

5 • EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

There is no doubt that an Early Modern English period needs to be recognized in the history of English. The jump from Middle English to Modern English would be too great without it. Between the time of Chaucer and the time of Johnson, roughly 1400 to 1800, the language continues to change in quite noticeable ways, and there are many points of difference with modern usage. By the end of the 18th century, however, very few linguistic differences remain. Reading a Jane Austen novel does not require the same kind of effort or editorial elaboration as is needed to understand Shakespeare (p. 76).

There is no consensus about when the Early Modern English period begins. Some opt for an early date, 1400–50, just after Chaucer and the beginning of the pronunciation shift which identifies a major intelligibility barrier between Middle and Modern English (p. 55). Some opt for a late date, around 1500, after the effects of the printing revolution had become well established. But it is the advent of printing itself which many consider to be the key factor, and this section accordingly begins in 1476, when William Caxton set up his press in Westminster.

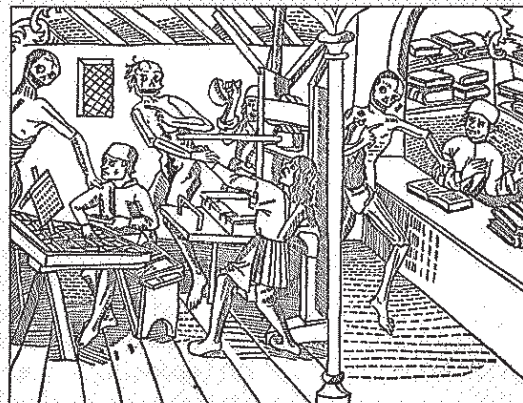
The new invention gave an unprecedented impetus to the formation of a standard language and the study of its properties. Apart from its role in fostering norms of spelling and punctuation, the availability of printing provided more opportunities for people to write, and gave their works much wider circulation. As a result, more texts of the period have survived. Within the following 150 years, it is estimated that nearly 20,000 books appeared. The story of English thus becomes more definite in the 16th century, with more evidence available about the way the language was developing, both in the texts themselves, and in a growing number of observations dealing with such areas as grammar, vocabulary, writing system, and style. In that century, scholars seriously got down to talking *about* their language (p. 61).

THE FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER

William Caxton was born in Kent, and by 1438 is known to have been apprenticed to a London textile dealer, or mercer. This suggests a birthdate any time between 1415 and 1424. He went to Bruges during the early 1440s, where he prospered as a mercer, and in 1462 was appointed governor of the English trading company there, the Merchant Adventurers.

In 1469 he began work on his first translation, a French account of the Trojan Wars, and two years later received the patronage of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, which enabled him to complete it. In 1471 he travelled to Cologne, where he stayed for 18 months, and learned the technique of printing. Back in Bruges he collaborated with the Flemish calligrapher Colard Mansion to set up a press, and in late 1473 or early 1474 put through his 700-page translation of *The Recuyell* [French *recueil* 'compilation'] of the *Histories of Troye*, the first book printed in English. Returning to England, in 1476 he set up his wooden press in a shop somewhere within the precincts of Westminster Abbey, to be near the court.

He published nearly 80 items, several in more than one edition. We know very little about how long he



The earliest known representation of a printing office: *La granté danse macabre* (1499), with death coming to take wicked printers away.

took to translate or print a work, despite the details he provides in his prologues and epilogues, because we do not know how conditions changed as he and his staff grew in experience. We do not even know how many presses he had, or whether he worked on more than one book at a time. Evidently, some works were produced quite slowly; others very rapidly. For example, it took him about seven weeks to print *Cordial* (1479) – a book of 74 leaves with 28/29 lines per page; but in 1783, a book of 115 leaves with 38 lines per page (*Festial*) was completed in just 24 days.

After his death, his business was taken over by his assistant, Wynkyn de Worde, who in 1500 moved the press to Fleet Street in London – from the court to the city – and a new era in printing began.

Caxton shows his handiwork to Edward IV at the almonry, Westminster.



THE ADVERTISEMENT

If it plesē any man spirituel or temporel to bye any pyes of two and thre comemoracions of salisbury use enpryntid after the forme of this presēt lettre whiche ben wel and truly correct, late hym come to westmonester in to the almonerie at the reed pale and he shal haue them good chepe . . .

Supplicō stet cedula

If it plesē any man spirituel or temporel to bye any pyes of two and thre comemoracions of Salisburi Use enpryntid after the forme of this present lettre, whiche ben wel and truly correct, late hym come to Westmonester in to the Almonesrye at the Reed Pale and he shal have them good chepe. *Supplicō stet cedula*.

The 'pye' which was for sale was the *Ordinale*, a book of Latin liturgical directions also printed by Caxton in c. 1477, and evidently in the same typeface ('forme'). A pye was a collection of rules showing how to act liturgically on a day when there was more than one office, or 'commemoration'. The 'Salisburi Use' was the widely practised form of the liturgy originally developed at Salisbury Cathedral. The commemorations are to the Virgin Mary and the saints. The last sentence tells the audience that a printed book will be cheap (that is, compared with the price of a copied manuscript). The shop in the almonry at Westminster was within the Abbey precincts. The significance of Caxton's sign, the Red Pale, is unknown: it may have been on the shop already, before he rented it. Someone has glossed the Latin, for the benefit of the less well educated.

The first printed works

We know of 103 separate items printed by Caxton, several of which are different editions of the same work. They can be grouped into four categories (after N. Blake, 1969):

- His own translations, such as *The Recuyell of the Histories of Troy* and *The Knight of the Tower*. This is the largest category, its prologues and epilogues providing a great deal of information about Caxton's aims as a publisher.
- Works of the courtly poets of 1350–1450 – chiefly, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate – and including two editions of *The Canterbury Tales*. Caxton's concentration on these authors shows him aware of the fashionable demand for an 'elevated' style of writing.
- Prose works in English, also including many translations, such as Chaucer's *Boethius*, Trevisa's *Polychronicon* (p. 35), and Malory's *Morte Darthur* (p. 58).
- A miscellaneous group of works, probably produced for particular clients. They include books of indulgences, statutes, phrase books, devotional pieces, and a Latin grammar.

A TIME OF CHANGE

From the epilogue to *Charles the Great*, the 'first Cristen Kyng of Fraunce':

The whyche werke was fynysshed in the reducyng of hit into Englysshe the xviii day of Juny the second yere of Kyng Rychard the Thyrd and the yere of Our Lord MCCC-Cxxxv, and emprinted the fyrst day of Decembre the same yere of Our Lord and the fyrst yere of Kyng Harry the Seventh.

In the meantime, there had been the Battle of Bosworth: 22 August 1485.

WITHOUT WHOM...

A page from the first English printed book, *The Recuyell of the Histories of Troy*. In the prologue, Caxton tells of his debt to the Duchess of Burgundy, and adds some interesting remarks about his own background.

And afterward when I rememberyd my self of my symplemes and vnperfectnes that I had in bothe langages, that is to wete [namely] in Frenshe and in Englishe, for in France was I neuer, and was born & lerned myn Englissh in Kente in the Weeld, where I doubte not is spoken as brode and rude Englissh as is in any place of England; & haue contynued by the space of xxx yere for the most parte in the contres [countries] of Braband, Flandres, Holand, and Zeland; and thus when alle thyse thynges cam tofore me aftry that Y had made and wretyn a fyue or six quayers [books], Y fyll in dyspayr of thys werke and purposid no more to haue contynuyd therein, and tho [those] quayers leyed apart; and in two yere aftry laboured no more in thys werke. And was fully in wyll to haue lefte hyt tyll on a tyme hit fortunyd

that the ryght redoughted lady, my Lady Margarete, sente for me to speke wyth her good grace of dyuerce maters. Among the whyche Y lete her Hyenes haue knowleche of the forsayd begynnynge of thys werke, whiche anone comanded me to shewe the sayd v or vi quayers to her sayd grace. And when she had seen hem, anone she fonde [found] a defeaute in myn

English whiche sche comanded me to amende and moreouer comanded me straytly to contynue and make an ende of the resydue than not translated...

This book was printed in Bruges. The first book Caxton printed in England was *The Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres* (1477), translated from French by the second Earl Rivers.

CAXTON'S PROBLEM

Caxton was a merchant, not a linguist or a literary scholar. Faced with the task of translation, he had to deal with several major problems:

- Should he use foreign words in his translation or replace them by native English words?
- Which variety of English should he follow, given the existence of major regional differences?
- Which literary style should be used as a model? Chaucer? Or something less 'ornate'?
- How should the language be spelled and punctuated, given the scribal variations of the previous centuries?
- In publishing native writers, should he change their language to make it more widely understood?

If the books were to sell, the language they contained had to be understood throughout the country; but, as he complained, how could he satisfy everyone? A famous extract from one of his prologues gives a vivid account of the size of the problem. If even a simple little word like eggs cannot be universally understood, what hope was there for him?

Caxton made his decisions, as did other publishers of the time, and in due course a consensus arose (p. 66). His own work is in fact extremely inconsistent. It is not until nearly a century later that there is uniformity in the appearance of printed texts – and indeed some matters (such as the use of the apostrophe) never settle down at all (p. 203).

THE 'EGG' STORY

And also my lorde abbot of westmyner ded [did] do shewe to me late certayn euydences [documents] wryton in olde englysshe for to reduce it in to our englysshe now vsid [used]. And certaynly it was wretton in suche wyse that it was more lyke to dutche [German] than englysshe I coude not reduce ne brynge it to be vnderstonden / And certaynly our langage now vsed varyeth ferre from that, whiche was vsed and spoken when I was borne / For we englysshe men / ben [are] borne vnder the domynacyon of the mone. [moon] whiche is neuer stedfaste / but euer wauerynge / wexynge one season / and waneth & dyscreaseth another season / And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a shippe in tamyse [Thames] for to haue sayled ouer the see into zelande / and for lacke of wynde they taryed atte forlond. [headland] and wente

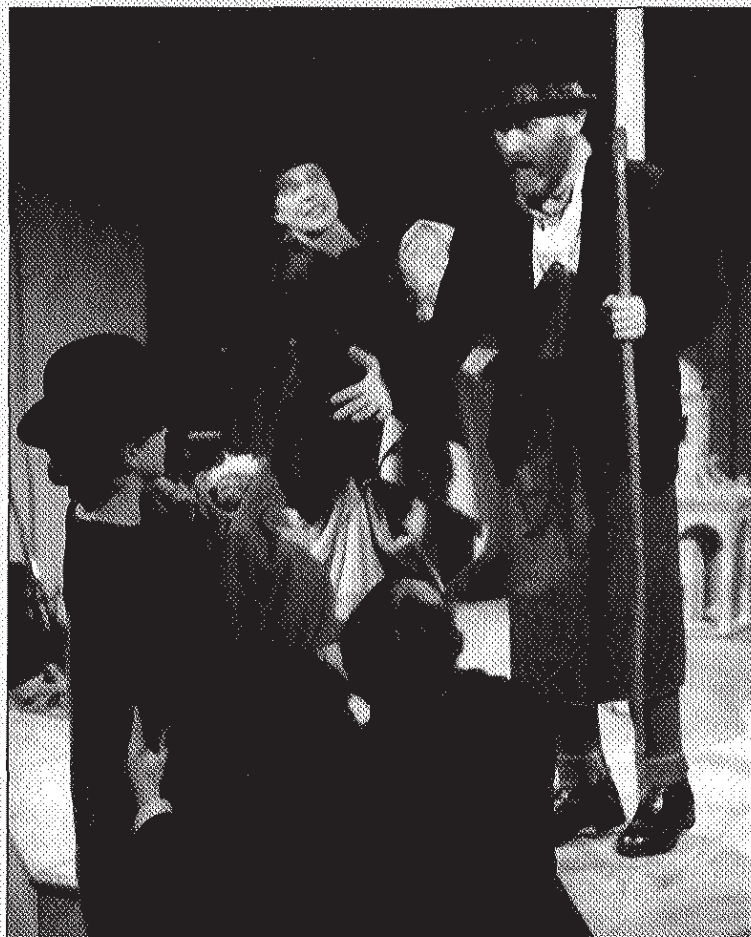
to lande for to refreshe them And one of theym named sheffelde a mercer cam into an hows and axed [asked] for mete, and specyally he axyd after eggys And the good wyf answerde, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wold haue hadde egges / and she vnderstode hym not / And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde haue eyren / then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym wel / Loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren / certaynly it is harde to playse euery man / by cause of dyuersite & chaunge of langage.

Sheffield's problem arose because egges was a northern form, a development from Old Norse, whereas eyren was a southern form, a development from Old English. The passage also shows some of Caxton's spelling inconsistencies and his idiosyncratic use of punctuation and capital letters. (Prologue to Virgil's *Booke of Eneydos*, c. 1490, with modern punctuation).

TRANSITIONAL TEXTS

Several authors and texts illustrate the linguistic transition from Middle to Early Modern English. They include the great prose romance translated by Sir Thomas Malory, the *Morte Darthur*, published by

Caxton in 1485, and the cycles of miracle and mystery plays, preserved in several 15th-century manuscripts. There are still many points of grammar, spelling, and vocabulary which cause difficulty to the 20th-century reader, but overall the language is familiar and intelligible, and is often used in modern presentations with little editorial intervention.



MYSTERY PLAYS

The miracle and mystery plays of medieval Europe were plays on biblical subjects, performed in cycles on special religious occasions such as the feast of Corpus Christi. The extract below is from the 32-play *Towneley Cycle* (so called because the manuscript once belonged to the library of Towneley Hall in Lancashire), and thought to have been the text for the plays performed at Wakefield in West Yorkshire.

Some of the plays have been acclaimed for the dramatically interesting way in which they develop their plot and characters, adding an extra dimension to the religious subject-matter. A case in point is the *Second Shepherds' Play*, which has been called the earliest surviving English comedy. The extract is from the episode where the shepherds visit Mak, the sheep-stealer, in his house, and find their sheep wrapped up as a baby in a cradle. Of stylistic note is the lively conversational rhythm of the dialogue and the humorous use of rhyme. Of grammatical note is the northern dialect -s ending on the third person singular present tense (p. 65).

FIRST SHEPHERD: Gaf ye the chyld any thyng?

SECOND SHEPHERD: I trow not oone farthyng.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Fast agane will I flyng,

Abyde ye me there.

Mak, take it to no grefe if I com to thi barne [child].

MAK: Nay, thou dos me greatt reprefe, and fowll has thou farne [behaved].

THIRD SHEPHERD: The child will it not grefe, that lytyll day starne [star].

Mak, with your leyfe, let me gyf youre barne

Bot sex pence.

MAK: Nay, do way: he slepys.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Me thynk he pepys.

MAK: When he wakyns he wepys.

I pray you go hence.

THIRD SHEPHERD: Gyf me lefe hym to kys, and lyft up the clowtt.

What the dewill is this? He has a long snowte.

The sheep-stealing scene from the Hijinx Theatre 1993 production of *In the Bleak Mid Winter* by Charles Way, with Richard Berry as Zac, Frenza Guidi as Miriam, Helen Gwyn as Gill, and David Murray as Mak.

THE QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAIL

The author of the work traditionally called the *Morte Darthur* calls himself Thomas Malory, a knight, who was in prison when he did most of the writing (1469–70). His identity is controversial, the leading candidate being Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revell in Warwickshire (1393?–1471), who served in France under the Earl of Warwick.

The extract is from Chapter 8 of Book XIII of Caxton's edition, and shows several of the features characteristic of his work (p. 57). There is the use of the slash mark as the main feature of punctuation, but with little system in its use: it can mark the end of a sentence (but not always), a major grammatical boundary within a sentence (but not all of them), or just a pause. The capital letter, likewise, appears unexpectedly (Wold) and inconsistently (in Quene and Launcelot). A great

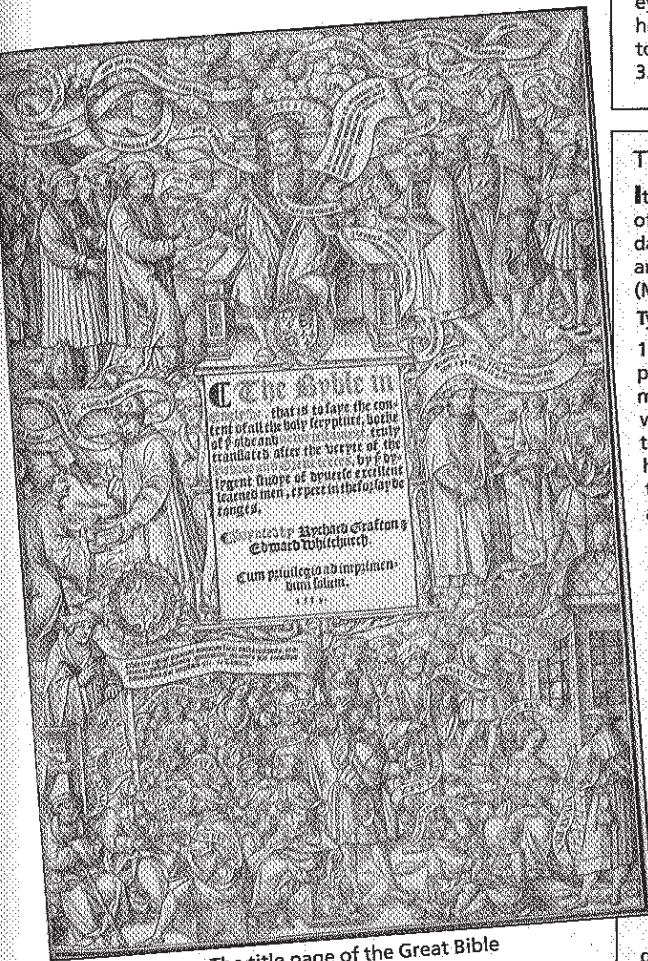
deal of editorial intervention is needed to provide a readily intelligible text; but in most other respects the grammar and vocabulary are accessible, and the narrative appealing – as Caxton puts it in his prologue: full of 'noble actes, feates of armes of chyvalrye, prowessse, hardynesse, humanyte, love, curtosye and veray gentylnesse, wyth many wonderful hystories and adventures'.

Thenne after the seruyse [service] was done / the kyng Wold wete [wished to know] how many had undertake the queste of the holy graylle / and to accompte them he prayed them all [he prayed them all to count themselves] / Thenne fond they by the tale [count] an honderd and fyfty / and alle were knyghtes of the table round / And thenne they putte on their helmes and departed / and recommaunded them all holy [entirely] vnto the Quene / and there was wepyng and grete

sorowe / Thenne the Quene departed in to her chamber / and helde her / that no man shold perceyue her grete sorowes / whanne syre Launcelot myst the quene / he wente tyl her chamber / And when she sawe hym / she cryed aloude / O launcelot / launcelot ye haue bitrayed me / and putte me to the deth for to leue thus my lord A madame I praye yow be not displeased / for I shall come ageyne as soone as I may with my worship / Allas sayd she that euer I sawe yow / but he that suffred vpon the crosse for all mankynde he be vnto yow good conduyte and sauftte [protection] / and alle the hole felauship / Ryght soo departed Launcelot / & fond his felauship that abode [awaited] his comyng / and so they mounted on their horses / and rode thorou the strete of Camelot / and there was wepyng of ryche and poure / and the kyng tourned away and myghte not speke for wepyng /

THE AGE OF BIBLES

The King James Bible, also known as the Authorized Version of the Bible, published in 1611, exercised enormous influence on the development of the language (p. 64); but it was itself influenced by several existing versions, all produced during the 16th century. The motivation for these bibles lay in the religious controversies of the day (Luther's protest at Wittenburg took place in 1517). Accordingly, they display great variation, not only in theological slant and stylistic level, but also in typography, presentation, editorial matter, and mode of presentation. For the historical linguist, the range and frequency of editions provides an unparalleled opportunity to view the development of the language at that time. Because they are all translations of the same core set of texts, the different versions can throw special light on changes in orthography, grammar, and vocabulary throughout the period.



The title page of the Great Bible

TYNDALE'S POPULAR VOICE

I had perceaved by experyence, how that it was impossible to stablysh the laye people in any truth, excepte the scripture were playnly layde before their eyes in their mother tonge, that they might se the processe, ordre and meaninge of the texte...

Tyndale's aim to translate for the people can be seen in the colloquial style of many passages:

1 But the serpent was sotyller than all the beastes of the felde which ye LORde God had made, and sayd unto the woman. Ah syr [sure], that God hath sayd, ye shall not eate of all maner trees in the garden. 2 And the woman sayd unto the serpent, of the frute of the trees in the garden we may eate, 3 but of the frute of the tree that is in the myddes of the garden (sayd God) se that we eate not, and se that ye touch it not: lest ye dye. 4 Then sayd the serpent unto the woman: tush ye shall not dye: 5 But God doth knowe, that whensoever ye shulde eate of it, youre eyes shuld be opened and ye sholde be as God and knowe both good and evell. 6 And the woman sawe that it was a good tree to eate of and lustie [desirable] unto the eyes and a plesant tre for to make wyse. And toke of the frute of it and ate, and gaue unto hir husband also with her, and he ate. 7 And the eyes of both of them were opened, that they understode how that they were naked. Than they sowed fygge leves togadder and made them apurns [aprons]. (Genesis 3.1-7)

TYNDALE'S INFLUENCE

It has been estimated that about 20 per cent of the text of the Authorized Version shows the influence of Tyndale. The Beatitudes is a good example: the differences are minor, and the number of words in the two passages (Matthew 5.1-10) almost identical.

Tyndale

1 When he sawe the people, he went vp into a mountayne, and when he was set, his disciples came to hym, 2 and he opened hys mouthe, and taught them sayinge: 3 Blessed are the povre in sprete: for theirs is the kyngdome of heven. 4 Blessed are they that morne: for they shalbe comforted. 5 Blessed are the meke: for they shall inheret the erth. 6 Blessed are they which honger and thirst for rightewesnes: for they shalbe filled. 7 Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obteyne mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in herte: for they shall se God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shalbe called the chyldren of God. 10 Blessed are they which suffre persecucion for rightwesnes sake: for theirs ys the kyngdome of heuen.

Authorized Version

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went vp into a mountaine: and when he was set, his disciples came vnto him. 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, 3 Blessed are the poore in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heauen. 4 Blessed are they that mourne: for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meeke: for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are they which doe hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obtaine mercie. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall bee called the children of God. 10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heauen.

THE CHIEF 16TH-CENTURY TRANSLATIONS

William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536)

Tyndale's New Testament of 1525, revised in 1534, was the first English vernacular text to be printed (in Cologne), and the basis for most subsequent versions. He was a strong proponent of the view that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language.

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569)

Coverdale's text of 1535, published at Cologne, was the first complete Bible to be printed in English. It was a translation from German.

Matthew's Bible (1537)

This complete Bible was the first to be printed in England. The text is attributed to Thomas Matthew, Chamberlain of Colchester, but it was compiled by John Rogers, a friend of Tyndale's. It is based largely on Tyndale's work, with some use of Coverdale.

The Great Bible (1539)

This text, so-called because of its physical size, was the first of many official versions for use in Protestant England. A copy would be placed in every parish church in the country. It is a revision of Matthew's Bible by Coverdale. Because Archbishop Thomas Cranmer wrote a preface to it, the work became widely known as 'Cranmer's Bible'.

The Geneva Bible (1560)

This translation was produced by English Protestant exiles during the reign of Queen Mary. It was the first English Bible in roman type.

The Bishops' Bible (1568)

This revised version of the Great Bible became the official version of the Church in 1571, and was used by the scholars working on the Authorized Version (p. 64).

The Douai-Rheims Bible (1609-10)

This translation was issued by Roman Catholic priests in exile in Europe. The Rheims New Testament first appeared in 1582, and the remaining text was produced from Douai in 1609. Based on the Latin Vulgate, it was used by English Catholics for the next century.

ENGLISH DURING THE RENAISSANCE

During the 16th century there was a flood of new publications in English, prompted by a renewed interest in the classical languages and literatures, and in the rapidly developing fields of science, medicine, and the arts. This period, from the time of Caxton until around 1650, was later to be called the 'Renaissance', and it included the Reformation, the discoveries of Copernicus, and the European exploration of Africa and the Americas. The effects of these fresh perspectives on the English language were immediate, far-reaching, and controversial.

The focus of interest was vocabulary. There were no words in the language to talk accurately about the new concepts, techniques, and inventions which were coming from Europe, and so writers began to borrow them. Most of the words which entered the language at the time were taken from Latin, with a good number from Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Then, as the period of world-wide exploration got under way, words came into English from over 50 other languages, including several indigenous languages of North America, Africa, and Asia. Some words came into English directly; others came by way of an intermediate language. Many came indirectly from Latin or Italian via French.

Some writers, such as Thomas Elyot, went out of their way to find new words, in order (as they saw it) to 'enrich' the language. They saw their role as enabling the new learning to be brought within the reach of the English public – whether this was access to the old classical texts, or to the new fields of science, technology, and medicine. There were many translations of classical works during the 16th century, and thousands of Latin or Greek terms were introduced, as translators searched for an English equivalent and could not find one. Some, indeed, felt that English was in any case not an appropriate vehicle for the expression of the new learning. English, in this view, did not compare well with the tried and tested standards of Latin or Greek, especially in such fields as theology or medicine. It was a language fit for the street, but not for the library.

Then as now, the influx of foreign vocabulary attracted bitter criticism, and people leaped to the language's defence. Purists opposed the new 'inkhorn' terms, condemning them for obscurity and for interfering with the development of native English vocabulary. Some writers (notably, the poet Edmund Spenser) attempted to revive obsolete English words instead – what were sometimes called 'Chaucerisms' – and to make use of little-known words from English dialects. *Algate* ('always'), *sicker* ('certainly'), and *yblent*

('confused') are examples (p. 125). The scholar John Cheke used English equivalents for classical terms whenever he could, such as *crossed* for 'crucified' and *gainrising* for 'resurrection' (p. 124).

The increase in foreign borrowings is the most distinctive linguistic sign of the Renaissance in English. Purist opinion did not, in the event, stem the influx of new words – nor has it ever, in the history of this language.

SOME RENAISSANCE LOAN WORDS IN ENGLISH

From Latin and Greek

absurdity, adapt, agile, alienate, allusion, anachronism, anonymous, appropriate, assassinate, atmosphere, autograph, benefit, capsule, catastrophe, chaos, climax, conspicuous, contradictory, crisis, criterion, critic, delirium, denunciation, disability, disrespect, emancipate, emphasis, encyclopedia, enthusiasm, epilepsy, eradicate, exact, exaggerate, excavate, excursion, exist, expectation, expensive, explain, external, extinguish, fact, glottis, habitual, halo, harass, idiosyncrasy, immaturity, impersonal, inclemency, jocular, larynx, lexicon, lunar, malignant, monopoly, monosyllable, necessitate, obstruction, pancreas, parasite, parenthesis, pathetic, pneumonia, relaxation, relevant, scheme, skeleton, soda, species, system, tactics, temperature, tendon, thermometer, tibia, tonic, transcribe, ulna, utopian, vacuum, virus

From or via French

alloy, anatomy, battery, bayonet, bigot, bizarre, chocolate, colonel, comrade, detail, docility, duel, entrance, equip, explore, grotesque, invite, moustache, muscle, naturalize, passport, pioneer, probability, progress, shock, surpass, ticket, tomato, vase, vogue, volunteer

From or via Italian

argosy, balcony, ballot, cameo, carnival, concerto, cupola, design, fuse, giraffe, grotto, lottery, macaroni, opera, piazza, portico, rocket, solo, sonata, sonnet, soprano, stanza, stucco, trill, violin, volcano

From or via Spanish and Portuguese

alligator, anchovy, apricot, armada, banana, barricade, bravado, cannibal, canoe, cockroach, cocoa, corral, desperado, embargo, guitar, hammock, hurricane, maize, mosquito, mulatto, negro, potato, port (wine), rusk, sombrero, tank, tobacco, yam

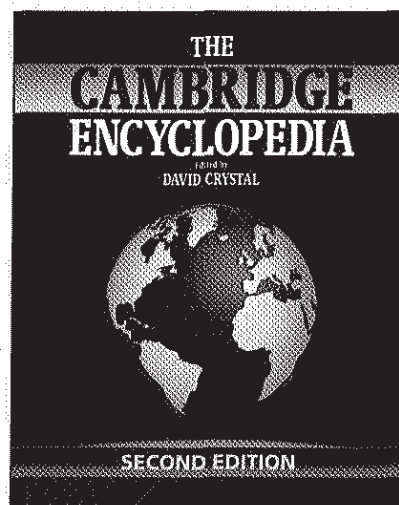
From other languages

bamboo (Malay), bazaar (Persian), caravan (Persian), coffee (Turkish), cruise (Dutch), curry (Tamil), easel (Dutch), flannel (Welsh), guru (Hindi), harem (Arabic), horde (Turkish), keelhaul (Dutch), ketchup (Malay), kiosk (Turkish), knapsack (Dutch), landscape (Dutch), pariah (Tamil), raccoon (Algonquian), rouble (Russian), sago (Malay), sheikh (Arabic), shekel (Hebrew), shogun (Japanese), troll (Norwegian), trousers (Irish Gaelic), turban (Persian), wampum (Algonquian), yacht (Dutch), yoghurt (Turkish)

EXPLAIN THYSELF

The inventors of neologisms were well aware of the need to explain their coinages. One strategy was to pair a new word with a familiar equivalent, such as *persist* and *continue*, and *animate* or *gyue courage* to. Another was to expound a meaning at greater length, as does Sir Thomas Elyot in introducing *encyclopedia*:

in an oratour is required to be a heape of all manner of lerynyng: whiche of some is called the worlde of science: of other the circle of doctrine / whiche is in one worde of greeke *Encyclopedia*.



THE INKHORN CONTROVERSY

Monetary metaphors were especially popular in the 16th-century controversy over the use of foreign words in English. Supporters use such terms as 'enrich' and 'credit'; opponents talk about 'bankruptcy' and 'counterfeiting'.



FOR

Thomas Elyot
(c. 1490–1546)

I am constrained to vsurpe a latine word calling it *Maturlitie*: whiche worde though it be strange and darke / yet by declaring the vertue in a fewe mo wordes / the name ones [once] brought in custome / shall be as facile to vnderstande as other wordes late comen out of Italy and France / and made denizins amonge vs. ... And this I do nowe remembre for the necessary augmentation of our langage. (*The booke named the Gouvernour*, 1531.)

George Pettie (1548–89)

Wherefore I marueile how our english tongue hath crackt it [its] credite, that it may not borrow of the Latine as well as other tongues: and if it haue broken, it is but of late, for it is not vnknown to all men how many woordes we haue fetcht from thence within these fewe yeeres, which if they should be all counted inkpot termes, I know not how we should speake any thing without blacking our mouthes with inke: for what woord can be more plaine then this word *plaine*, and yet what can come more neere to the Latine? (Preface to *The ciuile conuersation of M. Steeuën Guazzo*, 1581.)

The impossibility of the purist ideal, as Pettie points out, is well illustrated by such passages, which all contain several words of non-Germanic origin (such as *bankrupt* and, indeed, the word *pure* itself).

AGAINST

Thomas Wilson (1528–81)

Among all other lessons this should first be learned, that wee never affect any straunge ynkehorne termes, but to speake as is commonly received: neither seeking to be over fine, nor yet living over-carelesse, using our speeche as most men doe, and ordering our wittes as the fewest haue done. Some seeke so far for outlandish English, that they forget altogether their mothers language. And I dare sweare this, if some of their mothers were alive, thei were not able to tell what they say; and yet these fine English clerkes will say, *they speake in their mother tongue*, if a man should charge them for counterfeiting the Kings English. (*The Arte of Rhetorique*, 1553.)

John Cheke (1514–57)

I am of this opinion that our tung shold be written cleane and pure, vnmixt and vnmangeled with borrowing of other tungen, wherein if we take not heed bi tijm, euer borrowing and neuer payeng, she shall be fain to keep her house as bankrupt. For then doth our tung naturalie and praisable vtter her meaning, when she bouroweth no counterfeitness of other tungen to attire her self withall. ... (Letter to Thomas Hoby, 1557.)

WORSHIPFULL SIR

The rhetorician Thomas Wilson was one of the most ferocious critics of the new Latinate vocabulary emerging in England. In *The Arte of Rhetorique* he cites a letter written (he claims) by a Lincolnshire gentleman asking for assistance in obtaining a vacant benefice. It is likely that the letter is a parody, Wilson's own concoction, but the words he uses seem to be genuine, and in most cases are attested elsewhere. The following extract illustrates its style:

Pondering expending [weighing], and reuoluting [revolving] with my self your ingent [enormous] affabilitie, and ingenious capacitee, for mundane affaires: I cannot but celebrate and extolle your magnificall dexteritee, aboue all other. For how could you haue adepted [acquired] suche illustre prerogatiue [illustrious pre-eminence], and dominicall [lordly] superiorte, if the fecunditee of your ingenie [intellectual powers] had not been so fertile, and wounderfull pregnant. Now therefore beeyng accersited [summoned],

to suche splendent renoume, and dignitee splendious: I doubt not but you will adiuuate [help] such poore adnichilate [destitute] orphans, as whilome ware condisciples [schoolfellows] with you, and of antique familiarite in Lincolnshire.

What is noteworthy is that several of these new Latinate words have since entered the language (e.g. *ingenious*, *capacity*, *mundane*, *celebrate*, *extol*, *dexterity*). By contrast, most of the native coinages invented by contemporary writers as alternatives to Latin loans have failed to survive. An example is the set of terms proposed by Ralph Lever in his *Arte of Reason*, rightly termed, *Witcraft* (1573) for the study of logic. They include such Latin equivalents as *endsay* ('conclusio'), *ifsay* ('propositio conditionalis'), *naysay* ('negatio'), *saywhat* ('definitio'), *shewsay* ('propositio'), and *yeasay* ('affirmatio'). Though most of Lever's coinages had no future, a few of his forms emerged independently in regional use (especially *naysay(er)* and *yeasay(er)*). All of them intriguingly anticipate Newspeak (p. 135).

DERUNCINATED WORDS

cohibit ('restrain'), *deruncinate* ('weed'), *eximious* ('excellent'), *illecebrous* ('delicate'), *suppeditate* ('supply')...

During the Renaissance, many words were coined which did not survive. What is interesting, but little understood, is why some words were retained while others were not. For example, both *impede* and *expede* were introduced during this period, but only the former has survived. *Demit* ('send away') has been replaced by *dismiss*, though the parallel items *commit* and *transmit* have remained; and *disadorn* and *disaccustom* have been lost, though *disagree* and *disabuse* have been kept. In Wilson's letter, from which an extract is quoted above, most of the new Latin words survived, but *obtestate* and *fatigate* did not. In certain cases, the existence of perfectly satisfactory words in the language for a particular concept militated against the introduction of a further item: what need of *aspectable*, when we already have *visible*? It is mostly impossible to say why one word lived and another died.

NEW FORMATIONS

The influx of foreign words was the most noticeable aspect of lexical growth; but throughout the period the vocabulary was steadily expanding in other ways. Far more new words in fact came into English by adding prefixes and suffixes, or by forming new compounds (p. 128). It is also important to note the use of the process of word-class conversion, much encountered in Shakespeare (p. 63).

Prefixation
bedaub, counterstroke, disabuse, disrobe, endear, forename, interlink, nonsense, submarine, uncivilized, uncomfortable

Suffixation
blandishment, changeful, considerable, delightfulness, drizzling, frequenter, gloomy, immaturity, laughable, lunatical, murmurous

Compounding
chap-fallen, commander-in-chief, Frenchwoman, heaven-sent, laughing-stock, pincushion, pine-cone, rosewood, spoonwort

Conversion

Noun from verb: invite, laugh, scratch

Verb from noun: gossip, launder, season ('Season your admiration for a while...')

ENGLISH RECOGNIZED

The controversy over which kind of English lexicon to use should not be allowed to obscure the fact that English was now widely accepted as the language of learning. At the beginning of the 16th century, the situation had been very different, with Latin still established as the normal language of scholarship. All over Europe, vernaculars were criticized as crude, limited, and immature – fit for popular literature, but little else.

Richard Mulcaster (?1530–1611), headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School, was a leading supporter of the capabilities and value of the mother tongue in all subjects:

I do not think that anie language, be it whatsoever, is better able to utter all arguments, either with more pith, or greater planesse, than our English tung is, if the English utterer be as skilfull in the matter, which he is to utter: as the foren utterer is. ... I love Rome, but London better, I favor Italie, but England more, I honor the Latin, but I worship the English.

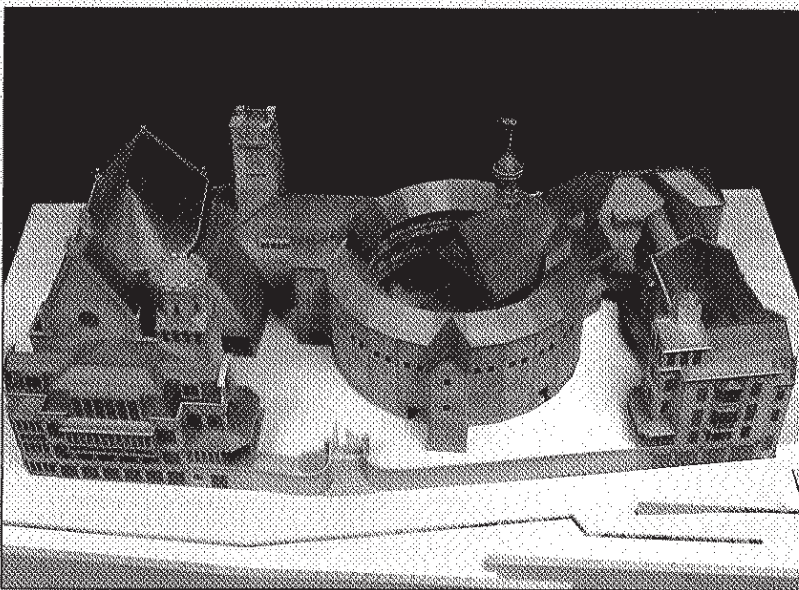
By the end of the 16th century, the matter was resolved. English became the language of learning.

THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE

All textbooks on the history of English agree that the two most important influences on the development of the language during the final decades of the Renaissance are the works of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and the King James Bible of 1611 (p. 64). 'Influence' does not here refer to the way these works use language in a beautiful or memorable way. Extracts from both sources predominate in any collection of English quotations; but the present section is not primarily concerned with issues of aesthetic excellence or quotability (p. 184). 'To be or not to be' is a quotation, but it is unimportant in discussing the development of the language's grammar or vocabulary. On the other hand, Shakespeare's use of *obscene* (in *Richard II*) is not part of any especially memorable quotation, but it is the first recorded use of this word in English. And even though he may not have been the very first to use it (some Shakespearean 'firsts', such as *puppi-dogges*, will undoubtedly have been present in the spoken language already), his usage would have been influential in developing popular awareness of it, and thus increasing its circulation.

The Shakespearean impact on the language was chiefly in the area of the lexicon, as the examples on these pages suggest. His work, however, also provides countless instances of the way English was developing at the time, and illustrations from his poems and plays are unavoidable in any discussion of contemporary pronunciation (p. 69), word formation, syntax (p. 70), or language use (p. 71). In return, the studies of Renaissance language in general have contributed many insights into Shakespeare's own use of language.

THE NEW GLOBE



An architect's model of the International Shakespeare Globe Centre, due for completion in spring 1995.

The first wooden structure opened in 1599, but was burned down in 1613 – it is said, by a spark from a cannon during a performance of *Henry VIII*. Although immediately rebuilt, the theatre was closed by the Puritans in 1642, and subsequently demolished.

The reconstruction was the brainchild of American actor-director Sam Wanamaker who died in December 1993, aged 74. The Globe Playhouse Trust was formed in 1970, but building work on the site, some 500 yards from the original location, did not begin until 1989. Elizabethan

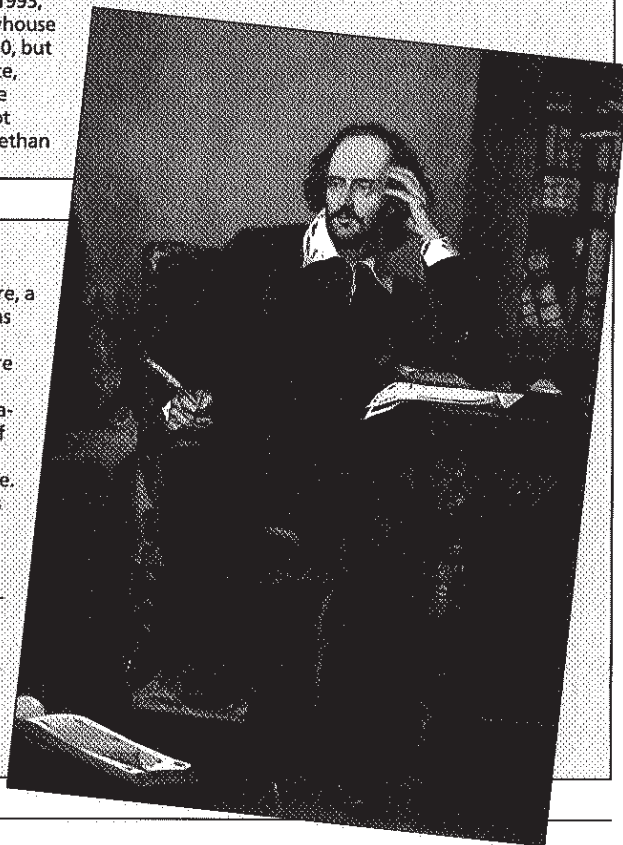
building techniques have been used to create a replica of the oak-framed theatre, based on contemporary sketches and records. The aim of the project is to restore an appreciation of Shakespeare's works as they were first performed. When complete, the Globe will have a capacity of 1,500, including 300 standing in the theatre's open yard, and will mount plays in the style of Elizabethan drama, and in the setting described simply and effectively in the Prologue to *Henry V* as a 'wooden O'.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, the son of John Shakespeare, a glover, and Mary Arden, of farming stock. Much uncertainty surrounds his early life. He was the eldest of three sons, and there were four daughters. Educated at the local grammar school, in 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, from a local farming family. Their children were Susanna (1583) and twins Hamnet and Judith (1585).

In about 1591 he moved to London and became an actor. The first evidence of his association with the stage is in 1594, when he was acting with the Lord Chamberlain's company of players, later 'the King's Men'. When the company built the Globe theatre, he became a partner, living modestly in a house in Silver Street until c. 1606, then moving near the Globe. He returned to Stratford c. 1610, living as a country gentleman at his house, New Place. His will was made in March 1616 (p. 149), a few months before he died, and he was buried at Stratford.

The modern era of Shakespearean scholarship has long been noted for its meticulous investigation of the text, chronology, and authorship of the plays, and of the theatrical, literary, and socio-historical contexts which gave rise to them. To all this has now been added a comparatively small but rapidly growing contribution from linguistically-inspired approaches such as stylistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and computational linguistics (pp. 63, 153). Of particular interest is the extent to which the remaining controversial questions of authorship (such as *Henry VI Part I* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*) can be illuminated using modern stylistic and computational techniques (pp. 266, 423).



1572

THE TRAGEDIE OF HAMLET, Prince of Denmarke.

Actus Primus. Scena Prima.

Enter Barnardo and Francisco two Centinels.

Barnardo.
Who's there?
Francisco. No answer me: I stand by yond
your file.
Barn. Long live the King.
Francisco. Barnardo?
Barn. He.
Francisco. You come most carefully upon your hour.
Barn. 'Tis now struck twelve, get thee to bed Francisco.
Francisco. For this relief much thanks: 'Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick with it.
Barn. Have you had quiet Guard?
Francisco. Not a mouse stirring.
Barn. Well, goodnight. If you do meet Horatio and
Marcellus, the Rivals of my Watch, bid them make haste.
Enter Horatio and Marcellus.
Francisco. I think I hear them. Stand: who's there?
Horatio. Friends to this ground.
Marcellus. And Leige-men to the Dane.
Francisco. Give you good night.
Horatio. O sworn hand! Soldier, who hath relieved you?
Francisco. Barnardo has my place: give you goodnight.
Exit Francisco.
Marcellus. Holla Barnardo.
Horatio. Say what is there?
Marcellus. A piteous cry.
Horatio. Welcome Horatio, welcome good Marcellus.
Marcellus. What, has this thing appear'd againe to night?
Horatio. I have some morning.
Marcellus. Horatio, I do, but our Fantasie,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seene of vs,
Therefore I haue told you along
With vs, to watch the minutes of this Night,
That if againe this Apparition come,
He may appear to our eyes, and speake to vs.
Horatio. Tis such, 'twould not appear,
Marcellus. Sit downe a while,
And let vs once againe vouch your eyes,
That we do see this thing: our Story,
What we two Night last seene
Horatio. Well, in we downe,
And let vs here Barnardo speake of this.
Marcellus. Last night of all,
When yond same Starre that Westward from the Pole
Had made his course: till came that pure of Heaven

Where now's buries, Marcellus and my selfe,
The Bell then beating one.
Marcellus. Peace, breathe there a while: *Enter the Ghost.*
Looke where it comes againe.
Horatio. In the same figure, like the King that's dead.
Marcellus. 'Tis as a Schollers, speake to it, Horatio.
Horatio. Lookes it not like the King? Marke it, Horatio.
Marcellus. 'Tis like him, and yet twice his length.
Horatio. 'Tis heere we see with feare & wonder
That he would speake too.
Marcellus. O, 'tis like him.
Horatio. What art thou that euen'st this time of night,
Together with that Faine and Whorlike forme,
In which the Maidly of buried Danes
Did sometime march: By Heauen I charge thee speake.
Marcellus. 'Tis offended.
Horatio. Speake, stand speake.
Marcellus. Say, speake, speake: I charge thee, speake.
Exit the Ghost.
Marcellus. 'Tis gone, and will not answer.
Horatio. How now, Horatio? You tremble & look pale:
Is not this something more then Fantasie?
What thinke you of it?
Horatio. Before my God, I might not this beleefe
Without the feble and true smooth
Of mine owne eyes.
Marcellus. 'Tis not like the King?
Horatio. As those are to thy feele,
Such was the very Armour he had on,
When th' Ambitious Norwey combated:
So frown'd he once, when in an angry palle
He smote the fledg'd Pollex on the Iee,
'Tis strange.
Marcellus. That twice before, and last at this dead hour,
With Martiall falke, Iush hee gone by our Watch,
In what particular thought to work, I know not:
But in the gorge and scope of my Opinion,
This bodie some strange eruption to our Seize.
Horatio. Good now fit downe, & tell me heere knowes
Why this same field and moor shewes Watch,
So nightly toyles the fabricke of the Land,
And why such daily Call of Brasse Cannon
And Forraigne Mart for Implements of warre:
Why such unkinde of Ship-wright, whose fore Tasse
Do't not divide the Sunday from the weeke,
Why such mightie towin'd, that this foresty heath
Doth make the Night layne-Labourer with the day:
Who let's this in our eares me?
Marcellus. That can I,

LEXICAL FIRSTS

• There are many words first recorded in Shakespeare which have survived into Modern English. Some examples:

accommodation, assassination, barefaced, countless, courtship, dislocate, dwindle, eventful, fancy-free, lack-lustre, laughable, premeditated, submerged

• There are also many words first recorded in Shakespeare which have not survived. About a third of all his Latinate neologisms fall into this category. Some examples:

abruption, appertainments, cadent, exsufficate, persistive, protractive, questrist, soilure, tortive, ungenitured, unplausible, vastidity

GRAMMATICAL CONVERSIONS

One of the consequences of the falling away of inflectional endings in English (p. 44) was a marked growth in the process of grammatical conversion – the use of one word class with the function of another (p. 129) – and this became particularly noticeable during the later Renaissance period, especially in dramatic writing. Contemporary rhetoricians called it *anthimeria*. Shakespeare made copious use of it, and was especially fond of making verbs from nouns.

Season your admiration for a while...

It out-herods Herod...

No more shall trenching war channel her fields...

Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle...

Julius Caesar, / Who at Phillippi the good Brutus ghosted...

Destruction straight shall dog them at the heels...

I am proverbed with a grandsire phrase...

DIVERSE HYPHENATIONS

Any study of Shakespeare's lexicon would be inadequate if it did not draw attention to his use of hyphenated compounds. Many of these (such as *hugger-mugger*) are uniquely and recognizably his, and they thus form an uncertain category between those neologisms in his writing which have survived into the modern language and those which have died (see above). It is their structural diversity which is so noticeable, as is suggested by this set of examples from *King John* (each occurs in the play just once):

Arch-heretique	Canker-sorrow	ill-tuned	sinne-conceiuing
baby-eyes	faire-play	kindred-action	smooth-fac'd
bare-pickt	giant-world	ore-look'd	thin-bestained
Basilisco-like	halfe-blowne	pale-visag'd	vile-concluded
breake-vow	heauen-mouing	pell-mell	widow-comfort

(After W. F. Bolton, 1992.)

SUCH KNAVERY

One approach to Shakespeare's linguistic creativity takes an everyday concept and shows the imaginative range of the expressions used to convey it. Even the commonest notions display a remarkable variety, as shown by this collection of insulting phrases using the word *knave*.

wrangling knave; foul knave; Fortune's knave; fantastical knave; naughty knave; Sir knave; arrant knave; a devilish knave; lousy knave; lunatic knave; muddy knave; unthrifty knave; a thin-faced knave; a subtle knave; beastly knave; untaught knaves; bacon-fed knaves; gorbellied knaves; crafty knaves; lazy knaves; most unjust knave; most villainous knave; thou most untoward knave; poor gallant knave; base notorious knave; scurvy, lousy knave; a counterfeit cowardly knave; arrant, malmsy-nose knave; scurvy railing knave; rascally yea-forsooth knave; stubborn ancient knave; jealous rascally knave; poor cuckoldy knave; a pestilent complete knave; foul-mouthed and calumnious knave; sly and constant knave; a slipper and subtle knave; shrewd knave and unhappy; a young knave and begging; knaves that smell of sweat; shrewd and knavish sprite; knave very voluble; little better than false knaves; the lying'st knave in Christendom; the rascally, scauld, beggarly, lousy, praggling knave; scurvy, doting, foolish knave; whoreson beetle-headed, flap-ear'd knave; poor, decayed, ingenious, foolish, rascally knave; base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave.

(After W. J. Hill & C. J. Ottschen, 1991.)

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

The jump from quotation to everyday idiom is sometimes not great, as the following examples illustrate. All were introduced by Shakespeare, and have become part of the idiomatic expression of the modern language (though sometimes with an altered meaning).

what the dickens

(*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III.ii)

beggars all description

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, II.ii)

a foregone conclusion

(*Othello*, III.iii)

hoist with his own petard

(*Hamlet*, III.iv)

in my mind's eye

(*Hamlet*, I.ii)

caviare to the general

(*Hamlet*, II.ii)

it's Greek to me

(*Julius Caesar*, I.ii)

salad days

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, I.v)

play fast and loose

(*Antony and Cleopatra*, IV.xii)

a tower of strength

(*Richard III*, V.iii)

make a virtue of necessity

(*Pericles*, I.iii)

dance attendance

(*Henry VIII*, V.ii)

cold comfort

(*King John*, V.vii)

at one fell swoop

(*Macbeth*, IV.iii)

to the manner born

(*Hamlet*, I.iv)

brevisity is the soul of wit

(*Hamlet*, II.ii)

hold the mirror up to nature

(*Hamlet*, III.ii)

I must be cruel only to be kind

(*Hamlet*, III.iv)

all our yesterdays

(*Macbeth*, V.v)

with bated breath

(*Merchant of Venice*, I.iii)

love is blind

(*Merchant of Venice*, II.vi)

as good luck would have it

(*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III.v)

THE KING JAMES BIBLE

In the year that Shakespeare retired from writing for the stage, 1611, the 'Authorized Version' or King James Bible was published. It was never in fact authorized by any parliamentary process, but its title-page states that it was appointed to be read in churches throughout the kingdom, and in this way its influence on the population, and on the language at large, was to be far-reaching.

The origins of the work are well-documented. On his journey from Edinburgh to London in 1603, King James was presented with the 'Millenary Petition', in which 750 reformers from within the Church of England requested a new translation of the Bible. In a conference the following year, the King proposed a panel of university scholars who would carry out a preliminary translation, and this would then be submitted to the bishops for revision. The 54 translators were divided into six 'companies', each working on a separate section of the Bible. The preliminary version took four years, and the final revision a further nine months. The first edition, printed in an elegant black-letter type, appeared two years later.

The panel followed a number of guidelines. Translators were to use the Bishops' Bible where possible (p. 59), but were permitted to consult Tyndale and other earlier versions if necessary (and in fact they did so to a considerable extent). They were to preserve recognized chapter divisions and proper names, and to avoid lengthy marginal notes. Translations by any one member of the group were to be approved by the other members, and each company was to send its material to the others for final agreement. Disagreements were to be formally discussed, and external opinions sought if required. Never had there been such a translation by committee.

Committee documents are often faceless and uninspiring, with character and individuality swamped by the waves of revision required to achieve consensus. That this project proved to be so successful must have been due to the intellectual quality and personal enthusiasm of the panel members, which comes across strongly in their Preface to the work. They show themselves well aware of the dangers of consensus language:

An other thing we thinke good to admonish thee of (gentle Reader) that wee haue not tyed our selues to an vniformitie of phrasing, or to an identitie of words, as some peraduenture would wish that we had done, because they obserue, that some learned men

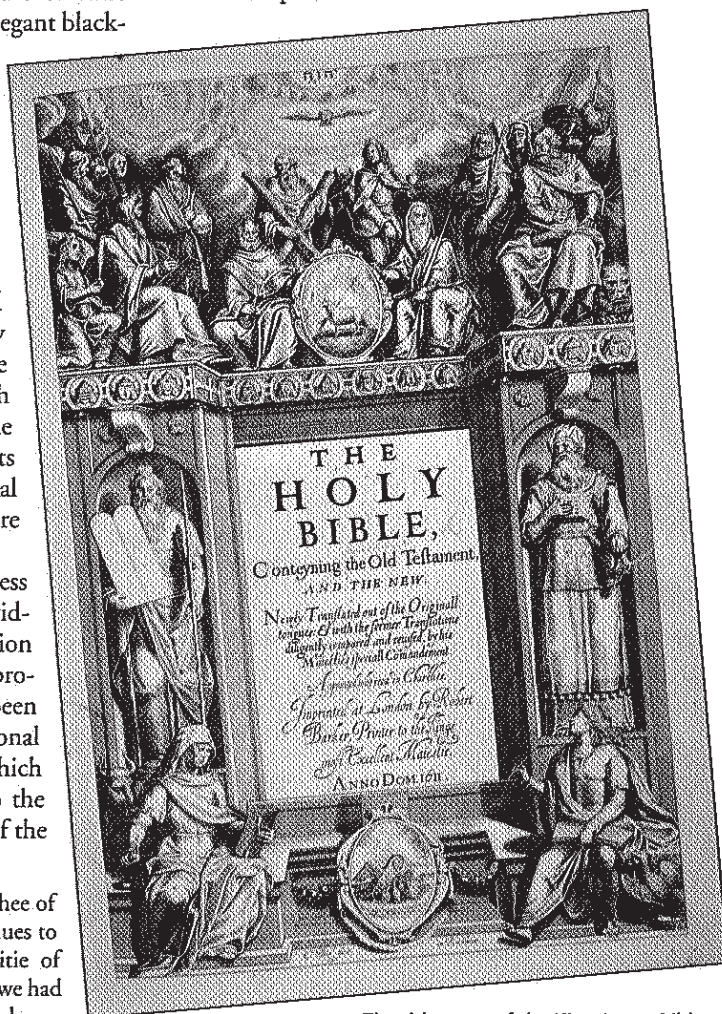
some where, haue beene as exact as they could that way... That we should expresse the same notion in the same particular word; as for example, if we translate the Hebrew or Greeke word once by *Purpose*, neuer to call it *Intent*; if one where *lourneying*, neuer *Traveiling*; if one where *Thinke*, neuer *Suppose*; if one where *Paine*, neuer *Ache*; if one where *loy*, neuer *Gladnesse*, etc. Thus to minse the matter, wee thought to savour more of curiositie then wisdome, and that rather it would breed scorne in the Atheist, then bring profite to the godly Reader. For is the kingdome of God become words or syllables? why should wee be in bondage to them if we may be free, vse one precisely when wee may vse another no lesse fit, as commodiously?

There were other important emphases in the work which contributed to its effectiveness. The translators were consciously conservative, and frequently introduced archaism and traditional readings, especially from Tyndale and Coverdale (p. 59). The resonances of the past were strong in their choices. And perhaps most important of all, they listened to final drafts of the translation being read aloud, verse by verse, in order to assess their rhythm and balance. It is, *par excellence*, a preachers' Bible.

BIBLICAL IDIOM

There are many phrases in the King James Bible which have entered the general idiom of the language (sometimes with minor changes in grammar or emphasis). Here are some of them.

my brother's keeper (Gen. 4)
a good old age (Gen. 15)
eye for eye (Exod. 21)
to spy out the land (Num. 13)
the apple of his eye (Deut. 32)
the people arose as one man (Judg. 20)
a man after his own heart (1 Sam. 13)
How are the mighty fallen (2 Sam. 1)
a still small voice (1 Kgs. 19)
the root of the matter (Job 19)
the skin of my teeth (Job 19)
out of the mouth of babes (Ps. 8)
His enemies shall lick the dust (Ps. 72)
go from strength to strength (Ps. 84)
at their wit's end (Ps. 107)
Heap coals of fire upon his head (Prov. 25)
a lamb brought to the slaughter (Jer. 11)
can the leopard change his spots? (Jer. 13)
eat sour grapes (Ezek. 24)
the salt of the earth (Matt. 5)
cast your pearls before swine (Matt. 7)
the straight and narrow (Matt. 7)
in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7)
new wine in old bottles (Matt. 9)
if the blind lead the blind (Matt. 15)
the signs of the times (Matt. 16)
whited sepulchre (Matt. 23)
Physician, heal thyself (Luke 4)
to kick against the pricks (Acts 9)
all things to all men (1 Cor. 9)
in the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15)
suffer fools gladly (2 Cor. 11)
thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12)
Touch not (Col. 2)
filthy lucre (1 Tim. 3)
money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6)
Fight the good fight (1 Tim. 6)
To the pure all things are pure (Tit. 1)
the patience of Job (James 5)
rule with a rod of iron (Rev. 2)



The title-page of the King James Bible.

A conservative style

The style of the King James Bible is much more conservative than that found in Shakespeare. As the translators say in their Preface, their aim was not to make a new translation, 'but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principall good one'. They aimed for a dignified, not a popular style, and often opted for older forms of the language, when modern alternatives were available. Their text therefore does not contain large numbers of new words, as Shakespeare's plays did (p. 63). One estimate finds in it only about 8,000 different words, which is less than half of the Shakespearean total (p. 123).

Similarly, the King James Bible looks backwards in its grammar, and preserves many of the forms and constructions which were falling out of use elsewhere. Some of these features are as follows:

- Many irregular verbs are found in their older forms: examples include *digged* ('dug'), *gat* ('got') and *gotten*, *bare* ('bore'), *spake* ('spoke'), *clave* ('cleft'), *holpen* ('helped'), and *wist* ('knew'). Other archaic forms are also found, such as *brethren*, *kine*, and *twain*.
- Older word orders are still in use, such as *follow thou me*, *speake ye unto*, *cakes unleavened*, and *things eternal*. In particular, the modern use of *do* with negatives and in questions is missing: we find *they knew him not* instead of *they did not know him*. By contrast, both old and new constructions are used in Shakespeare, and the *do* construction became standard by about 1700.

- The third person singular of the present tense of verbs is always *-(e)th*. In other texts of the period, it is being replaced by *-s* – a northern form which was moving south in the 16th century (p. 65), and which is often found in Shakespeare (along with the *-eth* ending).

- The second person plural pronouns were changing during this period (p. 71). Originally, *ye* was the subject form, and *you* was the form used as object or after a preposition. This distinction is preserved in the Bible, as can be seen in such examples as *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you...* But in most writing, by the end of the 16th century, *you* was already being used for *ye*, which disappeared from standard English in the late 17th century (apart from in some poetic and religious use).

- *His* is used for *its*, as in *if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted*. Although *its* is recorded as early as the end of the 16th century, it does not become general until 100 years later. Similarly, the modern use of the genitive was still not established, as can be seen in such usages as *for Jesus Christ his sake*.

- Several prepositions have different uses from today. *Of*, in particular, is widespread: *the zeal of* ('for') *thine house*, *tempted of* ('by') *Satan*, *went forth of* ('from') *the Arke*. Other examples include *in* ('at') *a good old age*, *taken to* (as a) *wife*, and *like as* ('like', 'as') *the sand of the sea*.

- *An* is used before many nouns beginning with *h*- in a stressed syllable, such as *an hundred*, *an helpe*, *an harlot*. This usage, begun by Wycliff, is still to be found as late as the 19th century.



Thomas Cranmer
(1489–1556)

TWO SAMPLE TEXTS

The first extract represents the 1611 printing, apart from the replacement of long 's' by s; the second extract is from a 19th-century printing, with modernized spelling and punctuation, which is closer to the versions that most people see today.

Luke 15.29–32

And he answering said to his father, Loe, these many yeeres doe I serue thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandement, and yet thou neuer gauest mee a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soone as this thy sonne was come, which hath deuored thy liuing with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calfe. And he said vnto him, Sonne, thou art euer with me, and all that I haue is thine. It was meete that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is aliue againe: and was lost, and is found.

Genesis 27.10–22

And he lighted vpon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and beheld a ladder set vpon the earth, and the top of it reached to heauen: and beheld the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it; and to thy seed:

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

A related influential text was the Prayer Book, which appeared in 1549 with the full title of *The Booke of the Common Prayer and administracion of the Sacramentes, and other Rites and Ceremonies after the Use of the Church of England*. It provided a single order of public worship to be followed throughout the country. The first edition was compiled by a group of bishops and scholars led by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Thomas Cranmer), and radically revised, after its controversial reception, in 1552. A later revision, generally known as the 1662 Book (from the date of enforcement of its use), substituted the text of the King James Bible, and introduced a degree of linguistic modernization. This version continued as the only official text in the Church of England until the adoption of an alternative liturgy in contemporary language at the end of the 1970s (p. 403).

The Prayer Book is responsible for a great deal of the vernacular idiom of English prayer, such as 'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen', 'Lord have mercy vpon us', 'be amongst you and remain with you always'. A few of its phrases (such as *holy wedlock*) have achieved broader currency, and a much larger number have achieved the status of quotations:

Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest (*Collect, 2nd Sunday in Advent*)

Renounce the devil and all his works (*Public Baptism*)

Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife? (*Solemnization of Matrimony*)

earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust (*The Burial of the Dead*)

$\frac{a}{a}$	$\frac{b}{b}$	$\frac{c}{c}$	$\frac{d}{d}$	$\frac{e}{e}$	$\frac{f}{f}$	$\frac{g}{g}$	$\frac{h}{h}$	$\frac{i}{i}$	$\frac{j}{j}$
$\frac{f}{f}$	$\frac{g}{g}$	$\frac{h}{h}$	$\frac{i}{i}$	$\frac{j}{j}$	$\frac{k}{k}$	$\frac{l}{l}$	$\frac{m}{m}$	$\frac{n}{n}$	$\frac{o}{o}$
$\frac{m}{m}$	$\frac{n}{n}$	$\frac{o}{o}$	$\frac{p}{p}$	$\frac{q}{q}$	$\frac{r}{r}$	$\frac{s}{s}$	$\frac{t}{t}$	$\frac{u}{u}$	$\frac{v}{v}$
$\frac{q}{q}$	$\frac{r}{r}$	$\frac{s}{s}$	$\frac{t}{t}$	$\frac{u}{u}$	$\frac{v}{v}$	$\frac{w}{w}$	$\frac{x}{x}$	$\frac{y}{y}$	$\frac{z}{z}$
$\frac{b}{b}$	$\frac{c}{c}$	$\frac{d}{d}$	$\frac{e}{e}$	$\frac{f}{f}$	$\frac{g}{g}$	$\frac{h}{h}$	$\frac{i}{i}$	$\frac{j}{j}$	$\frac{k}{k}$

Growing regularization

Mulcaster's own views did a great deal to hasten the growth of regularization at the end of the 16th century. His *Elementarie* provided a table listing recommended spellings for nearly 9,000 words, and influenced a generation of orthoepists (pronunciation teachers) and grammarians. Several other works of the period focused on the range of problems presented by the writing system, and a climate emerged which fostered standardization.

Vowels especially came to be spelled in a more predictable way. There was increased use of a double-vowel convention (as in *soon*) or a silent *-e* (as in *name*) to mark length; and a doubled consonant within a word became a more predictable sign of a preceding short vowel (*sitting*) – though there continued to be some uncertainty over what should happen at the end of a word (*bed* and *glad*, but *well* and *glasse*). Then, in the 1630s, one of the most noticeable variations in medieval English came to be standardized: the use of *u* and *v*. These symbols were at first interchangeable (p. 41), and then positionally distinguished (with *v* used initially and *u* medially in a word); they later followed Continental practice and adopted fixed phonetic values, with *v* representing a consonant and *u* a vowel. A similar standardization affected *j* (earlier a variant form of *i*) and *i*.

During the 17th century, an increasing number of spelling guides came to be published, which inevitably influenced printing practice. Children's schoolbooks began to contain lists of homophones (such as *made* and *maid*) and irregular spellings, which had to be learned by heart. And a considerable pressure for standardization followed the arrival of the first dictionaries (from 1604, p. 72). By the middle of the century, printing conventions had become highly regularized, and the gulf established between the forms of speech and their written representation. The modern system, in which irregular spellings can be explained but not predicted, had arrived. The period of social tolerance of variant spellings came to an end; and as 18th-century notions of correctness emerged (p. 72), poor spelling became increasingly stigmatized.

CAPITALIZATION

Hart recommended his readers to use a capital letter at the beginning of every sentence, proper name, and important common noun. By the early 17th century, the practice had extended to titles (*Sir*, *Lady*), forms of address (*Father*, *Mistris*), and personified nouns (*Nature*). Emphasized words and phrases would also attract a capital. By the beginning of the 18th century, the influence of Continental books had caused this practice to be extended still further (e.g. to the names of the branches of knowledge), and it was not long before some writers began using a capital for any noun that they felt to be important. Books appeared in which all or most nouns were given an

initial capital (as is done systematically in modern German) – perhaps for aesthetic reasons, or perhaps because printers were uncertain about which nouns to capitalize, and so capitalized them all.

The fashion was at its height in the later 17th century, and continued into the later 18th. The manuscripts of Butler, Traherne, Swift, and Pope are full of initial capitals. However, the later 18th-century grammarians were not amused by this apparent lack of order and discipline in the written language. In their view, the proliferation of capitals was unnecessary, and causing the loss of a useful potential distinction. Their rules brought a dramatic reduction in the types of noun permitted to take a capital letter (p. 122).

An extract from Jonathan Swift's *Baucis and Philemon* (1706), showing almost every noun capitalized. (After P. J. Croft, 1973.)

In antient Time, as Story tells
The Saints would often leave their Cells,
And strol'd about, but hid'd their Quality,
To try the People's Hospitality.

It happen'd on a Winter's night,
As Authors of the Legend write
Two Brother-Hermits, Saints by Trade
Taking their Tour in Masquerade
Came to a Village hard by Rixham
Ragged, and not a Groat betwixt 'em.
It rain'd as hard as it could pour,
Yet they were forc'd to walk an Hour
From House to House, wet to the Skin
Before one Soul would let 'em in.
They call'd at ev'ry Dore; Good People,
My Comrade's Blind, and I'm a Creepie
Here we ly starving in the Street
'Twould grieve a Body's Heart to see't;
No Christian would turn out a Beast
In such a dreadfull Night at least;
Give us but Straw, and let us ly
In yonder Barn to keep us dry.
Thus in the Strolers usuall Cant
They beg'd Relief which none would
grant;

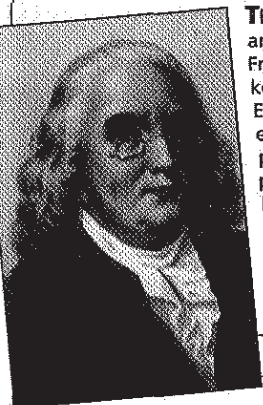
The Story of Baucis & Philemon. In antient Time, as Story tells
The Saints would often leave their Cells
And strol'd about, but hid'd their Quality
To try the People's Hospitality.
It happen'd on a Winter's night,
As Authors of the Legend write
Two Brother-Hermits, Saints by Trade
Taking their Tour in Masquerade
Came to a Village hard by Rixham
Ragged, and not a Groat betwixt 'em.
It rain'd as hard as it could pour,
Yet they were forc'd to walk an Hour
From House to House, wet to the Skin
Before one Soul would let 'em in.
They call'd at ev'ry Dore; Good People,
My Comrade's Blind, and I'm a Creepie
Here we ly starving in the Street
'Twould grieve a Body's Heart to see't.
No Christian would turn out a Beast
In such a dreadfull Night at least;
Give us but Straw, and let us ly
In yonder Barn to keep us dry.
Thus in the Strolers usuall Cant
They beg'd Relief which none would
grant;

IN FAVOUR OF CAPITALS

The American statesman and scientist, Benjamin Franklin (1706–90), had a keen interest in the English language, and especially in its typography (having been a printer in his youth). In a letter to Noah Webster (p. 80), written in 1789, he mourns the passing of the age of noun capitalization.

In examining the English books that were printed between the restoration and the accession of George the Second [1660–1727], we may observe, that all substantives were begun with a capital, in which we imitated our mother tongue, the German. This was more particularly useful to those who were not well acquainted with the English, there being such a prodigious number of our words that are both verbs and substantives, and spelt in the same manner, though often accented differently in pronunciation. This method has, by the fancy of printers, of late years been entirely laid aside; from an idea, that suppressing the capitals shews the character to greater advantage; those letters, prominent

above the line, disturbing its even, regular appearance. The effect of this change is so considerable, that a learned man of France, who used to read our books, though not perfectly acquainted with our language, in conversation with me on the subject of our authors, attributed the greater obscurity he found in our modern books, compared with those of the period above mentioned, to a change of style for the worse in our writers; of which mistake I convinced him, by marking for him each substantive with a capital, in a paragraph, which he then easily understood, though before he could not comprehend it. This shews the inconvenience of that pretended improvement.



RENAISSANCE PUNCTUATION

The basis of the modern punctuation system emerged during the Renaissance. Caxton was heir to a graphic tradition which was limited, unclear, and inconsistent. In common with classical models, the symbols were used rhetorically (p. 278), showing readers where to breathe, how long to pause, and how to introduce emphasis and rhythmical balance into their speech. Even so, there was a great deal of idiosyncrasy and arbitrariness in their use, and attempts to find a neat correlation between punctuation and prosody in Early Modern English texts have never succeeded.

The chief symbols were the *virgule*, or oblique stroke (/), found in both short and long forms; the *period* (.), found at various heights; and the *colon* (:). There is no correspondence with modern uses. In Caxton, the virgule variously had the function of a modern comma, period, or semi-colon; it fell out of use in the 16th century, and was largely replaced by the comma. The period was often used where today we would have a comma (as in the closing lines of the 'egg' text, p. 57). The colon had a broad range of rhetorical functions, and was not restricted to introducing a list or summary, as it is now.

John Hart (p. 66) had a great deal to say about both the rhetorical and grammatical functions of 'pointing'. He distinguished the period ('point'), colon ('joint'), comma, question mark ('asker'), exclamation mark ('wonderer'), parentheses ('clozer'), square brackets ('notes'), apostrophe ('tourner'), hyphen ('joiner'), diæresis ('sondrer'), and capital ('grear') letters. His detailed account greatly influenced the way grammarians and printers dealt with this area, and punctuation marks in books came to be more widely used as a result.

Other marks emerged in English Renaissance printing. The *semi-colon* (also called a *comma-colon*, *hemi-colon*, or *sub-colon*) came into use during the 16th century, and for a while was used interchangeably with the colon. 'Turned double commas', later called *quotation marks* or *inverted commas*, made their appearance to open direct speech, and some time afterwards double raised commas were brought in to close it. But not only did new symbols emerge; older symbols developed new uses. In the 18th century, for example, the apostrophe (p. 283) extended its range, first marking the genitive singular of nouns, then the genitive plural. There was also a much heavier use of the comma than is typical today, as the extract from Benjamin Franklin illustrates (p. 67). By the end of the Early Modern English period, the modern punctuation system was in most respects established.

QUOTE... UNQUOTE

Joshua Steele includes this letter as an Appendix to his treatise on *The Melody and Measure of Speech* (1775). Because he is thinking of it as a quotation, he encloses the whole thing in double inverted commas, following the conventions current at that time. Each new line is opened by these commas, with just one pair of raised commas to mark the close. An interesting feature is the inclusion of the date within the quotation.

[93]

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE TREATISE ON THE MELODY AND MEASURE OF SPEECH.

" May 14, 1775-

" **Y**OU have inclosed my remarks, which are too long; but as you desired them soon, I had not time to make them shorter. I am glad that you are to give your system to the public. * * * * * As to the queries and observations I sent you formerly, and have now sent you, you may make what use of them you think proper; and if they contribute in the least to make more compleat so ingenious a performance, I shall think they do me honour.

EDITING THE TEXT

A modern edition of a Renaissance text may introduce several differences in punctuation which affect the way the passage is to be interpreted (and, in the case of drama, how the actor should present it). Whether the emendations help or hinder is a matter for discussion; but the first thing is to be aware that they exist. The following extract from *King Lear* illustrates the issue (l.l.55-61). The first version is from the First Folio (1623); the second is from the New Penguin edition (1972).

GONERILL: Sir, I loue you more than words can weild ye matter,
Deerer then eye-sight, space, and libertie,
Beyond what can be valewed, rich or rare,
No lesse then life, with grace, health, beauty, honor:
As much as Childe ere lou'd, or Father found.
A loue that makes breath poore, and speech vnable,
Beyond all manner of so much I loue you.

GONERILL: Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter,
Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,
Beyond what can be valued rich or rare,
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour,
As much as child e'er loved or father found;
A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of 'so much' I love you.

There are several differences which could lead to an interesting argument.

- Does the removal of the comma after *valewed* (l. 3) alter the meaning of the phrase *rich or rare* (to mean 'what can be valued as rich or rare' rather than 'no matter how rich or rare')?
- Does the replacement of the colon after *honor* (l. 4) by a comma reduce the dramatic impact of the pause following the list of nouns?
- Does the removal of the comma after *lou'd* (l. 5) lessen the force of the contrast between *Childe* and *Father*? Similarly, is its removal desirable after *poore* in the next line?
- Does the replacement of the period after *found* (l. 5) by a semi-colon reduce the summarizing prominence of the final two lines?

(After G. Ronberg, 1992.)

PAUSAL PRECISION

Many writers of the time draw attention to the rhetorical role of punctuation marks, often computing pausal values with mathematical precision. An example is Simon Daines, in *Orthoepia Anglicana* (1640), who defines the period in this way:

The *Period*... is altogether used at the end of every speech or sentence,... and signifies *conclusion*. The pause or distance of

speaking hereto appropriate is sometime more, sometime lesse: for... when in the middle of a line it cuts off any integrall part of a complete Tractate [*treatise*], which goes not on with the same, but begins a new line, it requireth double the time of pause, that it doth when the treatise persists in the same line: being then foure times as long as a *Colon*, which in the same line is but twice.

SOUND CHANGES

The pronunciation changes which took place during Early Modern English have been studied in considerable detail. Not only is there a great deal of literary evidence, derived from the rhymes and rhythms of poetry, there are also detailed accounts of contemporary pronunciation from phoneticians and spelling reformers. The changes were many and complex. The effects of the Great Vowel Shift (p. 55) were still slowly working their way through the sound system, and several other important developments were in progress.

A GREAT FEAST OF LANGUAGES

Dramatists can provide a source of insight into contemporary pronunciation, partly because of their use of rhymes and word-play, but also because of what they make their characters say. A famous Shakespearean example is in *Love's Labour's Lost* (V.i.15), where the schoolmaster Holofernes complains about Don Armado's pronunciation.

I abhor such fanatical phantasies, such insociable and point-devise companions; such rackers of orthography, as to speak 'dout' fine, when he should say 'doubt'; 'det' when he should pronounce 'debt' – d, e, b, t, not d, e, t. He clepeth [calls] a calf 'cauf', half 'hauf'; neighbour vocatur [is called] 'nebour'; 'neigh' abbreviated 'ne'. This is abhominable – which he would call 'abominable'.

There were evidently two styles of pronunciation current in the late 16th century, and there is no doubt about which the schoolmaster prefers – the more conservative one, which most closely reflects the spelling (p. 66).

SOUND DESCRIPTION

The precision with which some writers could describe the sounds of English is well illustrated by this extract from John Wallis's account of [n] in his *Treatise on Speech* (1st edition, 1653). (Translated from the Latin by J. A. Kemp, 1972.)

For there is a difference between the sound of the letter *n* in the words *thin, sin, in*, and that in *thing, think, sing, single, sink, ink, lynx*, etc. Similarly in *hand, band, ran* the *n* is not the same as it is in *hang, bank, rank*, etc.... In the former of each of these two groups the pronunciation of *n* always involves the tip of the tongue striking

the front of the palate, near the roots of the upper teeth;

whereas in the latter the tip of the tongue is normally moved down to the roots of the lower teeth, and the back of the tongue is raised up to the back of the palate, blocking the sound at this point.

Precision indeed – and in 1653!



NEW SOURCES OF VARIATION

Some of the most important pronunciation indicators of present-day regional and social variation emerged during this period.

- The distinction in modern British Received Pronunciation (RP, p. 245) between *cut* (*son, run*, etc.) and *put* (*pull, wolf*, etc.) developed in the 17th century. Previously, both types of word had a high, back, rounded vowel /u/ – the quality heard in modern *put*. This quality remained in certain phonetic contexts (e.g. preceded by a labial consonant, as in *full, wolf, put*), but elsewhere the vowel became more open and lost its rounding, resulting in /ʌ/. In due course, pairs of words began to be contrasted using these qualities (such as *look* vs *luck*), and a new phonemic distinction emerged (p. 236). However, the change was ignored in many regions, with people continuing to use /u/ in both types of word, and this is now one of the chief means of telling whether someone has been brought up in the North of England.

- Throughout this period, /r/ was sounded before consonants and at the end of a word, as is suggested by the way it has been preserved in modern spelling (*jar, corn, fire*, etc.). It stopped being pronounced in RP during the 18th century, with various effects on the preced-

ing vowel: sometimes the vowel became a diphthong (as in *peer* and *bear*); sometimes it lengthened (as in *barn, corn*, and *clerk*). The RP change proved to be something of an exception: most British and American regional accents retained the /r/, and the discrepancy between sound and spelling later became a focus of purist criticism (p. 365).

- Two new consonants emerged during this period. The [ŋ] sound in such words as *sing* was pronounced in Middle English, but always followed by [g] or [k], so that it never had any independent status as a phoneme. By the early 17th century, this final [-g] was no longer being pronounced in RP, leaving /ŋ/ as a separate contrastive unit. Soon after, 'g-dropping' became a social issue (p. 77).

- The /ʒ/ phoneme also emerged in the 17th century, a development of /zj/ – in much the same way as in Modern English a rapid pronunciation of *was your* readily results in a coalescence of the two sounds. The change chiefly affected such words as *occasion* and *vision, measure* and *pleasure*, and later appeared in final position in such loan words as *beige* and *garage*. The French overtones of the sound are a source of controversy still, as when people argue the case of /gə'ɔ:ʒ/ vs /gær'dʒ/.

STRESS SHIFTS

Many words could be heard with a different stress pattern from the one found today.

- First syllable stressed: *antique, convenient, distinct, entire, extreme, July*.
- Second syllable stressed: *advertise, character, demonstrate, sinister*.
- Final syllable stressed: *aspect, expert, paramount, parent, yesterday*.

Secondary stress (p. 248) also often differed: for example, at one time *academy* had such a stress on its third syllable (so that it was rhythmically like *helicopter*). Many poetic rhymes do not make sense until this extra stress (and its effect on the vowel) is taken into account: Donne rhymes *make us one* and *propagation*, and Shakespeare *never die* and *memory*.

It is in fact difficult to be definite about word stress during this period. There was an unusual amount of variation, because native stress patterning (which tended to put the stress on the root syllable of a word) was in competition with the pattern heard in Romance loan-words (which tended to put the stress on a syllable at or near the end of a word). Stress might also vary depending on the position in which a word appeared in a sentence or metrical line. *Complete*, for example, has a stress on its first syllable in 'A thousand complete courses of the Sun' (*Troilus and Cressida*), but on the second in 'never complete' (*Timon of Athens*).

How do we know?

The clearest evidence comes from the way words are used in poetry, where a predictable metre or rhyme forces a pronunciation upon us. Also, grammarians began to describe accentuation in their accounts of the language – though they did not always agree with each other. Indeed, disputes about stress seem to have been just as strong then as they are today. One writer (Robert Nares, in 1784) criticizes Dr Johnson for recommending such forms as *bombast* and *carmine* instead of *bombast* and *carmine*, and complains about 'barbarous and displeasing sounds... which no ear can hear without being offended'.

THE TONGUE THAT SHAKESPEARE SPOKE

Now o'er the one half-world
 næu o:æ ðə wɜ:n ha:f wɜ:ld
 Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
 nætʃə:s ɪmz dɛd, ʌnd wɪkɪd dremz əbju:z
 The curtain'd sleep; now witchcraft celebrates
 ðə kʌrteɪnd slɪp; wɪtʃkrɑ:ft səlɪbreɪts
 Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder,
 peɪl hekəts ɒfərɪŋz; ʌnd wɪðəd mɜ:rdə,
 Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
 əlærəmd baɪ hɪz sɛntɪnəl, ðə wʊlf,
 Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
 hu:z həʊlz hɪz wɑ:tʃ, ðʌs wɪð hɪz steɪlθi peɪs,
 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
 wɪð tɑ:kɪnwɪz rævɪʃɪŋ strɪdz, tu:ədɪz hɪz dɪzɪn
 Moves like a ghost.
 mu:vz lɪk ə ɡəʊst.

(Macbeth, II. i. 49–56,
 transcription by A. C. Gimson; for
 phonetic symbols, see §17.)

EARLY MODERN ENGLISH GRAMMAR

The major shifts in English grammatical structure were over by the time of the Renaissance (p. 44); but even a casual glance at texts from the period shows that many important changes were continuing to take place, although of a more limited kind. For example, several features of verb use show differences from today: 'My life is run his compass', says Cassius (*Julius Caesar*, V.iii.25), where today we should say *has run* – and this sentence also illustrates one of the pronoun uses typical of the time. Constructions involving a double negative (*I cannot go no further*) or impersonal verbs (*me thinks he did*) were commonplace, and during the period a number of verb inflections (e.g. *pleaseth, know'st, spake*) fell out of standard use (for other examples, see pp. 63, 65).

There were also significant stylistic developments in sentence structure (p. 214). In Caxton and Malory, the sentences tend to be loose and linear, with repeated *and* or *then* coordination, and a limited amount of subordination, mostly introduced by *which* or *that*. Here is a typical sentence, taken from Caxton's prologue to the *Golden Legend* (for other extracts, see pp. 57–8).

And I shal praye for them vnto Almyghty God that he of his benygne grace rewarde them etc., and that it prouffyte to alle them that shal rede or here it redde, and may encrease in them vertue and expelle vyce and synne that by the ensauple of the holy sayntes amende theyr lyuyng here in this shorte lyf that by their merytes they and I may come to everlastyng lyf and blisse in heuen.

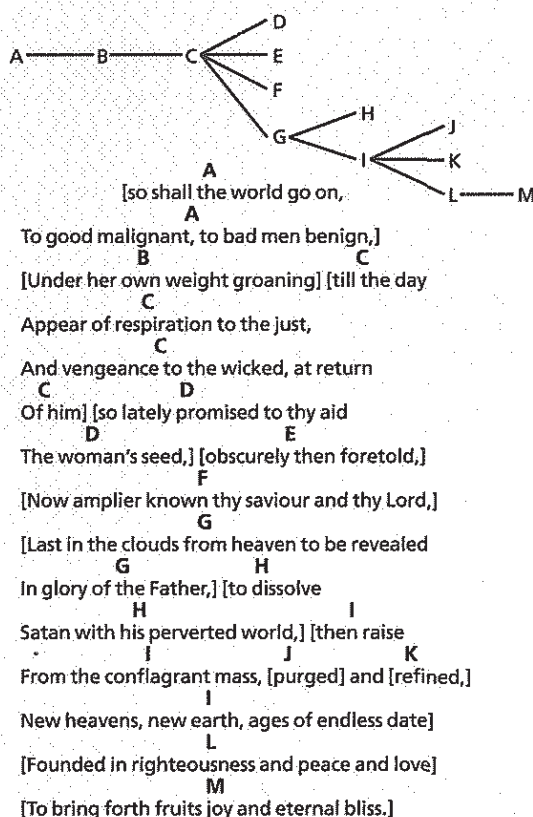
The influence of Latin syntactic style on English became marked in the 16th century. Cicero in particular was much imitated. There is a more complex use of subordination, and a search for rhetorical contrast and balance, as is shown by this extract from William Camden's *Remaines Concerning Britain* (1605):

As for the *Monosyllables* so rife in our tongue which were not so originally, although they are vnfitting for verses and measures, yet are they most fit for expressing briefly the first conceits of the minde, or *Intentionalia* as they call them in schooles: so that we can set downe more matter in fewer lines, than any other language.

The awkwardness or uncertainty which a modern reader often feels in reading early Renaissance prose is chiefly a consequence of the way writers were beginning to explore the potential of the language for complex sentence construction (p. 226). There was conscious experimentation with new grammatical patterns, supported by an increasingly standardized punctuation system (p. 68). New conjunctions emerged: *because*, for example, first appears in Chaucer, but *for* (*that*) remained the normal way of expressing cause

until the early 17th century. Participial constructions became extremely common, and added greatly to the length of sentences which, in the more complex writers, might run to 20 lines or more. In the early period, such sentences often appear incomplete or ill-formed to modern eyes (failing in concord, for example, or displaying an unattached subordinate clause); but it is important to appreciate that at the time such variability was normal. By the 17th century, however, highly sophisticated and carefully crafted sentences, following a variety of Latin models, were commonplace, as can be seen in the writing of John Lyly, Philip Sidney, and John Milton.

THE SUSPENDED SENTENCE

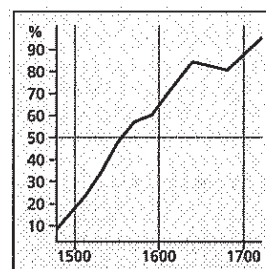


The controlled complexity of sentence construction is well illustrated by this extract from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (XII.537–51), in which archangel Michael concludes his account of the future of mankind. The diagram shows the formal balance involved. Each clause is identified by a capital letter (A–M). At each level of subordination there is a cluster of clauses, but only the last clause in each cluster (C, G, I, L) acts as a starting-point for further structural development. The effect is rather like a series of waves of meaning – as one critic has put it, 'surge follows surge in the relentless tide of Michael's vision' – until we reach the final clause (M), syntactically dependent on the opening clause (A), six levels of structure away. Constructions which display such a marked delay in grammatical and semantic resolution are often described as 'suspended sentences'. (After T. N. Corns, 1990.)

SAY YOU SO? I DO

One of the most important syntactic developments of this period concerned the use of *do* as an auxiliary verb (p. 212). The differences from modern usage can be seen in such interrogative and negative sentences as *Says she so?* and *Believe him not*, where today we would introduce a *do*-form (*Does she say so?*, *Do not believe him*). By Shakespeare's time, it was possible to use *do* in these sentences, but it was not obligatory. Also, *do* could be used in a declarative affirmative sentence without conveying any extra emphasis, again unlike today, as in 'they do offend our sight' (*Henry V*, IV.vi.56), which means no more than 'they offend our sight'.

During the period, it became increasingly usual to insert *do*-forms into negative and interrogative sentences, and to omit them from declarative affirmative ones (except in cases of emphasis). In one study of this topic, only c. 20 per cent of interrogative sentences used *do*-forms in 1500, whereas over 90 per cent did so by 1700. The graph shows the steady growth of *do*-forms in one of these contexts: affirmative questions (such as *Do they know?*). (After A. Ellegård, 1953.)



The thou/you question

The second person pronoun system of Renaissance English has been the subject of much investigation – not simply because the forms provide an obvious point of contrast with Modern English, but because they perform a central role in the expression of personal relationships, and are thus crucial to any study of contemporary drama. Understanding the Early Modern English functions of *thou* (*thee, thine, thy, thyself*) and *you* (*ye, yours, your, yourself*) can be critical in interpreting the emotions of the characters, as well as their varying attitudes towards each other during the course of a play.

The chief stages in the development of the system were as follows:

- In Old English (p. 20), *thou* (and its related forms) was used for addressing one person; *ye* (and its related forms) for more than one. Within these categories, *thou* and *ye* were used as clause subject, *thee* and *you* as object.
- During Middle English, *ye/you* came to be used as a polite singular form alongside *thou/thee*, a situation which was probably influenced by French *vous* vs *tu*.
- During Early Modern English, the distinction between subject and object uses of *ye* and *you* gradually disappeared, and *you* became the norm in all grammatical functions and social situations. *Ye* continued in use, but by the end of the 16th century it was restricted to archaic, religious, or literary contexts. By 1700, the *thou* forms were also largely restricted in this way.

WHY THOU, TO GOD?

We might have expected the deity to be addressed as *You* in Early Modern English, given such descriptions as 'king', 'father', and 'most high'. In fact, during this period he is always addressed as *Thou*. This may be because the usage was consciously archaic – a recollection of the early Middle English situation when *Thou* would have been the only possible form of address in the singular. Alternatively, the usage may show the influence of the first Bible translators (p. 59), who were following languages that distinguished second person singular and plural pronouns (as in Latin *tu* vs *vos*). As God would have been referred to by the singular pronoun in these languages, this practice may have influenced the choice of *Thou* in English, even in an age when a singular *you* would have been possible.

The Renaissance system

By the time of Shakespeare, *you* had developed the number ambiguity it retains today, being used for either singular or plural; but in the singular it also had a role as an alternative to *thou/thee*. It was used by people of lower rank or status to those above them (such as ordinary people to nobles, children to parents, servants to masters, nobles to the monarch), and was also the standard way for the upper classes to talk to each other. By contrast, *thou/thee* were used by people of higher rank to those beneath them, and by the lower classes to each other; also, in elevated poetic style, in addressing God, and in talking to witches, ghosts, and other supernatural beings. There were also some special cases: for example, a husband might address his wife as *thou*, and she reply with *you*.

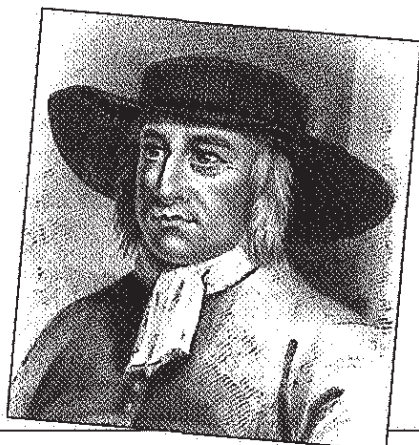
Of particular interest are those cases where an extra emotional element entered the situation, and the use of *thou* or *you* broke the expected conventions. *Thou* commonly expressed special intimacy or affection; *you*, formality, politeness, and distance. *Thou* could also be used, even by an inferior to a superior, to express such feelings as anger and contempt (as in the biblical text on p. 65). The use of *thou* to a person of equal rank could thus easily count as an insult, as Sir Toby Belch well knows when he advises Sir Andrew Aguecheek on how to write a challenge to 'the Count's youth' (Viola): 'if thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss' (*Twelfth Night*, III.ii.42), himself using a demeaning *thou* in a speech situation where the norm is *you*. Likewise, the use of *you* when *thou* was expected (such as from master to servant) would also require special explanation.

PURE PROPER UNTO ONE

By the middle of the 17th century, *thou* was disappearing from standard usage; but it was kept alive by members of the emerging Society of Friends, or Quakers, who disapproved of the way singular *you* had come to be part of social etiquette, and who accordingly used *thou* forms to everyone. This usage, it was felt, was closer to the way Christ and his disciples spoke, avoided unnecessary social distinction, and was grammatically more exact, being a 'particular, single, pure proper unto one'. The singular use of *you*, by contrast, was considered a corruption, a form of worldly honour, to be shunned along with all other empty social customs. The point was forcibly made by one of the first Quakers, Richard Farnsworth, in *The Pure Language of the Spirit of Truth* (1655), from which the above quotation also comes: 'That which cannot bear thee and thou to a single person, what sort soever, is exalted proud flesh, and is accursed'.

The use of *thou* forms often brought angry reactions, especially from those in

authority who still sensed the words' former association with 'lower' speech situations, and found them objectionable. At one point in his *Journal*, George Fox recalls that Friends were 'in danger many times of our lives, and often beaten, for using those words to some proud men, who would say, "Thou'st 'thou' me, thou ill-bred clown", as though their breeding lay in saying "you" to a singular'.



SIGNIFICANT SWITCHING

Switching between *thou* and *you* is so common in some texts that it may appear to lack purpose. However, if we adopt a sociolinguistic perspective, readings of considerable interest can result, as can be seen in the following Shakespearean examples.

- In the opening scene of *King Lear*, Lear's daughters address him as *you*, and he addresses Goneril and Regan as *thou* (as would be expected); but his opening remark to his 'best' daughter, Cordelia conveys special respect: 'what can you say...'. Then, when he is displeased by her response, he switches to an angry *thou*: 'But goes thy heart with this?'
- Hamlet uses *thou* to the Ghost throughout Act I, as is normal in addressing spirits, but changes to *you* in the closet scene (III.iv), presumably because his doubts about the identity of the Ghost have been removed. The *you* is now one of respect of son to father.
- The murderers of Clarence in *Richard III* (I.iv) address him as *you*, and he addresses them separately as *thou*. But his speech threatening God's vengeance provokes an angry retort, and their pronoun alters with their mood: 'And that same Vengeance doth he hurl on thee'.
- In *Henry VI Part 3* (III.ii), Edward IV is trying to persuade a reluctant Lady Gray to be his queen. At one point, after a sequence in which the King uses only *thou* forms, her evasion provokes him to an irritated *you* response – but he soon regains his composure:
EDWARD: Sweet widow, by my state I swear to thee I speak no more than what my soul intends, And that is to enjoy thee for my love.
LADY GRAY: And that is more than I will yield unto. I know I am too mean to be your queen, And yet too good to be your concubine.
EDWARD: You cavil, widow – I did mean my queen.
LADY GRAY: 'Twill grieve your grace my sons should call you father.
EDWARD: No more than when my daughters call thee mother.

THE SEARCH FOR STABILITY

The great age of Elizabethan literature brought an unprecedented breadth and inventiveness in the use of English, especially in the area of vocabulary (p. 60). It has been estimated that the period between 1530 and the Restoration (1660) displayed the fastest lexical growth in the history of the language. Nearly half of the new words were borrowings from the many cultures with which English was coming into contact; the remainder were different types of word formation using native resources. There was also a great deal of semantic change, as old words acquired new senses – a factor particularly noticed by those involved in the production of religious texts. The authors of the revised edition of the Book of Common Prayer (1662) comment that most of their alterations to the 1552 version were made ‘for the more proper expressing of some words or phrases of ancient usage, in terms more suitable to the language of the present times’.

This unprecedented growth brought with it unprecedented uncertainty. By the end of the 17th century there was a widespread feeling of unease about the direction in which the language was moving. Many critics felt that English was changing too quickly and randomly, and applied such terms to it as ‘unruly’, ‘corrupt’, ‘unrefined’, and ‘barbarous’. A particular area of concern was the lack of consistency in spelling or punctuation (pp. 66–9): at one extreme, there were people who spelled as they spoke (such as *sartinly* for *certainly*); at the other, there were those who took pains to reflect classical etymology in their spelling (such as by adding an *s* to *island* or a *c* to *scissors*). There was also a fear that foreign words and neologisms were entering the language in an uncontrolled way. The critics could see no order in the lexical inventiveness of the Elizabethan dramatists. Many of Shakespeare’s new words had become part of the language, but many had not (p. 63), and it was unclear how such anomalies should be dealt with.

Contemporary linguistic fashions and trends provided no solace. John Dryden, in *Defence of the Epilogue* (1672) complains about those ‘who corrupt our English Idiom by mixing it too much with French’. Joseph Addison, in a *Spectator* essay (4 August 1711), complains about the use of contracted forms, which has ‘untuned our Language, and clogged it with Consonants’: he cites such contractions as *mayn’t* and *wo’n’t*, as well as such abbreviations as *rep* (*reputation*) and *ult* (*ultimate*). Daniel Defoe, in *An Essay upon Projects* (1697), complains about the ‘inundation’ of swear-words in the language of his time, and hopes that the introduction of an Academy might stem what he calls a ‘Frenzy of the Tongue, a Vomit of the Brain’. Fifteen years later, Jonathan Swift takes up the challenge.

A
**Table Alphabetically, containing
teyning and teaching the true
vwriting, and vnderstanding of hard
vsuall English wordes, borrowed from
the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine,
or French. &c.**

**With the interpretation thereof by
plaine English wordes, gathered for the benefite &
help of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other
vnskilfull persons.**

**Whereby they may the more easilie
and better vnderstand many hard English
wordes, vvhich they shall heare or read in
Scriptures, Sermons, or elsewhere, and also
be made able to vse the same aptly
themselves.**

Legere, et non intelligere, negligere est.
As good not read, as not to vnderstand.

AT LONDON,
Printed by I. R. for Edmund Wea-
uer, & are to be sold at his shop at the great
North doore of Pauls Church.

1604.

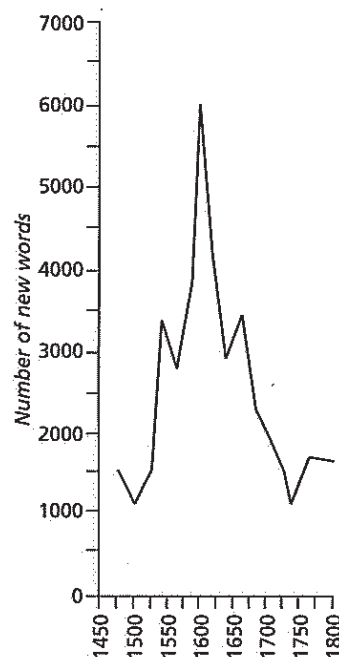
THE FIRST SYNONYM DICTIONARY

An important step forward in organizing the English lexicon took place when Robert Cawdrey published the first ‘dictionary of hard words’ in 1604. A *Table Alphabetically* contained glosses for 3,000 ‘hard vsuall English wordes’, such as *abbettors*, glossed as ‘counsellors’, and *abbreviat*, glossed as ‘to shorten, or make short’. It was a commercial success, and was followed by several other compilations on similar lines.

LEXICAL SUMMITS

The peak of vocabulary growth in the Renaissance period is clearly shown by this graph, which is based on a count of items appearing in an abridged version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (p. 443). Graphs of this kind must not be interpreted too precisely, however. Because of the bias adopted by the *OED* (as stated in its original Preface) towards ‘great English writers’, the lexicon of many ‘ordinary’ texts of the Early Modern English period is not fully taken into account. Several studies have shown that quite a large number of words and senses are not included in the *OED*, and that its first citations can often be antedated by many years. A German investigator of the period, Jürgen Schäfer, has estimated that, if all types of correction are taken into account, the total number of discrepancies in the *OED* database might be as many as half a million. Graphs such as the above are thus likely to be serious underestimates of the true lexical resources of Early Modern English; the late 15th century, in particular, is thought to be poorly represented. But the general impression of lexical growth conveyed by the graph is reasonable enough, and certainly corresponds to any intuitive sense of what was happening throughout this period.

(After T. Nevalainen, forthcoming 1996.)



The Academy issue

Authors such as Swift were deeply worried about the speed at which the language was changing. Without proper controls, would their work still be intelligible in a generation or so? In 'A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue' (1712), Swift presented his case:

if it [English] were once refined to a certain Standard, perhaps there might be Ways found out to fix it for ever; or at least till we are invaded and made a Conquest by some other State; and even then our best Writings might probably be preserved with Care, and grow in Esteem, and the Authors have a Chance for Immortality.

He submitted his proposal to the Earl of Oxford:

My Lord; I do here, in the Name of all the Learned and Polite Persons of the Nation, complain to Your LORDSHIP, as *First Minister*, that our Language is extremely imperfect; that its daily Improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily Corruptions; that the Pretenders to polish and refine it, have chiefly multiplied Abuses and Absurdities; and, that in many Instances, it offends against every Part of Grammar.

Swift attacked in all directions: he was against Restoration licentiousness, the sloppiness of the young nobility, the abbreviations used by poets, the spelling proposals which tried to reflect speech, the fashionable slang of university people – 'illiterate Court-Fops, half-witted Poets, and University-Boys'. His solution was to follow the example of the French (whose Academy was founded in 1635):

a free judicious Choice should be made of such Persons, as are generally allowed to be best qualified for such a Work, without any regard to Quality, Party, or Profession. These, to a certain Number at least, should assemble at some appointed Time and Place, and fix on Rules by which they design to proceed. ... what I have most at Heart is, that some Method should be thought on for *ascertaining* and *fixing* our Language for ever, after such Alterations are made in it as shall be thought requisite. For I am of Opinion, that it is better a Language should not be wholly perfect, than that it should be perpetually changing...

Swift was not the first person to propose an Academy for English: Dryden and Defoe had also done so. But even though the idea attracted a great deal of interest, it never got off the ground. Many saw that language cannot be kept static, and that standards always change. Dr Johnson was one who derided the notion:

When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay ...

Neither Britain nor the United States (p. 81) chose the Academy solution; and although the idea has been raised at intervals ever since, it has never found widespread support within those nations.

The debate about language corruption in the 17th century did, however, focus public attention on the existence of a problem and the need for a solution. If the language needed protection, or at least consistency and stability, these could be provided by dictionaries, grammars, spelling guides, and pronunciation manuals. Standards of correctness would thereby emerge, which all could follow. It was Johnson himself who put the first part of this solution into place (p. 74).

THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

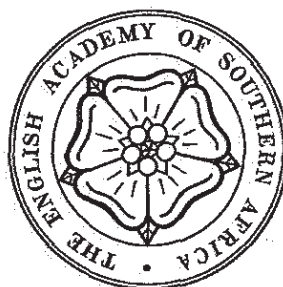
The sense of chaos and confusion which surrounded the language was attacked in several ways. Some scholars proposed radical systems of spelling reform (p. 66). Some, such as the mathematician Bishop John Wilkins (1614–72) tried to develop a logical alternative to English, which would do away with all irregularity – one of the first attempts at a universal language.

When the Royal Society for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge was founded in 1660, a scientific approach was proposed. A group of its members formed a committee to 'improve the English tongue, particularly for philosophic [i.e. scientific] purposes'. The aim was to develop a plain, objective style, without rhetoric and classical vocabulary, which would be more suitable to scientific expression. The committee achieved no consensus, and did not exist for long, but a 'naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses' was said to have been a hallmark of the founder members' style. This group was the nearest Britain ever came to having an Academy.

An allegorical engraving by Hollar, representing the foundation of the Royal Society (from Bishop Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*). Fame crowns the bust of Charles II, 'Royal Author and Patron'. On the right sits Francis Bacon, 'Artium Instaurator' (Renewer of the Arts); on the left is Lord Brouncker, the first president. Scientific instruments and books surround them.



THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXCEPTION



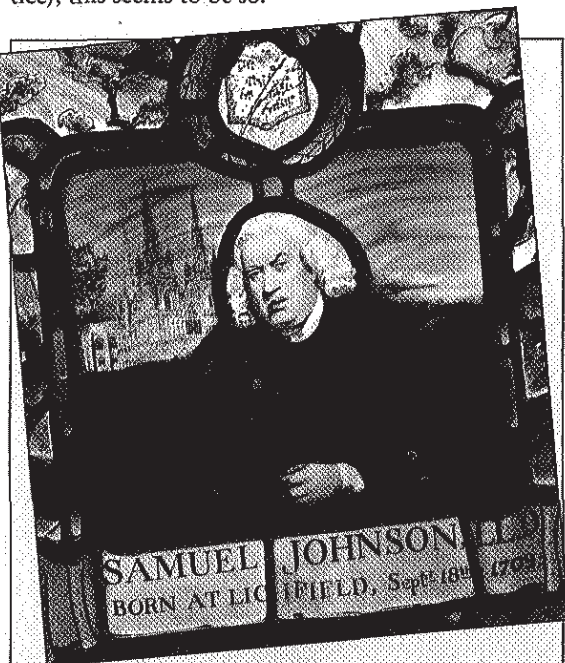
The only part of the English-speaking world which has ever set up an Academy is South Africa. 'The English Academy of Southern Africa' was established in 1961, and promotes 'the effective use of English as a dynamic language in Southern Africa'. Based in Johannesburg, it arranges lectures and conferences, administers prizes, participates in national bodies, and dispenses language information. It also operates an English advisory service, popularly known as 'Grammar-phone'.

JOHNSON'S DICTIONARY

It were a thing verie praiseworthy... if som one well learned and as laborious a man, wold gather all the words which we vse in our English tung... into one dictionarie.

Thus wrote Richard Mulcaster (p. 66) in 1582. Apart from the occasional collection of a few thousand 'hard words' (p. 72), the task was not attempted until 1721, when Nathaniel Bailey published his *Universal Etymological English Dictionary*. Bailey's entries are fuller, compared with the glosses in the hard-word books, and there are more of them (as many as 60,000, in the 1736 edition), but his definitions lack illustrative support, and he gives little guidance about usage.

It was not until Samuel Johnson completed *A Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755 that the lexicon received its first authoritative treatment. Over a seven-year period, Johnson wrote the definitions of c. 40,000 words, illustrating their use from the best authors since the time of the Elizabethans (but excluding his own contemporaries). Although he has fewer entries than Bailey, his selection is more wide-ranging, and his lexicological treatment is far more discriminating and sophisticated. The book, according to his biographer Boswell, 'conferred stability' on the language – and at least with respect to spelling (where most of Johnson's choices are found in modern practice), this seems to be so.



A stained-glass feature in Johnson's house, 17 Gough Square, off Fleet Street, London, where he lived from 1748 to 1759, and thus where most of the *Dictionary* was compiled. The house was rescued from demolition in 1911, refurbished during the 1980s, and is now a Johnson museum.

The alphabetical section of Johnson's *Dictionary* is preceded by a famous Preface, in which he outlines his aims and procedures:

When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech copious without order, and energetick without rules: wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated... Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, I applied myself to the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method...

The preliminaries also include a short history of the language, with long extracts from earlier authors, and a grammar, much influenced by the work of John Wallis (p. 69), with sections on orthography and prosody. But it is in the Preface, often anthologized as an independent text, that we find an unprecedented statement of the theoretical basis of a dictionary project. The statement is notable for its awareness of the realities of the lexicographer's task, and also for its descriptive intention (p. 442) – an interesting change of opinion from the prescriptive attitudes Johnson expressed in his 1747 *Dictionary* plan. There he had written: 'The chief intent... is to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of our English idiom'. The Preface, by contrast, stresses that his aim is to 'not form, but register the language'; and it is this principle which introduces a new era in lexicography.

SOME JOHNSONIAN DEFINITIONS

There are not many truly idiosyncratic definitions in the *Dictionary*, but some have become famous.

LEXICOGRAPHER A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge, that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words.

EXCISE A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid.

OATS A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.

PATRON One who countenances, supports or protects. Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery.

PENSION An allowance made to anyone without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country.

And which political party did Johnson support?

TORY One who adheres to the antient constitution of the state, and the apostolical hierarchy of the church of England, opposed to a *whig*.

WHIG 2. The name of a faction.

His definitions sometimes got him into trouble. He was threatened with libel over *excise*, and much lampooned over *pension* (after accepting one himself in 1762).

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709–84)

Johnson was born in Lichfield, Staffordshire, the son of a provincial bookseller. He studied for a while at Oxford, but lack of money caused him to leave after a year. He became a teacher and writer, moving to London in 1737, where he wrote for *The Gentleman's Magazine*. He also helped catalogue the library of the Earl of Oxford.

He produced an outline for his *Dictionary* in 1746, a contract was signed, and the first of his amanuenses began work on midsummer day of that year. A more fully elaborated *Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* appeared a year later. It took him some three years to read his source works and mark the citations to be used.

These were then copied by his amanuenses onto slips of paper, and filed alphabetically. Once all slips were collated, he began to draft his definitions. The first sheets were printed in 1750, beginning with letter A. The work was complete by 1754, and an edition of 2,000 copies appeared the following year, priced £4 10s. There was soon a second edition, published in 165 weekly sections at sixpence each; and a fourth edition, much revised, appeared in 1773. The book dominated the dictionary market for decades, and appeared in several editions for much of the next century.

After the *Dictionary*, Johnson continued as a literary journalist, and received financial security from a pension granted by George III. He met his biographer, James Boswell, in 1763, and in 1764 founded the Literary Club, where many of his famous conversations took place. Later works included an eight-volume edition of Shakespeare's plays and a ten-volume *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*. He was granted an honorary doctorate by Trinity College Dublin in 1765, and again by Oxford in 1775, and thus received the title by which he has come to be most widely known: Dr Johnson.

E T E

will not obey, who, to get rid of his rider, rises mightily before; and while his forehead is yet in the air, yelps furiously with his hind legs. *Farrar's Dict.*

ESTRE'ATE. *n. f.* [*extratum*, Latin.] The true copy of an original writing: for example, of amerciaments or penalties, set down in the rolls of a court, to be loved by the bailiff, or other officer, of every man for his offence. A law term. *Cowel.*

ESTRE'PEMENT. *n. f.* [of the French word *estrie*, *ier*.] Spoil made by the tenant for term of life upon any lands or woods, to the prejudice of him in the reversion. *Cowel.*

ESTRICH. *n. f.* [commonly written *efrich*.] The largest of birds.

To be furious,
Is to be frightened out of fear; and, in that mood,
The dove will peck the *efridge*. *Shak. Ant. and Cleopatra.*
The peacock, not at thy command, assumes
His glorious train; nor *efrich* her rare plumes. *Sandys.*

ESTUARY. *n. f.* [*estuarium*, Latin.] An arm of the sea; the mouth of a lake or river in which the tide reciprocates; a frish.

To **ESTUATE.** *v. a.* [*estus*, Latin.] To swell and fall reciprocally; to boil; to be in a state of violent commotion. *Dict.*

ESTUATION. *n. f.* [from *estus*, Latin.] The state of boiling; reciprocation of rise and fall; agitation; commotion.

Rivers and lakes, that want fermenting parts at the bottom, are not excited unto *estuation*; therefore some seas flow higher than others. *Brent's Vulgar Errurs*, b. vii. c. 13.

The motion of the spirits, and an *estuation* of the blood. *Norris.*

ESTURE. *n. f.* [*estus*, Latin.] Violence; commotion.

The seas retain
Not only their outrageous *esture* there,
But supernatural mischief they expire. *Chapman's Odyssey.*

ESURIENT. *adj.* [*esuriens*, Latin.] Hungry; voracious. *Dict.*

ESURINE. *adj.* [*esuris*, Latin.] Corroding; eating.

Over much piercing is the air of Hampstead, in which sort of air there is always something *esurine* and acid. *Wifeman.*

ETC. A contraction of the two Latin words *et cetera*, which signifies *and so on*; and the rest; and others of the like kind.

To **ETCH.** *v. a.* [*etizen*, German.]

1. A way used in making of prints, by drawing with a proper needle upon a copper-plate, covered over with a ground of wax, &c. and well blacked with the smoke of a link, in order to take off the figure of the drawing or print; which having its backside discoloured with white lead, will, by running over the stricken out lines with a stiff, impress the exact figure on the black or red ground; which figure is afterwards with needles drawn deeper quite through the ground, and all the shadows and hatchings put in; and then a wax border being made all round the plate, there is poured on a sufficient quantity of well tempered *aqua fortis*, which, insinuating into the strokes made by the needles, usually eats, in about half an hour, into the figure of the print or drawing on the copper plate. *Harris.*

2. To scetch; to draw; to delineate [unless this word be mistaken by *Lack* for *etch*.]

There are many empty terms to be found in some learned writers, to which they had recourse to *etch* out their systems. *Lack.*

3. [This word is evidently mistaken by *Ray* for *edge*.] To move forwards towards one side.

When we lie long awake in the night, we are not able to rest one quarter of an hour without shifting of sides, or at least *etching* this way and that way, more or less. *Roy.*

ETCH. *n. f.* A country word, of which I know not the meaning.

When they sow their *etch* crops, they sprinkle a pound or two of clover on an acre. *Martimer's Husbandry.*

Where you find dunging of land makes it rank, lay dung upon the *etch*, and sow it with barley. *Martimer's Husbandry.*

ETERNAL. *adj.* [*eternus*, Latin.]

1. Without beginning or end.

The eternal God is thy refuge. *Deut. xxxiii. 27.*

2. Without beginning.

It is a question quite different from our having an idea of eternity, to know whether there were any real being, whose duration has been eternal. *Lack.*

3. Without end; endless; immortal.

Thou know'st that Banquo and his Fleance lives.

—But in them nature's copy's not eternal. *Shak. Macbeth.*

4. Perpetual; constant; unintermitting.

Burnt off rings morn and evening shall be thine,
And fires eternal in thy temple shine. *Dryd. Knight's Tale.*

5. Unchangeable.

Hobbes believed the eternal truths which he opposed. *Dryd.*

ETERNAL. *n. f.* [*eternal*, French.] One of the appellations of the Godhead.

That law whereby the eternal himself doth work. *Hooker.*

The eternal, to prevent such horrid tray,
Hung out of heav'n his golden scales. *Milton.*

ETERNALIST. *n. f.* [*eternus*, Latin.] One that holds the past existence of the world infinite.

E T H

I would ask the eternalists what mark is there that they could expect or desire of the novelty of a world, that is not found in this? Or what mark is there of eternity that is found in this? *Burnet's Theory of the Earth.*

To **ETERNALISE.** *v. a.* [from *eternal*.] To make eternal. *Dict.*

ETERNALLY. *adv.* [from *eternal*.]

1. Without beginning or end.

2. Unchangeably; invariably.

That which is morally good, or evil, at any time, or in any case, must be also eternally and unchangeably so, with relation to that time and to that case. *Sculth's Sermons.*

3. Perpetually; without intermission.

Bear me, some god, to Baja's gentle seats,
Or cover me in Umbria's green retreats,
Where western gales eternaly reside, *Addison.*
And all the seasons lavish all their pride.

ETERNAL. *adj.* [*eternus*, Latin.] Eternal; perpetual; endless.

The Cyclops hammers fall
On Mars his armour forg'd for proof eternal. *Shak. Hamlet.*

ETERNITY. *n. f.* [*eternitas*, Latin.]

1. Duration without beginning or end.

In this ground his precious root
Still lives, which, when weak time shall be pour'd out
Into *eternity*, and circular joys
Dancing an endless round, again shall rise. *Crofton.*

Thy immortal rhyme
Makes this one short point of time,
To fill up half the orb of round *eternity*. *Cowley.*

By repeating the idea of any length of duration which we have in our minds, with all the endless addition of number, we come by the idea of *eternity*. *Lack.*

2. Duration without end.

Beyond is all abyss,
Eternity, whose end no eye can reach! *Milt. Parad. Lost.*

Eternity, thou pleasing, dreadful thought!
Through what variety of untired being,
Through what new scenes and changes must we pass. *Add.*

To **ETERNISE.** *v. a.* [*eternus*, Latin.]

1. To make endless; to perpetuate.

I with two fair gifts
Created him endow'd; with happiness,
And immortality: that fondly lov'd,
This other serv'd but to *eternise* woe. *Milton's Parad. Lost.*

2. To make for ever famous; to immortalize.

Mankind by all means seeking to *eternise* himself, so much the more as he is near his end, doth it by speeches and writings. *Sidney.*

And well befits all knights of noble name,
That covet in th' immortal book of fame
To be *eternized*, that fame to haunt. *Fairy Queen, b. 1.*

I might relate of thousands, and their names
Eternize here on earth; but those elect
Angels, contented with their fame in heav'n,
Seek not the praise of men. *Milton's Parad. Lost, b. vi.*

The four great monarchies have been celebrated by the writings of many famous men, who have *eternized* their fame, and thereby their own. *Temple.*

Both of them are set on fire by the great actions of heroes, and both endeavour to *eternize* them. *Dryden's Duffsong.*

Hence came its name, in that the grateful Jove
Hath *eterniz'd* the glory of his love. *Croft's Manilius.*

ETHER. *n. f.* [*ether*, Latin; *ais*, Gr.]

1. An element more fine and subtle than air; air refined or sublimed.

If any one should suppose that *ether*, like our air, may contain particles which endeavour to recede from one another; for I do not know what this *ether* is; and that its particles are exceedingly smaller than those of air, or even than those of light, the exceeding smallness of its particles may contribute to the greatness of the force, by which those particles may recede from one another. *Newton's Opt.*

The parts of other bodies are held together by the eternal pressure of the *ether*, and can have no other conceivable cause of their cohesion and union. *Lack.*

2. The matter of the highest regions above.

There fields of light and liquid ether flow,
Purg'd from the pond'rous dregs of earth below. *Dryden.*

ETHEREAL. *adj.* [from *ether*.]

1. Formed of ether.

Man feels me, when I press th' *etheral* plains. *Dryden.*

2. Celestial; heavenly.

Go, heavenly guest, *etheral* messenger,
Sent from whose low reign goodness I adore. *Milton.*

Thrones and imperial pow'rs, offspring of heav'n,
Eth'ral virtues. *Milton's Paradise Lost, b. ii. l. 311.*

Such as these, being in good part freed from the entanglements of sense and body, are employed, like the spirits above, in contemplating the Divine Wisdom in the works of nature; a kind of anticipation of the *etheral* happiness and employment. *Glavin. Apol. Valt.*

THE JOHNSONIAN METHOD

'Thus have I laboured by settling the orthography, displaying the analogy, regulating the structures, and ascertaining the signification of English words, to perform all the parts of a faithful lexicographer...'

This page illustrates several features of the approach Johnson outlines in his Preface:

- Most of the definitions are succinct, appropriate, and consistent between entries, as can be seen from the *eternal* series.
- He pays special attention to the different senses of a word – five, in the case of *eternal*. (In the entry on *take*, no less than 124 uses are distinguished.)
- There is a copious use of quotations to support a definition – c. 116,000 in all. These are generally taken from dead authors so as not to be 'misled by partiality'.
- He follows the usage of his sources in arriving at his definitions, even if he thinks his sources are incorrect, as shown by sense 3 of *etch* (verb).
- He routinely identifies parts of speech.
- He shows the most strongly stressed syllable in a headword by an accent.
- There is an openness of approach, nicely illustrated by his entry on *etch* (noun): 'A country word, of which I know not the meaning'.
- Following the tradition established by Ephraim Chambers and other encyclopedists of his age, he includes topical explanations of some words, as seen in *etch* (verb), sense 1.
- A wide range of ordinary words (*estuary*, etc.) are included alongside technical terms (*estrepement*, *ether*) – though he apologizes in his Preface for his limited coverage of specialized fields.

Although very well received at the time, the *Dictionary* was later to receive a great deal of criticism.

- It includes, in the 'hard-words' tradition, many cumbersome Latinate forms, such as *cubicular*, *estuation*, *esurine*, and *impossibility*, whose status within English was doubtful.
- His citations are highly selective, chosen more for their literary or moral value than for their linguistic clarity. Half of all his quotations come from just seven sources – Shakespeare, Dryden, Milton, Addison, Bacon, Pope, and the Bible.
- Several of his definitions use difficult words (a problem he acknowledges in his Preface), such as *reciprocates* in *estuary*. A famous example is *cough* (noun), 'A convulsion of the lungs, velleated by some sharp serosity'.
- Several of his definitions have become famous for their subjectivity (see p. 74).
- In the end, he ran out of space, and had to leave out about half the quotations he had collected. This caused a certain unevenness of treatment; in particular, words at the beginning of the alphabet were much more generously illustrated.

But despite these weaknesses, Johnson's *Dictionary* was the first attempt at a truly principled lexicography. It portrayed the complexity of the lexicon and of English usage more accurately than ever before; and his quotations initiated a practice which has informed English dictionaries ever since.