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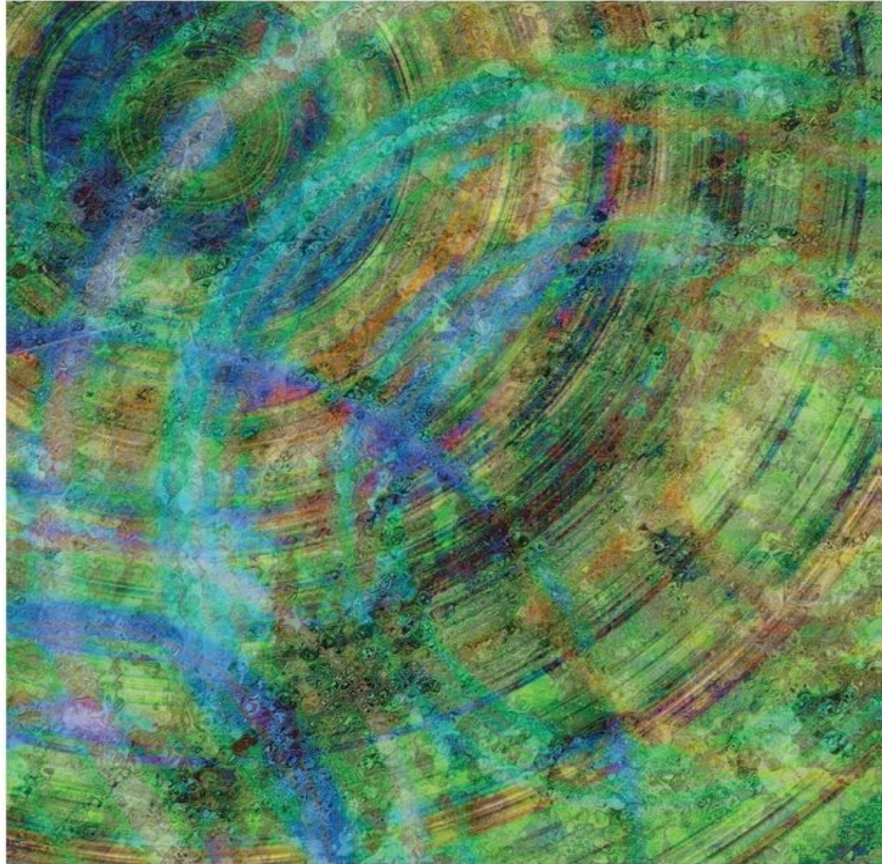
The Handbook of English Pronunciation



Edited by

Marnie Reed and John M. Levis

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Introduction

The Handbook of English Pronunciation is a collection of 28 chapters with various approaches to English pronunciation. As we have worked on the Handbook, we have been strongly aware that we could have doubled the number of chapters and still not fully done justice to the overall topic. The Handbook is intended for applied linguists and for teachers, for those who are experts and for those who are not. In applied linguistics, a growing number of researchers are examining pronunciation and its relationship to areas such as speech intelligibility, language testing, speech recognition and text-to-speech, pragmatics, and social factors impacting language acquisition. Indeed, researchers in any area of applied linguistics increasingly find the need to take phonetic and phonological form into account. They may not be experts in pronunciation, yet still they find a need to understand the forms and meanings of English pronunciation and they need to know where to find further information when they need it. Beyond directly practical chapters, many authors of more research-oriented chapters have added implications of research for teaching.

The handbook is also written for teachers who need immediately practical chapters about the place of pronunciation in their classrooms. They also need a wider context for how English pronunciation is structured, why it is so varied, and how it changes depending on discourse context. This means that the handbook includes chapters that are important in understanding the role of pronunciation in language description and analysis, and chapters that are more obviously relevant to teachers. A single book that tries to meet the needs of both groups is a challenge, but it is also necessary for a field with growing interest both for the classroom and for research.

The handbook is necessary because pronunciation is a topic that will not go away. Pronunciation influences all research into, and teaching of, spoken language, which must take account of how English is pronounced to account for what happens elsewhere in spoken language. Discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociocultural analyses of language, English as an international language, reading, acquisition, and ultimate attainment, all must reckon with pronunciation as an important variable. Those primarily interested in other areas may not be experts in pronunciation, yet still find a need to understand the forms and meanings of

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English pronunciation and where to find further information when they need it. Not only is pronunciation important in relation to other areas of language but it is important in its own right.

A knowledge of English pronunciation is also valuable by itself as an area of study. Even though a native-like accent is impossible for most adult L2 learners, pronunciation remains the gateway to spoken intelligibility for second language learners because of its close ties to social meanings within language. It also helps distinguish dialects, formal and informal registers of speech, and is influential in distinguishing social standing within speech networks.

In English language teaching, pronunciation is today on the ascendancy. As a subject area for language teaching, it plummeted from being central to falling into disfavor in the 1960s and 1970s when research confronted teachers with the uncomfortable fact that it was impossible, or at least extraordinarily unlikely, for second language learners to achieve a native-like accent. Additionally, the rise of communicative language teaching and its emphasis on fluency was a poor fit for the 1960s accuracy-oriented exercises of pronunciation teaching. As a result, pronunciation was often ignored in the classroom, with the hope that it would somehow take care of itself if teachers worked on helping learners achieve communicative competence.

Unfortunately, this hope was overly optimistic. Pronunciation did not take care of itself. The two choices of "we need to have native-like pronunciation" versus "it's not worth working on this if we can't be native" have been increasingly shown by research and practice to be a false dichotomy. Hinofotis and Bailey (1981) were among the first to argue that pronunciation played a kind of gate-keeping function in speech, in that speakers who had not achieved a threshold level of pronunciation adequacy in the second language would not, and could not, be adequate communicators no matter how good their fluency, listening, grammar, and vocabulary. The resurrection of the notion of intelligibility (Abercrombie 1949) as both a more reasonable and more realistic goal for pronunciation achievement began with Smith and Nelson's (1985) examination of intelligibility among World Englishes. Their classificatory scheme of intelligibility was mirrored in many ways by research done by James Flege, and Murray Munro and Tracey Derwing (1995) and has had a tremendous effect not only on research into pronunciation learning but also in the way it is approached in the classroom (see Levis 2005).

Even though teachers throughout the world recognize the importance of pronunciation, they have repeatedly reported feeling inadequate in addressing this area of language teaching (Burgess and Spencer 2000; Breitkreutz, Derwing, and Rossiter 2002; Macdonald 2002). As a result of their confusion and lack of confidence, most simply do not address pronunciation. While a full solution to this lack of confidence would require many changes in professional preparation both for teachers and applied linguistics researchers, a reliable, easily available source of information that reflects current knowledge of the field is one important step.

Throughout this Handbook, we learn how an understanding of English pronunciation is essential for any applied linguist or language teacher, from understanding the historical and often unusual development of English pronunciation over 1000 years, to descriptions of the diversity of Englishes and their

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pronunciations in the world today, to the ways that features of English pronunciation are best described, to pronunciation's role in the construction and the analysis of discourse, to patterns of first and second language acquisition, and to the social attitudes connected to differences in accent. Even this wide range of topics is too narrow. English pronunciation carries social meanings and is subject to social judgments, it reflects pragmatic meanings, it is intimately connected to the expression of information structure, and it is essential to speech recognition and text-to-speech technology. Pronunciation cannot be ignored.

The structure of the Handbook includes six general areas: History, Description, Discourse, Varieties, Acquisition, and Teaching. The first area tells us of the history of English pronunciation. English has a very interesting history of its pronunciation, going back more than 1000 years. Jeremy Smith provides a long view of how English has changed, looking at residualisms in varieties of English and focusing especially on three major changes: the phonemicization of voiced fricatives, the effect of Breaking on vowel changes, and the Great Vowel Shift. Each of these remains important in today's Englishes, showing that history is not just the past but influences today's Englishes as well. In the second chapter in this section, Lynda Mugglestone examines the social meanings of accent from the eighteenth century until today. The rise of Received Pronunciation (RP) as a marker of education and class both included and excluded speakers from the social power structure and reinforced social class barriers as RP spread throughout the power structure of Great Britain. The chapter is a fascinating look at how important "talking proper" (Mugglestone 2007) was and how even now the values associated with accent remain powerful. Finally, John Murphy and Amanda Baker look at the history of pronunciation teaching from 1850 till now. They identify four overlapping waves of practice, with a fifth wave perhaps in its early stages. Their meticulously researched history of pronunciation teaching will provide a framework for researchers and will help teachers understand where pedagogical approaches originated.

The second section of the Handbook is the bread and butter of pronunciation, the description of the structural units that make up the widely varying elements of the system. David Deterding provides a look at the segmentals of English, focusing his attention on the consonant and vowel sounds. Adam Brown looks at what happens to those segmentals when they are combined into syllables and how certain patterns are well formed and others are not. His discussion of phonotactics is important for anyone looking at acquisition since well-formed structures in English syllables are not always well formed in other languages. Anne Cutler looks at the ever-important but often misunderstood topic of lexical stress. An expert in how English speakers perceive stress and the signals they attend to, Cutler argues that the prosodic and segmental features of lexical stress are redundant and that listeners primarily attend to segmental cues. Ee Ling Low describes English rhythm from a cross-variety standpoint. She looks at how assumptions of stress-timed rhythm are and are not justified and what recent research on rhythmic variation in different varieties of world Englishes tells us about English rhythm and its place in pronunciation teaching. John M. Levis and Anne Wichmann look at the significant uses of pitch to communicate meaning in their chapter on

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intonation. Intonation in English is one of the oldest topics to be addressed from an applied viewpoint, yet it remains one of the topics where the gap between modern linguistic descriptions and applied linguistic work is widest. Levis and Wichmann describe newer approaches and the ways in which intonation communicates meaning.

The next section looks at research into how pronunciation behaves at the discourse level. Most research still is done at the sound, word, and sentence level, but discourse affects pronunciation in special ways that are important for both researchers and teachers. Ghinwa Alameen and John M. Levis provide an overview of a much-neglected topic in research, Connected Speech Processes. Comprised of topics such as linking, epenthesis, deletion, reduction, and combinations of these processes, the pronunciation of words in discourse often is dramatically different from citation forms. Anne Wichmann looks at the functions played by English intonation in discourse, looking at the examples of *please*-requests, information structure, interaction management, and attitudinal meaning. Beatrice Szczepek Reed examines the behavior of prosody in discourse, especially the role of speech rhythm in managing interaction. Many aspects of communication are not tied to single phonological features but rather clusters of features. Finally, Ron Thomson looks at the meta-category of fluency and its relationship to pronunciation. Often thought to be directly related to some aspects of pronunciation, fluency is instead indirectly related to pronunciation but remains a topic that may be important for teaching.

The next section looks at the pronunciation of varieties of English. Initially, we hoped that the writers here would describe their varieties in terms of the international phonetic alphabet, believing that such a description would serve to highlight comparisons. Unfortunately, this proved to be much more difficult than we thought. Different traditions seem strongly entrenched in different areas of the English-speaking world, and each makes sense within its own native environment. Wells' (1982) use of key words, e.g., the *GOAT* vowel) often served as a unifying descriptive apparatus. As a result, each chapter has its own idiosyncrasies, but each is also very accessible. Each may require, however, greater familiarity with the IPA chart, especially to the different vowel symbols not often seen in descriptions of English. In addition, each general variety, such as Australian/ New Zealand English, refers to a wide variety of regional and social dialects. Within the page limits, we asked authors not to focus on similarities within dialects, but rather to talk about socially significant pronunciations. The result is a catalogue of the richness of each variety.

Charles Boberg describes the pronunciation of North American English. A Canadian, Boberg is particularly well qualified to describe both Canadian and US pronunciations and to make sure that the dominance of US pronunciation does not overshadow the importance of Canadian English. Laurie Bauer (from New Zealand) provides the same kind of balance to the description of Australian/New Zealand English, demonstrating how the differences in the varieties were influenced by their earliest settlement patterns and differing immigration patterns. Clive Upton provides an abundant description of modern-day British English

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pronunciation, including not only traditional RP but the geographic and social variety that defines English pronunciation in Great Britain and Ireland. Looking at South African English (the only variety seemingly without an -ing/-in' variation), Ian Bekker and Bertus Van Rooy describe fascinating L1 and L2 varieties of English and their connection to South Africa's social and historical development. As interesting and important as the native varieties of English are, nativized varieties of English have their own pronunciation patterns. Pramod Pandey's description of Indian English looks at perhaps the best described and most influential of these new Englishes. Like native varieties, Indian English has its own abundant regional and social variation. Finally, Cecil Nelson and Seong-Yoon Kang look at pronunciation through a World Englishes lens, giving a historical overview of a World Englishes view of English, and especially the role of pronunciation. In doing so, they demonstrate clear differences in approach between World Englishes approach and that of English as a Lingua Franca.

The next section is brief with only two chapters. It addresses the acquisitional issues for English pronunciation. Marilyn Vihman gives a state-of-the-art review of how English pronunciation is acquired by children as an L1. For those used to reading about L2 learning, this chapter will be eye-opening. For L2 pronunciation, Pavel Trofimovich, Sara Kennedy, and Jennifer Foote overview the important variables affecting L2 pronunciation development and provide questions for further research. The long-running debate about the differences between L1 and L2 acquisition has, by and large, not been strongly held for pronunciation learning. These two chapters should serve to show how distinct the two processes are.

The final section of the Handbook is the most directly relevant to teaching. In it, most papers address, explicitly or implicitly, questions of priorities and questions of students' cognitive engagement with pronunciation learning. Given limited time, which elements of pronunciation are most important and how should such decisions be made? Murray Munro and Tracey Derwing bring their considerable expertise to bear on how research insights into intelligibility can influence the teaching of pronunciation with an examination of current practice. Beth Zielinski looks at another issue in teaching, the long-running segmental/supra-segmental debate. The debate centers on the question of which is more important in the classroom, especially in situations where there is little time available for pronunciation teaching. Zielinski argues that the underlying assumption of the debate, that it is possible to separate segmentals and supra-segmentals, is faulty, and that both are essential. Graeme Couper brings a multidisciplinary approach to classroom research to bear on questions of teaching. He looks at what second language acquisition, social theories of learning, L2 speech research, and Cognitive Linguistics say in developing an approach to L2 pronunciation learning that is not defined primarily by what is currently done in the classroom.

In the next chapter, Robin Walker and Wafa Zoghbor describe an influential and sometime controversial approach to teaching English pronunciation, that of English as a Lingua Franca. This approach is based on Jenkins (2000) in which two NNSs of English are in communication with each other (an overwhelmingly common occurrence in the world today) and what kinds of pronunciation features are required for

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them to be mutually intelligible. The approach was developed by Walker (2010) and is quite distinct from those pursued in most ESL and EFL contexts. In Intonation in Research and Practice: The Importance of Metacognition, Marnie Reed and Christian Michaud look at teaching intonation from a new perspective, that of metacognition. Intonation, even when it is taught, tends to focus on production, but the authors identify a difficulty with this approach. Students may successfully produce intonation in the classroom without understanding its communicative importance. As a result, they are unlikely to ever make what they have produced part of their own speech. Laura Sicola and Isabelle Darcy examine one of the most challenging yet recommended approaches to teaching pronunciation, the integration of pronunciation with other language skills. Wayne Dickerson, in the next chapter, argues for the importance of prediction in teaching pronunciation. Dickerson argues that predictive skills must be as important as perceptive and productive skills, and that predictive skills have a particular strength in empowering learners in pronunciation learning. Finally, Rebecca Hincks addresses technology, an area that is sure to grow and become even more influential in teaching pronunciation. She explains how speech technology works and explores how technology can be used to help learn pronunciation without and with automatic feedback, how it can evaluate pronunciation, and how it can provide automated speaking practice.

Single-volume handbooks are popular as reference sources. They offer a focused treatment on specialized topics that have a variety of interrelated topics that teachers and researchers are likely to understand inadequately. In an increasingly specialized profession, most teachers and researchers understand a few applied linguistics topics well, but there are many other topics with which they have only a passing acquaintance. English pronunciation is more likely than most topics to fit into the second category.

In summary, this *Handbook of English Pronunciation* is meant to provide:

- a historical understanding of the development of English pronunciation, the social role of accent, and the ways in which pronunciation has been taught over time;
- a description of some of the major varieties of English pronunciation and the social significance of pronunciation variants in those varieties;
- a description of the elements of English pronunciation, from sounds to syllables to word stress to rhythm to intonation;
- an examination of how discourse affects the pronunciation of segments and the meanings of supra-segmental features, as well as a discussion of pronunciation's connection to fluency;
- a discussion of how English pronunciation is acquired both in first and second language contexts and the variables affecting acquisition; and
- a selection of chapters that help to frame essential issues about how teaching pronunciation is connected to research and to the spread of technology.

One of the best things about editing this handbook has been learning that many of the things that we thought we knew were mistaken. Our authors come from

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many countries and most of the continents, and many of them we had not had the pleasure of working with before starting this project. It is clear that brilliant work on English pronunciation is being done by extraordinarily talented and interesting researchers and teachers throughout the world. By bringing them together in one volume, we hope that you, the readers, will find many new and provocative ways to think about English pronunciation, and that you will find the handbook to be as interesting as we have in putting it together.

Marnie Reed and John M. Levis

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Part I The History of English Pronunciation

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1 The Historical Evolution of English Pronunciation

JEREMY SMITH

Introduction

Since at least the nineteenth century, the study of sound-change has been at the heart of English historical linguistics and our current state of knowledge depends on the insights of generations of scholars. This chapter aims simply to give a broad outline of the current "state of the art", confronting basic questions of historical explanation. What does it mean to "account for" or "explain" a sound-change? How far can sound-changes be "explained"? How does one practise English historical phonology?

It is held here that historical phonology is as much history as phonology, and this insight means that evidential questions need to be addressed throughout. To that end, evidential questions are addressed from the outset. The chapter proceeds through the examination of a series of case studies from the history of English, ranging from the period when English emerged from the other Germanic dialects to become a distinct language to residualisms found in present-day varieties.

Overall, the chapter invites readers to reflect on their own practice as students of historical phonology; the explanations offered are, it is held here, plausible ones but by no means closed to argument. Good historiographical practice – for academic disciplines are of course collective endeavours – demands that such explanations should always be contested, and if readers can come up with better, more plausible explanations for the points made here, that is a wholly positive development, indicating new ways forward for the subject.

A question of evidence

Present-Day English is full of phonological variation; this variation, which is the outcome of complex and dynamic interactions across time and space, is valuable evidence for past states of English. To illustrate this point, we might take

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the varying British English pronunciations of the words (a) *good*, (b) *food*, and (c) *flood*: a Scot will commonly rhyme (a) and (b); speakers from northern England typically rhyme (a) and (c); southern British English speakers rhyme none of them. Another example: southern British English speakers have a phonemic distinction between /ŋ/ and /n/ in, for example, *sing*, *sin*; northern English speakers do not, since they retain a final plosive in *sing* and for them [ŋ] is environmentally conditioned (and thus an allophone of, and not a distinct phoneme from, /n/). Many speakers of Scots, the traditional dialect and accent of Scotland, as well as speakers from north-east England, will pronounce the vowels in words such as *cow*, *now*, *house* with a close rounded back monophthong rather than (as southern speakers do) with a diphthong (see further Wells 1982).

Those learning to read, or non-native speakers, might reasonably expect, in a supposedly *phonographic* language such as English, that words ending in the same three letters, viz. *–ood*, in the written mode, should rhyme when read aloud, but, as we have just observed, in many accents of English they do not. The reason for the variation, and for the mismatch between spelling and sound, is that sound-changes have occurred since the spelling-system of English was established and standardized, and that these sound-changes have *diffused* differently through the lexicon in different parts of the English-speaking continuum. Some changes have only been adopted in some varieties.[1]

The outcome of such patterns of divergence and diffusion is a body of *residualisms*, i.e., older forms of the language that remain in some accents but have ceased to be used in others (see Ogura 1987, 1990; Wang 1969; Wells 1982). The Scots/north-eastern English monophthongal pronunciations, for instance, of *cow*, *now*, *house* reflect the monophthongal pronunciation that seems to have existed in English a thousand years ago, cf. Old English *cū*, *nū*, *hūs* respectively. These pronunciations are therefore residualisms.

Residualisms are one of the major sources of evidence for the *reconstruction* of past states of pronunciation. We might illustrate the process of reconstruction using residualisms by comparing the British, Australian, and US pronunciations of the word *atom*; British and Australian speakers pronounce the medial consonant as /t/ whereas US speakers characteristically use a voiced alveolar tap, meaning that in US English the word *atom* is a homophone with *Adam*. It is usual to consider the US pronunciation to be an innovation, whereas the other usages are residualisms, the evidence for this interpretation being that US speakers characteristically voice intervocalic sounds in derived forms, cf. US English intervocalic /d/ (however precisely realized) in *hitter* beside final /t/ in *hit*, beside /t/ in both environments in British and Australian usage. Such reconstructive processes are, of course, the basis of comparative linguistics.

However, deciding what is a residualism and what is not can be a difficult matter without further information. To take a large-scale example: the phenomenon known as Grimm's law (the "First Consonant Shift"), whereby a series of consonants in the Germanic languages seem to have undergone a comprehensive redistribution within the lexicon, is traditionally described as a Germanic innovation. Illustrative examples are given in Table 1.1.

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Table 1.1 Grimm's law cognates in Germanic and non-Germanic languages.

	Germanic examples	*Non-Germanic examples*
/f/ - /p/	English *fish*, Norwegian *fisk*	Latin *piscis*, French *poisson*, Welsh *pysg*
/θ/ - /t/	English *three*, Icelandic *þrír*	Latin *trēs*, French *trois*
/h/ - /k/	English *hound*, German *Hund*	Latin *canis*, Welsh *ci*, Tocharian *ku*

However, some scholars, arguing that a similar process is also found in Armenian, like Germanic a "peripheral" language within the Indo-European group but at the eastern as opposed to the western end of that language-family's extent, have argued that Grimm's law represents a residualism rather than an innovation. This so-called *"glottalic" theory* is highly controversial, but that it has found purchase with at least some scholars indicates the nature of the problem (see Smith 2007: ch. 4).

The study of residualisms as evidence for the history of pronunciation, therefore, is – where possible – combined by researchers with other sources of evidence: sound-recordings, available since the end of the nineteenth century; contemporary comments on past pronunciation; past spelling-practices, given the mapping between speech and writing found in phonographic languages; and the practices of poets, in terms of rhyme, alliteration, and metre. Taken together, these various pieces of evidence allow scholars to develop plausible – though never, of course, absolutely proven – accounts of past accents, and sometimes even to offer plausible explanations for how particular accentual features emerged. A series of case studies follows, with special reference to the history of English, to illustrate the process of developing such plausible accounts and explanations.

Case study 1

Voiced and voiceless fricatives: development of new phonemic categories

The first of these case studies deals with the Present-Day English phonemic distinction between voiced and voiceless fricatives, a distinction that has emerged during the history of English and is reflected – albeit sporadically and unevenly – in Present-Day English spelling. The example also allows us to ask a certain key, and surprisingly neglected, question: what is a sound-change?

One such distinction, which often puzzles present-day learners of English, is to do with the pronunciation of the word *house*; when used as a verb, the word ends with /z/ but, when used as a noun, it ends with /s/. The usual historical explanation is as follows: in Old English, voiceless [s] and voiced [z] were allophones of the same phoneme, conventionally represented by /s/, and therefore in *complementary distribution* within the sound-system. It seems that /s/ was pronounced

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voiced intervocalically, but voiceless when a word-final. The Old English word for "house" (noun) was *hūs*, while the Old English word for "house" (verb) was *hūsian*; when, in the transition from Old to Early Modern English, inflectional endings such as *–ian* were reduced and ultimately lost, a voiced sound emerged in final position in words such as "house" (verb), leading to the current pattern for the sound's deployment. Since "house" (noun) and "house" (verb) now have distinct meanings marked by replacement of single word-final segments, the two words have come to form a *minimal pair* for the purposes of phonological analysis, and the phonemes /s, z/, now in *contrastive distribution*, may thus be distinguished.

Of course, the evidence we have for the initial complementary distribution can only be deduced; direct evidence, in the form of contemporary commentary or distinctive spellings from Old English times, is almost entirely lacking and the distribution of forms means that poetic evidence is not to be had. The issue is one of plausibility, in that the process of *phonemicization* just described aligns with known developments elsewhere in the linguistic system, notably inflectional loss.

Spelling evidence for sound change is really only available on a large scale from the Middle English period. Middle English is notoriously the period in the history of English when there is a closer alignment between spelling and pronunciation than before or since. Written English had a parochial rather than national function, used for initial or otherwise restricted literacy, while – following Continental practice – unchanging, invariant Latin was deployed as the language of record across time and space. Thus it made some sense to reflect English phonological variation in the written mode, since that made teaching reading easier. Only when English, towards the end of the medieval period, took on the role of a language of record did variation become inconvenient. The *standardization* of written English was a formal response to a change in linguistic function. That English spelling could remain fixed while pronunciation changed was first discussed by Charles Butler in his *English Grammar* (1633), who saw the development as regrettable and thus needing reform (Dobson 1968: 165), but the socially useful functionality, for record-keeping purposes, of a fixed spelling-system, despite a phonographic mismatch between spelling and widely attested pronunciations, has meant that comprehensive spelling-reform in English has never succeeded.

It is therefore possible – at least sometimes – to see reflections of sound-change in changes in spelling. As with the [s]/[z] distinction, Old English made no phonological distinction, it seems, between voiced and voiceless labio-dental fricatives and as a result the spelling <f> was used to reflect both, e.g., *fela* "many", *hlāf* "loaf" (both with [f]), but *yfel* "evil" (with medial [v]). A phonological distinction seems to have emerged in the Middle English period largely as a result of the adoption of loan-words from French, e.g., *fine*, *vine*, and this distinction became sufficiently salient for a spelling-distinction, between <f> and <v>, to be adopted and even extended to native words, such as *evil*. The <f>/<v> distinction first emerged in Middle English and has been sustained ever since.

However, it is noticeable that even in Middle English conditions such developments do not always follow. Distinctions between other voiced and voiceless

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fricatives, i.e., the alveolars /s, z/ (as we have just seen) and the dentals /θ, ð/, also emerged, but the spelling-evidence for such developments is uncertain. The letter <z> remains marginal in Present-Day English spelling, used in the initial position only in exotic words such as *zoo*, *zebra* and even replaced by other letters altogether in *xylophone*, *xerox*; in medial and final positions it is also in some sense "optional", cf. the variation between *criticise*, *criticize*, or the fact that the word *ooze* is a homophone with the river-name *Ouse*. For Shakespeare, <z> was an "unnecessary letter" (*King Lear* II.2) and in Middle English <z> is witnessed only sporadically. It is noticeable that the only texts to use <z> consistently in the initial position are Middle Kentish ones, such as the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, surviving in a manuscript localized to Canterbury in 1340, where a consistent distinction is made between, for example, *zom* (from Old English *sum* "a certain") and *som* (from Old French *sum* "a sum (of money, etc)". Initial voicing of fricatives seems to have survived in Kentish until the end of the nineteenth century though is now recessive (see Smith 2000 and references there cited).

Similarly marginal is the distinction in voiced and voiceless dentals. Present-Day English deploys <th> for both /θ/ and /ð/, except in specialist vocabulary such as *sandhi* or in forms made up for literary effect by philologists, such as the name *Caradhras* in J.R.R.Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*; in both cases <dh> represents the voiced fricative sound. The reason for this limited reflection of a phonological distinction seems to be that there is only a limited set of minimal pairs, e.g., *thy*, *thigh*, and *that*, and at least in the initial position, the voiced dental fricative is restricted to "grammar words" such as *the*, *that*, *this*, *those*, *these*, *there*, *though*, or in certain pronouns such as *they*, *them*, *their*. In Middle and Early Modern English texts, there is some evidence that some scribes deployed <þ> – sometimes written in a manner indistinguishable from <y> – only in such words (e.g., the common use of <ye> for "the"). Such practice may reflect a sound-distinction, but equally plausibly it could be argued that it is simply a space-saving device, whereby a form largely predictable from context could be represented in abbreviated fashion (the custom of abbreviating forms such as "the" or "that" as <ye> or <yt>, with superscript second letters, would support the latter interpretation).

The key point, of course, is that there is no necessary connection between what a medieval or renaissance scholar would have called the *figura* (written manifestation of a *littera* "letter") with a particular *potestas* (sound-equivalent) (see Abercrombie 1949). To demonstrate this point, we might take, for instance, spellings of the words "shall", "should", common in the Middle English of Norfolk, viz. *xal*, *xuld*. In such cases, it is notoriously hard to establish the potestas of <x>. Is <x> in such words simply a local spelling for [ʃ] or does it represent a distinct sound? Its restriction to the words "shall", "should" (until the very end of the Middle English period, when it is sporadically transferred to words such as *xuldres* "shoulders") would suggest the latter, but there is no certainty as to the precise potestas to be assigned to it.

Support for a voiced/voiceless distinction in the fricatives, at least for the alveolar and dental sets, is suggested rather than proven by the spelling-evidence, and

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other information is needed if we wish to establish the phonemicization in the history of English pronunciation. Unfortunately, there is no meaningful discussion of English pronunciation until the sixteenth century, when English became a respectable subject for intellectual study rather than simply a "vulgar" tongue; however, the evidence from then on becomes full. John Wallis's *Grammar of the English Language* (1653), for instance, noted the distinction between what he called "hard *s*" and "soft *s*", in which the latter was pronounced "per *z*" in *a house*, *to house* respectively (Kemp 1972: 178–179), and Wallis regretted the failure in English spelling to distinguish voiced and voiceless dental fricatives, which he regarded as "an unfortunate practice" (Kemp 1972: 176–177). Wallis states that the Welsh use <dd> for the voiced sound "though some maintain that *dh* would be a better way of writing it than *dd*; however they have not succeeded in getting the old established custom altered" (Kemp 1972: 177).

Interestingly, the labio-dental voiced/voiceless distinctions are not discussed to the same extent, possibly because the spelling-distinction was already accepted by early modern times. The spelling *hlīuade* for the third-person preterite singular of *hlīfian* "stand tall, tower" appears in the late tenth century *Beowulf Manuscript* (MS London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xv, *Beowulf* line 1799), beside the more common *hlīfade*. The spelling with <u> is usually taken as the earliest instance of an attempt to reflect a voiced–voiceless distinction in English spelling.

A good working definition of sound-change might be as follows:

> *Sound-change is a phenomenon whereby speakers adjust their phonologies, or sound-systems. The raw material for sound-change always exists, in the continually created variation of natural speech, but sound-change only happens when a particular variable is selected in place of another as part of systemic regulation. Such processes of selection take place when distinct systems interact with each other through linguistic contact, typically through social upheavals such as invasion, urbanization, revolution, or immigration.*

However, two issues become fairly clear from the discussion so far. Firstly, as the form *hlīuade* and the current restricted distribution of the voiced and voiceless dental fricatives suggest, sound-change is what might be termed an *emergent* phenomenon. That is, sound-changes are not sudden affairs but typically diffuse through time and space in a *"sigmoid-curve" pattern*, working their way through the lexicon. Diachronic discussion is not a matter of aligning a series of synchronic descriptions of phonological inventories at given points in time, i.e., a series of "maps". It is a different kind of discourse (for the notion and importance of emergence, see especially the essays in Bybee and Hopper 2001).

Secondly, it is clear that, although almost all scholars accept a general narrative about the history of voiced and voiceless fricatives in the history of English, the evidence is indicative rather than conclusive. Potestates map on to figurae, but in complex ways, and without access to recorded sound from any period before the end of the nineteenth century it is not possible to offer any final, demonstrable proof of the structure of past sound-systems. The argument, as so often in historical study, is based on the *plausible interpretation* of fragmentary indicators.

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Digraphs and diphthongs

The previous section focused on what is arguably the major phonological development in the history of English sounds: the emergence of a whole distinct category of phonemes. Changes in English vowels are more widespread, but making evidence a starting-point can also be most illuminating.

As with consonantal change, that potestates map on to figurae in complex ways can be illustrated with reference to the history of English vowels, and a Present-Day English example makes the point. In most modern accents, words with <ee> and <ea> commonly rhyme, e.g., *meet*, *meat*, although there are of course numerous exceptions, e.g., *greet*, *great*, and some alternative rhyming patterns, commonly, where the vowel is followed by /r/, e.g., *pear*, *pair* rather than *pear*, *peer* (although cf. the non-rhyming *fear*, *fair*), or by a dental or alveolar consonant, e.g., *breath* (rhyming with the personal name *Seth*) and *dead* (rhyming with *bed*). In some varieties, particularly conservative ones, what are clearly older patterns survive residually, e.g., in some accents of Irish English *meat* rhymes with *mate* rather than *meet*. The current complex distribution of <ea> spellings in relation to sound-systems is the result, as we might expect from the discussion so far, of sound-changes diffusing incompletely and irregularly across the lexicon subsequent to the standardization of the writing system.

It might be expected, in periods before the writing system became standardized, that the relationship between figurae and potestates might be closer, i.e., the language-variety in question would be more completely *phonographic*. However, despite a tradition of research of more than a century, very basic problems in the interpretation of vowel-potestates remain contested by scholars.

Anglo-Saxonists, for instance, still debate the existence of basic phenomena such as the nature of the diphthongal system and the interpretation of the spellings <ea, eo, ie>. Questions asked, still not conclusively answered, include:

1. Do these spellings really represent diphthongs?
2. Are they to be seen as equivalent to long monophthongs, i.e., VV?
3. How far are (as conventional wisdom holds) the "short diphthongs" <ea, eo, ie> to be seen as metrically equivalent to short vowels, i.e., V (vowels with which, historically, they tend to merge)?
4. How are the individual elements within these diphthongs (if that is what they are) to be pronounced?

These questions form a major conundrum in the study of Old English phonology.

Almost all scholars accept the existence in the West Saxon dialect of Old English of the long diphthongs spelt <ea, eo>, which represent the reflexes of Germanic diphthongs as well as the products of certain sound-changes. These diphthongs were "bimoric", i.e., VV in terms of *metrical weight*, and thus equivalent to long monophthongs, sounds with which historically they tended to merge. The problem arises with the so-called "short diphthongs", which were not the reflexes of Germanic diphthongs but arose as the result of sound-changes such as breaking or

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"palatal diphthongization", and have been believed by many scholars to be monomoric, i.e., V, and thus equivalent in metrical weight to a short monophthong. Richard Hogg sums up this view as follows: "… the traditional position holds that <ea, eo, io> always represented diphthongs both long and short except where the orthographic evidence suggests otherwise or the linguistic development is implausible …" (1992: 17). The key problem is, as David White has pointed out (2004: *passim*), that such short diphthongs are vanishingly rare in world languages, and indeed not found in living languages at all; their presence in standard descriptions is the outcome in all cases of scholarly reconstruction.[2]

One argument offered originally by Marjorie Daunt (1939, 1952) and reiterated by White (2004) is that spellings such as <ea, eo>, when representing the "short diphthongs", include a diacritic element, flagging the quality of the following consonant. Certainly it is generally accepted that such diacritic usages occur in Old English, e.g., spellings such *sēcean* "seek" (beside more common *sēcan*), or *geong* "young" (which would have yielded Present-Day English **yeng* if <eo> in this word had represented one of the presumed "short diphthongs"). It could therefore be argued that <ea, eo> in words such as *eald* "old", *earn* "eagle", *weorpan* "throw", *eolh* "elk" represent /æ/ or /e/ followed by a "back (i.e., velarized) consonant"; <eo> in *heofon* "heaven" would be an attempt to represent /e/ "colored" by the back vowel in the unstressed syllable. Daunt pointed out that digraphs of various kinds were deployed by Old Irish scribes to flag the quality of neighboring consonants, and Old Irish scribal practice strongly influenced Old English usage.

However, there are problems with this analysis. Minimal pairs arose in West Saxon, subsequent to the operation of the sound-change that produced <ea> in *eald*, *earn*, etc., which seem to indicate that <ea> was perceived in West Saxon as distinct in quality from <æ>, e.g., *ærn* "house" beside *earn* "eagle"; despite suggestions to the contrary (e.g., White 2004: 80), it seems likely that, in the conditions of vernacular literacy obtaining in West Saxon, this difference indicates a real distinction in pronunciation. If there were no difference in pronunciation we would expect variation in spelling between **æld* and *eald* in West Saxon, and such a variation does not occur.

Although some languages (e.g., Scottish Gaelic) have a three-way length distinction, viz. V, VV, VVV (see Laver 1994: 442), it seems unlikely that Old English had the same system, with the short diphthongs to be interpreted as bimoric (VV) and the long diphthongs as trimoric (VVV). The "long diphthongs" of OE derive in historical terms from bimoric (VV) Proto-West Germanic diphthongs, and there does not seem to be any good reason to posit a lengthening, especially as, in later stages of the language, they tend to merge with long monophthongs (VV).

Perhaps the most economical explanation would be to see the "short diphthongs" as consisting of a short vowel followed by a so-called glide vowel, i.e., Vv in the environment of a following back consonant. Daunt herself argued that "there was probably a glide between the front vowel and the following consonant" (Hogg 1992: 18–19, and see references there cited). The distinction between monophthongs plus glides and diphthongs is a tricky one, but recent

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experimental work on Spanish suggests that a robust distinction is possible (see Hualde and Prieto 2002). The spelling <ie> is used in Early West Saxon to represent the outcome of further sound-changes that affected <ea, eo>, and it therefore seems logical – if the Daunt/White interpretation is accepted – to assume that it, too, represents a diphthong, probably of the same kind (i.e., full vowel plus hiatus vowel).

Establishing the sound-equivalent (potestas) of a particular spelling (figura) is one thing: proceeding to explain the conditions under which a particular potestas emerged is another, and here we are on even more tenuous ground at such an early date in the history of English. The Old English spelling <ea> in *eald*, *earn*, etc., is a product of the sound-change known as "*Breaking*", usually defined as a diphthongization in the environment of a following "back" (i.e., velar) consonant. Whether <ea> is to be interpreted as a diphthong or not is, as we have just seen, a complex question, but all scholars agree that the consonants <l, r>, etc., are "back" in terms of the Old English system. The question is, though, when did they *become* back consonants to induce the change?

One plausible possibility is that the precise realization of <l> in the Old English dialects manifesting breaking had undergone a change as the result of contact with other varieties, a change in consonantal realization that had a knock-on effect on the pronunciation of the preceding vowel. It is thus relevant to refer back to consonantal change when accounting for the evolution of vowels, flagging the dynamic interconnectedness of sound-changes. Breaking is the first sound-change that can be clearly located in Anglo-Saxon England after the so-called *Adventus Saxonum* ("the coming of the Saxons"), the period of transition between Romano-Celtic Britain and Anglo-Saxon England; earlier sound-changes, e.g. "*First Fronting*" (sometimes known as "Anglo-Frisian Brightening"), date from the period when the Angles and Saxons were still on the Continent of Europe. It thus developed, in West Saxon, at a time when Saxons were coming into contact with Angles in a condition of confused and complex social ties.

There is some evidence that, in Old Anglian, /l/ and /r/ were back consonants. Old Anglian was in origin the variety furthest north within the West Germanic-speaking area, being spoken in the area immediately abutting the most southern varieties of North Germanic, and the continual interchange between North and West Germanic, often commented on by linguists (see for instance Haugen 1976: *passim*), would clearly have impacted most upon it. Many of these southern varieties even now have a "dark /l/", often referred to as "thick" or "cacuminal" /l/. It could therefore be argued that, when Anglian and Saxon varieties came into contact with each other as a result of the Adventus Saxonum, Saxons attempted to reproduce Anglian usage in situations of language contact; a "dark" form of /l/ would result. That Saxons would have imitated Anglians rather than vice versa is suggested by the evidence – admittedly somewhat tenuous – that Anglians dominated the early Anglo-Saxon polity: after all, the name "England" derives from "Angle", and the name "Saxony" is applied to an area of present-day Germany (see further Smith 2007: ch 4, and references there cited).

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The Great Vowel Shift

In the previous section, the explanation offered for change was in some sense sociolinguistic, but there were limits to such an approach, derived, quite simply, from the comparative paucity of evidence. The best that can be hoped for from such explanations is plausibility linked to certain arguments to do with similarities between past and present. In this section, greater evidence allows us to make such arguments more convincingly.

Such explanations as that just offered for the origins of Breaking, as the result of language contact in situations where one group might be considered more prestigious than another, may be tenuous, but they gain traction from the observable fact that such situations are observable in present-day language. As William Labov famously argued in what may be considered a foundational statement of the subdiscipline of *historical sociolinguistics*, the present can be used to explain the past (Labov 1974). Since the so-called "*uniformitarian hypothesis*", accepted by linguists, holds that speakers in the past – like us – reflected their social structure in language (see, for example, Romaine 1982 and Machan 2003), it seems unarguable that the social setting of language-use in early times had an effect on linguistic development, specifically sound-change. The tenuousness of the explanation relates to the difficulty not of the principle but of our limited understanding of the precise social circumstances that obtained at the time.

It is therefore arguable that the more information we have about social structure the higher degree of plausibility there is about explaining a given sound-change. Thus a later change, such as the *Great Vowel Shift* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a process of raisings and diphthongizations that distinguishes the phonologies of Late Middle English period from those of the Early Modern English period and that may be described as a redistribution of sounds within the lexicon, can be explained fairly convincingly as the outcome of interaction between social groups in conditions of increasing urbanization.[3]

The origins of the Great Vowel Shift have, notoriously, been regarded by many scholars as "mysterious" (Pinker 1994: 250), an adjective that would seem to close down discussion. However, an interest in the Shift's origins has persisted, particularly amongst scholars whose work engages with sociolinguistic concerns.

It is noticeable that the Shift took place at a key moment of transition in the history of English, when English ceased to be a language of comparatively low status in comparison with Latin and French and began to take on national roles, i.e., it underwent a process that Einar Haugen has referred to as *elaboration* (Haugen 1966; cf. also Hudson 1980: 32–34, and references there cited). The elaboration of English meant that prestigious varieties of that language began to emerge. The story of the Southern Great Vowel Shift relates, I have argued, intimately to that emergence. It seems that the Southern Shift derives from sociolinguistically-driven interaction in late medieval/early Tudor London, whereby socially mobile immigrant groups *hyperadapted* their accents in the direction of usages that they perceived as more prestigious. Such a process can be paralleled

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in modern situations, whereby linguistic innovation is located in the usage of those who are weakly tied to their social surroundings (see Milroy 1992).

The origins of the Southern Shift correspond in date to four major – and, I would argue, linked – developments in the external and internal history of the English language. These developments are as follows:

a. *The rise of a standardized form of English.* At the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, it is possible to detect, in the written mode and to a lesser extent in speech, the emergence of focused forms of language that are the precursors of Present-Day "standard" varieties.
b. *The growth of London.* The end of the Middle Ages and the beginnings of the Tudor period saw the increasing significance of London as England's major administrative and trading centre. From the fourteenth century onwards there was a major influx of immigration into the capital from the countryside as folk sought to improve their condition in the city. This is the age of the quasi-mythical figure of Dick Whittington, who moved to London, where the streets were (it was said) paved with gold, to make his fortune. The result was that London became, according to contemporaries, the only English city comparable in size and importance to continental centers such as Paris, Venice, and Rome (see, for a convenient account, Ackroyd 2002, and references there cited). London society, which (as nowadays) attracted incomers from elsewhere eager to take advantage of the opportunities it had to offer, may be characterized as one with *weak social ties* in comparison with those which obtained in the much more stable, less dynamic village society that existed elsewhere in England.
c. *The loss of final –e*. The Shift corresponds in date to a grammatical development of considerable prosodic significance: the development of what is essentially the Present-Day English grammatical system with *the loss of inflectional –e*. Final *–e* was still in use in adjectival inflections in Chaucer's time, as established (*inter alia*) by the poet's verse practices, but the generations that followed Chaucer, from the end of the fourteenth century onwards, no longer recognized the form. The loss of *–e* had major implications for the pronunciation of English, whose core vocabulary became, to a large extent, monosyllabic in comparison with other major European languages.
d. *Phonemicization of vowels affected by Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening in those accents where these vowels did not undergo merger.* This development was a consequence of the loss of final *–e*. There is good evidence, from contemporary rhyming practice in verse, that the comparatively prestigious form of speech represented by that of Geoffrey Chaucer distinguished carefully between the reflex of Old English *e* and *o*, which had undergone a quantitative change known as *Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening* and the reflex of Old English *ēa*, *ǣ*; with the loss of final *–e*, this distinction became phonemicized in Chaucer's (more properly, Chaucer's descendants') variety and thus perceptually salient. However, in other varieties outside London, Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening-affected *e*, *o* merged with the reflexes of Old English *ēa*, *ǣ*, and *ā* >Q̄ respectively. These two systems may be characterized as System I and System II respectively.

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With the rise of London and the perception of there being a prestigious form of speech that coincided with it, users of System II, whose social situation may be characterized as weakly tied, came into contact with users of System I. System I speakers distinguished phonemically between Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening-affected *e* and *o* and the reflexes of Old English *ēa*, *ǣ*, and *ā* > Ǭ, whereas System II speakers did not. Moreover, it seems likely that System I speakers, with a habit of pronouncing much of their stylistically marked vocabulary in a "French" way – see (a) – would have distinct ways of pronouncing mid-close *ē* and *ō*; there is some evidence that French *ē* and *ō* were realized as somewhat higher in phonological space than the reflexes of English *ē* and *ō*, and adoption of French-influenced usages would have been encouraged by the presence of the extra phoneme, derived from Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening, in both front and back series of long vowels. R.B. Le Page has suggested that the aristocracy of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were likely "to adopt affected forms of speech as a means of 'role-distancing' from the lower classes, from whom they had hitherto been differentiated by speaking French" (cited in Samuels 1972: 145–146). Further, if the raised "French" style pronunciations of *ē* and *ō* were adopted by System I speakers, it seems likely that diphthongal pronunciations of the close vowels *ī* and *ū*, which are attested variants within the phonological space of close vowels in accents with phonemic length, would have been favored by them, viz. [ɪi, ʊu], in order to preserve distinctiveness. Such a development would mean that a four-height system of monophthongal long vowels would be sustained, with Middle English /iː/ being reflected as a diphthong, albeit one with a comparatively close first element.[4]

We would expect in such circumstances that hyperadaptations would follow, and this is the basis of the argument for the origins of the Shift offered here. System II speakers, who may be characterized as weakly tied, socially aspirant incomers, encountered System I speakers whose social situation they wished to emulate. The process, it might be plausibly argued, would have worked somewhat as follows. System II speakers would have heard System I speakers using what they would have perceived as a mid-close vowel in words where they would use a mid-open vowel. Since final *–e* had been lost there would not be a grammatical rule to identify when such vowels should be used, and System II speakers, who formed the rising class of late medieval and early Tudor London, would replace their mid-open vowels (whether derived from Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening-affected *e*, *o* or from Old English *ēa*, *ǣ*, and *ā* > Ǭ) with mid-close ones. There would be phonological space for them to do so since they were also attempting to imitate the socially salient raised allophones of System I speakers' "French" style raised /eː, oː/. Since these latter pronunciations were themselves not in the inventory of System II speakers, it seems likely that such pronunciations were perceived as members of the phonemes /iː, uː/ and would be reproduced as such (on hyperadaptation, see Smith 2007, and references there cited, especially Ohala 1993).

Of the remaining developments in the Shift, diphthongization of front vowels would derive from attempts by System II speakers to imitate System I speakers' [ɪi, ʊu] allophones of /iː, uː/. Such selections would be encouraged by the need to

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retain perceptual distance from the "French" style raised /e:, o:/, hyperadapted by System II speakers as /i:, u:/. As I have suggested elsewhere, the later development whereby Middle English /a:/ > /ɛ:/ probably derives from a distinct, sociolinguistically-driven process. Middle English phonemic /a:/ was comparatively new in most Southern English accents, being derived largely from Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening-affected /a/. The main accent in the South-East where phonemic /a:/ had existed beforehand was the Essex dialect, which seems to have been the "old London" usage characteristic of low-prestige speakers in the area. A raised pronunciation of Middle English /a:/, probably as [æ:], would have been another way of marking social distinction, which System I speakers would have been keen to make. System II speakers, attempting to replace their own realizations of /a:/ with System I's [æ:], would have tended again to overshoot, identifying the System I [æ:] pronunciation with the next phoneme in their own series, viz. /e:/.

The outcome of all the developments just described was the distribution of vowels attested by the best writers on pronunciation in the sixteenth century. The developments just argued for, incidentally, also illustrate how sound-change is a processual, emergent phenomenon, not something that suddenly appears in saltatory fashion, as might sometimes appear to be the case from handbook accounts.

Explaining sound-change

We might now move to central issues raised by the case studies discussed. Historical explanations, such as those just provided for Breaking and the Great Vowel Shift, are necessarily exercises in plausible argumentation, and a plausible argument is not absolutely proven. In historical subjects, absolute proof is not to be had. The question, therefore, is: how can we assess the success of an historical explanation?

As I have argued elsewhere (Smith 2007), certain historical approaches, e.g., postmodernism, have emphasized the "observer"s paradox", the way in which the frame of reference of the investigator constrains the enquiry. However, as I have suggested, the observer's paradox should not be seen as disabling, but rather it places certain ethical requirements on historians: to be self-critical, to be open to other interpretations of events, and (above all) to be humble. Historians are (or should be) aware that their work is in no sense a last word on a topic but simply part of a continuing discussion in which their views may eventually come to be displaced. Explanations of sound change, like all historical explanations, are successful if they meet certain criteria of plausibility. As April McMahon has put it, "we may have to accept a … definition of explanation at a … commonsense level: explanation might … constitute 'relief from puzzlement about some phenomenon'" (1994: 45, and references there cited).

In assessing the plausibility of the accounts of the Shift just offered, it is perhaps a good idea to return to the notion of the uniformitarian principle, a notion that underpins what is probably the most fruitful current development in the study of

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the subject, viz. historical sociolinguistics (see further Millar 2012 and references there cited), and a renewed focus on what has been called the "linguistics of speech". Such a *parole-* (as opposed to *langue*)-based approach to linguistic investigation is informed by the close analysis of large bodies of data, both from the present-day and from the past, harnessing insights about the "dynamic" nature language derived from complexity science (for which see most importantly Kretzschmar 2009). The linking of present-day and past circumstances – as flagged by Labov back in 1974 – is crucial; if sound-changes in present-day circumstances take place because of certain social conditions, and if the phonetic processes that obtain in those circumstances (i.e., hyperadaptation) may be observed, then it seems at least plausible that similar processes governed sound-changes in the past. The study of past sound-changes, therefore, is a project that must be linked closely to an understanding of the dynamic and complex processes of social history. In so doing, we may be "relieved from puzzlement" – which is, in English historical linguistics, probably as good as it gets.[5]

NOTES

1 In a phonographic language there is, broadly speaking, a mapping between grapheme and phoneme. A *logographic* language, by contrast, is one where the mapping is between grapheme and notion. Written versions of Western European languages are largely phonographic; written Chinese is logographic. The difference may be illustrated by the symbols used for numbers; "8" is a logograph, corresponding to the written/spoken usages *eight* (in English), *huit* (in French), *otto* (in Italian), *acht* (in German), or indeed the spoken usages *bā* (Mandarin Chinese), *takwas* (Hausa), *siddeed* (Somali), or *walu* (Fijian). There are advantages to logographic languages; German speakers may not be able to understand Fijian speakers when they write in their native languages, but both Germans and Fijians will be able to understand each other's mathematical symbols. Famously, Cantonese and Mandarin are not mutually intelligible when spoken, but since the writing-system commonly deployed in varieties of Chinese is in principle logographic it is possible for users of these varieties to understand each others' writings. Logographic systems are problematized by their use of a very large number of symbols, and they are thus a challenge to the memorizing powers of those learning to read and write, but it is undeniable that they are useful as a language of record and transaction – which is why they emerged in Imperial China.

2 Richard Hogg was of course aware of the difficulty, although – appropriately in a handbook – he tended to the conventional view, and his qualification is therefore carefully expressed. A fuller quotation reads: "… the traditional position holds that <ea, eo, io> always represented diphthongs both long and short *except where the orthographic evidence suggests otherwise or the linguistic development is implausible* …" (1992: 17; my italics).

3 Five-height systems of monophthongal phonemes are attested in the world's languages, but are rare; three- and four-height systems are much more common (see Maddieson 1984: *passim*).

4 As well as a "full" Shift affecting both the long front and long back vowels of Middle English, characteristic of southern varieties, there was also a distinct Shift, affecting

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primarily long front vowels, which is found in Northern accents. The discussion in this chapter focuses on the "full" or Southern Shift; for a discussion of both in much more detail, see Smith 2007: ch. 6, and references there cited. It is argued that the triggering of the "Northern" Shift was the result, like the Southern Shift, of socially-driven linguistic choices (i.e., it was a sociolinguistic phenomenon), whose outset related to earlier shifts in the back series of long vowels consequent on interaction with Norse.

5 For a similar attempt to use the present to explain the past, but with reference to a much more archaic set of sound-changes, see Jane Stuart-Smith's discussion of the processes involved in ancient Italic accents (2004).

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2 Accent as a Social Symbol

LYNDA MUGGLESTONE

Introduction

For Samuel Johnson, drafting his *Dictionary* in the late 1740s, *accent* was already densely polysemous. It could denote patterns of intonation and the prominence given to certain syllables in pronunciation; *antique*, he noted, "was formerly pronounced according to the English analogy, with the accent on the first syllable; but now after the French, with the accent on the last" [my emphases]. By poetic license, *accent* could also signify language or words *per se*. "How many ages hence | Shall this our lofty scene be acted o'er, | In states unborn, and accents yet unknown", states Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in an illustrative citation that Johnson included under this sense. In more general terms, *accent*, as Johnson confirms, could indicate "the manner of speaking or pronouncing, with regard either to force or elegance". Supporting evidence from Shakespeare already, however, suggests its potential for qualitative discrimination in this respect, as in the "plain accent" used to describe the forthright speech of Oswald the steward in *King Lear* or Rosalind's "finer" accent in *As You Like It*: "Your accent is something finer than you could purchase in so removed a dwelling." As Puttenham had indicated in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), reference models for speech are not to be located in the "ill shapen soundes" of craftsmen or carters or, he adds, "others of the inferiour sort". Even at this point, preference was given to other localized norms, centered on London and surrounding counties within about 40 miles and, in particular, as typified in the usage of educated and courtly speakers –"men ciuill [civil] and graciously behauoured and bred", as Puttenham affirmed.

As Johnson's entry for *accent* suggests, certain meanings are nevertheless prominent only by their absence. Only in the nineteenth century would *accent*, by a process of synecdoche, come to signify the presence of regional marking in speech *per se* – so that one might, or indeed might not, in the idioms of English, "have an accent". "She has a bad figure, she moves ungracefully, perhaps speaks with an accent", an 1865 citation under *accent* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) confirms.

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The original definition of *accent* in *OED1*, written in 1884 by the phonetician Alexander Ellis, was telling: "This utterance consists mainly in a prevailing quality of tone, or in a peculiar alteration of pitch, but may include mispronunciation of vowels and consonants, misplacing of stress, and misinflection of a sentence. The locality of a speaker is generally clearly marked by this kind of accent." Illustrative uses include "he has a strong provincial accent" or "an indisputably Irish, Scotch, American … accent".[1] Citational evidence added in the *OED Supplement* (1972), here taken from H.G. Wells's novel *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham* (1930), confirmed the further consolidation of these ideas. "Underbred contradictory people with accents and most preposterous views", wrote Wells, providing an unambiguous correlation between "underbreeding" and "accented" speech. *Underbred*: "Of inferior breeding or upbringing; wanting in polish or refinement; vulgar", the *OED* explains. *Accent*, in Wells's novel, is made to signal the presence of localized marking alongside assumptions that only those lower in the social spectrum will – or should – possess geographical signifiers of this kind. Other evidence added to the *Supplement* (now deleted from *OED3*) made the sociocultural consequences particularly clear: "1956 D. Abercrombie *Prob. & Princ.* iv. 42: *Accent* … is a word which, in its popular use, carries a stigma: speaking *without* an accent is considered preferable to speaking *with* an accent …. The popular, pejorative, use of the word begs an important question by its assumption that an accent is something which is added to, or in some other way distorts, an accepted norm."

The location – both social and linguistic – of Abercrombie's "accepted norm" is equally significant. If "speaking with an accent" had, for Wells, revealed "underbreeding", the opposite end of the social spectrum lay, as White noted in *Words and Their Uses* (1881), in "that tone of voice which indicates breeding". Laden with sociosymbolic values rather different in kind, this form of pronunciation revealed little or nothing of the place of origin of those who used it – whether with reference to what came to be known as "Received Pronunciation" (RP) in Britain, or in the relative homogenization of General American in the United States (see Lippi-Green 1997). As in Abercrombie's analysis, such speakers, in "popular use", were regarded as being able to speak "without an accent" at all. George Bernard Shaw's phonetically-orientated take on the Pygmalion myth in 1914 provides an apt illustration of the sociolinguistic dynamics that can result. Here, the Cockney flower-seller Eliza Doolittle must lose one accent – the geographically marked properties of lower-status London which will, Shaw states, "keep her in the gutter to the end of her days". Courtesy of intensive phonetic re-education, she instead gains another – an "accentless" RP by which, irrespective of social reality, she will pass for a Duchess at the ambassador's garden party. Unlike Cockney, which betokened Eliza's origins – social and regional – in highly specific ways, RP was supra-local, used by speakers "all over the country" as Ellis (1869) had specified, in a speech community characterized by its social meaning as well as its highly restricted membership. As the elocutionist Benjamin Smart (1836) had commented, here with specific reference to accent: "the common standard dialect" is that in which "all marks of a particular place of birth and residence are lost, and nothing appears to indicate any others habits of intercourse than with the well-bred or well-informed, wherever

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they may be found." Conversely, it should be remembered that the speech of Northumbrian witnesses, testifying in London in 1861 at the Commission on Mines, was deemed to require an interpreter (Pittock 1997: 118).

While the "received" in other aspects of language practice habitually reflects issues of communality and consensus (see, for example, the early injunction in Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall* (1604) "to speak as is commonly receiued"), the history of received pronunciation, and its ideologized values, is instead therefore often bound together with the uncommon or nonrepresentative – the language of the privileged few rather than the accented many. The rise of RP as the prime reference accent can, in this light, seem striking. Examining a range of framing discourses such as education, literature, and the mass media, this chapter will explore the changing role and representation of accent, both localized and supra-local, in the history of English. The patterns of endorsement and emulation which are evident in terms of an emergent RP in, say, the eighteenth-century elocution movement or in the prominence of the supra-local in in the training of announcers on the early BBC (Mugglestone 2008) can, for example, stand in recent years alongside evidence of attitudinal resistance, whether in broadcasting or in the accents one might choose to adopt or shed. Here, too, lexical and semantic shifts provide interesting evidence of change. *Mockney*, a recent entry in *OED3* records, is: "An accent and form of speech affected (esp. by a middle-class speaker) in imitation of cockney or of the speech of Londoners; (generally) *mockney accent*". As in accounts of the British Chancellor George Osborne's attempts at linguistic downshifting (in which traditionally stigmatized features are seen as prominent),[2] a twenty-first century version of *Pygmalion* might well tell a very different story. "People sneered at the chancellor's new mockney accent – but it did make him look more human," wrote Victorian Coren in *The Observer* in April 2013.

Acts of transformation: the eighteenth-century context

Samuel Johnson, it might be noted, steadfastly retained his Staffordshire accent to the end of his days. This, he declared in 1776, was "the purest English". Such patterns of local, and linguistic, allegiance offer a useful corrective to habitual readings by which Johnson is often assumed to be single-handedly standardizing the English of his day.[3] Yet attitudes to Johnson, and his speech, can in fact usefully illuminate a changing consciousness of accent and pronunciation during this period. David Garrick, the famous actor and theatre-manager, who came to London from Lichfield with Johnson in 1735, followed a very different linguistic trajectory. Some eight years younger than Johnson, it is thanks to Garrick's mockery of Johnson's regional marking (a form of speech that Garrick swiftly shed) that we know, for instance, of Johnson's lengthened Staffordshire vowels in words such as *punch*. Rather than commendations of Johnson's accent loyalty, it was perceptions of his "dreadful voice and manner" on which the wife of James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury (and author of *Hermes*) likewise comments in April 1775.[4] Even James

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Boswell's *Life of Johnson* drew attention to Johnson's "uncouth" tones on their first meeting in 1762 (Pottle 2004: 260): "he speaks with a most uncouth voice", Boswell wrote in the intended privacy of his *London Journal*. Of interest too is the diary of Hester Thrale, a close friend of Johnson, who in 1778 decided to award him a score of zero (out of twenty) for "Person and Voice".[5]

The fact that Thrale decided to initiate an evaluative exercise of this kind among her friends is, of course, also significant in this context. Earlier eighteenth-century comment on differences of speech had been decidedly liberal: "A Country Squire … having the Provincial Accent upon his Tongue, which is neither a Fault, not in his Power to remedy", Swift had written, for instance, in 1709. "I do not suppose both these Ways of Pronunciation to be equally proper; but both are used … among Persons of Education and Learning in different parts of the Nation", stated Isaac Watts with similar unconcern (1721: 102). If spelling continued to vary, especially in private use, it clearly also possessed a nationally distributed form; the same was true of the diffusion of a supra-regional grammar. Yet for pronunciation, placed outside the consensus norms of printed texts, there was no public national mode of articulation. The localized, of necessity, remained the norm even if certain modes of pronunciation (e.g., the south-western marking of Somersetshire in Britain) were stereotypically disfavored (see Blank 1996).

The assimilation of accent into regulative discourses of standards and standardization is nevertheless increasingly apparent at this time. Readings of the localized – in the light of what is increasingly promulgated as a supra-regional ideal – can assume strongly negative associations. Boswell himself provides a useful case history. If Boswell is usually remembered in terms of his formative relationship with Johnson, it was in fact Thomas Sheridan, the actor and elocutionist, who was, as Boswell acknowledged, his "Socrates" and mentor. Sheridan's lectures on elocution – emphasizing, in relation to localized language habits, the importance of a wide-ranging shift in attitudes and practice alike – had prompted Boswell's immediate enrolment as Sheridan's private student. "How can consciousness be awoken without information?", Sheridan had declared (1762: 37): "no man can amend a fault of which he is not conscious; and consciousness cannot exert itself when barred up by habit or vanity". Boswell proved a most receptive pupil. "Consciousness" led to repeated anxieties about accent, identity, and regional marking. "Mrs. Miller's abominable Glasgow tongue excruciated me", Boswell wrote in his *London Journal* on March 17, 1762 (Pottle 2004: 221). "Habit" was countered by intentionally corrective "information". Under Sheridan's instruction, Boswell strove to eradicate all traces ("faults") of his Scottish origins from his voice. Similar anxieties later led to an assiduous monitoring of his daughter's speech. If Johnson credited Staffordshire with the "purest English", Boswell did not agree.[6]

In Sheridan's rhetoric, images of "received" speech hence exist alongside a determined inculcation of ideas about what should not be "received" at all. Hitherto, he noted (1762: 37), "many provincials have grown old in the capital, without making any change in their original dialect" (a comment it is tempting to read in the light of Johnson's regionalized speech). In contradistinction, the

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regional, for Sheridan, is a firm "mark of disgrace". Placed in the tropes of the "sick" language (an "infection" for which a "cure" is necessary, as Sheridan makes plain), localized speech patterns are framed by the diction of "defect" and "deviation". The accent proposed as the regulative ideal is rather different – not only in its features but also in the perceptual social and cultural values it is made to suggest. It is "a proof that one has kept good company," writes Sheridan, "sought after by all, who wish to be considered as fashionable people, or members of the beau monde" (1762: 30). It is, for Sheridan, an indubitable marker of status or social symbol: "Surely every gentleman will think it worth while to take some pains, to get rid of such evident marks of rusticity," he declares.

Sheridan's "received" speech is both socially and geographically restricted. Prototypically characterizing upper-status speakers in London, it has, as he continues, hitherto "only [been] acquired by conversing with people in polite life". Perry (1775) makes a similar point, selecting "the present practice of polite speakers in London" as his intentionally regulative norm. Nevertheless, as a range of writers indicate, a new democratization of access (and of speech) might henceforth be facilitated through education, elocution, and the national power of print. As Sheridan (1762: 30–31) explained:

> The difficulties to those who endeavour to cure themselves of a provincial or vicious pronunciation are chiefly three. 1st, The want of knowing exactly where the fault lies. 2ndly, Want of method in removing it, and of due application. 3dly, Want of consciousness of their defects in this point.

As we will see, all three were, in a variety of ways, to be provided as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries advanced. Whereas Johnson's *Dictionary* had merely marked the position of word stress, Sheridan's *Dictionary* (1780) had rather different aims. "One main object … is to establish a plain and permanent standard of pronunciation," the title-page proclaims. Sheridan's work expounds with striking specificity this shift in "consciousness", together with the determined positioning of accent within schema of social meaning. It is nevertheless important to see this as part of a wider process. Buchanan's *Linguae Britannicae vera Pronunciatio* (1757) was, for example, already starting to explore the provision of an "accurate Pronunciation", which native speakers as well as foreigners might acquire by means of lexicography. By 1766, Buchanan had published *An Essay towards Establishing a Standard for an Elegant and Uniform Pronunciation of the English Language … as practiced by the Most Elegant and Polite speakers.* Kenrick's *New Dictionary* (1773) likewise promised full information on "Pronunciation … according to the present practice of polished speakers in the Metropolis". Perry in 1775 made a similar claim. The commodification of accent was also enhanced by the rise of elocution as an industry in a period of marked social change. As an object of desire, the "right accent", characterized by "elegance" rather than "provinciality", might also be acquired, as in Sheridan's teaching of Boswell, or the private lessons offered by a range of other elocutionists across the country (see Benzie 1972).

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Pronouncing dictionaries, and other works dedicated to the spoken voice, were disseminated both nationally and internationally,[7] providing an increasingly detailed and prescriptive reference model. This was /h/-full, possessing the velar nasal /ŋ/ rather than /in/ or /iŋg/ in words such as *hopping*, /hw/ rather than /w/ in words such as *which,* using the FOOT-STRUT split, as well as an emergent BATH-TRAP divide. As the elocutionist John Walker (1791: xiii) explained with reference to individual accent modification and the acquisition of "proper pronunciation" (in this instance, the regulative patterning of [v]/ [w]), pronouncing dictionaries were ideally made part of a process of active change:

> Let the pupil select from a dictionary, not only all the words that begin with *v*, but as many as he can of those that have this letter in any other part. Let him be told to bite his under lip while he is sounding the *v* in those words, and to practice this every day till he pronounces the *v* properly at first sight: then, and not till then, let him pursue the same method with the *w*; which he must be directed to pronounce by a putting out of the lips without suffering them to touch the teeth.

Educating accents

"I let other folks talk. I've laid by now, and gev up to the young uns. Ask them as have been to school at Tarley; they've learnt pernouncing; that's come up since my day," comments Mr. Macey in George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861). As in the localized metathesis of *pernouncing*, Macey's speech is made to testify to an earlier educational age. Instruction across the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, instead increasingly included spoken alongside written language, with a calculated emphasis on the acquisition of supra-regional markers deemed "standard". "It ought to be, indispensably, the care of every teacher of English, not to suffer children to pronounce according to the dialect of that place of the country where they were born or reside, if it happens to be vicious," Buchanan stressed (1757: xli). The potential for social meaning in speech is made particularly explicit: "to avoid a provincial dialect, so unbecoming gentlemen, they are early instructed, while the organs of speech are still flexible, to pronounce properly", Buchanan persuasively declared. Accent, in private education of this kind, is made a telling object of desire.

"Method", as Sheridan had explained, was nevertheless vital. The acquisition of regulative (and supra-local) norms depended in part upon "opening a method, whereby all the children of these realms, whether male or female, may be instructed from the first rudiments, in … the art of reading and speaking with propriety and grace" (1762: 225). This process of acquisition was intended to displace existing practice in which habits of pronunciation "depend entirely upon the common mode of utterance in the several places of [children's] birth and education". Whether by personal tuition (as for Boswell), educational practice in schools and colleges, or conscious application by the motivated individual, the process – and desirability – of educating accents became a prominent topos. The new genre of the pronouncing

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dictionary, with its specification of reference models for accent as well as meaning, was presented as particularly useful. The dictionary "must soon be adopted into use by all schools professing to teach English", wrote Sheridan (1762: 261), a precept also evidently taken on board in the emergent national education system in Britain (see Mugglestone 2007: ch.7). "Rp., received pronunciation", as Ellis specified, was "that of pronouncing dictionaries and educated people" (1889: 6).

From the point of view of applied linguistics, elocutionary manuals and educational texts provide considerable detail in this respect. Sheridan's *Elements of English* (1786), aimed at children from the earliest years, provides an obvious example. This sets out detailed guidance by which a "right pronunciation" is to be acquired – and a "wrong" one displaced. The basis of instruction is phonetic, with the order of instruction being first labials, then dentals, labio-dentals, and "palatines". Minimal pairs form the basis of exercises and transcriptions offer disambiguation where necessary, as in the recommended distribution of /ʌ/ or /ʊ/ (*cut*, *bull*) or /hw/ and /w/ (*which/witch*) according to supra-regional rather than localized patterns (see, for example, also the specification of rounded [ɒ] after [w] as in *want*, rather than localized [a]). Only favored variants are recorded.

Evidence of the implementation of instruction of this kind is particularly important. Poole's *The Village School Improved* (which had three editions 1813–1815) offers considerable detail of the ways in which, in Enmore in Somerset, children were encouraged to abandon "provincial" forms in favor of supra-local models. Reading aloud became an exercise in discrimination. "Even a coarse or provincial way of pronouncing a word, though sanctioned by the general practice of the district, is immediately noted by the teacher; and exposes the child … as much to the correction of those below him, and consequently to the loss of his place, as any other impropriety in reading would do" (Poole 1815: 40–41). The hierarchical ranking of the class is particularly telling, offering a microcosm of the kind of top-down models of convergence that contemporary works on elocution advocated. Local children, Poole admitted, have habitually "heard and spoken a broad provincial dialect". Learning "to pronounce with propriety" could be challenging: "The more remote the dialect of the [child's] country is from the propriety of the language, the greater is the embarrassment experienced … when he begins to be instructed according to the new and improved system" (1815: 41). Nevertheless, the benefits are presented as incalculable: "this embarrassment is merely temporary" but "permanent advantages are sure to follow", not least in the "intelligent, discriminating manner of reading" and "purity of pronunciation" that will, in the end, be acquired.

Teaching manuals from later in the century provide further evidence of the ways in which reference models of accent were incorporated within general educational practice and assessment. Morrison's *Manual of School Management*, which went through three editions (1859–1863), presents a useful example. Originally "designed for the use of students attending the Glasgow Free Church Training College", the manual sets out recommended methods of instruction on the basis of tried and tested methods. "Nothing has been set down which experience has not proved attainable," Morrison stresses (1863: iii). Exercises within

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individual chapters are given as aligned with the Committee of Council of Education "with the view of directing attention to the points considered important by the Inspectors of Schools". An extensive section details "the correct use of letters, the signs of sounds". For the teacher, "the first thing to be done is to analyze the language into its simple elementary sounds"; these again include contrastive medial vowels in *cut* and *bull*, *cat* and *cast*, as well as use of the velar nasal /ŋ/ in words such as *skipping*. As in Sheridan, minimal pairs are advised to enable facility in reading and speaking alike. A section headed "Correct Pronunciation" outlines the principles by which the teaching of reading includes not only comprehension but articulation in the prescribed way: "the first essential requisite in good reading is correct pronunciation" (1863: 125). This, Morrison (1863: 125) points out, is dependent on the teacher suppressing (a) his/ her own regional marking and (b) those of the children in his/her care:

> There is no security that the pupils acquire correct pronunciation, unless the teacher be able to give the example. Accordingly the teacher who is anxious to be in this, as in all things, a model, should strive during his preparatory training to acquire a thorough knowledge of English pronunciation. This can only be done by careful observation of good speakers, or, if need be, by a course of lessons with an accomplished and trustworthy teacher. Whenever the young teacher hears a good speaker pronounce a word differently from what he has been accustomed to, he ought to note it, and never rest satisfied until he has ascertained the correct pronunciation. He will be amazed at the benefit such a course will confer. (1863: 126)

While the teacher's acquisition of "correct orthoepy" is made central to teaching ability in this context, Sheridan's earlier emphasis on "method" is also clear. "The only effectual method by which [the teacher] can secure good pronunciation among his pupils, is to insist that they pronounce every word correctly," writes Morrison: "Constant correction … will alone accomplish the desired result." An educated accent is specified as one devoid of the "peculiarities of pronunciation" which characterize "various districts", whether in terms of "a constant tendency to shorten the long vowels" or "in others to lengthen the short ones", or in the presence other regionally marked features (1863: 126). The normative remit of the teacher is evident: "we advise the teacher, whenever he finds himself located in a particular parish, to observe carefully the prevalent peculiarities; and, when he has done so, vigorously to set himself to correct them among his pupils" (1863: 127). Education reveals, in essence, the firm institutionalization of an ideology in which pronunciation can be divided on standard/subordinate models.

Morrison's strictures are paralleled in a range of other teaching manuals, as well as in school inspectors' reports where articulation (and the absence of regional marking) is often presented as proof of educational success. Recitation – the reading out of a passage with "proper" elocution – was a popular aspect of assessment in which the presence of regional markers could be viewed as testimony not only to local identity but, as other educationalists admonished, as indicators of "Defective Intelligence" *per se*. It was in these terms that John Gill, one of

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the most influential writers of teaching manuals in this context (see Hole 2003) chose to orientate his discussion of features such as zero-realization of /h/ or the nonuse of /ʌ/ in *cut*. The classification of purely phonetic features under "Defective Intelligence" amply confirms the negative repercussions of applied language attitudes in educational practice of this kind.

Self-education presents a further domain in which attitudinal shifts to regionally marked speech, and the attempted inculcation of a supra-local model, is in evidence. Texts on pronunciation and elocution often recommended assiduous self-application. It is, however, specific evidence on individual receptiveness to such dictates that can be most illuminating. Prescriptive rhetoric provides merely one side of the story. A useful snapshot here is provided by Michael Faraday, the scientist (and famous lecturer) who began life as the son of a blacksmith in working-class London. It was in this context of self-improvement that Faraday's interest in language, and specifically pronunciation, began. By 1813, he had established, with other members of the local City Philosophical Society, a "mutual improvement plan" whereby some half a dozen friends met "to read together, correct, and improve each other's pronunciation" (see Mugglestone 2011). Five years later, this plan was extended by Faraday's decision to attend Benjamin Smart's lectures on elocution, from which Faraday's detailed notes, running to some 150 pages, remain in the Royal Institution archives in London.

Faraday noted, in full, Smart's maxim: "Always pronounce words according to the best usage of the time … defects or provincialities must be corrected by a dictionary for which purpose I would recommend Walker's or by reference to those who are already correct." Comments on "defective articulation", and its needful remedy, receive equal attention: "H is … the most subject to a corrupt pronunciation and therefore requiring our early attention," Faraday's notebook records; "The person should practice … lists of words beginning with H, then in mixed lists of words some beginning with H, and some with a vowel and lastly with the introduction of the words commencing with H mute." As Smart pointed out, lectures should be accompanied by active practice, not merely passive listening. "Man", Smart added (in another maxim noted down word for word), "is an improving animal … that man only is to be condemned and despised, who is *not* in a state of transition. We are by our nature progressive." Like Sheridan for Boswell, Smart was Faraday's phonetic mentor, in a connection that lasted until the 1850s.

Attitudes, accent, and popular culture

Popular culture also acts as a domain in which the information central to Sheridan's recommended shift in "consciousness" can come into play. The shifts in language practice attested by Boswell and Sheridan, for instance, testify to that process of enregisterment – a cultural awareness of a set of social meanings associated with specific varieties of speech as detailed by Agha (2003, 2005). Cockney, Scots, as well as speech varieties that participate in what Lippi-Green describes as "the myth of non-accent" (1997: 41) all exist, among other varieties, as enregistered

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forms across the nineteenth century – and, as Shaw's *Pygmalion* affirms, into the twentieth century too. Literary texts, and the conventions of representation they adopt, can reflect and foster perceptual meanings in this respect with ease.

As in the following extract from George Gissing's *Born in Exile* (1892), conventional orthographical patterning is placed in contrastive distribution with strategic patterns of respelling in the representation of direct speech. Text conventions of this kind rely on acts of reception by which unmodified spelling will, by implication, suggest the standard proprieties of "educated" speech. A social as well as linguistic divide is made to separate Godwin Peake, a student at Whitelaw College, and his uncle; here, a range of approximations denotes the urban vernacular of the London underclass that Godwin's Uncle Joey retains. The textual as well as social asymmetries in representation intentionally encode divisions of identity, education, and status. Yet, as Blake (Austin and Jones 2002: xvii) warns, "Any spelling which differs from th[e] standard may seem bizarre because it is strange; and what is bizarre may often seem ludicrous or comic." Visual disparities of form readily reinforce normative readings of one variety against what can be made to seem unambiguous infelicities and errors in another. Here, stigmatized features such as [Ø] for [h] in '*ow* (*how*), or [in] rather than [iŋ] (*caterin'* against *catering*) are signaled by the inserted apostrophe. As a graphemic marker, this engages with models of deficit rather than difference (indicating the absence of something that "should" be there). Other features (the absence of sandhi phenomena in *a openin'*, *a 'int*) are reinforced in intentionally negative readings by their co-occurrence with nonstandard grammar (e.g., *as* relative in "*give a 'int to the young gents as you might come*", alongside multiple negation). The use of socially disfavored lexical items is equally marked. *Gent*, as *OED1* specified in 1899, was "only *vulgar*, exc. as applied derisively to men of the vulgar and pretentious class who are supposed to use the word, and as used in tradesmen's notices".

> '*This* ain't no wye of caterin' for young gents at Collige!' he exclaimed. 'If there ain't a openin' 'ere, then I never see one. Godwin, bo-oy, 'ow much longer'll it be before you're out of you're time over there?'
>
> 'It's uncertain – I can't say.'
>
> 'But ain't it understood as you stay till you've passed the top standard, or whatever it's called?'
>
> 'I really haven't made up my mind what to do.'
>
> 'But you'll be studyin' 'ere for another twelve months, I dessay?'
>
> 'Why do you ask?'
>
> 'Why? cos s'posin' I got 'old o' this 'ere little shop, or another like it close by, me an' you might come to an understandin'—see? It might be worth your while to give a 'int to the young gents as you're in with—eh?'
>
> Godwin was endeavouring to masticate a piece of toast, but it turned to sawdust upon his palate.

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Even where pronunciation features are likely to be shared by speakers of different social identities (as in weak forms such as *of* in positions of low stress, or the patterning of ellipsis), they are typically allocated as "accented" and, by implication, "nonstandard" features. Such skewed patterns of representation heighten the assumed contrast between a "standard" – and unmarked – supralocal discourse, against other varieties that are marked, socially and regionally, in a range of ways (see also, for example, American novels and the contrastive marking of accents of the South). Textual patterning of this kind was, by the end of the nineteenth century, a widespread feature of canonical and noncanonical texts alike, appearing in popular journals, newspapers, and magazines, as well as novels.

Factual works can, in fact, be equally productive in the level of language consciousness that they reveal. Entries in the first edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (Stephen and Lee 1885–1891) present particularly useful examples, frequently drawing attention to accent as a salient property of identity. "So perfectly fitted was Ainley, both in looks and voice – from which the north country accent had gone during his training under Benson – that he became famous on the first night," we are informed of the actor Henry Ainley; "His short, stout appearance and strong northern Irish accent did not endear him to his contemporaries; Disraeli remarked 'What is that?' on first hearing Biggar speak in the house," the entry for the politician Joseph Biggar states. Entries for Frederick Alexander ("His cultured voice had no trace of regional accent") or Sir Francis Beaufort ("rejected by a school in Cheltenham on the ground that his Irish accent would corrupt the speech of the other boys") share an emphasis on pronunciation as a reference point for social identity. The fact that, in the relatively brief accounts provided, it was seen as important to confirm that William Huskisson had "a most vulgar uneducated accent" or the politician John Felden had a "strong provincial accent" likewise attests to the perceived salience of attitudes of this kind. The *DNB1* entry for the actor Hannah Brand, and the sense of unacceptability her regional accent elicited, is particularly interesting in the light of shifts in language ideology (and recommended changes in praxis) at this time: "Two years later, on 20 March 1794, Brand appeared at the York theatre, playing Lady Townly in Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Husband*. Her manager there, Tate Wilkinson, complained of her old-fashioned dress, provincial accent, conceit, and contradictory passions. All of these provoked the audience, and her performance "met with rude marks of disgustful behaviour".

The broadcast voice

Brand's castigation in terms of accent was intensified because of her prominent position upon the stage – an early model of a broadcast voice. Broadcasting in its modern sense is, of course, a much later phenomenon. In Britain the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) – originally the British Broadcasting Company – instituted national radio broadcasting in 1923. Its remit, as its Director General,

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John Reith, stressed, was that of public service broadcasting. Ameliorative and beneficial, it was to provide opportunities for access to high culture in what an article in *The Observer* on 18 July 1926 described as a "University of taste". Language was seen as another aspect of such remedial change: "Wireless … can do much to repair … one of the most conspicuous failures of elementary education in raising the quality of common speech." *The Observer* continued: "It could establish – in time – a standard voice analogous to the 'standard yard' and the 'standard pound"' ("Pronunciation Problems" 1926: 17). As Cecil Lewis, an early employee at the BBC, confirmed (1924), "it has often been remarked – and this is one of the responsibilities that are indeed heavy to carry – that the announcing voice sets a fashion in speaking to thousands of homes and should therefore be faultlessly accurate." The ideal, Lewis added, was that of "accentless" speech.

Reith was particularly engaged with the idea of broadcast English as a reference model. Elaborated in his *Broadcast over Britain* (1924), this led to increasingly stringent policies on the kind of accents deemed suitable for announcers. "We are daily establishing in the minds of the public the idea of what correct speech should be and this is an important responsibility," a BBC directive of 1925 specified. As for Sheridan, images of top-down convergence and the need for corresponding emulatory endeavor are marked. As *The Guardian* wrote in December 1932, the BBC's agenda seemed to be that of "levelling up" pronunciation. "You cannot raise social standards without raising speech standards," Arthur Lloyd James, responsible for the training of announcers on the early BBC, had declared. As *The Guardian* reported, "The case for such attempts to level up pronunciation, as put by Mr. Lloyd James, is that it is the business of State education to remove improper, or at any rate socially unpopular, forms of speech behaviour, because this is in practice an obstacle to getting on in the world."[8] If the BBC was, in this, responsive to pre-existing language attitudes, a clearly interventionist remit was also assumed, as Lloyd James (1927) indicates:

> For some reason a man is judged in this country by his language, with the result that there is, broadly speaking, a sort of English that is current among the educated and cultured classes all over the country. It has little local variations, but these are of no matter, and a man who has this sort of accent moves among the rest of his fellow country men without adverse criticism.
>
> This type of speech avoids the lapses of the uneducated and the affectation of the insufficiently educated at both ends of the social scale, and it is the duty of the BBC to provide this sort of speech as often as possible.

While regional speech appeared on local broadcasting, the early BBC effortlessly inculcated the sense of a supra-regional accent as one of its quintessential features, reinforced through accent training in which RP's hegemony was indubitable. That the same practices extended to Australia and Canada (Price 2008), where RP also came to dominate in news broadcasting and announcing, is still more striking.

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Belief and behavior: convergence and divergence

Received English, and the acts of reception that surround it, can nevertheless be more complex than the elocutionary rhetoric of Sheridan, Buchanan, or the early BBC can suggest. If responsibility is overtly assumed for the dissemination of one particular "standard" model through the "noble art of printing" by Sheridan or by direct transmission of particular accents (and their associative meanings) on the early BBC, the reality of language practice can, of course, continue to be conspicuously diverse. A supra-regional mode of speech (as Ellis already indicated in the late nineteenth century), RP spans a spectrum of related forms and emerging/obsolescent variants; yod-presence exists alongside yod-absence in words such as *suit* in Ellis's transcribed forms, just as monophthongal variants existed alongside diphthongs in words such as *mate*. Perry's ambition to fix a social model of speech has, in this respect, failed. In Britain, RP is today used by a minority – usually estimated at between 3 and 5% of the population (see, for example, Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt 2012).

Well over 90% of the population has, in these terms, maintained some degree of localized marking in their speech. Accent as a social symbol hence testifies to far more than the indices of the "well-bred", as stressed by Smart, or familiarity with "good company" as Sheridan proclaimed. Outside those accents promoted as "educated" stand, for example, the authority of vernacular culture, of accent loyalty, and of resistance to the ideological hegemonies in which one type of accent alone is favored and the others proscribed. Reactions to the early BBC, and the acts of speech standardization that it attempted to foster, are particularly useful in this context. The privileging of particular forms of speech on the airwaves was not necessarily without resistance. As *The Manchester Guardian* stressed in 1927, "In self-expression we are heretics all, proud of our dialects and our difference." Acknowledging that "the B.B.C. … has attempted to achieve a pact of pronunciation within these islands", it queried whether this could or should be made a shared norm for all. After all, here against the rhetoric of the "accentless", forms of this kind were profoundly "accented" when seen from, say, the perspective of speakers in the Midlands and the North. If RP was supra-regional in use, it remained distinctly southern in its patterning of words such as *fast* and *bath*, *cut* and *bull*. Attempted standardization, the writer continued, was "in many respects a surrender to the slovenly and drawling speech of the Southern English and will be promptly disregarded by all self-respecting speakers of the language" ("Speech control", 1927: 8). Normative readings of accent varieties are not always shared. Images of "disgrace", in Sheridan's terms, can be countered by those of pretension. As in Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), the question of who precisely "talks the right language" can already be made depending on where you are coming from: "'You're frightening them horses,' says he, in his mincing way (for Londoners are mostly all tongue-tied, and can't say their a's and i's properly)", as the Manchester-born John Barton is made to aver.

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"Is it wrong for a person to change their accent?", *The Observer* in April 2013 demanded. The social rhetoric it explored exposed the wide-ranging assumptions that have, since the eighteenth century, often informed popular writing on accent. Question of class, social, prejudice, and discrimination all surface in such debates. Since no one accent is inherently better, the arbitrariness of attributions of "disgrace" and "polish" is all too clear. Sheridan's intended democratization in terms of accent now firmly rests in the shared understanding of the perceptual nature of varieties, rather than in pressures for conformity to a top-down ideal. Prestige, too, in this light, is multidimensional. Covert and overt prestige do not pull in the same direction (see, for example, Watson 2006). Specified norms can be rejected; RP, rightly, has been displaced in Australian broadcasting (as well in other domains where national varieties of English now assume pride of place). Like other varieties once promoted as inviolably "correct" (see Lippi-Green 1997), RP is now understood as profoundly accented, not only in its phonological patterning but in the social meanings it has traditionally assumed. Even in news broadcasting on the BBC, it has largely lost its dominance, while transcription policies in *OED3* likewise reflect a commitment to varietal forms. The revised entries of the new *DNB* (Matthew, Harrison, and Goldman 2004) are likewise substantially different in emphasis and orientation. If the supra-local remains a model in language teaching, the hyperlectal features of U-RP (upper-class RP) are not advocated, while notions of the "received" can prompt evident unease. "Because of the dated – and to some people objectionable – social connotations, we shall not normally use the label RP (except consciously to refer to the upper-class speech of the twentieth century)," write Collins and Mees (2003: 3–4). Such shifts of social symbolism are interesting. Alongside the disfavoring of U-RP is, as Coupland and Bishop (2007) confirm, a clear valorization of speakers' own varieties in many (but not all) cases, alongside a decreased responsiveness to supra-local norms in younger speakers. The sociophonetic landscape can nevertheless remain complex. Even in 2013, issues of regional accent and educational delegitimization can still recur. "Cumbrian teacher told to tone down accent," as *The Independent* newspaper stated in November 2013, reporting the views of education inspectors on a school in Berkshire. Alongside the rise of *mockney* and the incorporation of once-stigmatized features such as glottalization within modern RP, the perceptual legacies of the past can linger on.[9]

NOTES

1 The process of revision in *OED3* has now removed the negative coding of Ellis's "mispronunciation … misplacing … misinflection"; see *OED3 accent* sense 7: a. "A way of pronouncing a language that is distinctive to a country, area, social class, or individual". b. "Without possessive or defining word or words: a regional or foreign accent".

2 See, for example, Sam Masters, "George Osborne's 'Man of the People' accent ridiculed", *The Independent* 26 June 2013. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/

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george-osbornes-man-of-the-people-accent-ridiculed-8675419.html. Masters isolated Osborne's appropriation of [in] rather than [iŋ], [h]-deletion, and glottalization.

3 Lass's convictions (2000: 57) that, in terms of eighteenth-century phonology, Johnson is a prototypical user of "London standard" are apparently founded on a misapprehension that Johnson hailed from Warwickshire.

4 James Howard Harris (ed.), A Series of *Letters of the First Earl of Malmesbury*; *His family and Friends from 1745 to 1820* (London: Richard Bentley, 1870), 1: 303.

5 Thrale ranked her friends on a number of factors. See K. Balderston (ed), *Thraliana*, *the Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776–1809* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), I.329.

6 See, for example, the comment with which Boswell follows Johnson's linguistic commendation of the regional in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791): "I doubted as to the last article in this eulogy."

7 Five American editions of Perry's dictionary were, for example, published by 1800.

8 The immediate context was the BBC's decision to broadcast a series to schools called "The King's English" in which features such as /h/-dropping and intrusive /r/, as well as a range of regionalized markers, were all proscribed. See "Our London Correspondence", *The Manchester Guardian* 15 December 1932: 8.

9 The robust defence of regional accents, within as well as outside educational contexts, which this event provoked, is, of course, significant in confirming a changing culture of attitudes and praxis in terms of accent in twenty-first century Britain. Equivalent comments in Poole or Morrison by no means elicited censure on the grounds of discrimination or analogies with racism.

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