

## REVIEWS

*A history of English: A sociolinguistic approach.* (Blackwell Textbooks in Linguistics 17.) By Barbara A. Fennell. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. Pp. xiv + 284.

Reviewed by Manfred Voss, Cologne, Germany.

What would one not give for a freshly conceived up-to-date and reliable history of the English language, one that would be neither too concise nor too detailed, one that would be, for instance, mindful of the difference between a phone and a phoneme, but would remain accessible to the neophyte, a work with a perfect balance between internal and external language history! Unfortunately, what is under review here is not that ideal book by a long shot. Too much seems to have gone horribly wrong.

The problems do not lie with the structure or the plan of the book. True, the subtitle announcing a sociolinguistic approach to the history of the English language might raise some concern, as for most of the time-span covered there is just not enough relevant information on which to base stringent sociolinguistic scenarios. The "Sociolinguistic Focus" sections in the historical chapters (Pre-Old English to Early Modern English) range from speculations on the spread of the Indo-European language to the introduction of the printing press and a discussion of the Great Vowel Shift. Most of this is only vaguely sociolinguistic. In other respects the organisation of the material in this book entirely follows established custom: There are the usual preliminaries (pp. 1-14) (periodization of the English language, nature of language change, linguistic terminology, etc.), then chapters on the prehistory of English (pp. 15-54), Old English (pp. 55-93), Middle English (pp. 94-134), Early Modern English (pp. 135-166), Present-Day English (pp. 167-207), English in the United States (pp. 208-240) and World-Wide English (pp. 241-269). Each chapter is preceded by a timeline listing assorted dates from the historical, cultural and technological spheres. (Whether the invention of the ball-point pen in 1938, for instance, merits inclusion may be debatable.) Illustrative texts ranging from a few lines of *Beowulf* to excerpts from computer manuals are given. A bibliography (three items dealing with Pictish matters are listed, but no standard Old English manual) and a somewhat skimpy index (there is an entry "noun", but no "pronoun" or "verb", for example) conclude the volume.

The real problems become immediately apparent in the body of the work and have to do, as will be shown, with the author's apparent lack of any deep familiarity with the earlier stages of the history of the English language. At times she seems to be plainly at sea and appears only somewhat more comfortable once she reaches the comparatively safe haven of Present-Day English. There are far too many errors and infelicities. For reasons of space only a selection of the various kinds of more or less serious blunders can be printed here: (p. 33) "Frisian, a coastal German (!) dialect, ..."; (p. 33) Fürstenburg [on the Oder], *l. Fürstenberg*; (p. 38) "Thus, I-E [p], [t], [k] > [f], [θ], [x] (Grimm's Law) or [b], [d], [g] (Verner's Law) depending on the position of the stress accent in the I-E etymon concerned. The picture is further complicated in the development of OE, as Germanic [f], [θ], [x] could be voiced > [v], [ð], [g] or [x], with the voicing of the voiceless spirant [s] > [z]": [x] > [ɣ] by Verner's law; the environments for voicing in OE should be indicated; [x] is not a voiced sound; (p. 38) "In OE the voiced consonants [ð], [g], [z] then underwent a secondary development to [d], [g], [r] – hence the opposition of *weard* 'became' and *word-en* 'become' (p.p.), *freas* (froze) and *fror-en* (frozen), etc.": [ð], [z] > [d], [r] in West Germanic already; the "secondary development" [g] (should be [ɣ], of course) > [g] looks decidedly odd; (p. 38) "(1

p-, t-, k- > OHG pf, ts, k(x)": German *schöpfen, sitzen, wecken* do not seem to belong here (-pf-, -tz-, -ck- < geminates); (p. 56) The Saxons apparently also settled in Essex, Middlesex and elsewhere north of the Thames. (p. 59) "We know that the Anglo-Saxons spoke West Germanic, a sister [!] dialect to Old High German, Old Frisian, Old Low German, Low Saxon [?] and Old Low Franconian." (p. 61) [east], *l.* [æ:əst] (in F.'s notation); (p. 61) "The sound spelled with the letter <c> was either [k] (before a consonant or back vowel) or [ç]/[ʃ] (next to a front vowel) ...": [č]/[tʃ]? (p. 61) "This voiced velar fricative [*sc.* [ɣ]] coalesced with [g] by late OE or early ME": certainly not in all positions! (p. 61) The phoneme /z/ did not appear "late in OE". (p. 61) \**Bēd* 'prayer' (*l. bed*, of course) and *bedd* 'bed' are not a minimal pair, CC and C before pause were neutralized early in OE. (p. 63) OE *tellan* is not pronounced [telan], but [tellan] (or, more likely, [tellan]); (p. 64) OE *eðel* means 'native land', not 'native lord'; (p. 69) The preterite plural of *drifan* is *drifon*, not *drifon*. (p. 70) The preterite subjunctive of *drifan* is *drife(n)*, not *drife(n)*. (p. 72) *Wunundon, l. Wunudon*; (p. 80, 81) [Orosius'] *Historiarum Adversarum Paganos Libri vii, l. Adversus*; (p. 81) *Byrthferth, l. Byrhtferth*; (p. 82) British Museum, *l. Library*; MS Vitellius A 15, *l. A.xv*; (p. 83) *Junius XI, l. II*;

(p. 83) One would be curious to know what the "two later editions" of the Exeter Book are. The author claims that "[t]he main text contains 123 pages [*l. folios*] with the originals [!] of *Phoenix, Julian [l. Juliana], The Wanderer, The Seafarer, Widsith, Deor, Wulf and Eadwacer, The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*"; (p. 83) *Codex Vercellis: l. Vercellensis*; (p. 83) *Beowulf* also tells about a fight against an anonymous dragon. (p. 83) "..., and the poetry is alliterative, with stress on the first syllable": this sounds odd; (p. 85) "and Northumbrian, spoken north of the Humber (hence the name), excluding Scotland, where, again, (Gaelic) Celtic was spoken": in parts of what is today Scotland Northumbrian was spoken; (p. 86) "The Kentish dialect is represented in the eighth century from glosses in Latin charters, ...": for *glosses* read *names*; (p. 94) [Timeline] 1346 Battle of Poitiers, *l. 1356*; (95) "the German emperor, William V", *l. Henry V*; (p. 98) "hnappian [hnæpjan]": *l. [hnappian]*; (p. 98) *lihtlic [lɪxtliç]*, *l. [li:çtliç]*; (p. 98) [OE] *bedde: l. bed(d)*; (p. 98) "Amongst the long vowels, the most important change was the raising and rounding of long a > o: ...": open o! The author does not make sufficiently clear that the OE three-height long vowel system developed into the ME system with four vowel heights. (p. 100) "a + ɣ au gnagan [gna:ɣan]", *l. [gna:ɣan]*; (p. 100) ME *newe* 'new' does not go back to OE "*neawe [næ:we]*"; (p. 101) "o: + w ou growan [gro:won]", *l. o: + w*; (114) "Finally, *æ* is still a front vowel, as indicated by the spelling <e> as in *bet* and *red*": there was no *æ* in the antecedent of *bet*; (p. 115) "..., and Sir John Mandeville's account of his travels is also probably to be counted as prose": ? (p. 121) "..., since the poor people now had more say in the affairs of the country": really? (p. 123) The author of *The Ancrene Riwe* did not write in Southern Middle English.

(p. 137) "At this time [*sc.* 1707] the parliaments of the two countries [*sc.* England and Scotland] were united, not to be separated again until 1999": At the time of this writing there is still a United Kingdom parliament, and its Scottish members may freely vote on purely English matters. (p. 140) "Up to the mid-sixteenth century ME short vowels retained their original qualities, but later short /a/ raised to /ɛ/ while /eo/ lowered to /eo/ and /ɪa/ centralized and lowered to /ɪu/": This looks extremely odd. (p. 141) "(3) When followed by a nasal (usually in combination with a velar element) /ɛ/ was raised to /ɪ/, as in *wing, single, thing, link, singe*, etc. [in Early Modern English]: this was a Middle English sound change and there was no /ɛ/ in *thing* that could have been raised at the time; (p. 141) "(4) A minor development is that of /ɔ/ to /o/ after /l/, as in *old, cold*, etc.": *l. before /l/?* PDE /əʊ/ in *old, cold*, however, reflects the unconditioned development (OE /ɑ:/ >) /ɔ:/ > /o:/ (> /ou/, /əʊ/); (p. 145) "..., Baugh and Cable (1993) discuss the fact that in Old English there were participial forms such as *he wæs on lærende* ...": Baugh and Cable (1993: 287), in fact, have *he wæs lærende*, \**he wæs on lærende* is not an attested Old English construction. (p. 157) "Chomsky and Halle (1968)" are not listed in the bibliography. (p. 185) "The Education Act of 1870 established English public schools, where middle and upper classes mingled for the first

time.": The author does not seem to understand what the Education Act of 1870 was meant to do. Public schools like Eton, Charterhouse, Harrow etc. had existed long before 1870. The Education Act was about the general provision of elementary education throughout the country. (p. 188) "On the grammatical level there are a number of variants within RP: ...": RP is an accent. (p. 192) Although the nature of the Pictish language is extensively discussed, it remains quite unclear just when Old English was first spoken in what is today Scotland. *Din Eidyn* (Edinburgh) was captured by the Northumbrians in 638; cf. (p. 56): "The Angles settled the huge area from north of the Thames to the Highlands of Scotland." (p. 193) "Under James I (1406-37) the Acts of his predecessors were translated from Latin into Lowland Old English, not Gaelic, and his own legislation was written in Old English, ...": Scotland as an Old English relic area? (p. 218) "Of course, Native Americans had lived in America for hundreds of years before the settlers, ...": even for thousands of years; (p. 267-8) "Language teachers in Britain and the United States feel that the drop in students enrolling in German and Russian classes is a temporary phenomenon, linked to their present financial and internal difficulties.": some very loose writing here!

The illustrative texts supplied do not fare much better. In twelve lines from the *Ohthere* interpolation in the OE *Orosius* (p. 81) I count six miscopied items. In the excerpt from the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (p. 113) a line is missing. In the short *Beowulf* excerpt (pp. 83-4) the author attempts to supply a literal interlinear version, but repeatedly fails to understand individual words and constructions: line 2: *byrnum werede* "mail-coats wearing": *l.* "protected by mail-coats"; lines 8-9: *No her cuðxlicor cuman ongunnon/lindhæbbende*, ...: "No warrior more boldly came ashore/shieldbearers, ...": The translation is complete gobbledygook: *her* is 'here', not 'warrior' (confusion with *here* 'army?'), the subject is *lindhæbbende, cuðlicor*, in the first instance, means 'more openly', *ongunnon* is left untranslated; line 20: *ofost is selest* "haste is needed", *l.* "haste is best"; line 21: *to gecyðanne, hwanan eowre cyme syndon*: "to know, from where you come are": *to gecyðanne* is 'to make known, announce', a literal translation of the last four words in the line would be "whence your comings are". Serviceable cribs and editions with reliable glossaries are readily available, and, oddly enough, a more accurate (albeit not literal) prose translation of the excerpt by E. Talbot Donaldson is even provided by F. (pp. 84-5). In the *Cursor Mundi* prologue (p. 119) the author mistranslates *lede* 'people' as 'language'. She would have found a correct translation in Baugh – Cable (1993: 401-2).

In fact, substantial stretches of F.'s narrative are, without proper acknowledgment, heavily indebted to Baugh – Cable (1993) or (1978). (As will be seen, she apparently used both editions. A textual scholar with spare time on his hands might be able to throw light on this problem.) Section 4.4.1. (pp. 116-20) "English Re-established", for instance, is essentially an abridged retelling of a corresponding chapter "The Reestablishment of English, 1200-1500" in Baugh – Cable (1993: 124-53) whose influence may be detected elsewhere in the author's Middle English chapter, too, even in a misunderstanding: compare (p. 116) "William Langland (1362-87) is the author of *Piers Plowman*, ..." and Baugh – Cable (1993: 152): "... William Langland, the reputed author of a long social allegory, *Piers Plowman* (1362-1387); ..." (An instance of miscopying also crops up again in that ubiquitous quotation from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* concerning the Prioress (p. 120): "And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly/After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe": *l. fetisly* (a variant of *featously* 'elegantly, with correctness and propriety'. Baugh – Cable (1993: 138) have the correct reading. – The French of Stratford, by the way, is discussed by Rothwell (1985), whose numerous articles on Anglo-French matters should be sought out by anybody writing on the Middle English period.) Reviewing these sections would only mean re-reviewing Baugh – Cable (1993) and its often outdated scholarship. Sir Walter Scott's "sociolinguistic" treatment, itself derivative, of *swine, ox, calf* vs. *pork, beef, veal* in *Ivanhoe* is laid under contribution yet again (pp. 106-7), and it is probably totally useless to point out once more that Scott is utterly mistaken, see Berndt (1981).

More unacknowledged borrowings, misapprehensions and miscopyings: (p. 158) “The long *æ* in Old English spelling [vowel length is usually unmarked in OE spelling] represented two sounds: in certain words it stood for /a:/ in West Germanic. It represents a close /e:/ outside the West Saxon area and remains /e:/ in ME (North-West Saxon [!] *ded* > *ded*; *slepan* > *slepen*). In many words OE /æ/ [!] resulted from the *i*-umlaut of /a/ [!]. This was a more open vowel and appears as /e:/ in Middle English (OE *clæne* > *clene*; *dælan* > *delen*). The two sounds have now become identical: *deed*, *clean*.” Compare this to Baugh – Cable (1993: 231-2), who themselves are certainly not beyond reproach here: “The long *ǣ*, so characteristic a feature of Old English spelling, represented two sounds. In some words it stood for an *ā* in West Germanic. This sound appears as a close *ē* outside the West Saxon area and remains *ē* in Middle English (Non-WS *dēd* > *dēd*, *deed*; *slēpan* > *slēpen*, *sleep*). In many words OE *ǣ* was a sound resulting from the *i*-umlaut of *ā*. This was a more open vowel and appears as *ē* in Middle English (OE *clæne* > *clēne*, *clean*; *dælan* > *dēlen* [sic], *deal*). These two sounds have now become identical (cf. *deed* and *clean*.” Or compare the discussions of Celtic and Scandinavian place-name evidence by F. (pp. 89-90, 92) and Baugh – Cable (1993: 73, 96). Some attempt has been made to cover the tracks and rephrase, compare: “But is in the names of hills, rivers and places near such phenomena that the Celtic names survive primarily: ...” (pp. 89-90) to Baugh – Cable’s (1993: 73) original: “But it is in the names of rivers and hills and places in proximity to these natural features that the greatest number of Celtic names survive.” The indebtedness, however, remains all too clear. The suggested readings at the ends of F.’s chapters never recommend the more detailed Baugh – Cable (1993) to the reader, although she herself must have considered the book eminently useful. One of the few instances where the author gives credit to “Baugh and Cable [...] (1993)” at first leads into a cul-de-sac (p. 269). The lengthy “wondrous bout of Anglocentrism” attributed to them (and torn from its context) is nowhere to be found in the fourth edition of their book. Closer investigation reveals that the quotation, again not entirely accurately transcribed, is from Baugh – Cable (1978: 6-7).

Reviewing F.’s book has been a depressing experience. Whether the nadir has been reached as far as the production of histories of the English language is concerned is impossible to tell. The book under review was reprinted, apparently without corrections, in 2001. Like many other books this one too comes with fulsome advance praise on its back cover. An encomiast from Arizona was looking forward to using the book in her classes, and typing its title into one of the web’s search engines reveals that it has been adopted as a coursebook around the world. One can only hope that it will be used with utmost caution. This shoddily-produced book was issued by a reputable publisher, who should not have accepted it for publication in its present form. It should be withdrawn immediately and pulped.

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*A grammar of Shakespeare's language*. By Norman Francis Blake. Houndmills/New York: Palgrave, 2002. Pp. xvi, 406.

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Few researchers would be against the idea that Blake (2002) is the most comprehensive achievement on Shakespeare’s language since the publication of Abbott (1870). Inheriting the essence of his previous publications (Blake 1989 etc.), Blake successfully covers both the long tradition of the research of Shakespeare’s language (henceforth ShE) and Early Modern English (EModE), as well as recent developments in the area of pragmatics.

The material used for analysis almost always comes from the First Folio (1623), and sometimes from quartos. Blake argues for the importance of analyzing the language of these originals, “although Shakespeare’s plays have been edited continuously, there are still many elements of his language which are overlooked by his editors. It is time that his language was given more attention than it currently receives; and this is one purpose behind this grammar” (p.12). Referring to Shakespeare in his grammar Blake realizes that it does not necessarily mean that the writer himself only, but also the language of that period since part of Shakespeare’s text comes from his contemporaries.

Blake’s book consists of ten chapters. Chapter 1 introduces existing editions and a short history of the study of ShE. Blake points out that recent publications on ShE are unfortunately never consulted by editors. Chapter 2, “The linguistic background”, provides indispensable linguistic information for editors and readers.

Chapter 3 is the first chapter of the main part of the book. This chapter, “The noun group”, covers morphology and syntax of the nominal expressions in ShE. Chapter 4, “The verb group”, covers morphology and syntax of verbal expressions.

Chapter 5 deals with adverbials, interjections, conjunctions and prepositions, since their meaning and function overlap and are closely linked with each other. The former two belong to the open class of words, whereas the latter two belong to the closed class; there are more changes observed in the previous two categories. The author devotes many pages to prepositions and cites examples for the use of each of them. It should be noted that the loss of inflection has also had influence on this category, leaving some cases without a preposition where there would be one in PdE. In Chapter 6, “Concord, negation, ellipsis and repetition”, Blake follows the development of negation from OE through ME to EModE period, noting the movement of the negator’s position in a sentence.

Chapter 7, “Clause organization and sentence structure”, first treats syntax in a narrow sense, that is, sentence patterns and the word order. Next Blake discusses what he calls “distortion of syntax” and other things: these are stylistic and rhetorical issues, which are peculiar to the writer and could make the interpretation of the text more difficult.

The next two chapters are an attempt to offer new perspectives for the editing of Shakespeare’s texts. Chapter 8, “Discourse and register”, deals with forms of address, conversational strategies, discourse markers and register, which are relatively well studied topics of historical pragmatics. The discussion on discourse markers is quite stimulating, since it offers a different interpretation of the original text from the one in modernized editions. It is regrettable, however, that Blake explains some of the conversational strategies at the beginning and the end of a dialogue but does not go into the body of dialogue itself. Chapter 9 deals with the IVOA Principle (CP), politeness, etc. Blake argues for the importance of the CP in editing: if editors cannot make sense, there may be a misunderstanding of the text or there may be a deliberate flouting of one (maybe more) of the maxims.

Chapter 10 concludes the book. Blake reviews Abbott (1870) and other major works in order to offer helpful suggestions for editing the text of ShE.

One of the strong points of this book is the abundant evidence from ShE. The author rightly exemplifies his ideas with rich linguistic material.

Blake's analysis of ShE is based on traditional grammar, incorporating some more recent linguistic ideas. I have a strong impression, however, that linguistic terms are sometimes employed in a different sense than those that have been already established without any definition or explanation, e.g., "governed by" (p. 64 & p. 100), "preposition stranded" (p. 101), "dummy subject" (p. 139), and "universals" (p. 328). In addition, there are regrettably many confusing uses of grammatical terms. For instance, "attributive adjectives" (p. 115) (the examples are on the contrary predicative), "Transitive verbs may be divided into dynamic and stative" (p. 143) (since intransitive verbs can also be dynamic and stative, there is no plausible reason for this classification; terms such as "stative" and "dynamic" are not for a subcategory of the verb, but for an aspect or an aspectual character of the verb), and "politeness" (passim; esp. Chapter 8) (the author seems to imply only negative politeness when he employ "politeness" or "polite" before Chapter 9, where he discusses politeness in detail).

This book takes a wider perspective on ShE than any previous publications in the field. Two chapters are devoted to pragmatics (including adjacent areas such as discourse analysis and sociolinguistics which overlap pragmatics), and the author also refers to pragmatic notions sporadically in the previous chapters: for instance, the alternation you and thou in Chapter 3 and "politeness" in Chapter 4. Though he does not clearly mention speech acts, he states that "In the second person the use of *will* is rare in that you cannot express the will of another, so examples have the sense of a request or command" (p. 123). Here we can see the confusion of semantic and pragmatic notions: he is talking about "sense", which is probably in the area of semantics, while "request" is a pragmatic idea which expresses a function. Traditionally the researchers have studied both syntactic and semantic phenomena under the name of syntax, which Blake follows in this book, and as we have already seen, he employs the term "grammar" to cover this area. However, since linguists define pragmatics against semantics (and often against syntax), the "grammar" (or whatever) would fail to capture the essentials of pragmatics without a tentative definition of semantics. As for pragmatics itself, Blake seems to have a preconceived idea that negative politeness was dominant probably due to the existence of stricter social ranks in Shakespeare's period. Kopytko (1993), on the other hand, obtains results to the contrary. In Shakespeare's plays positive politeness strategies are rather dominant. In addition, Blake somehow avoids obvious discussions on speech acts and other topics which have been studied in historical pragmatics. We will be waiting for the further development of the research on ShE.

Turning now on to more technical matters, proofreading of this book is fairly well done except for a few errors, e.g., "*Cleoaptra*" (Cleopatra; p. 321) and "consludes" (concludes; p. 326). In the bibliography, which is no doubt an excellent collection of the publications in the field, we can find minor problems: the book by the author himself, Blake (1989), is referred to as published in 1988, and Baldwin's (1944) first name is wrongly shown as "William". In a number of cases some bibliographical information is confusing. The reviewer regrettably has the impression that the author might not have actually referred to the original. The book contains indexes both for general and grammatical terms and for the words which appear in Shakespeare's works.

Despite some shortcomings, it should be pointed out that Blake (2002) is an ambitious piece of work which captures a number of aspects of ShE. It will certainly be a landmark for many years to come, not only for Shakespeare studies, and especially for editing, but also for descriptive and historical studies of English of the period.

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