BOOK REVIEW

Charles Barber, *Early Modern English*
Edinburgh University Press, 1997,
pp.viii + 280.

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The book here taken up is the 1997 version of *Early Modern English*, which was originally published in 1976 by André Deutsch, London. Although I am primarily going to review the newer version, my subsidiary intention is to compare it with the 1976 version. A marked difference can immediately be seen in the arrangement of the subject matter in the two versions. The 1976 version has "1. Varieties of Early Modern English / 2. Attitudes to English / 3. Changes of Meaning / 4. The Expanding Vocabulary / 5. Grammar / 6. Phonology"; while the 1997 version has "1. Varieties of Early Modern English / 2. Attitudes to English / 3. Phonology / 4. Grammar: (1) Morphology / 5. Grammar: (2) Syntax / 6. The Expanding Vocabulary / 7. Changes of Meaning / Appendix: Further Passages for Study." Thus in the 1997 version Grammar has been treated in far greater detail, and Syntax has been more closely investigated. Another remarkable point is the addition of "Appendix" in the 1997 version, clarifying the thoughgoing tertbookish nature of the work. There seven questions lead the reader to review the respective explanations in the foregoing main chapters.

Below I shall sum up the more marked features according to the main chapters of the 1997 version. Chapter I begins with the author's assertion that his main concern is to present the known facts about Early Modern English (hereafter abbreviated as eModE), which may be justified as referring to the English language between 1500 and 1700. He adds, however, that theory is not rejected, since linguistic facts can only be discussed adequately within a theoretieal framework.

In this chapter on varieties of eModE, the author goes on to describe about (1) variation with time, (2) regional variation, (3) the Scots literary language, (4) social variation, (5) the language of rogues and vagabords, (6) language written for oral delivery, (7) artless written language, and (8) other varieties. Each of these items is closely explained with adequate extracts from eModE prose essays and plays. It may be worth noting that "spelling convention" (p. 4) has been taken up here, as against such subject matter as phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, and meaning, which are treated in their own right in the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter II the author treats attitudes to English. It is filled with humanistic observations in respect to eModE. He surveys the general tendency appearing in English language and literature along with the Renaissance and the Reformation. Under the heading of "the superiority of Latin," he states that the use of Latin as a language of scholarship persisted all through the eModE period, while normally an English person wanted to write poetry or plays or prose fiction in English, with the exception of More's *Utopia* (p. 45). There follow such

items as "forces in favour of English," "disputes about the use of English," "the neologisers," "the inkhorn controversy," "the purists," "the archaisers," "rhetoric," "English dictionaries," "grammars of English," "spelling reformers," and so on. All of these are discussed fully enough.

In Chaper III Phonology, the author goes on describing the phonemes of eModE, starting with the late ME counterparts. To depict them he has in the 1997 version adopted the system of standard phonetic symbols, instead of the traditional system of ordinary alphabetical letters with various diacritics in the 1976 version. The revision is clearly more understandable to the general reader. Below some noteworthy points will be referred to. (1) ME /ɛ:/ and /o:/ were especially shortened in the eModE period. When /ɛ:/ was shortened into /ɛ/, it was regularly developed into PE /e/, as in *bread, breath, sweat, spread*. It may be inferred that double forms were in circulation throughout the eModE period (p. 123). (2) ME /o:/ became eModE [u:] and then was shortened into [ʊ], which has been regularly developed into PE [ʌ], as in *blood, flood*. But when the shortening took place later, the [ʊ] remained, as in *look, foot*. In the second half of the seventeenth century, there were in circulation three different forms of such a word: [fu:t], [fʊt], and [fʌt], the third being possibly vulgar (pp. 123–4). (3) In ME the vowel of *broad* was /ɔ:/. Later it became [ɵ:], rhyming with *road*. Then the vowel was shortened, giving [brɔd] in the sixteenth century. In the middle of the seventeenth century it began to be relengthened into PE [brɔ:d] (p. 124). (4) Throughout the eModE period, /r/ was pronounced in all positions, as in *barn, board, err, farmer, here, turf*. In the eighteenth century, /r/ was lost — producing non-rhotic speech — in standard English before a consonant and in final position (p. 127). (5) In eModE the commonest form of *were* was the strong form [wɛ:r], with its vowel from ME /ɛ:/, though there was also the weak form [wər], which came from earlier [wɛr]. In eModE *should* and *would* had their strong forms, retaining /l/. So there were strong [ʃu:ld]/[wu:ld], weak [ʃʊd]/[wʊd], and the mixed forms [ʃu:d]/[wu:d] (p. 129).

Out of the numerous noteworthy passages contained in Chapter IV, Morphology, I shall select the following. (1) In the course of the eModE period, the third-perssn singular morpheme {-es} gradually supplanted {-eth}, which was likely to be chosen in highly formal and solemn speech, often for rhythmical purposes. Thus in the first scene of Shakespeare, *Hamlet*: 'The Bird of Dawning *singeth* all night long', *singeth* is used to provide two syllables, rendering the sentence rhythmical (pp. 166–7). (2) In eModE the subjunctive was part of everyday familiar speech. So in Shakespeare, *Richard III* a plebeian character says to his mate: 'What if it *come* to thee againe?' (p. 173). (3) In eModE there were a number of adverbs lacking the ending *-ly*, as in 'Books will speake *plaine*, when Counsellors Blanch' (Bacon, *Essays*). This form derives from the OE adverbs *fæste, hearde, softe*, etc.., where the adverbial ending *-e* was added direct to the stem (p. 182).

In Chapter V the syntax of eModE is discussed in detail. Below I shall point out some passages that seem specially noteworthy. (1) Under the heading "the noun phrase", the author touches on instances of a personal pronoun or an interrogative adverb used as head of the determinative-adjective-noun pattern, as in 'But *the highest him*, ... the God of Nature, I appeale' (Spenser, *Faerie Queene*)/ 'Thou loosest here *a better where* to finde' (Shakespeare, *King Lear*) (pp. 184–5). (2) Auxiliary *be* was sometimes used to form the perfect tense of intransitive verbs denoting motion or a change of state, as in 'Thinke not that I *am come* to destroye the lawe' (Tyndale, *New Testament*) /Woucester *is stolen* away by Night; thy Fathers

Beard *is turn'd* white with the Newes (Shakespeare, *Henry IV* Part 1) (p. 189). (3) Though word-order regulation advanced fairly in the seventeenth century, there still occurred such a characteristic construction with inverted order, as in *'Goe* not *my Horse* the better, I must become a borrower of the Night' (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*), meaning 'Unless my horse goes the better, ...' (p. 192). (4) In eModE auxiliary *can* was not used to give permission. 'You *can* go' did not mean 'I give you permission to go', as it does today. Conversely, auxiliary *may* was used to signal capacity or physical power, as in 'in thynges subiecte to Nature nothyng of hym selfe onely *may* be norisshed' (Elyot, *The Governor*), where today *can* is preferred (p. 197). (5) Multiple (or cumulative) negation, which was common in OE and ME, was dying out in the middle of the eModE period, and yet occurred in such a collocation as in 'Why, if I was born to be a Cuckold, there's no more to be said — *Nor no* more to be done, Old Boy' (Congreve, *Love for Love*) (p. 199). (6) The use of impersonal verbs largely died out in late ME, but a few vestiges remained in eModE, as in 'And then may *chaunce the* to repent, The tyme that thou hast lost and spent' (Wyatt, *Poems*) /'*Me thought* that Glouster stumbled' (Shakespeare, *Richard III*). The forms *methinks* (= it seems to me) and *methought* (and *methoughts*, perhaps due to analogy with *methinks*) survived throughout the eModE period (pp. 200–1). (7) In eModE it was very common to use a compound subordinator, with *that* as its second element, as in 'Where goodly solace was unto them made, ... *Untill that* (= until) they their wounds well healed had' (Spenser, *Faerie Queene*)/ The reason is, *for that* (= that, because) there is no sense without some stay of the Object on the faculty (Glanville, *Vanity*) (pp. 206–7). (8) In eModE relative *which* was freely used with a personal antecedent as well as a non-personal one, as in 'men *which* will be studious about the weale publike' (Elyot, *The Governor*) (p. 211).

In Chapter VI The Expanding Vocabulary, the author describes loans from Latin, from Greek and Hebrew, from other modern European languages (such as Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and Low German), and from non-European languages. Then he touches on *"types* and *tokens."* By counting many occurrences of the same form as only one occurrence, you count *types*; while by counting every graphic unit as one occurrence, you count *tokens*. In eModE many new *types* entered the vocabulary, but in actual passages of writing they are represented by relatively few *tokens*. On the other hand, the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* contains more than 29,000 head-words (*types*) and more than 800,000 citations (*tokens*), showing that he made freer use of new words than any other writer in his age (pp. 239–40).

The last chapter, VII, deals with Changes of Meaning. Here the author discusses with adequate instances the items: overlapping fields or reference, gain or loss of meanings, generalisation and specialisation, titles of terms of address, metaphor, euphemism, loss of intensity, etc. Below some passages will be pointed out. (1) In eModE *lady* and *gentleman* were normally restricted to members of the gentry. By this date, however, *lady* was beginning to spread down the scale, as is illustrated by Middleton's comedy *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (written c. 1613) (pp. 249–50). (2) The noun *mettle* was originally a figurative use of *metal* meaning the stuff (of which a person or a horse is made), perhaps with an implicit comparison with a sword-blade. Hence it came to mean 'quality, temperament,' and especially 'ardent or spirited temperament.' This figurative use arose in the sixteenth century (p. 252). (3) Loss of intensity arises from the common human habit of exaggerating for effect. In eModE the adverb *presently* meant 'at once, immediately' and also 'at present, now', the latter remaining in American English. The present-day meaning 'after a short interval' was first found round about 1600 (pp. 254–5).

The book is so rich in exhaustive discussion and explanation that we are inclined to consider it the most systematic reference that has ever been published in the sphere of eModE. It reminds us that the description of eModE forms the very essence of the history of the English language in general.

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