HOGG, Richard (General Ed.): *The Cambridge History of the English Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. *Volume I: The Beginnings to 1066.* Edited by Richard M. Hogg (1992). xxii + 609 pp. (£60.00). *Volume II: 1066-1476.* Edited by Norman Blake (1992). xxi + 703 pp. (£ 65.00).

Writing a review on a major work such as this one -namely "the first multivolume work to provide a full account of the history of English" (Presentation) is a task which remains necessarily incomplete. This is so for two obvious reasons: one, only the first two volumes are available; two, each chapter is worth reviewing in itself, for reasons that will become evident in what follows.

Any overall judgement must wait then till the complete series is published; even so, these two books contain sufficient elements to predict a sucessful result for a most ambitious project. And project is really the key word: it has been carefully planned and scheduled from the very beginning as is shown by the detailed contents of all the forthcoming volumes. But as a matter of fact, this was only to be expected from the General Editor, who, besides his well known perceptiveness, expertise, and insightful knowledge, has added to the assets of this work Volume Editors and contributors such as Norman Blake, Roger Lass, John Algeo, Vivian Salmon, Cecily Clark, Malcolm Godden, Elizabeth Closs Traugott, Manfred Görlach, Matti Rissanen, Dieter Kastovsky, John Wells, James Milroy, David Burnley, Braj Kachru, Suzanne Romaine, Robert Burchfield, Dennis Baron, David Denison... to mention just a few. Together with the advisors appearing in the Acknowledgements (f.i. John Anderson, Angus MacIntosh, Robert Stockwell, Jacek Fisiak, M. L. Samuels, Donka Minkova, Fran Colman, Don Scragg … among others) they form a most impressive list, very difficult to improve, if not impossible.

In the General Editor's Preface (usefully included in every volume) the aims and methods of the work are clearly explained. It attempts to remedy the

lack of an intermediate work between scholarly specialist works and the introductory textbooks to the whole history of English or to a single period. However, Richard Hogg and his fellow authors are not just providing "a solid discussion of the full range of the his tory of English both to the anglicist who does not specialise in the particular area to hand and to the general linguist who has no specialised knowledge of the history of English" (p. xv). It is much more than this and perhaps the most stimulating aspect of these volumes is that this is done by scholars who have been (and are) producing the leading research in English historical linguistics for the last thirty years.

Richard Hogg has very wisely encouraged them to "write their contributions in the way they see most fitting whilst at the same time taking full account of developments in linguistic theory" (p. xvii), though each one of them generally read the whole volume. With such contributors and approach, the immediate consequence are first-hand research studies in most chapters, which, as has been said above, would deserve specific comment. For the sake of clarity and brevity, in the present review only general aspects of each one are considered, leaving reappraisal in depth for prospective individual reviewing.

The distribution of materials among the different volumes has two directions: the first four volumes have been divided chronologically; thus, the first one covers the beginnings till the Norman Conquest; the second goes from this till 1476 (Caxton's *editio princeps* of the *Canterbury Tales);* Volume III (edited by Roger Lass) will reach the declaration of independence of the U.S.A. whereas Volume IV (edited by Suzanne Romaine) will consider developments up to the present day. Whilst these four volumes cover the history of whatever was Standard English at a given moment (i.e. classical West Saxon included), the last two volumes are geographically based -hence reflecting the peculiar centripetal evolution of English in the last three centuries when compared to former periods: Volume V (whose editor is Robert Burchfield) will deal with dialects in England and English in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Australia, the Caribbean, New Zealand, South Africa and South Asia,

and Volume VI (edited by John Algeo) will be entirely devoted to English in North America. This organization is due to the view that the causes for the rise, spread and even decadence of languages are not intra-linguistic facts *(nonsense* is Hogg's word for that view) but political, cultural and economic events.

What perhaps is not made quite clear in the Preface (though implicitly assumed in the kind of approach) is that these have the power of affecting only very marginally the internal evolution of a language, which possesses its own specific mechanisms. Conversely, change never affects to the same extent the various areas of language: depending both on intra and extralinguistic factors, developments in syntax, phonology, lexicon, etc., will be more or less extensive, slow or apparent in each period of its history. This is very effectively reflected in the organization of each volume of the series as, though following the same basic plan, chapters vary from volume to volume, not only in subjects, but also in the space allotted to them, according to "the importance of that topic during the relevant period" (p. xvii).

Hence the differences between the two volumes reviewed here: both have chapters devoted to phonology and morphology, syntax, semantics and vocabulary and onomastics, which, of course, leads unavoidably to comparison. But on top of this, Volume I has one more chapter dealing with the linguistic background of English which I am afraid leads to disappointment after the Introduction to the book. Hogg's discussion of the sources for Old English is masterly: by sticking to the highly commendable habit of making a critical analysis of the evidence available prior to drawing any conclusion from its study, he not only gives a lesson in historical linguistics research in general, but also emphasizes an aspect of earlier stages of English we sometimes tend to forget: that what we are bound to find in any case is a distorted image, but although the ultimate reasons for this are beyond our control (a limited and unexpandable body of data) there is still a great degree of distortion produced in the different stages of scholarly work (i.e. text editing) regarding which we should be both aware and exigent. Consequently, the introductory

account of texts, history and culture of the Anglo-Saxon period, besides being comprehensive and relevant, is placed against a stimulating background.

After this, a chapter such as "The Place of English in Germanic and Indo-European" does not seem to maintain the general level of excellence of both volumes. It is not just particular aspects such as the following statement: "The aim of historical linguistics consists in following up the development of a given language through its history" as the discipline would be very incomplete indeed without enquiries into the causes for that development and connections to general his torical linguistic theory. Perhaps its main weakness lies in the contrast with the rest of the chapters, written by authors whose main fields of research are precisely the topics they are dealing with. It is not surprising, therefore, that crucial innovations in IndoEuropean studies should be omitted (Meillet's, Trubetzkoy's or, as usual, Spanish works) or that, when others are mentioned (the discovery of Hittite, f.i.), they are just ignored when coming to the actual reconstruction of the Germanic ancestry of Old English. Applying the Greco-Aryan model could be useful in practical approaches illustrating the classical comparative method, but it might not be theoretically acceptable for the Germanic languages.

Apart from this, I have already observed that topics are organised in analogous ways: phonology and morphology, syntax, lexis and semantics, literary language and onomastics. Furthermore, in this case, the respective chapters have the same author. The late Cecily Clark studies this area in great depth, considering, besides the traditional fields of anthroponymy and toponymy plus foreign influences, the relevance and function of linguistic mechanisms. Besides the tracing of individual data (always exciting in itself) what has interested me most in these chapters has been the way Clark uses them not only as an additional basis for historical or cultural deductions, but also as an example of the actual functioning of the English language through the above mentioned mechanisms: how it evolved and how, even in an area so permeable to foreign influences as this one, particularly in Middle English, we

are able to recognize features specific to the English language, from the obvious adaptation to native phonological patterns to the preference for the short forms of full names in all periods (p. 566).

Another difference between the two volumes, significative owing to the specific planning of the work, is their length: the second one has almost a hundred pages more than the first one. This presumably accounts for the considerable larger amount of materials (both primary -texts- and secondary sources -studies-) available for the ME period when compared with OE. But that those extra pages are distributed in fewer chapters also shows that certain topics have been perceived (it could not be otherwise in a period full of crucial changes) as more controversial than their parallels in OE.

This is particularly true of the sections devoted to phonology and morphology, where that corresponding to ME is substantially longer (32 pages more) than its OE counterpart. Having been written by Richard Hogg and Roger Lass respectively, it is natural that both should continue the same line of assessment of the evidence and methods of reconstruction outlined in the Introduction to the first volume; and that, though, as usual, Hogg tends to be clearer, their accounts should be displayed within connected theoretical frameworks basically of their own, though always offering contrasting judgements from other authors.

Some of their views might perhaps be challenged; for instance, Hogg's treatment of gender is too simplified as his section on morphology is biased towards phonological rather than functional aspects. But their works are in the end both revealing and stimulating, not only as regards what has been mentioned, but also because of their authors' concern with systematic language change; i.e. they do not list individual pronunciations, declension or case endings. Rather, they consider the various relevant systems and subsystems, defined according to modern parameters of analysis (contrasting features, morphophonemic alternations) and how and why they evolved through time. The extensive use of diagrams and schemes contributes greatly to the clarity and usefulness of the exposition -in this respect, Lass's work

relies much more on them, providing, at the same time, a more complete treatment of morphological matters.

Norman Blake's sharp remark on syntax being "the Cinderella of ME linguistic studies" (Introduction to Volume II) does not hold true for the OE period, as is shown by the large and upto-date bibliography quoted by Elizabeth Closs Traugott. In spite of the difficulties posed by the great influence of Latin, she still believes in the possibility of identifying autonomous patterns of syntactic development. For this purpose she has selected those constructions which "highlight differences between OE and later stages of the language" (p. 169) but the selection is in fact so wide that most issues have been covered. The same kind of contents plus clearer references to transformational grammar (still a favourite approach in English historical syntax) appear in the account of ME syntax by Olga Fischer: and although she explicitly admits to having followed the same structure as Traugott's work, she has improved substantially on the former's organization by treating negation and interrogation separately from complex sentences.

Another difference is that, whereas Traugott has relied exclusively on prose, arguing that it is less likely than poetry to be influenced by literary conventions, these have changed enough in ME to allow Fischer to employ poetry as well -though this always implies a risky grounding. Finally, both chapters coincide in offering practical appendices: a summary of the main changes during the OE period and a list of ME source texts, this latter being remarkably useful for research on account of the exhaustive data provided.

Thomas Toon's essay in OE dialectology focuses almost exclusively on orthographical and phonological matters, after the usual considerations on historical events and their relationship with the amount and significance of manuscripts, the trends towards standardization. Perhaps the most appealing aspect is the section dedicated to variation and dialectology, where current trends in the mechanisms of sound change are discussed and illustrated with a profusion of statistical data. The detailed study of the principles and methods for dialectology plus the recent history of the subject in ME studies is

fully developed by Milroy in the second volume of the series. This is hardly surprising given that ME in Milroy's own words "exhibits by far the greatest diversity in written language of any period before or since" (p. 156). On these grounds his question whether "the label ME does not refer to a coherent entity, but to a complex series of divergent, rapidly changing and intertwining varieties retrospectively seen as transitional between OE and Modern English" (p. 157) is fully justified. He has also expanded the scope of his study by considering grammatical variation and by analysing texts from different sources. His concluding remarks, with the allusions to the social motivations of language change are also worth mentioning.

"Exhaustive" is the adjective which best suits Dieter Kastovsky's work on OE vocabulary and semantics. After previous notes on the concept of word, terminology used and lexical variation, issues such as loanwords, dialectal, social and stylistic stratification of the vocabulary, word formation and semantics are revised, bearing the same conclusion: that there are properties which remain specifically English in spite of the vast quantities of foreign vocabulary acquired in the course of time: stem variability through ablaut and morphophonemic alternations, word formation through compounding, certain affixes, etc. The analogous chapter on ME keeps a similar structure, though David Burnley also pays particular attention to processes of semantic change and the structure of the lexicon. Both essays benefit greatly from the prevalence of the evaluation of the various topics over long lists of lexical items -which, as a matter of fact, can easily be found in other works.

No serious study of the history of English would be complete without special chapters on the literary language. Only in modern times have other types of written records surpassed literature in the quantity of materials -and this has, in many respects, constrained the bulk of evidence for historical linguistics to literary texts. Enquiries on the nature of literary language and its evolution throughout the various stages of English have consequently their own place in this work. And it is most rewarding to see that both Malcolm

Godden and Norman Blake trascend the limits of the dichotomy linguistic vs. literary studies which, unfortunately, can sometimes be witnessed in many academic forums. Godden is more explicit in this respect:

> [Literary language] is, however, of particular importance to historical linguists because it shows the language being tested to the full, being used by individuals who think seriously about the right choice and use of language and are prepared to employ the full range of possibilities and even to invent, or to break the boundaries of ordinary discourse (p. 490).

Godden focuses basically on what is native to OE literature (i.e., not only non-Germanic but also non-English) and finds it in a very specific poetic language. On the other hand, Blake has carefully traced the foreign models which influenced ME literary traditions; both have done it by setting out from detailed linguistic analyses. And the result is that, together, by producing a most attractive picture of Medieval English literature, they provide one of the best arguments against those who deny the immediate interest of Medieval studies in general.

My final remarks concern general aspects, and more specifically, those sections with which scholarly works of this kind are usually furnished: indexes, bibliographies, etc. It is maybe a matter of personal preference, but separated onomastic and subject indexes might have been more useful; and the same could be said of bibliographical lists, which would perhaps be more helpful if, besides their present division in primary and secondary sources, had also made further divisions such as general linguistics, handbooks on the history of the language, specific studies, etc., even with the presence of particular sections of further reading after each chapter. But this is a very minor objection to otherwise exhaustive and absolutely up-to-date bibliographies in both volumes, with rewarding entries such as some works by Juan de la Cruz -and also absences like Charles Jones's *History of English*

Phonology. The "Glossary of Linguistic Terms", also included in each volume, is an additional asset for a series whose first two issues are already a must for any scholarly work, course, etc on Old and Middle English historical linguistics. But this, of course, also implies that the third and subsequent volumes of the series are awaited with avid interest.

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