

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

The litel prynce

With sondry ymages of the auctour

Middle English



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With fondry ymages of the auctour

Drawen out of Frensshe on Englissh speche
by
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This is the first translation of *Le Petit Prince* into a mediaeval language variety. For the very fun of it—and somewhat tongue-in-cheek—the translator, who taught Historical Linguistics at Heidelberg University for many years, has rendered the Modern French original as faithfully and consistently as possible in **Chaucer's English**, the speech of late 14th century London. This witty “scholarly” undertaking nicely shows us what Geoffrey Chaucer expressed poetically in his *Troilus and Criseyde*: “Ye know ek that in forme of speche is change / Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho / That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge / Us thinketh hem, and yet they spake hem so.”

Whan that I was sixe yeer of age I biheld in a boke which that men clepen Trewre tales from the wilde wode a wonder ymage. Therinne myghte men see a cow-naddre devouryng or swelwyng a wilde beeste. Here ys the lyknesse of it.

The booke seyde thus: “Thise cow-naddres swelwen hire praye atones withouten first chewyng it. After that they mowen nat stiren ne moeven and slepen a six-month whil digestioun lasteth.”

I thoughte longe whil on the aventures that bifallen in the wilde forest, and finally I peynted myn owen hond myn alderfirst ymage with a penne of colour. My first ymage. Thus was it peynted: [...]

I shewed my wonderful werk olde folk and asked of hem if they weren afered of myn ymage. Echon answered: “Why sholde an hat me maken afered?”

Myn ymage ne shewed noon hat. It shewed a cow-naddre makyng digestioun of an olyfaunte. Thanne peynted I the inner side of thilke cow-naddre, so that olde folk myghten understonde. Hem nedeth alwey declaryng. My secounde ymage was thus: [...]

Olde folk radde me I sholde leye asid peyntyng of cow-naddres, wheither with ynne or with oute, and sholde bisyen me rather to lere erthe lore, historial thyng, augrim, and grammeere.

And thus made I an ende of my wonderful myster of peyntour, syn that I was sixe yeer of age. I hadde lost alle ioye by cause that my first and secounde ymages faylleden. Olde folk nevere understonde thyng allone, and children ne desiren nought to declaren thyng ay withouten ende.

Therefore I mooste cheese an other craft, and I lered to governe eir-shippes. I fleigh al over the erthe from oon ende to that oother. And for the nones erthe lore heelp me much. I myghte knowe at oones the difference bitwix Cathay and the newe lond that men callen Aryzona. The whyche is ful good whan that men erren to and fro in the nyght.

I have thus mette in my lyf a greet route of sobre men. I woned longe whil amonge olde folk. This ne made myn opinioun of hem nat moche bettre.

The book is available from all good bookshops or directly from the publisher

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