



Interfaces between Language and Culture in Medieval England: A Festschrift for Matti Kilpiö, Alarie Hall, Olga Timofeeva, Ágnes Kiricsi and Bethany Fox (eds), (*The Northern World* 48), Brill: Leiden and Boston 2010. 333 pp.

Interfaces between Language and Culture in Medieval England contains an excellent collection of essays in honor of a great scholar, Matti Kilpiö. This volume is impressively coherent, a feat which is neither expected nor often found in Festschriften, focusing largely on language interaction in the medieval period as well as lexical and semantic studies per se. This volume will especially appeal to scholars of Old and Middle English language and culture and will make a useful addition to any research library focused on these topics. The collection begins with a short introduction written by the authors which concisely summarizes each of the articles.

Olga Timofeeva's article, "Anglo-Latin Bilingualism before 1066: Prospects and Limitations," uses contemporary language contact theory to attempt to trace the extent of English/Latin bilingualism in England before the Norman Conquest. This piece begins with a lucid overview of the state of Latin in Anglo-Saxon England, which of course was in flux, moving in the later period toward (9) a "process of cultural emancipation, during which inferiority complexes were gradually abandoned and the attitudes of writers towards their vernacular became more conscious." Timofeeva then grounds any further interpretation in the sobering statistics of how many literate Anglo-Saxons there may have been, which she estimates at no little more than half of a percent of the total population. Naturally such a small segment of the

population, on which we depend for virtually all of our data concerning the Old English language, can actually tell us very little about the state of common Old English; that is to say, we know nothing about the (15) “some 98-99.5 percent of the population [who] left no record of their language.” And naturally the miniscule percentage of literate Anglo-Saxons—and the even smaller subset of them who may have been bilingual—could not have been able to affect the language situation in any significant way. Nevertheless, we can only work with the evidence we do have—from this small literate elite—and within this group Timofeeva makes some interesting observations about English/Latin code switching, code alternation, passive familiarity, and negotiation. In sum, Timofeeva demonstrates the usefulness as well as the limitations of using contemporary language contact theories for studying the linguistic landscape of Anglo-Saxon England, ultimately hypothesizing that (32) “a variety of Old English emerged which, possessing lexical and syntactic complexities unknown to common Old English, was heading towards a social dialect”. However, since this dialect was limited to the very small, literate, cultural elite (32) “its era came to an end together with the shift of elites which took place soon after the Norman Conquest”.

Alaric Hall’s piece examines “Interlinguistic Communication in Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*,” in particular looking at communication among speaks of the vernaculars—Brittonic, Irish, and English—drawing upon two types of evidence: narratives and place-names. Looking in particular at Bede’s depiction of the Synod of Whitby, Hall finds (42) “no evidence for Latin as a spoken *lingua franca* between Anglo-Saxon and Irish churchmen”; rather communication between these groups would have to take place by means of (exceptional) bilingual Irish-English speakers. Although Bede valued the written traditions of Latin and their connections to Rome, Hall finds in Bede anxiety concerning the Anglo-Saxons’ ability to handle this language. In contrast, a number of Britons were likely native speakers of Latin and possessed a clearer connection to the Roman past. Bede exhibits a general hostility towards the Britons both in terms of their Latin as well as their vernacular. Hall’s close reading of place name evidence suggests Bede’s limited but real knowledge of Irish and willingness to share information about it again in contrast to Brittonic and British Latin, both of which he makes a point of ignoring or even demonizing. In the end, based on his meticulous examination of narrative and place name evidence, Hall demonstrates that (73) “churches

and churchmen were not outside the mechanisms affecting the competitiveness of languages”.

Moving from these broad considerations of the role of languages in Anglo-Saxon history to a tightly focused study, Seppo Heikkinen traces the history of the “The Disappearance of Fifth-foot Spondees from Dactylic Hexameter Verse.” After providing an introduction to the development of quantitative hexameter verse from Greek into Latin, Heikkinen discusses the particular use of the fifth-foot spondee, that is two long syllables in the penultimate foot of a verse. Although rare and perceived generally as “soft” and exotic in classical verse, the fifth-foot spondee becomes even scarcer in Silver Age and early Christian Latin writers. The Anglo-Saxons Aldhelm and Bede both wrote metrical treatises to try and introduce the principles of Latin qualitative verse to their non-Romance audiences. Despite their familiarity with the writings of Vergil (who uses fifth-foot spondees) as well as late classical grammatical texts which likewise cannot ignore the fifth-foot spondee, both Aldhelm and Bede exhibit disbelief if not hostility towards the fifth-foot spondee. Bede, in his highly influential *De arte metrica*, makes the fifth-foot dactyl part of the definition of hexameter verse, thus effectively writing the fifth-foot spondee out of the history of Latin verse.

In a long but fascinating piece which still bears some marks of perhaps being ripped untimely from the author’s dissertation (110: “In this chapter I shall...”), Jesse Keskiaho traces emotions connected to dreams and visions in a wide range of Merovingian and Anglo-Latin texts. Ultimately Keskiaho finds (129) “an absence of fear connected to true visions” except in texts primarily concerned with the maintenance and promotion of specific relic cults, where (130) “fear had a role in motivating behavior and perhaps even as a criterion for distinguishing between significant dreams and mundane ones”.

In a very brief piece, John Blair suggests a Latin model for the seemingly “precocious” Old English dedication inscription at the parish church at Kirkdale. With its unparalleled, though (142) “decidedly Roman appearance,” Blair suggest the inscription slab is a piece of “late Anglo-Saxon classicism” attributable perhaps to Ealdred, Archbishop of York. Kathryn Lowe’s article uses pre-Conquest charter materials from Bury St Edmunds to trace the state of East Anglian—one of the most important dialects in the history of the English language which is little studied in the Old English period due to a lack of textual evidence. She focuses on one particular sound change which has

historically been considered Kentish which occurred in Bury but not in Norfolk. Nevertheless, the large number of Norfolk members of the monastic community in the Middle English period caused an introduction of a large number of Norfolkisms which then show up in the thirteenth and fourteenth century copies of pre-Conquest charters. Lowe's article concludes with a detailed appendix listing evidence of the sound change.

Antonette diPaolo Healey's contribution is a delightful reflection on lexicography, not surprising, given her role as Editor in Chief of the Dictionary of Old English (DOE) project at the University of Toronto. She outlines the inherent difficulties in writing a dictionary at all and some of the particular problems and limitations writing the DOE focusing on one of the largest entries, the verb *gan* (to go). This is a particularly fitting tribute to the volumes dedicatee, who himself drafted the DOE entries for two even more complicated verbs, *beon* (to be) and *habban* (to have). In addition to outlining the complexity of dealing with a word which has thousands of surviving occurrences, Healey also examines a few examples of the opposite context: *hapax legomena*, words which have to be defined based on singular occurrences within the entire surviving corpus of Old English.

Toni Healey's article is the perfect set up for the following three, each of which are concerned with the semantics of important terms: Lilla Kopár on time words; Carole Biggam on her specialty—basic colour terms in English; and Ágnes Kiricsi on *mood* and *mind* in Old through Middle English. Kopár's piece narrows a huge topic by focusing on one semantic metaphor used in English terms for time, time as space, and within this subfield zeroes in on the spatial understanding of time with the image of the hall. In addition to drawing upon Indo-European etymology to trace the building-specific origins of three particular time words, *fæc*, *hwil*, and *fyrst*, Kopár draws upon Norse mythological evidence to reconstruct a pre-Christian Germanic view of time as space.

Carole Biggam provides a wide ranging (from prehistoric to modern times) consideration of basic colour terms in English at the same time as providing a clear overview of how linguists and others go about reconstructing such. Biggam begins with Berlin and Kay's 1969 definition of a basic colour term which was based on their research with modern languages.¹ Lacking, of

¹ Brent Berlin & Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*, University of California Press: Berkeley, CA 1969.

course, native informants for prehistoric, reconstructed, and dead languages, Biggam combines Berlin and Kay's criteria with prototype theory: the idea that basic color terms evolved from exemplary examples of the color in question, like modern English *orange*. She then traces the likely development of colour terms from the most commonly found categories: LIGHT, DARK and RED through the other basic colors and how they developed in historical English. Biggam concludes by showing that Berlin and Kay's evolutionary understanding of basic colour terms based on modern languages is compatible with her results of a diachronic study of English basic color terms.

Ágnes Kiricsi provides a more focused, corpus data-driven study of the development of the English words MOOD and MIND in Old and Middle English. After carefully delineating her corpus, which is a careful selection of items from the DOE and Helsinki corpora, she traces the development OE *mōd* from primarily meaning "mind" in an intellectual or spiritual sense, to the emotional connotation it has today. The intellectual sense is very common in OE prose, especially the writings of Alfred and Ælfric, but she also points to the very common emotional sense of *mōd* in OE poetry. Kiricsi sees this poetic sense as representing an older, vernacular tradition of the word, which begins to reemerge in the Middle English period, as the intellectual sense is supplanted by *mind*. In addition to tracing these broader trends, her careful corpus analysis reveals sense occurrences of mind and mood which ante- and post- date the current OED attestations.

Corpus linguistics also lies behind Alexandra Fodor's diachronic analysis of the conditional use of *and*. She finds that the use of conditional *and*, while never exceedingly common, is not characteristic of any particular region or time period. Its use rises through the Middle English period, peaks in the sixteenth century, then quickly declines and disappears. The volume concludes with an interesting study of modern translations of Chaucer, three English and one Finnish, and how they deal with the politeness strategies found in the original Middle English, specifically the exchanges between husbands and wives when the wife is unfaithful. Ultimately Pakkala-Weckström finds that—not surprisingly—most of these subtle uses of politeness strategies have gone unnoticed by translators.

The only gap this reviewer finds in this hardy, cleanly-edited collection of essays is some consideration of the dedicatee. The editors make allusion to their relationship to Matti Kilpiö in the introduction, as do some of the

particular contributors in their essays, but I cannot help but feel that something is missing from this Festschrift. A bibliography of Professor Kilpiö's publications would have been greatly appreciated. This perceived lacuna, however, should not detract from this strong collection of essays which is a worthy tribute to a scholar who has done much for the world of medieval English studies.

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