CORRECTION

The article on 'The Swedish scientist and linguist Urban Hiärne' in *HSNL* 22 was by Stig Ohlsson, not Paul Salmon as incorrectly stated. The four volumes of Hiärne's works listed at the end of Vivian Salmon's piece in the same issue were, or are to be, edited by Stig Ohlsson. We would like to send apologies to all concerned.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Umberto Eco's Journey through European Linguistics

Umberto Eco: *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea.* Rom-Bari:
Laterza 1993. 434 pp. ISBN 88 420 4287 0.
(German translation: *Die Suche nach der vollkommenen Sprache.* München: C. H.
Beck 1994. 388 pp. ISBN 3 406 37888 9. English translation: *Search for the Perfect
Language.* Oxford: Blackwell (to appear March) 1995. ISBN 06 311 74656.)

From the special viewpoint of the *ricerca della lingua perfetta*, Umberto Eco presents
the historiography of European linguistics on a large scale. The classical philosophers,
the Church Fathers as interpreters of the Bible, Cabbalistic theory and practice, Italy's
Dante, Spain's Lully and France's Postel, the nationalistic ambitions of several (e.g.
Dutch and Swedish) linguists, Athanasius Kircher as the expert on hieroglyphics and
Chinese writing, Giordano Bruno, Descartes, Comenius and Leibniz, the English
authors of philosophical languages and the French *Encyclopédistes,* the planners of
world-wide auxiliary systems of communication, and even Chomsky and the
representatives of artificial intelligence: they all appear as European linguists with
comparable interests, their works as nodes in a gigantic network of ideas. The field
covered by this book is Europe as an intellectual continent, the time span is about
2200 years, from the classical philosophers to (essentially) 1800 and the present.

Works of this scale are not new in historiographic literature. Usually they are written
in the pedantic style of handbooks and encyclopedias in order to cope with the masses
of names, dates, titles, texts and ideas. And rarely have they only one author. But in
this case things are different. There is *one* author whose knowledge seems to be
inexhaustible and whose linguistic resources enable him to narrate the statements,
contradictions, and competitions of ideas as if they were moving figures in a
panoramic landscape. Everybody knows him as a sharp-witted semiotician and
literary critic, and as the narrator of novels made heavy (and interesting for those who
like it) by theory. This time we meet him as the author of a historiographic work on
linguistic ideas made light by his gift of narration.

Of course, the beginning is the prelapsarian dialogue between God and Adam in
Paradise, together with the postlapsarian Babylonian curse (ch. 1). Cabbalistic
techniques of reconstructing the genuine Torah and finding God's name (ch. 2) show
the pre-eminence of (largely unknown) Hebrew and, moreover, that the loss of the
Adamic language in fact meant the loss of the direct knowledge of God as it prevailed
at the beginning of the world. The idea, literally derived from the Bible, that the
universe was created in a divine speech act and was, consequently, ordered according
to its ideational structure must make the loss of general linguistic intelligibilty (i.e. the
variety of natural languages) after Babel appear to be the loss of the perfect
knowledge which marked the beginning of this world.

The Biblical story is also seen against the backdrop of the classical linguistic unity (at
first Greek and then Latin), for which only one's own language counted and every

other was 'barbaric'. The universal validity of Latin to about 1300 served as a similar shield against the irritating experience of multilingualism. At least intellectuals need not be worried about it. When Lully devised his generative system (ch. 4) of creating all possible knowledge by a complex combination of concepts, he used Latin names for them, although he meant language-independent entities. But awareness of the many languages extant and their mutual unintelligibility will eventually mark post-classical linguistic consciousness and set the scene for the discussions of many centuries to come, almost till today. This leads Eco to the daring hypothesis that Europe proper started with Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, i.e. around 1300, because only with this book the European vernaculars come into their own (ch. 3). The centuries before were merely preparatory.

Historians and medievalists will frown upon this ousting of what they are accustomed to calling 'European literature and the Latin Middle Ages' (Curtius), 500 years of a highly developed, unrivalled Latin culture whose traditions were strong till deep into the Renaissance and which are still felt today. Are grammaticography or rhetoric really less European, because their origins are undoubtedly classical? Moreover, these 500 years also witnessed epic literature and courtly poetry in the national vernaculars. The Latin unity of the High Middle Ages is unquestionably a heritage of the classical period, its semantics (in a general sense), however, are a cosmos of meanings in which classical philosophy and Christian ideas amalgamated into something new, which everybody (rightly) calls European. If Eco regards the theorizing about languages (not language) as something genuinely European, he is certainly right. But he is wrong to search for the cultural unity of Europe only in linguistics. He is, however, justified in maintaining that, around 1300, a *different* Europe began - multilingual, multicultural, increasingly critical, sometimes revolutionary, and more and more competitive (in a good and eventually also in a very bad sense). And Dante is its first convincing voice. It must be left to the experts to decide whether Eco's reading of Dante is correct, but the chain of arguments is convincing: As every human being is able to learn one of the many languages, there must be a universal form common to them all. This form is the desired perfect language, in whichever vernacular it happens to appear. Dante's own wish was to give it a perfect, natural shape in his *volgare illustre*. For those historiographers who do not forget the linguistics of their present, Dante becomes the first representative of universal grammar as the essential prerequisite for the human ability of language learning.

If there are many languages extant and even hitherto unknown ones are discovered and if you are convinced that all of them are derivations of one original divine means of communication, you start searching for it. The language of the beginning is the truth of the beginning. There are several methods of doing this (ch. 5). You set up a genealogical pedigree of languages with Hebrew as the only candidate for the source language (Postel and many others). Or you look for the true meaning of words by constructing etymologies (from Isidor to Kirchner). With more sophisticated knowledge about languages, you hypothesize intermediary source languages (Scaliger and others) and may even admit that the ultimate source language, in whose existence you nevertheless believe, is lost for ever (Causabon and others, among them Leibniz). With the growing importance of national vernaculars, some linguists are ambitious enough to present their own as the true heir to the original idiom of mankind (Tuscan,

Catalan, Celtic, Dutch, Swedish, German). The theological underpinning and religious zeal of medieval thinking about language is, thus, slowly replaced by ethnic pride and the struggle for national power. This introduces evaluative overtones. A language which is thought to be nearer to the origin (whether Hebrew or unknown) than others is valued more highly. The old dichotomy of 'Greek' and 'barbaric' comes back in a different time-dependent disguise. Eco could have stressed more strongly and demonstrated by more extensive quotations that we find the beginnings of national stereotypes and clichés, which haunt us even today, in such deliberations.

The last example of this long-drawn-out quest for unity (one pope, one church, one emperor, one truth, one language, etc.) is the Indo-European hypothesis. Its representatives know, of course, that the protolanguage they try to reconstruct has nothing in common with Adam's speech. The early religious stimulus has given way to a fervent love of historical research with national(istic) overtones. But there is still the traditional wish to find the *one* behind the *many*.

Preponderant as the idea of monogenesis is, the idea of polygenesis is not totally absent. The former goes together with the idea of unity, the latter acknowledges variety. Epicure already saw the human (not divine) origin of language linked to the manifold and varying emotions of people who give their names to things, which they subsequently conventionalize out of economic reasons. This theory found its way into the Middle Ages via Horace, Diogenes Laertius and others. Of the Church Fathers, Gregor of Nyssa saw language as something human and ridiculed the idea that God should have taught mankind the alphabet. As humans are different in their reasoning, he thinks that their languages are, too. Philosophers who understood language to be originally rooted in some natural motivation (Vico, Hobbes, the French sensualists), were more inclined to accept linguistic variety than others. This led eventually to the idea of language-specific mentality and culture, which really came into its own with Herder and Humboldt. However, this German chapter of European linguistics is treated by Eco with disappointing brevity.

Thus, the author has taken his readers through 2200 years of linguistic thinking. More recent theories are treated as a mere aftermath. But so far we have only read one third of the book, five chapters out of seventeen. Yet this is a point where we (at least the present reader) begin(s) to ask what the book is actually about and where it will take us. Eco admits that only one author of the many mentioned, viz. Dante, had a perfect language in mind *expressis verbis*. What about all the others?. Some (Abulafia, Dante, Lully, Postel, Vico) are presented extensively, others receive just one paragraph, sometimes only a few sentences. All of them contribute to the idea that the state of Paradise should be regained, but (except in Dante) this does not really mean a *ricerca della lingua perfetta*. It means uncovering knowledge lost and gaining new (old) insights. Admittedly, thinking about language is involved in this. But can we really say that, for example, the Church Fathers, Abulafia, Lully, and Dante worked on the same idea? Doesn't this mean stretching the term 'perfect language' very wide? When the Indo-European hypothesis is introduced, it is explained to us that something new is beginning which is totally out of step with everything said before. Indeed, reconstructing prototypical Indo-European has nothing in common with reconstructing a perfect language, except for the idea of hypothetical unity. Is this

enough to be included in the book? Again, when introducing the *idéologues*, we are told a "dramatic change" took place with Rousseau (already announced by Vico), because the original language is now not the most perfect but the most imperfect linguistic state of mankind. This introduces the important notion of progress. Would this change of paradigm, to use a contemporary technical term, not deserve some explanation and not just a mention at its proper locus in chronology?

After chapter 5, the book makes a new start by going back to the *Corpus Hermeticum* of 1460 and the impact it had on the revival of Cabbalism and Lullism. Now we find that the perfect language attracts people no longer because of the insights it allows, but because of its impenetrable mysteries, which only the initiated can handle as talismanic tools (chs. 6, 8). Steganographies (Trithemius) appear fairly rational in this play with language, because they serve a practical purpose, viz. the transmission of secret messages, e.g. in wars (ch. 9). But in what way are they connected with the notion of a perfect language? Other projects are steeped in magic, occultism, or alchemy (Dee, Agrippa, Bruno) and have their own idiosyncratic elements of 'perfectness'. Their dominating method is the systematic combination of linguistic elements, which can produce well-ordered encyclopedias (Alsted), but also the mathematical possibilities of a universal language (Mersenne). Egyptian and Chinese ways of writing (ch. 7) fascinate, because they suggest new (not necessarily perfect) semiotic possibilities for denoting reality beyond the alphabetic system (Kircher). The density of names and titles is particularly high in these chapters of the book, which, via the Polygraphies (ch. 9), slowly approach the English universal language movement. It is treated extensively (ch. 10-13), in parts surpassing what is known about it from analytical literature. Perhaps Eco underrates the religious attitudes which formed the background of the new sciences as deliberated on by the men of the Royal Society, to whom Wilkins belonged. But it is true that his *philosophical language* also served the practical purpose of universal communication. This establishes another overall linguistic aim *after* theological zeal, national pride, magic, and *before* historical research. Wilkins' tables arouse Eco's interest so much that he seriously discusses their merits and faults in classifying reality according to our contemporary principles. For example, he points out the differences between a scientific nomenclature and folk taxonomy. When discussing the transcendental particles he mentions that they not only stand for morphological features, but also for rhetorical figures like irony or metaphor.

With these 17th century projects we encounter a new and very special case of a *lingua perfetta*, i.e. a language which is perfect because it is understandable to everybody through their mother-tongue. It is a man-planned and implemented version of Pentacost, depending on the conviction that the rational faculties of all men are identical and that languages are their neutral signs. General learnability, which includes intelligibility, is guaranteed *a priori* by the perfect correspondence between *res et verba*, contrary to the later auxiliary languages (Esperanto etc.) whose learnability is guaranteed as an assumed empirical fact. They are perfect, if this term can be used at all, because they serve the practical purpose of universal communication better than other languages do (ch. 16).

For Leibniz (ch. 14) a perfect language is an algebraic method. He creates a new concept of the linguistic sign, which can be semantically empty and still produce knowledge. Finally, the *idéologues* postulate the correlative influence of language and thinking, which leads to the consequence that there is not one perfect language for mankind, but every language is (can be) perfect for expressing the culture by which it has been shaped and which it has created itself. There are more projects in the 18th century, so-called parsigraphies (ch. 15), which were modelled on the example of Wilkins. Being planned in France, they incline more to the basic syntax of French than the English versions of the 17th century, which depended on a simplified Latin syntax. Finally, this leads Antoine de Rivarole to say that French is *the* perfect language *non pareille*. It combines the perfect grammar of a parsigraphy with universal learnability as demonstrated by its wide use.

Umberto Eco's book is brimful of information (and there are many more items than can be alluded to). Of course, everybody likes this. Nevertheless, we miss a clear terminology even for the central topic. There are too many meanings for the term 'perfect language'. Quoting Formigari and Genette, Eco on one occasion (beginning of ch. 5) starts sorting out the differences between a perfect language and a universal language, between language origin and the character of language (whether natural or conventional), between sound and letter, between morphology and semantics, between original language and universal grammar. But this attempt at a differentiation has no consequences for the book. Similarly isolated is the recourse to Hjelmslev (end of ch. 1)

The chapters of the book have an almost musical relation to each other, i.e. the repetition and variation of a *leitmotif* in its various modulations. The axes of order are chronology and one central but variable notion, for which the author chooses the name *lingua perfetta*. Strictly speaking, this is an anachronistic name, reminiscent of a tradition starting in the 17th century (Bacon, Descartes and after). For *earlier* centuries it should perhaps be replaced by 'prelapsarian', 'holy', 'truthful', 'original', 'pure'; for *later* by 'philosophical', 'precise', 'formal', 'unambiguous', 'communicative'. The author of *The Name of the Rose* would probably not mind being called anachronistic, because he would admit that the history of linguistic (but also other) ideas is actually moved forward by anachronisms. And a term like 'perfect language' with all its present-day connotations is excellent for suggesting that very modern concepts like Boole's mathematical logic or Chomsky's generative grammar have very old roots, just as political stereotypes and even xenophobic crimes have. But in a historiographical book on *one* linguistic idea such interconnections cannot merely be named, they must be explained on a metahistoriographical level.

Likewise, the order in time, which is constitutive for history, deserves to be complemented by some structural order. Historiographically speaking, a mental concept is not only determined by its chronological appearance (which remains indispensable, because it is the natural substratum of historiography), but by transformations, partial exchanges, subtle shifts, recourses etc. (Derrida), which in historiographical work are just as important, if not more, as/than hitherto little known or unknown facts from the past. Mention of similarities and dissimilarities, of continuity and discontinuity may make it advisable to depart from the chronological

guideline much more often than Eco actually does. We do find all this in Eco's book, just as we find anticipations and recourses. But there is no historiographical reflexion (not to speak of a theory) on such phenomena, we are simply shown them in a historical panorama full of details. Their connections and interconnections are not raised to a reflexive explanatory level. In short, what we miss is a historiographic theory.

This does not mean that Umberto Eco does not have one. But it is difficult to find, because he does not speak about it. In his inaugural lecture on the same topic to the *Collège de France* he quoted d'Alemberts *Discours Préliminaire* to the *Encyclopédie* where he (d'Alembert) speaks of the criss-cross development of the human intellect which must be patterned in the way in which a cartographer patterns geographical reality on a map. This marks the end of the ambition to find *one* grammar for *all* languages. Because there are as many maps of the world as there are aspects from which we look at it (for example, that of a perfect language), a deliberation like this would have done Eco's book good. It would have suggested to him to reflect on and to justify the special viewpoint of his historiographical report, i.e. the particular creativity of re-creating the past in the way in which he did it. This would have shown the limits and the possibilities of his historiographical work.

But perhaps the story-teller, the novelist Eco is more influential than the historiographer should allow. However, this accounts for the lively appeal of his historiographic *tour de force*. After 350 pages of an arresting report, the reader closes a book whose very advantages are its very disadvantages and vice versa.

* Werner Hüllen, Essen

REVIEWS

[We received the following two reviews, both of which cover Dr Di Giorgi's book, we have taken the slightly unusual step of including them both. Eds]

Sigfrido Di Giorgi, *The Syntactic Structures of English, classified and explored by means of Jespersen's Formulas.* Genesi Editrice, 1994. XXV, 188 pp. ISBN 88-86313-10-1. Lire 30,000.

This book is described on the flyleaf as a tribute to Jespersen for the fiftieth anniversary of his death. The true anniversary of that event was 30 April 1993, an occasion which was marked at the University of Copenhagen by a symposium of scholars, who delivered various papers on aspects of Jespersen's life and work (see Newsletter no. 21, p.11) which were afterwards issued as a booklet, *A Linguistic Miscellany*, by the Department of English, University of Copenhagen, 1994. Although others have thus already paid their respects to Jespersen's memory, the present volume, the work of a single author, is a particularly handsome and generous tribute.

The author proceeds at a sedate pace, probably from an awareness that he will have to overcome an instinctive aversion from formulas among his readers. A Foreword of five pages, addressed to students of English, makes it clear that the intention is didactic: 'A formula becomes a sort of path you can follow through the jungle of a language' (p. vii). Next comes a section of six and a half pages in which Jespersen's symbols are listed and their uses briefly illustrated; towards the end (pp. xvi-xvii) the author adds a few symbols of his own invention. This part is followed by a seven-page Preface, informing us that as well as Jespersen's books the author has also drawn on A. S. Hornby's *Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and his *Guide to Patterns and Usage in English*. The rest of the Preface is taken up by an explanation of Jespersen's system of ranks and of sentence analysis, presented in the confident belief that, as set out here, the elements of the system can be easily assimilated by the ordinary student. We are then offered an outline of the theoretical basis for the system, sufficient, it is claimed, for all practical purposes while leaving out 'those abstruse subtleties which may have some scientific interest for linguistic experts but which are devoid of any didactic value' (p. xix).

The remark just quoted shows that Di Giorgi's use of the formulas is somewhat different from what Jespersen had in mind originally with his system. From my work with Jespersen I can say that he imagined his formulas as useful in scholarly debate, but not normally in practical language teaching, except possibly at a very advanced level, where instruction becomes in effect a concern with principles of syntactic analysis. For teaching beginners and less advanced students Jespersen rebelled strongly against traditional teaching practice, which was most often based on grammar and translation drill. He wanted both of those elements reduced or abandoned, and replaced by a method emphasizing the living language and first of all speech.

The combination of Jespersen's system of formulas with Hornby's usage patterns has resulted in an impressively detailed and very clear presentation of English syntactic

structures, set out in the form of 82 numbered patterns with variations, followed by a synoptic reference table. The blurb's claim that the book is 'a dense, self-sufficient compendium of Jespersen's grammar and his most interesting grammatical observations on English' may well be justified. With the help of the Index of Words with which the book ends it should be possible to use it as a reference book.

In a biographical note on the jacket we are told that Di Giorgi, a physicist by training, spent a great part of his life in the computer industry in Turin. 'His first contacts with English were those of a reader of scientific texts and technical papers on computers and programming.' We are told of his enthusiasm when he discovered Jespersen's formulas, and the note concludes: From the haphazard encounter of a very great linguist and an obscure English learner ... sprang up this typical fruit of an interdisciplinary mentality.

Paul Christophersen, Cambridge

Otto Jespersen, *Progress in Language with special reference to English.* New Edition with an Introduction by James D. McCawley. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1993. xx + [vii]-[xiii] + 370 pp. $55.00

Sigfrido Di Giorgi, *The Syntactic Structures of English classified and explored by means of Jespersen's formulas.* Turin: Genesi, 1994. xxv + 188 pp. LIt. 30,000

Jespersen was appointed to the Chair of English Language at Copenhagen in 1892; *Progress in Language* first appeared in 1893, and he died in 1943. These two volumes are thus appropriately timed, and Dr Di Giorgio's book is explicitly "A tribute to Jespersen for the fiftieth anniversary of his death". *Progress in Language* is probably too well-known, by repute at least, to need comment here, save to note that McCawley's pages of introduction, followed by a (very) selective bibliography of Jespersen's writings show clearly the extent of Jespersen's innovations, but also notes the 'somewhat peculiar' 'inventory of topics covered', with its chapters on "The History of Chinese and of Word-Order", "Primitive Grammar" and "The Origin of Language". It is, however, the fresh insights that Jespersen gave to the history of English in this early work which are rightly stressed — the analysis of the genitival -*s* applied to a whole phrase ("the Queen of England's"), and the assertion that "the fine details of the changes that took place in the 11th-14th centuries were vastly different from what one would expect if French influence were a significant factor, e.g., genitive -*s*, spread more rapidly than plural -*s*, even though it was only the latter for which French provided the model", a point which is still worth repeating. It will no doubt be useful for readers who do not have access to the great libraries to have this book more readily available. Each page of the reprint reproduces an opening (two pages) of the original; this is a minor incon-venience, perhaps, but the nineteenth century was clearly more extravagant with paper than we are now, and the reduced print is not uncomfortably small.

Di Giorgio's book is presented as a manual for learners of English, based essentially on Jespersen's "algebraical" formulas for parsing English sentences. These formulas do, indeed, provide a useful abstract notation for comparing the structure of sentences once they are in existence, though they are likely to be bewildering as a pædagogical device.

There are 82 archetypes, many of which are represented by variant expositions, in one case as many as sixteen. The number could admittedly be reduced if optional elements were admitted into the archetypes; thus four of the first five (classed as simple sentences) could be subsumed into subject and verb plus optional object and optional adverb. This would not, of course, differentiate between transitive and intransitive verbs; but nor does this presentation, which would have to be supplemented by a list of verbs specifying their valencies in terms of dependency grammar. The fourth and fifth archetypes are distinguished by the possibility or impossibility of transposing a stressed adverbial particle, e.g. "He put on a cap" as opposed to "The women had decked themselves out ...", and here it is suggested that the pattern of the second sentence "often recurs with such verbs as 'move, run, get, see' and such particles as 'across, over, through', when they are adverbs". It is not clear whether the formulaic analysis makes it any easier to memorize such a list.

The book lists on p. vi a set of problems for which it claims to provide answers. These may be exemplified by the difference between "John is eager to please" and "John is easy to please", which would be represented respectively as SVP(2O(I)), where the predicate is an adjective which governs an object which in turn is an infinitive, and S(O*)VP(2I*), where the predicate consists of an adjective governing an infinitive the object of which is the subject of the sentence as a whole, or, as Di Giorgio puts it, "The infinitive is 'retroactive'"; but access to such information is by way of a rather unwieldy and not absolutely impeccable Index. Many of the example sentences appear to come from written sources. It will be an advanced learner who can cope with "Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants" (p. 23); other examples, also perhaps derived from native sources, are subjected to transformational procedures which do not always ring true; thus the emphatic transform is exemplified by "On a sandbank the coaster went aground" (p. 9), where topicalization would more probably lead to something like "It was on a sandbank that the coaster went aground".

It is perhaps inevitable that a work of this kind would include sentences to which a native speaker may take exception, but Di Giorgio's vast collection of specimen sentences in fact contains very few such examples. There does, however, seem to be room for simplification by pointing out more clearly the optional components in the structures under discussion, a procedure which would reduce the number of variants within the archetypes, and probably the number of archetypes.

Paul Salmon, Oxford

Brigitte Hauger, *Johan Nicolai Madvig: the Language Theory of a Classical Philologist.* 1994, Münster: Nodus Publikationen.

This book is a welcome addition to the already impressive collection of works in the history and historiography of linguistics to have appeared in the list of Nodus Publikationen, and it provides a much-needed contribution to the relatively neglected Scandinavian field. In her introduction Brigitte Hauger states that 'one aim of this study is to treat Madvig as a linguist in his own right, not as a forerunner of others' (12). Fortunately, although this is an important goal in itself, this work goes far

beyond a simple description of J. N. Madvig's view of language and sites his thinking in a number of contexts which serve to make this book both accessible and of significant interest to a diverse readership.

The introduction is laudably brief, setting out potential reasons for the surprising marginalization of Madvig by posterity and concludes with a list of relevant publications, both the original Danish ones and their German translations. The 'biographical framework' which opens the first chapter is again brief and avoids burdening the reader with much irrelevant anecdotal information by condensing the major events of Madvig's life in tabular form and dealing instead in the text with Madvig's position vis-à-vis his more famous contemporaries and his work as a politician and educator. It is interesting that Madvig, like so many other northern European linguists of the nineteenth century, managed to be active and play no small part in a number of different areas of public life. The second chapter provides a potted history of the relationship between classical and comparative philology as the background to Madvig's view of both. This chapter sets the trend for a central motif of the whole book, namely that of Madvig as a loose cannon firing off in all directions, alienating himself from his contemporaries and from historical recognition in the process. Whether Hauger intends to portray Madvig above all as a destructive and self-destructive polemicist is not clear, but by treating him as such Hauger enables herself to look critically at major movements in intellectual history which is the strength of this superficially rather specific monograph. Here in Chapter 2 Madvig's dissatisfaction with the directions classical philology, his own discipline, had taken and his dissatisfaction with the Romantic concept of *Wissenschaft*, as well as his criticisms of giants like Rask, Grimm, Humboldt and Max Müller are well-documented.

The long third chapter is a synthesis of Madvig's linguistic theories culled from his disparate writings, but the relationship of these theories to those of his contemporaries is never forgotten by the author. Here we learn of Madvig's views on applied linguistics, more specifically language teaching, and we witness Madvig fulminating against the supposed superiority of the Classical languages and in favour of the mother tongue as the point of departure for linguistic education, as well as against linguistic reflection in favour of a functional basis for linguistic study. Madvig's well-developed theory of language origins is presented here too and we wince again as we hear the voice of Madvig inveigling in the middle of the nineteenth century against the received idea of the *Ursprache*. Madvig's ideas about grammar and lexicon are also presented as radical, from his postulation that 'the basis for a complete and symmetric case system cannot be found in any living language, and is rather the work of grammarians' (131) to his very modern view that gender markedness stems from the fact that, in the beginning, *men* only distinguished that which seemed distinctive and different from their standpoint.

Hauger concludes this chapter by returning to Madvig's position on historical linguistics, that is to say that there is no system in language beyond the synchronic one, which exists exclusively for the living speaker' (111) and insists that 'without exaggeration, one can say that no scholar before Saussure demanded a separation of diachronic and synchronic investigation with greater clarity than Madvig' (147). All

in all the picture we are given of Madvig is of a 'vox clamantis in deserto', a description used of Madvig as early as 1871, while he was still alive.

Clearly a book documenting the points on which Madvig agreed with his predecessors and contemporaries would not be of great interest. As Hauger takes the polemical line she does, her picture of Madvig consequently makes for an exciting read. Nonetheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that Madvig was the author of an enormously influential and oft reprinted *Latin Grammar for Use in Schools*, translated into English in 1849, and this is the work for which he is primarily recognized, not for his monographs and lectures on general linguistics. Furthermore his treatment of grammar did provide an influential model for others and he did have disciples - an *Old Norse Syntax* of 1862 by G. F. V. Lund (Madvig's student) was for example written in explicit debt to Madvig's model. His entry in the late nineteenth century edition of the Danish National Biography describes him as 'the greatest philologist Scandinavia has had and ... entirely on a par with the finest known philologists'. Hauger's picture is by no means false as she does of course recognize the status of the Latin work, but the reader should not forget the 'other' Madvig.

The penultimate chapter of the book explicitly addresses Madvig's relationship with Humboldt, Curtius, Whitney and Brugmann. The relationship with Whitney is especially interesting as Whitney appears to have reproduced Madvig's most original ideas almost verbatim and without any acknowledgement which makes a fascinating, unexplained chapter in the history of nineteenth century linguistics. The final chapter deals with the subsequent treatment and reception of Madvig and the 'footnote syndrome'. There are useful appendices, listing Madvig's publications, the contents of his autobiography and the make-up of his most significant lecture. The book concludes with a full bibliography, an index nominum and an index rerum, which possibly gain in clarity from their separation from each other.

Johan Nicolai Madvig: the Language Theory of a Classical Philologist is an attractively bound and typeset paperback. There are misprints in English and German alike, but these are not sufficient to mar understanding or appreciation. Some odd formulations like 'put the highest store in [empirical facts]' (117) and 'characteristic for' (152) are only noticeable because the style is otherwise so fluent and readable. The edition I saw progressed as far as page 138 and then went back to page 115 before continuing, but I trust this isn't a recurrent problem with the run. These are really only minor criticisms of what is otherwise a fascinating treatment of an unjustly neglected figure, and a treatment which will certainly be of interest to a wide variety of those who read the *Newsletter*.

Andrew Linn, Luton

Franz Plank, *Wohlgeschliffener Tugendspiegel des Sprachforschers, demselben vorgehalten von einer Societät zur Beförderung der praktisch reinen Vernunftmoral*, Nodus Publikationen, Münster: 1992.

'Valetudo decrescit, adcrescit labor', says the ageing pander Cappadox in Plautus's *Curculio*, but is the one contingent upon the other, or are they independent evils? Do we waste more effort to achieve the same (a worse) result? More thought might lead to undertaking less and lighten the burden. In such a mood, what better reason for taking time to review Franz Plank's whimsical work? Title, layout and approach smack of the 17th-century language society and the 18th-century moralizing aesthetics. Those of us who thought the Germans had no sense of humour need only read this compilation to see if we were (and how) right.

The author (who surely ought to spell himself Planck if he wants to play at baroquerie), is indeed also prompted, apparently, by the insight that "a serious history of linguistics must seek explanation partly in the contingencies of personal realities". But, alas, the stringency of any old contingency is not as contingent as the stringency of contingencies which are relevant to the subject in hand. In fact, following up Plank's reference to *Language* 56, p.648, we are led to Dell Hymes's review of Robert A. Hall Jnr.'s *Stormy petrel in linguistics*, 1975, a personal account of linguistic historiography in terms of some of the dominant personalities behind structuralism and TG. The subject is actually a serious one, and Hymes has some cogent observations on the various random fates which befell/ befall scholars in their striving, as exemplified notably by the tribulations of Swadesh. Hymes notes (p.649):

> So much, in fact, has depended on who was where with whom, at what time, to what purpose; who was hired and who was not; who stayed with the discipline and who did not; who died prematurely and who lived; what administrators and sources of funds understood, wanted, and agreed to; what difference a war made; even why the seemingly objective sequence of dates of publication must be treated with caution...

Plank takes this up, it seems, and provides a serendipitous, eclectic, anarchic, yet factually based, part jaundiced, part mellow view of personal contingencies in the biographies of cardinal figures in linguistics. The points of departure are mostly (always?) attested from the secondary literature of the subject, the history and study of languages, yet the direction of the journey is wayward, misguided or 'absurd' - not congruent. The mirror of virtue reflects an inverted image, - all the grotesqueries of a distorting mirror. However, just because life (and language) can be treated as infinitely allusive and recurrently self-referential, it doesn't mean that there aren't foregrounded or privileged messages, endeavours, intentions and aims, whether individual or collective.

However, trying to establish the red thread of the present volume is difficult: parodistic intentions are linked to a chronological framework and subversive images (Shalot's mirror: a Platonic (con)cave) make us undo the text which is being woven, either by simple juxtaposition or by distortion. The various sections are accompanied for the most part by illustrations drawn from a variety of sources and treated as a

quasi-emblematic contradiction of the ambitious and muddled-headed efforts of men to advance in status and understanding. For instance, the beginning of linguistic typology, suggested by Georg von der Gabelentz in an article in the *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 4, 1894 shows the misprint, - perhaps occasioned by the Sütterlinschrift of the author? - so that the title (and the running head) reads : 'Hypologie der Sprachen, eine neue Aufgabe der Linguistik' - which prompts Plank to provide a list of 'corrigenda' from the text to replace *Typus* by *Hypus* etc. *passim* (pp.133-34).

Running throughout are recurrent pictures of an obscenely moustachioed mouth mouthing the phonemes of some language, much like forerunners of the illustrations to Daniel Jones's *The Pronunciation of English*, and these are glossed by trivialized quotations from Ludwig W[ittgenstein] - "If a lion could speak, we wouldn't be able to understand him" (p.99); "Imagine people who were only able to think out loud!" (p.41).

At times, a parodistic intention re-shapes the falsely created context, as when Kafka's *Auf der Galerie* - the short parable of our tragic awareness of our inability to know the difference between truth and illusion, is re-written - or poorly remembered? The visitor to the circus, who has come (presumably) for illusion, rather than reality, suspects that the bareback rider and the ringmaster are trapped in a pitiless round of drudgery, yet they and the voyeuristic audience, including us, the hypocritical readers, are only too apt to dwell on the escapist fantasy in order to be relieved of taking any action to remedy the awful actuality... With terrible precision Kafka counterposes and inverts the verbal modes conditional and indicative in these two paragraphs to subvert their 'default' values - as Malcolm Pasley once more elegantly observed to me: "the *[modus] irrealis* becomes the *realis*". But here (p.72-3) the parable only serves to point up the differing fates of the philologists Carl Benedikt Hase and Friedrich Schlegel.

Some episodes from the historiography of languages, or, rather, from the biographies of their historiographers, are amusing in themselves. Popowitsch's erudition and naivety are everywhere apparent in his *Untersuchungen vom Meere* - he had planned a more systematic and helpful organization of parts of the plant kingdom than Linnaeus, his ambition being not merely to list the fungi (including the four kinds of mould growing on his boots during one damp winter's sojourn in a disused underground wine-store), but actually to list the places where the mushrooms could be found! He also devised a scheme for throwing sealed bottles into the river Danube near Melk in order to establish if there were a subterranean link with Lake Balaton. For all this and other such projects, he was perpetually on the look-out for patrons - those forerunners of research council grants. In fact, if any scholar took his research seriously, Popowitsch did; - but that doesn't mean that it would not repay us to sift through his papers (still, apparently extant at Vienna) to learn more about 18th-century Austrian German: the beginnings of a dilemma still current, 'Österreichisch? oder österreichisches Hoch=Teutsch?' A 'separate' variety in its own right, or a variety of 'German' (or a bit of both?) Popowitsch, one suspects, would have enjoyed such „Geplänkel"...

The whole farrago ends with an annoying index which, although largely accurate, wilfully misleads by parody: 'Gabelentz, Hans Conon von der, man siehe unter Papa'; Bonifaz Gaugengigerl is glossed there as 'Ignazens Bruder', and Ignaz contrariwise; there is a marked preference for listing scholars with their wives (those long-suffering creatures), occasionally appending their earlier maiden or married names (see e.g. Wilkins, Robina). Oddly, Frau Gottsched is missing, also the account of her particular kindnesses to Popowitsch in Vienna, with whom she took tea. Even more oddly, Nebukadnezar (p.156), who gave us all employment by building Babel, is missing from this index which Blake's reproduction of him prefaces: the book concludes with that crestfallen originator of linguistic diversity.

Among the two pages of advertisements for more serious products from this publishing house, presented under the Gothic-type heading 'Verlags=Anzeigen', it is reassuring to see the edited papers of ICHoLS IV which include, a personal contingency, the names of my old school-chum Michael G. Carter, and of my much missed colleague, the former President of the Henry Sweet Society, Leslie Seiffert.

Sadly, one must conclude that an opportunity has been missed here to demonstrate, perhaps even by scurrility, the other important point, that our subject - here the history of linguistics - may (must?) be construed as social science in which human interactions, including errors, have a part to play. To establish the distribution of linguistic features at whatever level machines are patently more adequate than men - it is possible to evaluate huge corpora of millions of items using computers (see John Sinclair: *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*, OUP,1991) and suitably established programmes and procedures. But the results, like stock market figures, are not useable without interpretation to make them accessible to other scholars and, in the case of analysis of contemporary languages, to the speakers. 'Objectivity' alone is a sterile, trivial or 'arbitrary' aim. It is the subjectivity of speakers which enables them to use their language adequately for their needs, permitting them to assess the degree of acceptability, irregularity, novelty or outdatedness of the forms they encounter. Ultimately such perceptions of what holds valid must surely shape the history of languages? And here we have the interface between 'linguistic history' and 'style'. There is, naturally, scope for error, disagreement and alternative views, as well as broad consensus - again a stock market image suggests itself: the performance of shares depends largely on what the investors, or their advisers, *think* is going on. Plank's whimsies fail to remind us adequately of the social settings in which discoveries are made and he comes dangerously close to discrediting earlier researchers, instead of understanding their achievements in context. Where everything is vanity the gesture of judicious editing of the material (the role Plnk (sic!) arrogates to himself on p.ix) acquires a certain moral grandeur. This would have been a funnier book had it focused on the serious contention that linguistic changes and variations are conditioned in part at least by contingencies which affect the speakers and also by the contingencies of the scholars who observe and interpret the linguistic output.

C.J. Wells, Oxford

Lia Formigari, *Signs, Science and Politics. Philosophies of Language in Europe 1700-1830.* Translated by William Dodd. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1993 (Studies in the History of the Language Sciences, 70). pp. x + 210.

Niels Helsloot, *Van Ironie naar Skepsis. Over de taaltheoretische Gevolgen van het socratisch-kantiaansche kennisideaal.* Amsterdam: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU, 1992. pp. 61.

The first of these works is revised and enlarged from the original *L'esperienza e il segno* (Rome, 1990). The Preface notes that it brings together essays and papers of the author which appeared in a variety of places since 1972. However, the process of editing has turned what might have been a repetitive and possibly inconsistent set of articles into a seamless whole.

It is divided into three chapters: the first is headed "The Semiotic Control of Experience" and deals with eighteenth-century views on the nature of man, and on the mutual implications of man's nature and his language. It goes into anecdotal reports of children brought up in the wild without language, and goes on in great detail into the theorists of language who drew on these reports. The focus is largely on French scholarship, but there are also valuable summaries of the views of Herder, for whom "The cases of men reduced to the state of animals by no means belie the peculiarity of human nature; on the contrary, they show that this consists primarily in his capacity for adaptation", and on Monboddo, noting the "contradiction between his advanced anthropology and his conservative metaphysics".

The second chapter, on "The Semiotic Control of Civil Society" is particularly interesting in drawing parallels between linguistic thought and anthropological and political views. Here the greatest weight is given to Italian thinkers. Of Muratori it is observed that "rhetorical registers have to be varied according to the social class of the listeners". This application of the classical division of high, middle and low styles envisages three audiences; and "for 'people of the middling sort', the typical audience of the urban preacher, neither the sublime eloquence taught in the treatises nor the immediate, purely concrete images suitable for ploughmen, peasants, and low-born women are effective." Vico's views on the relationship between language and society, and that between language and religion are discussed in detail, as is the special position of language in law: "Ever since it appeared in early familial societies, language in its various forms has gone hand in hand with the forms of positive law, changing as these change." It is observations of this kind, supported by detailed textual reference, which make this book so rewarding.

The briefer final chapter, on "The Birth of Idealism in Linguistics" concentrates on German scholarship. In analysing the views of Steinthal on Humboldt, Formigari is able to elaborate a principle which may be summarized, if inadequately, by the remark that Humboldt "on the one hand ... took over the transcendental method from classical German philosophy, on the other he clung to the traditional empiricist assumption that thought is conditioned by language", while Steinthal "tries to make use of one side of Humboldt's philosophy against the other".

In general the book offers an indispensable guide to central aspects of linguistic thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and is enhanced by a wealth of bibliographical references and suggestions for further reading.

Helsloot's monograph is relevant to the content of Formigari's last chapter. The three-page summary in English which follows the text and bibliography gives the gist of his argument that the Kantian distinction between synthetic and analytic judgments is a continuation in other terms of the dispute whether names are derived from the nature of the objects they denote, or applied by agreement of their users. Four modern protagonists of each of these camps are named — at first sight a strange pair of constellations: on the one hand Frege, Zamenhof, Heidegger and Basil Bernstein; on the other Chomsky, Labov, Grice and Jürgen Haberman. "Ideal" or artificial languages are seen as efforts to compensate for the inadequacies. (It is perhaps unfortunate that the efforts of Wilkins and his like are not considered here.) The other school of thought denies the imperfection of language and claims that its representation of thought is accessible through ever subtler interpretation. For a resolution of these opposing views Helsloot invokes Pyrrho (365-275 B.C.) and Sextus Empiricus (160-210 A.D.) for the sceptical, but very practical view that perfection in language is not only impossible but undesirable.

The scope of these two books is clearly different: one is the fruit of twenty years' original work, the other an ingenious and well-argued hypothesis. In their different ways both commend themselves to our attention.

Paul Salmon, Oxford

Frits Stuurman, *Dutch Masters and Their Era.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1993. 149pp.

Libraries in the United Kingdom report that the most popular form of non-fiction reading among their subscribers is the biography. It is not therefore surprising that these accounts, brief as they are, of the lives of nineteenth-century Dutch scholars should prove such absorbing reading, illustrating as they do their subjects' ideas, ambitions, struggles, and, occasionally, eccentricities, and bringing to life scholars who, to most students of the English language, are no more than names. If, sometimes, the biography is far from eulogistic it is hard not to find it even more interesting; who, for example, would have thought that the highly distinguished author of one of the outstanding grammars of English would have broken out on the least provocation, with volleys of virulent and personal abuse, his outbursts of invective scandalising and eventually estranging even his closest friends.

Stuurman states that his aim is to provide a historical perspective, for present-day students of the English language, on what is certainly a — if not the — great age of Dutch linguistic scholarship; and the collection printed here is intended to be a temporary substitute for what must eventually become a full-scale history of Dutch grammarians. With this end in view, Stuurman has collected a number of biographies previously printed in encyclopedias of Dutch scholarship, and a number of obituaries.

All except one originally appeared in Dutch, the exception being a single paper in German, and Stuurman has translated them all and very creditably too.

The author prefixes the collection by a very useful introduction, in which he explains his choice of scholars, partly on a basis of personal preference, partly on what is available. It was not always easy for the author to find appropriate material; for example, one distinguished scholar, who made regular contributions to the OED between 1888 and 1904, ought to have been included, but Stuurman has been unable to obtain any account of him. He has, however, been able to find biographies of the most important of these scholars — Poutsma (1856-1937), Kruisinga (1875-1944), Visser (1886-1976) and Zandvoort (1894-1990); the names of other scholars represented here will probably be hardly known at all, at least to contemporary British readers, e.g. J. B. Vinckers (1821-1892) and C. Stoffel (1845-1908).

There are fifteen biographies, all the subjects but one (Anna Vechtman-Veth, 1883-1931) being male; Vechtman-Veth published two valuable school texts on English grammar. These scholars share certain characteristics which reflect the social and academic situation in the nineteenth century. First, since modern subjects were not taught in Dutch universities until the end of the nineteenth century, we find that nearly all of them were employed as schoolmasters. Secondly, since they taught in different regions of the Netherlands, they had very little personal contact, and seem to have worked for the most part in isolation. Thirdly, they appear to have had little assistance in their labours, which must have been enormously difficult without the help of the typewriter, the dictating machine, or the word-processor. Two of these scholars, however, did have some assistance — Roorda (1855-1930) and Poutsma. Roorda's daughter (1891-1954) edited her father's papers after his death (and in order to do so she must therefore have shared in his researches during his lifetime), while Poutsma's daughter (1886-1949) was consulted by her father during the later 1920s, and took care of his manuscripts after his death. Unfortunately, neither Kruisinga's account of Roorda, nor Zandvoort's of Poutsma, cared to notice that each had a daughter who contributed to her father's work.

While most of the Dutch scholars noted in this collection made their reputations in the field of modern English grammar, Stuurman does not neglect the other area in which Dutch scholars made distinguished contributions to the subject, i.e. the study of Old English language and literature. Perhaps the best known of these scholars is P. J. Cosijn (1840-1899). Stuurman also links these Dutch scholars with their counterparts in other countries, of particular interest to members of this society being his many references to Henry Sweet; other British scholars mentioned for their relationships with Dutch scholars are James Murray and Daniel Jones. Not surprisingly, there are also several references to Jespersen (1860-1943). All these references show that, however isolated they were in the Netherlands, these Dutch scholars had many links with their counterparts abroad.

It was a highly original idea on Stuurman's part to collect these biographies, since they provide for the first time a valuable survey of a golden age of Dutch language study; moreover, a short survey of anglistics in the Netherlands, by Godfried Storms, shows that this golden era was part of a long-standing tradition, the beginning of which Storms

locates in Isaac Vossius (1577-1649). It will no doubt be many years before a definitive study of Dutch anglistics in the nineteenth century appears; meanwhile, this collection offers an excellent and well-edited introduction to a fascinating subject, its only deficiencies being the surprising absence of page numbers for the contents.

Vivian Salmon, Oxford

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(to 31 October 1994)

Members of the Society have been kind enough to donate the following publications to the HSS Library at Keble College. Further contributions, which are very welcome, should be sent to the Keble Librarian, Mrs Marjory Szurko. Monographs by individual authors will be reviewed wherever possible; articles in collected volumes will be listed separately below when they have a bearing on the history of linguistics, but, like offprints and articles in journals, will not normally be reviewed.

Members who wish to consult the Library are welcome to stay at Keble College, and should write in advance to the Steward (see inside back cover).

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NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The library and archives of the Forschungs-und Landesbibliothek, Schloß Friedenstein, Gotha, Germany.

The integration of the new states following German unification has led to significant changes in the organisation of libraries and archives in the former GDR. One of the most exciting developments for historians of linguistic ideas is the increased accessibility of collections in the east, particularly in Thuringia, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. The main disadvantage is that in some cases published catalogues of the collections are not yet freely available.

Gotha lies along the main Frankfurt-Dresden axis, between Eisenach (Bach's birthplace) and Erfurt. The Forschungs-und Landesbibliothek is still accommodated in the impressive castle - Schloß Friedenstein - built in Gotha by Duke Ernst ('the Pious') of Saxony-Gotha (1601-1675). The library in Gotha, together with the Thuringian Universitäts-und Landesbibliotheck in Jena and the famous libraries in Weimar, forms one of a triangle of historically important Thuringian libraries. As a research library, Gotha is co-operating with the Bavarian Staatsbibliotheck Munich and the Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel on the projected catalogue of German sixteenth-century imprints.

The collections in the Gotha Forschungs-und Landesbibliothek comprise about 10,000 mss. and over 500,000 printed works, of which about half are pre-1830. Partly through the history of its foundation under Duke Ernst, partly through the integration of the library of the Gotha grammar-school (itself a historically important institution) in 1945, the Forschungs-und Landesbibliothek is rich in seventeenth century material, including philological works and textbooks for teaching. The archives also include a significant collection of oriental, particularly Arabic, manuscripts.

Schloß Friedenstein is currently undergoing extensive renovation. Ultimately, it is hoped to provide appropriate accommodation for visiting scholars. Currently, a charge of less than £10 per night is made (due to Spartan conditions), IF you can manage to get accommodated in the castle.

Enquiries to Herrn Dr. H. Claus, The Director, or to Frau Dr. M. Mitscherling, Head of the Manuscripts Department, Forschungs-und Landesbibliothek Gotha, Postfach 30, 99 851 Gotha, Schloß Friedenstein, Germany.

See also: Claus, H. (1992) *Von der Bibliotheca ducalis Gothana zur Forschungs-und Landesbibliothek Gotha.* Bibliotheksforum Bayern BFB 10/1, 21-31. (John Walmsley)

Ratke's Textbooks

Funds have been awarded by the German Research Council for a joint research project between the Faculty of Linguistics and Literature at the University of Bielefeld, and the University of Halle-Wittenberg, Abteilung Köthen. The topic concerns the textbooks or teaching works of Wolfgang Ratke (Ratichius 1571-1635). The Gotha collections contain a number of completed but still unedited manuscripts by Ratke; others of his works were not published until the twentieth century. Between 1618 and 1621 Ratke and his team produced about thirty textbooks printed in Köthen, prepared according to his principle of harmony ("pro didactica Ratichii"). The award will run until 1996.

Contacts: Herrn U. Kordes MA., University of Bielefeld, Faculty of Linguistics and Literature, DFG-Projekt "Ratkes Lehrbuchwerk", Postfach 10 01 31, 33501 Bielefeld, Germany.
Herrn Dr. H. Egerland, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, FB Erziehungswissenschaft, Institut für Grundschulpädagogik Köthen, Lohmannstraße 23, 06366 Köthen, Germany. (John Walmsley)

First International Conference in Contrastive Semantics and Pragmatics, University of Brighton

6-9 April 1995: further enquiries and bookings should be addressed to the organisers, Katarzyna Jaszczolt (tel. 0273 642192 or 643459, email KMJ@uk.ac.bton.vms) and Kenneth Turner (tel. 0273 643345, email KPT1@uk.ac.bton.vms) The Language Centre, University of Brighton, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9PH. Fax: 0273 690710.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Anders Ahlqvist has been awarded an Associate Chair in Old And Middle Irish and Celtic Philology at the University of Galway.

NEW MEMBERS

Bald, Prof. Dr. Wolf-Dietrich, Englisches Seminar, Universität zu Köln, Albertus-Magnus-Platz, D-50923 Köln, Germany.

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