SLIN

NEWSLETTER

no. 28   December 2001

Contents:

Editor's note

You will have noticed that the present issue of SLIN NL comes to you later than usual. The reasons are manifold. Firstly, some private difficulties and troubles of mine, partly enhanced by my premature retirement from University work. Secondly, the lack of contributed material from you, my dear readers and fellows in this adventure. Lastly, but not least, the cultural earthquake produced by the events of 11th September and the subsequent warfare. While apologizing to you all, I do promise I will be more punctual and duly exhaustive next time. Thanks for your kind attention.

1. SLIN Conferences and Seminars

After the success of the 10th SLIN Conference held in Pavia last September (please have a look at Richard's beautiful description on p. ** below) while John Meddemmen is eagerly waiting for the speakers' final papers to reach him for publication by the end of January 2002, David Hart is preparing for the SLIN Seminar to be held in Rome next Spring with Matti Rissanen's .promised presence. All details will be given in the next Spring issue of SLIN NL.

2. HEL and other (English) linguistics conferences and seminars

A few (helpful?) REMINDERS and UPDATINGS:

§ The **12th ICEHL (International Conference on English Historical Linguistics)** will be held at **Glasgow University** on **21 to 26 August, 2002.**

Plenary lectures will be given by Michael Benskin (Oslo Un.), Marace Darau (DOST), David Denison (Manchester Un.), Andreas Fischer (Zurich Un.), Olga Fischer (Amsterdam Un.), April McMahon (Sheffield Un.), Anneli Meurman-Solin (Helsinki Un.) and Carol Percy (Toronto Un.).

While the deadline for sending proposals for 20-minute papers was inexhorably fixed on 15 October, which incidentally was a postponed date in view of the 11 September tragic fact, suggestions for a poster session may still be submitted up until 31 December.

The Conference will start on Wednesday 21 August with an evening informal buffet and end on the late morning of Monday 26 August.

The delegate fee is expected to vary from 100 to 150 pounds sterling. Accommodation costs range from £15 - £35 per night in student rooms to an average £45 per night at local hotels.

Further information is provided at the following websites:

www.gla.ac.uk/general/index.html

www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESLLL/EngLang

www2.arts.gla.ac.uk/SESLLL/EngLang/news.htm/ICEHL12

§§ The 13th International Conference of SEDERI (English Renaissance Linguist-ics and Literature) will be held at the University of Vigo (Spain) from 21 to 23 March, 2002, organized by the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies. Participants wishing to offer 20-minute papers oh English Renaissance linguistics and/or literature are invited to submit a 200-word abstract both in printed and in electronic format, the deadline being 31 October, 2001. The relative addresses are:

- SEDERI 13, Departamento de Filoloxia Inglesa, Francesa y Alemana, facultade de Filoloxia et traduccion, Universidade de Vigo, Campus As Lagoas Marcosende, e-36200 Vigo, Spain

- sederi13@uvigo.es

For more information please visit the conference site: www.uvigo.es/webs/h04/sederi13

§§§ ICOME 4 (Fourth International Conference on Middle English) will take place at the University of Vienna (Austria), hosted by the Institut fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik and organized by Dieter Kastovski, Nikolaus Ritt and Herbert Schendl. The Conference will consist of plenary lectures, details of which will be disclosed in the next circulars, and 20-minute presentations, organized in groups according to their topic and followed by discussion. Two-page summaries of the proposed papers are kindly invited from speakers to be circulated in advance among participants.

The Conference will begin on Thursday afternoon, 4th July, and end

on Sunday 7th July A Conference banquet will be given on 6th July. Accommodation will be offered in student hostels or nearby hotels at approximate costs of 35 EUR and 85 EUR per night, respectively. The conference fee will be kept as low as possible.

A registration form to be delivered as soon as possible may be obtained along with further information from the following website:

www. univie.ac.at/anglistik/icome4

Mail may be addressed to: icome4.anglistik@univie.ac.at

§§§§ International Conference on Historical Lexicography and Lexicology, University of Leicester, 15-17 July 2002

Papers (20 min) are invited on any subject in the fields of historical lexicology and historical lexicography. Suggestions for one-hour and half-hour sessions (roundtables, demonstrations, linked papers) are also invited. Five-minute notes and queries are included in the program. Proposals should be forwarded by 29 march, 2002 mailing to: jmc21@le.ac.uk

Please also consult the Conference site:

www.le.ac.uk/ee/jmc21/hll.htm

§§§§§ Organization in Discourse II: the Historical Perspective (Turku, Finland, August 7-11, 2002) organized by Risto Hiltunen, Department of English, University of Turku.

An advanced notice has been posted at

www.utu.fi/hum/engfil/oid2002.html

For inclusion in the mailing list write to: oid2002@utu.fi

Pensioners go shopping, mothers accompany little children. The street is lined by a series of small traditional shops (salumeria, ferramenta, pasticceria, pasta fresca...), bars from the tiny to the medium size with names redolent of the decades around the 1950s (Gelateria Moderna, Bar Lux, Haiti...) and three newspaper kiosks fluttering their pennants of multicoloured magazines. This leads you to Piazza della Vittoria, the old Roman forum, broad and long, cobbled (like all the streets of the town) with round stones from the nearby riverbed varied by strips of smooth stone for cartwheels. About twenty years ago there was still an agricultural supplier here with sacks of seeds outside, but though this has gone the place still retains the air of a country town centre. From here it is just a short walk down Strada Nuova, past the University, a right turn along another not-quite-straight cobbled street; past the area of uneven tree-shaded, sun-dappled tables of the Araldo Café (suggesting country life, slow time and student days), to the broad Piazza and Collegio Ghisleri, our conference venue, a building austerely classical and imposing.

Up the wide steps, past eight allegorical figures, through the porter's lodge to the cloister-like quadrangle with its twenty arches and paired columns. On the first day, a little early, I sat on a bench to work on the imperfect latest version of my unruly paper, hoping to tidy it up enough to present it to the others in a few hours' time. But other conference delegates soon started to arrive, interrupted my labours, laughingly brushing aside my concerns, and moved me with them towards the conference room.

The Aula Goldoni (named after Ghisleri's most famous (expelled) student) is a long room with elegant pale-yellow and white pilaster strips and stucco bands, terminating in a semicircular apse with dais and speaker's table. Ample windows to the left give on to a vague courtyard space where plane trees filtered the warm sunlight and provided a fitting environment of calm and quietness.

The first speaker was jolly, youthful-looking Jeremy Smith of Glasgow University, a scholar who likes to find regularity in complexity, an appreciator - I am sure - of carpet-patterns, fresh-firecoal chestnut falls; fin-

ches wings... His presentation was almost a self-challenge to trace the connections between (i) the 1542 Cambridge controversy over the pronunciation of classical Greek, (ii) the evolution of standard English, (iii) Palsgrave's 1540 translation of *Comedy of Acolastus* and Cheke's 1561 translation of Castiglione.

The Greek controversy saw a confrontation between a group of young men full of enthusiasm for the new learning (combined with a passing interest in self-advancement) - Smith, Cheke, Cecil, Ascham and Hoby - lined up against old-school Stephen Gardiner, Chancellor of the University.

The emergence of standard English in IME times was presented as 'a communication-driven development': with the functions of written English increasing, wide variation in written forms became 'communicatively inconvenient'. However, the history of standardization was no smooth progression: for example, though new 'focused' standards were now used for transcriptions from other dialect systems, in some cases a prestige text was repeatedly copied together with its spelling system and dialect forms: Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Love's translation of *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* being two examples. In Scotland there was another complication: the Southern standard (associated with the Authorized Bible translation) was used by Protestants while Catholics wrote in Scots. Palsgrave's Preface to his *Acolastus* of 1540 shows these previously uneven approaches to standardization were now being reduced to order, as the 'great aduantage to waxe vniforme' became a dominant ideology.

The last piece of the jigsaw is the letter written by Cheke to Hoby (both former champions of new-learning Greek pronunciation) to preface the latter's translation of *The Courtier* (1561). In this he uses the reformed orthography he had previously used in the very Bible translation that had led to his recent imprisonment. This 'broken man' was therefore defiantly using reformist language forms to indirectly assert the reformist religious ideas for which he had been condemned.

The whole picture showed how both scholarly and religious reformist ideologies aligned themselves with language reform programmes, both of which proceeded in the typically untidy way of real life.

Next Patrick Leech from Bologna, suavely ironic, tackled the subject of 17th-century plain style. Though its linguistic manifestations are not always clear, one indication of a true plain-stylist is the foregrounding of simple textual organization (introductory summaries and numbered sections). As for the well-know hostility to the metaphor (often condemned by means of metaphor…), this only applied to certain text-types, scientific texts in particular. Leech proposed two principal origins of the movement in the early 17th century: (i) Bacon's empirical observation method where words represent perception, (ii) 'mystical Protestantism' (linked to the universal language movement) that tried to narrow the post-Fall space between words and things. Diffusion in the second half of the century is associated with other phenomena: (iii) the creation of a extra-university, national space of scientific discussion, (iv) a new (post Civil War) ideal of civility in both manners and language-use.

After a break of which curiously I have no memory, it was my turn to speak. My aim was to present two hypotheses concerning the evolution of the English pronouns of address: (i) that unaccented objective /ju/ was functionally reinterpreted as the unaccented subjective polite pronoun of address, with phonetic lack of prominence and syntactic indirectness used to avoid the threat to face of the accented pronoun (backed up by a historic report of the objective pronoun being used as an extra-polite subjective in Frisian); (ii) that the abandonment of *thou* took a decisive turn when parents began to use *you* to their children, in dialect-contact situations where they used a learned prestige dialect to talk to their children, adopting only its V-pronoun, a situation that has been reported in present-day Flanders. That was the aim, but preparation was incomplete, the typescript over-long and under-focused and the result fragmentary. A few friends were kind enough to say that some of those *fragments* were, indeed, *very interesting*, or that (painful distinction! yet better than silence) it was 'a fascinating subject'. I refer present readers who might

be interested to the printed version in the forthcoming proceedings.

Next came the doyen of English historical linguists in Italy, Rolando Bachiell from Urbino, a man with something of the gentle, hesitant Ralph Richardson about him. A linguistic Autolycus too, a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, principally at the Bartholomew's Fair of word-formation. Today he talked of 'compound verbs' (*to backbite, to highlight*), almost nonexistent in OE, with new formations coming plentifully from the 16th century and growing enormously from the 19th century onwards. Such verbs are formed by a series of derivation-models: backformation from nouns (*to lawbreak*) and adjectives (*to soundproof*); prefixing of adverbial complements (*to push-start*); reduplication (*to criss-cross*); and then by wind-borne propagation of popular models (*to babysit, flatsit; to party-, bed-, bar-hop*). Taken up by exuberant Renaissance wordplayers, not disdained by Dr Johnson, and later promoted by 19th-century Saxonists, today they are found in many semantic areas and registers and still remain available for ad hoc inventiveness. At the wealth of examples, the audience round-eyed with amazement.

The afternoon was brought to an end by Giuliana Russo from Catania on Cobbet's *English Grammar* (1818). This popular text (in print throughout the 19th century) shows Cobbet in a contradictory position: (i) he writes in a clear style, his text is dedicated to a shoemaker and is directed at 'soldiers, sailors…ploughboys' and in his Introduction he questions the relationship between power, class and education; yet (ii) he finds himself forced to follow the prescriptive tradition in his treatment of the common grammatical shibboleths.

We then separated, to meet again at 8 on the steps of the Collegio, where some students with cars ferried us across 'Ticino rive' (as our brochure has it) to a trattoria with an flickering neon sign, just outside town and at the bend of an unfrequented road (good scene for a perilous meeting in a Hitchcock film, I thought). Here we were served a series of Lombard dishes, including both risotto and polenta, accompanied by local Oltrepò wines. The meal ended with an unprogrammed rendition of 'O sole mio'

by Nicola Pantaleo, followed by 'The Thra Craws' in broad Scots with perhaps a veil of benevolent irony by Jeremy Smith.

Friday

Our only full conference day started with Gabriele Stein from Heidelberg on 'Early lexicographical indices of English standardization'.

In traditional handbooks, typical examples of late-Medieval changes in attitude towards dialects and standardization are Chaucer's prayer at the end of *Troilus* asking for no changes to be made to his text, Trevisa's critical stance towards outlandish dialects and Caxton's general adherence to Chancery spellings. Stein argued that a study of dictionaries also provides us with many additional pointers.

After a survey of the principal English lexicographical works in the 15th and 16th centuries, Stein noted how even one of the earliest, the *Promptorium parvulorum* (English-Latin, c1440) tacitly recognises a standard when the author makes clear that the English he uses is that of Norfolk where he grew up, and cross-references from less acceptable spelling to the full entry under the preferred form. By the 1550's the presumption of a standard form is clear to see in the way dictionaries identify and comment on non-core items: (i) regionalisms, foreign loans, (ii) obsolete items (generally from c1570), (iii) 'hard words' (from c1570). Pride of place here was given to Stein's lexicographical hero John Palsgrave, who as early as 1530 in his highly innovative *Esclarcissement de la langue française* gave clear signs of awareness of a linguistic standard: he chooses a prestige form of French and identifies its locality, and for English points out neologisms, loans, archaisms ('this worde is nowe out of vse') and regionalisms ('farre northern verbe').

Next Antonio Bertacca of Pisa guided us through the comments on pronunciation of a series of 17th-century grammarians. Though not interventionist standardizers, they were clearly aware of a norm and condemn some non-standard forms: Gil (1619) shows prejudice against Easterners and affected London *Mopsae* and complains that Westerners use old words, while Cooper (1687) talks of avoiding 'a Barbarous pronunciation' and implicitly recommends 'the best dialect'.

These grammars give precious testimony of GVS evolutions: Gil shows that TIME- and HOUSE-words had an open diphthong in Northern dialects, and that the NAME-vowel was already raised and possibly diphthongized in Eastern dialects ('capon' being transcribed *kjpn*).

Evidence of several 'natural phonological processes' was then rapidly identified and illustrated from the seven-sided handout (time too short to translate the Latin quotes - though of course we all understood them, didn't we): (i) the loss of the velar fricatives in *might* etc., (ii) *l*-vocalization in *talk* etc., (iii) the lowering influence of /r/, and (iv) schwa-glide before /r/, as in *flower*.

For our coffee breaks we went from the courtyard into a vaulted passageway (specular image of the tunnel-like entrance on the other side), open to the quad but closed by glass doors at the end that led to the slightly overgrown garden with its palm trees. This was a pleasant slightly-echoing space, a mixture of indoors and out, where we could sip a steaming cup of black coffee, while chatting about the recent talks and at the same time enjoying the slight hint of autumn in the air.

After the break we continued with old SLIN-member Giovanni Iamartino who introduced Alessandra Vicentini, a young researcher at Milan University, who then gave a report on their joint work on "James Howell as a spelling reformer in 17th-century England". James Howell, poet and diplomat, polyglot and polymath, is a fine representative of Renaissance encyclopedic and linguistic enthusiasm, a writer of delightful non-p.c., non-p.s. (plain style) prose. In contrast with 16th-century spelling reformers he was content with minor adjustments: these last the speakers had grouped into 12 rules, most of them following a principle of economy in grapho-phonological correspondences (weeding out 'superfluous Letters'), or an etymological preference for Latin over French spelling for Latin-derived words.

Next, as midday chimed from a nearby tower, came grey-suited Elisabeth Lonati from Milan, who had looked at the entries for 'Language' and 'English' in Chambers *Cyclopedia* (1728) and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1771). What was interesting here was the way these works agreed that language was 'established by custom', constantly changing (especially for sociolinguistic reasons), and based on speech. There are also clear defences against popular beliefs that English 'offends against many Parts of Grammar'. Nevertheless, the contradictions that come from the inevitable link of language and ideology are not slow to appear: English is close, clear, chaste, reserved, judicious, severe, honest, sublime, moderate and restrained, has majesty in abundance, is excellent, perfect, bold, daring and superior - and yet it has many defects and is neglected by those who use it.

The last talk of the morning was interrupted soon after its start by a commemoration of those who had died a few days before in the New York attacks: some lines by W.H. Auden were read ('Defenceless under the night / Our world in stupor lies') and we stood for a minute in silence.

With difficulty, but necessarily, starting again, Susan Kermas from Lecce continued with her talk, based on a study of the evolution of BrE spelling distinctions for homophones, and the way differences of meaning become associated with different spellings. To investigate this she compared the presentation of such items in a wide range of dictionaries over time - a simple but very effective technique that reveals changes like the following: 'Program, Programme' (OED, 1908), 'Program(me)' (OED 1933, with a note that 'the phonetic spelling would be preferable'), 'Program' (Chambers 1959), 'Programme' (in British dictionaries from the 1970s on). The emergence of a new computer meaning with AmE - *am* has apparently led to a desire to make a distinction for other uses, now seen as separate (from the 1980s, British dictionaries treat the two forms as separate headwords).

The same technique shows how 'disk, disc' presentation of the headword from the 1930s to 50s gave way to 'disc, disk' in the 60s and 70s, and to the separation into differently spelt headwords in the 1990s (*disk* 'computer storage', *disc* 'sound recording'). Latinate *inquiry* had precedence from the 1930s to 70s, but from the 80s there has been a distinction between *enquiry* ('request for information') and *inquiry* ('an official investigation'). The speaker was modest in her presentation and slightly nervous, yet the simplicity of the method and the clarity of the results made this one of the talks that I enjoyed the most.

For lunch we went in separate groups through the cobbled interstices of Pavia's mystic geometry; then returned, hurrying now to gain shelter from the first flying spots of rain out of a darkening sky. The afternoon began with Maurizio Gotti on 'The codification of *shall* and *will* as second-person future auxiliaries in early English grammars'. Wallis (1653), in a text for foreign learners (so more probably descriptive than prescriptive), is the first to distinguish the meaning of first-person and other-person use of *shall* and *will*. Such a distinction is clearly connected with speech-acts only performable by the speaker (like promising) - coming some centuries before speech-act theory, the 17th-century grammarians are trying to make sense of a real difference in use with the means at their disposal. A second part of the story is the generalisation of *will* use, which we find in examples of Private Letters (in the corpus) where 79% of all *will/shall* choices go to *will*. A third part of the story is the continuing differential use of the verbs for promise, threat, order, prediction etc. in uses where the original 'volition' and 'obligation' meanings still influence choice.

Next - as the sky darkened and lights were lit - Roberta Facchinetti gave a brisk presentation - clear OHPs - of 'The pragmatics of *can* in early Modern English'. Here the story was of how *can*, from humble beginnings in the M3 section of the Helsinki Corpus - still not separated from its lexical verb uses - grew in frequency, spreading from dynamic modality to gain a series of illocutionary meanings, ranging from request, proposal, promise, reprimand (based on dynamic ability meaning) and suggestion (based on dynamic possibility meaning). These new uses are found especially in speech-related texts, indicating their origin in pragmatic interaction.

During the next talk the wind rose, rain lashed the windows, and the public-address system first faltered and then failed, leaving poor Marina Dossena like Prospero in the opening scene of *The Tempest*, with fewer lighting effects and (luckily) no buckets of water being thrown in from the wings. In her talk - above the raging elements - she set out to see if the Suthron *should*-forms in the *suld/should* total in the Helsinki Old Scots corpus could be ascribed to any 'constraining factors'. The first and easiest was increasing prestige of the Southern standard seen in a general increase of *sh*-forms after 1603. Not, however, in all text-types: Pamphlets and Handbooks had more Anglicized spelling, while more literary Biographies and Travelogues, more conservative Official Correspondence and Trial Proceedings and less norm-attracted Diaries maintained the *s*-form longer (a combination, it would seem, of genres following Scottish written standard and those closer to vernacular speech).

The storm passed and the loudspeakers were put right for the penultimate speaker of the day, Nicola Pantaleo of Bari, who had analysed expressions of deontic necessity in five early 15C religious texts. The semantic continuum was divided into 'hard' circumstantial (*moste*) and moral (*shoulde*) obligation, and softer dutifulness (*falleth*) and desirability (*behoueth*). The statistics of use showed interesting preferences for the various modal expressions, in part attributable to the pragmatic aims of the different texts, in part to dialectal influence.

The day ended with Luisanna Fodde from Cagliari speaking on 'Attitudes to standardization and bilingualism in the United States'. Most of us are aware of the 'English only' campaign from the 1980s, which has had success especially in SW states of the union, and which aims to establish English as the only official language of public administration and education. However, the debate over the official status and ideological function of English has had a long history in the USA, running in parallel with the debate on the independence of AmE from BrE. Both debates were seen as essentially ideological and inevitably based on 'myth'.

The day's work over, I left alone, pausing at the top of the College steps:

in the persistent rain the wide expanse cobbled square, now mainly empty of cars, looked desolate and wintry. I shivered.

A couple of hours later, however, I was running through rainy streets that now magically looked more attractive; I dived down the narrow street off Piazza del Duomo and saw ahead the friendly light of the restaurant doorway. Here - in autumnal *anteprima* - was now an attractive aspect of winter: the welcoming interior (stoves glowing), the stamping of shoes, the doffing of coats, and the warm room *freondum afylled*. The meal went well, conversation flowed, and we ended with a toast preceded by a speech by Nicola Pantaleo (about to retire, yet sure to remain an active member and leader of SLIN) in his typical dryly humorous style: a mock letter from a superior person passing in review the participants, ending with the pitied organizer of this improbable event.

Saturday

On Saturday morning the sun shone straight down Corso Cavour; the air, washed by the rain, showed colours clear and bright; and balcony-flowers dripped sparkling sunlight. At the Collegio Ghisleri, our last session started with Laura Pinnavaia (from Milano Cattolica University) who told us about evolution of 'the non-standard variety of *parlyaree or polari*'. This was an argot of about 200 terms used by excluded groups such as entertainers, actors, itinerants and homosexuals, which originated the 17th century, much influenced by Lingua Franca. A down-to-earth ideology is shown by the semantic areas of terms, and resistance against social exclusion can be seen in the use of *polari* itself in provocative language (verbal skills being one power always available to the powerless). This argot, the speaker claimed, was now practically extinct, having been fixed in dictionaries of slang and widely publicized in the 'Julian and Sandy' BBC radio sketches of the 1960s: accepted somehow as a part of standard English it could no longer function as a marker of a special group.

We finished with Maria Luisa Maggioni (also from the Cattolica) who

had made a study of many histories of the English language to see how they gradually came to class the New Englishes as standard languages in the 20th century. The shock of the World Wars perhaps changed both realities and perspectives: certainly American English is first dealt with in English Language histories only in the 1920s (following Mencken 1919), while Mossé's *Esquisse d'une histoire de la langue anglaise* in 1947 was the first to deal with varieties elsewhere in the world.

Proceedings ended with the Business Meeting (reported elsewhere) - and so our landmark 10th SLIN conference came to an end. Goodbyes were said and we agreed to meet again in Pisa in 2003. I crossed the town for the last time: once more past the rustic Araldo Café, past San Francesco Grande, where people were coming out from a wedding into the sunlight, once more along *shining Corso Cavour*, lively with children from Saturday-morning school, and so back to the station and normal life, where I had arrived two short days before.

(Richard Dury)

International Conference on Late Modern English (Edinburgh, 29th August – 1st September 2001)

It is always a moment of heightened emotion to read a paper at an international conference. And when the backdrop is in fact one's spiritual hometown, then the feelings of privilege, and honour, and sheer emotion become difficult to describe – as yours truly had the opportunity to experience on the occasion of this fascinating conference. Organized with the usual competence and attention to detail by Charles Jones and Derek Britton, of the Department of English Language at Edinburgh University, which had also been the venue of an earlier edition of ICEHL, the Conference featured both plenary papers and parallel sessions in which a range of text-types were discussed.

Proceedings were opened by Richard Bailey's keynote lecture on 'The Ideology of English in the Long Eighteenth Century'. Other plenary talks were given by Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (on Lowth's letters), Joan Beal (on John Walker), Carol Percy (on prescriptive grammar for girls in the eighteenth century), Manfred Görlach (on the study of etymology between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries), Sylvia Adamson (on animacy in Late Modern English), the present writer (on argumentation in the Darien pamphlets) and Rafael Molencki (on prescriptivism and changes in the system of English counterfactuals). Also Maurizio Gotti's paper focused on modality. Dialectology, instead, provided the framework for the papers by Raymond Hickey (on Irish English), Graham Shorrocks (on John Collier's 'A View of the Lancashire Dialect') and Robert Millar (on language attitude in the 'First Statistical Account of Scotland'). Social variation was the focus of papers by Terttu Nevalainen (on gender stereotypes and language use in Late Modern English), Tony Fairman (on pauper letters of the early nineteenth century) and Minna Nevala (on forms of address in eighteenth-century correspondence). Around 30 papers were presented in addition to the plenary ones, so it would be impossible to summarize them all. The general impression, however, was of a highly homogeneous programme, in which themes and topics reappeared and intersected. Among

these, issues relating to the prescriptive tradition, gender and class variation, correspondence and social network theory, appeared to be especially prominent. The same themes were also discussed in a workshop organized and chaired by Carol Percy on gender and language. The workshop included a number of scholars whose work, whether published or in progress, focuses on diastratic variation, in particular language use by female speakers/writers and of attitudes to this. As regards source texts, private letters were shown to be especially valuable, and we may expect that in future years the study of Late Modern correspondence will increase.

As is typical of successful conferences, this event provided many opportunities for the exchange of information relating to work in progress and projects currently being outlined to which scholars from different countries could contribute their expertise. The Conference venue in the heart of the Old Town proved a suitable and inspiring environment for the discussion of English in a historical perspective. Social events stressed the value of Edinburgh as a multi-faceted cultural capital – although the Fringe Festival was over by the time the Conference started (a detail gratefully acknowledged by participants who had arrived early and had seen, or knew already, just how busy the High Street could become), the Edinburgh Festival still had concerts, opera performances, films, exhibitions and plays to offer. In addition, the last night of the Conference coincided with the Fireworks Concert in Princes Street Gardens – a spectacular close to the Festival which impresses with its fountains of colourful patterns around the Castle and the lively music that accompanies them. For the more historically minded, the Conference (candle-lit!) dinner was held in the same stately home in which Dr Johnson had been hosted during his famous tour – Prestonfield House, nowadays perhaps more famous for its golf course and the splendid views of Arthur's Seat that can be enjoyed from its peacock-populated park. Also the post-Conference excursion had been tuned to a literary and historical chord, as it included the visit of Melrose Abbey, in the Borders, and Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott. The present writer, however, did not take

part – not because of lack of interest, but because by then the difficulty of tearing oneself away from Edinburgh was reaching critical mass, and I could not resist a long, quiet walk around the familiar streets of auld lang syne.

(Marina Dossena)

Modality in Contemporary English (Verona 6-8 September 2001)

Almost one hundred scholars from 25 different countries gathered in Verona for the first International Conference of Modality in Contemporary English, organized by the Language Centre and the Faculty of Education of the University of Verona. The keynote speech was given by the best known scholar of modality in English, Professor Frank Palmer of the University of Reading, who spoke on *Modality in English: theoretical, descriptive and typological issues* with undimished authority and clarity. There were four other plenary sessions, each given by scholars renowned for their work on modality: Geoffrey Leech spoke on *The English modal auxiliaries 1961-1991: modality on the move*, basing himself on findings from the LOB and Brown and FLOB and Frown corpora; Jennifer Coates gave modality a feminist turn speaking about *The role of modality in women's talk*, again basing herself on a corpus of English conversation; Stephen Nagel managed to be both learned and amusing speaking on the topic of *Double modals in the Southern United States: syntactic structure or syntactic structures*; Maurizio Gotti gave us an historical perspective in his paper on *SHALL and WILL in contemporary English: a comparison with past uses*.

On the Saturday morning there was a workshop given by Bas Aarts and Sean Wallis on the British component of the International Corpus of English, which has been developed at University College London.

There were nearly 40 papers given in the two parallel sessions. It is not possible to summarize them all in the brief space I have, but I will try to mention some of the main themes that were touched on.

The majority of the papers presented followed the approach of Professor Palmer that modality was mainly a question of the semantics of modal verbs. Typical of this were the papers by, for example, Raphael Salkie, Corina Holzherr and Jelena Timotijevic on *SHOULD and MUST: a contrastive analysis*, Stéphane Gresset on *CAN/MAY, MIGHT/ COULD and interchangeability: a discussion, and, more specifically, "Towards a contextual micro-analysis of the non-equivalence of MIGHT and COULD"*; Kensei Sugayama on *The grammar of BE TO: from a WG point of view* and Heidi Verplaetse on *What people want: an investigation into the semantics of verbal complementation with want to in everyday spoken English*.

Geoffrey Leech's corpus based approach was picked up by, among others, Nicholas Smith, who spoke on *Changes in the modals of strong obligation and logical necessity: MUST, HAVE TO and (HAVE) GOT TO in recent British English*.

Along the same lines as Jennifer Coates's paper was Arja Nurmi's intervention entitled *Men and women's use of MUST in the BNC Sampler*.

A number of scholars looked at modality in formal and academic genres including Magnar Brekke on *Modal usage in economic-administrative text: the language of uncertainty*; Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli on *Interacting with the audience: the role of modality in business lectures delivered in a cross-cultural context*; Mirjana N. Dedaic in her talk *"If I may, I would like to ask you to let me say": cross-cultural modality in political communication*; Giuliana Diani on *Modal expressions of volition in academic review articles*; Sara Gesuato on *Modal expressions in job application letters*; Davide Simone Giannoni on *"Auxiliary verbs shall be used consistently". Standardisation and modality in directive texts*. These talks were based on specially constructed corpora, as was Ute Römer's paper *A corpus-driven approach to modal auxiliaries and their didactics*, which examined modals in English teaching textbooks used in Germany.

Modality in literature was not neglected, either: Steluta Stan spoke on *'Feminist modalities' with Fay Weldon* and John Douthwaite looked at modalization in the South Africa writer Coetze.

Although the topic of the conference was modality in contemporary English, various papers adopted a comparative approach: there were two papers comparing Spanish and English modality, one by Juanna Marin-Arrese, Laura Hidalgo and Silvia Molina, the other by Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibañez and Lorena Pérez Hernández; there was a paper

by Edit Jakab comparing English and Russian modality; Ivana Trbojevi_ Milo_evi_compared English and Serbian modality while Anastasios Tsangalidis spoke on the interaction of tense, aspect and modality in English and Greek. Anna Wärnsby talked about constraints on the interpretation of epistemic modality in English and Swedish.

Looking at dialect differences, Peter Collins from the University of Sydney looked at modality in Australian English, while Graeme Trousdale examined modal verbs in Tyneside English.

The relationship between modality and aspect was looked at by Christopher Williams in his paper *Modality and (non) progressive aspect in English* while modal logic was the theme of Reinhard Kahle's paper on *What MUST can mean*.

An interesting theoretical model of modality was introduced by Lionel Dufaye speaking on *MUST + NOT and the double scope of negation with modals*.

Gregory Ward speaking for the team from Evanston University gave a stimulating talk entitled *A pragmatic analysis of the epistemic WOULD construction in English* which considered the relevance of a contextually salient open proposition for modal constructions.

Overall, the conference was characterized by a tendency to look at the semantics of modal verbs and a reliance on either the commercially available corpora or specially created mini-corpora. A few scholars, for instance Myhill on *will* and *gonna*, insisted on pragmatic aspects of interpreting modality and very few - Jennifer Coates and John Douthwaite are examples - extended their analyses to other linguistic forms used to express the attitude of the utterer towards the certainty, veracity etc. of their text.

A common finding, which was the basis of Professor Leech's talk and was confirmed by several others, was that modal usage in English is changing: classic modals such as *must*, for instance, are being replaced by more 'informal' verbal expressions such as *have to*.

The social side of the conference was a great joy, from the guided tour of Verona to the splendid Gala Dinner in Piazza dei Signori and the trip to Venice after the work of the Conference was over.

The organization was as near perfect as could be and Roberta Facchinetti and the team in Verona deserve, and received, the warmest congratulations. The success of the Conference encouraged the participants to propose a second *International Conference on Modality in Contemporary English* to be held in Paris in 2002.

(John Morley)