

*Academy Dictionaries 1600–1800*. By John Considine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xii + 259 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-07112-4. £ 67.00 (HB).

Reviewed by Philip Durkin (Oxford)

In this fine addition to his growing body of work on the history of dictionaries, John Considine takes as his subject the academy dictionary tradition, from 1600–1800, or in other words, from the appearance of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* in 1612 (although he very appropriately goes back well into the 16th century in investigating the origins of that dictionary) through to the period when the emergence of historical dictionaries began to transform the lexicographical landscape (ending with a brief look ahead to these). The volume is short (its main text runs to 173 pages, complemented by 50 pages of endnotes), but is broad and inclusive in its scope. Obviously, the Accademia della Crusca, the Académie française, and the dictionaries they produced take pride of place, as the key defining influences on the academy tradition — in the case of the Académie française, an influence that was felt internationally long before the eventual emergence of the first edition of the dictionary in August 1694. Beside these, Considine also takes in developments in Germany, Denmark, Spain, the United Provinces, Russia, Portugal, and Sweden — thus including all those countries where an academy actually produced a dictionary (such as the distinguished *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* of the Real Academia Española) as well as places like Germany, where the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft in the 17th century produced no dictionary as a corporate body, but had a significant influence on the lexicographical products of several of its members (as well as on developments in Denmark).

If we remain with Germany as an example of the breadth of this book's coverage, Considine also devotes several insightful pages to the lexicographical work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), and in particular how he reacted to (or in some cases against) the work of the academies at home and abroad (particularly, of course, the Accademia della Crusca and the Académie française), as well as finding space for an account of the work of the royally sponsored Societät der Wissenschaften of Berlin in the early 18th century. The British Isles are not excluded either, and here Considine's generous (and bold) approach to his topic is particularly evident: the narrowest reading of his volume's title could have been satisfied by a simple statement that in this period no academy produced a dictionary of English. Eschewing such narrowness, another writer might nonetheless

have been happy with an account of various moves towards an academy that might have produced a dictionary. Considine offers us all this (in a packed 8-page account) but also much more, in the form of a short but illuminating account of how Ephraim Chambers's (1680–1740) *Cyclopaedia* (1728) stands in relation to these developments, and then 13 insightful pages devoted to Samuel Johnson's (1709–1784) *Dictionary* (1755) and its relationship to the academy tradition of lexicography, in which we find neither a reductive contrastive account nor a tendentious claim that Johnson be accorded the status of an unofficial academy dictionary, but rather a thoughtful consideration of what we learn about both Johnson's dictionary and works such as the *Dictionnaire de l'académie française* (or in its original orthography *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*) when we compare their content and place each in their cultural context.

Throughout this wide-ranging book, Considine's concision is a distinct advantage: rather than offering detailed histories of each academy and its lexicographical efforts, he provides just enough historical narrative to carry the reader through a brilliant sketch of what characterizes dictionary making in this particular tradition, and what the main departures and idiosyncracies are that are shown by particular dictionaries within this tradition. The style throughout is admirably (even enviably) readable, and anyone with a modicum of interest in the history of dictionaries will find it hard to resist reading from cover to cover. Considine is well aware of how details about the personalities involved in dictionary making can enliven his narrative, but is nonetheless careful to concentrate on those details that are most revealing about the dictionaries they made; Antoine Furetière's (1619–1688) vivid criticism of the activity of the *jetonniers* of the Académie française (modestly reimbursed for their attendance at meetings) is given here (pp. 38–39), including the reported resort to hurling folio dictionaries at one another's heads at a particularly fraught meeting in 1683, but Considine is also careful to point out that “for all their faults, [the *jetonniers*] completed a dictionary on a large scale, good enough to have been the foundation of a long and living series of subsequent editions”, and that “we know most about the *jetonniers* from the work of Furetière, who had [...] his own reasons for presenting them and their work in the worst possible light” (p. 38).

Considine carefully and cleverly weaves some topics throughout the volume without making this too obtrusive. For instance, he documents the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*'s use of quotations from (earlier) authorities, and places this in the context of the question of the language in early modern Italy, showing how the very specific background of this dictionary in a particular set of historical and cultural circumstances shaped its liberal inclusion of quotations (and lexis) from classic Florentine authors of the 14th century; but, at the same time, he notes how near the dictionary came to a chronological ordering of all of

the available materials, thus looking ahead to the methodology of the historical dictionaries of the 19th century (if without their crucial underpinning conception of historical language development). He then takes up this thread in examining the *Dictionnaire de l'académie française*, which turned away from using quotations in favour of made-up usage examples, as did its earlier-published highly influential (more or less avowed) rival Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* of 1690; both of these dictionaries thus contrast with Pierre Richelet's (1626–1698) *Dictionnaire françois* of 1680, which included examples of 'good usage' from recent writers (many of them members of the academy), thus showing greater fidelity to the model of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, even though (being free from the particular pressures brought to bear on the Italian dictionary by the question of the language) Richelet did not choose to include examples from earlier times. The use of (real or made-up, contemporary or historical) quotations is then taken up for each of the dictionaries discussed in the book, giving a real sense of an evolving and varied tradition.

A similar thread is the question of the order in which the entries appear, whether strictly alphabetical, or a modified alphabetical ordering, with derivative words occurring under their parent. Considine provides interesting accounts of this seemingly very dry topic, for instance (pp. 53–55) where the justification of semi-etymological ordering from the preface of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* is placed alongside an insightful discussion of its practical application in the pages of the dictionary, or again (p. 124) where Considine explores how Samuel Johnson's toying with semi-etymological ordering illuminates how he was thinking more historically than the compilers of most of the continental academy dictionaries.

This topic really comes into its own in the discussion of the German tradition, for instance in the work of Justus-Georg Schottelius (1612–1676) in the 1640s, where semi-etymological ordering came together with the ideological principles of the *Stammwortprinzip*, that is to say ordering of material by productive roots, or *Stammwörter*. Considine here shows the depth of the cultural background he brings to dictionary history when he deftly sketches the connection of the *Stammwortprinzip* with the conception of German as a *Hauptsprache*, "a cardinal language with no apparent parent, like Greek or Hebrew, rather than an offshoot of another, like Italian or French", its "(typically monosyllabic) roots [...] regarded as wonderfully forceful, and [...] of immemorial and uncontaminated antiquity" (p. 75). In passages like these Considine ably advances his long-term project to demonstrate the close interconnection between the making of dictionaries and deep currents in cultural and intellectual history. Indeed, he also does not neglect connections with contemporary politics and patronage; for instance, with regard to French dictionaries, the very practical issues of royal privilege to publish, or the

active involvement of Cardinal Richelieu (Armand Jean du Plessis, 1585–1642) and the granting of a state pension for the general editor of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, or the careful political positioning that is evident as much in the dictionary's preface as in the symbolism of its presentation to Louis XIV at Versailles (51–52, 55). (Among a host of other European monarchs, Catherine the Great also has more than a walk-on part in this narrative, 152–157.) Considine is also not afraid to make some wider connections, as for example between state linguistic policy and nationalism, even expansionist nationalism (30–31), or in making clear the frequently close connections between absolutism, prescription, academies, and the dictionaries they produced (p. 71).

A further, very successful, cohesive device is the use wherever possible of equivalent entries to illustrate each dictionary. Thus we have (among many others) entries for Italian *lento* “slow” from the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (p. 9), for Latin *lentus* “slow” from Mario Nizzoli's (1498–1576) *Nizolius, sive Thesaurus Ciceronianus* of 1576 beside the entry for the Italian word from Giacomo Pergamini's (1531–1615) dictionary in its 1617 edition (13), and then entries for French *lent* from Jean Nicot (1530–1604) (Nicot 1606) and Richelet (1680) on (p. 42), followed by Furetière (p. 48) and the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (p. 55); the same approach is continued remarkably successfully throughout the book. Similarly, discussion of whether entries are included for items such as *rhinoceros* or *lentil*, and if so how much information they include, is used as a useful touchstone for differing attitudes to technical and scientific vocabulary and to inclusion of information considered encyclopaedic. Occasionally though I find the consideration of these parallel entries just a little underpowered: for instance, though Considine is undoubtedly right that *lent* in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* is “terser” than Furetière's equivalent entry (p. 55), it also seems clear that Furetière's much fuller dictionary tells us more about the semantic nuances of the French word (for instance, the not entirely predictable specific meanings of *fièvre lente* or *feu lente*), and while both dictionaries do indeed feature “made-up examples” (ibid.) I wonder whether there is not more to be said about their treatment of phraseology (indeed, one illuminating angle could have been to compare the treatment of phraseology in many modern synchronic dictionaries, especially those intended for L2 learners). However, it is Considine's judicious selection of examples that has prompted these thoughts, and perhaps he has after all been wiser to leave some of the detailed comparison to the interested reader. On a related note, Considine's thoughtful comments on matters of typography and mise-en-page often seem to cry out for an illustration, but here the absence is surely explained by the constraints of modern-day scholarly publishing; perhaps, though, some short references could have been supplied to where interested readers can find images of the dictionaries online.

What, then, in Considine's view typifies a dictionary in the academy tradition? He does not dodge the question, noting (inter alia) that "academy dictionaries were officially sponsored, collaborative, normative, and synchronic, and they were all those things for better and for worse" (p. 165), and that "the academy lexicographers' mandate to produce a normative treatment of vocabulary helped to clarify the scope and purpose of their work, but kept much of the life of the language out" (p. 166). Characteristically, the book ends with a whole set of stimulating suggestions about how the legacy of the academy dictionary tradition fed into 19th-century historical lexicography.

This book is elegant, clear, and crisp in both argument and style, like the best of the dictionaries it discusses. Unlike many of them, it is anything but narrow in its conception of its subject, and in its sensitivity to the broader cultures of which these dictionaries formed an important part.

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*Reviewer's address*

Philip Durkin  
Oxford English Dictionary  
Oxford University Press  
Great Clarendon Street  
OXFORD OX2 6DP  
U n i t e d K i n g d o m  
philip.durkin@oup.com