

HERBERT PENZL. Englisch. Eine Sprachgeschichte nach Texten von 350 bis 1992. Vom Nordisch-Westgermanischen zum Neuenenglischen. (Langs Germanistische Lehrbuchsammlung, Band 82.) Bern: Peter Lang, 1994. Pp. 202.

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Herbert Penzl's new history of the English language differs from all previous books published on the subject in that (a) it is based on close linguistic analyses of a restricted number of texts representing the various historical periods; (b) it deals with the external history of the English language only in scant outline; (c) it compares, more or less regularly, internal linguistic developments in English with those taking place in the history of German; and (d) it has extended the focus of English language history to encompass both an analysis of an American dialectal text, the Biglow Papers from 1848 (161-69), and an examination of texts representing what Penzl (P) calls the Nordic-West Germanic language spoken on the Continent prior to the Anglo-Saxon emigration and represented in 3rd- and 4th-century runic inscriptions such as, e.g., the Gallehus legend (17-22).

The Old English texts selected by P for analysis are: the Northumbrian and West Saxon versions of the Caedmon Hymn to illustrate the dialectal diversity of early Old English (23-37); Beowulf (lines 499-549) as the most important of all Old English literary monuments (38-59); and an extract of Aelfric's Latin grammar, a specimen of late West Saxon as well as a source of 'metalinguistic' information (60-79). The textual representatives of early Middle English are the 1135 annal of the Peterborough Chronicle (80-88) and an extract of the Ormulum (89-106), whereas for late Middle English P has included Chaucer's General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (lines 1-50), a London text. The extracts selected for the early Modern English period – the 15th-century Paston Letters (120-27), the 16th-century orthoepic endeavours by John Hart (128-34), Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, IV.i, 2074-2116 (135-44) and the 18th-century Verney Papers (145-53) – all serve to illustrate the emergence of an English standard language. Finally, Modern English is discussed on the basis of Swift, Johnson (154-60) and a present-day translation of an Old English Aelfric passage analysed earlier in the book (170-83). The volume consists of a total of fifteen chapters followed by a select bibliography comprising some 160 titles (184-88), an appendix with useful additional texts such as the Proclamation of



Henry III and Ayenbite of Inwyt (189-94), and, at the very end, a comprehensive index compiled by Margaret Austin Hall (195-202).

P's approach to language history is based on the belief that no satisfactory diachronic presentation can be given without the type of synchronic cross-sections he aims at providing in this book. The texts listed above are analysed in terms of orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary, and linguistic variation is often taken into account, most conspicuously in connection with the Middle English dialectal texts (89-92). P makes no bones about his methodological stance: he is a firm believer in philological and structural approaches to text analysis (see especially 183, 7 and 13-14) and dissociates himself from the generativist model, Chomsky and Halle's abandonment of the phoneme being described as 'ein böser Rückschritt, weil er die angemessene phonologische Interpretation des graphischen, aber phonologisch bedingten Materials der Vergangenheit verhindert' (171). In my view, P's individual analyses of texts are the real meat of the book. Anyone interested in English language history can benefit from them. By means of cross-references and, to some extent, a widening of his linguistic and textual frame of reference P does much to make the various analyses readable and coherent (he succeeds best at this, in my opinion, in his chapters on early Modern English), but I am sure that the general impression that at least beginners will have after reading this book will be a rather fragmented one (an inevitable result, perhaps, of the relatively small number of short texts examined).

It does not help much in this respect that P concerns himself to such a limited degree with the external history of the language, especially because his information is sometimes imprecise or dated. From his description of the Danish settlement in England (80) readers would think that the settlement began as early as in 787 (or 851, cf. 105), and that the Danelaw included such far-off places as Galloway in Scotland and southern Wales (but cf. 105). The dialectal provenance of the Ormulum is, in turn, labelled as Northern Middle English (16), East Midland (89) and Midland (183), the correct assignment being probably northern Lincolnshire as suggested in § 112 (93). P's linkage of the (Northern) idiom spoken by the two students in Chaucer's Reeve's Tale with the Ormulum and the North-Midland dialects (120) is not quite precise, either. It might finally be mentioned that what little information P provides concerning the borrowing of Latin loan words prior to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity (78) is dated (based on Serjeantson 1935).

As already observed, P makes ample comparison between the history (and periodisation) of the German language and internal historical developments in English. The volume under review being written in German and thus designed chiefly for a German-speaking audience, this sort of comparison will undoubtedly increase the value of the book to many readers, especially those already knowledgeable about German and/or English language history.

P's inclusion of the early runic language in his history of English is also of interest to diachronic scholars working within the fields of English and German in that P takes the Nordic-West Germanic language represented in the 3rd- and 4th-century runic inscriptions to be the ancestor of both English and German (11-12, 17-22, 182). Personally, I think that the early runic language may well have been the predecessor of the Scandinavian and the so-called Ingveonic West Germanic languages (e.g., (pre-)Old English), but I doubt that it was the ancestor of Old High German as well. Indirectly, P himself provides evidence against the inclusion of Old High German as a descendant language by deriving both early runic gsm. *a*-stem (*godag*)*as* (Valsfjord) and OE gsm/n. *-æs*, *-es* from Germanic *\*-as(a)* < Indo-European *\*-oso* (21, 49-50), the OHG gsm/n. *a*-stem suffix being *-es* (< IE *\*-eso*). Similarly the gsm/n. forms of the demonstrative and interrogative pronouns in Old English, *þas* and *hwæs*, reflect IE *\*toso* and *\*kwoso*, whereas the OHG gsm/n. forms *des* and *huues* go back to the Indo-European alternants *\*teso* and *\*kweso* (54-55, 57-58). It is significant that in his account of the prehistory of the OE strong adjectival inflection P suggests that the suffix in OE dsm/n. *gōdum* was preceded by *-em*, thereby putting the form on a par with OHG *guotemu* (52). It is beyond any doubt that the OHG *-emu* suffix was secondary and the result of *e*-levelling in the OHG pronominal paradigm. The original dsm/n. vowel was *\*-o-*, which because of its weakly accented, pre-nasal position became *-u-* instead of *-a-* and was retained in Norse, Old English and Old Saxon. Finally it should be pointed out that the suffix of the early runic strong past participle *haitinaz* (Kalleby) (22) has obvious counterparts in Old English (*forsleginum*) and Old Frisian (*fendsen*) but, at best, less clear and isolated ones in Old High German (and Old Saxon).

P seeks to justify his inclusion of James Russell Lowell's Biglow Papers in the book by pointing to the insufficient attention hitherto paid to American dialectal variation by works dealing with the history of the English language (15). This particular text (163-64) constitutes a literary dialect but does, nevertheless, represent documentary



evidence of the popular New England dialect of the 19th century. According to P, the genuine popular dialects of America had become extinct by the end of the 19th century (168). P's chapter on the Biglow Papers is very interesting and well written, but to include such an analysis in a book on the history of the English language seems to me somewhat idiosyncratic.

On the whole, the number of typographical errors is small, but it is annoying that at times the use of length marks over long vowels is erratic (see, e.g., 46, 51, 53-55, 71-75). On p. 77 the sentence reference of *heo byð* should be (13) and not (11). In the bibliography (184) Campbell's first name is Alistair and not Alan! P does not always refer to the most recent editions of scholarly works: he does not seem to know of Brunner <sup>3</sup>1965, Elliott <sup>2</sup>1989 nor of the English version (from 1991) of Görlach's book on early Modern English.

In summing up we may say that the value of Herbert Penzl's book lies in its skilful linguistic analyses of a number of historical texts rather than in the way in which it surveys the history of the English language as a whole. Consequently, the volume can be recommended primarily for supplementary reading. It does not provide sufficient background information to serve as a general introduction to the subject. The volume has been priced at CHF 88.00, a bit on the expensive side, especially when compared to other recent one-volume books on English language history.

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