

A Social and Cultural History of English

S. Gramley, WS 2009-10
The 16th Century

Dec. 03 The Reformation; the Elizabethan Age and Shakespeare; religious movements (16th century)

Text 16: Excerpt from George Puttenham. *The Arte of Poesie* (1589)

Text 17: William Shakespeare: *Henry V*

Reading in Baugh and Cable, chap. 7, §§146-151 (on dialects and the standard) and chap. 8, §§ 152-172 (on new words)

The 16th century as an age of change

- Centralization of government
 - power
 - bureaucracy
- Renaissance
- Reformation
 - dissolution of the monasteries
 - split of the Church
- Education, printing, reading, literacy
- Religion
- Clothing, festivals, theater
- Change in language

Centralization of government

- power was now centered around the king
 - royal power of granting rewards (jobs, lands, financial rewards (pensions)
 - no longer the great lords who might be kingmakers (as Warwick had been in the 15th century)
 - but see Cardinal Wosley (1471-1530), a commoner, but a church dignitary
 - no longer any "private" armies
 - the rule of law; hence the need for lawyers and people with a legal education (Inns of the Court)
 - importance of success at the Court
- bureaucracy and the need for educated administrators

Thomas Cardinal Wolsey (1371-1430)



Renaissance and the behavior of the aristocracy

- in stark contrast to the medieval noble, feasting, fighting, and dallying with women
- the new ideal of the courtier, the Renaissance man: a warrior, a conversationalist, an artist, a musician, a sportsman (cf. Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, 1528, 1561 in England) – clearly well educated

Education

- Renaissance emphasis on education in order to make interesting conversation
- a new need for education and not just noble blood (administration and law)
- middle-class need for education (the three R's) for boys and even girls (who were expected to help run their husbands' businesses; for example, while merchants traveled their wives could manage things at home)
- a more empirical approach to knowledge (cf. medicine: theory of the humors vs. new studies of anatomy)
- a more pedagogical approach to teaching young children (encouragement rather than punishment)
- move away from rote learning to understanding

Higher Education

- founded in late 12th century (Oxford in 1167 and Cambridge in 1209 at the latest; short-lived Northampton, 1261-65)
- next foundings – all in Scotland – in the 15th century
- matriculation at Cambridge
 - 1550s: 160 a year
 - 1570s and 1580s: 340 a year

Schools

- free schools, unevenly distributed and not really free open for boys only (girls could be educated, but at home)
- public schools were expensive (first one mentioned: 1364 in Kingston (near Winchester); Winchester 1382; Eton 1440)
- grammar schools were most concerned with teaching Latin and Greek (grammar); the earliest in 597 (Canterbury) and 604 (Rochester)

Printing

- wider reading public
- English as central to this (Latin required time-consuming learning)
- greater range of subjects written about, including the introduction of the novel
- books remained expensive
- hence the popularity of broadsides (e.g. ballads at a halfpenny each)
- members of the Puritan middle classes would have read the Bible and histories
- the spread of print and of education led to more or more use of English as the medium of instruction

Reading and literacy

- Henry VIII's library at Whitehall contained 329 books at the time of his death (1547)
- Protestant views emphasized reading and studying the Bible
- literacy spread to the middle classes and yeomanry, which left 80% of the population illiterate
- higher literacy rates in London; lower in the countryside (under 30%) and the North (Sim: 139f)
- height between 1560 and 1580, e.g. East Anglia:
 - husbandmen: 30%
 - yeomen: 75%
 - tradesmen (Norwich): 60%
- two-thirds of all men in Norwich couldn't sign their names; three quarters of all women couldn't (Sim: 142)
- London: all but 18% of apprentices and 3% servants could not sign their names (ibid.: 165)

Religion

- Reformation: part of the major Protestant-Catholic split in Christendom; an end to many traditional festivals such as Corpus Christi
- Henry VIII: formal separation from Rome; confiscation of the monasteries; break with More
- Edward VI: greater actual reform; the *Book of Common Prayer*
- Mary I: reversion to Roman Catholic practice
- Elizabeth I: a careful balance
- Vestry controversy and Puritanism
- Bible translations (see last week)

Thomas Morus
(1378-1435)



Clothing and Fashion

- clothing as a sign of status; cf. sumptuary laws
- law of 1533:
- only someone with an income of over £40 p.a. could wear silk velvet;
- a voluminous gown of silk velvet only at £200+ p.a.
- only noblemen could wear scarlet, crimson, or blue silk velvet
- what people wore:
- women: (1) *linens*: *smock*, no *drawers*; (2) *bodies* (with *bents*, later *whalebone*), *corsets*, *skirts* possibly a *farthingale*; (3) *kirtle*; (4) *gown*
- men: (1) *linens*: *shirt*, *drawers*; (2) *upper stocks* (or *breeches* or *slops* or *hose*) with a *cod piece*; then *nether hose* (or *stockings*) with *garters* and a *doublet* above sometimes with a *jerkin* over it; (3) over this a *gown*, later a *cloak* (see following dialog)

Margaret: Ho Francis rise, and get you to schoole: you shalbe beaten for it is past seven: make you self reddie quickly, say your prayers, then you shall have your breakefast.

Francis: Margerite, geeve memy hosen: dispatche I pray you: where is my doublet? Brygn my garters, and my shoos: geeven mee that shooying home.

Margaret: Take first a cleane shirte, for yours is fowle.

Francis: Make haste then, for I doo tarie too long.

Tudor clothing



Henry VIII



Elizabeth I

Festivals and religious observations (post-Reformation)

- fewer holidays because of the working time lost, esp. during the summer months (in an agricultural society)
- less colorful churches with fewer statues of saints and the candles that burned for them
- ceremonies of blessing with holy water might be abandoned
- fasting in Advent, including Christmas Eve; end of the fast on Christmas Day
- gift-giving on New Year's Day (the Feast of Annunciation) and a sumptuous feast on Epiphany (Jan. 6) – at least among the wealthy
- the Lord of Misrule was practiced (often at Christmas, but also at other times)

Theater

- popular everywhere as part of the medieval tradition of cycles of plays
- resistance from the Puritans as pretence and illusion and an opportunity for vice
- London theater
- initially in open spaces outside the town (traffic problems)
- theater halls (capacity 1000): expensive
- open amphitheaters (like the Globe) (capacity 2,500) had cheap standing places at one penny (artisans earned a shilling a week) and were popular
- not proper for women to go
- behavior was rude

Language usage

- new consonant phonemes
- the Great Vowel Shift
- modes of address
- expansion of the use of the auxiliary *do*
- literary representation of national accents

The Middle English Period

Phonemicization (/v, dʒ, ʒ, ð, ŋ/)

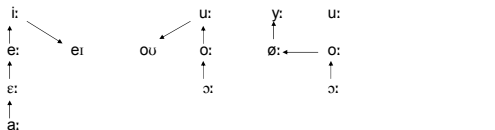
The high degree of lexical borrowing supports the evolution of some of the new phonemes.

- the presence of initial /v-/ in words borrowed from French led the way to meaningful distinctions between words with /f-/ where before they were allophones (ModE *fat-vaŋ*)
- much the same thing applies to the development of /dʒ-/ to a phoneme (cf. *jet-geŋ*)
- a /z/ followed by /i/ or /j/ = /ʒ/ palatalized to /ʒ/, a process supported by the existence of /ʃ/ (system symmetry) (Samuels: 34)
- weakly stressed function words began with voiced /ð/ and so formed minimal pairs with stressed words beginning with unvoiced /θ/ (*thy - thigh*)
- with the loss of final voiced consonants after nasals (-mb, ng, and in many dialects -nd) the allophone /ŋ/, which was pronounced before a /g/ became a phoneme, cf. the minimal pair /sʌŋ/ - /sʌn/ (*sung - sun*)

The Early Modern English Period (1500 – 1700)

The Great Vowel Shift (GVS) in Southern England and in Northern England and Scotland

front vowels (England and Scotland) back vowels (S. England) (North and Scotland)



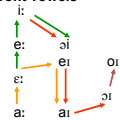
Examples of the shift:

time [i:] → [eɪ]	foul [u:] → [ou]	house = hus [u:]
teem [e:] → [i:]	fool [o:] → [u:]	good [o:] → [ø(i)] or [i:]
team [ɛ:] → [e:]	foal [ɔ:] → [o:]	foal [ɔ:] → [o:]
tame [a:] → [ɛ:]		

The GVS

Figure 4: The Great Vowel Shift (GVS) in Southern England and its continuation in London English (Cockney)

front vowels



Examples of the shift:

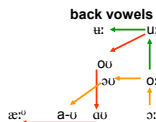
team [e:] → [eɪ] (feeding into the class *teem*)
teem [e:] → [i:] → [əɪ]

time [i:] → [eɪ] → [aɪ] → [ɔɪ]

tame [a:] → [e:] → [eɪ] → [aɪ]
toy [ɔ:] → [ɔɪ]

The GVS

Figure 5: The Great Vowel Shift (GVS) in Southern England and its continuation in London English (Cockney)



Examples of the shift:

book [o:] → [u:] → [ʌ]

about [u:] → [ou] → [aʊ] → [æʊ]

boat [o:] → [ɔ:] → [əʊ] → [a-ʊ]

The diphthongization of the high vowels (varying in regard to /i:/ and /u:/) took place in:

English	but not in	Scots
Dutch	but not in	Frisian
High German	but not in	Low German

Why is this?

All three areas of shift (England, the Netherlands, the High German area) were areas of a higher cultural level and greater contact with speakers of non-Germanic languages.

The pressure to differentiate themselves is stronger in the higher ("more cultured") classes.

Presumably the level of redundancy also needs to be heightened.

This leads to greater stress on the long vowels, which then heighten and/or diphthongize.

Note: Isolated areas show only slow change (e.g. Iceland, Sardinia) while conquered areas have the highest rates of change (Normandy, England).

Elizabethan terms of address

In this period (about 1600) "people liked to 'place' each other in the social hierarchy when they were conversing in the more formal contexts. Thus, titles, occupational terms like *parson* or *cook*, generic terms like *man*, *woman*, and *gentleman*, even terms of relationship like *husband* and *wife* (used freely between spouses on good terms) were frequently used in direct address; and if one of these was appropriate or available, a vague word like *neighbour* was even used." (Leith: 82f)

Condescension was expressed by using *fellow*. There was an expansion down the social ladder of *gentleman* and of *goodman* (early on: "master of an establishment").

Shakespearean English: Second Person Singular Pronoun

The Two Gentlemen of Verona (Act I, Scene 1) (1590):

Were't not affection chains thy tender days

Pronoun: 2nd person singular *thy* as a marker of intimacy "Thou in Shakespeare's time was ...the pronoun of (1) affection towards friends (2) good-humoured superiority to servants, and (3) contempt or anger to stranger. It had, however, already fallen somewhat into disuse, and being regarded as archaic, was naturally adopted (4) in higher poetic style and in the language of solemn prayer." (Abbott: 153f)

So by your circumstance you call me fool.

Pronoun: Change to *you* for banter (or a dispute).

Shakespearean English: Periphrastic *do*

The Two Gentlemen of Verona (Act I, Scene 1) (1590):

*When thou dost meet good hap; and in thy danger –
If ever danger do environ thee –*

Periphrastic *do*: newly introduced to the language, it is extended to verbs in general, not just negations, questions, and emphatic affirmation as in ModE

Subjunctive *do* for ModE *does* (also non-emphatic use of *do*)

Content: Puttenham text

Puttenham argues for the use of the best English, which

- is current: *at this day the Norman English; Piers plowman nor Gower nor Lydgagte nor yet Chaucer; for their langage is now out of vse*
- is English, not Celtic: not the *British*
- is *naturall, pure, and the most vsuall of all his country*
- is *spoken in the kings Court, or in the good townes and Cities within the land;*
- not: *in the marches and frontiers, or in port townes, where straungers haunt for traffike sake, or yet in Vniuersities*
- not *poore rusticall or vnciuill people: in any vplandish village or corner of a Realme, where is no resort but of poore rusticall or vnciuill people*
- not: *craftes man or carter, or other of the inferiour sort*
- not northern: *vsed beyond the riuer of Trent*
- not: *Westerne más speech*
- but Southern English: *take the vsuall speech of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within ix. myles*
- as used by gentlemen and clerks
- but not affected language:

Text 16: Excerpt from George Puttenham. *The Arte of Poesie* (1589)

But after a speech is fully fashioned to the common **vnderstanding**, and accepted by consent of a whole country and **natiō**, it is called a language, and **receaueth** none allowed alterenation, but by extraordinary occasions by little and little, as it were insensibly bringing in of many corruptiōs that creepe along with the time; of all which matters, we haue more largely spoken in our bookes of the originals and pedigree of the English tong. Then when I say language, I meane the speech wherein the Poet or maker writeth be it Greek or Latine, or as our case is the **vulgar** English, and when it is **peculiar** vnto a country it is called the mother speach of that people: the Greekes terme it *Idioma*: so is ours at this day the Norman English.

Spelling:

<v> and <u> are positionally defined: <v> at the beginning of a word and <u> elsewhere, regardless of whether used as a vowel (ModE <u> or a consonant (ModE <v>), cf. *vnderstanding* (ModE <u>); *vulgar* (ModE <v>) *receaueth* (ModE <v>); *peculiar* (ModE <u>)

following <n> may be marked with a macron over the vowel: *natiō*

... it is called a language, and **receaueth** none allowed alteration, but by extraordinary occasions by little and little, as **it were** insensibly **bringing in of many corruptiōs** that creepe along with the time; of all which matters, we haue more largely spoken in our bookes of the originals and pedigree of the English tong. Then when I say language, I meane the speech wherein the Poet or maker writeth **be it Greek or Latine**, or as our case is the vulgar English, ...

Syntax:

Third person present tense singular verbs in {-e}th): *it is called a language, and receaueth none allowed alteration*

Subjunctive:

- Singular *were* for an uncertain status: As it were ... bringing in ...
- Present tense *be* always in the sense of "it might be": *be it Greek or Latine; as they be now spoken and pronounced; that it be naturall, pure, and the most vsuall of all his countrey*

Complement structure:

Participles may have objects introduced by the preposition *of*: ... *were insensibly bringing in of many corruptiōs*

Periphrastic do: *for such persons doe abuse good speaches by strange accents or ill shapen soundes, and false ortographie*

Literature

Baugh, A.C. and T. Cable (2002) *A History of the English Language*, 5th ed. London: Routledge.

Blake, N.F. (1996) *A History of the English Language*. Houndmills: Palgrave.

Sim, A. (2009) *Pleasures & Pastimes in Tudor England*. Stroud: History Press.