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Jonathan Culpeper
Lancaster University

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS: EXPLORATIONS OF A SOCIO-POLITICAL KIND IN THE *ARDEN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE*

Word meanings reflect contexts of use. In this paper, I examine a selection of words that had become strongly imbued with the social and political resonances of their use. Along the way, I elaborate on how one finds evidence for these resonances, and how one represents the evidence that one finds. The former has partial solutions in corpus-based methods; the latter has partial solutions in lexicography.

The background to my paper is the five-volume *Arden Encyclopedia of Shakespeare's Language*. The first two volumes, co-edited by me, constituting a dictionary of Shakespeare's language, appeared in 2023. Unlike other Shakespeare 'dictionaries', it is not restricted to words deemed 'hard', but has an entry on every word in Shakespeare's plays, the first dictionary to do so since that of Alexander Schmidt in 1871. However, it is no ordinary dictionary; it is the first to be primarily driven by corpus linguistics methods. It traces Shakespeare's actual use of words in the context of Early Modern England. For example, it is an empirical fact about Shakespeare's plays that there is a statistical relationship between the word *Spaniard* and both the words *proud* and *Pope*, something that speaks volumes about the attitudes and politics of the time. Moreover, in the dictionary, every Shakespearean word (about 21,000) is compared with (a) a million-word corpus of plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries, and (b) a 321 million-word corpus of contemporaneous writings of all extant genres (religious, legal, administrative, scientific, etc.). Thus, we find, for example, that Shakespeare used *Spaniard* less than other playwrights and indeed less than other early modern writers generally. In this way, the dictionary offers contexualised accounts of word-meanings and establishes what is unique, if anything, about Shakespeare's use of language.

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Matylda Włodarczyk

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

THE (UN)DESERVING AND THE ABLE-BODIED: INTERLINKING SOURCES ON THE UNDERPRIVILEGED SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE LATE MODERN PERIOD

Poverty is an inevitable consequence of social instability. In the Late Modern period, as industrialising states aim to alleviate poverty and contain its broader social consequences, printed media start to play a major role in disseminating information on and evaluating the efficacy of welfare programmes (e.g. the English Poor Laws). Notwithstanding the part that news publications played in representing the poor in the period, research has so far largely relied on archival sources such as egodocuments (e.g. diaries and letters, Dossena 2013; petitions, Laitinen 2015, Włodarczyk 2016), and, very infrequently, overseer accounts (Fairman 2002) to document the voices of the marginalised social groups. By presenting a case study into representations of the poor based on different types of interlinked records and data, the paper extends the sources and methods of historical linguistics and discourse studies by insights gained from contemporary news discourse.

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Angela Andreani
University of Milan

LEXICAL CHANGE THROUGH THE ENGLISH REFORMATION: RELIGIOUS AND "LINGUISTIC" TERMINOLOGY

The early modern period is a key moment in the development of the English lexicon (Görlach 1991; Barber 1997; Nevalainen 2000; Durkin 2014), as the vernacular came to be used "in an increasing range of functions, especially as a language of learning and of religious discourse" (Durkin 2014: 306). Indeed, the Protestant Reformation triggered the expansion of European vernaculars for exegetical and devotional purposes, while it also stimulated closer study of Scriptural and Patristic sources in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Throughout the period, the English vocabulary of the church and religion was explicitly contended, discussed and re-codified in writing: treatises, translations and sermons often include discussions of disputed Eucharistic terminology, of ecclesiastical roles and institutions, and of denominations to refer to church administration (Andreani 2021; Andreani and Russo 2021). Ranging from lengthy "censures" to curt sarcastic remarks, these debates stimulated reflection on and experimentation with the English language, starting from the forns and meanings of words. With the aim of exploring the effects of the Reformation on lexis and linguistic thought, this paper proposes an analysis of the contribution of a group of translators, theologians and controversialists to religious language in early modern English. The paper will highlight borrowings and processes of word-formation, with special reference to ecclesiastical, doctrinal and related terminology, identified relying on automatic extraction of lemmas from the OED Online. The analysis will further take into account the metalanguage used by polemicists, exegetes and intellectuals in their exploration of English morphology and semantics.

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Marco Bagli - Fabio Ciambella

University for Foreigners of Perugia - Sapienza University of Rome

FROM ITALY WITH LOVE: (POST-)REFORMATION, MARITIME TRADES, AND THE ITALIAN INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH CULINARY PRACTICES IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

This paper examines the linguistic and cultural impact of Italian culinary practices on English cuisine during the Early Modern period. It explores how this influence is ultimately connected to the sixteenth-century Reformation and Counter-Reformation, which prompted significant migration from mainland Europe to England (and viceversa), and to the intensification of maritime trades. In this scenario, Italian expatriates introduced culinary traditions that shaped English gastronomy. Italian food emerged as a sophisticated commodity, a marker of distinction among cultural elites, and a symbol of identity for migrant communities. Cookery books of the period featured recipes prepared "to the Italian manner" and listed ingredients imported by Italian merchants, such as wine, olive oil, and others. The analysis draws on a corpus of Early Modern English manuscript recipe books from the Folger Shakespeare Library, to trace the adoption and adaptation of Italian recipes, ingredients, and culinary terms. Particular attention is given to dishes labeled as Italian and the sociolinguistic markers reflecting Italian influence, especially lexical items referring to imported goods, which illustrate the circulation of specific foodstuffs in Early Modern London. The study also explores the contributions of prominent Italian expatriates, such as Michelangelo Florio and his son John Florio, in fostering cultural exchange. John Florio's linguistic work bridged Italian and English culinary lexicons, embedding Italian gastronomic terminology within English discourse. These findings are contextualized within the broader framework of Anglo-Italian trade, which facilitated the exchange of ingredients, techniques, and cultural symbols. By combining corpus-driven linguistic analysis with socio-historical insights, this research highlights how food, language, and culture intertwined to shape culinary tastes and perceptions in Early Modern England. It underscores the role of migration and multiculturalism in forging a shared culinary identity, offering a microhistorical perspective on globalization through the lens of recipes and gastronomy.

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Nicholas Brownlees - Mairi McLaughlin

University of Florence - University of California, Berkeley

TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE CHANGE IN THE FINAL YEARS OF THE ENGLISH REPUBLIC (1655-1659)

This paper will examine the language and content of translated passages in *Mercurius Politicus* and the *Publick Intelligencer*, two English weekly news pamphlets, from 1655 to 1659. The time span covers some of the most politically unstable years in 17th-Century England. With the execution of Charles I in 1649, and the consequent establishment of a republic, the 1650s represented a time of constitutional experimentation, change and finally the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Between 1655 and 1659 the government-backed *Mercurius Politicus* and *Publick Intelligencer* were the sole periodical news pamphlets to appear in England and much of the news about France and Anglo-French relations was translated from *La Gazette*, the French weekly published in Paris.

Following on from their study of a single, translated news report in *Mercurius Politicus* in 1657 (McLaughlin and Brownlees 2023: 392-5), the authors will provide a comprehensive analysis of ways in which over the five years the translated news reports in the English publications altered the language and content of the source French texts for strategic purposes. This study builds on work carried out in three very dynamic areas of research concerning the history of news discourse (Brownlees 2011; McLaughlin 2021), the translation of news (Hernández Guerrero 2009; Zanettin 2021), and the relationship between translation and language change (e.g. Kranich 2014; Malamatidou 2016). The approach adopted is interdisciplinary, combining methods from the history of the press, philology, historical discourse analysis, and translation studies. Preliminary findings indicate that the changes introduced include not only content omission and addition but pragmatically significant alterations in features such as address terms. These, in particular, regard members of the Republican English administration, and, especially, Oliver Cromwell. It is hypothesised that the language changes are motivated by a systematic design to enhance and fortify an ever less confident Republic. We will conclude the paper by showing what the consequences of the changes introduced in translation might have been for language, the press, England, France, and English-French relations.

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Marina Dossena
University of Bergamo

ENFORCING POLITICAL STABILITY (?) THROUGH LANGUAGE CHANGE FROM ABOVE: OR, NIHIL NOVUM

Since the beginning of his mandate, the 47th President of the USA has dictated changes in language use that have drawn the attention of supporters, opponents and commentators at an international level; the best-known example is perhaps the renaming of the *Gulf of Mexico* as *Gulf of America*, though other instances also come to mind. Those initiatives, however, are nothing extraordinary. Also in Europe, and indeed in Italy, there are well-known cases of placenames changing in relation to changing political atmosphere, even at street level.

What is more interesting to observe is the fact that such moves had already been made in Late Modern times. When the rule of the House of Hanover was threatened by the Jacobite uprisings, "North Britain", as Scotland had been renamed after the Union of the Crowns in 1603, had to be patrolled and indeed 'domesticated'. For that reason, in the Highlands new military settlements were established and named after significant figures in the royal family: Fort Augustus, Fort William and Fort George. Similarly, the names of the main streets in the New Town of Edinburgh, built in the second half of the 18th century, i.e. after the Jacobite cause had been completely defeated, bear a recognisably ideological stamp.

In this presentation I intend to outline how placenames reflect the turmoil of the early 18th century even as they attempted to hide it. While 'North Britain' has never been a very successful label outside official documents, other instances have become fully lexicalised and users may not be aware of their actual time depth. Through a discussion of both maps and texts, it will be shown how political stance may be conveyed through apparently innocent decisions in which praise for the ruling dynasty combines with the deletion of its opponents in contexts where ordinary people move daily, and which therefore become tools of political persuasion, if not downright propaganda.

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Gloria Mambelli
University of Verona

LANDHOLDING IN A MULTILINGUAL AGE OF TRANSITION: A LEXICO-GRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH VOCABULARY

This study explores the vocabulary used to refer to tenants and landholders during the late Middle English period (1300-1500), a time of transition from both a societal and a linguistic perspective. The manorial system was undergoing changes due to demographic and economic shifts, eventually leading to its decline. Meanwhile, the linguistic environment was still characterised by what has been described as the "trilingual civilization of medieval England" (Rothwell 1998: 164), where Anglo-French, Medieval Latin, and Middle English coexisted, especially in professional contexts (Ingham & Marcus 2016). However, significant changes were underway, with English largely replacing Latin and French in written records by the late fifteenth century, although this shift was not straightforward (Wright 2020: 29-30). Latin remained the dominant language of record in business contexts throughout the period, showing varying degrees of code-switching from a Latin matrix into the vernaculars (Ingham 2009; Trotter 2009; Wright 2013). Evidence of such language-mixing practices can be found in historical dictionary citations.

This study investigates the lexicographic treatment of the terms for medieval tenants and landholders by examining entries in the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED), while also cross-referencing them with equivalent entries in the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (DMLBS) and the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). The aim is to evaluate whether and how the transformations of the period are mirrored in this lexical domain across dictionary citations.

In addition to highlighting the impact of multilingualism on this domain, data show how patterns of lexical obsolescence reflect the decline of villeinage and the manorial system. Furthermore, notwithstanding the limitations of dictionaries in fully representing the linguistic situation of the time, the analysis of matrix languages across citations highlights the linguistic shifts of the period and the role of Latin in the administrative text type. Findings emphasise the importance of including non-literary attestations in historical dictionaries and the need for a bridge between the available lexicographic resources.

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Isabella Martini
University of Florence

TOWARDS THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY.

ITALIAN SECRET SOCIETIES IN 19th-CENTURY BRITISH PRESS: NEWS AND/ OR PROPAGANDA?

From the dissemination of the first corantos to the rise of news in print, Italy has always raised the interest of the international press for a variety of reasons. Being a major destination of the Grand Tour that attracted travellers from across Europe and the United States, Italy's major cities have hosted communities of expatriates whose interest in the country was nurtured not only by its favourable climate and artistic and cultural heritage, but also by its political events. In particular, the times of socio-political unrest that eventually led to the Unification of Italy, their key figures (Giuseppe Mazzini to name one), and the political movements that led to the independence of Italy from foreign powers, to the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, and to the capture of Rome in 1870, received considerable international press coverage. This because they were seen as times of unrest that would promote the social well-being of the population, liberating the Italians from a centuries-long rule that had fragmented their country. In particular, the British press showed a consistent interest in the so-called secret revolutionary societies that laid the foundations of the unification process in the first half of the 19th century, and in the secret societies active in Italy in particular. This contribution examines their linguistic representation in the British press, i.e., in the news and in letters to the editors (LTEs), applying to a corpus specifically built for this study a quantitative and qualitative analytical framework that combines corpus linguistics, corpus-assisted discourse analysis and historical pragmatics. Recurrent clusters, collocations and extended co-textual references in LTEs will be examined to identify their ideological connotation, and to what extent they can be considered propaganda in the news.

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Elisa Ramazzina
Università dell'Insubria

AGING BODIES, AGING SOCIETIES: METAPHORS OF LONGEVITY AND IN-STABILITY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH TEXTS (17th-18th C.)

This paper explores the metaphorical parallels between aging and socio-political instability in Modern English texts from the 17th to the 18th centuries, focusing on how discourses on old age and longevity were shaped by the broader anxieties of a turbulent historical period. Against the backdrop of events such as the English Civil War, the Restoration, and the Glorious Revolution, medical and philosophical treatises and polemical texts framed aging not merely as a biological phenomenon but as a reflection of societal fragility and the desire for renewal. Texts like Francis Bacon's *Historie Naturall and Experimentall, of Life and Death* (re-printed in 1638), Roger Bacon's *The Cure of Old Age* (re-printed in 1683), Joseph Du Chesne's *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke* (1605) and John Heydon's *A New Method of Rosie Crucian Physick* (1658) reveal how the language of aging became a site for negotiating cultural and political tensions.

The paper focuses on how concepts such as "radical moisture", "the lamp of life", and "balsam of vitality" were employed as metaphors for both individual aging and the perceived decay of social and political structures. These texts often juxtaposed the inevitability of aging with alchemical and theological promises of rejuvenation, mirroring contemporary desires for the restoration of political stability in the face of upheaval. By examining the lexicon, metaphors, and argumentative structures used to address old age and longevity, the study demonstrates how these works reflected and reinforced broader ideological concerns, particularly the tension between decay and renewal.

This analysis situates the discourse on aging within the linguistic and cultural framework of Modern English, emphasising how socio-political instability influenced not only the content but also the evolution of medical and philosophical language. It argues that these texts contributed to shaping public perceptions of aging and longevity, presenting old age as a metaphorical mirror of societal vulnerability and resilience. By doing so, the paper highlights the intricate interplay between language, medicine, and socio-political anxieties during a transformative period in English history.

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Eleonora Natalia Ravizza
University of Milan

THE IMPACT OF THE MESOPOTAMIAN CAMPAIGN ON THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUAL AND DISCURSIVE NEGOTIATION OF ARAB IDENTITIES: GERTUDE BELL'S *THE ARAB OF MESOPOTAMIA*

At the height of the Mesopotamian campaign (WWI), as the conflict with the Ottomans intensified, an increasing number of British soldiers were deployed in the Basra region with little or no knowledge of the local culture. Originally published anonymously in 1917, *The Arab of Mesopotamia* is a collection of once confidential briefing papers written by the renowned archaeologist, travel writer and secret agent Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), which were later repurposed to serve as a practical guide for those officers who were totally new to the Mesopotamian war theatre (Rich 2016). As it constructed knowledge on a so-far little known region, its inhabitants, the inefficiency of the Turkish government, and the so-termed "Pax Britannica" (Bell 1917: 52) in the British-occupied zone, the manual also worked as a sophisticated propaganda exercise, which justified British presence in a territory which was strategic not only for military purposes, but also for its rich oil deposits (Di Gregorio 2006). This paper argues that Bell's work may be regarded as an exceptional document to investigate language change within a colonial setting. As a matter of fact, "The Arab of Mesopotamia" does not only mediate foreign Mesopotamian cultures to the benefit of colonial exploitation, administrative configurations and subsequent modes of subordination. It also strives to translate the colonized 'Other' linguistically, for example through the use of loanwords. By adopting a combined discourse-historical (De Cillia et al 1999; Wodak 2001) and socio-cognitive approach (Koller 2011; O'Halloran 2003. Van Dijk 2003, 2006), I will focus on how the book constructs the "Arab" Other – an "Other" which, as the title suggests, could be identified in the singular, "suggesting thereby that there was an essential type which, once uncovered and excavated, would unlock a true understanding of the motives, preferences and worldview of all Arabs" (Collins and Tripp 2017: 7). By focusing on how the historical contingencies of the British military operations and subsequent colonial occupation of the area influenced discourse and language, the paper will also cast light on how colonial and military writings may produce language change and variation within the English language.

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Giulia Rovelli
University of Bergamo

"CANADA'S ALTERNATIVES". SOCIO-POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS IN CANADA, 1791-1900.

Although Canada may properly be said to have entered its endonormative stabilization phase (Schneider 2007) only in the second half of the 20th century, as evidenced by the publication of such metalinguistic products as dictionaries and usage guides, a number of socio-political events that took place in the 19th century may have contributed to the development of metalinguistic awareness and, consequently, of linguistic nationalism. In this period Canada went from being a pioneer colony needing to be set up to a self-governing polity of the British Empire, which, as such, started to question not only its role in the Empire, but also its position in it. As national consciousness began to form and develop, discussions surrounding Canada's "alternatives", that is, strengthening the British connection, independence or annexation to the United States, animated the public debate and also had a number of linguistic implications. The present paper investigates whether such socio-political instability had an impact on the development of metalinguistic awareness by analyzing the number, type and evolution of metalinguistic comments which focus on the then-developing Canadian variety. To do so, it analyzes, following a mixed-method approach which combines quantitative corpus linguistic (McEnery and Hardy 2012) and qualitative (historical) discourse analytic (Brinton 2001) methods, a corpus of comments on the features of the language used in Canada which were published in some of the most important magazines of the time, which have been described as "the national medium" (Sutherland 1989). The investigation is thus expected to offer an insight into popular perceptions of early Canadian English and the role that the socio-political events and debates taking place at the time had on the development of metalinguistic awareness, which ultimately allowed the emergence of Canadian English as an independent and autonomous variety.

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Christina Samson
University of Florence

LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE ITALIAN PEOPLE! THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY AND SOCIAL WELLBEING PROPAGANDA IN LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The unification of Italy, known as Risorgimento, was the 19th-century political and social movement which developed a national consciousness while freeing the Italian states from foreign domination. The latter were politically united into the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, though the unification process reached its completion in 1871 after the capture of Rome (Bacchin 2009). Since the 1850s the Italian national patriotic discourse was extensively disseminated through many social events organised and publicised by Philo-Italian associations and groups of English radicals playing an important active role (Bacchin 2010) in the propaganda of the "myth of the Italian Risorgimento" within the British public opinion (Banti 2012; Ginsborg 2012). Much of the propaganda included letters to the editor in the British press focusing on the patriots' battles for the Italian unification embodying Good as opposed to despotism, oppression and foreign control. This study, unlike previous research dedicating attention to the historical, political and socio-economical aspects of the Unification (Ginzborg 2012), adopts a mixed approach. It starts with a corpus driven analysis integrated with discourse analysis of a specially compiled small corpus of Letters to the Editor on the Unification of Italy (LEUI) in the British press. The purpose is to analyse the use of the most frequent lexical items, their clusters and semantic prosody with the aim of highlighting the persuasive discourses used by the patriots to influence and shape the British public opinion and achieve a favourable response while receiving support to their final objective of freeing Italy and lead its population towards social wellbeing.

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Polina Shvanyukova
University of Udine

"AND THE MASSES WERE CONVERTED INTO A LAWLESS MOB…": THE REPORTING ON THE 1877 GREAT RAILWAY STRIKE IN AMERICAN PRESS

In the United States, the decade that started in 1870 was punctuated by a series of violent industrial disputes that culminated in the Great Railway Strike of 1877. For the first time in American history, railroad workers in seventeen states, supported by the local communities, withdrew their labor as a reaction to successive wage cuts and blacklistings (Heale 1990). This paper examines the reporting on the strike and the accompanying violence that resulted in the loss of life and destruction of railroad property. Using a small corpus of newspaper articles extracted from the database of *America's Historical Newspapers* (*AHN*), the study offers a qualitative analysis of the discursive representations of this major industrial dispute. The analysis is conducted by combining a Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) with systemic-functionally oriented method of text analysis (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999; van Leeuwen 2008). The focus of the investigation is on the specific linguistic strategies that are employed to portray the strikers as a threat to American republican values and mobilize the public opinion against the striking lower classes by, for example, referring to them as "the communists who took advantage of the situation to carry out their fiendish policy" (*Daily Free Press*, October 8th, 1878). The paper thus addresses the theme of the conference by exploring the language of socio-political unrest in the reporting on the intensification of class conflict in the late nineteenth-century United States.

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Massimo Sturiale
University of Milan

PROVINCIAL AND COLONIAL ENGLISH ACCENTS IN THE LATE NINE-TEENTH-CENTURY LANGUAGE DEBATE: A SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The late nineteenth century witnessed significant debates about English pronunciation and its role in defining social and political identities, both within Britain and across its colonies (Milroy 2000; Mugglestone 2003; Willoughby 2020). Terms like "provincial pronunciation" and "vulgar pronunciation" were often used pejoratively to describe northern English accents or those associated with lower social classes (Beal 2012; Hickey 2009; Sturiale 2014). Similarly, "colonial English" emerged as a way to characterize and sometimes diminish the linguistic practices of English speakers in regions like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Hickey 2012). These debates, articulated in newspapers and public discourse, reflected broader tensions surrounding social hierarchy, empire, and linguistic standardization.

This paper investigates how provincial and colonial accents were constructed and contested in the late 19th-century English language debates. Drawing on newspaper archives from Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the study analyses the use of such phrases in discussions about linguistic purity, social mobility, and colonial identity. It also examines how socio-political changes, including industrialization, migration, and imperial expansion, influenced perceptions of "proper" English and the codification of Received Pronunciation as the standard.

By situating these linguistic debates within the broader context of socio-political instability and empire-building, the paper reveals how accents became markers of both inclusion and exclusion, power and marginalization. Furthermore, it considers the lasting impact of these discussions on the development of English varieties and the hierarchical relationships among them.

This historical analysis contributes to understanding the interplay between language, power, and identity, while providing insights into how socio-political instability shapes linguistic ideologies and practices.

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Laura Tommaso
University of Eastern Piedmont

'THERE WILL ARISE A DISTINCTION OF THE NOBLE AND THE IGNOBLE IN STYLE': ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN 19th-CENTURY ENGLISH TRAVELOGUES

British Travel literature about Italy from the sixteenth to the twentieth century has been the subject of consistent scholarly interest over the decades, particularly in literary studies (e.g., Chaney 2014) and more recently within linguistic research (e.g., Pinnavaia 2013). Despite the work that has already appeared on language and the Grand Tour (Tosi 2020), travel writing remains a rich genre for exploring language contact, attitudes, and representation, making it a promising domain for sociolinguistic inquiry (Auer *et al.* 2015).

This case study may contribute to this area by examining how Italian dialects and accents are described in seven English travelogues, spanning from Ellis Cornelia Knight's *Descriptions of Latium* (1805) to Charles Dickens's *Pictures from Italy* (1846). Particular attention is paid to the perceptions and evaluations of linguistic variability that emerge from these texts, interpreted in light of the period's evolving ideologies of standardisation and prescriptivism (Beal *et al.* 2008). Although the authors did not necessarily intend to provide in-depth linguistic analyses—given the diverse motivations behind their journeys—their observations nonetheless reflect underlying attitudes toward language, often intertwined with broader socio-political concerns during a time of fragmentation, foreign domination, and the early stirrings of Italian nationalism (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Joseph *et al.* 2020).

With regard to these purposes, a corpus-based discourse studies approach (Baker 2023) is adopted, integrated with perspectives from historical discourse analysis (Brinton 2001; Fitzmaurice & Taavitsainen 2007), to systematically identify and interpret evaluative language used to describe Italian speech varieties in relation to the sociolinguistic and ideological context of the time.

The findings provide evidence of three distinctive discursive constructions: (1) aestheticization of elite speech, wherein upper-class Italian was characterised through sensory metaphors of musicality and refinement; (2) dehumanisation of vernacular varieties, which framed working-class speech as devalued and corrupted; and (3) comparative hierarchisation

that positioned Italian dialects alongside subjugated languages within the British Empire, reinforcing imperial ideologies.

This study ultimately demonstrates how travel literature not only documented but actively participated in constructing language attitudes that both reflected and reinforced social hierarchies during periods of instability across the European continent.

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Letizia Vezzosi
University of Florence

THE APOCALYPSE ACCORDING TO TIMES: SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM THE BRITISH LIBRARY *HARLEY MS 874*

One of the most seminal texts of the Middle Ages is the *Apocalypse of John* (also known as the *Book of Revelation*), which serves as an essential and appropriate final statement of holy scripture. It is a prophecy of the Last Judgment and the appearance of the New Jerusalem (Bynum & Freedman, 2000). The genre of 'apocalypses' produced other writings, excluded from the canon of the Bible but still highly influential, such as the *Apocalypse of Paul* (*Visio Pauli*) and the *Apocalypses of Peter* and *Thomas*. Numerous commentaries on these texts flourished from the first centuries A.D., reaching their peak in the Middle Ages.

Indeed, the *Apocalypse of John*, more than other biblical texts, was frequently accompanied by interpretations, both in Latin and in the vernacular. These interpretations were initially aimed at explaining its complex language and challenging imagery in relation to other biblical texts. As a result, they became significant indicators of, on the one hand, the theological and spiritual beliefs or didactic intentions of the commentators, and on the other, the changing attitudes of readers or audiences towards the text (Morgan, 2012; Ross, 2006).

Late medieval England was no different from the rest of Europe in terms of the pervasiveness of apocalyptic texts and the influence of apocalyptic themes. Notably, the *Revelation* was widely transmitted as an independent text, primarily in Latin (26 manuscripts) and Anglo-French (19 manuscripts), with six manuscripts featuring either bilingual (Latin and Anglo-French) versions or Latin versions with Anglo-French glosses. The first copies in Middle English did not appear until the mid-fourteenth century, with the most significant work being the so-called *Wycliffe translation*. This translation significantly and originally diverged from the Anglo-Norman model, aiming to make the text more accessible to the people it was intended for. However, Wycliffe's work was preceded by earlier attempts, among which British Library Harley MS 874 stands out as the oldest Middle English version of the Anglo-Norman text of the *Apocalypse* (Pitts & Furnish, 2006).

This paper focuses on the linguistic and rhetorical strategies that diverge from the original text, highlighting the translation practices employed in terms of syntactic, lexical, and morphological choices. Special attention is devoted to the emergence of new expressions, including new compounds, and new words which turn out to be firstly used in the Harley 874 *Revelation*. Although the translation adheres closely to the Anglo-Norman version, it demonstrates interesting and strategic attempts to adapt the text not only to the target language but also to the audience and cultural context in which it would be received. The new words, both neologisms and borrowings, and the new strategies can be seen as adaptations essential to preserve the educational power of the apocalyptic images evoked by the *Apocalypse*.

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