romantic attachment is a series of aphorisitc or gnomic utterances grouped under such keywords as 'Oedipus', 'Boredom', 'Image-reservoir', and 'Intertext'. The interesting point is that at no stage in the book is a text analysed. This seems a logical, though regrettable, procedure. French structuralism begins by removing the text from the author; it ends by removing the text from the critic. There is a moral in all this somewhere.

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Language and Learning

Books discussed in this review:

Albert C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974. 506 pp. Boards £4.00.

Charles Barber, *Early Modern English.* André Deutsch, 1976. 360 pp. Boards R16,00.

George Steiner, *After Babel.* Oxford University Press, 1976. 507 pp. Paperback R5,75.

D.H. Bullock and C.W. Turl, *Words in Use.* G. Bell and Sons, 1977. 140 pp. Paperback R1,40.

A.C. Gimson, *A Practical Course of English Pronunciation.* Edward Arnold, 1975. Boards £2.75; Paperback £1.25; Tape £6.75; Cassettes £7.50; Learning Pack £8.25.

One of the first discoveries made by Alistair Cooke when he arrived at Harvard forty years ago was one which 'every Englishman has been making for most of the past three hundred and fifty years': that the languages of old and new countries vary in many and fascinating ways; they are always flowing together, or withdrawing, each enriching the other.

Man's curiosity about himself, and therefore his language, has led to a number of theories about the origin and development of English. In *Language,* Bloomfield asserted that 'linguistic change is far more rapid than biological change, but probably slower than changes in other human institutions'; Martin Heidegger, in *Dichterish Wohret der Mensch,* maintains that 'man acts as if he were the shaper and master of language, while it is language which remains mistress of man .... Language is the highest and everywhere the foremost of those assents which we human beings can never articulate solely out of our own means'.

Linguistic change would seem to be continuous, and English, like all other languages, subject to that constant growth and decay which characterizes all forms of life. Thus, any history of the English language should take into account the continuous cross-flow between different dialects (and languages) as well as matters historical, political and social which have a profound effect on the course 'taken' by any language.

Professor Albert C. Baugh does this successfully in *A History of the English Language:* in five hundred pages he deals sensitively with the Indo-European family of languages (language constantly changing; Indian, Armenian, Hellenic, Albanian, Italic — within the context of recent discoveries); Old English; foreign influences on Old English; the Norman conquest and the subsequent re-establishment of English (1066–1500); Middle English; the Renaissance (1500–1650); the temper of the eighteenth century; the ninteenth century; and finally, the English Language in America.

A History of the English Language justifies its description in the 'blurb': Professor Baugh does indeed 'present the historical development of English in such a way as to preserve a proper balance between what may be called internal history — sounds and inflections — and external history — the political, social, and intellectual forces that have determined the course of that development at different periods'. Each chapter is a careful and

scholarly treatment of its subject, with many references incorporated in the footnotes and bibliographies. As a refreshing departure from the norm, and by way of an exciting bonus, the author has devoted equal attention to earlier and later stages in the development of English.

In the first chapter Professor Baugh deals with 'English Present and Future'; in the last, he surveys 'The English Language in America'. It is these which spice the 'plain fare' of any such reputable History of English, almost as though — having yoked his mind to the didactic requirements of intervening chapters — the author allows his intellect to range widely and freely. The most interesting questions considered are: 'Will English become a World Language?' and 'Is American English good English?'. In the former Baugh points to the number of attempts that have been made artificially to supply the obvious need for a world language:

> Between 1880 and 1907 fifty-three universal languages were proposed. Some of these enjoyed an amazing, if temporary, vogue. In 1889 Volapük claimed nearly a million adherents. Today it is all but forgotten. A few years later Esperanto experienced a similar vogue ... . Apparently the need has not been filled by any of the laboratory products so far created to fill it. And it is doubtful if it can ever be filled in this way. (p. 7)

He goes on to explain that such a language might serve the needs of business and travel, but would fall far short in areas such as 'political, historical and scientific thought, to say nothing of the impossibility of making it serve the purposes of pure literature, involving sustained emotion and creative imagination'. (p. 8) What, then — asks Professor Baugh — are the assets and liabilities of a language which seems to have superseded (or replaced) French and German as a developing 'world language'? In answer, he lists the following:

1. Assets

(i) Cosmopolitan Vocabulary (p. 9)

Here are some of the borrowings:

American Indian	— chipmunk, moose, raccoon, skunk, hominy;
Dutch	— brandy, golf, measles, wagon, uproar;
Italian	— balcony, granite, piano, umbrella;
Spanish	— alligator, cork, hammock, sherry, stampede;
Russian	— steppe, drosky, vodka, rouble;
Persian	— caravan, dervish, mogul, shawl, sherbet.

A good etymological dictionary will reveal a host of such borrowings from many other languages. Furthermore, these heterogeneous elements have been assimilated so successfully that few people are aware of their origin.

(ii) Inflectional Simplicity (p. 10)

(a) Inflections in the noun as spoken have been reduced to a sign of the plural and a form for the possessive case, eliminating the elaborate Teutonic inflection of the adjective.
(b) The verb has been simplified by the loss of practically all the personal endings.
(c) A gradual 'discord' of both the subjunctive mood, and distinction between singular and plural, is taking place.

(iii) Natural Gender (p. 11)

English has adopted natural, in place of grammatical gender, a process which began during the Middle English period. As Professor Baugh points out, 'attributive gender, as when we speak of a ship as feminine ..., is personification and a matter of rhetoric, not grammar'.

2. Liabilities

(i) Languages with a minimum of inflections depend on stereotyped idioms (p. 12)

(ii) The chaotic character of our spelling (p. 12)

There is a frequent lack of correlation between spelling and pronunciation:

> *shoe, sugar, issue, mansion, mission, nation, suspicion, ocean, nauseous, conscious, chaperon, schist, fuchsia, pshaw. (Fourteen* spellings for the sound of *sh!)* (p. 13)

In 'Is American English good English'? we have a question designed to evoke a multiplicity of emotions and response. With the humour that characterises many pages of this book, Professor

Baugh states: 'It is idle to deny that the differences between English and British English are frequently the cause of irritation on both sides of the Atlantic'. (p. 461) He then discusses the utterances (both serious, and tongue-in-cheek) of men such as Henry Bradley, De Selincourt, William Archer and Brander Matthews, before listing possible sources of embarrassment exported by America:

(i) the humourist, whose chief stock is slang and 'linguistic novelties'
(ii) realists or actualists in fiction who picture the social and linguistic vulgarities of a small section of Americans
(iii) those who '... write about the language as though it were nothing but a collection of sub-reputable locutions' (p. 462).

The author sums up with his usual succinctness: 'good American English is simply good English, English that differs a little in pronunciation, vocabulary, and occasionally in idiom, from good English as spoken in London or South Africa ... . It rests upon the same basis as that which the standard speech of England rests upon — the usage of reputable speakers and writers throughout the country'. (p.463)

Any book on language should contain a nice blend of fact and theory; it should be based on the assumption that 'historical facts exist only within a theoretical framework'. And this is where Professor Baugh succeeds, as does Dr Charles Barber, in his latest book *Early Modern English* (1976). Dr Barber, who is an authority on the dramatist Thomas Middleton, is also well known as the author of *The Story of Language* and *Linguistic Change in Present-Day English.* His newest book is aimed at people 'who read works written in e Mod E [Early Modern English] — plays, poems, historical documents, philosophy, or whatever'. (p. 13) To this end he has included a *Select Bibliography* (more, and laudably, comprehensive than 'select' — particularly for the student in South Africa), consisting of Primary Texts (at a rough count, more than 160) and Secondary Texts; a valuable and time-saving *Name and Subject Index;* and an extremely meticulous *Word Index.* Another handy reference tool is his list of Phonetic Symbols (p. 9).

This attractive and authentic book resolves, for me, at least, many of the controversies that have raged (and, it seems, will continue to do so) about the questions of semantics and syntax. In

chapters such as 'Varieties of Early Modern English', 'Attitudes to English' and, more especially, 'The Expanding Vocabulary', the author's arguments are founded on careful and exhaustive analysis of selected passages.

A trivial example of disputes which often arise because questions at issue cannot be determined when both sides treat a problem of words as a problem of fact is told by William James in one of his books:

> The problem was this. Suppose that a squirrel is on one side of a tree-trunk and a man on the other side. The man starts going round the tree, but however fast he goes round, the squirrel goes round in the same direction, so that he keeps the trunk of the tree between the man and himself. The philosophical question was as to whether the man went round the squirrel or not. The disputants were evenly divided, and it is not surprising to learn that they had disputed for a long time without coming any nearer to a solution of the problem.
>
> (from Robert H. Thouless: *Straight and Crooked Thinking,* Pan Books, London, 1965, p. 59.)

'Translation', states George Steiner in the 'Afterword' to *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (1976), 'is fully implicit in the most rudimentary communication'. (p. 471) True words, indeed, if one bears in mind the 'explosion' caused by different interpretations of the words, 'go round' in William James's story! *After Babel* is an apt title for Steiner's work, in which he points to the realization that: 'to a greater or lesser degree, every language offers its own reading of life. To move between languages, to translate, even within restrictions of totality, is to experience the … bias of the human spirit towards freedom'. (p. 473)

George Steiner's views are strongly stated. They deserve to be, for he has taken a courageous stand on a controversial subject, as he admits in his 'Afterword' (p. 472): 'When I began this book the question of Babel, and the history of that question in religious, philosophic, and anthropological thought were hardly respectable among "scientific" linguists. Now, only four years later, one of the foremost comparative linguists concludes that "… most of language begins where abstract universals leave off"'. (My deletions.)

Steiner seems to be no respecter of theories and systems: Chomsky, for instance, comes in for some severe, but careful, criticism, while upper-class English diction ('both a code for mutual recognition ... and an instrument of ironic exclusion', p. 32) does not escape unscathed.

In sections moving inexorably from 'Understanding as Translation', 'Language and Gnosis' to 'The Claims of Theory' and 'Topologies of Culture', the author explores and expounds his theme with a combination of remorseless logic and keen, but sensitive, insight. Very few works of this length are able to boast of such tightly organised cohesiveness, nor do many reveal to such an extraordinary extent the wide reading of their author: George Steiner's sources range from Heidegger to Hemingway to Hewes; from the Prometheus Myth to the Psalms; from Racine to Robinson Crusoe; from Delphi to Dunbar. Even more extraordinary is the fact that none of these references is extraneous: all are tightly bound to, and incorporated in, the context of the argument.

In Chapter II, the author asserts that 'translation exists because men speak different languages'. By the last page this 'truism' has been considerably modified, explained and expanded, until the reader is left with the thought that: 'The Kabbalah, in which the problem of Babel and of the nature of language is so insistently examined, knows of a day of redemption on which translation will not longer be necessary ....Words will rebel against men. They will shake off the servitude of meaning. They will "become only themselves, and as dead stones in our mouths". In either case, men and women will have been freed forever from the burden and the splendour of the ruin at Babel. But which, one wonders, will be the greater silence?'

More pedestrian, but no less useful, is *Words in Use* by D.H. Bullock and C.W. Turl (1977). Believing, like Wittgenstein, that 'the meaning of a word is its use', and like Bertrand Russell, that the young should use words 'with a precise meaning, rather than with a vague mist of emotion', the authors have a workbook for senior pupils which ensures that constant and systematized practice in the use of words will lead to an awareness of meaning.

Bullock and Turl have produced a book stocked with a rich working vocabulary, the result of systematic research into 'the problem of the adolescent's imprecise, inaccurate and limited

vocabualry'. (p. v) They have asked themselves how the 'ordinary' child acquires a knowledge of words and skill in their use, with the object of providing a practical and systematic study of 'some English words in common use in educated speech and writing'. (p. vi)

The result is an extremely useful booklet, divided into thirty homogeneous chapters, each containing an introductory paragraph from which selected words are taken and examined by means of brief definitions and illustrative sentences. Meanings are given briefly, and 'accepted' pronunciation has been used throughout:

> The defending counsel was most *adroit* in accentuating his argument that the prisoner's venture into crime had been *abortive*. The prisoner, he said, was not an *adept;* he had surrendered to a temptation, to a momentary *aberration.* The prisoner had fallen into bad company, but when his associates had plotted new crimes, he had refused to *acquiesce,* and had remained *adamant.*
>
> Yet the defending counsel, in spite of his *affable* tones, was unable to *affect* the jury as much as the prosecuting counsel had done. The latter, speaking with an *acerbity* which was not *affected,* produced reliable witnesses who aroused the *abhorrence* of the jury with their descriptions of the victim, an old woman who had been badly wounded.

> *Note:* Cross reference to synonyms, antonyms and related words should be made throughout the book wherever possible.

> aberra'tion (n.). A mental slip.
>
> Owing to a momentary aberration, he omitted to put his signature to the form.

> This word is derived from the Latin root meaning *to stray.* The root is seen in words like err, error, erratum, knight-errant, erroneous and erratic. Erroneous means *incorrect (wandering from the truth),* and erratic *(wandering, irregular in conduct or course).*

> abey'ance (n.). A temporary disuse.
>
> The rule forbidding boys to ride motorscooters to school was in abeyance during the bus strike.

Do not confuse *abeyance* with *obeisance (a gesture expressing respect or submission)*, or with *obedience.*

abhor'rence (n.). An intense dislike, detestation.
   The ruffian's treatment of the harmless cat filled all sensitive people with abhorrence.

A.C. Gimson, like Bullock and Turl, has no intention of arming his readers and students with a catalogue of cautions; instead he offers a sampling of typical pronunciations and inflections in order to demonstrate how usage operates. His intention, in *A Practical Course of English Pronunciation: a perceptual approach,* is to present an auditory-perceptual course relevant to the foreign learner's difficulties. The tape or casette is meant to be used in conjunction with the booklet; indeed, it forms a necessary part of the course. The aims and uses of this useful, and remarkably cheap, aid to learning can be summarised as follows (pp. 1–6):

(i) Purpose of the course

(a) 'If the essence of language is its grammar, communication by language clearly relies crucially on the effectiveness of the transmission phase, i.e. ... the easy intelligibility of the pronunciation.'
(b) 'The pronunciation of a second language poses problems of a different kind. ... The first requirement is to overcome the pronunciation prejudices which have become instilled in us.'
(c) This course sets out to drill 'listening and discrimination, and only then attempts performance' by the learner.
(d) 'Only a minimum of theoretical knowledge' is required from the learner. Theoretical commentary is restricted to essentials.

(ii) Pronunciation Systems

There are two categories:
(a) segmental elements
(b) prosodic elements

Both categories receive extensive treatment through tape used in conjunction with text.

(iii) Standard of Performance

The required, and minimum, standard is an adequate native speaker response. As Gimson states: 'it is not sufficient for the

learner to be easily intelligible when speaking English to a listener of his own nationality'.

(iv) The type of English

British English, or 'received pronunciation', which is 'typical of the middle generations in the last half of the twentieth century'.

(v) How to use the course

(1) Listen

The learner should listen to the examples more than once, so that a firm auditory impression is established.

(2) Identify

In such drills, the user should make discriminatory decisions either as between English sounds or as between English and non-English sounds. He may then refer to the Appendix for the correct answers.

(3) Transcribe

In a few cases, the user is advised to transcribe phonetically what he hears (English or nonsense) or words given in the text. Again, the correct transcription will be found in the Appendix.

(4) Listen and repeat

Most drills take this form. There are pauses between items to allow the learner to imitate what he hears. If he has facilities for recording his responses, he should compare his performance with the model. These drills should be played as many times as is necessary. Additional examples for performance practice are to be found in IPE.

(5) Notes

Most sections are prefaced by brief notes on the elements to be drilled. These notes are intended to provide basic information essential for the learner. For more detail, reference is made to the relevant sections of IPE. The various Departments of Education in South Africa would be well advised to obtain it for use in their remedial courses for immigrants from non-English-speaking countries.

A.D. Adey