

RICHARD WATTS and PETER TRUDGILL (eds.), **Alternative Histories of English**. 2002. London: Routledge. Pp. xiii, 280.

This book is quite innovative. It seeks to promulgate, and rightly so, the history of nonstandard varieties of English as contributing to our overall knowledge of the development of the language. Furthermore, it seeks to change the focus of most future histories of English from the traditional areas of phonology, grammar, and lexis to sociolinguistic concerns, including the interrelated pragmatic and discourse-oriented aspects. As the editors succinctly assert: "So it is perhaps not too far-fetched to say that many of the orthodox histories of the English language have been sociolinguistically inadequate, anglocentric and based on Standard English" (p. 2). Their goals are certainly noble ones.

The volume is conveniently divided into two parts. Part I contains six essays on numerous nonstandard varieties of English. Let me single out the fine essay by the second editor for discussion. Peter Trudgill's "The History of the Lesser-known Varieties of English" (pp. 29-44) is quick to point out that only 400 years ago, English was spoken only in England and parts of Scotland. Over the course of the following centuries, of course, it spread far and wide, to become an international, nay a global language, the greatest one the world has ever seen so far. One of the places where English took root was in Saint Helena, a British colony with 6,000 population, in the South Atlantic (Napoleon was exiled there from 1815 until his death in 1821). Trudgill refers to Saint Helena English as a creoloid (p. 36); however to me, this imprecise term should be abandoned as nonscientific (see Alan S. Kaye and Mauro Tosco, Pidgin and Creole Languages: A Basic Introduction, Munich: Lincom Europa, 2001). Using this same term "creoloid," the English of Pitcairn Island, another British colony 2,200 km southeast of Tahiti, is referred to as a "dual-source creoloid" (p. 39). English and Tahitian can be traced as its origin, since Pitcairnese

speakers descended from the mutineers of the British ship HMS Bounty and their Tahitian companions. In 1856, however, the Pitcairn Islanders resettled on Norfolk Island, today an Australian territory. According to Trudgill, Norfolk English is spoken by only 25% of the population, and it is, not surprisingly, very close to Pitcairnese (p. 42).

The other authors and their titles in Part I of the volume include: Joy Milroy's "The Legitimate Language: Giving a History to English," Katie Wells' "'North of Watford Gap': A Cultural History of Northern English," Elizabeth Gordon and Andrea Sudbury's "The History of Southern Hemisphere Englishes," Shana Poplack, Gerard Van Herk and Dawn Harvie's "'Deformed in the Dialects': An Alternative History of Non-standard English," Rajend Mesthrie's "Building a New English Dialect: South African Indian English and the History of Englishes," and Dennis R. Preston's "The Story of Good and Bad English in the United States."

Part II, "The History of Communicative and Pragmatic Aspects of English," contains four essays. Let me focus on the chapter by the first editor, Watts' "From Polite Language to Educated Language: The Re-emergence of an Ideology" (pp. 155-172). This article persuasively argues that "'polite language' [over the years: ASK] came to mean 'standard language'" (p. 155). Mentioning a problem in the definition of the term "Standard English" as used by John Honey in his (1997) book, Language is Power: The Story of Standard English and Its Enemies (London: Faber and Faber), Watts disagrees with his contention that users of Standard English must, of necessity, be educated. Honey is quoted as saying: "... there is ... [an] overwhelming association, right across British society, between the use of grammar, vocabulary and idioms of standard English, and the concept of 'educatedness'" (p. 170), to which Watts, correctly in my estimation, retorts: "The statement is entirely unsubstantiated by any evidence at all ..." (*ibid.*). There is certainly much food for thought in this article.

The remaining essays in Part II include: Sharon Millar's "Eloquence and Elegance: Ideals of Communicative Competence in Spoken English," Terttu Navalainen's "Women's Writings as Evidence for Linguistic Continuity and Change in Early Modern English," and Andreas H. Jucker's "Discourse Markers in Early Modern English."

Finally, the prolific David Crystal concludes the tome with the epilogue "Broadcasting the Nonstandard Message" (pp. 233-144). It becomes rather clear from what he surveys that the gap between standard and nonstandard varieties of English "is likely to widen," and that there are numerous parallels with diglossic languages to be reckoned with in this connection (p. 242).

I can recommend this publication for those interested in English as well as Englishes.

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