SLIN

NEWSLETTER

no. 17   March 1998

1. SLIN and HEL Conferences and Seminars

§ Here is a provisional, though amply plausible, timetable of the 3rd SLIN Biennial Workshop on "Corpus material from Old English to Present English" including a discussion of didactic topics, to be held in Rome on 8 to 9 May next. All members of SLIN and any interested visitors are eagerly invited.

Friday 8, at 3 o'clock p.m., in the premises of Dipartimento di Linguistica, Facoltà di Lettere e filosofia, Via del Castro Pretorio 20, 00185 ROME, very close to the railway station, the Seminar will be opened by David Hart. In the evening there will be a social dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Saturday 9, at 9 o'clock a.m., at the Dipartimento or, if needed, at Centro Linguistico di Ateneo, Via Ostiense 139, the Workshop will continue and be ended at noon approximately, followed by an informal discussion of future SLIN activities.

Talks will be given by Marina Dossena ("What is in a site?"), Richard Dury (his own experience of a credit-centered course), Roberta Facchinetti (a presentation of the Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Texts and of Newdigate Newsletters, and a report on the Debrecen Seminar on Corpus Linguistics), Maria Teresa Zagrebelski (INCLE: the Italian Subcorpus). More speakers might be added.

David suggests that colleagues who need a reasonably cheap accommodation should contact Igea Hotel, via Principe Amedeo. A final programme of the Workshop will be sent to those who address David by writing to the Dipartimento or phoning to 06/4959354, or faxing to 06/4957333.

It is likely that the proceedings of 7th SLIN Conference (Gargnano, 1996), edited by Giovanni Iamartino, will be ready, presented and distributed during the Workshop.

§§ 10/ICEHL (Manchester, 21-26 August, this year) is, it goes without saying, an appointment of paramount importance for all those who work in historical English studies. The programme, further, looks especially

1

interesting for the wide range of subjects and the international stature of speakers. Additional workshops are: statistics (charged £25), OED, Social Networks and Optimality theory. For last-minute enrollers Registration and Conference fees for an amount of respectively £15 and £85, including six lunches, receptions and facilities, should be paid by cheque or credit card as soon as possible through the enclosed Registration form being returned to 10th ICEHL, Dept. of English and American Studies, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, U.K. (e-mail 10icehl@man.ac.uk; fax: +44(0)161-275 3256). Recommended accommodation at Hulme Hall costs £38 (single + bathroom, nightly), £25 (twin shared + bathroom or single without bathroom). If total payment is made by April 30 a 10% discount is allowed.

2. Other national and international meetings.

* XXXst Annual meeting of SLE (Societas Linguistica Europaea) is going to take place at St Andrews University (Scotland) on August 26 to 30, 1998, that is amazingly coincident with the end of 10ICEHL (a happy chance under a renovated Union of Crowns, !). The Conference fee is £18 for members, £24 for non-members to be paid by April 30, and accommodation cost at the two Halls of Residence ranges from £172 to £227 covering full board for the period of the Conference. For all types of information the postal, e-mail, fax and internet addresses are: SLE 1998, Department of German, School of Modern Languages, The University, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9PH, Scotland/UK; cb1@st-and.ac.uk; (01334) 463677; http://www.st-and.ac.uk/academic/modlangs/SLE98/SLE98.html.

** LAUD Symposium, Duisburg, 1-5 April: "Humboldt and Whorf revisited: Universal and Culture-Specific Conceptualizations in Grammar and Lexis". Contact for full information Prof. Valeri Ballanine, C for Langs, Natl Chengchi U, Taipei, Taiwan. Fax ++886 +29385776.

*** "Traduzione multimediale: quale traduzione per quale testo?", Forli, 2-4 April. Hostess: Prof. Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli, Forli.
**** "The Other Within" (Third International Conference of the Hellenic Association for the Study of English), 7-10 May, Aristotle University, Thessaloniki. If interested please contact Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, School of English, Aristotle University, 54006 Thessaloniki, Greece. Fax: +31 99 7432; e-mail: angath@enl.auth.gr
***** "Degree of Restructuring in Creole Languages", Regensburg (Germany), 24-27 June. Information from Prof. Ingrid Neumann-Holzschuh, Inst. Romanistik, Univ. of Regensburg, D93040 Regensburg. Fax: −+49−941-9431990. E-mail: ingrid.neumann-holzschuh@sprachlit.uni-regensburg.de

3. Conference Reports

We are very grateful to Prof. Lucy Perry of King's College, London University, for contributing, through the intercession of Prof. Jane Roberts and Prof. Maurizio Gotti, the following report on the Layamon Conference held in Canada last July.

A Report on the Third International Congress on La3amon's *Brut* St John, New Brunswick, Canada, 23rd-26th July 1997

The delegates at this small conference were treated to a highly stimulating programme and extreme kindness from the unpredictable weather of east coast Canada, as well as from the organiser and host, Professor James Noble. The majority of the delegates were North American although a healthy contingent was there to represent British La3amon studies. There was plenty of opportunity for informal discussion outside the organised sessions with much work continuing over meals and refreshments. A packed diary of social events complemented the conference schedule. Among the memorable 'extra-curricular' activities were the evening trip on the river, complete with glorious sunset, and the

final party, a delicious meal in the home of our host. The subjects of the papers ranged over matters of historiography, social history, language, narrative, poetics, gender, translation, and manuscript studies.

Kenneth Tiller, in 'Providence, Evidence, Dissidence: La3amon's *Brut* and Twelfth-Century Historiography', focused upon the poet's model of historiographic writing, taking off from the conclusions of previous studies that La3amon's *Brut* questions and challenges the providential paradigm of historiography. Dr Tiller showed how La3amon, rather than following the providential model used by Wace and Geoffrey of Monmouth, made subtle changes to the narrative resulting in ambiguity as to the providentiality of the chronicle events. This paper revealed that there is a lot more to La3amon's process of translation of a French poetic chronicle than might initially be perceived, and other speakers also were to investigate La3amon's originality in approach, in his poetic and narrative skills; for example, Fiona Tolhurst's paper, 'La3amon's Virgilian and Exodial Heritage: the Process of Translation from Geoffrey to Wace to La3amon'.

By contrast, Rosamund Allen looked at the historical evidence outside the *Brut* which could lead us to a picture of the social circumstances under which the poem was written and how these circumstances are reflected in the work itself. In 'Eorles and Beornes: Contextualising La3amon's *Brut*', Allen revealed how both the actuality of the nobility's allegiance to their king in the English realm and the hierarchical system of the time, based upon feudal rights, directly influenced the poet in his composition of the *Brut*. The focus then shifted with 'Lawman and the Scandinavian Connection', a reappraisal by John Frankis of La3amon's relation to the Norse tradition, in which the speaker argued that the narrative of the *Brut* revealed Scandinavian influences from oral tradition, derived ultimately from Scandinavian settlers.

Daniel Donoghue, 'On the Syntax of Lawman's *Brut*', re-examined evidence of continuity of or departure from the syntax of Old English whilst also taking sideways glances to other early Middle English texts. He offered analysis of La3amon's syntax, in the use of various word orders, in the absence of auxiliaries at the end of a clause, in the use of the initial prepositional phrase, and also the use of the subjunctive mood, and came to a conclusion in agreement with Eric Stanley's, that La3amon's syntax is thoroughly Middle English.

La3amon's use of irony was discussed in two papers. The major focus of Carole Weinberg's paper, '_at kindewur_e bed and "the bed fit for a king": ironic patterning in La3amon's *Brut*' was the Uther and Ygærne episode, from which the quotation in the paper's title was taken. Carole Weinberg resolved that La3amon emphasises the irony inherent in this story in order to underline the thematic pattern running through the poem — the heroic British figure destined for greatness but undermined by human weakness. Both Carole Weinberg, and Steven Brehe noted the association of the poem's ironic patterning back to the Brutus and Diana episode. In 'La3amon's Ironies', Steven Brehe focused upon the images of the birds, fishes and beasts of Britain, as vocalised by Diana in Brutus's dream, utilised repeatedly throughout the poem but with particular power in the Arthurian section. It is here that long similes recall the images of the animal life found in Diana's speeches but in these similes the images have become ironic metaphor.

'Women and (the Lack of) Order in La3amon's *Brut*'. Maureen Fries's contribution to the proceedings, addressed afresh the matter of gender in the poem. In 'Narrators, Messengers, and La3amon's *Brut*', Joseph Parry showed how messengers render conspicuous in the text the activity of narrating itself and that inherent in this is the sense of 'power as knowledge' and 'knowledge as power'. He suggested that ultimately La3amon adds very little to the narrative of his sources and identifies himself not directly with knowledge but with truth for he is conveying that which is already known.

Three speakers brought the Otho manuscript (British Library MS Cotton Otho C.xiii) into particular focus. In 'Affective Poetics and Scribal Reperformance in Lawman's *Brut*: A Comparison of the Caligula and Otho Versions', Jonathan Watson examined the formulaic method of composition evident in the *Brut*, taking as a premise K. O'Brian O'Keefe's finding that scribal method frequently conflated versions of the

text in an environment of open textuality. Watson finds the scribal technique of Otho to be a 'reperformance' of the text of the Caligula manuscript (British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.ix) in a formulaic mode, at times with conflicting and tension-filled results. Following on, 'The Otho Manuscript's Scribe's Systematic Changes in the Text of Lawman's *Brut*', resulted. Dennis Donahue argued, in a levelling of some of the aggression, passion, and joy in Otho's style.

Elizabeth Bryan, in 'La3amon's *Brut*, Collaborative Textuality and Literary Criticism', proposed a critical approach which takes account of and engages with the idea of collaborative textuality of the Middle Ages, displaying her theory with the Otho manuscript. This approach builds upon the idea that, in medieval culture, scribes and authors were equally valued in an 'after-worldly reward structure' and recognises the collaborative nature of textual creation. The speaker argued that current critical approaches are not valid for the texts of manuscript culture as these critical theories treat each manuscript as a single text rather than as a collaboration of readings. Her approach centres upon an examination of the interpretative agendas of readers, including the scribe, shown in, for example, the layout of the manuscript and marginalia.

Three speakers talked about insights gained from their experience in working upon translations of the *Brut* into Modern English: 'Translating the *Brut*es, Wace and La3amon.' Wayne Glowka allowed us a preview of his verse translation of Wace's *Roman de Brut* in a lively recitation. Carole Weinberg and Ros Allen, each of whom has produced translations of the Caligula text of La3amon's *Brut*, the former a prose translation, the latter verse, talked about some of the issues that they had to consider during the translation process. What became evident in this discussion was that, however dismissive the attitude towards modern translations might be, the lessons learnt during the translation process and the advances thus made to the study of a text are inestimable.

The speakers revealed in their papers the ongoing debate regarding aspects of the *Brut* that is taking place outside the conference arena. Many of these papers were responses to earlier publications and there is a real sense of group contribution to advances in this field of study.

Following the success of this third conference on La3amon's *Brut*, planning for La3amon IV is now in progress, to be held at King's College London in 2000. This is a testament to the fresh work being undertaken in the field and material for ongoing meetings seems to be plentiful. In the meantime two sessions dedicated to La3amon's *Brut* have been approved for the 33rd International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo in May 1998: 'Theorizing La3amon's Brut', to include papers that consider a particular theoretical approach, and 'Bruts Unite: La3amon among the Chroniclers', looking at La3amon's *Brut* in the context of other medieval chronicles or histories, particularly *Brut* chronicles.

(Lucy Perry)

Proceedings:

'Eorles and Beornes: Contextualising La3amon's *Brut*', Rosamund Allen, Queen Mary and Westfield College, The University of London

'La3amon Ironies', Steven Brehe, North Georgia College and State University

'La3amon's *Brut*, Collaborative Textuality and Literary Criticism', Elizabeth Bryan, Brown University

'The Otho Manuscript's Scribe's Systematic Changes in the Text of Lawman's *Brut*', Dennis Donahue, Albert Dorman Honors College

'On the Syntax of Lawman's *Brut*', Daniel Donoghue, Harvard University

'Lawman and the Scandinavian Connection', John Frankis, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne

'Women and (the Lack of) Order in La3amon's *Brut*', Maureen Fries, State University of New York at Fredonia

'Narrators, Messengers, and La3amon's *Brut*'. Joseph Parry, Brigham Young University

'Providence, Evidence, Dissidence: La3amon's *Brut*. Twelfth-Century Historiography'. Kenneth Tiller, Clinch Valley College of the University of Virginia

'La3amon's Virgilian and Exodial Heritage: the Process of Translation from Geoffrey to Wace to La3amon'. Fiona Tolhurst. Alfred University

Affective Poetics and Scribal Reperformance in Lawman's *Brut*: A Comparison of the Caligula and Otho Versions'. Jonathan Watson, Indiana University

'_at kinewur_e bed & "the bed fit for a king": Ironic patterning in La3amon's *Brut*'. Carole Weinberg, The University of Manchester

'Translating "the *Brut*[es]": Wace and La3amon. Rosamund Allen, The University of London. Wayne Glowka. Georgia College & State University. Carole Weinberg, The University of Manchester

4. Our worries about "nonce". An original contribution by Prof. R. Bacchielli

Rolando Bacchielli who has lately resigned his post of associate professor of History of English at Urbino University, among universal regret on the part of his Italian colleagues, wishing to witness - quite unnecessarily indeed - his fresh intellectual vitality due to more time for research has agreed to contribute an essay on a very fascinating topic. We are honoured to publish it here.

Our worries about "nonce". Something more than a terminological problem.

It is time lexicographic studies (both diachronic and synchronic) in the first place, and then text linguistics, discourse analysis, semantics, pragmatics, and the newly-born cognitive linguistics started reconsidering the notion of "nonce".

Right at the start I should like to emphasize the paradox that underlies the problem I am going to deal with: while it is normally language that generates meaning, in the case of nonce formations it is meaning that generates language. This is the assumption to be kept in mind if we want to get to a more informed and better founded notion of "nonce".

The meaning of "nonce" is much too often given for granted. The hasty definitions that most dictionaries, both historical and descriptive (the O.E.D. included), give it: "a word invented for one particular occasion" are based on its etymology: < M.E. for an anes = for the one (occasion) > for_e nanes (where the -n of the dative is attached to anes for wrong segmentation) > Mod.E. "for the nonce". But this is not enough to give it a safe interpretation and definition for linguistic purposes. Strangely enough lexicalists (I am not using this term in the Chomskyan sense, but as a merger of "lexicologists" and "lexicographers") have disregarded the problem. There are, though, here and there, dictionaries and handbooks of word-formation (cp. Barnhart 2, Adams, Bauer, etc.) that have grasped some, but not all, of the fundamental traits of nonce formations.

The other shortcoming of the term "nonce" is that in current literature it is referred exclusively to lexical formations, while it should be extended also to occasional word combinations and occasional shifts of meaning, function and status.

Another point that is necessary to make to clear the ground from confused notions is that the passage from "langue" to "parole" (the shaping of thought through language) always has a nonce character: language, in fact, has to be selected, manipulated and adapted to specific

occasions of discourse in order to fullfil the needs of communication. Moreover, with "parole" the *circumstantial* semantization of the "langue" carried out depends on time, place, mode and the communicative situation in which words are uttered.

Conventionalized words usually have a "fixed sense and denotation". Their first task is to refer to the mental categories into which the culture underlying a given language has organized human knowledge and experience. Their second task is to identify the referents. But they have also a third task: that of conveying all the possible connotational and circumstatial nuances intended in the discourse. To achieve this in coding and decoding a message all the facts associated with it, i.e. the context and situation, must be taken in due account. Meaning, in fact, either "denotative", "referential", or "connotative" depends heavily on context and situation. But what about innovations? In a language like English we are confronted with more and more neologisms whose meanings we are often hard put to get to. In order for an innovation to be understood, the author of an utterance has to adopt specific strategies and procedures, make the right linguistic choices and supply all possible hints conducive to the perception of meaning: he also has to make the right "presuppositions" as to "the linguistic, rhetorical and cognitive competence" of his interlocutor. This is imperative particularly in the case of nonce formations. Let us note, in passing, that the interest of lexical studies has moved from "dictionary meaning" to "contextualized meaning" and lately, with cognitive linguistics, to "situated meaning".

That of lexical innovations is a multitudinous sea and it would be out of place to try to investigate it wide and large here. For the sake of this inquiry I propose to adopt the following gross classification:
1) new words like "trade names" (Kodak, Omo, Frisbee, etc.), "technicalisms" (blip, fax, Boolean, etc.), "imitative coinages" (bleep, glitz, slurb, etc.), "borrowings" (ombudsman, guru, kimono, etc.). These categories of words are arbitrary: they are not based on shared knowledge (sound-simbolism is not a safe communal certainty), they are not the outcome of text organization or of a mode of articulation, they are not negotiated by the linguistic community and their acceptability does not depend on social consensus or solidarity, they are simply imposed either by necessity, by contact and contagion, or by institutions and powers of various kinds, they are "released" as "durable", not as "temporary";
2) nonce linguistic expansions of all kinds (by "expansion" I mean the fact that all simple linguistic items are apt to produce new derivatives, new compounds, new collocations, and variations of function, sense and status: expansions are often unusual, transgressive, fanciful and far-fetched and if they become idiomatic, they usually settle down as "durable"): these new formations can be both morphological (Prometheus, the *stealer* of fire [this unusual "defining" derivative is used here to discriminate from *thief* which is semantically lexicalized];It is a rule that every fish caught must be kept alive, and after being weighed must be put back into the water by the official *weigher-in* [an unusual agentive derivative of *weigh-in* as it is used in boxing and in fishing games], collocational (...you did not disdain to talk to the occupants of "*passage houses*"...[the use of quotes in the text underlines an unusual collocation - see also quotation below]), and semantic (...the detached, ironical, *adverbial* James...[the semantic expansion of *adverbial* here is decidedly odd and idiosyncratic]) and rest on the awareness of some stable linguistic structure and cultural notion (Mrs. Parkington lunched, *teaed, tangoed*, dined, danced, and supped): they are the result of a form of linguistic articulation (...I had a wife and a new child. The dog and child, we had reasoned, would get along wonderfully. Simple and domestic - *wived, childed*, and *dogged* [note also the nonce jocular semantization of the three verbs]), and even though in some measure they may be conditioned by the culture and by context and situation, they are produced through the articulation of the system and are therefore understandable outside their contexts (The keen smell of the bacon! The trotting of feet bearing the repast: the click and clatter as the tableware is finally arranged! A clean white cloth! "Ready Sir!"...The *going in* ! The *sitting down* ! The *falling to* ! - H.G.Wells, *The History of Mr.Polly*): from "temporary" they can become "durable" and be "established", because they rest on shared and durable knowledge: they usually require social consensus to acquire currency;

3) nonce-words proper or contextuals (see below): these formations depend on textual evidence; they are articulatory and temporary and, being text-dependent, they cannot be used outside their context and situation of discourse; therefore they never acquire autonomy and currency; social consensus in their case is out of the question: "When you lived in Ogden Street, you did not disdain to talk to the occupants of "passage houses" [houses with doors opening on to both sides of the street], but nevertheless, if you were a woman who knew how to enjoy yourself, you could afford to be sympathetic towards a humble *passage-houser...*" (J.B.Priestley, *The Good Companions*) [this new complex formation would be incomprehensible outside its context];

"It was what you might call a 'walk-on part', or should I say a *swim-on part*?

All he had to do was swim in a straight line past the camera"; [without the model 'walk-on part' the expression 'swim-on part' would not be understood outside its context]; "Reading about some people's major prejudices, I broke off - I am a great *breaker-off* these days - to ask myself what my own prejudices were" [the text is essential to disambiguate the meaning of this unusual agentive derivative]; "One way of distinguishing kinds of knowledge is into practical *knowledge-how*, propositional *knowledge-that*, and *knowledge-of*. However, the various sorts of *knowledge-of* seem reducible either to *knowledge-how* or to *knowledge-that*" [these nonce formations can be understood only in their situation of discourse]; "Are you a *thisser* or a *thatter* ?" [quite exceptional agentive derivatives used in an inquiry as to the preference for *this* or *that* as anaphoric pronouns; they would not make sense outside their context].

Thus it is the syntactic structure and the context and situation of discourse that operate like a lexicogenic matrix and reveal both the linguistic function and the semantic charge of a nonce formation.

The boundaries between 2) and 3) are often fluffy and blurred, but the dividing line, in any case, is wheter the nonce formation can be understood outside its context or not. Obviously some of them might be conventionalized in some act of force as the neologisms of the first category above.

The identikit of a nonce-word.
The basic traits:
a) created for the occasion, but entirely text-dependent and unusable outside its text

b) a utilitarian character: a remedial trick or makeshift solution contrived on the spur of the moment to overcome an immediate difficulty in or urgency of communication

c) ambiguity resolved through the text

some recurrent secondary traits:

a) a high index of linguistic, cultural and cognitive presupposition understood by the author of the utterance

b) expressive force

c) uninhibited, transgressive and provocative boldness

d) a zest for playful, fanciful, picturesque language

e) an idiosyncratic form of self-expression, a search for originality to produce a fresh, interesting effect, to make one's point in an original and memorable way

f) a linguistic epiphany, a brainwave.

Nonce language in a historical dimension.
What problems does nonce language pose to the historian of the language ? Certainly he is faced, first and foremost, with methodological and theoretical problems. Since nonce language is a mode of linguistic creativity that has operated in every age: a) is he always in a position to distinguish between established words and occasional, ephemeral and volatile formations, particularly in the ages when the language had not yet been bridled and codified or ages for which records are particularly scarce ?; b) how important has the practice of nonce language been for the history of the English lexicon ? Furthermore, to make a more pointed example, how much of Shakespeare's vocabulary is nonce and to what extent did he, as a text producer and a master pragmatician, worry about

making himself understood, when he used nonce words ? This will certainly be a good testing bench for the now emerging "historical pragmatics".

Given the new technical means available now, this inquiry can be understood also as an invitation to re-examine the written production of the past, particularly literary works, in the light of these argumentations, in order to get more incisive and speculative insights into the history of linguistic productvity and the related problems of its recording and codification.

Conclusions.

Thus we have words produced by the language system (hinged on the awareness of formative patterns) and words produced by the text (hinged on the awareness of text structure).

The gist of this inquiry therefore rests on the initial assumption that while normally it is language that generates meaning, in the case of "nonce formations" it is meaning, or in other words the way meaning is organized and structured, that generates language forms.

My proposal, in conclusion, is that we should adopt a term such as "contextuals" for all nonce formations that are definitely text-dependent and are not re-useable outside their contexts.

I hope it is apparent enough that the need remains, in any case, to redeem the term "nonce" from its vagueness and ambiguity.

Given the "*nonceness*" of this inquiry, after "*noncing away*" my time with these randomly and dubiously "*nonced*" ruminations, I am afraid I have qualified as the oddest "*noncer*" of the year. But, alea jacta est, and, whatever the results, the terminological problem at least is open for debate.

(Rolando Bacchielli)

14

5. Reviews and bibliographical information

§ Richard Dury of Bergamo University, a very affectionate and prolific contributor to SLIN NL, suggests to maintain a line of reviewing he baptizes "The never-ending History of English" of which he provides a substantial and beautifully argumented specimen with the following reviews on recent books by J.Fisiak, J. Culpepper, G.Knowles, M.Görlach, J.Smith.

THE NEVER-ENDING HISTORY OF ENGLISH

'*To write a history of a language is not an easy task*' (Fisiak 1995)

The following short reviews examine a few recent single-volume histories of the English language as a starting-point for evaluating the present state of consensus of practitioners of the discipline, in the light of debates at a national and international level. Two of the recent works examined, Smith and Knowles, though very different, make frequent references to recent research, seeming to indicate an awareness of expanding parameters and the need for a new synthesis. This awareness, indeed, may lie behind the significant number of new single volume surveys of English language history published in the last few years.

1) Jacek Fisiak, *An Outline History of English. Vol. I: External History* (1993)

This slim volume is designed specifically for Polish University students following the course of history of the English language. The promised volume two will be 'internal history' arranged around 'a selected number of issues... presented in depth', so it will apparently conform more to an emergingtypology of the 'English historical linguistics' textbook, with highlighted problems and illustrations of techniques and theories, as we find in Smith 1996.

15

Volume one conforms to a consensus approach: it is a history of standard English in chronological order, ending with more emphasis on the geographical spread of the language, and the many examples taken from standard handbooks emphasize the basic conventionality of the approach. There are ten maps which depend heavily on the established tradition of HoE and three illustrations of texts, one for each historical period, of decorative value (I should add that I am not against decoration).

2) Jonathan Culpepper, *History of English* (1997)

This book belongs to a series called 'Language Workbooks' designed for use in British secondary schools in the preparation of the A-level 'English Language' exam and described on the cover as "practical introductions to specific areas of language for absolute beginners'. The thematic chapters consist of short sections, discussion points and exercises. The tone is very much the kindly schoolteacher: the chapter on language change starts 'Imagine that you have a stomach ache and you go to the doctor...' The simplification and the specific school audience make this an unnecessary acquisition for Italian academic libraries.

3) Gerry Knowles, *A Cultural History of the English Language* (1997)

The key word in the title of Knowles's *A Cultural History of the English Language* (1997) is 'cultural', as in the phrase 'cultural studies', i.e. concerned with the way that oppressive class /colonialist interests and ideologies lie behind apparently-neutral discourse. If you like this sort of thing, then this is the sort of thing that you will like.

Knowles avoids long noun phrases and the concentrated use of technical terms - possibly, given his opinions on power and language, as an experiment at writing prose that does not try to overawe the reader. This was certainly achieved successfully in Charles Barber's one volume survey (1964), a classic example of learning worn with lightness and ease, but is not always successful with Knowles. He has some interesting

things to say and has illuminating novel points of view, but his paragraphs are sometimes constructed of short juxtaposed sentences that become note-like, and thematic focus seems to wander where political matters are dealt with.

An introductory chapter on language myths etc., of a discursive essay-like style and obviously intended to set students' ideas straight, is followed by a historical chapter on early Old English which includes an interesting discussion of the survival of Celtic and of Celtic-speaking populations. We then get three parallel chapters on 'English and Danish/French/Latin'. This has previously been announced in an elegant formulation reminiscent of those of Görlach or Smith:

> When a language is given up, its users may transfer some of its patterns into the new language. In this way foreign influence has peaked when Danes adopted Anglo-Saxon.... when bureaucrats began to use English rather than French. ... and when scholars began to write in English rather than Latin (p. 3)

Although the organization of contact-phenomena in three juxtaposed chapters like this seems immediately almost natural. I cannot remember it being done so clearly before. These chapters are welcome as a model for organizing English language history and as a (small) counterweight to the monumental *Cambridge History of the English Language*, the main volumes of which give no place to sociolinguistics on the contents page, and are arranged by traditional period and levels of language, with an additional (unexpected) chapter on 'literary language'.

Like Smith (1996: 127, 131), Knowles presents the case for possible pre-migration contact in the area of easy communications between North Germany, Jutland and Southern Sweden, continuing over the North sea after Anglian migration. He then marshals the evidence of early linguistic influence from the tenth-century Lindisfarne Gospel glosses and possible syntactic influences (pp. 34, 43).

An interesting feature of Knowles' volume is his attention to parallel developments in other European languages, both those that may show

shared developments through contact and those that may show a more general European trend in evolution. Apart from the above parallels in Danish, he notes similarities in long vowel evolution in English, Dutch and German (p. 59), in open-syllable lengthening in English and French (p. 59) and in unstable raising and lowering of /er/ and /ar/ in English and French (p. 59).

Like Smith, Knowles opposes the Fisher's 'strong' hypothesis of Chancery English as 'sole begetter' of standard English and points to the growth of London and in economic activity. His hypothetical 'commercial language of London' (p. 54), however, presented as the basis of the language used for official purposes from the 1360s onwards, does not seem to me to be borne out by the available evidence.

As the chapters move on to the metalinguistic debates of the Modern period the style becomes more essay-like and emphatic. This is a pity because the author has researched extensively in the works on language in the Scolar Press series of reprints 'English Linguistics 1500-1800' (and the Bibliography contains no fewer than 117 works on language published in this period and most of them from this series). I would have thought that to trace the codification of the language would have been enough, without letting us constantly know the strength of the author's feelings against 'schoolmasters, Anglicans, scholars, pedants and gentlemen' (p. 17).

For some reason, Knowles particularly dislikes Dryden, of whom he says 'His remarks are, of course, devoid of sense, but Dryden was not making serious remarks about the language, but rather asserting his own greatness as a writer' (p. 112). Again of Dryden (and with a certain lack of self-reflection) he says, 'At this point it becomes all but self-evident that he is not attempting a serious evaluation of language, but using language as a weapon in an ideological debate' (p. 114). Swift too is belaboured for the way he 'confuses his problem with unconnected issues and irrelevant prejudice, and comes across as arrogant and absurd' (p. 117).

Knowles' book gives us a good picture of language history from the point-of-view of radical historical and literary studies married to

sociolinguistics. This enables a fresh approach and presentation in some areas, but as the argument gets more polemical, historical linguists will miss the careful definition of terms and close analysis of texts. I would nevertheless recommend its purchase for academic libraries.

4) Manfred Görlach, *The Linguistic History of English* (1996) X

There could be no greater contrast in style and approach than that between Knowles' *Cultural History* and Manfred Görlach's *Einführung in die englische Sprachgeschicht* (first published in 1974 and followed by editions in 1982, 1994 'with minor corrections and a thoroughly revised bibliography'), and its long-awaited English translation (by the author), *The Linguistic History of English* (1996).

Most of Görlach's original clarity survives in the translation: his rigorous method, his initial presentations of methodology and terminology, his subdivision of chapters into short subtitled sections and his ability to deftly remind the reader of vital distinctions. Here is a short extract from §2.3 'Basic concepts of structuralism':

> The arbitrary nature [of form-content connection] can be illustrated by translation: *tree*, *arbre* and *Baum* - all mean 'tree': it is also a precondition for sound change (in words of stable content) and semantic change (in words of stable form).

The simplicity and syntactic parallelism of the exposition give the reader the experience of mentally manipulating the linguistic concepts. Commutating parameters (form, meaning; synchronic inter-language comparison and diachronic intra-language comparison) gives the reader mental exercise, thereby reinforcing the concepts presented; it also, I would say, provides the reader with an aesthetic experience (defined by Dewey as 'the perception of emergent form') as three different phenomena are seen to be linked in an unsuspected way.

The corpus of parallel Biblical texts from OE to PDE (present-day English) (printed in an appendix, pp. 156-221), to which reference is

constantly made in the exposition and which is also used as the source for analytical data in the numerous fascinating tables, is perhaps the most outstanding original feature of the book. Combined with the rigorous structuralist approach it gives the book its beautiful simplicity. Görlach is right to claim 'there is no book organized on the same principles in German or English'.

Another feature of the work are the many diagrams: matrixes, tree-diagrams, horizontal flow-diagrams (for the development of the vowel-system), and Venn diagrams (including a fascinating complex example to show the semantic overlap of ME *milce, ore, ruth, pity* and *mercy*). Two matrices give brilliantly simple demonstrations of an onomasiological approach (Table 10.3, showing words used for 'urban settlement') and a semasiological approach (Table 10.4, showing the meaning of *tun/toun/town* over the centuries) and at the same time demonstrate what can be done with a small corpus, rigorously arranged and constantly referred to. Such diagrams complement the concision of the text in forcing a reading that involves mental manipulation of concepts and parameters at the same time as providing an intellectual-aesthetic experience as form is perceived. This is a 'classic' that should be acquired for academic libraries.

5) Jeremy Smith, *An Historical Study of English: Function, Form and Change* (1996)

Jeremy Smith's *An Historical Study of English* (1996) is a constant delight. Routledge are to be congratulated on a well-designed volume with generous amounts of white space and clear sub-headings. There are many maps, diagrams and tables. The diagrams include illustrations of spatial metaphors (e.g. 'fixity' and 'focus'), trees and other representations of synchronic interrelationship and diachronic evolution, Cartesian mappings of 'variational space' and Venn diagrams.

The book, which opens boldly with 'This book is not a conventional history of English' (p. 3), is organized (like Samuels' *Linguistic Evolution* which in part inspires it) according to theoretical/methodological topics

and linguistic levels with examples illustrating theories. It aims to be 'not... a historical narrative, but a book on how the discipline of English historical linguistics might be pursued' (xi). The subtitle *Function, Form and Change* is a guide to the basic approach: taking language as an interacting cultural and systemic phenomenon and examining in this light its dynamic processes of change.

The elegance of the graphic presentation is appropriate to the clarity of Smith's text. The reader is immediately impressed by the way that he sets out his principles clearly, carefully defines terms and methodology and presents his varied examples. The index confirms this rigorous approach in the way it indicates where terms are defined: 'sociolinguistics: *defined* 8-10... standard language: *defined* 65'. The reader is never lost as we receive frequent clear indications of how the text is structured in overviews, references back and forwards, and summaries.

As with Görlach the elegant balanced phrasing, combined with the manipulation of conceptual parameters gives the reader a combined intellectual and aesthetic experience, as in the following presentation of the complementarity of the tree and wave models which brings together diachronic and synchronic influence, imitation and borrowing, the language of individuals and the language of communities:

> [The tree and wave models] are relevant in both micro- and macrolinguistic contexts. According to the tree model, children attempt to reproduce the language of their parents; according to the wave model, children borrow linguistic features from their peers. These models are also relevant to the macrolinguistic scale: languages descend from earlier ancestors... or they borrow from neighbouring languages. (p. 50)

Another example of beautiful simplicity is this summary of the traditional model of the Great Vowel Shift: '[Long] vowels were raised or, if in close position already, diphthongized' (p. 87).

The reader is also impressed by the emphasis on the craft of the historical linguist: we read not so much a simple narrative of language evolution, as sample narratives (which together give good coverage of the overall history) presented with constant reference to the nature of the evidence and the processes of arriving at a conclusion, together with information on the most interesting recent contributions. Chapter 2, for example, ends with three examples (from OE, ME and ModE) to illustrate methods of making linguistic deductions, each of which give a fascinating narrative of language change at the same time as telling the story of how this change has been understood by successive scholars. In 'An Old English Problem', for example, we learn about the Rushworth Gospels manuscript, the scribe, Mercian and West Saxon phonology, at the same time as learning about hypercorrection - and all this is elegantly vehicled on the fascinating story of how an obscure spelling-system was gradually explained. The skilful narration enlivened with the 'brute imprint, of actual detail' (Stevenson 1994: 181), with particulars of the data and the search for interpretation, give the reader the most vivid impression of being in contact with both the historical and investigative reality.

After this chapter on methodology, Part I ends with a chapter on models of linguistic change. Here once again we are refreshed by Smith's willingness to apply a variety of mental models to the explaining of linguistic evolution. He first adopts the evolutionary model, comparing the minute mutations of biological evolution to linguistic variants: natural selection to the implementation and diffusion of variants (in systemic or social contexts that may help or hinder). This model is then modified by chaos theory: 'the complex interaction of apparently random factors' (p.52) produces a level of order in 'dynamic open systems' (Halliday 1987: 139) with 'apparent direction [of changes]... the result of interactive reinforcement between variables at every level of language' (p.52). This apparent direction has also been metaphorically attributed to a 'hidden hand', and examples of the process have been called 'conspiracies' and 'snowballs'.

The four chapters in Part II discuss change on four levels of language: the writing system, the sound system, lexis and grammar. Each chapter starts with a discussion of models, theories and terminology and continues with examples presented with all the skill of those already discussed in Part I. In this case, the 'second thread' that is woven in with the examples is the thesis that the various linguistic levels interact with each other and with extralinguistic events in language change.

Chapter 4, is divided into discussion of scripts and orthography. The former has not traditionally been a substantial part of histories of the English language, though we have an interesting example of synchronicity in a similar chapter in Graddol et al. 1996 (Graddol's Chapter on 'English Manuscripts'), and in the many manuscript facsimiles of Freeborn's innovative work (1992).

Smith's discussion of orthography in the second half of the chapter allows him to tackle the difficult subject of 'standard language'. Here he distinguishes two types of systems: (i) 'standardized or focused... a centripetal norm towards which speakers [or writers] tend', and (ii) 'standard or fixed... a fixed collection of prescribed rules from which any deviation is forbidden' (p. 66). In these terms, a so-called 'standard' pronunciation like RP is only ever 'standardized or focused' and so is similar to so-called 'standard' orthography of OE and ME varieties. Notice that he reserves the term 'standard or fixed' in written English to 'the fixity of spelling, lexicon and grammar which derives from the work of the prescriptivist writers of the eighteenth century' (p.65) (i.e. he would not call Chancery English and eModE a standard language), and in spoken English to the 'prestigious system of grammar and lexis [but not pronunciation]... available for any register of the language (as opposed to varieties which are often termed "restricted" or "dialectal")'.

The following chapter, devoted to sound changes, begins with the usual definition of terms and theoretical models before applying them to a full and fascinating account of another classical episode of English language history, the Great Vowel Shift (pp. 86-111). Once again we get the idea of not reading a summary of a consensus but we experience the excitement of fresh approaches and original research. After a description

of the GVS and an identification of the problems associated with it, he attempts to give a more complete account of the various phenomena first of all by presenting two extralinguistic 'correspondences' (the rise of London, and standardisation of the language) and then two associated intralinguistic phenomena (loss of final-*e* and open syllable lengthening). The chapter on change in the lexicon unusually contains sections on the loss of grammatical gender and new forms of pronouns. Smith chooses to place them here because it is here that he deals with the influence of Norse and French on English, and because 'the boundary between grammar and the lexicon is fuzzy' (p. 199 n1) and 'one of the themes of this book is the interconnectedness of linguistic levels' (pp. 127-8). It has the beneficent effect of making the chapter on lexis much more interesting than such chapters often are. The careful attention to the interaction of causes that distinguishes Smith's method is also clearly visible here.

The following chapter on grammatical change contains examples of both 'innovative failure' and 'innovative success' - the former an antidote to teleological thinking: 'innovation can occur which may ultimately leads nowhere', though there may be an overall 'drift' of the language created by interacting compatible developments (p. 151). The sub-section on innovative success is devoted to the various interacting changes that led in the direction of a more analytic system. It may be worth quoting Smith's succinctly-worded summary of the various processes involved:

> Case- and gender-endings became slightly obscured as a result of changes in stress-patterns; ...prepositions begin to be more commonly used to avoid ambiguities arising from the obscuration of vowels in unstressed syllables; marked word-order patterns are extended to resolve ambiguities; in turn these developments encourage the further loss of inflectional endings whereby case and gender are marked. These individual changes have interacted to produce a major shift in the expression of relationships between words. (p. 158)

Part III is devoted to the examination of the evolution of whole varieties: Scottish English and Black English, the former particularly stimulating in Smith's typical presentational technique, which might be compared to a film montage of a subject seen from different angles and different degrees of close-up accompanied by a voice-over commenting how the sequence and image reflect on meta-questions of theory and methodology.

This constant changing of angle and detail makes the reading of this book an exciting process, a stimulating session at a mental gymnasium. Being asked to take theories of evolution or chaos theory as metaphors or models of linguistic processes provokes thought on one level; looking at the rhymes in Burns and then seeing them interpreted in terms of evolving and inter-related sociolinguistic situations provokes thought on another. The richness and variety of examples and fractal-like levels of detail is constantly surprising. The whole approach has been carefully thought out and the clarity of presentation and the elegance of the formulations make this a text that will surely be much quoted by others. My disagreements on small points did not disturb my overall feeling that I was reading a work that is outstanding in art and scope. I recommend it for all University Libraries.

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- *Studies in Middle English Saints' Legends*. Winter, Heidelberg, late 1997, pp.180
- *A Usage Dictionary of Anglicisms in Selected European Languages*. OUP, Oxford, early 1998, pp.400 _
- *Aspects of the History of English*. Winter, Heidelberg, 1998, pp.250
- *Even More Englishes (VEAW)*. Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1988, pp.250
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CERCLES - 5TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
BERGAMO, 17-19 SEPTEMBER 1998

Theme: **Integration through Innovation: The Challenge Facing Language Centres in Europe** After successful conferences in France, Britain and Germany, the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CERCLES) is going to hold its fifth conference at the University of Bergamo (Italy) from Thursday 17 September 1998 to Saturday 19 September 1998.

This will be the first time that this important international conference has been held in Italy and renowned scholars are expected from countries both within and outside the European Union.

As in previous Conferences, there will be plenary sessions on general issues and five parallel sessions on the following themes: new technologies, self-access and learner autonomy, assessment, testing and evaluation, management and training, language policy. A materials exhibition will also be organized at the Conference venue.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:
Prof. Maurizio Gotti, chair; Dr. Marina Dossena; Dr Monica Piantoni.
Further information and booking forms may be obtained from

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28