

July 18, 2003

CLASS 9: The Early Modern English Period

OUTLINE

- Early Modern English (ENE):** about 1500 to the present day
- “Renaissance” versus “Medieval” as historical periods
 - some cultural connotations

Print Culture: Gutenberg, Caxton et al

- comments by Elizabeth Eisenstein
- manuscripts and books at Houghton
- “the Text” as a product of print culture, versus “scribal text”
- printing allowed the fixed text, autonomous text
- notion of “author”
- the special case of the Bible

Observations on Richard Banckes's *Herbal* (see Pyles & Algeo: 166)

- spelling and letter forms
- punctuation

Great/Tudor Vowel Shift

Steps of the Vowel Shift

1. 1450s: [i] and [u] become diphthongs with a schwa as first element (by the later 1600s it became [ai])
2. c. 1500 next highest, close <e> and close <o> become [i] and [u] at first *food*, *foot*, *food* were all pronounced alike; later changes
3. open <e> and <o>: Recall their spelling differences today by c.1600 they become [e] and [o] the two kinds of <e> eventually merge, or at least overlap (e.g. *see*, *sea*; *meet*, *meat*)
4. ME [a] to [æ] already changed by 1500 (fronting) raised to open <e> by c.1600 — raised to [e] by c. 1650

Summary

- of the seven (or eight) long vowels, two became diphthongs
- the other five were raised at staggered intervals
- new vowel (low, back <a>) was introduced (from words of French origin)
- “long vowels” for NE is an inaccurate way to describe them
- short vowels, by contrast, have been remarkably constant from OE times

External History

Milestones in the period:

• socioeconomic:

- *shift of wealth*: inherited land to financial assets leads to
 - *social mobility*: emerging middle class
 - population of *poor workers in cities* grows
 - late 1700s: *Industrial Revolution* begins
 - *living standards* rise for middle/upper classes; fall for laborers
- #### • intellectual:
- *secularization of scholarship*; humanism; the Renaissance; the Enlightenment
 - shift from religious dogma to *intellectual inquiry*; founding of science
 - the *Reformation*: Papal ‘empire’ fractures; Protestant sects multiply
 - *English Reformation*: Church of England founded 1534 Henry VIII
 - *printing lowers cost of books* → *wide literacy* among middle/upper classes
- #### • political:
- *England*: Parliament (peopled by the rich) shares power with the monarch
 - *Empire*: Portugal, Spain, England found settlement/plantation colonies on far-flung continents

The Reformation

- excesses of power and wealth in the church hierarchy bring forth *protestors* in various places
- *October 31, 1517*, Wittenberg, Germany: Martin Luther (a monk, theologian, and professor) posts 95 theses criticizing corrupt church practices
- *Europe-wide result* was fracturing of the Roman church into many sects

The English Reformation

- *Henry VIII* desires to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, to marry Anne Boleyn
- *divorce is not permitted* in the Roman church
- Henry declares a separate *Church of England* with himself and the Archbishop of Canterbury at its head — to emphasize the separation and the ‘Englishness’ of this church, Henry and his successors develop a canon of *church documents in English*:
 - *The Book of Common Prayer* 1549
 - *The King James Bible* 1611
- previous to this, *translating the Bible was a daring act* in defiance of the Papacy in Rome

The effects of printing

- *literacy* spreads as books become cheap and accessible
- printing influences *standardization*
 - printed documents originate in London, home of standard dialect
 - practical need to print only one version of a book (not multiple dialect versions)
 - begins fixing of spellings (though inconsistency remains for centuries)
- the printed word *gains authority* over handwritten documents
- *prestige of document content*: religious, scientific, literary, governmental
- *power of elites* to control what gets printed

Linguistic Consequences

- *emerging middle class*: insecure 'identity of wealth'; mimic 'old money' material culture & language
- Reformation: Bibles/prayer books in *English*
- Renaissance: Revival of classical Latin/Greek learning leads to *study of English grammar*
 - also *massive borrowing* of words (see below)
- these three combined lead to *development of a codified standard English*: 'proper English'
- Empire exports *English worldwide*; brings foreign words to English
- foundation of role of *English as the dominant international language*

Major changes in the language

- Lexicon: words from
 - Latin & Greek (major lenders): Renaissance/Enlightenment borrowings
 - science, technology, philosophy, religion, arts

→ result: three layers of formality

Low: Anglo-Saxon	Medium: French	High: Latin/Greek
<i>ask</i>	<i>question</i>	<i>interrogate</i>
<i>folk</i>	<i>people</i>	<i>populace</i>
<i>guts</i>	<i>entrails</i>	<i>intestines</i>
<i>gift</i>	<i>present</i>	<i>donation</i>
<i>word</i>	<i>term</i>	<i>lexeme</i>
<i>help</i>	<i>aid</i>	<i>assistance</i>
<i>fair</i>	<i>beautiful</i>	<i>attractive</i>
<i>foe</i>	<i>enemy</i>	<i>adversary</i>
<i>rise</i>	<i>mount</i>	<i>ascend</i>
<i>hearty</i>	<i>cordial</i>	<i>cardiac</i>

- growth in vocabulary
- the Inkhorn controversy
- coinages by authors: Marlowe, Shakespeare, others
- hundreds of new words appear for the first time in Shakespeare's work:

addiction, assassination, comply, consign, denote, compulsive, discontent, domineering, exhale, generous, hostile, investment, luggage, obscene, pious, protester, retirement, survivor, supervise, tranquil, unreal, useful

phrases from Shakespeare:

breathe one's last, cheer up, foregone conclusion, good riddance, household name, salad days, seamy side, tower of strength, etc.

- other European languages: French, Italian, Spanish
- 'high culture', trade, travel
- non-Indo-European languages (India, Africa, Far East, Americas)
- conquest; new substances, animals, plants, foods

• Grammar:

- most suffixes of OE and ME gone
- Norse-origin pronouns win: *them, she* replace *hem, hie*
- Norse present-tense ending *-(e)s* replaces OE *-(e)th*: *doth > does; saith > says*
- emergence of modern verb forms such as 'do' in negatives and questions, but also the present progressive (e.g., *is walking*)
- Shakespeare: *I doubt it not & I do not doubt you or What sayde he? & What do you see?*

• Pronunciation: The Great Vowel Shift

- English vowel sounds and vowel spellings part ways
- affected the long vowels only.

Middle English	Early Modern & Modern English
<i>mis</i> ('mees')	<i>mice, bite, time, night</i>
<i>gees</i> ('gayss')	<i>geese, beet, feet</i>
<i>leaf</i> ('lehf')	<i>leaf, cheat, plead, meat</i>
<i>loude</i> ('lood')	<i>loud, house, flower, tower, about</i>
<i>goos</i> ('gohs')	<i>goose, boot, pool, soon</i>
<i>stoon</i> ('stawn')	<i>stone, no</i>
<i>nam</i> ('nahm')	<i>name, blame, fame</i>
<i>ham, bat</i> ('hawm')	<i>home, boat</i>

- some long /o/ > modern 'oo': *good, book, wood*

- short /o/ > modern 'uh': *love, some, son, come*

- the special case of palatalization for words like *view, mute, beauty*

compare *June, rude, chew*

and *duty, new, neuter, suit, enthusiasm*

the special case of *sugar, sure*

in British and American English *tissue, issue*

Latin Influence on early Modern English

- Humanism gave renewed attention to ancient Latin and Greek authors
- borrowings were usually specialized words
- etymological respellings:
 - describe, parfet, verdict, peynure, avis, aventure, Avril, dette, vittles*
- no change in pronunciation: *dette, doute, vittles*

MORPHOLOGY

Nouns

Number: Pretty much **like today** — the **plural marker** –s is realized as /ɪz, z, s/ depending on the phonological context. (There were a **few more irregular** patterns: *eyen, shoonen, housen*.)

Case: The **genitive was an –s** like today (only not written with the **apostrophe** usually).

In the 16th century, the genitive became an **NP-marker**, rather than a noun-marker, so:

e.g. *the king's of England crown* → *the king of England's crown*
the man's I met yesterday dog → *the man I met yesterday's dog*

The **genitive plural** was sometimes marked with two –s endings, sometimes with none:

e.g. *the farmerses wives / the farmer wives* (modern: *the farmers' wives*)

Adjectives

No **case, number or gender** marking anymore.

Comparative and superlative forms like today, except forms like the following are found:

e.g. *more easier, famouser*

Pronouns

Thou / thee disappear in (Standard English) in the 17th century due to social factors. In the 16th century, *thou* was the pronoun of **intimacy** and *you* the pronoun of politeness (*tu/vous, du/Sie*).

Ye was the nominative of *you*. Both had a weak form pronounced /jə/.

The rule of **my vs. mine** was like for *a vs. an*: e.g. *mine eyes/eyen, my shoes/shoon*. Alongside *mine*, there were also “attributive” forms for other pronouns which survive in some present-day dialects: *hys, hern, yourn, theirn*, but these were replaced by forms with –s.

Its is an innovation; in **ENE his** is the possessive of *it*.

The “three-term” demonstrative system is still found:

this (near me), **that** (near you), **yon** (over there)

Verbs

Like present-day English, except that there were **forms in –st that went with thou** (i.e. 2SG).

The **third person singular** was either –s (in the north) or –eth (in the south). **Around 1600**, –s becomes general in Standard English (in early Shakespeare it is less common than in later Shakespeare). In 16th-century Standard English, –s is **more colloquial, –eth is more formal**.

Around 1600 we find –eth fairly systematically in **disyllabic verb forms** like *riseth, preacheth* (where today we have –s **pronounced /ɪz/**).

(Written) **negative contraction** — *don't, won't* etc. — appears in the late 17th century.

Forms like **be, beest** (instead of **art, are**) are now purely South Western.

In Scots, the 2nd and 3rd person singular endings were –is; in all other persons, there was no ending if the subject was a pronoun and –is if the subject was not a pronoun.

SYNTAX

NE rules for negation and inversion

NE negation: put *not* after the auxiliary if there is one OR ELSE put *not* before the main verb and put *do* in front of *not*.

NE inversion (in questions and elsewhere): put the auxiliary, if there is one, before the subject. If there is no auxiliary, put *do* before the subject. Main verbs are never put before the subject.

NE tense/agreement: in both negation and inversion, the main verb has no tense or agreement marking — the auxiliary or *do* carries this.

Earlier rules for negation and inversion (changed in the 16th century)

ME & ENE Negation: put *not* after the finite verb/auxiliary.

ME & ENE Inversion: put the finite verb/auxiliary in front of the subject.

There was **no (syntactic) distinction** between auxiliaries and main verbs (and modal auxiliaries could have direct objects in ME; cf. Class 7 — some of them were still able to do this in ENE).

During the 16th century, and for a little while after, **do was able to appear in seemingly any kind of sentence** (not just negatives and questions) — this appears to be a facet of the change.

Consider some relevant examples from Shakespeare:

- (1) He **heard** *not* that. (Julia, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV.ii)
- (2) **Know** you *not* the cause? (Tanio, *Taming of the Shrew*, IV.ii)
- (3) **Wilt** thou **use** thy wit? (Claudio, *Much Ado About Nothing*, V.i)
- (4) You **do** *not* **look** on me. (Jessica, *Merchant of Venice*, II.vi)

Reading

Algeo 2001 — Burchfield 1994 [take a look at pretty much any of these chapters]