

When children turn one, they are learning to walk; when they turn two, they are learning to talk; when they turn three, most of them start using these skills to engage in serious scholarship. It may not be too fanciful to see this well-known developmental path reflected in the growing series of “Late Modern English Conference” volumes, in which this is the third one. Topics discussed in the papers that follow include many that will be familiar to scholars interested in eighteenth and nineteenth-century English, but the reader will find here increasing scope and refinement – a sign, we hope, of a maturing discipline. In this introduction, we will first sketch the early development of work on Late Modern English and then preview the fifteen papers included in this volume, highlighting their main results and setting them against the earlier context.

It is probably accurate to say that work on Late Modern English (LModE) only took off in any serious way during the 1990s. There were of course prior studies of eighteenth and nineteenth-century English, but these were relatively thin on the ground compared with the great amounts of work done on the Old, Middle and Early Modern periods. Significantly, the Helsinki Corpus of Historical English Texts, created in the late 1980s, stopped at the year 1710. Moreover, those studies of eighteenth and nineteenth-century language that were carried out often lacked formal rigour and showed a different type of empirical approach to language from that which would be required today. The Language Library volumes on Jane Austen (Phillipps 1970), Charles Dickens (Brook 1970), Anthony Trollope (Clark 1975) and William Makepeace Thackeray (Phillipps 1978) are well known, but their focus is very much on individuals and hence on idiosyncratic usage, so they tend to be rather impressionistic in their characterisation of the language as a whole. This is also true of Phillipps (1984), who deals with the Victorian period. A striking feature of this book, as the author himself comments in the Introduction, is that it is “weighted towards upper-class usage” (1984: 2). This he attributes to the fact that “the poor” tend to be regarded in the literature of the period “as picturesque individuals rather than as members of a class”, and that “the further down the scale we go, the greater the likelihood of a multiplicity of different provincial dialects, with which it would be unprofitable to tangle in an undertaking of this kind”. Due to such limitations, in terms of both data and theoretical perspective, the above works offer glimpses rather than a full picture of LModE.

LModE data are – not surprisingly, given the book’s title – well represented in Poutsma (1914–1929), a main pillar of the “great tradition” of English grammar writing (Stuurman 1994). However, Poutsma’s work takes a largely synchronic view of the language and – until very recently – had little visible effect on the historical study of English. There is also much Late Modern data in Visser’s (1963–1973) monumental historical syntax, but during the 1970s and 80s this particular temporal layer of the monument did not spark a great deal of further work either. And again, the data had not been collected systematically. Possibly the first work on LModE to adopt modern methods of data collection was Dekeyser (1975), a corpus-based study of case and agreement in nineteenth-century British English. Later, there were studies such as Rydén and Brorström (1987) and Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1987), in which socio-historical methodology was brought to bear on eighteenth-century syntactic data. The scarcity of work of this or any other type must have been what led Richard Hogg, general editor of the six-volume *Cambridge History of the English Language*, to include a volume on the “long” nineteenth century when planning *CHEL* during the 1980s. The volume in question appeared in 1998 (ed. Romaine 1998), around the same time as Muggleston (1995, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2003), an account of attitudes to pronunciation in the LModE period, and Bailey (1996) and Görlach (1999), both of them textbooks on nineteenth-century English, British as well as American. The 1990s also saw the first work on creating digital corpora containing LModE materials – see several of the papers in Kytö, Rissanen and Wright (1994).

In 1998, Mats Rydén, Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade and Merja Kytö published *A Reader in Early Modern English*, a collection of reprints of articles that had come out between 1944 and 1994. In the introduction they dealt with the question of the delimitation of the EModE period, and decided that it would cover the eighteenth century, too. The reasons for doing so were that the “late” stage of the language was “part of the near and the immediate past, including the period designated as Present-day English” (PDE) (1998: 2), and that the eighteenth century was still characterised by too much systemic variation to be called *Late Modern English*. An obvious consequence of this view would be that LModE would range from 1800 to the present day. The editors felt justified in their decision by the temporal

division employed in the *Cambridge History of the English Language*. Clearly, by this time the beginnings of LModE as a distinct field were becoming evident. All that was needed was sorting out the dates and organising a couple of conferences. And this duly happened.

To begin with, Charles Jones organised a Late Modern English Conference, held in Edinburgh in August 2001. As some readers may remember, the first call for papers for that conference actually mentioned *Early* Modern English as the conference theme. But, no doubt because of awareness of the growing amount of activity described above and perhaps also inspired by the start of a new millennium, the theme changed and a successful conference was held about Late Modern English in Edinburgh that year. In fact, the conference was considered to be so fruitful that the need was felt for a follow up, so a second Late Modern English Conference was held in 2004 in Vigo, organised by Jorge Bueno-Alonso, Dolores González-Álvarez, Javier Pérez-Guerra and Esperanza Rama-Martínez. At the end of that conference, too, it was felt that the topic merited more research and more reports on ongoing research topics, so a third conference was planned and subsequently held in 2007 in Leiden. That is where the papers in the present collection originated.

The proceedings of the first Late Modern English Conference, *Insights into Late Modern English*, were edited by Marina Dossena and Charles Jones, and published by Lang in 2003. Unusually for a conference volume, a reprint of this book came out in 2007, which further testifies to the current interest in the topic. The proceedings of the second conference, called "*Of Varying Language and Opposing Creed*": *New Insights into Late Modern English* and edited by Javier Pérez-Guerra, Dolores González-Álvarez, Jorge L. Bueno-Alonso and Esperanza Rama-Martínez (Lang, 2007) came out – admirably – just before the third conference.

Meanwhile, Görlach's (2001) textbook on eighteenth-century English had appeared (thus completing the author's project of single-handedly covering in detail the entire history of English between 1500 and 1900), and there were several in-depth studies of specific Late Modern topics, such as Gieszinger (2001) on the language of nineteenth-century advertising. Joan Beal's *English in Modern Times 1700–1945* was published in 2004, as a result of which we now have a textbook on Late Modern English aimed at graduates and under-

graduates, but which has also proved to be of considerable interest for more established scholars in the field. It has been reviewed as “a welcome and praiseworthy addition to existing scholarship on the history of English” (Smitterberg 2006: 217) and as a “balanced and up-to-date account of the period” (Los and van der Wurff 2007: 62). The book will help to prepare a new generation of researchers interested in the language of the LModE period. At the 3rd Late Modern English Conference in Leiden, the importance of stimulating students to take up LModE topics was underlined by the handing out of the “3LModE Young Scholars Award”, meant to mark out the junior researcher presenting the best paper. Encouragingly, it turned out that it was necessary and possible to distinguish junior from senior junior scholars here, with Robin Straaijer and Svenja Kranich being the respective awardees.

As is clear from the references given in the individual papers of this volume, since the early 2000s there has been a rapidly growing stream of work on our period. For an advanced audience of scholars, there is now the volume *Nineteenth-Century English: Stability and Change* (Cambridge Studies in English Language, 2006), edited by Merja Kytö, Mats Rydén and Erik Smitterberg. The studies included in the volume, according to the editors, “invite rather than preclude further research, and above all, they indicate that there is a rising scholarly interest in nineteenth-century English” (2006: 2). It was no doubt awareness of this interest that also led to a continuation of the work in Late Modern digital corpus creation, which had been started a decade earlier. All the papers in Kytö *et al.* (2006) draw on the new Corpus of Nineteenth-Century Texts (CONCE) created at the University of Uppsala, which has the distinctive feature of including a great amount of less formal and less public text. A corpus with a more “traditional” focus has been compiled by Hendrik De Smet at Leuven University, who exploited the masses of freely available text on the Internet (De Smet 2005). The corpus of nineteenth-century business English which is currently being compiled by Marina Dossena and Richard Dury at the University of Bergamo testifies to a growing interest in new text types originating during the LModE period. Charles Jones’s study of eighteenth and nineteenth-century pronunciation, published by Palgrave in 2006, represents a major advance in our knowledge of the subject. Further primary materials on pronunciation can be found in the 2800-page [sic] *Phonetics of English in the*

*Nineteenth Century* (2006), in which Beverly Collins and Inger Mees bring together the writings of the well and lesser-known soundmen and soundwomen of the century. Hickey's *Ideology and Change in Late Modern English* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2009) is a further testimony to the current vibrancy of the field.