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NEWSLETTER

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All materials to be published (reports, reviews, short articles etc.) should be sent to the above address.

1. SLIN Conferences and Seminars

An enjoyably impressionistic, though quite careful, portrait of people, places and papers from the 11th National Conference of SLIN on *Historical linguistic studies of spoken English*, held at Pisa University on 5 to 7 June last, is kindly offered by Richard Dury to our appreciation and may be found below in section 3. among Conference reports,

Reminders and datings

§ The 12th National Conference of SLIN is expected to take place at Università Cattolica, Milan, in late May or early June, 2005. Professor Maria Luisa Maggioni has agreed to explore such a possibility to organize it with her colleagues of the Milan universities. It is likely that such a topic as "The language of the supernatural in diachronic English" would be selected as the main topic of the Conference. More precise elements will be communicated when the National Committee of SLIN has discussed the whole matter.

§§ The next SLIN workshop will be held in Rome as usual in the Spring of 2004. David Hart is willing to organize and publicize it once again. The workshop will deal with:

1. a discussion of the new state of History of English within the general frame of Italian university courses as they were lately re-structured, also taking into account the responses to the Questionnaire circulated among subscribers;
 2. an assessment of techniques and materials of language testing in SLIN.
- All further details will be provided in the next issue of this *NL*.

§§§ The proceedings of 10th SLIN Conference (Pavia, 5-6 June, 2001), edited by John Meddemmen and published in a special issue of *Il Confronto Letterario* which includes contributions from J. Smith, G. Stein, R.

Bacchielli, A. Bertacca, M. Dossena, R. Dury, L. Fodde, M. Gotti, G. Iamartino and A. Vicentini, S. Kermas, E. Lonati, M. Maggioni, N. Pantaleo, L. Pinnavaia, G. Russo, M. Sturiale are in print at present and copies will be sent to contributors as well as all those interested who are requested to apply to the editor, Professor John Meddemmen, Collegio Ghislieri, P.zza Ghislieri 5, 27100 Pavia; Tel. 0382. 3786570; fax 0382. 504504.

E-mail: johnmeddemmen@hotmail.com

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

Reminders and datings

§ The Linguistic Association of Finland is organizing a Symposium on *Syntactic Functions- Focus on the Periphery* to be held in Helsinki, Finland, on **November 14-15, 2003**. Papers either addressing theoretical questions or taking a specific viewpoint of one or more particular language(s) will be discussed.

If interested, please contact the following site:

www.ling.helsinki.fi/sky/tapahtumat/synfunct/synfunct.shtml.

§§ A multidisciplinary conference on *Progress in Colour Studies* will be held in **Glasgow, U.K.**, from **30th June to 2nd July, 2004**. Queries, suggestions and abstracts are to be addressed to **Carol Biggam** at c.biggam@englang.arts.gla.ac.uk

§§§ **13th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics (13ICEHL)** will take place in Vienna, at the English Department, University of Vienna, on **23. – 28. August, 2004**.

The **academic programme** includes 4 plenary lectures by **Merya Kyto**

(Uppsala Un.) and **Jonathan Culpeper** (Lancaster Un.), **Jeremy Smith** (Glasgow Un.), **Ilse Wischer** (Potsdam Un.) and **Laura Wright** (Cambridge Un.). As usual a number of 30-minute section papers will also be discussed: to this purpose proposals consisting of 300-word abstracts should be sent to the organizers in advance to allow reviewing and circulation among participants.

The **social programme** includes the customary conference dinner to be held at a winery in the evening of August 27 costing 35-40 euros, and four optional events: a visit to famous museums and places of interest in Vienna, a Wienerwald walk, a bustour to Mayerling and Heiligenkreuz monastery, and a bus excursion to the Roman excavations of Carnuntum.

Accommodation will be provided in nearby hotels or student hostels, a list of which with relative costs may be found and unloaded along with the registration form at the Conference site:

www.univie.ac.at/Anglistik/icehl13icehl.

Correspondence should be addressed to the Conference organizers (C. Dalton Puffer, D. Kastovsky, N. Ritt, H. Schendl and C. Weiss) by using fax (+43 1 4277 42499) or e-mail (icehl.anglistik@univie.ac.at) or writing to ICEHL13, c/o Christine Klein, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Wien, Uni-Campus AAKH, Hof 8, Spitalgasse 2, A-1090 Vienna, Austria.

It is recommended that registration along with choice of hotel accommodation should be effected as soon as possible. The Conference fee (130 euros, 50 for companions and 65 for PhD students for early registration before 15 May 2004) is payable through credit card alone. (The relative Registration form is enclosed with the Newsletter)

25th Conference of the International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English (ICAME 25) on "Corpus Linguistics: the state of the art twenty-five years on", organized in collaboration with the language Centre of the University of Verona, will be held at the **University of Verona, 19-23 May, 2004**. Preliminary details may be accessed at the Conference site: <http://centri.univr.it/cla/icame25.htm>

Papers on virtually all the fields touched on by corpus linguistics, especially those focussing on the compilation and use of specialised corpora either monolingual or bilingual are welcome. 250-300-word abstracts should be sent by 15 February, 2004 in electronic form to icame25@univr.it, specifying whether they are papers, work-in-progress reports, posters or software demonstrations.

Accommodation will be provided over a wide range of hotels near the conference venue.

The conference fee which includes lunches, receptions, the conference banquet and a number of trips to Verona city-centre, Lake Garda and Valpolicella wineries amounts to 290 Euros if paid by 1 April, 2004 (360 after that).

Preliminary registration may be effected by filling in the relative form, obtainable through the site http://cla-firstclass.univr.it/icame_registration/Datapage1.asp and sending it before December 31, 2004.

For scientific information please contact professor Roberta Facchinetti at her address: icame25@univr.it.

For all queries concerning organizational details please write to Dr. Annamaria Caputo: annachiara.caputo@endes.it

§§ The first International Conference on **Historical News Discourse (CHINED)** will be held in Florence on 2-3 September, 2004. The keynote speakers are Professors Maurizio Gotti (Bergamo), Andreas Jucker (Zurich) and Susan Herring (Indiana).

Papers addressing news discourse from the Early Modern English Period (c. 1500-1800) are welcome. Information regarding topics and submission of abstracts can be found on the website: www.chined.org.

Further information will be provided by Nicholas Brownlees (n.brownlees@libero.it)

§§§ The **2nd International Conference on "Modality in English"** will take place at the University of Pau (France) on 2-4 September, 2004. The Conference in the organizers' intention "aims to bring together researchers working in the field of modality in English. It will provide a natural forum for scientific exchange both for specialists in the field and for those who are new to the area and wish to be updated on recent developments", being "a follow up to the International Conference on "Modality in contemporary English" held in Verona on 6-8 September, 2001, which, among other things, led to the publication of the homonymous book edited by R. Facchinetti, M. Krug and F. Palmer, Mouton de Gruyter, 2003". Six paper sessions and a poster session dealing with one of the selected topics – types of modality, modality and cognition, modality and grammaticalization, modality and discourse – are expected to take place. Anonymous abstracts of no more than 3 A4 sheets along with a separate page specifying name and address are invited to be sent by e-mail, within the end of January, 2004, in the form of attachment to Paul Larreya (paul.larreya@wanadoo.fr) who is ready to give information on the Conference. The invited guest speakers are J. van der Awera, R. Declerck, R. Facchinetti, M. Krug, F. Palmer, C. Rivière, E. Sweetser, D. Ziegler. A workshop on corpus-based analysis on modality in political discourse will also be held.

A preliminary registration could be effected by filling in a form obtainable through the Conference website www.univ-pau.fr/psd/modality to be furthered preferably by e-mail to pierre.busuttil@univ-pau.fr before 31 December, 2003.

3. Conference reports (R. Dury, G. Mazzon)

Here is R. Dury's much expected report on the SLIN Pisa Conference:

We came to Pisa by a cross-country route, a little-used (almost secret) railway line passing over the Apennines south from Parma, stopping at sleepy stations among green hills, slipping into Tuscany quietly by the back door at Carrara, where marble blocks are stacked by the railway line. This was no major corridor of transportation and industrial development; it reminded me of an old map I once saw of Goethe's route across the Alps: a desperately thin and winding red line among the surrounding green. And that made me think (railway journeys being conducive to reverie) of Goethe's night-time traveller (in 'Nähe des Geliebten'), trembling on the narrow footbridge.

We arrived. There was time to leave bags at hotels and for lunch in a *birreria* near the Arno before going to the first session of the conference in the Aula Magna Storica: a luminous white-vaulted space with gilded panelling and ornate front-centre pulpit, the walls lined with portraits of bespectacled elderly men in ermine collar and chain of office. Forty people were present at the beginning as Antonio Bertacca, gaunt and tall, in pale green jacket and yellow tie, introduced the official inaugural speeches, which then went on while three youngsters struggled, as invisibly as possible, with the computer projection. 'Something there is that doesn't love a wall' and something there is in the nature of conferences that is hostile to PowerPoint.

David Britain from Essex University and an East Anglian himself, opened with a very useful overview of present-day dialect change in England. He also proposed a new paradigm for contemporary dialect-evolution studies. Traditionally the picture is of loss of older forms from distinctive systems (seeing dialects as 'individuals'), while Britain proposes seeing change in terms of continuous dynamic interaction between dialect-systems that are never fixed (and perhaps in the end individuals work like that too).

Certainly there are losses (dialect attrition, dialect death), yet these correspond to the evolution of new koinés (produced by socio-geographic mobi-

lity) and new local dialects (produced by new groups in contact in restricted urban areas). Sometimes new forms spread over wide areas independently of koinés (and here the speaker supplied an interesting table, summarizing many studies, that showed the wide diffusion through England of phonological features perceived as typical of popular London speech (th-fronting, l-vocalization, t-golotalization and labiodental-r).

Koinés form as 'routinized social activities' shift to a supra-local urban area of dialect contact following the lowering of barriers to communication and the increased attractive pull of the urban centre. An example of a general Northern koinization is the way that FACE and GOAT vowels in Newcastle have changed from typical 'Geordie' diphthongs to general Northern qualities.

More localized new dialects can be found in New Towns, where populations from different dialect areas meet, and in urban areas with ethnic settlement and contact with the traditional community. An interesting study of the Tower Hamlets district of London shows that adolescent males from the White and Bangladeshi communities have evolved a shared phoneme system that only has some of the features of traditional Cockney. The girls cling to their old-fashioned phonologies. (If you want to know the limerick here alluded to, I'll tell you, if you buy me a drink.)

In the following paper Susan Kermas (University of Lecce) investigated Cockney rhyming slang, underlining how the same form is used to substitute an indefinite number of forms that rhyme with it. So *Jack and Jill* can traditionally signify 'hill', and also 'till', 'bill' and 'pill' (and so, one would think, any other rhyme, if inserted in the discourse with sufficient skill-and perhaps, I thought, it is this inventive and performative skill that is the most important aspect of the phenomenon; but that would be another paper). The fluid adaptability of rhyming terms has continued in Australian English, so that *butcher's [hook]* (terms are often shorn of their rhyming element in this allusive 'game') from 'look' (in the phrase *gizza butchers*, 'let me have a look', that I remember from North Kent infant schooldays) has been adapted to the AusE 'crook' (= 'angry'). As an Armani shop—I mean, cherry on the top—Kermas finished with readings from Mike Coles' *The Bible in Cockney, well bits of it anyway*. Clearly a book to get.

After a coffee break in the courtyard with 19th-century allegorical statue and

war memorials, we returned to hear **Nicholas Brownlees** talk about courtroom interaction in the trial of Charles I, as revealed in the official published account. The hurried withdrawal of this publication was elegantly explained as the result of Parliament realizing that the intended apologia for themselves had turned out 'a public relations disaster' because Charles in his speeches had been able to reinforce his status by a series of pragmatic strategies. For example, with mutual 'Sir' between King and President soon established, the former nevertheless uses it less often and gains a certain advantage thereby. The frequent interruptions of the King which violate the turn-taking sequence also reinforce his status (and were significantly edited-out of accounts in anti-Royalist newspapers). The King also frequently uses 'by your favour', normally a polite hedge, but here associated with contradiction and interrogation, so used as an ironic device to foreground unmistakeably face-threatening acts. (We know all about this in Italy at the moment; except that poor Charles was fighting for his life, not using it as an everyday tool of 'normal' interaction.) This was an excellent talk delivered with Brownlees' usual (polite) communicative skill.

Virginia Pulcini (a *concorso* cousin of mine) next talked of *okay*, most frequently used as a discourse marker (with use as adjective etc. much less frequent), though dictionaries continue to use terms like 'exclamation', 'interjection' or 'convention' (CoBUILD). After a historical introduction, she moved on to an analysis of occurrences in the Louvain corpus of spoken English interaction (LINDSEI), which shows how the form is used in teacher-pupil interaction almost three-quarters of the time by teachers, and mainly (with a falling intonation) as a way of organizing discourse. Okay: The main pragmatic functions found were for introducing a new topic, acknowledging the other person's turn (= 'I have heard'), and as a mark of the closing of a topic (with the two framing functions—though the term 'frame' was used only for the 'opener'—representing over two-thirds of all uses). Okay. The work of counting and classifying that accompanies all statistical studies is made difficult by the fact that words are often used with more than one function.

Thursday's programme ended here and we divided; to meet again for dinner at a little trattoria where we sat at odd tables in half of an L-shaped

room, ventilated by open French windows. Outside these at one point I stood with another *concorso* cousin catching up with news—a useful function of conferences. Then we wandered back through Pisa's remarkably quiet streets to our hotels, most of which were near the Cathedral complex—unusually for Italy placed not centrally in a square but in one corner of the old walled city and on a grassy field. Against this background, in this frame, the white stone of the four buildings stands out clearly and the fascinating 'musical' geometry of the Romanesque architecture interacts endlessly. The leaning of the bell-tower is like the deliberate imperfection that the Islamic artist incorporates into his design to avoid competing with Divine perfection. That this tower alone is painted on countless Pizzeria walls and reproduced in plastic souvenirs, and this as a mere curiosity of non-perpendicularity, seemed—as we viewed the Field of Miracles that night—seemed, I thought, a strange reflection on—on something or other. But I think it's time I went to bed.

On Friday and Saturday we were in the Economics Faculty, a longish walk from the Cathedral area, the second half along the south-facing Lungarno Mediceo, exposed to the sun all day in this hotter-than-usual early June (subsequently most people chose a more zig-zagging route through internal streets). At half-past nine (and with twenty-five people present) we started with the second guest speaker, tall, blonde **Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kolaczyk** (whose name alone promised a certain familiarity with sequences of consonants) on 'The phonotactics of consonant clusters in the history of English'. First we were given an overview of consonant cluster (CC) changes (simplification, e.g. *hnecca* > *neck*; modification of one element, e.g. *byr_en* > *burden*; plus one set of new CCs, as in /nju:/). Then the speaker examined the explanation for such changes that might be supplied by socio-historical linguistics, which starts from a 'uniformitarian' presupposition of language change. In this case, such historical changes could be seen as illustrating the same phonostylistic processes as found in modern casual speech (with reductions explained by factors of positional and inherent strength of individual consonants, combined with least-effort simplification). However, with our inevitably imperfect knowledge of the historical social context (quote to this effect from Gabriella Mazzon, luckily in the audien-

ce), this type of analysis has its limits. The speaker then unveiled her own approach, in terms of the 'goodness' of CCs in Beat-and-Binding phonology (i.e. universalist phonotactics rather than universalist phonostylistics). Starting from the observation that 70% of languages lack CCs and that there seems to be a universal preference for the highly-contrastive CV syllable ('best' for both articulation and perception), the aim of this approach is to formulate rules for CCs which reveal a universal scale of 'goodness' based on the degree of contrast between consonants and between consonant and adjacent vowel. So, as far as sonority is concerned (leaving aside place of articulation and voicing), the initial CC in *twice* is in the 'best' category and that in traditional BrE *lute* in the 'worst'. The speaker then returned to the set of historical English CC changes and explained each as moving in the direction of universal phonotactic preferences, with 'worst' class CCs being reduced first or strengthened by modification to 'better' CCs.

In the debate that followed, David Britain picked up a comment on h-dropping in Shockey's *Sound Patterns of Spoken English* (in the phonostylistic review of CC changes) and suggested that learnt *home* reduced to *ome* in casual speech is unrealistic, and that most speakers learn a stored *ome* and then later *home* for careful formal use only. Here Katarzyna Dziubalska begged to differ: for her, speakers acquire emphatic 'motherese' *home*, though she admitted that the case is clearer for more properly phonostylistic reductions (like *whatchou* vs *what you*). The debate was postponed to allow those present to interview a sample of two-year-olds.

Paola Tornaghi, our white-jacketed Ariadne, next led us through the labyrinth of Old English vowels, boldly confronting, face-to-face, the dreaded form-changing diphthongs. Here dialect differences which must have existed before Alfred need to be established by a careful examination of early records such as charters and inscriptions. This was an overview in the tradition of Germanic philology that pulled together data from numerous studies. After the coffee break (in a strange irregular room paved with Pirelli tiles, that looked like the bit that the architect forgot as he designed other spaces around it), **Stefania Maci** (looking cool in a loose black outfit and sandals) talked about IME/eMode orthographic representation of the TIME vowel as a clue to its phonological development. (In the talk, however, she used the

terms 'long-i' and 'the diphthong /ai/', slightly confusing to a bear of little brain like myself). She had analysed all TIME-words in four Norfolk plays written around 1475 (in MS Digby 33), together with those in a group of the East-Anglian Paston letters from 1425 to 1486. The results showed scribal variation, a majority use of <y> but also a good number of cases of <ey>, and the suggestion that some words were 'leaders' in grapho-phonological change. There was also an interesting suggestion of rhymes with DAY-words (in a *pray-dey* ('die') rhyme and in a *sy* ('say') spelling).

Laura Pinnavaia (from Milan Cattolica in a pale green shirt, loose and light) next looked at phonological adaptations of Italian, French, Dutch and German words in English (in the pronunciations recorded in dictionaries). Three types of substitution were found: foreign sound replaced by the nearest English sound (as in *menu*), substitution governed by English phonotactic constraints (e.g. /st/ in *alpenstock*), and by analysis in terms of a familiar English morpheme (e.g. *landgrave*). The preservation/substitution of foreign sounds depends on i) time (more recent loans less adapted, e.g. *Sekt* vs *sauerkraut*), ii) spoken or written entry into the culture (principally written forms more adapted, e.g. /ks/ in botanic *Puccinia*), iii) semiotic function (less adaptation for words with a strong connotational function associated with the culture of origin, more adaptation where denotation is dominant (as in scientific registers) e.g. *précieuse* vs *gauze*).

Maria Luisa Maggioni (also from Milan Cattolica) next talked of how spoken language was represented in the 14th-century poem *Patience* by the *Gawain*-poet. Sometimes direct speech is introduced without a verb of speaking (and presumably the quotation marks in the handout were not in the original MS). On other occasions there is a verb of speaking: unmarked, like *sayde*, or marked, like *called*, where the manner of speaking is also indicated. Then there are adverbials that give further indications of 'metaphonological traits' (e.g. *wroþly, with a roughlich rurd* 'with a rough sound'). The various strategies show the writer trying to evolve ways (at this early stage of revived literary English) to indicate not only the words spoken but also, as an important clue to meaning, the way that these were said.

After a pizza round the corner, the afternoon was devoted to historical writers on English sounds, starting with **Giuliana Russo** (a pleasant, quiet-spoken PhD student from Catania) who told us about the MS grammar written in 1612 by the Cambridge scholar Thomas Tonkis, *De Analogia Anglicani Sermonis Liber Grammaticus*. (She flattered us by not translating all the Latin . . .). As has been known since Michael 1970, AAS was a source (unacknowledged) for Ben Jonson's posthumously published *English Grammar* of 1640. Tonkis may have written for foreign students, since he has comparative examples in Latin, French and Spanish. His was an innovative work: the first English grammar that considers the article as a separate part of speech; almost half of the work is devoted to compounding and word-derivation. Most interestingly, however, Tonkis (who wrote a couple of University plays and so would be aware of spoken forms) devotes some comments to weak forms (*wimmee* vs *with me*, *tommee* vs *to me*, *ov us* vs *of us*) and so shows an awareness that English language teaching cannot be simply based on words. This was a well-structured talk that illustrated a single thesis very clearly without getting lost in the data.

Alessandra Vicentini (from Milano Statale), tall, long-haired in grey trousers and a black top and cardigan (undoubtedly the most elegant of the speakers), spoke to us about the attitude towards homophones in two 17th-century handbooks: Hodge's *Most Plain Directions for True Writing* (1653) and Care's *Tutor to True English* (1683). The matter was felt to be a problem for those learning to spell, yet these works also give us precious information about contrastive voicing in pairs such as *use*, verb and noun, and contrastive syllable stress in 2-syllable pairs such as *convert*, noun and verb, as well as free variants in spelling (French vs Latin spelling for *enquire* vs *inquire* etc.), and also actual pronunciations (as, for example, where Hodges lists *worry* and *weary* as homophones).

After the coffee break we returned to hear **Massimo Sturiale** of Catania talk about the attitude to 'correct' pronunciation in two popular 18th-century texts: Anne Fisher's *New Grammar*, Newcastle, 1745 (whose innovative approach included teach-yourself materials and 'bad English' examples) and William Perry's *Royal Standard English Dictionary*, Edinburgh, 1775 (the first use of 'standard English', 1836 for the OED, though here perhaps predominantly a metaphoric use of 'royal standard'). Both of them associa-

te linguistic and social 'correctness', both are interested in the correct syllable stress (and we saw that words ending in *-able* were still generally stressed on the suffix). In addition Perry (who disagrees with Sheridan on vowel qualities) gives us invaluable information on the evolution of sounds in the 18th century, in particular, he acknowledges the FULL/UP split (which, as we know, did not spread to Northern England, though it leapt over to Edinburgh and into Scottish English). Despite the abundance of data here, the speaker showed didactic ability in carefully pointing out the significant words in the ohp slides and commenting on them, so that we never felt lost.

The day ended with **Elisabetta Lonati** (of Milano Statale) on the way that two 18th-century encyclopedias (Chambers' *Cyclopaedia*, 1728, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1771). Chambers takes the spoken language as the basic system and orthography as derivative. An interesting comment in the same work is 'We not only differ from one another [in orthography]: but there is scarce any that consists with himself', which seems to show a certain tolerance of informal spelling variation. Both works confusingly talk of 'vowel' as a 'letter' that 'affords' (? = 'produces') a 'sound', showing the continuing imperfection of linguistic metalanguage. The paper ended with Johnson's remarks on orthography. All three works seem to show, among continuing confusion and inconsistencies, a definite development of scientific rigour in dealing with language.

The long day ended with the *cena sociale* 'da Pillo' in via del Borghetto, where we had a seemingly never-ending series of *antipasti* and then *primi* that was reminiscent of an Italian wedding meal. Details I do not remember, but both wine and food were good. Before the *dessert* and *caffè*, **Nicola Pantaleo**, one of the founding fathers of the SLIN group stood up and proposed a toast to the organizer. At this point the present writer felt moved to offer a recitation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 in an approximation of Shakespearean pronunciation. This had been something I had suggested, well, at least 14 years before, and since no-one else had done it, I thought I should have a try. It was an interesting experiment, rather like an archaeologist making a working model of some historical machinery: i.e. rather difficult, and involving decisions that you didn't think of when just conside-

ring things on paper. Though I'm sure only a certain percentage of sounds were right, it seemed to go quite well. Now we want a SLIN drama company; a school of applied historical phonology; pronunciation dictionaries for previous eras... After that Alessandra Vicentini also felt moved to contribute to the entertainment: she obviously belongs to a gospel choir and, with an unexpectedly good, strong and vibrant voice, gave us a stirring rendition of 'Oh, Freedom' accompanied by our clapping. Suppressing the performative urges of the rest of the company, Nicola then continued a typical *pince-sans-rire* speech concluding with another toast to Antonio Bertacca and with the entry of the dessert.

Saturday morning started with Elena Olivari from Brescia on Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* in which she analysed a series of features that underline the relationship with the reader and render the didactic treatise more effective. These include the use of simple language, short sentences and paratactic syntax; periphrasis and repetition in order to ensure understanding (with frequent use of *that is to seyn* etc.), also the careful anaphora so that things are referred to in an unambiguous fashion; and the direct address to the reader and the warning imperatives aimed at maintaining attention at important points (*And take heede, and have this in mynde* etc.). Chaucer demonstrates his linguistic ability in the innovative series of choices he had to make in writing a scientific treatise in English.

Roberta Mullini (University of Urbino) next attempted to identify those parts of late 15th-early 16th-century dramas that might be closest to normal speech. These she identified with arguments (when the turns become shorter and a stanza is occupied by more than one speaker), with other climactic and emotional moments, and also with some banal everyday exchanges (such as the interrogation in a lesson in *Wit and Science*, 1534). (This reminded me of Gabriella Di Martino's similar search at CNSLIN9 in early language-teaching textbooks for dialogues like bargaining at the market and negotiating a rate for lodgings.)

The most ambitious non-guest-speaker paper was undoubtedly that by Marcella Bertuccelli and Patrizia Pesola from Pisa, talking about the grammaticalization of *I see* – *You see*: the proposal of a new theory of gram-

maticalization, no less. Alas, 20 minutes is not quite long enough for such a bold enterprise, especially as more than half of it had to go on an introduction of the pragmatic functions of *I see* and *you see* and on an outline of existing grammaticalization hypotheses. The speakers did not find the predicted syntactic 'scope reduction' for the studied forms, nor did they clearly find 'generalization of meaning'. Their own approach, squeezed into 'extra time', involves the increase of opacity that results from presupposed 'background' meaning, the complexity of polysemy, and also a third point—but here my notes become illegible. An apparently promising paper of impressive scope: we look forward to reading the printed form in the Proceedings.

Gabriella Del Lungo of Florence University brought up the rear with a talk on Adam Smith's 'Lectures on Jurisprudence', part of a project to examine lectures over time. In this case, the lectures, written up from student notes, contain interesting traces of orality and of face-to-face interaction. The speaker had time only to illustrate and analyse the use of personal pronouns (the frequent use of *we*, for example, both inclusive and exclusive), and link this with the use of the inserted personal and explicatory anecdote (that we find in such lectures right up to the present) and the use of impersonal constructions (like *it is to be observed that*). These are not interactive lectures (direct address is infrequent) and the lecturer has undisputed prestige and authority (as is seen in his frequent use of *we* followed by expressions of deontic modality).

The conference ended here with the business meeting (reported in the previous *Newsletter*). On the journey home I began thinking of our organization, now fifteen years old and I thought back its inauguration in Naples back in 1988: an image I remember of this hopeful beginning (this is all now part of my return journey reverie) is of tall doors open to a first-floor ambulatory around a quadrangle and long white curtains floating in the breeze. There is no doubt that the University reforms have led to less visibility to English historical linguistics in Italy. So where do we go from here with our conferences? The kind of overview given by the two guest-speakers is an excellent way to learn about the latest research—and perhaps in future SLIN conferences could give the guest speaker a whole half-day, so that the event could take on the mixed character of conference and

seminar. The next conference will be a vital test of our future—let's hope we get more full professors present, and a consistent number of auditors. Such were the mixed thoughts passing through my mind as the train sped northwards between Riomaggiore and Sestri Levante, where the line twists through tunnels and along cliff-faces. At one point I looked up to see, for a long two seconds, a narrow cove; a wave dashing against rocks and spray sent into the air. To describe that buffeting wave rightly I felt I needed a word with an initial *cn-* cluster (a good cluster that was unfortunately not a 'good' cluster) and I thought of the Seafarer who, at the prow of his ship, 'be clifum cnossa)' during the 'narrow (or anxious) nightwatch'. And this set me thinking again of Goethe's journey and of his night traveller trembling on the narrow footbridge. And Schubert's music.

Gabriella Mazzon has accepted to contribute an intriguing report on the first successful **Conference on English Historical dialectology** (University of Bergamo, 4-6 September last).

The present writer has for a long time been a fan of small, focussed conferences, which may lack the glamour of big events, but are invaluable occasions for getting down to doing some real work, besides providing the opportunity for fruitful and relaxed socialisation. ICEHD1 in Bergamo was a big event, from a scientific point of view, but attenders managed to enjoy the quiet efficiency of the Faculty and the charming setting of Bergamo Alta without the hassle that is typical of larger conferences.

The schedule started with a keynote lecture by **Roger Lass**, which sounded like a retrospective *mea culpa*: with the usual good humour, he set about to fustigate past (and sometimes present) editorial practice, drawing on two of his collateral passions, archaeology and criminology. The historical linguist, he maintained, should behave like a crime-scene detective, and avoid tampering with evidence or contaminating the scene in any way. Practices such as adding punctuation, dividing words that are written consecutively on the manuscript, or expanding abbreviations and contractions, are equivalent to mixing one's fingerprints with those of the murderer, or

placing a clay fragment where it 'should' fit according to modern vase-making. We should therefore discard editions published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when these emendations were so current as to be quite often made silently, and go back to the manuscript if we are to carry out any serious piece of research. As to be expected, this lecture caused a salve of questions and comments, which continued over the coffee break.

The second morning session included a paper from **M. Ogura** (written with **W. Wang**), which attempted to outline a theoretical model of the spread and changes in language features in an evolutionist perspective, drawing on Darwinism to delineate an idea of language as a system that changes because it gets adapted to perceptual factors from one generation to the next. This paper also raised a number of comments, since the application of evolutionist views to language change, attempted by various scholars in various ways over the past few years, is still highly controversial. The paper closing the session was delivered by **A. Meurman-Solin**, who has been working on the *Corpus of Scottish Correspondence*, and she also raised methodological issues, maintaining that we should overcome the stage in which we only try to make inventories of forms, issuing detailed tables of the number of occurrences of each item, only to stop there and think we have gained insight just by counting. Conversely, since "quantity should never come first in our studies", we should try and explain each variant according to the context and to its possible uses and communicative functions, in order to go beyond the inventory and try and outline a typology of the forms we study as they might have been represented in the repertoire of the manuscript writer.

We were all feeling very much stimulated by the morning session, but we welcomed the lunch break, which saw us gather in the garden of a nearby restaurant, enjoying the warm temperature, the tasteful decor, and the appetizing buffet. After lunch, we were in for another thought-provoking session: **M. Laing**, drawing from the experience gathered by trying to place texts for the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English*, gave us a typology of possible combinations of such mysterious figures as 'author', 'scribe', 'translator', 'transliterator'. Some of these roles can, at times, be taken up by the same person, or they can all be attributed to single individuals, thus creating a maze of possible intersections between the codes each of these individuals

brings with him and carries over in the manuscript. The paper showed that space is only one of the dimensions we should take into account in historical dialectology, since variation has a number of additional sources. The next paper, delivered by another member of the *LAEME* team, **K. Williamson**, touched on another kind of fundamental issue: what do we mean, in historical dialectology, by 'synchrony' and 'diachrony'? Williamson went back to de Saussure's analogy between language states and moments in a game of chess, and tried to reinterpret this analogy in the light of what we know today. It is indeed the case, he stated, that our approach is often really as much synchronic (although not dealing with the present, but with a past stage) as diachronic, mainly because historical dialectology is an essentially empirical discipline. Historical dialectology, he argued, could profit from a model including a unified *Spacetime* continuum in order to integrate lacunae in our knowledge of past stages of a language system.

In Italian we have the saying 'non tutto il male vien per nuocere', and this was indeed a case in point: late cancellations in the afternoon schedule allowed us to have a general discussion about the day's sessions, focussing on methodological issues. The discussion was informally chaired by **S. Fitzmaurice**, who immediately posed fundamental questions: if we are studying dialectology, what exactly are we studying dialects of? Considering the presence of some distinguished guests, who have spent at least half their lives studying these issues, it is no surprise that the debate that followed was very rich in ideas and information, and it stands as part of the general debate on the question of defining language varieties, and on the danger of reification of objects such as 'West Midlands dialect', which actually only have a heuristic function. It was a brilliant idea to record the whole debate, so that it can be included in the conference proceedings.

The day closed with a reception held in the intriguing San Francesco cloister, a quiet place rich in history and art, where wine and nibbles were served and attenders, while enjoying the view and the frescoes, could carry on discussing the many interesting ideas that had come out during the day. We then dispersed in small groups to explore the ever-enchanting upper town and find good places for dinner, which there is certainly no lack of.

The first session of the next morning was devoted to Old English and Middle English issues. **P. Kitson**, with his usual impressive care for detail,

went on to show how language variants employed in Anglo-Saxon Charters can help us place literary works within a range of only a few miles. Of course, this holds for West Saxon, which is more abundantly documented, far better than for northern dialects, which are not so well represented and show, in some cases, variants whose distribution is not completely clear even from charter analysis. With **M. Stenroos's** paper, we then moved on to Late Middle English, a period when, as the argument of the paper went, variation becomes increasingly non-regional, due to the spread of standard, or rather pre-standard, forms, and of dialectally 'neutral' variants (what Stenroos calls 'colourless' forms), perhaps suggesting koineisation or just a sort of 'levelling' process due to copying practice, as indicated by the fact that some of these variants are specific of some text-types only, possibly due to a spread of writing as 'professional practice'. In the next paper, **G. Stenbrenden** added another blow to the demolition of the notion of 'Great Vowel Shift', a notion that has been put under severe questioning for the past years. Using data on long vowels from the various atlases of Middle English, she showed that some of the changes normally included in the GVS pattern seem to occur much earlier than expected, and are so intertwined with other changes as to make it very difficult to isolate them and treat them separately. A deep reinterpretation of the notion of Great Vowel Shift is needed, she concluded, and there was agreement with that statement from the audience, especially from people such as Roger Lass who have been pointing out this need for years. The last speaker of the morning panel, **J. Smith**, could not attend the conference but sent in his paper, which was read by **R. Dury**. The paper deals with issues related to the quality, and to possible changes in quality, of some ME short vowels, trying to explain the fact that these vowels were often taken, by previous scholars, to be quite homogeneous with the corresponding long vowels till about the 13th century.

After the coffee break, we were treated to a marvellous lecture by **M. Benskin**, a leading authority on ME dialectology and on the rise of early standards, whose depth of insight, balance of argumentation, and richness, left the audience spellbound. The birth of Hiberno-English, often considered the first 'colonial' variety of English, was examined in detail, and the oldest evidence available scrutinised. The analysis shows that, while much early writing appears rather standardised, other documents include spellings

that seem highly suggestive of the consequences of language contact, and of a deeper influence of the Irish language. With magistral clarity, Benskin illustrated some dubious cases that remain unsolved, leading to a general reflection: as in the study of later 'immigrant varieties', a precise distinction between what is due to substrate and what has different sources ultimately seems impossible to draw.

After lunch, another quite rich session followed; **R. Hogg** gave us an example of how to ask oneself questions, and how to face the unavoidable dilemmas, when going about reconstructing the possible geographical provenance of an Old English work. In this case, the *Rushworth Gospels* were re-examined and compared to other northern texts in order to try and arrive at a more secure placement of this work, since the traditional allocation has recently been challenged. Next, **A. van Kemenade** swept us away from spellings into syntax, presenting a project that will try to map Middle English dialect syntax in the framework of the latest version of the Principles and Parameters theory. Such an approach is bound to raise a debate, especially since other, totally different approaches such as those behind socio-historical linguistics and historical pragmatics have been gaining ground, and so also in this case, a lively debate followed the paper. Next, **A. Warner** also presented a paper on ME syntax, particularly concerned about the distribution of verb-subject inversion in specific contexts and in various 'dialects', in order to show that the distribution of patterns is indeed different in some northern documents from southern ones. **R. Hickey** offered some data from his Corpus of Irish English, speculating on the origin of specific features according to their distribution, mainly touching on morphological issues (second person pronoun forms) and syntax (representations of habitual aspect). The whole of this session offered us the opportunity to get updated with new historical corpora being produced and with new projects, at the same time highlighting new ways in which material may be used.

After the coffee break, **J. E. Díaz Vera** led us through an analysis of variation within some lexical fields pertaining to social and religious ceremonies in Early and Middle Scots. This paper focussed on onomasiology, and was particularly interesting because it was an attempt at gaining insight into cognitive and cultural, social issues through the study of language items.

The next paper was a joint effort by **J. Fernández Cuesta** and **N. Rodríguez Ledesma**, and it focussed on northern dialect features in Early Modern English wills; these features appear more consistently than in other text-types of the same time and provenance, so they might be attributed to the sociolinguistic background of writers. The last paper was by **G. Shorrocks**, who gave an enjoyable account of dialect features in a work in which a late 18th-century informant related some personal narratives, which were transcribed (with a visible attempt at reproducing the features of oral delivery) and later published by Robert Southey. Shorrocks lamented the fact that documents such as these have been neglected by dialectologists so far, and highlighted some linguistic and cultural aspects of the document.

Such an intense day found its perfect crowning in the luxurious conference dinner, which took place at a wonderful restaurant on the magic *piazza* that is the core of Bergamo Alta. While enjoying the delicious food and wine, speeches of thanks were given, flowers were offered (and several toasts made) to **Marina Dossena**, for organising an event that everybody was finding extremely helpful for our work, besides being highly enjoyable.

The first session of the next morning was devoted to issues concerning standardisation. **J. Beal** dealt with attitudes to pronunciation as they emerge from pronouncing dictionaries (which appear highly prescriptive in the sense that they clearly indicate what pronunciations are to be avoided), and in particular with the first dictionary records of the stigmatisation of the absence, from northern varieties, of some sound changes. Next, **R. Mooneram** introduced us to issues related to the standardisation of Mauritian Creole, which has recently found some strong advocates among literary people on the island, and is rapidly becoming a vehicle for literacy and a symbol of identity. **S. Fitzmaurice** explored issues connected to the perception of the standard and of dialects in the eighteenth century, and her paper was in the line of socio-historical linguistic studies drawing from the sociolinguistic analysis method of social networks, trying to trace connections between intellectuals that may give evidence about the spread of specific language changes; in this case, she concentrated on copula contractions in various text-types.

The last session was devoted to issues that involve language contact. **G. Melchers** provided a number of examples of Insular Scots, showing the

influx of Scandinavian varieties on morphology and syntax, besides lexis. **M. Filppula** and **J. Klemola** made recourse, in their joint paper, to data from traditional dialect sources in order to show the possible impact of Celtic substratum on such elements as verb paradigm levelling and uses of the definite article, besides touching on lexical items borrowed from Celtic varieties, which seem to be much more numerous than usually claimed, pointing to a deeper impact of Celtic languages on traditional dialects of English.

After this last paper, **Marina Dossena** offered a few rounding-up remarks, and the audience renewed their thanks to her for the wonderful idea to organise this conference, and for the obvious success it had proved to be. So much so, that it was decided that this has been only the first of a series. ICEHD2 will be held in Bergamo again in 2007; such a long time-span (which disappointed those who were clearly hoping to have another occasion to be in this enchanting place again fairly soon) was decided on after taking into consideration the fact that most papers concerned long-term projects, so it was deemed best to postpone the next meeting to a stage when they will probably be near completion.

Gabriella Mazzon

4. Reviews and bibliographical information

§ Here is a list of novelties and publications of major interest for SLIN specialists suggested by Nicholas Brownlees.

(If SLIN newsletter subscribers have books which have been published in the last six months they are asked to send the bibliographical details of their works to Nicholas Brownlees (email: n.brownlees@libero.it)

Britain, D. & J. Cheshire (eds.). 2003. *Social Dialectology. In honour of Peter Trudgill*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Crystal, D. 2003. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (second edition). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Facchinetti, R., Krug, M. & F. Palmer (eds.). 2003. *Modality in Contemporary English*. [Topics in English Linguistics 44, General Editors: Bernd Kortmann and Elizabeth Closs Traugott] Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Gotti, M. 2003. *Specialized Discourse. Linguistic Features and Changing Conventions*. Bern: Peter Lang AG.

Nevalainen, T. & H. Raumolin-Brunberg (eds.). 2003. *Historical Sociolinguistics: Language Change in Tudor and Stuart England*. London: Pearson Education.

Raymond, J. 2003. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taavitsainen, I. & Andreas H. Jucker (eds.). 2003. *Diachronic Perspectives on Address Term Systems*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Bibliography of Pragmatics ONLINE; Handbook of Pragmatics ONLINE. (These two online research tools for Pragmatics can be tested free for thirty days. You sign up at: www.benjamins.com/online)

Nicholas Brownlees

§§ The *Journal of the Spanish Society for Medieval English Language and Literature (SELIM)* accepts contributions for its forthcoming issues – numbers 11 and 12 – on any aspect of Medieval English studies. Articles, notes, review articles and reviews are welcome.

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