer a critical edition of the clearly readable original, whose layout is strikingly elegant even to twenty-first-century eyes (see for instance the various well-designed hierarchical taxonomies, whose rendering in the French translation is less perspicacious). A nineteen-page introduction precedes the facsimile and translation. Three annexes complement the edition with translation, the most interesting of which offers some information on the grammarians referred to by Drosay. A fourteen-page bibliography and three indexes round off the volume.

Despite the numerous merits of the work, some criticism is unavoidable. First, the work displays a disturbing number of minor formal flaws and mechanical inconsistencies, which tend to detract from the book's credibility. Judged by the translation of the title page, Drosay's grammar has been published in 1543 instead of 1544. A typo in the original grammar is almost silently corrected in the French translation: the corrected form (genitive *cornus* instead of *cornu*) is only marked with an asterisk, the function of which remains in the dark (the book does not contain a section on editorial principles). In the footnotes of page 15 alone, three divergent ways of referring are used. In terms of punctuation and diacritic signs Drosay was more consistent than his translator. A more serious flaw is the erroneous rendering of the Hebrew text (from left to right instead of right to left; see, e.g., 230 and 346). For the Hebrew parts the reader is thus bound to rely on the original text. A second criticism concerns the explanatory footnotes, some of which are slightly less instructive than the reader might have wished. For example, Drosay distinguishes between five different vowel lengths (*tempus* [32], rendered with *durée* by the translator on 238): one length (e.g., *čăpūt*), one length and a half (*tenèbrae*), two lengths (*ārs*), two lengths and a half (*sōl*), and three lengths (*mōns*). The footnote only mentions that Drosay's system recalls a form of music notation and clarifies that traditional ancient grammar only distinguished between short and long vowels. However, many readers would have appreciated some additional information as to the novelty of Drosay's musical system.

In general, one might conclude that thanks to the commented translation under review Drosay's quadrilingual grammar is now disclosed to a wider present-day audience of historians, linguists, and historical pedagogues alike. In view of the above considerations, however, the original Latin text has by no means been rendered superfluous.

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