

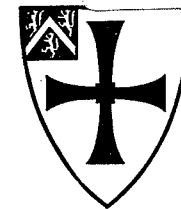
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'GERMAN LANGUAGE'
IN UNIVERSITY GERMAN STUDIES
IN BRITAIN — A RETHINKING
OF SOME ASPECTS

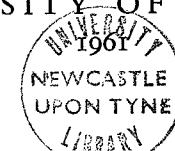
*Inaugural Lecture of
the Professor of German and Scandinavian Studies
delivered at King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne,
on 1 December 1960*

by

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Published by the
UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM



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"GERMAN LANGUAGE" IN UNIVERSITY GERMAN
STUDIES IN BRITAIN — A RETHINKING OF SOME
ASPECTS

"Einer seit, waz er gesiht,
der ander seit, waz im gesiht,
der dritte von minne,
der vierde von gewinne,
der fünfte von grözem guote,
der sechste von hôhem muote".

ONE man speaks of what he sees, a second of what happens to him, a third of courtly love, a fourth of gain, a fifth of great possessions, a sixth of the gaiety that befits a knight".

Thus Wernher der Gartenære, the author of the thirteenth-century German narrative poem *Meier Helmbrecht*, lists six possible themes before he steps out of the Middle Ages and comes down on the side of the magic seventh, a combination of the two realistic first possibilities, something that he saw with his own eyes, something that happened to him:

"hie wil ich sagen, waz mir geschach,
daz ich mit mînen ougen sach",

not like so many of his predecessors and successors what he "an den buochen las," "read in books".

The choice of theme is just as bewildering for someone giving an inaugural lecture as it was for Wernher. Tonight I am going consciously to reject many tempting themes which would give me chances to deal exclusively with what I "an den buochen las" and consider rather some things that are occasionally controversial but that need to be talked about because they impinge so sharply on my own and younger people's life and work as Germanists in British universities —

"waz mir geschach,
daz ich mit mînen ougen sach".

It is, I assure you, in the quotation from St. Matthew's Gospel that every Germanist knows because one of the first and greatest of Germanists, Martin Luther, made such play with it in his *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen*, "Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur": "Wes das herz vol ist, des geet der mund über".

My subject is:

"German Language" in University German Studies in Britain:
A rethinking of some aspects.

When a new professor like myself takes over a department, it is his first duty to rethink. That is comparatively easy if he comes fresh to another man's creation. If he stands as I do, a White Knight, in the midst of something that is largely his own invention, the duty is more apt to be avoided. It is easier for the new broom to sweep clean than it is for the old one with its bristles showing signs of wear but with an extra ribbon attached to the handle to penetrate into dusty corners instead of keeping to the safe centre of the floor. I have for that very reason chosen in self-discipline to do some rethinking for and with you in this lecture.

When we talk about "German Language" we think about three different kinds of things: first: speaking, reading, and writing German the way an educated German does these things, second: translating German into English and English into German, and third: knowing and thinking about the German language, most often with a strong stress on its history.

The first group, speaking, reading, and writing German the way an educated German does, represents a series of aptitudes which must be acquired by the foreigner, the second, translating German into English and English into German, two techniques which even bilingual persons have to learn, the third, knowing and thinking about the German language, is a scholarly discipline.

My rethinking with you today is to be devoted to considering: speaking and reading German; translating English into German (so-called Prose Composition); and the "History of the German Language". I have chosen them because they most need thinking about and because it is a lecture I am giving and not an article I am writing. I am not claiming to treat a wide subject as an

organic whole. First, the aptitudes, speaking and reading German. These, especially speaking, form the layman's criterion for "knowing German". The trouble is that the layman is impressed only by fluency, which can be — and often is — divorced from grammatical accuracy and careful pronunciation and intonation. Grammatical accuracy, which involves an appreciation of colloquial style as against literary style, will come only with practice after careful analysis. But careful pronunciation and intonation can be taught and need much more time and care devoted to them than is done currently in Britain. Unfortunately not every undergraduate has the same sort of problem. "Accent", to use the layman's word for pronunciation and intonation lumped together, is popularly supposed to be good if it sounds "foreign". A remarkably large number of promising young students fall a prey to this fallacy and produce a spoken German which sounds like a bad imitation of a Frenchman speaking the language. This is sometimes the fault of an over-worked French master, who teaches German on the side, but more often I have found it to be the student's own fault. He has been so overwhelmed by his discovery, usually about the age of seventeen, when he got over the first shyness of adolescence, of his ability to imitate a foreign intonation that he is completely carried away by his skill in this exotic exercise and applies the sounds and varying pitch of French speech to German which has, in his case, more subtle nuances, because of its kinship with English. Happier on the whole is the student who comes to his University studies still content with the new consonants he learned at school and his Northern English vowels supplemented by a few acquired when he started French. He has at least less to unlearn. Some well-trained undergraduates have of course also been well trained by teachers who have unfortunately not kept up with the literature in the field of German pronunciation. Thus it is a common failing for the ex-schoolboy to go out of his way to use before initial vowels the glottal stop [ʔ] which up till thirty years ago was adjudged correct in Standard Spoken German but is now rather frowned upon. One also finds cases where the old permitted [x] pronunciation of final "g" after a central or back vowel, so [ta : x], [lo : x] for [ta : k], [lo : k], has

been carefully inculcated. Worse still, [dɛr], [ɛr], or even [dɛə], [ɛə], have often been deliberately taught in school for correct [de : r], [e : r], [dɛr], [ɛr] because of older permissive usage, [dɛə], [ɛə] because of Southern English speech habits in the teacher. Conversely, the now permitted [R] pronunciation of "r" has often been taught or acquired, independently and clumsily, on a visit to a region of Germany that uses the sound when the English-speaker already possesses or can easily acquire a tongue-tip trilled [r] which is not only adequate but correct.

When circumstances like these are taken into consideration, the easy-going old solution of imitating a native German speaker after a sketchy introduction to phonetics is just not good enough. The student must be taught practical phonetics on the basis of a careful study of his own spoken English and of German as German is recommended to be pronounced today. The analysis of the student's own speech is often made difficult because the spoken English that is described in text-books is Southern Received Pronunciation. It is exceedingly puzzling at first for a Northerner or a Scot to find that he has an almost completely different set of vowels and diphthongs from those described in his manual of Spoken English, though of course it is very good for him linguistically to make the discovery. When it comes to Standard German Pronunciation there is and has been for the last three years the new edition of Theodor Siebs's *Deutsche Hochsprache* which now for the first time employs the phonetic symbols of the International Phonetic Association, a work that promises to become as useful to teachers of German outside Germany as "Daniel Jones" is to teachers of English outwith the English-speaking world. Even *it* is, however, no cure-all for pronunciation ills; the correct relative positions of the organs of speech must be taught and practised. And the teaching has to be done by somebody who knows about them and not just by "any educated German" or by an experimental phonetician who does not know German well or by a literary historian who is not deeply interested, though the experimental phonetician's help is invaluable, indeed, essential in teaching the rudiments of Phonetics and not nearly as widely available in British universities as it should be.

Even when the sounds of German have been correctly taught there remains the whole complicated chapter of intonation in conversation and in reading aloud. Here precept and practice help, but here also to a much greater extent than with the production of the correct sound technical aids must be enlisted. Students should be able to hear themselves, and this is where tape-recordings and playing-back under skilled supervision are really essential. I remember while I was working with the BBC during the war strenuous hours of coaching by trained actors and humbling hours of listening to my own recorded voice. If we do not attempt to give our students something of this, we are giving them very much a second best. And when we do not attempt to do so the reason is understaffing and under-equipment of German Departments; we have, however, to beware lest we are persuaded, once the best method has been recognized, against doing what we can do simply because "mechanical aids are not employed in Arts Faculties" — or because there is something mildly un-public-school-like about getting intonation so correct that one is mistaken for a native speaker of German.

Second, Translation into German, "Prose Composition".

Prose Composition is a legacy of the Classical Studies that in so many ways were the godparents of Modern Languages in our schools and universities. The natural desire to make Modern Languages just as exacting a discipline as Classics led to the early introduction of Prose Composition into the Modern Languages canon. It was forgotten that there are not three or four models — Caesar, Cicero, Tacitus, etc. — for the modern languages man, with the result that his task becomes infinitely more difficult than that of the Latinist. He can certainly aspire to turning Addison into the language of Gottsched, or Thackeray into that of Fontane, but does he want to? There *is* a thing called contemporary German into which Addison and Thackeray can be rendered too. And it is fortunately beyond the ingenuity of man to create an infinity of pastiches of an infinite number of distinguished writers. In other words, the writing of "Prose Composition" is hopelessly complicated for the student of Modern Languages. He knows, or he very soon learns, that competent translation requires ideally a team of three: a native

speaker and writer of the new language who is thoroughly familiar with the original tongue, a second native speaker of the new language who has a specialist knowledge of the subject matter, and finally, a native speaker of the original language who knows the new tongue competently. He knows that in some fields the first two persons of this trinity may be combined in one and that, at a pinch, the services of the third may be dispensed with. He is thus conscious of the excitement and pleasure of the aspiration to perfection in translating into his own language from another that he knows well. It is significant that Goethe makes Faust, the perfectionist, translate "λόγος" into his own tongue — "in mein geliebtes Deutsch" — and not the other way round. In his early days as an undergraduate it is just possible of course that the student may imagine he can "do" Prose Composition adequately: all University teachers of modern languages are familiar with the entrant to an Honours School who proclaims: "I'm not keen on history and literature, but I like language and I love doing 'Prose'." Disillusionment and insight come with reading, and if not with that, then with failure in the first examination.

Light is cast on the inherent absurdity of the situation by the history of "Verse Composition" because that, and not the "Free Composition" of our primary school days, is the real antithesis of "Prose Composition". We have all enjoyed translating for fun:

Johnny, feeling life a bore,
Drank some H₂SO₄ etc.

into something like:

Hänschen trinkt — er hält's für Bier
Ein Gläschen H₂SO₄."

But though Dryden in the measures of Ovid may be a possibility, it would be a nightmare parody of scholarship to have an English student with even a good knowledge of German weighing Eichendorff against Weinheber as a model for his rendering of Wordsworth. "Verse Composition" in German and Modern Languages generally is not even the option it is becoming in the Classics canon.

The four main arguments for the retention of Prose Composition in its present form in the University curriculum of a modern language are: it is a discipline, it is a good tool for learning the language, they retain it in France, and it is easy to mark. The fifth one, "It's a Paper in the Civil Service Examination", smacks of a commercial approach and I shall ignore it.

A discipline: many people hold fast to this belief about "Prose" at many different levels though they vary the formula; I remember once sitting in the Ministry of Education as a representative of our Schools Examinations' Board face to face with the Modern Languages Panel of the Secondary Schools Examinations Council and hearing a fellow Aberdeen graduate, then German Master at an eminent public school, grind out through clenched teeth something like: "It doesn't matter whether the boys learn German or not. 'Prose' is good for them because it's difficult". At least one university has essentially the same attitude; it does not seem to matter how good a matriculant's German or French is, his examination will not be recognized for entry to the University unless it has included translation into the language — "Prose Composition".

A transposition exercise which is only stiff with errors but not bristling with them, a parody and a travesty of a page of the language is thus the acid test. And even at the Final Honours stage the palm goes to the man with the executive-grade civil-service mind who does not make mistakes rather than to the man with imagination and creative ability who attempts something living in German but makes an occasional slip. The "correct" version of a "prose" is so often not what a skilled native German translator would write but a wooden piece of German with a rather archaic flavour about it.

"A good tool to learn the language": let us say rather a traditional tool to learn the language. Good, no perhaps possible, as long as it is the game of substitution that is being played, genitive for genitive, prepositional phrase for genitive, even temporal clause for absolute construction, but slightly precious once doctored English gives way to even Somerset Maugham's limpid international syntax and ludicrous as a tool to learn the

language when James Joyce or Neil Gunn or Eric Linklater has to be translated. It would in contrast do us good to return often to the classical words on language-learning of the great archaeologist, Heinrich Schliemann:

"So warf ich mich denn mit besonderem Fleisse auf das Studium des Englischen, und hierbei liess mich die Not eine Methode ausfindig machen, welche die Erlernung jeder Sprache bedeutend erleichtert. Diese einfache Methode besteht darin, dass man sehr viel laut liest, keine Übersetzungen macht, täglich eine Stunde nimmt, immer Ausarbeitungen über interessante Dinge niederschreibt und sie unter Aufsicht des Lehrers verbessert, auswendig lernt und in der nächsten Stunde aufsagt, was man am Tage vorher korrigiert hat".

"So I threw myself with special diligence into the study of English and in so doing I was forced by necessity to discover a method which simplifies considerably the learning of *any* language. This simple method is as follows: You read a lot aloud, make no translations, take a lesson daily, write one free composition after another on interesting subjects and correct them under the supervision of the teacher, then learn them by heart and recite in the next lesson what you have put right the day before".

"They retain Prose Composition in France": as France in the curious logic of so many academic thinkers is the "abroad" that can be talked of with respect in Arts Faculties like the United States and the Soviet Union in Science ones and as "they order this matter better in France", therefore while France sticks to Prose Composition England must stick to it also. A glance at the "English Prose" paper in an *Agrégation* examination will show "Prose" *in excelsis* and carried to complete absurdity at the same time; and if that experience is insufficient to convince, there is the insistent little question "And in which high-literacy countries of Western Europe does Modern Language teaching show the least effective results for its efforts? Not France and Britain by any chance?"

"Prose" is easy to mark". Possibly on the substitution level, certainly not where choice and feeling play their part. One suspects always that an examiner's finding "Prose" easy to mark

is as much related to the superior speed at which the task can be performed, the feasibility of applying a slotted-card scheme of marking, his reluctance to think each answer through individually, and the lack of appreciation of finer points, as it is connected with a "constant" represented by the English text which makes comparative measurements of performance easier and more rational.

In fact of course, if we face up to it, "Prose Composition" is, even at the best, a convention, often fun like all word-games, often instructive, but when it gets beyond a certain stage of difficulty rather a baroque curiosity than a scholarly exercise.

Third: "History of Language":

"History of Language" owes its place in the German Studies canon to Romanticism and, secondly, to Romance Studies, especially French Studies. Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Jakob Grimm had so much to do with the modern study of language generally that it would have been farcical if the investigation of their native tongue had not become a recognized feature of German Studies. They had worthy successors in Hermann Paul, Wilhelm Braune, and Friedrich Kluge among many others, as the accent shifted from a Romantic to a Realist, not to say Positivist historical approach. And Henry Sweet and, important above all for German Studies in Britain, Joseph Wright were trained and formed in Germany. The Romance Studies influence was on two levels, first, just as Classics had "Prose Composition" and so Modern Languages had to have it too, so French Studies had "History of the French Language" and German Studies had to have it too. That was superficial and logical; the deeper reason of course was that the history of the Romance Languages was and is, as Benvenuto Terracini and others have frequently pointed out, the touchstone for all historical study of language, because Romance Languages have a known quantity — Classical Latin — which can be *used* as a base and starting point for historical study whereas German and English, Welsh and Irish, Czech and Serbo-Croat have to operate with nebulous things like Primitive or Proto-Germanic, Proto-Celtic and Proto-Slavonic.

In the last thirty years of course "History of the German Language" — with the stress on *history*, has, like the histories of other languages, been under attack. It has not, fortunately, abdicated its title. But it has had and continues to have its vicissitudes. Whereas men and women of my generation, in a Scottish Grammar School at least, came under the influence of teachers who had used Sweet's and Wright's textbooks or even the English Grammar of the last of the great normative grammarians, who had opened his agile mind to the ideas of the young generation, Alexander Bain of the Chair of Logic and Rhetoric at Aberdeen, the present generation of would-be students of German has been taught by English-masters to whom "Old and Middle English" and "History of the English Language" have largely been a regrettable chore, an alien discipline in an alien tongue, antiquarian and stuffy, an imposition that had to be accepted as the price of real English literature with its Romance antecedents that began with John Barbour and Chaucer. As a result this present generation of undergraduate can — sometimes — quote T. S. Eliot, whereas Central and Southern English diphthongization as exemplified by Received Southern Speech saying (taun) and Northumbrian (tu : n) — or the Great Vowel Shift, as exemplified by "name" being spelled n - a - m - e whilst it is pronounced (neim) and by the differences between the nineteenth-century pronunciations of Latin in England, Scotland and Germany — with all their fascination — remain unknown and are greeted when explained with what only can be described tritely as "a scornful wonder". Nor have German-masters any better a record than English-masters; a training in direct method, or perhaps rather the provision of direct method text-books against a background of "There is no Law" of the popular linguistic theory of the early years of the century has made even the High German Sound Shift a *ferlie* (as Langland would have called it and as Scots still call it) to the sixth-former who has just become a student, rather than being a matter already known in practice but apt to yield up more of its intricate secrets to the scholar who approaches it with new questions and new hypotheses. As a consequence of this background or lack of background in the student's mind and

previous education, we find that distaste through lack of understanding tends to be perpetuated. "History of Language" except for a small band of enthusiasts fails to break through to the student's consciousness, he shuts his mind against it, because it is something tremendously complicated like algebra but worse because of unfair exceptions, something that is linked in teaching with a still more esoteric field, medieval literature, of which the "fortunate" read only fifty pages from two texts — to forget them again in a fortnight, as it is going to be useless in taking even a Sixth Form in a Grammar School.

Let us return now to the picture of the uninformed "German Prose" enthusiast who is simultaneously the uninformed contemner of the history of German and who seeks, despite his "I'm more interested in language than in literature", his introduction to the methods of scholarship in the very difficult field of the study of the literature of a country, Germany, with a history so unlike that of Britain and a philosophical tradition without an understanding of which much literary study becomes a litany of names and superficialities. Beside it let us consider the exciting development of linguistics in the last thirty or forty years, even sixty years — Gilliéron, Wenker, Meillet, Saussure, Bloomfield, Trubetzkoy, Louis Hjelmslev, Leo Weisgerber, Hugo Moser, Walter Porzig, to name only a few, each one — and one could name twenty others besides — with fresh ideas on varying fields and developed out of varying experience, only a very few of which and those slowly and after endless testing percolate through into the academic teaching of German. One has only to think of how literary "structuralism", to use a convenient general term, has penetrated and revived literary study in Western Europe and America to wonder why British Germanists who are also linguists in the sense of students of language have not been able to make general linguistic speculation, especially that which we usually call structuralism, fertilize their special branch of study — in its relation to the undergraduate — more than they have done.

German Germanists treating German language as their theme have been doing pioneering work in the last ten years or so, especially Hans Glinz (a Swiss incidentally) with his *Die innere*

Form des Deutschen (Bern 1952) and his *Der deutsche Satz* (Düsseldorf 1957), Johannes Erben with his *Abriss der deutschen Grammatik* (Berlin 1958), Walter Jung with his *Kleine Grammatik der deutschen Sprache* (Leipzig 1953) and Alfred Hoppe with his *Inhalte und Ausdrucksformen der deutschen Sprache* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bonn 1955), my teacher Hennig Brinkmann with his essays. The extent to which the new ideas are already part and parcel of German scholars' thinking about German is reflected in the attitude taken by Paul Grebe in the completely revised new edition of *Duden: Grammatik der deutschen Gegenwartssprache* (Mannheim 1959) for which he is responsible. We find him writing in his preface to this work:

"Jede Einzelsprache . . . hat . . . bis zu einem gewissen Grade eine eigene Struktur. Diese Struktur ist das Ergebnis des sprachlichen Zugriffs der Sprachgemeinschaft gegenüber dem Seienden in der Welt.

Daraus ergibt sich als Aufgabe einer Grammatik unserer Muttersprache, 'die innere Form' des Deutschen bewusst zu machen, d.h. die Grundstrukturen zu verdeutlichen"

"Every individual language has to a certain degree a structure all its own. This structure is the result of the way the language-community tackles linguistically what has its being in the world.

Thus it is the task of a grammar of our native language to make people conscious of the inner form of German, i.e. to indicate its basic structures". Though he goes on to say that he is being conservative in his use of new methods and new results as he must be in a book meant not only for scholars but as a practical guide for a wide public, it is exciting to see how often he does follow men like Glinz in arranging and giving life to the vast material he treats and to find him rejoicing when he finds himself in dealing with such a central matter as the basic forms of the simple sentence in German coming independently to conclusions which are almost identical with Erben's.

This consciousness of research along new lines having an immediately fertilizing effect in a great work that will be consulted and used by millions of people is highly gratifying. It certainly appeals and should appeal further to the British because it is an example of quick practical application of research. And more

gratifying still is that all this is not a case of isolated if interesting phenomena. One has only to read any of the recent surveys of linguistic advance like Bertil Malmberg's outstandingly able *Nya vägar inom språkforskningen* (Lund 1959) — which ought to be translated into English or German immediately — to be struck by the refrain of "of importance to teachers of languages".

It looks then as if we have several things to do if we are to revive a real consciousness of linguistic study of German as part of our canon. We must reach a new high standard of pronunciation and intonation. We must get rid of the preoccupation with a correct "prose" constructed on a base of impossibly difficult English which thanks to "direct methodism" carried to extremes sometimes does not hark back to normative grammar even though the unintelligent use of the English-German lexicon is easy to detect. We must devote much of the time wasted on this sacrosanct "weekly prose" with its meagre dividends to the study of the structure of contemporary living German in all its varied aspects and at all its levels. This last would have the enormous advantage of being a research-training field where a technique other than that of literary research is acquired. It would also restore the prestige of the older reference-grammar by enforcing its study as an aid to the understanding of and as a check on observed usage — much to the advancement of a real knowledge of German. In the American Germanist George Oliver Curme's *Grammar of the German Language* (Second Edition, New York 1952, First Edition 1922) we have an outstandingly able picture of the German of fifty years ago unsurpassed even in the work of German-born German scholars, yet how many or indeed rather how few teachers of German or even school libraries possess a copy of this work in whose introduction Werner Leopold writes: "Curme was very conscious of the co-existence of different levels of speech and paid more attention to the popular and the informal spoken language than do the authors of most large scholarly grammars; but he always specified the speech level carefully"!

Side by side with this synchronic study of the contemporary language would have of course to run the traditional historical study of German, but a renewed scholarly interest in the

contemporary language instead of a merely practical interest would be able to allow that contemporary language to be the "known quantity" which that seemingly most orthodox of *Junggrammatiker*, Hermann Paul, dared to make it in his monumental *Deutsche Grammatik*. "Structure and Growth", to turn the title of Jespersen's classic round about, are essential partners and a structural approach to the most ancient problems and formulations like L. L. Hammerich's exciting re-statement of the Germanic Sound Shifts, *Die germanische und die hochdeutsche Lautverschiebung*, in *Paul u. Braunes Beiträge* — West German Series — vol. 77, 1955, can only be an advantage. But history of language is not only history of the changes of patterns of phoneme, morpheme and syntagm. It is also of the very essence of men's lives and it reflects economic and social change and revolution in a way that can amaze the uninitiated but in which the scholar can rejoice soberly and with solid satisfaction. To quote Niels Bohr in his address to the Second International Congress of Germanists at Copenhagen this summer (1960):

"Language is indeed our main tool for the expression and communication of knowledge and views and hopes, and researches into the development of languages and their mutual influence on each other present one of the richest sources for the illumination of many aspects of human culture".

Examples from German of the sort of thing that make the language come alive in depth are myriad: in phonology anomalies like *Rucksack* beside *Rücken*, *sanft* beside *sacht*, in morphology the undeclined, strong, and weak forms of the adjective which go back to the old declensions with, on the one hand, substantival and, on the other, pronominal endings and, apparently, a substantivising declension like the Latin one that produced *Cato* out of *catus*, or the development of a past participle sign "ge" out of a preterite preverb which as late as the twelfth century distinguished two aspects of the verb — *ich saz*, I was sitting, *ich gesaz*, I sat down, in syntax the position of the past participle in principal clauses and of the finite verb in subordinate ones, in word-formation the *sesquipedalia verba* like — my own personal favourite from an obituary notice in a Kiel newspaper of my postgraduate days there — *Fördedampferrestaurateurswitwe* ("firth

- steamer - caterer's widow") — in wordlore generally the bipolarity of affection for foreign loan-words and for purisms that prescribes *schreiben* and *Party* ("write" and "party") — a thousand years apart — alongside *Fegefeuer* and *Bahnsteig* ("ignis purgatorius" and "railway-platform") — some six hundred years apart. It is heartening to be able to agree from the neighbouring field of German Philology with so much that Professor T. B. W. Reid said on behalf of the historical approach in his Inaugural Lecture *Historical Philology and Linguistic Science* (Oxford 1960) though one may be permitted to disagree with him on other points. And it is encouraging to be able to welcome in this connexion the reappearance of the *Zeitschrift für deutsche Wortforschung* this year after a gap that reaches back to the very distant year of 1914.

It is of course fruitless to consider German's structure and growth in a sort of vacuum. English above all else as a second of the so-called West Germanic languages must be taken at all stages as a basis of comparison, conservative as it is in consonantal system, progressive in morphology, syntax and most other aspects compared with German. One's own language of course with one's own prejudices on usage and pronunciation is, however, often less easy to analyse than one that has been learnt as a foreign tongue. But the effort must be made and it is the hope of all that the young teachers now going out from University schools of English Language trained in thinking once more of the structure of English will not be long in making their impression on English studies in schools and even on that most clumsy of superstructures, the examination system. Till then and till all matriculands eager to study German continue the study of English as far as their grammar schools will take them and beyond, University teachers of German language may have to do their best to fill in the gaps that the schools have left.

But English alone, though good, is only one basis of comparison and ideally there should be two, one if possible still Germanic but outside the West Germanic field. That is why though the Dutch of Holland and the Dutch of South Africa (Afrikaans) — both "West Germanic" languages — are absorbingly interesting in this connexion — and we teach Dutch in Newcastle — ym

preference must go to a language of the other living Germanic group — a North Germanic, a Scandinavian Language. Here in Newcastle we offer and students of German language accept with enthusiasm the chance to learn contemporary Swedish, Danish or Norwegian. I flatter myself that that does not only help to throw light on German as it is and as it has developed but thanks to the devotion and skill of the foreign-born colleagues who teach and have taught these languages in the scholarly linguistic tradition of Scandinavia helps to send out young scholars to do research or to teach German with a genuine width of knowledge as far removed from the world of "chattering in German" as from that of "doing good 'prose' but not speaking the language". It is my hope that we shall one day too within the cultural field of Scandinavia but outside the linguistic field of Germanic — indeed of Indo-European — be able to offer in Newcastle the Uralian language that stands nearest to us geographically — Finnish — as a fascinating example of the *totaliter aliter*, which for the linguist has an attraction just as irresistible as the slight variant, the dialect, or the related literary language.

In conclusion, before thanking you for having patience with an iconoclast who has certainly not selected a windmill to tilt at in Prose Composition and has shown himself anything but a utilitarian by pleading for the teaching of Finnish, I should like to speak two words of gratitude and remembrance, the first to my earliest academic teacher, Walter Bruford, when I first met him in 1925 as Reader in German at Aberdeen, now Schröder Professor of German at Cambridge, the second to the late Lord Percy, who to us was Lord Eustace Percy. It was thanks to his encouragement and help that I was able to create and build up the school of Scandinavian Studies here in Newcastle to whose usefulness for German Studies I have just alluded but which now, not least in its production of a young colleague to teach Swedish Language and Literature for the University of Cambridge and in the training of a Chairman of Scandinavian Studies for the University of Wisconsin, has grown into a school in its own right that can lift up its head modestly but not overawed beside the more senior schools of London and Cambridge.

For myself, as I look back over the seventeen years as Lecturer and Reader at King's College the War allowed me out of a possible twenty-two to my first public lectures here in 1937/38 on "The Contemporary German Novel" — I was youthfully sure of myself then — and as I look forward hopefully to serving the University of Newcastle for which my academic generation has hoped and planned, I would like to conclude by quoting from John Galt's *Annals of the Parish* Mr Balwhidder's words to Thomas Thorl the weaver after he was inducted at Dalmailing in 1760:

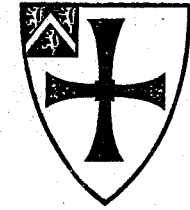
"I thanked Thomas, and went in with him, and we had some solid conversation together, and I told him it was not so much the pastor's duty to feed the flock, as to herd them well; and that although there might be some abler with the head than me, there wasna a he within the bounds of Scotland more willing to watch the fold by night and by day".



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OF DURHAM

KING'S COLLEGE NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

'GERMAN LANGUAGE'
IN UNIVERSITY GERMAN STUDIES
IN BRITAIN — A RETHINKING
OF SOME ASPECTS

by

DUNCAN M. MENNIE

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