

LINGUISTICS

STUDIES ON OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN POLAND (1900-2000)

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Interests in Old and Middle English in Poland go back to the beginning of the 20th century. However, Medieval English did not occupy an important place in English studies in Poland before 1939. There were only two scholars who pursued serious studies in the field, i.e., Prof. Roman Dyboski (1883-1945) in Cracow and Dr. Zygfryd M. Arend (d. 1944) in Poznań.

Professor Dyboski published the edition of *Songs, carols and other miscellaneous poems from the Balliol MS 354, Richard Hill's Commonplace-book* (EETS, ES 101) in 1908 (which was accepted by the University of Vienna as a *habilitation* dissertation). In 1910 he also published a study on English medieval language and literature which was used as a handbook at Polish universities until the 1950's.

Arend's interests centred on Middle English phonology, particularly in *Cursor Mundi*. He was completing a major work on the subject (his *habilitation* dissertation) when World War II broke out. Part of it, devoted to the phenomenon of linking, appeared in *Transactions of the Philological Society 1925-1930* in 1931. Arend unfortunately lost his life in 1944 and did not finish the work.

In 1935 Dyboski and Arend jointly edited the Middle English MS *Knyghthode and bataile* for the Early English Text Society (EETS, OS 201).

The premature death of both these scholars left Polish departments of English immediately after the war with no real specialist in the field of Medieval English. This situation lasted almost until 1950. A breakthrough came with the return of *Alfred Reszkiewicz* from his postgraduate studies at the University of Notre Dame, Ind., USA and with *Professor Margaret Schlauch's* arrival in Warsaw in 1951. The rise of interest in the subject was also enhanced by the reform of higher education which introduced to the curriculum of English studies

inter alia a two-semester (four hours a week) course on Old English and a two-semester course (also four hours a week) on the history of English with one semester devoted to Middle English (also four hours a week). Both courses were obligatory for all students of English. This continued until 1971 and encouraged a number of students to take up M.A. studies in the area of Medieval English.

The situation changed somewhat for the worse in 1971 when the courses on Old English and the history of English were reduced to one two-semester course on the history of English taught two hours a week. The course was still obligatory for all undergraduates. Since 1981, when universities gained a fair amount of autonomy, in some English departments, e.g., the University of Warsaw, students can hardly have a glimpse at Old or Middle English since the course on the history of English has been reduced to one semester (two hours a week). Some departments (e.g., Poznań) still offer a two-semester (three hours a week) course on the subject. The Poznań School of English additionally offers more advanced courses on various aspects of Old and Middle English for 3rd and 4th year students.

In the fifties major contributions to the field came from Professor Margaret Schlauch (1898-1986) and Professor Alfred Reszkiewicz (1920-1973) both in the form of handbooks for students as well as original papers and larger works.

Professor M. Schlauch published a paper on Chaucer's colloquial English (1952b) and an outline history of English (1952a) covering the period from late Middle English until 1950's. The former was later reprinted in several collections of papers and the latter, thoroughly revised and updated, was published under the title *The English language in modern times* in 1959 (2nd ed. 1964). It was favourably reviewed among others by R. W. Zandvoort, R. M. Wilson, T. Finkenstaedt and E. J. Dobson. M. Schlauch in her analysis of the development of the English language devoted ample space to external social, political and cultural factors determining the course of language evolution and particularly the history of the rise of a standard variety. The work predates the later socio-historical linguistic accounts of the history of English and has not lost much of its originality even today. Among Prof. M. Schlauch's students of Middle English, the only one who has devoted most of his career to research in the field is Professor Jacek Fisiak (see below).

Professor A. Reszkiewicz combined a profound interest in structural linguistics with a thorough philological training. In Cracow he was under the strong influence of Professor Jerzy Kuryłowicz, a world-renowned Indo-Europeanist (1895-1978). His works cover a wide range of topics in Old English phonology and grammar as well as late Middle English syntax. Among the phonological contributions the most important is his study on the phonological status of OE short diphthongs (published in 1953, now a classic widely quoted in world literature, e.g., by F. Mosse, J. Vachek, R. P. Stockwell, B. Trnka and R. M. Hogg

among others) and his papers on the rise and loss of some OE short vowels (1971a, 1972). His most important syntactic works include a monograph on word order in Late Old English (1966a), a paper on OE split constructions, and a study of main sentence elements in the Late Middle English *Book of Margery Kempe* (1962). Professor Reszkiewicz has provided generations of Polish students with original handbooks, grammars and readers of Old English (1951-54, 1964, 1973a, 1973b [reprinted 1996], 1973c). His *Diachronic grammar of Old English* was reprinted after twenty-three years and is still in use at Polish universities. He taught a number of specialists currently involved in the research and teaching of Medieval English. Among his students of Old English were Prof. J. Fisiak and Prof. J. Wełna. His untimely sudden death in 1973 deprived Poland and the scholarly world at large of an outstanding medievalist.

In the early sixties three younger scholars entered the field of Medieval English, i.e., **Professor Jacek Fisiak** (b. 1936; in Łódź until 1965 and since then in Poznań), a student of Professor M. Schlauch and Professor A. Reszkiewicz, **Professor Ruta Nagucka** (b. 1930; in Cracow; she published earlier under her maiden name Sikora), a student of Professor Kuryłowicz, and **Docent Walerian Świczkowski** (1929-1993; in Lublin), a student of Roman Jakobson at Harvard.

Professor Jacek Fisiak provided Polish students with *An Early Middle English reader* (1961, 5th ed. 1996) and *A Middle English grammar* (1964 and a revised version in 1968; 7th ed. 1995). He has also published a monograph on the morphology of Chaucer's English (1965), which is still one of the few treatments of Chaucer's word formation. Prof. Fisiak has contributed a number of papers on Old and Middle English phonology, in particular on OE and ME consonant clusters and vocalic changes (1967, 1968, 1982a, 1988a), on subjectless sentences in Middle English (1976) and on certain ME linguistic changes due to social motivation (1977b). Since the early 1980's his interests have focussed on Old and Middle English dialectology resulting in general and theoretical works (1982b, 1983c, 1985b, 1999) as well as more specific contributions on the shift of isoglosses in the 15th century (1983d), the voicing of initial fricatives in Middle English (1985a [reprinted in Viereck 1985], 1992a, 1994a), Old East Anglian (1988c [reprinted in Fisiak – Trudgill 2000]), Late Old English dialects in *Domesday Book* (1990a), EME *mon ~ man*, OE *hyll* in the East Midlands in Early Middle English and the distribution of ME *beck* in the Midlands. Since the late 1980's Professor Fisiak's dialectological research has concentrated on onomastic evidence. In 1983 and 1993 he published other aids for students of Old and Middle English, i.e., a bibliography of writings for the history of English, which was subsequently revised and enlarged and appeared in 1987, and in 1993 a short external history of English (2nd rev. and enlarged ed. 1995; the Japanese edition 1995; 3rd ed. 2000). In 1976 Professor Fisiak started organizing international conferences on historical linguistics where Medieval English occu-

pied a significant place. Eleven conferences took place between 1976 and 2000, i.e., on historical phonology (1976, 1996), morphology (1978), syntax (1981), semantics/word formation (1986), on historical linguistics and philology (1988), language contact and linguistic change (1991), linguistic change and typology (1993) and two more general conferences on historical linguistics (6th ICHL 1983 and 9th ICEHL 1996). In 1994 Professor Fisiak organized an International Conference on Middle English which started a new series of conferences (2nd ICOM took place in Helsinki in 1997 and 3rd ICOM in Dublin in 1999). Thirteen volumes of papers from the conferences have been published to date (Fisiak 1978, 1980, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1988, 1990, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, and Fisiak – Krygier 1998).

Professor Fisiak has trained a number of medievalists of the youngest generation and supervised numerous Ph.D. dissertations (e.g., Prof. W. Awedyk, Prof. R. Kopytko, Prof. A. Adamska-Sałaciak, Prof. M. Krygier, Prof. P. Gąsiorowski, Dr. M. Nowakowski, Dr. T. Retelewska, Dr. A. Wegner, Dr. H. Mausch, Dr. A. Zbierska-Sawala, Dr. A. Hans, and Dr. M. Fabiszak in Poznań, Prof. B. Lewandowska in Łódź and Prof. J. Wełna in Warsaw) as well as M.A. theses on various aspects of Old and Middle English.

In 1996 the Department of the History of English under the headship of Prof. Fisiak was established in the School of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, which has become the strongest centre of English historical linguistics in Poland.

Prof. Ruta Nagucka's interests have basically centred on the generative syntax of Old and Middle English. In 1968 she published a pioneering monograph on the syntax of Chaucer's *Astrolabe* and a paper on ME *because-constructions*. She has also written on ME subjectless sentences (1979a), pre- and postnominal adjectives in Late Middle English (1997d), spatial relations in Chaucer's *Astrolabe* (1996) and a reflexive function of the personal pronoun in Old and Middle English (1981). However, since 1979 most of her works have been devoted to the syntax and semantics of Old English. Two original papers deal with the syntax and semantics of OE *hatan*, eleven more address such issues as complementation (1985, 1986), passivization (1999a, b), the order of sentence elements (1991), instrumental (1997a), temporal relations expressed by prepositional phrases (1999c), the prepositions *to* and *for* (1992) and *in* and *on* (1993, 1995). Old and Middle English syntax and semantics are also treated in more general works devoted either to the history of English syntax or semantics or some specific theoretical issues (1978, 1983, 1984a, 1984b, and 1997b, 2000a, 2000b). Among a series of readers edited by Prof. Nagucka, there is a *Late Middle English reader* published under her maiden name Sikora (1966; reprinted as Nagucka 1977). Professor Nagucka's earlier research interests focussed on the prosody of Middle English songs. It was the subject of her (unfortunately un-

published until today) doctoral dissertation, the abstract of which appeared in 1965.

Professor Nagucka has also trained a number of specialists in Medieval English and supervised several Ph.D. dissertations (e.g., Prof. A. Pasicki (Cracow), Dr. J. Krzyszpień (Cracow) and Dr. R. Molencki (University of Silesia, Katowice), and numerous M.A. theses.

Docent W. Świeczkowski's major contribution to Medieval English is his Harvard Ph.D. dissertation on word order in *Piers Plowman* and ME sermons published in 1962. He supervised Dr. T. Olszewska's Ph.D. dissertation.

A number of younger medievalists have joined Polish English departments since the mid-sixties. The research interests of this generation cover a wide spectrum of issues from spelling, phonology, morphology, word-formation, syntax and semantics to vocabulary.

Dr. A. Hans has contributed a paper on spelling in three manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* based on her unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (1999).

Professor J. Wełna published a handbook of historical phonology (1978), a monograph on the history of English vowels (1987) and a series of papers on the phonetic interpretation of OE <cg> (1986), ME diphthongs (1988a), word stress in Chaucer (2000a) and ME vowel lengthening (2000b). Professor W. Awedyk wrote on the syllable in Old English (1975a), palatal and velar umlaut (1975b), and OE double consonants (1971). The interpretation of *i*-umlaut has recently been taken up again by Professor M. Krygier (1997c, 1998a). Professor P. Gąsiorowski has published a monograph providing an original interpretation of stress in Old English in terms of a metrical model where the mora and not the syllable is the central notion (1997a), two papers devoted to ME stress (1995, 1997b) and a paper on ME open syllable lengthening as a compensatory lengthening (1991-93). Prof. A. Adamska-Sałaciak wrote on the origin of ME /a/. Professor J. Rubach (1986) and Professor K. Dziubalska-Kończyk (1997) have tested the application of generative and natural syllable-less beats-and-binding phonological theories to the explanation of degemination in Old English and Early Middle English quantitative changes respectively.

In the field of morphology Professor J. Wełna contributed a handbook of historical English morphology (1996a) of which more than half is devoted to Old and Middle English. He has also written on strong-to-weak and weak-to-strong shifts in Old and Middle English verbs (1991, 1997) and on gender of loanwords in Old English (1980). Professor M. Krygier's interests have focussed in the main on the disintegration of the strong verb system (1994a, 1994b), and inflectional *i*-umlaut in Middle English (1992a). In addition he has also contributed papers on plural markers of nouns of relationship in Layamon's *Brut* (1996), velar and palatal variants of the 'seek'-verbs (2000), the synchronic approach to Old English morphology (1998), and on the evolution of morphology as an indi-

cator in the demarcation of the border between Old and Middle English (1997b). Dr. H. Mausch has written on referential gender in Late Middle English (1986) and on the evolution of the ME personal pronoun system (1989, 1991-93). H. Rutkowska has contributed a study devoted to personal pronouns in the *Cely letters* (1999).

A wide variety of topics in Old and Middle syntax has been dealt with by a number of medievalists of the youngest generation. Dr. J. Krzyszczyk has written on *hit*-sentences (1985) and on the periphrastic subjunctive with *magan* in Old English, as well as on impersonal constructions with an experiencer in Old and Middle English (1988). Professor B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk has contributed four papers on questions in Late Middle English (1967, 1972, 1973, 1974). Dr. J. Malak (Ph.D. under Prof. W. Awedyk's supervision) has published two studies on OE participial constructions (1991-93, 1998). Dr. R. Molencki has contributed a series of works on various aspects of Old and Middle English syntax, including relative and concessive clauses (1988, 1990a, 1997a), word order (1990b, 1997d), complementation (1991), and counterfactual constructions (1995, 1997b, 1997c, 1998, 1999b, in press). Dr. T. Olszewska has written on Old English word order and inflections. Prof. A. Pasicki has published a series of studies on Old English temporal adverbials (1985, 1987), relatives (1994) and *while*-clauses (1983). Dr. A. Wegner has devoted three studies to various aspects of ME syntax in Mirk's *Festial* (1976, 1977a, 1977b), and Dr. T. Retelewska (1975) to the performative analysis of imperatives in Old English. E. Sielanko (1995) has written on split coordinated structures in Late Old English and W. Rybarczyk (1977) on Old English word order and Functional Sentence Perspective. In the area of word formation one has to single out works by Dr. A. Zbierska-Sawala on word formation in Early Middle English (1989, 1983a) and Old English (1997). Dr. M. Nowakowski has also devoted part of his study on language change to Old English nominalizations.

Several interesting studies on historical English semantics have been written by Prof. G. Kleparski (1990, 1997). Parts of them have been devoted to Middle English. Prof. R. Kopytko (1986a) has published a paper on ME verbs of sensory cognition, Dr. P. Łozowski on the lexical meaning of some words and some cases of synonymy in Old English (1991, 1993, 1996a, 1996b), Dr. J. Krzyszczyk (1987) on the semantic interpretation of verbs in the OE and ME impersonal constructions and Dr. M. Fabiszak on the semantics of emotion terms in Old English (1999) and the concept of 'joy' in Middle English (2000). Finally, Prof. W. Awedyk (1975c) and Prof. M. Krygier (1998b) have proposed new interpretations of the origin of ME *she*.

Apart from the older and younger scholars whose works have been discussed above there is still the youngest group who are currently working on their Ph.D. dissertations on various aspects of Old and Middle English. The combined ef-

forts of all of them should soon result in more contributions to the vast and fascinating field of Medieval English linguistics.

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