

Preface

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Papers from the 5th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics

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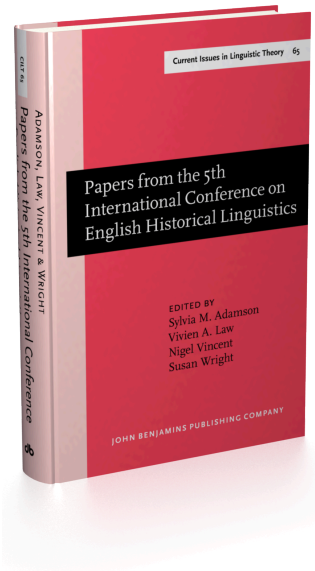
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PREFACE

The Fifth International Conference on English Historical Linguistics (ICEHL5) was held in St John's College, Cambridge from 6th to 9th April 1987. In the number of its participants, it was comparable with the Amsterdam meeting of 1985 (ICEHL4), but--as witness the size of the present volume--there was again a sharp rise in the number of papers that survived the successive selection procedures for presentation and publication. Clearly the ICEHL series has established itself as a major forum for debate in the field; indeed, a number of the papers in this volume explicitly continue (or controvert) lines of enquiry initiated in ICEHL4.

The conference was organised as a series of thematic sections, and we took advantage of our position as organisers to promote the discussion of topics in which Cambridge has established a particular interest: so there were sections on the auxiliary system, on historical stylistics and on the history of the study of the English language, as well as a valuable workshop discussion (which unfortunately cannot be represented here) on methods and problems in teaching. For the rest, the balance of both conference and volume reflects pretty accurately the state of English Historical Linguistics at the end of the 1980s: the continued expansion of syntax at the expense of

phonology; the revitalisation of dialectology, begun under the influence of sociolinguistics and now given new impetus and directions by the growth of interest in creoles and the dynamics of languages in contact; and the emergence of grammaticalisation as a major field of study which challenges many of the traditional lines of demarcation, whether between syntax and semantics or synchrony and diachrony. We believe that many of the papers in this volume, some of them specially commissioned by the conference, will become important reference points for English Historical Linguistics in the 1990s.

The volume is dedicated to the memory of one of its contributors, Professor James Thorne. As Sir John Lyons explains in his memorial, the paper that Jimmy gave at the conference was his last, and it was memorable--and entirely characteristic--in the way it combined the interests of the philologist and the theoretical linguist. It is therefore appropriate that his name should stand at the head of a collection of papers whose subjects range from Old English to Modern American, from justifying the form of grammars to evaluating the physical remains on which linguistic histories are built. One of the delights of attending the ICEHL series of conferences and one of the most valuable features of the volumes that result from them is that they promote the kind of interdisciplinary understanding that was the hallmark of Jimmy's own work.

The process of translating the conference into volume form ran into difficulties through the early loss of two of the three original conference organisers: Nigel Vincent moved from Cambridge to become Montfollick Professor and Head of the Linguistics Department in Manchester; less happily, Vivien Law suffered a prolonged and incapacit-

ating illness. The situation was saved only by the arrival of Susan Wright, who took on the task of working with contributors and producing camera-ready copy for those who, for one reason or another, were unable to do so themselves. It is perhaps unusual for one editor to thank another, but in this case it is true to say that without Susan the volume would have been further delayed or else seriously depleted in contents.

The conference and volume owe many other debts of gratitude. Among individuals, we would like to record our thanks to: Professor Peter Matthews for advice and support throughout the period of planning and staging the conference; Sir John Lyons for inviting the conference to stage one of its sessions in Trinity Hall; Dr Richard Beadle and the library staff of St John's College for arranging a special exhibition of medieval manuscripts in the Upper Library of St John's; Professor Ray Page and Mrs Alison Wilson of Corpus Christi College for opening the Parker collection to conference participants; the graduate students of the Department of Linguistics for acting as conference stewards; the secretarial staff of the English Faculty for helping in the preparation of materials for the conference; the editorial staff of Benjamins for their patience and co-operation during the preparation of the volume; Jonathan Hope for compiling the index of names; and--last but not least--all the anonymous readers who gave so generously of their time and advice to ensure the high quality of the papers included in this collection.

We also wish to acknowledge the support of a number of institutions: The British Academy and the Cambridge English Faculty paid the travel expenses of some of our commissioned speakers; the Cambridge Local Examinations

Syndicate marked the inauguration of the new Centre for English as an International Language by sponsoring an academic and social evening in which Professor Braj Kachru's paper 'On the Linguistic Hegemony of English across Cultures' opened up issues new to many European participants; other evening receptions were hosted by the General Board of the University of Cambridge and by Cambridge University Press in association with Heffer's bookshop. But our greatest obligation is to the Master and Fellows of St John's. The College provided all the domestic and academic facilities for the conference as well as the administrative and catering staff who ran it so smoothly; it provided a memorable conference dinner; but above all it was the College's financial generosity which enabled us to commission papers by some of the most distinguished scholars in the field and, no less valuably, to offer bursaries that brought talented young graduate students to their first international conference.

Sylvia Adamson
Cambridge, 1989