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the History of the English Language

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A COMPANION TO

THE *H*ISTORY
OF THE ENGLISH
*L*ANGUAGE

EDITED BY
HARUKO MOMMA AND MICHAEL MATTO

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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Notes on Contributors

Richard W. Bailey is the Fred Newton Scott Collegiate Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan. He is the author of many books, including *Nineteenth-Century English* (1996), and the editor of *Milestones in the History of English in America: Papers by Allen Walker Read* (2002).

Philip Baldi is Professor of Linguistics and Classics at Penn State University. He is the author of *The Foundations of Latin* (2002) and editor of *Linguistic Change and Reconstruction Methodology* (1990) and has also published numerous articles on various subjects, including Indo-European linguistics and morphology.

Robert Bayley is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Davis. He is the author of *Sociolinguistic Variation in American Sign Language* (with C. Lucas and C. Valli) (2001) and *Language as Cultural Practice: Mexicanos en el Norte* (with S. R. Schecter) (2002), and editor of *Language Socialization in Bilingual and Multilingual Societies* (with S. R. Schecter) (2003).

Allan Bell is Professor of Language and Communication and Director of the Centre for Communication Research at Auckland University of Technology. He has led a dual career combining academic research with journalism and communications consultancy, and authored several books on language and media discourse, including *The Language of News Media* (1991). He is co-founder and co-editor of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*.

Mary Blockley is Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin. Her publications include "Cædmon's Conjunction: *Cædmon's Hymn* 7a Revisited," *Speculum* (1998) and *Aspects of Old English Poetic Syntax: Where Clauses Begin* (2001). She is preparing the third edition of the late C. M. Millward's *A Biography of the English Language*.

Charlotte Brewer is Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford, and Lecturer at Oxford University. Her publications include *Editing Piers Plowman: The Evolution of the Text* (1996) and *The Oxford English Dictionary: Treasure House of the Language* (2007).

Thomas Cable is Professor of English and Jane Weinert Blumberg Chair at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *The English Alliterative Tradition* (1991), *The Union of Words and Music in Medieval Poetry* (with R. A. Baltzer and J. I. Wimsatt), and *A History of the English Language*, 5th edn. (with A. C. Baugh) (2002).

Deborah Cameron is Rupert Murdoch Professor of Language and Communication at Oxford University. She is the author of *On Language and Sexual Politics* (2006) and *Verbal Hygiene* (1995), and the editor of *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader* (1990, 1998).

Tony Crowley is Hartley Burr Alexander Chair in the Humanities at Scripps College and Visiting Professor in the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of *Language in History: Theories and Texts* (1996), *Standard English and the Politics of Language* (2003), and *Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland, 1537–2004* (2005).

Anne Curzan is Associate Professor of English at the University of Michigan. Her publications include *Gender Shifts in the History of English* (2003), *Studies in the History of the English Language II: Unfolding Conversations* (editor, with K. Emmons) (2004), and *How English Works: A Linguistic Introduction* (with M. Adams) (2006).

Terence Patrick Dolan is a Professor of English in the School of English and Drama at University College Dublin. He is the compiler and editor of the *Dictionary of Hiberno-English: The Irish Use of English* (1998, 2004, repr. 2006) and Director of the UCD hiberno-english.com website.

Daniel Donoghue is John P. Marquand Professor of English at Harvard University. He is the author of *Old English Literature: A Short Introduction* (2004) and *Style in Old English Poetry* (1987) and the editor of *Beowulf: A Verse Translation* (trans. Seamus Heaney) (2002), and *The Year's Work in Old English Studies* (2000–present).

John Edwards is Professor of Psychology at St. Francis Xavier University. His books include *Language and Disadvantage* (1989), *Multilingualism* (1994), and *Language in Canada* (editor) (1998). He is also editor of *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* and the book series *Multilingual Matters*.

Eugene Chen Eoyang is Chair Professor of Humanities and Head of the English Department at Lingnan University and Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature

and of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Indiana University. He is the author of *The Transparent Eye: Translation, Chinese Literature, and Comparative Poetics* (1993), *The Coat of Many Colors* (1995), *"Borrowed Plumage": Polemical Essays on Translation* (2003), and *Two-Way Mirrors: Cross-Cultural Studies in Glocalization* (in press).

Olga Fischer is Professor of English Linguistics and Linguistics of the Germanic Languages at the University of Amsterdam. She is the author of *The Syntax of Early English* (with A. van Kemenade, W. Koopman, and W. van der Wurff) (2000) and *Morphosyntactic Change: Functional and Formal Perspectives* (in press).

Robert D. Fulk is Class of 1964 Chancellors' Professor of English at Indiana University. His publications include *A History of Old English Meter* (1992), *A History of Old English Literature* (with C. M. Cain and R. S. Anderson) (2002), and the forthcoming revised edition of Frederick Klaeber's *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* (with R. E. Bjork and J. D. Niles).

Dirk Geeraerts is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Leuven. His publications include *The Structure of Lexical Variation* (1994), *Diachronic Prototype Semantics: A Contribution to Historical Lexicology* (1997), and *Words and Other Wonders: Papers on Lexical and Semantic Topics* (2006). He founded the journal *Cognitive Linguistics* and is co-editor (with Hubert Cuyckens) of the *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (forthcoming).

Br. Andrew Gonzalez FSC (d. 2006) was President Emeritus and Professor of Languages and Literature at De La Salle University, Manila and Secretary of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports of the Philippines. His publications include *Language and Nationalism: The Philippine Experience Thus Far* (1980).

Mechthild Gretsch is Professor of English Philology at Universität Göttingen. She is the author of *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* (1999, 2006) and *Aelfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (2005).

Reinhard R. K. Hartmann is Honorary University Fellow at the University of Exeter and Honorary Professor of Lexicography at the University of Birmingham. He is the author of *Dictionary of Lexicography* (with G. James) (1998) and *Teaching and Researching Lexicography* (2001) and the editor of *Lexicography: Critical Concepts*, 3 vols. (2003).

David L. Hoover is Professor of English at New York University. He is the author of *A New Theory of Old English Meter* (1985), *Language and Style in The Inheritors* (1999), and *Approaches to Corpus Stylistics: The Corpus, the Computer, and the Study of Literature* (with J. Culpeper and B. Louw) (2007).

Jonathan Hope is Reader in the Department of English Studies at the University of Strathclyde. His publications include *The Authorship of Shakespeare's Plays: A Socio-Linguistic Study* (1994) and *Shakespeare's Grammar* (2003).

Geoffrey Hughes was an Honorary Research Associate at Harvard University, is Emeritus Professor of the History of the English Language at the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg), and Honorary Research Associate at the University of Cape Town. His recent publications include *A History of English Words* (2000) and *Swearing: An Encyclopedia* (2006).

Werner Hüllen is Professor Emeritus of English Linguistics at the University of Duisburg-Essen. He is the author of *English Dictionaries, 800–1700: The Topical Tradition* (1999, 2006), *Werner Hüllen: Collected Papers on the History of Linguistic Ideas* (ed. M. M. Isermann) (2002), and *A History of Roget's Thesaurus: Origins, Development and Design* (2004, 2006).

Gavin Jones is Associate Professor of English at Stanford University. He is the author of *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (1999) and has published articles on George W. Cable, Theodore Dreiser, W. E. B. DuBois, Sylvester Judd, Paule Marshall, and Herman Melville.

Braj B. Kachru is Center for Advanced Study Professor of Linguistics, and Jubilee Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences Emeritus, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His recent publications include *Asian Englishes: Beyond the Cannon* (2005), *The Handbook of World Englishes* (with Y. Kachru and C. L. Nelson) (2006), and *World Englishes: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* (with K. Bolton) (2006).

Tabish Khair is Associate Professor of English at the University of Aarhus. He is the author of *Babu Fictions: Alienation in Contemporary Indian English Novels* (2001), and co-editor of *Unbinging Hinglish: The Languages and Politics of Fiction from the Indian Subcontinent* (2001) and *Other Routes: 1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing* (2005). Khair is also a novelist and poet; his most recent novel is *Filming: A Love Story* (2007).

John N. King is Distinguished University Professor and also Humanities Distinguished Professor of English and of Religious Studies at the Ohio State University. His publications include *Voices of the English Reformation: A Sourcebook* (2004) and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (2006). He is editor of *Reformation* and co-editor of *Literature and History*.

Lucia Kornexl is Professor of English Historical Linguistics and Medieval English Literature at the University of Rostock. Her publications include a commented edition of the *Regularis Concordia* and its Old English gloss (1994). She is the editor of *Book-*

marks from the Past: Studies in Early English Language and Literature in Honour of Helmut Gneuss (with U. Lenker) (2003) and co-editor of *Anglia*.

Robin Tolmach Lakoff is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. Her publications include *Talking Power: The Politics of Language in Our Lives* (1990), *The Language War* (2000), *Language and Woman's Place: Texts and Commentaries, Revised and Expanded Edition* (editor, with M. Bucholtz) (2004), and *Broadening the Horizon of Linguistic Politeness* (with I. Sachiko) (2005).

Seth Lerer is Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Avalon Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University. His most recent books include *Error and the Academic Self: The Scholarly Imagination, Medieval to Modern* (2002) and *Inventing English: A Portable History of the Language* (2007).

Marion Löffler is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies at the University of Wales. Her publications include *Englisch und Kymrisch in Wales. Geschichte der Sprachsituation und Sprachpolitik* (1997) and *A Book of Mad Celts: John Wickens and the Celtic Congress of Caernarfon 1904* (2000), as well as numerous articles on Welsh language, history, and sociolinguistics.

J. Derrick McClure is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Aberdeen. He is the author of *Scots and Its Literature* (1995), *Why Scots Matters* (1988, revd. 1997), *Language, Poetry and Nationhood* (2000), and *Doric: The Dialect of North-East Scotland* (2002), and the editor of the annual journal *Scottish Language*.

Carey McIntosh is Professor Emeritus of English at Hofstra University. He is the author of *The Choice of Life: Samuel Johnson and the World of Fiction* (1973), *Common and Courtly Language: The Stylistics of Social Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (1986), and *The Evolution of English Prose, 1700–1800: Style, Politeness, and Print Culture* (1998).

Adam N. McKeown is Assistant Professor of English at Adelphi University. He has published articles on visual rhetoric in early modern England, and is the co-creator of Sterling's *The Young Reader's Shakespeare* series. His book *English Mercuries: Elizabethan Soldier Poets* is forthcoming.

Michael Matto is Assistant Professor of English and Director of Writing Programs at Adelphi University. He has published essays on Old English literature and HEL, and is guest-editor (with Haruko Momma) of a special issue on HEL pedagogy and research for *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* (2007). He is currently editing (with Greg Delanty) a collection of new translations of Old English poems (forthcoming in 2009).

Alamin M. Mazrui is Professor of Africana Studies at Rutgers University. He is the author of *The Power of Babel: Language and Governance in the African Experience* (with A. A. Mazrui) (1998), *Debating the African Condition: Ali Mazrui and His Critics* (with W. Mutunga) (2004), and *English in Africa After the Cold War* (2004).

Laurent Milesi is Senior Lecturer in the School of English, Communication and Philosophy at Cardiff University. He is the editor of *James Joyce and the Difference of Language* (2003) and translator of Jaques Derrida's *H. C. for Life, That Is to Say . . .* (with S. Herbrechter) (2006).

Robert McColl Millar is Lecturer in Linguistics at the University of Aberdeen. He is the author of *System Collapse, System Rebirth: The Demonstrative Systems of English 900–1350 and the Birth of the Definite Article* (2000) and *Language, Nation and Power* (2005).

Donka Minkova is Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is most recently the author of *English Words: History and Structure* (with R. Stockwell) (2001), *Alliteration and Sound Change in Early English* (2003), and co-editor of *Studies in the History of the English Language: A Millennial Perspective* (with R. Stockwell) (2002).

Haruko Momma is Associate Professor of English at New York University. She is the author of *The Composition of Old English Poetry* (1997) and *From Philology to English Studies: Language and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (forthcoming in 2009), as well as essays on Anglo-Saxon literature, historical linguistics, and philology. She guest-edited with Michael Matto a special issue on HEL pedagogy and research for *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* (2007).

Salikoko S. Mufwene is Frank J. McLoraine Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Chicago. His publications include *The Evolution of Languages* (2001), *Créoles, écologie sociale, evolution linguistique* (2005), and *Polymorphous Linguistics: Jim McCawley's Legacy* (with E. Francis and R. S. Wheeler) (2005). He is also the series editor of the *Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact*.

Lynda Mugglestone is Professor of History of English at the University of Oxford. She is the author of *Lexicography and the OED: Pioneers in the Untrodden Forest* (2002), *Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol* (2003), and *Lost for Words: The Hidden History of the Oxford English Dictionary* (2005), and the editor of *The Oxford History of English* (2006).

Terttu Nevalainen is Professor of English at the University of Helsinki and Director of the Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English (VARIENG),

National Centre of Excellence (Finland). Her publications include *Historical Sociolinguistics: Language Change in Tudor and Stuart England* (with H. Raumolin-Brunberg) (2003) and *An Introduction to Early Modern English* (2006).

Pam Peters is Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Linguistics at Macquarie University and Director of the Dictionary Research Center. Her publications include *The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide* (1995) and *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* (2004).

John F. Plummer is Professor of English at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *Vox Feminae: Studies in Medieval Woman's Songs* (1981) and the editor of *The Summoner's Tale: A Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, Vol. 2 (1995) and "Seyd In Forme and Reverence": *Essays on Chaucer and Chaucerians In Memory of Emerson Brown, Jr.* (with T. L. Burton) (2005).

Noel Polk is Professor of English at Mississippi State University. He is the author of *Eudora Welty: A Bibliography of Her Work* (1993), *Children of the Dark House: Text and Context in Faulkner* (1996), and *Outside the Southern Myth* (1997). He is the editor of the *Mississippi Quarterly* and of "The Corrected Text" editions of William Faulkner's novels.

Mary Poovey is Professor of English and founder of the Institute for the History of the Production of Knowledge at New York University. Her publications include *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830–1864* (1995), *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (1998), and *The Financial System in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2003).

Fred C. Robinson is Douglas Tracy Smith Emeritus Professor of English at Yale University. He is the author of *The Tomb of Beowulf and other Essays* (1993), *The Editing of Old English* (1994), and *A Guide to Old English*, 7th edn. (with B. Mitchell) (2006), and editor of *Beowulf: An Edition with Relevant Shorter Texts* (with B. Mitchell and L. Webster) (1998).

Geoffrey Russom is Professor of English at Brown University. He is the author of *Old English Meter and Linguistic Theory* (1987) and *Beowulf and Old Germanic Metre* (1998). He has also published several articles on the linguistic history of English, the multicultural backgrounds of *Beowulf*, and preliterate verse traditions.

David Simpson is Professor of English at the University of California, Davis. He is author of numerous books on Romanticism, literary theory, and cultural studies, including *The Politics of American English, 1776–1850* (1986), *Situatedness; or Why we Keep Saying Where We're Coming From* (2002), and *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (2006).

Jeremy J. Smith is Professor of English Philology and Head of the Department of English Language at Glasgow University. His publications include *An Historical Study of English: Function, Form and Change* (1996), *Essentials of Early English* (1999), and *An Introduction to Middle English* (with S. Horobin) (2002).

Philippa K. Smith is Projects Manager at the Centre for Communication Research at Auckland University of Technology. She has presented papers at international conferences on identity construction in broadcasting and is writing a book chapter on discourse research methodologies. She is a co-author of "Television Violence in New Zealand: A Study of Programming and Policy in International Context" (2003).

Mary Soliday is Associate Professor of English at the City College of New York. She is the author of *The Politics of Remediation: Institutional and Student Needs in Higher Education* (2002) and many articles on teaching college composition and rhetoric.

Kamal Sridhar is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. Her publications include *English in Indian Bilingualism* (1989), as well as several articles on the English language in India, and languages in the Indian Diaspora in the US.

Robert P. Stockwell is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of California, Los Angeles. His recent publications include *English Words: History and Structure* (with D. Minkova) (2001). He is the co-editor of *Studies in the History of the English Language: A Millennial Perspective* (with D. Minkova) (2002).

Justine Tally is Professor of American Literature at the Universidad de La Laguna. She is author of *Paradise Reconsidered: Toni Morrison's (Hi)stories and Truths* (1999) and *The Story of Jazz: Toni Morrison's Dialogic Imagination*, and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison* (forthcoming).

Thorlac Turville-Petre is Professor of Medieval English Literature at the University of Nottingham. His publications include *A Book of Middle English* (2004), *The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, British Library Add. MS 35287 (M)* (2005), and *Reading Middle English Literature* (2007).

Donald Winford is Professor of Linguistics at the Ohio State University. He is the author of *Predication in Caribbean English Creole* (Creole Language Library Vol. 10) (1993) and *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics* (2002), as well as several recent articles on creoles and vernaculars.

Walt Wolfram is William C. Friday Distinguished Professor of English at North Carolina State University. His publications include *Dialect Change and Maintenance on the Outer Banks* (1999), *Language Variation in the School and Community* (1999), *The*

Development of African American English (with E. Thomas) (2002), *American English: Dialects and Variation*, 2nd edn. (2006), and *Dialects in Schools and Communities* (2007).

Mary B. Zeigler is Associate Professor of English Language and Linguistics at Georgia State University. Her publications include “Theorizing the Postcoloniality of African American English” (2002), “‘Fixin(g) to’: A Grammaticalized Form in Southern American English” (2002), and “Don’ Be Callin Me Outta My Name: Language Variation and Linguistic Difference” (2004).

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Note on Phonetic Symbols and Orthography

Though the study of the history of the English language does not require an extensive linguistic background, it is helpful to know some typographic conventions of linguistic analysis and some letters and abbreviations no longer found in current orthography.

Phonetic Transcription

Brackets

Readers will note three kind of brackets placed around letters and other symbols in these essays: angle brackets <t>, slashes /t/, and square brackets [t].

- <t> angle brackets indicate *graphemes*: how a sound is represented in written form.
- /t/ slashes indicate *phonemes*: the smallest meaningfully distinct sound within a language.
- [t], [t^h] square brackets indicate *phonetic transcription*: the exact description of a spoken sound.

While phonemics and phonetics are often virtually identical in practice, very precise phonetic transcription offers more phonological detail. For example, the phoneme /t/ in *top* and *stop* is spelled with the grapheme <t> and for most speakers represents essentially the same sound, but the <t> in *top* is aspirated (i.e., accompanied by a puff of breath) and so signified by the superscript ^h in phonetic transcription [t^h], while the <t> in *stop* is not aspirated [t].

Phonetic alphabet

The desire among linguists for a systematic method for transcribing the spoken sounds of languages was realized with the creation of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in 1888 by the International Phonetic Association. Designed to represent the

Superscript symbols

- ^h aspiration: indicates that the sound is accompanied by a puff of breath.
^w labialized: indicates that the sound is accompanied by a rounding of the lips.

Compare the /k/ aspirated in *kit* [k^hɪt], unaspirated in *skit* [skɪt], and labialized in *quit* [k^wɪt].

Consonant sounds of modern English illustrated

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|------------|-----|--------------|------------|--------------|-----|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| /p/ | pit | /f/ | fan | /ʃ/, /ʒ/ | sure | /m/ | mine | /y/, /j/ | yet |
| /b/ | bit | /v/ | van | /ʒ/, /ʒ/ | azure | /n/ | nine | /hw/, /w/ | whet |
| /t/ | tip | /θ/ | thigh | /tʃ/, /tʃ/ | char | /ŋ/ | sing | /w/ | wet |
| /d/ | dip | /ð/ | thy | /j/, /dʒ/ | jar | /r/ | rat | | |
| /k/ | cot | /s/ | sue | /ç/ | huge | /l/ | let | | |
| /g/ | got | /z/ | zoo | /h/ | hot | | | | |

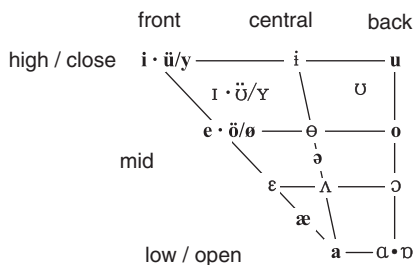
The following fricative consonant sounds are not generally found in modern American or British RP pronunciation, but are important to the history of English.

- /ɸ/ voiceless like /f/, but with lips together as if pronouncing /p/
 /β/ voiced like /v/, but with lips together as if pronouncing /b/
 /x/ unvoiced like /ç/ but slightly further back, as if pronouncing /g/
 /χ/ slightly further back than /x/, but not so far as /h/
 /ʁ/ like /x/, but voiced

Vowels

The various schemas and symbols for representing vowel systems are difficult to reconcile with one another. While most vowel schemas attempt to reproduce the biological manner of articulation, they employ different terminologies. For instance, IPA describes the openness of the mouth (with “close – mid – open,”) while APA instead indicates the level of the tongue (with “high – mid – low”).

Like the consonant chart, the schematic below represents only the sounds discussed in this book. One should imagine the graph represents a mouth facing left, and the symbols mark places of articulation. Three of the sounds are given two symbols, which represent transcription variants from APA (left) and IPA (right): ü/y, ö/ʏ, and ø/ø. Note that the vowel phoneme /y/ (from IPA) is different from the consonant or glide phoneme /y/ (from APA), though they use the same symbol. Symbols to the left and right of bullet points represent unrounded and rounded variants, respectively (rounded sounds are pronounced with the lips pulled into a circle and slightly protruding).



Long and short vowels

: indicates a long vowel, which is held longer than its short counterpart, but is otherwise articulated in the same place. Compare the long vowel of *sea* [si:] with the short vowel of *seat* [sit]. Length can also be indicated by a doubling of the phonetic symbol: /sii/ versus /sit/.

Vowel sounds of modern English

Examples are from standard American pronunciation.

| | | | | | |
|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| /i/ | bee | /ə/ | bud | /u/ | boo |
| /ɪ/ | bid | /ʌ/ | bug | /ʊ/ | book |
| /e/ | bade | | | /o/ | boat |
| /ɛ/ | bed | | | /ɔ/ | bought |
| /æ/ | bad | | | /ɑ/ | body |

The following vowel sounds are not generally distinguished in modern American or British Received Pronunciation, but are important to the history of vowels in English.

| | |
|----------|--|
| /ü/, /y/ | like /i/, but rounded (like the French <i>du</i>) |
| /ö/, /ʏ/ | like /ɪ/, but rounded |
| /ö/, /ø/ | like /e/, but rounded |
| /ɵ/ | like /ə/, but slightly higher |
| /i/ | like /ɵ/, but slightly higher (e.g., the unstressed first syllable of <i>begin</i>) |
| /a/ | like /æ/, but slightly lower |
| /ɒ/ | like /ɑ/, but rounded |

Diphthongs

Many of the vowels of English are pronounced as a movement from one vowel to another; these are called diphthongs. The three most commonly pronounced diphthongs in English can be heard in the standard American pronunciations of *boy* /bɔɪ/,

buy /baɪ/ and *bough* /bau/; each unambiguously contains a movement between two vowel sounds. However, compared with many other European languages, modern English has few pure vowel sounds at all. For instance, even the /e/ of *bade* has a slight glide from /e/ to /ɪ/ for many English speakers, a movement perhaps more noticeable in the word *bane* or *bay*.

Orthography

Handwriting and typographic conventions change over time and vary among languages. Some of the essays in this collection make use of unfamiliar orthography when quoting from period sources or languages other than English. The following notes may be of use:

<ȝ> is called *yogh*, and is related orthographically to <g>. Yogh was used in the Middle English period to represent a variety of related velar sounds, including /y/ and /x/.

<7> is the so-called “Tironian *et*” used in medieval manuscripts as an abbreviation for *and*, much as modern printers use <&>.

<þ> is called *thorn* and was used to represent either /θ/ or /ð/ in Old and Middle English. It was virtually interchangeable with <ð>.

<ð> is called *eth* and was used to represent either /θ/ or /ð/ in Old and Middle English. The grapheme <ð> thus does not always carry the same sound as the voiced fricative /ð/. It was virtually interchangeable with <þ>.

<v> and <u> were used either interchangeably or in the reverse of modern convention in medieval and early modern English. Often, <v> is used at the beginning of a word, <u> in the middle. In other texts, <v> might regularly represent the vowel, and <u> the consonant.

A Timeline for HEL

The following timeline will help readers contextualize the historical events discussed in this volume. While this list emphasizes topics covered by the contributors (as noted), it also includes other important events.

| | |
|----------------|---|
| >1000 BCE | Indo-European languages spread throughout Europe and southern Asia, some already attested in writing for hundreds of years. (Baldi) |
| ca. 1000–1 BCE | Gradual sound shifts (Grimm’s Law) take place in Germanic languages. (Fulk) |
| 55–54 BCE | Julius Caesar invades Britain. |
| 43 CE | Romans under Claudius conquer Britain; the “Roman Britain” period begins. |
| ca. 50–100 | Scandinavian Runic inscriptions are produced, which remain the oldest attestations of a Germanic language. (Baldi) |
| ca. 98 | Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus writes <i>Germania</i> . (Fulk) |
| ca. 350 | Bishop Wulfila translates the Bible into Gothic, an East Germanic language. (Baldi) |
| 410 | Roman troops withdraw from Britain as Visigoths sack Rome; the “Roman Britain” period ends. |
| 449 | According to tradition, Anglo-Saxons (Angles, Saxons, Jutes) begin invasion and settlement of Britain, bringing their West Germanic dialects to the island. |
| 597 | Pope Gregory sends Augustine to Kent where he converts King Æthelberht and 10,000 other Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. (Donoghue) |
| 793–ca. 900 | Vikings (Danes, Norwegians, Swedes) raid England periodically and establish settlements. |
| 878 | King Alfred’s victory over Guthrum’s Danish army at Edington paves the way for the creation of the Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons. (Gretsch; Donoghue) |
| 886 | King Alfred and Guthrum sign a treaty establishing the “Danelaw” north and east of London, heavily settled by the Norse-speaking vikings. (Donoghue) |
| 890s | King Alfred translates Pope Gregory’s <i>Regula pastoralis</i> into English. (Gretsch) |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ca. 900 | Bede's <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> is translated from Latin into Old English. (Donoghue) |
| ca. 975–1025 | The four great manuscripts containing Old English poetry (Exeter Book, Junius Manuscript, Vercelli Book, and <i>Beowulf</i> Manuscript) are compiled, though many of the texts they contain were likely composed over the previous 300 years. |
| 993–5 | Aelfric composes his Latin–Old English <i>Glossary</i> . (Hüllen) |
| 1066 | William the Conqueror leads the Norman conquest of England, solidifying French as the language of the nobility. (Turville-Petre) |
| 1171 | Henry II leads the Cambro-Norman invasion of Ireland, bringing French and English speakers to the island. (Dolan) |
| 1204 | King John of England loses Normandy to France. (Turville-Petre) |
| ca. 1245 | Walter of Bibbesworth compiles his <i>Tretiz de Langage</i> to improve the French of English-speaking landowners. (Hüllen; Turville-Petre) |
| 1282 | Wales is conquered by King Edward I of England. (Löffler) |
| 1348–50 | The Black Plague kills about one-third of the English population. |
| 1362 | Statute of Pleading requires English be spoken in law courts. (Plummer) |
| 1366 | Statutes of Kilkenny outlaw (among other Irish customs) speaking Irish by Englishmen in Ireland. (Dolan) |
| 1370–1400 | Chaucer writes his major works. (Plummer) |
| 1380s | John Wycliffe and his followers illegally translate the Latin Vulgate Bible into English. (Nevalainen) |
| 1380–1450 | Chancery standard written English is developed. (Lerer) |
| ca. 1450 | Johannes Gutenberg establishes the printing press in Germany. |
| 1476 | William Caxton sets up the first printing press in England. (Nevalainen; King) |
| 1492 | Christopher Columbus explores the Caribbean and Central America. |
| 1497 | Italian navigator John Cabot explores Newfoundland. |
| 1500–1650 | Great Vowel Shift takes place. (Lerer; Stockwell & Minkova) |
| 1525 | William Tyndale prints an English translation of the New Testament. (King; Nevalainen) |
| 1534 | The first complete English translation of the Bible from the original Greek and Hebrew is produced. (Nevalainen) |
| 1536 and 1543 | Acts of Union (Laws in Wales Acts) annex Wales to England. (Löffler) |