

**THE SEMANTICS OF
DOUBLETS STUDIED IN
OLD AND MIDDLE FRENCH**

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by

ALBERT DOUGLAS MENUT

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Philosophy,
Columbia University.

NEW YORK
1922

TO
MY PARENTS,
WHO HAVE MADE MY
STUDIES POSSIBLE.

The following study has been accepted by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures of Columbia University as an original and useful contribution to scholarship.

H. A. TODD.

August, 1922.

PREFACE

*As an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, the author's interest in the subject of Semantics was aroused by the study of Bréal's *Essai de sémantique* and Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*, which were read in a course in general linguistics given under the supervision of Professor Clarence L. Meader. Some time later, while in quest of a subject for a doctoral dissertation, the author received from Professor H. A. Todd, of Columbia University, the suggestion that he investigate the problem of the semantics of doublets in the Romance languages. Upon investigation, it was found that the semantics of French doublets had already been treated in a dissertation, *Über die Bedeutungsentwicklung der Scheidewörter des französischen*, by Ewald Thomsen, Kiel, 1890. The brevity of that work, however, and the notable advance which has been made in etymological studies in recent years seemed to warrant a further canvassing of the subject. The present volume is an attempt to present the case in the light of sound and recent methods of linguistic investigation.*

At the outset it was intended to cover the semantics of Romance doublets in general; but it early became evident that the attempt to make a study of the entire field was too ambitious an undertaking and would involve too long a period of research. The study was accordingly

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limited to French doublets, and even here it seemed best to restrict the investigation to words appearing textually in the period preceding 1530, and to concentrate attention upon those groups which upon actual experiment were found to be most interesting and instructive in their semantic development. The practical classification of doublets here presented (namely, according to the various sources — ecclesiastical, legal, etc. — from which they were introduced into the language) was arrived at independently by the present author. It was, in a sense, a gratifying corroboration of the author's method to discover later that a similar plan had been adopted by a German doctoral candidate, Hans Keck, whose dissertation on a kindred subject, *Die lateinischen lehnwortlichen Substantiva (Konkreta) im neufranzösischen*, Darmstadt, 1917, appeared some time before the inception of the present work, but owing to the vicissitudes of intercommunication during and immediately after the World War was not obtainable in this country until recently.

To reach a thoroughly satisfactory working definition of the term doublets proved to be a knotty problem, which was at last solved with only a relative degree of accuracy. Another investigator might have found it desirable to approach the subject from quite a different angle. The author's preference for the historical rather than the psychological approach to the solution of semantic problems will probably meet with little objection on the part of philologists, who, it would appear, are in the main agreed that it is better to await further development of the science

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of psychology before attempting to apply psychological methods to the study of semantics.

It is hoped that the introduction, as an appendix, of a fairly complete word-list of French doublets etymologically as nearly accurate as possible, will be of general usefulness to those interested in the subject.

Without the scholarly advice and unfailing interest of Professor H. A. Todd, of Columbia University, this work would doubtless long since have been consigned to the limbo of unrealized ambitions. For this sympathetic guidance the author wishes to express deep indebtedness. Professors J. L. Gerig and Federico de Onís have given valuable suggestions concerning the treatment of the subject, and have aided in many details of the bibliography. To Visiting Professor Anatole Chamard and to Professors Raymond Weeks and Dino Bigongiari the author owes grateful recognition for painstaking and fruitful criticism of the text. Professors R. H. Fife and A. J. Barnouw have kindly assisted with elucidation of the Germanic etymologies involved. The author's colleague, Mr. E. M. Bowman has kindly aided in the correcting of the proofs.

NEW YORK CITY,

August, 1922.

