

A.P. Cowie (Editor). *The Oxford History of English Lexicography. Volume I: General-purpose Dictionaries. Volume II: Specialized Dictionaries.* 2009. Volume I: xviii + 467 pp., Volume II: xix + 551 pp. ISBN Volume I-II: 978-0-19-928562-4. Volume I: 978-0-19-928560-0. Volume II: 978-0-19-928561-7. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Price: £140.

According to the blurb, *The Oxford History of English Lexicography* (volumes I-II) presents 'the fullest account yet published of the lexicography of English from its origins in medieval glosses, through its rapid development in the eighteenth century, to a fully-established high-tech industry that is as reliant as ever on learning and scholarship'. The term 'English lexicography' is interpreted broadly to embrace dictionaries not only of British English but also its national varieties such as Scots, American English, the varieties of English spoken in Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa and the English-based Creoles of the Caribbean (cf. vol. I, p. 1). In addition, throughout the topical presentation numerous references are made to developments in Europe and elsewhere which have influenced the course of English lexicography.

In addition to other preliminaries and the 15 contributions (pp. 15-409), volume I contains the following nine components: (1) Contents (pp. v-vi), (2) Preface (pp. vii-viii), (3) Contents of Volume II (pp. ix-x), (4) Notes on Contributors (pp. xi-xiv), (5) List of Illustrations (p. xv), (6) List of Abbreviations (pp. xvi-xviii), (7) Introduction (pp. 1-14), (8) References (pp. 410-450), and (9) Index (pp. 451-467). The 15 contributions are grouped in two: 'Part I: Early Glossaries; Bilingual and Multilingual Dictionaries' (pp. 15-128), which contains five contributions, and 'Part II: The History of English Monolingual Dictionaries' (pp. 129-409), which comprises 10 contributions.

In addition to other preliminaries and the 17 contributions (pp. 23-478), volume II contains the following nine components: (1) Contents (pp. v-vi), (2) Preface (pp. vii-viii), (3) Contents of Volume I (pp. ix-x), (4) Notes on Contributors (pp. xi-xiv), (5) List of Illustrations (pp. xv-xvi), (6) List of Abbreviations (pp. xvii-xix), (7) Introduction (pp. 1-21), (8) References (pp. 479-533), and (9) Index (pp. 535-551). The 17 contributions are grouped in two: 'Part I: Dictionaries Specialized According to Ordering of Entries, Topical or Linguistic Content, or Speech Community' (pp. 23-336), which contains eleven contributions, and 'Part II: Dictionaries Specialized According to Uses and Users' (pp. 337-478), which contains six contributions.

Both volumes contain well-constructed and informative introductions by the editor, A.P. Cowie. In the course of the 14 and 21 pp. respectively, the author admirably succeeds in capturing and presenting the salient points of the two constituent volumes.

In volume I, part I, Hans Sauer explores the early development of glosses, glossaries and dictionaries in the Medieval Period; Janet Bately gives an outline of bilingual and multilingual dictionaries of the Renaissance and early seventeenth century; Monique C. Cormier writes about bilingual dictionaries of the

late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Carla Mareello deals with bilingual dictionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and Donna M.T.Cr. Farina and George Durman contribute a chapter on bilingual dictionaries of English and Russian from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. In part II, N.E. Osselton explores the early development of the English monolingual dictionary (seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries); Allen Reddick writes about the work of Samuel Johnson and Charles Richardson; Sidney I. Landau gives an extensive outline of major American dictionaries (including sections on the work of Noah Webster and that of his successors in the USA); Lynda Mugglestone contributes a chapter on the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1879–1928), henceforth OED; Charlotte Brewer writes about the OED Supplements; Richard W. Bailey contributes a chapter on dictionaries of national and regional varieties of English; Margaret Dareau and Iseabail Macleod write about dictionaries of Scots; Michael Adams deals with period dictionaries (dictionaries of Old and Middle English); Jeannette Allsopp writes about dictionaries of Caribbean English; and Edmund Weiner contributes a chapter on the computerization of the OED.

In volume II, part I, Werner Hüllen gives an outline of dictionaries of synonyms and thesauri; Michael Rand Hoare contributes an extensive chapter on scientific and technical dictionaries; Carole Hough writes about dictionaries of place-names; Patrick Hanks writes about dictionaries of personal names; Joan C. Beal's contribution deals with pronouncing dictionaries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; Beverley Collins and Inger M. Mees contribute an extensive chapter on pronouncing dictionaries from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day; Thomas Herbst and Michael Klotz write about syntagmatic and phraseological dictionaries; Elizabeth Knowles contributes with a chapter on dictionaries of quotations; Anatoly Liberman deals with English etymological dictionaries; Robert Penhallurick deals with dialect dictionaries; and Julie Coleman contributes a chapter on dictionaries of slang and cant. In part II, Robert Allen writes about dictionaries of usage; Sidney I. Landau contributes a chapter on American collegiate dictionaries; A.P. Cowie writes about the earliest foreign learners' dictionaries; Thierry Fontenelle deals with linguistic research and learners' dictionaries; Rosamund Moon gives an account of the Cobuild project; and Hilary Nesi writes about dictionaries in electronic form.

It is regrettable that in volume I the first 1100 years, the period spanning ca. 700–1800, is allotted only approximately 100 pages (pp. 17–40, 41–64, 65–85 and 131–154), while the remaining 300 pages cover the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Does this perhaps reflect a tendency that is prevalent in our day, especially in Western Europe, to focus too closely on current and recent developments? This trend is exemplified in the new Danish literary history, *Dansk Litteraturs Historie*, which is planned as a five-volume work, the first of which appeared in 2006 and covers the period 1100–1800, while the remaining four are to be devoted to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (with all the vol-

umes to be of identical size). A similar bias is found in the recent 17-volume history of Denmark, *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie* (2002–2005), which devotes a total of five volumes (vols. 12–16) to the twentieth century, while the nineteenth is allotted two volumes (vols. 10–11), the eighteenth one volume (vol. 9), and the period 200–1250 is covered in three volumes (vols. 2–4), and, again, the volumes are identical in size.

Is this perhaps, on the other hand, to be explained by a lack of research in the history of lexicography in Europe, or in the world at large: Is there simply not known more, and therefore little to write about? Alternatively, was the editor unable to recruit a sufficient corps of researchers with relevant expertise in lexicographic history? Whatever the case, it is noticeable that the contributions on the oldest and early periods (ca. 700–1700) are of variable quality. Hans Sauer's contribution on medieval lexicography (vol. I, pp. 17–40), for example, and N.E. Osselton's piece on monolingual lexicography in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (vol. I, pp. 131–154) reflect breadth, depth, thoroughness and critical analysis, while the chapter on the Renaissance and early seventeenth century (vol. I, pp. 41–64), for example, is superficial, disorganised and lacking in focus (a large number of dictionaries are mentioned, but little real insight is given into any of them).

It is also rather incomprehensible that a whole chapter (vol. I, pp. 105–128) is devoted to bilingual dictionaries of English and Russian — why English and Russian? What special role can Russian, as opposed to other world languages, have in a history of English lexicography? The contributions dealing with the period post-1700 are all, on the other hand, and with few exceptions, of a high standard (praiseworthy are, for example, Allen Reddick's chapter on Samuel Johnson's and Charles Richardson's work, Sidney I. Landau's contribution on American dictionaries, the chapters on the OED etc.).

The Oxford History of English Lexicography is an anthology, not a monograph. This presents both advantages and disadvantages. The principal advantage is that the work could be produced within a short time, which enables the most recent research to be incorporated. Had one or two academics been made responsible for the whole work, it might have had a gestation period of 10–15 years, with the result that the chapters written first could well be outdated by the time they reached publication. There is a further advantage to be gained since in the case of most specialist areas a high standard of writing and accuracy of detail is ensured by enlisting experts and experts alone, to produce the relevant chapters. Had only one or two metalexicographers written the entire work, it would hardly have reached the high standard it demonstrates, and many errors of detail would probably have passed unnoticed.

The disadvantages that an anthology entails are not easily disguised. The easiest to uncover is a lack of terminological consistency, even in the area of quite elementary, central lexicographic concepts or entities. Thus, for example, in the course of the first volume at least seven different expressions are used for 'lemma': (1) *lemma* (e.g. vol. I, p. 21), (2) *headword* (e.g. vol. I, p. 134), (3) *word-*

heading (e.g. vol. I, p. 172), (4) *entry* (e.g. vol. I, p. 184),¹ (5) *entry word* (e.g. vol. I, p. 190), (6) *word* (e.g. vol. I, p. 193), and (7) *term* (e.g. vol. I, p. 207). A second problem is that cohesion between the individual chapters is hardly greater than that to be found in a carefully-edited theme-volume ('History of Lexicography' as theme, for example) of an academic journal. Where is a *leitmotif* to be found? What are the basic assumptions or starting-points? What is the theoretical groundwork? What underlying approach is there to narrowing down the text genre or document type that lexicographic reference works represent? What is the overall view of lexicography — and how can one expect authors of individual contributions to achieve a consensus on such issues when they demonstrate no common ground on use when dealing with the lemma? It is generally accepted that there are diverging views as to what constitutes a lexicographic reference work — just as there are varying opinions on how lexicography itself is to be defined. Landau (2001), for example, regards lexicography as an art and a craft, and therefore apparently not as an academic discipline, whereas Michael Jacoby, who is responsible for a 1 000 page survey of Scandinavian dictionaries (Jacoby 1990), treats his overview as being an example of a *lexicological* work, despite the fact that others maintain that his book is a *lexicographic* work (cf. Gundersen 1994). Lindemann (1994: 2) distinguishes between *glossography*, knowledge and theorizing about word-lists, and *lexicography*, knowledge and theorizing about dictionaries and lexica. A widespread view, especially amongst linguists, is exemplified by Meier (2003: 307), who regards lexicography as a branch of *applied linguistics*. Wierzbicka (1985: 5) allows lexicography no scientific basis whatsoever, whereas Henriksen (1992) suggests a merger of *lexicography* and *encyclopaedism*, resulting in a synthesis to be called 'reference science' (Danish: *referenciologi*)! Finally there are Bergenholtz and Tarp (2002, 2003 *et passim*), Tarp (2008a, 2008b *et passim*), and Pálfi et al. (2008), who have yet other, but compatible, viewpoints. What is understood in *The Oxford History of English Lexicography* by 'lexicography' and what is the concept of the nature of the document type to which lexicographic reference works belong?

A second, and more important concern regarding lexicographic history, which is given no attention whatsoever, is the following central crux: To what form of historiography do the various contributions adhere? There are diverging approaches and assumptions on which the presentation of any form of historical development can be based, cf. Koerner (1978), Grotzsch (1982), Brekle (1985) and Dörner (1991). The range can be narrowed down to three:

- The historical-positivistic approach that seeks, monumentally, to collect as much data as possible and regards the described development as a constant progression towards a higher level.
- The selective approach which picks out the most important data and presents it without a (preconceived) evaluating frame; this is often associated with everyman's general interest in history: history is exciting.

- The selective approach in which especially significant data is critically selected and presented within an evaluative assessment frame which is often presented against a background of logic: one can learn from history.

Bergenholtz and Pálfi (2008) adopt the last of these three approaches but do not exclude elements of the second. In contrast to what emerges from some, but by no means all, of the chapters in the work under review, Bergenholtz and Pálfi (2008: 185; trsl. LLP) do not accept that lexicography has moved in curves constantly attaining higher levels:

On the contrary, we believe we are able to observe that lexicography in the period of the Enlightenment in many ways reached a level that subsequent dictionary writing was unable to attain [...]. When we take contemporary lexicography into consideration, we will not be motivated by a pattern of criticism or praise for the past, but rather by criticism of contemporary endeavours which have not always learned from earlier lexicographical mistakes or, indeed, predecessors' advantageous considerations.

On reading the chapters in these two volumes, it is clear that there is no shared view as to how history is to be written or approached.

It is also unfortunate that there are no theoretical generalisations. Neither the differences between Anglo-Saxon and Continental European lexicography (cf. Rothe 2001), nor the internal similarities within Anglo-Saxon lexicography (cf. Rothe 2001) are, for example, given any mention. It is questionable whether such elements can feature within the concept of an anthology, for which of the contributors should raise them? There should at least have been an editorial afterword or epilogue, as a supplement to the editor's introductions to the individual volumes — this could have highlighted and reviewed a number of theoretical issues.

The two indexes are laid out in traditional flush-and-hang style with indented sub-entries. At page turns the main entry is repeated and marked with '(cont.)', so that the user can retain a sense of perspective; see for instance 'proper names (cont.)' in vol. I, p. 464, which is an entry continued from the previous page. The index in vol. I is four per cent (17 pp.) of the body of the text (411 pp.) and is therefore a so-called four per cent index, whereas the index in vol. II is three and a half per cent (17 pp.) of the body of the text (480 pp.) and is therefore a three and a half per cent index. Neither of the indexes is sufficient in size and depth in relation to the density of information in the volumes (on estimating the size of an index cf. Mulvany 2005: 69-73). Both indexes display many unfortunate gaps; just to mention a few examples from the index in vol. I: *Libri de significatu verborum* (from the first century BC), which is mentioned on p. 29 and is important because it may be the very first dictionary from European Antiquity, is not indexed, not as a main entry with its title nor as sub-entry under the author's name (Verrius Flaccus); the author (Verrius

Flaccus), mentioned on p. 29, is not indexed either; *Etymologiae* (an encyclopedia from the sixth or seventh century), which is mentioned on p. 29 is not indexed, not as a main entry with its title nor as sub-entry under the author's name (Isidore of Seville); the author, mentioned on p. 29, is not indexed either; John Garland's *Synonyma* (a dictionary from 1483), mentioned on p. 37, is also missing, and so is its author, mentioned on p. 37; *Afrikaans* is not indexed, which means that the reader (who also receives no help from the list of contents) has no means of quickly establishing that bilingual dictionaries of English and Afrikaans are discussed in connection with bilingual dictionaries of English and Dutch (p. 101); *Patriot woordeboek/Patriot Dictionary* (1902–1904), mentioned on p. 101, is missing, as is its author, S. J. du Toit (p. 101); 'validation of words' (e.g. pp. 141–142, 147–148, 154) is missing, nor is it listed under 'words' (as 'words, validation of'). The number of missing entries in the two indexes is strikingly high, but responsibility for this probably lies with the publisher, rather than the indexer; the fact that the two indexes are identical in size (precisely 17 pp.), despite the fact that volume II is considerably larger than volume I, certainly points in this direction. The size of the indexes was probably dictated in advance, or they were trimmed by the publisher. This is regrettable because a sizeable amount of the mass of information presented by many experts is thereby not readily available, or, at worst, actually disappears (in the field of LIS (Library and Information Science) it is held that information that cannot be retraced or received can just as well be regarded as lost or non-existent). Especially in a work of the breadth of *The Oxford History of English Lexicography* it is very important that the text is fully indexed, since most readers, for lack of time, will probably never read through the whole work — and certainly not more than once to retrace non-indexed material which they believe they have encountered on the first read.

All in all, *The Oxford History of English Lexicography*, naturally enough, is a very useful publication and a rich source of information, which, despite the criticisms raised above, must be regarded as invaluable for metalexigraphers (primarily dictionary historians), first and foremost in Europe and the English-speaking parts of the world.²

Notes

1. The term *entry* is admittedly also used in the sense 'dictionary article' (e.g. p. 179) and it can well be argued that the word is employed in this sense on p. 184, and possibly elsewhere, and not in the sense of 'lemma'.
2. I am very grateful to Christopher Sanders for translating parts of this review from Danish.

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