7 English Around the World

ENGLISH HAD hardly established itself as a language when it began to travel out of England. During the Middle Ages it moved north into Scotland (p.120), west into Wales and across the sea into Ireland. Each area in due course developed its own national dialect and a home-grown literature with a distinctive voice. And in the last 400 years the same thing that happened across the British Isles has been repeated on a global scale.

Although English-speaking explorers made contacts in various parts of the world during the fifteenth century, settlements in America produced the first distinctive community variety of English outside the British Isles. This took place with remarkable speed. Within a few years of the first colonists arriving in Virginia, their letters and manuscripts start to provide evidence of an emerging American English. A new vocabulary, such as words for local plants and animals, reflected the culture of exploration, and Native American place names gave the new maps an unfamiliar appearance (p.140). Not long afterwards British visitors to the country began to remark on the American accent – or rather accents, for those who came across the Atlantic on the *Mayflower* and other vessels came from several parts of Britain, and their different regional backgrounds influenced the ways in which American English would later develop.

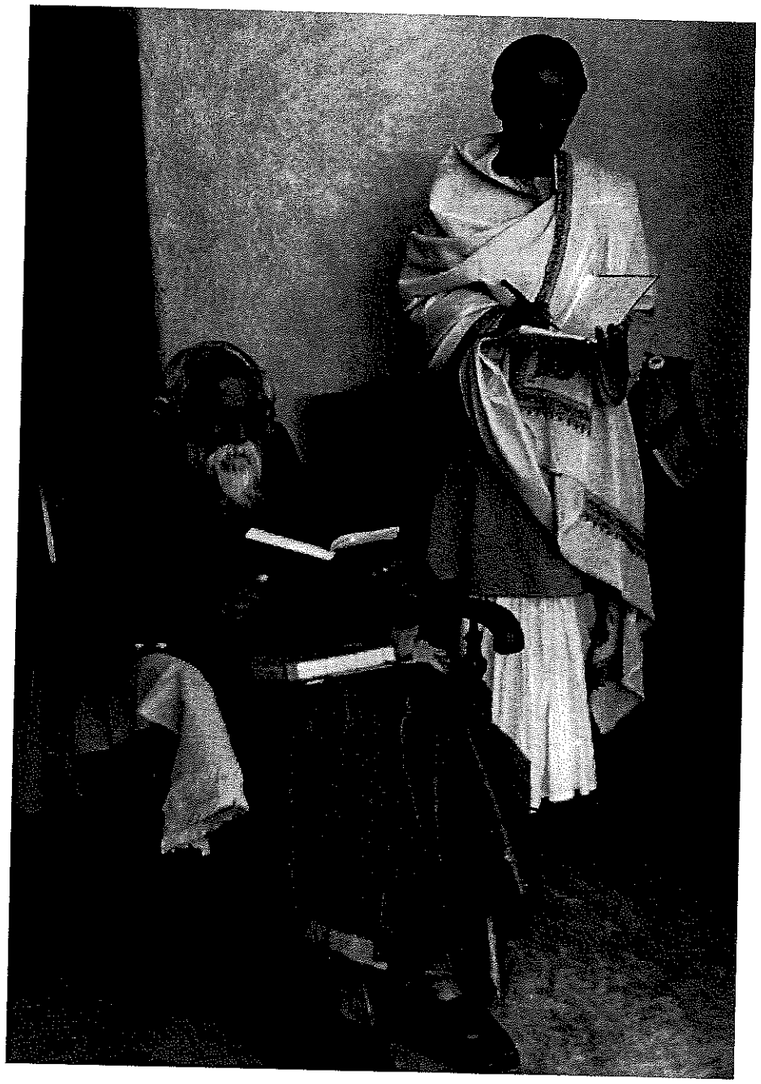
Once the United States achieved independence, American English took on the status of a national institution. Noah Webster's essays and dictionaries (p.144) focused attention on the need to develop a new language for the 'new nation', and his spelling reforms (*color* for *colour*, etc) have been the primary index of difference between British and American English ever since. The bulk of what we would now call American vocabulary emerged in the nineteenth century, reflecting the geography, culture and economy of the rapidly developing country. Folklorists such as Charles Leland tried to capture the dynamic vocabulary of cattle trading, gold rushes and the 'Wild West' (p.145), while a range of later dictionaries focused on the new words being introduced by waves of immigrants (*hamburger* from German, *cookie* from Dutch, *bagel* from Yiddish, *chop suey* from Chinese, and so on) as well as by the new denizens of the American way of life, such as jazz musicians and hobos (p.152).

It took some time for the countries of the Caribbean to develop their own voices in print. The first newspaper from the region, the *Barbados Gazette*, was published in 1731, but it proved conservative and British in its language and attitudes (p.142). The contrast with modern writers from a Caribbean background, such as Benjamin Zephaniah and John Agard, could not be greater (p.156). A similar slow growth in the evolution of a regional English voice is seen in the subcontinent of India. Hicky's *Bengal Gazette*, published in 1780, was the first English-language paper from the area; it is predominantly British English with just a hint of local expression (p.143). A century later, however, and Anglo-Indian English had developed to such an extent that it prompted a large dictionary – the acclaimed *Hobson-Jobson* of 1886 (p.147). Although unprecedented in its scope and detail, this was by no means a comprehensive lexicographical treatment. For example, if we examine the names of the textiles in the East India Company's cargo lists (p.141), we find that only a very few are included. There were other stylistic dimensions to Indian English, too, illustrated by the clerical style of Babu English (p.148) and the ephemera that reflected the cultural attitudes of the time (p.150).

Whenever English arrives in a country and people adopt it as a lingua franca, they quickly adapt the language to suit their circumstances. Within a few generations, a regional vocabulary can grow to tens of thousands of words, and grammar, pronunciation and patterns of discourse can also be affected. The spread of English in Africa illustrates the extraordinary diversity that can result after only a century. Olive Schreiner wrote the first novel to come out of South Africa in 1883 (p.146); Sol T. Plaatje was the first black writer to produce a novel from this country in 1919 (p.151). Both felt the need to add glosses to their work to make the cultural background accessible to British readers. A generation later reveals how the local character of African writing had gained in stature. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, for example, published in the 1950s, contains no glosses, and for the most part its individual West African narrative style was published as it was written (p.153). Less well known are the kinds of publication illustrated by Onitsha literature (p.154), representing a less literary but just as authentic demotic African voice.

By the end of the nineteenth century Australia and New Zealand had also begun to develop individual varieties of English. The two countries are not distinguished in early dictionaries, such as the 1898 *Austral English* (p.149), but it did not take long before their respective dialects diverged. Today the Maori influence on English in New Zealand helps to make that variety look and sound very different from the way English is used in Australia. But there is nowhere to match the linguistic distinctiveness that developed a hundred miles north, in Papua New Guinea. There we find the emergence of a trade contact language (or 'pidgin'), known as Tok Pisin. This is so different from anything else in this section that it has come to be considered as a separate language (p.155).

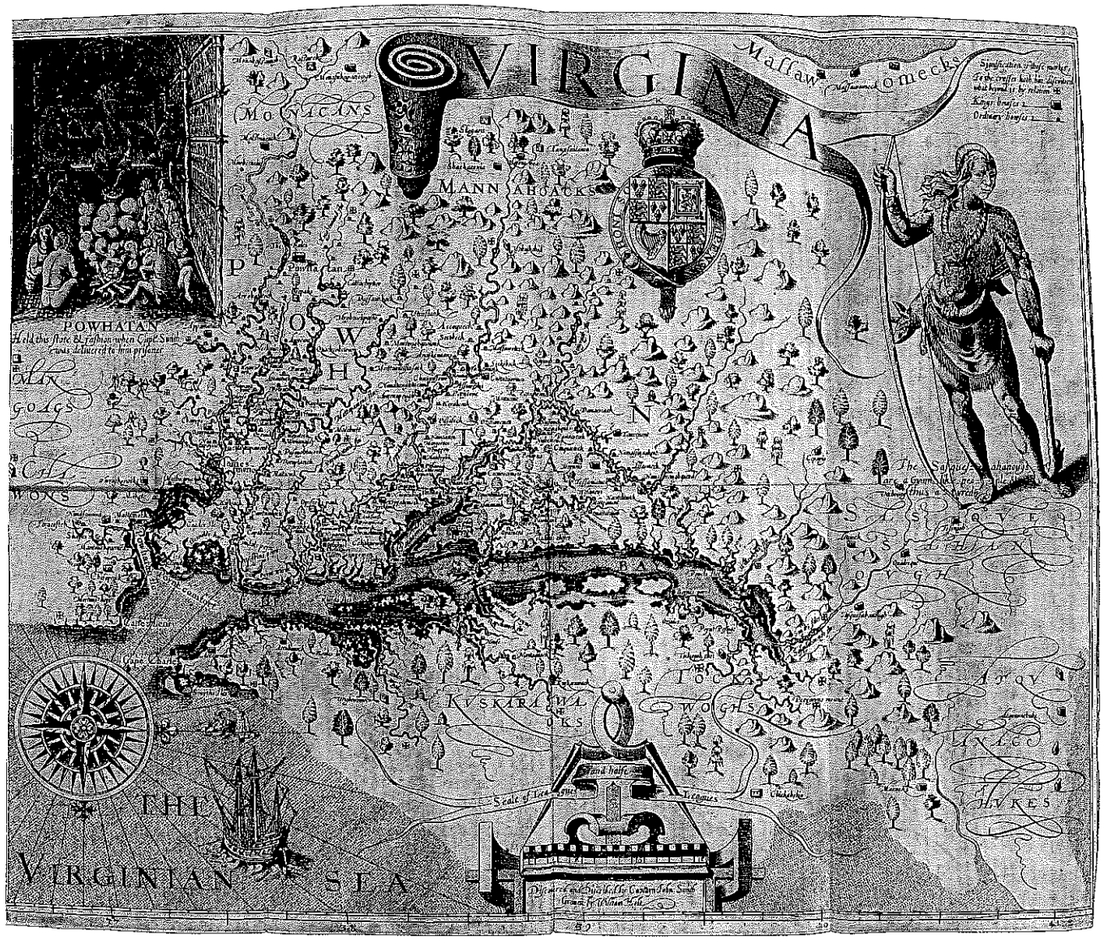
Virtually any part of the English-speaking world could be used to illustrate the growth of a new kind of literature, in which the language has been adapted to express local cultural identities. The question of whether English should be used at all is often contentious. Some writers wish to avoid the associations that come from the language's colonial history, preferring to express themselves in an indigenous tongue. On the other hand, the use of English guarantees them an international audience in a way that a local language cannot, so the decision is a difficult one. If English continues to expand its role as a global lingua franca, however, as seems probable, the number of regional varieties of English, and their associated literatures, will continue to grow.



In the first half of the twentieth century, the Indian author Rabindranath Tagore (pictured dictating to his secretary at his university in 1929) was the only Nobel laureate (1913) representing English literature from outside the UK, Ireland and the USA. In the past 50 years, however, the steady growth in commonwealth and postcolonial literature reflecting global varieties of English has begun to make its presence felt in the Nobel literary list; Patrick White (Australia, 1973), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria, 1986), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa, 1991), Derek Walcott (St Lucia, 1992) and J.M. Coetzee (South Africa, 2003).

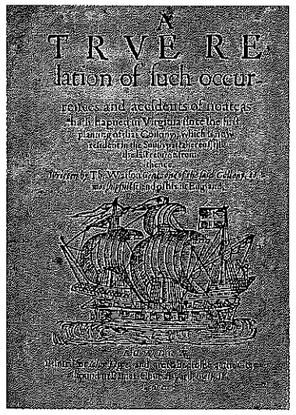
E.O. Hoppe/Corbis

John Smith, *A True Relation* (1608)



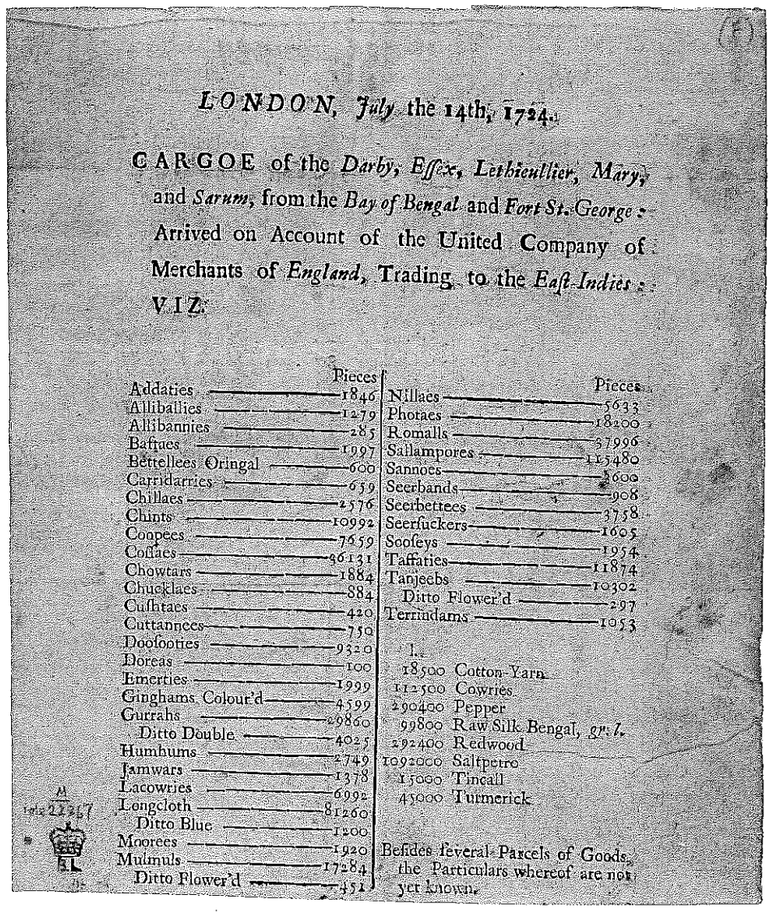
Captain John Smith (1580–1631) arrived in Virginia in 1607 after fighting in several European campaigns. Two years later he would become president of Jamestown's council. Smith explored the new territory at length, and wrote an account of the encounters between colonists and Native American tribes (including the famous story of his escape from execution by the chief Powhatan through the intervention of his daughter Pocohontas). He sent the manuscript back to England, where, as the illustration shows, it was published erroneously in 1608 under the name of Th. Watson (a corrected edition soon followed).

Smith's map of Virginia was printed in 1612, and remained in use for over a century. It is noted for first representing Native American place names, several of which, including *Roanoke, Appomattox* and *Potomac*, are still in use today. His writing also introduced Europeans to a new vocabulary of Amerindian words, such as *raccoons* (which he spells *Raugroughcuns*) in 1608 and *moccasins* in 1612. These are among the first examples of what was perceived in Europe to be American English – a term that Webster introduced.



British Library, G.7121

East India Company, Cargo List (1724)



LONDON, July the 14th, 1724.

CARGOE of the *Darby, Eſſex, Lethienllier, Mary,* and *Sarum,* from the *Bay of Bengal* and *Fort St. George*: Arrived on Account of the United Company of Merchants of *England*, Trading to the *East-Indies*: VIZ.

	Pieces
Addaties	1846
Alliballies	1279
Allibannies	285
Baftues	1997
Bettellees Oringal	600
Carridarries	659
Chillaes	2576
Chints	10992
Coopees	7459
Coſſaes	96131
Chowtars	1884
Chucklaes	884
Cuſhtaes	420
Cuttannees	750
Doofooties	9320
Doreas	100
Emerties	1999
Ginghams Colour'd	4599
Gurrahs	49860
Ditto Double	4025
Humhums	2749
Jamwars	1378
Lacowries	6992
Longcloth	81260
Ditto Blue	1200
Moorees	1920
Mulmuls	17284
Ditto Flower'd	451

	Pieces
Nillaes	5633
Photaes	18200
Romalls	57996
Sallampores	115480
Sannoes	2600
Seerbands	908
Seerbettees	3758
Seerſuckers	1605
Sooſeys	1954
Taffaties	11874
Tanjeebs	10302
Ditto Flower'd	297
Terriandams	1953

18500	Cotton-Yarn
112500	Cowries
290400	Pepper
99800	Raw Silk Bengal, *gn. l.*
292400	Redwood
1092000	Saltpetre
15000	Tincall
43000	Turmerick

Beſides ſeveral Parcels of Goods, the Particulars whereof are not yet known.

The cargo lists of the major shipping lines provide an insight into how English was embracing a new specialized vocabulary during the eighteenth century. The illustration describes the contents of five ships of the East India Company which arrived in England in July 1724. The majority of the items are fabrics, mostly types of cotton, linen or silk. Their names reflected local Indian usage, or sometimes the town of origin (as with *cushtaes*, from Kushtia, now in Bangladesh). A few names refer to types of product, such as *longcloth* (white cotton cloth in long pieces) or *romals* (silk or cotton squares or handkerchiefs). *Tincal* is another (English) name for borax, a soluble white mineral widely used as a detergent.

The exact meaning of some of the terms is no longer clear, and spelling is highly variable. The type of muslin here called *bettellee*, for example, might appear in other lists as *beteela, betteela, beatelle* or some other form. Some names, such as *taffeta* and *gingham*, have come into more general modern usage, but most have remained part of the specialized lexicon of historical textiles. Cargo lists and other business documents are an excellent illustration of the way in which trade has been a major influence on the growth of English vocabulary.

SPELLING VARIANTS

The uncertainty over how to spell some of these new terms is evident in this list of quotations from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The coarse cotton fabric referred to as *baftaes* in the cargo list appears in a multiplicity of forms.

William Phillip (1598): 'Cotton Linnen of various sorts... Boffetas.'
Samuel Purchas (1612): 'Baftas or white Callicos.'
London Gazette (1722): 'A Parcel of... Pelongs, Cuttanees, chequer'd Bafts, Nillaes, etc.'
Thomas Forrest (1779): 'They purchase blue and red baftaes from the Chinese.'
Joachim Stocqueler (1845): 'Some silk manufactories here... produce a coarse stuff, called baftah.'
Richard Burton (1876): 'Blue baft from which the stiffening has been washed out.'

British Library, ORB.30/587

The *Barbados Gazette* (1731)

On CELIA.

EPIGRAM.

By artful Glances and inviting Smiles,
Celia first-hints her Skill in am'rous Toils;
Returns each Ogle from Philander's Eyes,
And with him languishes, and with him sighs:
At length the happy Man dares speak his Flame,
The willing Fair too deigns to own the same;
In melting Kisses takes him to her Arms,
And seems, as once, to give up all her Charms;
Yet she, inexorable, still denies
The only Thing for which her Lover dies.
Celia should know that whilst her Conduct's such,
She does too little, or she does too much.

The QUACK-DOCTOR.

IT happen'd that a Country-Clown
Finding his Wife was lying down,
Ran for a *Doctor* in the Town.
No common *Doctor*, I assure you,
That would by vulgar Methods cure you!
(For he decry'd, yea, curs'd *Emeticks*,
*Cathartick*s, cleansing *Diureticks*,
Damn'd all for Fools, and call'd 'em fulsome,
Who cur'd a Wound with sovereign Balsom;)
For his Part "He'd a Way uncommon,
" (Ne'er known before to *Man* or *Woman*,)
" Protesting he had made so pat
" A Compound of *Blue Dragon*'s Fat,
" Which being mix'd (fresh every Day)
" With *Drops* distill'd from *Milky Way*,
" Then after blended well together,
" Next laid on Toe, with *Phœnix* Feather,
" From all Diseases he could free
" Mankind —— And all by Sympathy.
But ere he aim'd a Cure, began it,
With grave consulting of a Planet,
(For if the *Stars* spoke not the Word,
He ne'er could any Cure afford).

But to proceed—— *Sir*, (says the Man)
I beg you'll make what Haste you can,
My Wife!—— my dearest Wife!—— alas!——
Cries out, and is in piteous Case.

" All shall be well (quoth *Domine*)
" Ne'er fear thy Wife, Leave that to me.
" And as we walk, I'll tell you why
" I am so positive.—— The Sky
" You see is sprigled out with Stars,
" *Venus* shines here, and there shines *Mars*;
" Lookee see how they're in Conjunction,
" Which speaks Success to my great Function.
" Here *Gemini* its Course begins,
" *Ergo*, Your *Spouse* must needs have Twins."

The *Man* amas'd, with great Surprize,
Lifts up his Hands, and Whites of Eyes.
Cries out, *Dear Sir, I hope not Two,*
God knows I have enough to do,
To keep my self, ('twixt me and you.)

" *Pho!* (quoth the *Doctor*) he wants *Brains*,
" Who 'gainst the *Will of Heav'n* complains;
" Each Secret that in Heaven lies,
" Is only giv'n unto the Wise;
" That is, Good Friend, I may I be free,
" To such, and only such as me:
" Nor should I speak, but that I know
" What Circle every Star doth go,
" As perfect as these Roads below."

Scarce thus he spoke;—— but down he fell
Into a Ditch, whose pleasing Smell
Did so perfume, and all betmear him,
No Christian could adventure near him.

The Clown sees this, now keeps his Distance,
Tho' the poor *Doctor* beg'd Assistance,
No, says the honest Countryman,
First stopp'd his Nose, and thus began,
Good Doctor, if you please, Good by t'ye,
I see the Planets have done Right t'ye;
And for your Skill, the Stars may pay you,
Since they're so treacherous to betray you.
And you, your self a Fool have shown,
To tell other Fate, but not your own.
I know by this, what Planet *rules,*
Tho' Planets govern none but Fools.

Thus spake, he runs away and left him,
Till Stink and Mud of Life bereft him.

Advertisements.

To be sold at the Printing-Office,

A New *English* Dictionary; or a Compleat Collection of the most proper and significant Words, and Terms of Art commonly used in the Language; with a continued short and clear Expofition. The whole digested into Alphabetical Order; and chiefly designed for the Benefit of Young *Scholars*, *Tradesmen*, *Artificers*, *Foreigners*; and the *Female Sex*, who would learn to spell truly; being so fitted to every Capacity, that it may be a ready and continual Help to all that want an Instructer. As also Three useful Tables, *viz.* I. Of Proper Names of Men, especially those that are contained in the Holy Bible, shewing their true Original and Derivation. II. Of Proper Names of Women, with the same Explication. III. Of Nick-names or *English* Christian Names abbreviated or made short. Price bound 2 *s.* 6 *d.*

A Military and Sea-Dictionary, explaining all difficult Terms in *Martial Discipline*, *Fortification*, and *Gunnery*, and all Terms of *Navigation*. To which is added, The New *Exercise of Firelocks* and *Bayonets*, with Instructions to perform every *Motion*. Very useful to all Persons that read the Publick News, or serve in the Army, Militia, or Navy. Price Bound 1 *s.* 6 *d.*

GOODS lately Imported from *London*, to be sold by Mel. *Randal* and *Richard Macdonnel* Merchants, living in *Cross-Alley*.

FINE Castor Hats,	White Stomachers,
Fine Callicoes,	French Rolls,
Strip'd Mantua Silks,	New Mantua Silk Caps,
Shaggreens,	Superfine Ivory Fans,
Mulberry Lustrings of different Colours,	Silver and Gold Trimings,
White Sarsnet,	Brown Thread in half Pounds,
Black Alamodes,	Pins of all sorts,
Black Lustrings,	Black Earings & Necklaces,
Ribbonds of all Sorts,	French 2 rows, ditto,
Silver Girdles,	Queen Elizt superfine playing Cards,
Woaten Silk-Stockens,	Cambricks,
Mens ditto,	Genoa Thread Hose.

Barbados: Printed by *S. Keimer*, where Subscriptions are taken in at 5 *s.* per Quarter.

The *Barbados Gazette* was the first newspaper to be printed in the Caribbean. It was edited by Samuel Keimer, a British-born printer who moved to Barbados from Pennsylvania. He started the *Gazette* in 1731, originally as a weekly, and then progressed to publishing twice a week. The illustration shows the back page of the issue for Saturday 6 November 1731.

Although the paper claimed in its strapline to publish 'the freshest Advices Foreign and Domestick', the content that dominated was very clearly domestic. The issues are full of poems, epigrams, songs and other creative writing by local authors. A series of women's love poems published anonymously in the paper have since been collected and republished as acclaimed early examples of the genre.

The language of the *Gazette* shows no sign of local Barbados English. Plainly it was catering for an elite colonial clientele, concerned to preserve cultural links with Britain (as the advertisement at the bottom shows) and to maintain 'proper' linguistic standards. As a result it took some time before publications from the Caribbean began to reflect a distinctive regional character. The other two advertisements are, intriguingly, for dictionaries – one general, the other specialized for military and naval use. The general dictionary draws attention to the emerging concern over correct spelling, soon after to be addressed by Dr Johnson (p.49). The anticipated readership for such works makes an interesting mixture: 'Young Scholars, Tradesmen, Artificers, Foreigners, and the Female Sex'.

British Library, Burney 289B

Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* (1780)

To be LET,

A GARDEN House, consisting of a Hall Three Rooms and two Virandoes; situated on the Culpey Road near Ally Pore. For particulars apply to Mr. THOMAS ADAMS. March 4, 1778.

Calcutta, 10th March, 1783.

At the Large GODOWN, lately CROFTS and JOHNSON'S,

On the Banks of the River, near CHAUND-PAUL GAUT

WILL be Sold on Monday next the 13th Inst. the remaining Articles belonging to the Estate of Lieut. Col. Dow; consisting of Furniture, Hindostan Tents, Carpets, Chinaand Queen's Ware, Kitchen Utensials, Pinnace and Budgrow,

At the same time will be Sold a very complete Pinnace Budgrow, belonging to the Estate of George Hurst, Esq; lying at Anchor opposite to the said Godown, and nine Burrs belonging to the Estate of Reynold Thomas, lying at Nim Tolah.

Conditions of Sale.

The Purchasers to bind themselves under the penalty of 25 per Cent to be forfeited in case they do not pay for and clear out their respective Lots as follow; the Budgrow and Pinnace within five Days and all other Articles within ten Days from the time of Sale, but the risk of the River to be on the Purchaser immediately on the Sale, further to bind themselves to make good all deficiencies and expences that may arise by a re-sale.

Calcutta, March 11, 1780.

By Order of the EXECUTORS.

On the Premises;

WILL be continued on Tuesday and Wednesday next the sale of the remaining valuable Effects of the late *George Hurst*, Esq.

At Mr. WILLIAMSON'S AUCTION ROOM.

OLD PLAY HOUSE:

WILL be Sold by Public Auction, on Thursday next the 16th Inst. Sundry Articles saved from the wreck of the Snow DISPATCH.

Several Articles belonging to the Estate of Lieut. Col. John Fortnom.

The Effects of two Gentlemen about to depart for England. And a variety of other Articles.

Conditions of Sale.

The Purchasers to bind themselves under the Penalty of 25 per Cent to be forfeited, in case they do not pay the amount of the Purchase Money, and clear out their respective Lots within ten Days from the Day of Sale, as well as to make good all deficiencies and expences that may arise by a re-sale.

At Mr. PRICE'S Victualling-Yard,

WILL be Sold by Public Auction, on account of the Company, on Saturday the 18th Inst. by Mr. *Williamson*, *Vendu Master*, the following Stores. Salt Beef and Pork, Arrack, Biscuit, Rice, Doll, Ghee, Salt, Wax and Tallow Candles, Mustard-seed and Coco-nut-oil, empty Casks, Staves, Iron Hoops and Coopers Tools.

Conditions of Sale.

The Purchasers to bind themselves under the Penalty of 25 per cent to be forfeited, in case they do not pay for and clear out their respective Lots within ten days from the day of sale, as well as to make good all deficiencies and expences that may arise by a resale.

Calcutta, March 4th 1780.

To be SOLD, or LETT ready Furnished.

THE Garden House belonging to John Richardson, Esq; delightfully and commodiously seated at Duncanfore, on the Bank of the River. Any Person desirous of Purchasing or hiring the same, is requested to apply to Mr. Williamson, for further Particulars. Feb. 19, 1780.

Mr. *WILLIAMSON*,

BEGS leave to acquaint the Public, through the Vehicle of Mr. Hicky's Gazette, that he has for Sale by Private Contract, the following Articles, *viz.*

Diamonds, Rubies, and other precious Stones,

Pearls of various Sorts,

An Organ with 12 Barrels, which performs several of Handel's Concertos with various accompanyments,

High Scented Ottah of Roses,

Rings of different Stones,

Shawls and Shawl Handkerchiefs,

Old Madera in Pipes and Bottles,

French Wax Candles, Sconce Candles and Tapers,

Country and Town Houses,

West India Sweetmeats in 6lb Jars,

Two Pairs of elegant Diamond Ear Rings,

An Harpsichord,

Chariots and Pheatons,

An Officer's Marque, lined with Gingham,

Ship Book Cases of Mahogany,

Brandy Fruits,

Plate,

Large Strong Buggy Horses,

A beautiful bright Sorrel Hunter known by the name of Fame, formerly the property of Mr. Bruer, warranted free from blemish,

A dark Dun Saddle Horse, of a high cast, about fourteen hands high, just arrived.

A fourteen Oar'd Pinnace built Budgroe, lying at Mrs. Rof's Gaut,

A new Pinnace, 22 feet Keel by 7 feet Beam, with a House in the center, laying under a Shed at Mr. M'Gwain's Bungelow, near the Hospital.

An elegant English Crane necked Chariot.

A neat Country built Chariot.

March 11, 1780.

Mr. DONALD,

BEGS leave to acquaint the public in general and the Merchants and Mariners of the Settlement in particular that he acts as an Insurance Broker and effects Insurances either on English or Foreign Bottoms by good and Capital underwriters on as easy Terms as the nature of circumstances will admit. Remitters either to Europe direct, or by the way of China may depend on getting their Risks covered with Punctuality and dispatch. ----Those who may be pleased to favour Mr. DONALD, with their Commands are requested to send him their Directions in writing not only for the sake of Expedition but to prevent Mistakes.

Calcutta, March 10, 1780.

ON TUESDAY, next the 14th, Inst. will be sold at public Auction, by Mr. DONALD, at his Auction Room near the Court House. A few Pipes of Old Madera Wine, a few Chests of Hyson Tea of the best Quality, China Sugar Candy in large Tubs.

On the same DAY.

A piece of Ground at BANDEL containing 3 Bigahs and 15 Cottahs belonging to the Estate of the late Mr. JAMES DRIVER, of CALCUTTA, deceased, there is part of an old Brick House on the Premises, and a Number of Mango, Jack, and coco-nut Trees. The Sale to begin at 11 o'Clock. March 11, 1780.

To be SOLD.

THAT large commodious House in the Loll Bazar, at present occupied by John Levet, Esq; and formerly rented by the Harmonic Society. Three fourths of the purchase money may remain at mortgage upon the Primises for two years at 8 per cent per Annum. For further Particulars apply to Mr. DONALD, Auctioneer. March 11, 1780.

MR. DUNCAN, begs leave to acquaint the Public, that he has for Sale by private contract, a piece of Ground opposite the new Riding School, in a Garden formerly belonging to Henry Vereliih, Esq; the House behind Mr. Short's, adjoining to Mr. Miller's Ground which he is now building upon.

TURNBULL and MACINTIRE,

BEG leave respectfully to inform the *Ladies* and *Gentlemen* of Calcutta, that they purpose returning to this Settlement by the first Ship from China the ensuing season, and will gladly receive Orders and carefully execute any commission they may be favoured with.

Mergui Hatta, Feb. 25, 1780.

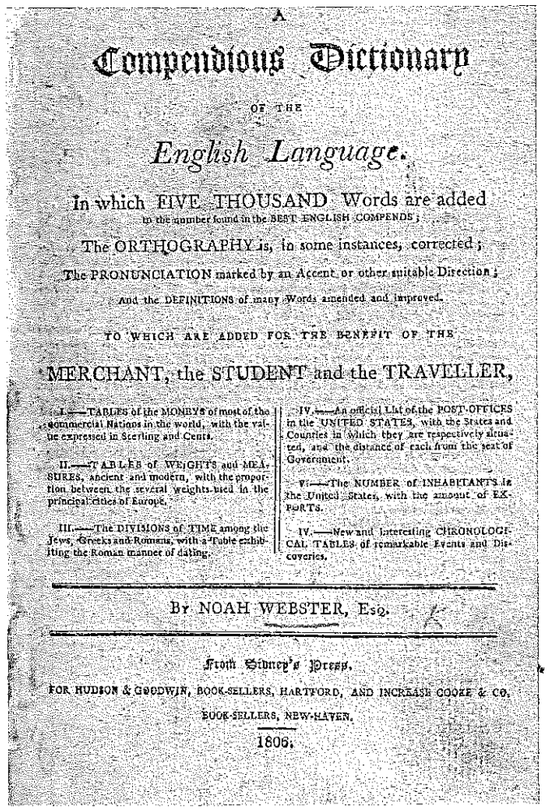
N. B. Any kind of Silks, Gauzes or Ribbonds, made after Europe Patterns.

Hicky's *Bengal Gazette*, also called the *Calcutta General Advertiser*, was the first English-language newspaper to be published in the Indian subcontinent. It was founded in Calcutta by an Irishman, James Augustus Hicky, in 1779, and appeared weekly. The illustration is from the issue of 11 March 1780.

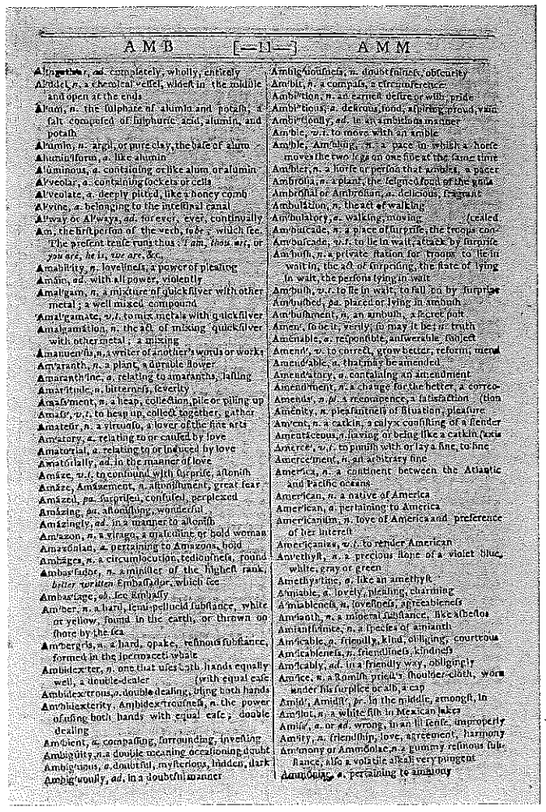
The *Gazette* had all the major functions of a modern paper. On the front page of this issue there were items of 'foreign intelligence' from France and England, while the back page, seen here, was devoted to a wide range of advertisements. Some small but important linguistic differences are beginning to emerge. The news items are in standard British English, but the advertisements feature some local Anglo-Indian expressions. A *godown* or warehouse, for example (the second item in column one), is an established word, recorded in the sixteenth century; so is *arrack* (top of column two), a drink distilled from the coco-palm. However, such terms as *bigah* (usually spelled *bigha*) and *cottah*, referring to different measures of land (the second item in column three), are contemporary innovations, as are the *burrs* (banyan trees) featuring in the godown sale. Spelling is still somewhat variable. *Budgrow*, a type of barge used on the Ganges, appears also as *budgroe*; today it is usually written *budgerow*.

British Library, ORB.40/285

Noah Webster, *Compendious Dictionary* (1806)



A
Compendious Dictionary
OF THE
English Language.
In which FIVE THOUSAND Words are added to the number found in the BEST ENGLISH COMPENDS;
The ORTHOGRAPHY is, in some instances, corrected;
The PRONUNCIATION marked by an Accent or other suitable Direction;
And the DEFINITIONS of many Words amended and improved.
TO WHICH ARE ADDED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
MERCHANT, the STUDENT and the TRAVELLER,
I.—TABLES of the MONEYS of most of the commercial Nations in the world, with the value expressed in Sterling and Cents.
II.—TABLES of WEIGHTS and MEASURES, ancient and modern, with the proportion between the several weights used in the principal cities of Europe.
III.—The DIVISIONS of TIME among the Jews, Greeks and Romans, with a Table exhibiting the Roman manner of dating.
IV.—An official List of the POST-OFFICES in the UNITED STATES, with the States and Counties in which they are respectively situated, and the distance of each from the seat of Government.
V.—The NUMBER of INHABITANTS in the United States, with the amount of EXPORTS.
IV.—New and interesting CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES of remarkable Events and Discoveries.
By NOAH WEBSTER, Esq.
From Sidney's Press,
FOR HUDSON & GOODWIN, BOOK-SELLERS, HARTFORD, AND INCREASE COOKE & CO. BOOK-SELLERS, NEW-HAVEN.
1806.



AMB [—11—] AMM

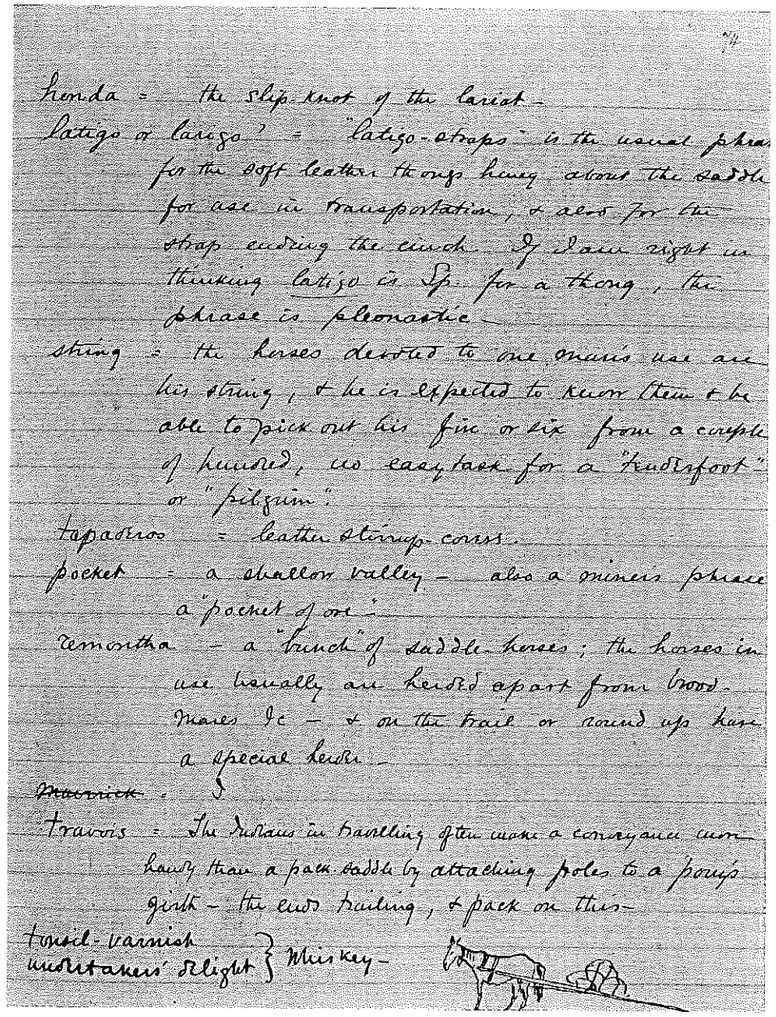
Altogether, ad. completely, wholly, entirely
Alembic, n. a chemical vessel, widest in the middle and open at the ends
Alum, n. the sulphate of alumin and potash, a salt composed of sulphuric acid, alumin, and potash.
Alumin, n. argil, or pure clay, the base of alum
Aluminiform, a. like alumin
Aluminous, a. containing or like alum or alumin
Alveolar, a. containing lockets or cells
Alveolate, a. deeply pitted, like a honey comb
Alvine, a. belonging to the intestinal canal
Always or Always, ad. forever, ever, continually
Am, the first person of the verb, to be; which see. The present tense runs thus; I am, thou art, or you are, he is, we are, &c.
Amability, n. loveliness, a power of pleasing
Amain, ad. with all power, violently
Amalgam, n. a mixture of quicksilver with other metal; a well mixed compound
Amalgamate, v.t. to mix metals with quicksilver
Amalgamation, n. the act of mixing quicksilver with other metal; a mixing
Amanuensis, n. a writer of another's words or works
Amaranth, n. a plant, a durable flower
Amaranthine, a. relating to amaranths, lasting
Amaritude, n. bitterness, severity
Amassment, n. a heap, collection, pile or piling up
Amass, v.t. to heap up, collect together, gather
Amateur, n. a virtuoso, a lover of the fine arts
Amatory, a. relating to or caused by love
Amatorial, a. relating to or induced by love
Amatorially, ad. in the manner of love
Amaze, v.t. to confound with surprise, astonish
Amaze, Amazement, n. astonishment, great fear
Amazed, pa. surprised, confused, perplexed
Amazing, pa. astonishing, wonderful
Amazingly, ad. in a manner to astonish
Amazon, n. a virago, a squaloing or bold woman
Amazonian, a. pertaining to Amazons, bold
Ambages, n. a circumlocution, tediousness, round
Ambassador, n. a minister of the highest rank, better written Embassador, which see
Ambassage, ob. for Embassy
Amber, n. a hard, semi-pellucid substance, white or yellow, found in the earth, or thrown on shore by the sea
Ambergris, n. a hard, opake, rebnous substance, formed in the spermaceti whale
Ambidexter, n. one that uses both hands equally well, a double dealer
Ambidextrous, a. double dealing, using both hands
Ambidexterity, Ambidextrousness, n. the power of using both hands with equal ease; double dealing
Ambient, a. compassing, surrounding, inverting
Ambiguity, n. a double meaning occasioning doubt
Ambiguous, a. doubtful, mysterious, hidden, dark
Ambiguously, ad. in a doubtful manner
Ambiguousness, n. doubtfulness, obscurity
Ambit, n. a compass, a circumference
Ambition, n. an earnest desire or wish, pride
Ambitious, a. desirous, fond, aspiring, proud, vain
Ambitiously, ad. in an ambitious manner
Amble, v.i. to move with an easy pace
Amble, Ambling, n. a pace in which a horse moves the two legs on one side at the same time
Ambler, n. a horse or person that ambles, a pacer
Ambrosia, n. a plant, the food or drink of the gods
Ambrosial or Ambrosian, a. delicious, fragrant
Ambulation, n. the act of walking
Ambulatory, a. walking, moving
Ambuscade, n. a place of surprise, the troops concealed
Ambuscade, v.t. to lie in wait, attack by surprise
Ambush, n. a private station for troops to lie in wait in, the act of surprising, the state of lying in wait, the persons lying in wait
Ambush, v.t. to lie in wait, to fall on by surprise
Ambushed, pa. placed or lying in ambush
Ambushment, n. an ambush, a secret post
Ameer, to decline, verify, to pay it per se, saith
Amenable, a. responsible, answerable, subject
Amend, v. to correct, grow better, reform, mend
Amendable, a. that may be amended
Amendatory, a. containing an amendment
Amendment, n. a change for the better, a correction
Amends, n.pl. a recompence, a satisfaction
Amenity, n. pleasantness of situation, pleasure
Ament, n. a catkin, a calyx consisting of a slender
Amentaceous, a. having or being like a catkin, as
Amerce, v.t. to punish with or lay a fine, to fine
Amercement, n. an arbitrary fine
America, n. a continent between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans
American, n. a native of America
American, a. pertaining to America
Americanism, n. love of America and preference of her interest
Americanize, v.t. to render American
Amethyst, n. a precious stone of a violet blue, white, gray or green
Amethystine, a. like an amethyst
Amiable, a. lovely, pleasing, charming
Amiableness, n. loveliness, agreeableness
Amianth, n. a mineral substance, like asbestos
Amianthiform, n. a. in cells of amianth
Amicable, a. friendly, kind, obliging, courteous
Amicableness, n. friendliness, kindness
Amicably, ad. in a friendly way, obligingly
Amice, n. a South priest's shoulder-cloth, worn under his surplice or alb, a cap
Amid, Amidst, pr. in the middle, amongst, in
Amilus, n. a white fish in Mexican lakes
Amiss, a. or ad. wrong, in an ill sense, improperly
Amity, n. friendship, love, agreement, harmony
Ammony or Ammoniac, n. a gummy resinous substance; also a volatile alkali very pungent
Ammonia, a. pertaining to ammony

The title page of the *Compendious Dictionary* by Noah Webster (1758–1843) shows the beginning of a division between British and American lexicographical practice. The work includes a great deal of encyclopedic information, for example on populations and post offices, which later British dictionaries would exclude. Despite its title it was a small book, about 16.5 x 10 cm (6.5 x 4 in), but thanks to small print and succinct one-line definitions it managed to pack in around 37,000 headwords (Johnson's dictionary was just a few thousand larger).

Webster's dictionary is full of linguistic signficance. It is the first dictionary to contain words specific to the USA, such as *Americanize, butternut, caucus, checkers, chowder, constitutionality, hickory, hommony, opossum, skunk* and *succotash*. Most of its spelling innovations remained resolutely American (e.g. *color, defense*), but some came to be in general use, such as the simplification of '–ck' endings to 'c' (e.g. *music, public*) – a practice that Johnson had refused to countenance in his dictionary (p.49). The success of this work led eventually to Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), with almost twice as many entries. It made the word *Webster* virtually synonymous with 'dictionary' in the United States.

British Library, C.133.b.2, f.11

Charles Leland, Notes (1850s)



Honda = the slip-knot of the lariat –
latigo or larigo? = "latigo-straps" is the usual phra
for the soft leather thongs hung about the saddle
for use in transportation, & also for the
strap ending the cinch. If I am right in
thinking latigo is Sp. for a thong, the
phrase is pleonastic –
string = the horses devoted to one man's use are
his string, & he is expected to know them & be
able to pick out his fine or six from a couple
of hundred, no easy task for a "Hoofsfoot"
or "pilgrim".
tapaderos = leather stirrup-covers.
pocket = a shallow valley – also a miners phrase
a "pocket of ore".
remontha = a "bunch" of saddle-horses; the horses in
use usually are herded apart from mares.
Mares &c – & on the trail or round up have
a special herd –
Maverick.
Travois = The Indians in travelling often make a conveyance more
handy than a pack saddle by attaching poles to a pony's
girth – the ends trailing, & pack on this –
Tonsil-varnish
undertakers' delight } Whiskey –

Charles Leland (1824–1903) was a folklorist, born in America, who settled in London in the 1860s. He had an exceptionally wide range of interests, and a particular fascination with the way in which different groups adapted English to express their needs. His notebooks include long lists of Chinese pidgin expressions, circus terms, gypsy vocabulary and, illustrated here, words and phrases linked to the cattle trade in the USA's 'Wild West'. It is an impressionistic list, with Leland unafraid to add a question mark when he is unsure, as in the case of *latigo/larigo*. He is no lexicographer, but his lists provide unique detail about terms emerging in the mid-nineteenth century as the cattle trade rapidly grew. Words associated with the trade relate to horses and their tack, cowboys and their equipment, local Indian culture and the physical environment of the cattle trails. Nor is relaxation ignored, as the last two items on this page illustrate.

Vocabulary and idiom developed rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century to express a distinctively American mindset and way of life. Many reflected the waves of immigration that occurred during that period. Their flavour can be captured in the short selection of words below.

AMERICA TALKING

bronco	1850	*railroad cut*	1862
cattle town	1881	*roundup*	1876
delicatessen	1893	*rustler*	1882
dude	1883	*showboat*	1869
fender	1883	*smoke signal*	1873
greenbacks	1862	*spiel*	1894
hoodlum	1871	*trail boss*	1890
kindergarten	1862	*train robber*	1887
maverick	1867	*tutti-frutti*	1876

British Library, MS Add.39561

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883)

GLOSSARY.

Several Dutch and Colonial words occurring in this work, the subjoined Glossary is given, explaining the principal.

Benaauwdheit = Indigestion.
Brakje = A little cur of low degree.
Biltong = Dried meat.
In-span = To harness.
Kappje = A sun-bonnet.
Karroo = The wide sandy plains in some parts of South Africa.
Karroo-bushes = The bushes that take the place of grass on these plains.
Kartel = The wooden bed fastened in an ox-waggon.
Kopje = A small hillock, or 'little head.'
Kraal = The space surrounded by a stone wall or hedged with thorn branches, into which sheep or cattle are driven at night.
Mealies = Indian corn.
Meerkat = A small weasel-like animal.
Meiboss = Preserved and dried apricots.
Nachtmaal = The Lord's Supper.
Out-span = To unharness, or a place in the field where one unharnesses.
Predikant = Parson.
Reim = Leather rope.
Schlecht = Bad.
Sloot = A dry watercourse.
Spook = A ghost.
Stamp-block = A wooden block, hollowed out, in which mealies are placed to be pounded before being cooked.
Upsitting = In Boer courtship the man and girl are supposed to sit up together the whole night.
Velschoen = Shoes of undressed leather.

by Smuts

THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

SHADOWS FROM CHILD-LIFE.

The Watch.

The full African moon poured down its light from the blue sky into the wide, lonely plain. The dry, sandy earth, with its coating of stunted 'karroo' bushes a few inches high, the low hills that skirted the plain, the milk-bushes with their long finger-like leaves, all were touched by a weird and an almost oppressive beauty as they lay in the white light.

In one spot only was the solemn monotony of the plain broken. Near the centre a small solitary 'kopje' rose. Alone it lay there, a heap of round ironstones piled one upon another, as over some giant's grave. Here and there a few tufts of grass or small succulent plants had sprung up among its stones, and on the very summit a clump of prickly-pears lifted their thorny arms, and reflected, as from mirrors, the moonlight on their broad fleshy leaves. At the foot of the 'kopje' lay the homestead. First, the stone-walled 'sheep kraals' and Kaffir huts; beyond them the dwelling-house—a square red-brick building with thatched roof. Even on its bare red walls, and the wooden ladder that led up to the loft, the moonlight cast a kind of dreamy beauty, and quite etherealized the low brick wall that ran before the house, and

B

The first novel to come out of South Africa was *The Story of an African Farm*. It was written by Olive Schreiner (1855–1920), but the first edition was published under a male pseudonym, Ralph Iron. Schreiner was born in South Africa and began her novel while working as a teacher in Kimberley, publishing it in 1883 after moving to England. Her portrait of a strong, independent-minded female protagonist, Lyndell, working on an isolated ostrich farm, greatly impressed the early women's movement, and she became part of the social activism of the time.

Schreiner was well aware of the linguistic limitations of her British readers. She preceded her first chapter with a glossary of local South African terms, highlighting them in her text with inverted commas (see *karoo, koppje* and *kraals* on her opening page above). In fact not all of the regional expressions feature in the glossary, and British readers would still have had some difficulty interpreting such items as *milk-bushes, prickly pears* and *Kaffir*. The practice of putting local words in inverted commas was common in early colonial writing, but as commonwealth literature gained a stronger international presence it was dropped.

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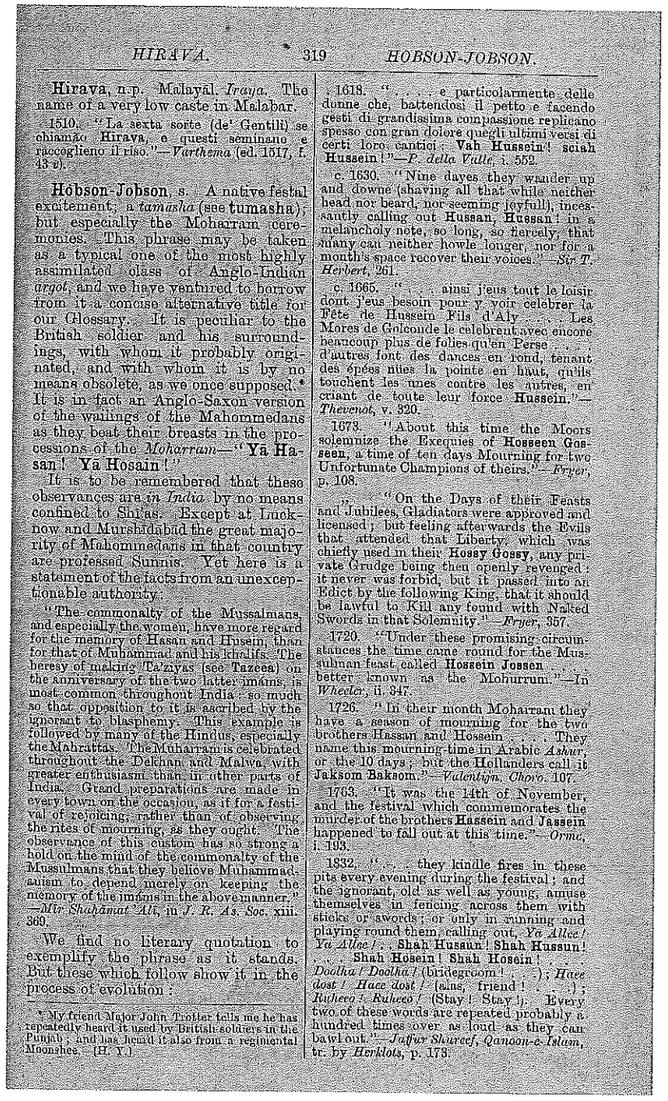
Henry Yule & Arthur Coke Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (1886)



HIRAVA. 319 HOBSON-JOBSON.

Hirava, n.p. Malayál. *Iraiya*. The name of a very low caste in Malabar.

1510. "La sexta sorte (de' Gentili) se chiamão Hirava, e questi seminano e raccoglieno il riso."—*Varthema* (ed. 1517, f. 43 b).

Hobson-Jobson, s. A native festal excitement; a *tamasha* (see **tumasha**); but especially the Moharram ceremonies. This phrase may be taken as a typical one of the most highly assimilated class of Anglo-Indian *argot*, and we have ventured to borrow from it a concise alternative title for our Glossary. It is peculiar to the British soldier and his surroundings, with whom it probably originated, and with whom it is by no means obsolete, as we once supposed.* It is in fact an Anglo-Saxon version of the wailings of the Mahommedans as they beat their breasts in the processions of the *Moharram*—"**Yá Hasan! Yá Hosain!**"

It is to be remembered that these observances are in *India* by no means confined to Shí'as. Except at Lucknow and Murshidábád the great majority of Mahommedans in that country are professed Sunnís. Yet here is a statement of the facts from an unexceptionable authority:

"The commonalty of the Mussalmans, and especially the women, have more regard for the memory of Hasan and Husein, than for that of Muhammad and his khalífs. The heresy of making Ta'ziyas (see **Tazeea**) on the anniversary of the two latter imáms is most common throughout India: so much so that opposition to it is ascribed by the ignorant to blasphemy. This example is followed by many of the Hindus, especially the Mahrattas. The Moharram is celebrated throughout the Dekhan and Malwa with greater enthusiasm than in other parts of India. Grand preparations are made in every town on the occasion, as if for a festival of rejoicing, rather than of observing the rites of mourning, as they ought. The observance of this custom has so strong a hold on the mind of the commonalty of the Mussulmans that they believe Muhammadanism to depend merely on keeping the memory of the imáms in the above manner."—*Mír Shahámat 'Alí*, in *J. R. As. Soc.* xiii. 369.

We find no literary quotation to exemplify the phrase as it stands. But these which follow show it in the process of evolution:

* My friend Major John Trotter tells me he has repeatedly heard it used by British soldiers in the Punjáb; and has heard it also from a regimental Moonshee. (H. Y.)

1618. ". . . . . e particolarmente delle donne che, battendosi il petto e facendo gesti di grandissima compassione replicano spesso con gran dolore quegli ultimi versi di certi loro cantici: **Vah Hussein! sciah Hussein!**"—*P. della Valle*, i. 552.

c. 1630. "Nine dayes they wander up and downe (shaving all that while neither head nor beard, nor seeming joyfull), incessantly calling out **Hussan, Hussan!** in a melancholy note, so long, so fiercely, that many can neither howle longer, nor for a month's space recover their voices."—*Sir T. Herbert*, 261.

c. 1665. ". . . ainsi j'eus tout le loisir dont j'eus besoin pour y voir celebrer la Fête de Hussein Fils d'Aly . . . . Les Mores de Golconde le celebrent avec encore beaucoup plus de folies qu'en Perse . . . . d'autres font des dances en rond, tenant des épées nües la pointe en haut, qu'ils touchent les unes contre les autres, en criant de toute leur force **Hussein.**"—*Thevenot*, v. 220.

1673. "About this time the Moors solemnize the Exequies of **Hosseen Gasseen**, a time of ten days Mourning for two Unfortunate Champions of theirs."—*Fryer*, p. 103.

" " "On the Days of their Feasts and Jubilees, Gladiators were approved and licensed; but feeling afterwards the Evils that attended that Liberty, which was chiefly used in their **Hossy Gossy**, any private Grudge being then openly revenged: it never was forbid, but it passed into an Edict by the following King, that it should be lawful to Kill any found with Naked Swords in that Solemnity."—*Fryer*, 357.

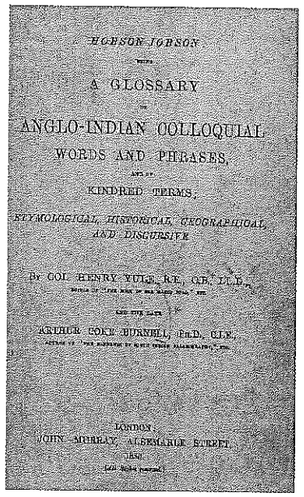
1720. "Under these promising circumstances the time came round for the Mussulman feast called **Hossein Jossen** . . . better known as the Mohurrum."—*In Wheeler*, ii. 347.

1726. "In their month Moharram they have a season of mourning for the two brothers Hassan and Hossein . . . . They name this mourning-time in Arabic *Ashur*, or the 10 days; but the Hollanders call it **Jaksom Bakaom.**"—*Valentijn, Choro.* 107.

1763. "It was the 14th of November, and the festival which commemorates the murder of the brothers **Hassein** and **Jassein** happened to fall out at this time."—*Orme*, i. 103.

1832. " . . . they kindle fires in these pits every evening during the festival; and the ignorant, old as well as young, amuse themselves in fencing across them with sticks or swords; or only in running and playing round them, calling out, *Ya Allee! Ya Allee!* . . **Shah Hussun! Shah Hussun!** . . . **Shah Hósein! Shah Hósein!** . . . *Doolha! Doolha!* (bridegroom! . . .); *Huee dost! Huee dost!* (alas, friend! . . .); *Ruheeo! Ruheeo!* (Stay! Stay!). Every two of these words are repeated probably a hundred times over as loud as they can bawl out."—*Jafur Shureef, Qanoon-e-Islam*, tr. by *Herklots*, p. 173.

British Library, 12906.r.28



HOBSON-JOBSON

A GLOSSARY

OF

ANGLO-INDIAN COLLOQUIAL

WORDS AND PHRASES,

AND OF

KINDRED TERMS,

ETYMOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND DISCURSIVE

By COL. HENRY YULE, R.E., C.B., LL.D.,

ARTHUR COKE BURNELL, Ph.D., C.I.E.,

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

During the 1870s Colonel Henry Yule (1820–89), a soldier and orientalist who had served in India, engaged in correspondence with Arthur Coke Burnell (1840–82) of the Madras Civil Service. The two men had been separately collecting Anglo-Indian words, and a collaboration was the outcome. After Burnell's death Yule brought the work to completion, providing over 2,000 entries supported by copious literary citations. He wanted a title that would both attract interest and suggest dual authorship, and the result was *Hobson-Jobson* – a phrase designed, as he puts it in his preface, 'to be a typical and delightful example of that class of Anglo-Indian argot which consists of Oriental words highly assimilated, perhaps by vulgar lips, to the English vernacular'.

Yule felt the need to defend the title of his serious etymological work, and his instinct was right. The rhyming reduplication was criticized by some as sounding juvenile (think *Humpty-Dumpty*) and by others as disparaging, for the phrase was also used in Victorian slang to refer to a pair of rustic clowns. Yule need not have worried, however, for the work's stature was assured. Within a few years of publication, 'the law of Hobson-Jobson' was being used to describe the way that a phrase from one language is adapted into the sound system of another. Nor was it long before several of the entries were being used as sources by the team compiling the *Oxford English Dictionary* (p.55).

Arnold Wright, *Baboo English as 'tis Writ* (1891)

Here is another in much the same strain :—

"HONOURED AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR,—With due respect and humble submission, I beg to bring to your kind notice that for a long days, I have not the fortune to pay you a respect, or not to have your mental or daily welfare, therefore my request that you will be kind enough to show me some mercy and thankfulness, by pending some few lines to your wretched son and thereby highly oblige. In accordance by your verbal order, I am still lingering for your hopeful words, which I cannot put out from my memory or think not to be disappointed by you.

"Those words are not my fancyless imaginations, but a desire of ardent hope that I shall be patronize by you, and that patronizm and gratitude are ever remain in my heart from my eternity as long as I live in this world. Because I am out of employment more than a year, my mental faculties and conscience are daily swift away from my mind by which I shall afterwards jeopardize my future prospects, subject me to undergo many difficulties, and thereby makes me idle not to provide the necessary expenses of my family but to beg door to door.

"Cares and anorcities are the followers of my un-

fortunation to-days, by which I am as a pilethropic il- (i. e. inner part is empty and outer part shows a very good looking appearance.) Such is my condition.

"So my request to you that your sympathy and philanthropic zeal will take some measure in my part, by provide me a post either by you, or by your direct patronage, to look with a favourable eye towards me by showing some mercy and thankfulness.

"By the pray of the Almighty Father you have placed in a high rank and you have the full capacity to patronize a man like me, which I hope for a long time not to be disappointed, but to remembered me as one of your obedient servant give a sharp reply of this wretched epistle and try for me the last, thereby highly oblige."

There is such an amusing assumption of self-satisfaction in the following that it also deserves to be quoted :—

"MOST RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH,—That your petitioner being given to understand that your honor is in want of hands to do the duties of signaller and porters begs to offer himself as a candidate for one of these : that your petitioner can read and write him

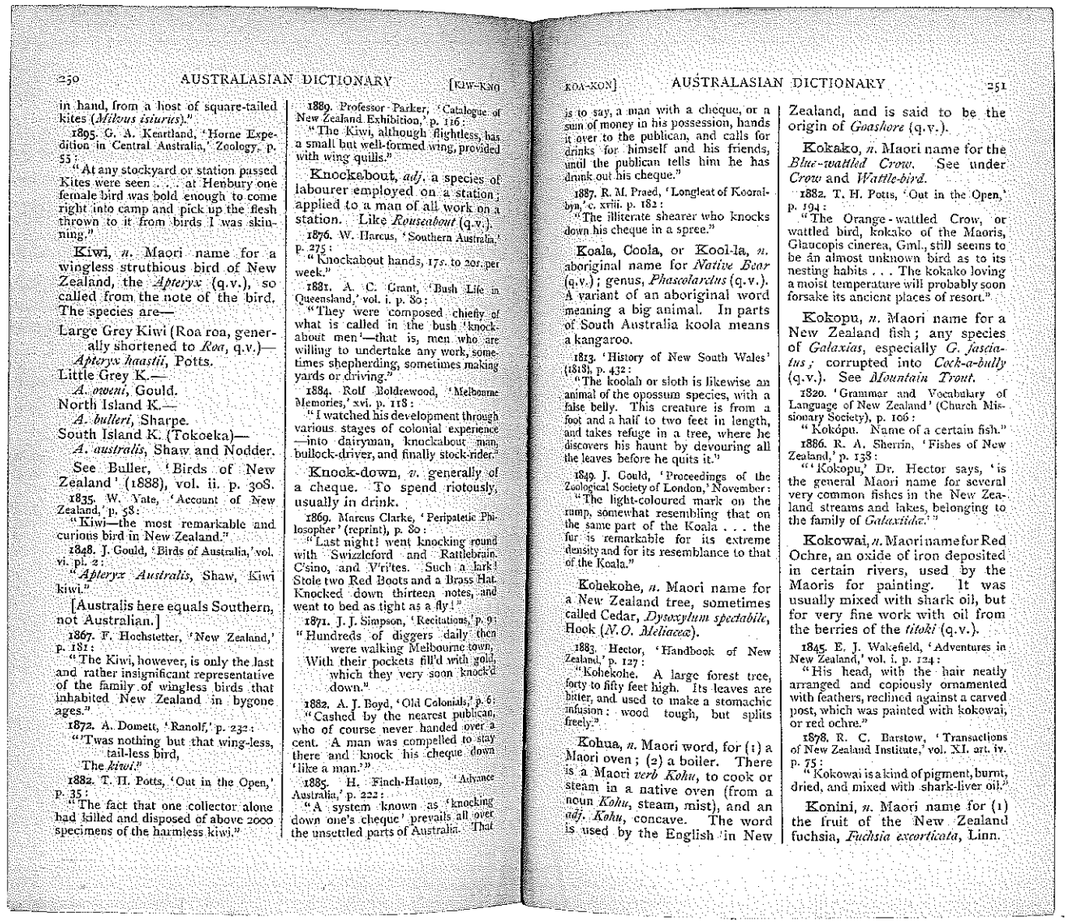
The subtitle to this book, 'Being Curiosities of Indian Journalism', says a great deal about the author, his subject and the period in which he was writing. It is one of many such books from the British colonial era in which the authors explore, with a mixture of ridicule and paternal amusement, the kinds of English being used by subject populations. Babu (or 'Baboo') English attracted particular attention because it did something unusual. Generally people who acquire a language in an untutored way produce a simpler version of it, often popularly called 'broken' or 'pidgin'. Here, however, the opposite effect is achieved. This is an elaborate, flowery kind of English, full of learner errors yet aspiring to poetic heights in its vocabulary and phrasing.

The name *Babu* was borrowed from Bengali (where it was a term of respect). It came to be used sarcastically by the British elite in India to refer to native clerks seeking to impress their masters with their newfound ability to use English. Over time a highly verbose, formal, ornamented style evolved, in which the meaning of a communication became secondary to the manner in which it was expressed. It came to be used not only in the Indian civil service, but also in journalism, business and many social situations where indirectness and excessive politeness were considered appropriate. Its influence can still be seen in the style of much South Asian English writing. Newspaper articles, for example, often use words and idioms that a British or American equivalent would consider over-elaborate or archaic.

Lampooned unmercifully in the colonial era, Babu English attracts less caricature and condemnation today – though new editions of such books as Arnold Wright's do still appear. There is a growing appreciation that the forces motivating Babu writing were not so unusual or regional after all. The style has a great deal in common with the ornate expression encountered in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British English – whether in formal essays, literary conversations or advertisements (p.92). Indeed, the antecedents of Babu English can be traced back much earlier, to the kind of elaborate language used by the sixteenth-century writer John Lyly – or, for that matter, in Shakespeare's character of Polonius.

British Library, T.39184

Edward E. Morris, *Austral English* (1898)



in hand, from a host of square-tailed kites (*Milvus isiurus*)."

1895. G. A. Keartland, 'Horne Expedition in Central Australia,' Zoology, p. 53 :

"At any stockyard or station passed Kites were seen . . . at Henbury one female bird was bold enough to come right into camp and pick up the flesh thrown to it from birds I was skinning."

Kiwi, *n.* Maori name for a wingless struthious bird of New Zealand, the *Apteryx* (q.v.), so called from the note of the bird. The species are—

Large Grey Kiwi (Roa roa, generally shortened to *Roa*, q.v.)—
Apteryx haastii, Potts.
Little Grey K.—
A. owenii, Gould.
North Island K.—
A. bulleri, Sharpe.
South Island K. (Tokoeka)—
A. australis, Shaw and Nodder.

See Buller, 'Birds of New Zealand' (1888), vol. ii. p. 308.

1835. W. Yate, 'Account of New Zealand,' p. 58 :

"Kiwi—the most remarkable and curious bird in New Zealand."

1848. J. Gould, 'Birds of Australia,' vol. vi. pl. 2 :

"*Apteryx Australis*, Shaw, Kiwi kiwi."

[Australis here equals Southern, not Australian.]

1867. F. Hochstetter, 'New Zealand,' p. 181 :

"The Kiwi, however, is only the last and rather insignificant representative of the family of wingless birds that inhabited New Zealand in bygone ages."

1872. A. Domett, 'Ranolf,' p. 232 :

"'Twas nothing but that wing-less, tail-less bird,
The *kiwi!*"

1882. T. H. Potts, 'Out in the Open,' p. 35 :

"The fact that one collector alone had killed and disposed of above 2000 specimens of the harmless kiwi."

1889. Professor Parker, 'Catalogue of New Zealand Exhibition,' p. 116 :

"The Kiwi, although flightless, has a small but well-formed wing, provided with wing quills."

Knockabout, *adj.* a species of labourer employed on a station; applied to a man of all work on a station. Like *Rouseabout* (q.v.).

1876. W. Harcus, 'Southern Australia,' p. 275 :

"Knockabout hands, 17*s.* to 20*s.* per week."

1881. A. C. Grant, 'Bush Life in Queensland,' vol. i. p. 80 :

"They were composed chiefly of what is called in the bush 'knock-about men'—that is, men who are willing to undertake any work, sometimes shepherding, sometimes making yards or driving."

1884. Rolf Boldrewood, 'Melbourne Memories,' xvi. p. 118 :

"I watched his development through various stages of colonial experience—into dairyman, knockabout man, bullock-driver, and finally stock-rider."

Knock-down, *v.* generally of a cheque. To spend riotously, usually in drink.

1869. Marcus Clarke, 'Peripatetic Philosopher' (reprint), p. 80 :

"Last night! went knocking round with Swizzleford and Rattlebrain. Casino, and Vrites. Such a lark! Stole two Red Boots and a Brass Hat. Knocked down thirteen notes, and went to bed as tight as a fly!"

1871. J. J. Simpson, 'Recitations,' p. 9 :

"Hundreds of diggers daily then
were walking Melbourne town,
With their pockets fill'd with gold,
which they very soon knock'd
down."

1882. A. J. Boyd, 'Old Colonials,' p. 6 :

"Cashed by the nearest publican, who of course never handed over a cent. A man was compelled to stay there and knock his cheque down 'like a man.'"

1885. H. Finch-Hatton, 'Advance Australia,' p. 222 :

"A system known as 'knocking down one's cheque' prevails all over the unsettled parts of Australia. That

is to say, a man with a cheque, or a sum of money in his possession, hands it over to the publican, and calls for drinks for himself and his friends, until the publican tells him he has drunk out his cheque."

1887. R. M. Praed, 'Longleat of Koorabya,' c. xviii. p. 182 :

"The illiterate shearer who knocks down his cheque in a spree."

Koala, Coola, or **Kool-la**, *n.* aboriginal name for *Native Bear* (q.v.); genus, *Phascolarctus* (q.v.). A variant of an aboriginal word meaning a big animal. In parts of South Australia koola means a kangaroo.

1813. 'History of New South Wales' (1813), p. 432 :

"The koolah or sloth is likewise an animal of the opossum species, with a false belly. This creature is from a foot and a half to two feet in length, and takes refuge in a tree, where he discovers his haunt by devouring all the leaves before he quits it."

1849. J. Gould, 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London,' November :

"The light-coloured mark on the rump, somewhat resembling that on the same part of the Koala . . . the fur is remarkable for its extreme density and for its resemblance to that of the Koala."

Kohekohe, *n.* Maori name for a New Zealand tree, sometimes called Cedar, *Dysoxylum spectabile*, Hook (*N.O. Meliaceæ*).

1883. Hector, 'Handbook of New Zealand,' p. 127 :

"Kohekohe. A large forest tree, forty to fifty feet high. Its leaves are bitter, and used to make a stomachic infusion : wood tough, but splits freely."

Kohua, *n.* Maori word, for (1) a Maori oven ; (2) a boiler. There is a Maori *verb Kohu*, to cook or steam in a native oven (from a noun *Kohu*, steam, mist), and an *adj. Kohu*, concave. The word is used by the English in New Zealand, and is said to be the origin of *Goashore* (q.v.).

Kokako, *n.* Maori name for the *Blue-wattled Crow*. See under *Crow* and *Wattle-bird*.

1882. T. H. Potts, 'Out in the Open,' p. 194 :

"The Orange-wattled Crow, or wattled bird, kokako of the Maoris, Glaucopis cinerea, Gml., still seems to be an almost unknown bird as to its nesting habits . . . The kokako loving a moist temperature will probably soon forsake its ancient places of resort."

Kokopu, *n.* Maori name for a New Zealand fish ; any species of *Galaxias*, especially *G. fasciatus* ; corrupted into *Cock-a-bully* (q.v.). See *Mountain Trout*.

1820. 'Grammar and Vocabulary of Language of New Zealand' (Church Missionary Society), p. 106 :

"Kokópu. Name of a certain fish."

1886. R. A. Sherrin, 'Fishes of New Zealand,' p. 138 :

"'Kokopu,' Dr. Hector says, 'is the general Maori name for several very common fishes in the New Zealand streams and lakes, belonging to the family of *Galaxiidæ*.'"

Kokowai, *n.* Maori name for Red Ochre, an oxide of iron deposited in certain rivers, used by the Maoris for painting. It was usually mixed with shark oil, but for very fine work with oil from the berries of the *titoki* (q.v.).

1845. E. J. Wakefield, 'Adventures in New Zealand,' vol. i. p. 124 :

"His head, with the hair neatly arranged and copiously ornamented with feathers, reclined against a carved post, which was painted with kokowai, or red ochre."

1878. R. C. Barstow, 'Transactions of New Zealand Institute,' vol. XI. art. iv. p. 75 :

"Kokowai is a kind of pigment, burnt, dried, and mixed with shark-liver oil."

Konini, *n.* Maori name for (1) the fruit of the New Zealand fuchsia, *Fuchsia excorticata*, Linn.

These pages, from one of the first dictionaries to come out of Australasia, illustrate how quickly English assimilates local words for the fauna and flora of a region, as well as for local cultural behaviour. English-speaking settlement dates from only the end of the previous century, but this collection by Edward E[llis] Morris (1843–1902) shows that over 2,000 new words had already entered the language. Indigenous botany and zoology can be seen in *kiwi*, *koala*, *kohekohe*, *kokako*, *kokopu* and *konini*, while cultural practices are reflected in *kohua* and *kokowai*. Traditional English vocabulary also features, but the sense is modified, for example in *knockabout* and *knock-down*.

At the end of the nineteenth century Australian and New Zealand English were not regarded as distinct varieties, reflecting two very different cultures. From an antipodean perspective, they were both simply 'Austral'. A century later, however, the two forms are always distinguished in accounts of global English. Australian and New Zealand English have developed in very different ways, notably through the assimilation of indigenous words and names – from Aboriginal culture in Australia and Maori culture in New Zealand. Some local words, such as *kiwi* and *koala*, have also now become part of global standard English.

British Library, 012986.f.9

A Loyal Acrostic (1911)

Language is always a product of culture, time and place, and the ethos of a colonial age is clearly displayed in this remarkable publication. It is one of several leaflets published to mark King George V's coronation in 1911, each trying to outdo the other in linguistic and artistic virtuosity. This writer has used an acrostic (a text in which the initial letters of the lines spell out words when read vertically) to highlight the occasion, accompanied by suitably elevated language, though this is at times stylistically variable – *aspirations* and *approbations* at one point, *ins and outs* at another. The subservient diction was typical of the era, but it reads uncomfortably today.

This is language in the service of Empire; but it is an unusual kind of language, for it mixes work and play. On the one hand it displays the formal features of a proclamation, with hints of Babu English (p.148); on the other it reveals the ludic features that we normally associate with puzzles and poetry. It also includes language at work in a different, less elevated sense, as the leaflet ends with an apparent advertisement for tooth powder.

British Library, ORB.99/185.(b.)

Sol T. Plaatje, *Mhudi* (1919)

CHAPTER XI.

A Timid Man.

" Mhudi," exclaimed Ra-Thaga, when he came home with two companions, " You must see the visitors who arrived at the Chief's court to-day. A most interesting group."

Mhudi : Where from, Basutoland ?

Ra-Thaga : No, No ! They come out of the sea—away beyond where the clouds do end.

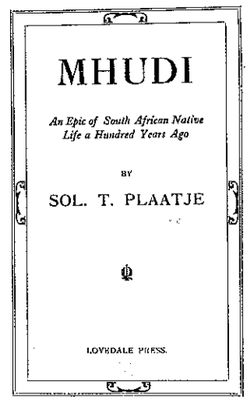
Mhudi : And what best did you like about them ? Are they good people like Moner' Atsi-bele* and his family ?

Ra-Thaga : They are white, but they don't look like Missionaries. They can't be from the same sea. What did I like best? O Mhudi, you should see them. I have never seen so many kololos† in one herd, as those in possession of the strangers. Not since that morning when you and I saw that troupe of zebras in the Kolong ‡ valley ; (and every one of them with a rider.)

1st Companion : I was tremendously impressed by their guns—a forest of them—a gun for every Boer. I said to myself " If ever we acquire half as many guns, and the Matabele come again, they shan't kill any more Barolong."

2nd Companion : I liked their stately beards best. I have never in all my life seen so much beard as I saw today, hanging on the chins of those Boers. Mhudi

**The Archbells—Wesleyan Missionaries at Thaba Nchu.*
†Horses.
‡Hartz River.

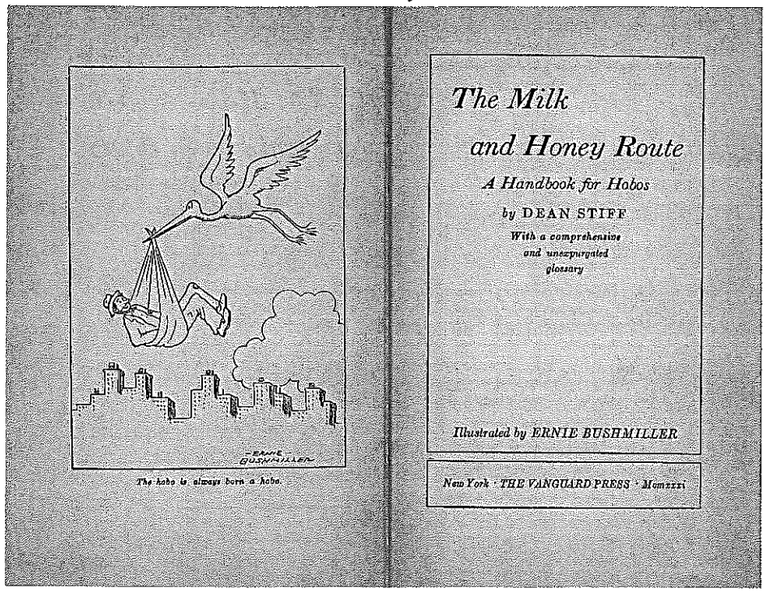


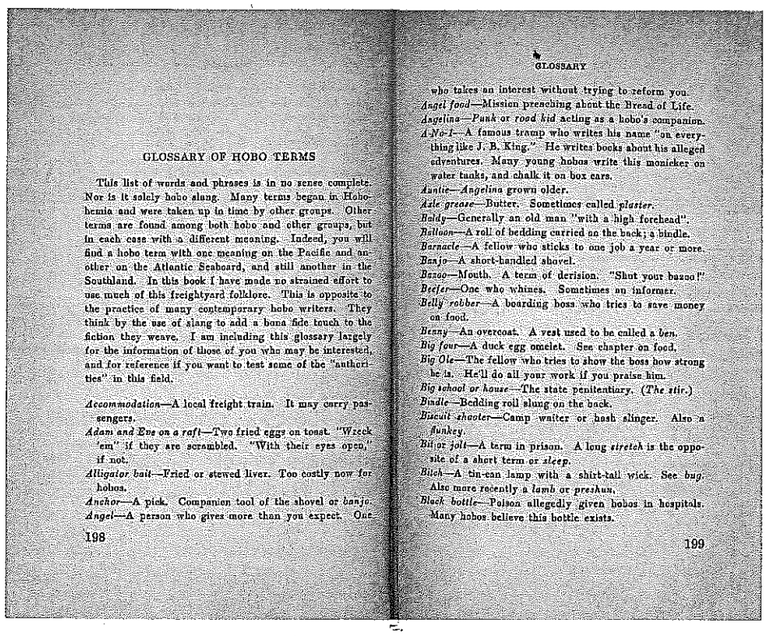
Solomon Tshekisho (Sol T.) Plaatje (1876–1932) had a brilliant and diverse career as a linguist, journalist and political activist. He served as an interpreter during the Boer War, later becoming editor of several newspapers and co-founder of the African National Congress. Plaatje compiled several works on Tswana language and culture, and was the first to translate some of Shakespeare's plays into an African language, Setswana. *Mhudi* was written in 1919 but not published until 1930. A love story about an earlier era written during a time of great political turmoil, it was the first novel to be written in English by a black South African. *Mhudi* was widely acclaimed for the way it blended African and European literary traditions.

This page conveys a clear linguistic impression of local African culture, most noticeably through the names of the lovers (Ra-Thaga and the heroine, Mhudi) and of the various ethnic groups they are talking about. Plaatje is well aware that some of his cultural references need linguistic commentary, as his footnotes show. However, he confidently uses ethnic names without gloss such as Matabele, Boer and Barolong – the latter, a tribe from North West province, South Africa – one of several indications in the novel of an emerging distinctive African voice.

British Library, 012600.l.45

Dean Stiff, *The Milk and Honey Route* (1930)





GLOSSARY OF HOBO TERMS

This list of words and phrases is in no sense complete. Nor is it solely hobo slang. Many terms began in Hobohemia and were taken up in time by other groups. Other terms are found among both hobo and other groups, but in each case with a different meaning. Indeed, you will find a hobo term with one meaning on the Pacific and another on the Atlantic Seaboard, and still another in the Southland. In this book I have made no strained effort to use much of this freightyard folklore. This is opposite to the practice of many contemporary hobo writers. They think by the use of slang to add a bona fide touch to the fiction they weave. I am including this glossary largely for the information of those of you who may be interested, and for reference if you want to test some of the "authorities" in this field.

Accommodation—A local freight train. It may carry passengers.

Adam and Eve on a raft—Two fried eggs on toast. "Wreck 'em" if they are scrambled. "With their eyes open," if not.

Alligator bait—Fried or stewed liver. Too costly now for hobos.

Anchor—A pick. Companion tool of the shovel or *banjo*.

Angel—A person who gives more than you expect. One who takes an interest without trying to reform you.

Angel food—Mission preaching about the Bread of Life.

Angelina—*Punk* or *road kid* acting as a hobo's companion.

A-No-1—A famous tramp who writes his name "on everything like J. B. King." He writes books about his alleged adventures. Many young hobos write this moniker on water tanks, and chalk it on box cars.

Auntie—*Angelina* grown older.

Axle grease—Butter. Sometimes called *plaster*.

Baldy—Generally an old man "with a high forehead".

Balloon—A roll of bedding carried on the back; a bindle.

Barnacle—A fellow who sticks to one job a year or more.

Banjo—A short-handled shovel.

Bazoo—Mouth. A term of derision. "Shut your bazoo!"

Beefer—One who whines. Sometimes an informer.

Billy robber—A boarding boss who tries to save money on food.

Benny—An overcoat. A vest used to be called a *ben*.

Big four—A duck egg omelet. See chapter on food.

Big Ole—The fellow who tries to show the boss how strong he is. He'll do all your work if you praise him.

Big school or house—The state penitentiary. (*The stir.*)

Bindle—Bedding roll slung on the back.

Biscuit shooter—Camp waiter or hash slinger. Also a *flunkey*.

Bit or jolt—A term in prison. A long *stretch* is the opposite of a short term or *sleep*.

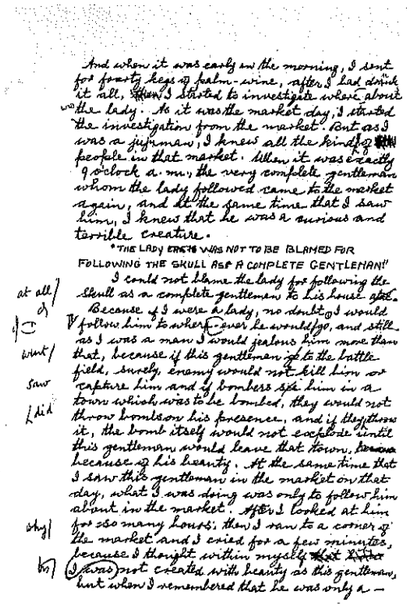
Bitch—A tin-can lamp with a shirt-tail wick. See *bug*. Also more recently a *lamb* or *preshun*.

Black bottle—Poison allegedly given hobos in hospitals. Many hobos believe this bottle exists.

What kind of English moves around the world? At one level there is the standard English and cultured accents of the empire-builders. At another lie the regional English and demotic accents of those who make a living by travelling around a country, often moving between countries when political conditions permit. The illustration is the beginning of a glossary that follows an account of 'hobohemia' (a blend of *hobos* and *Bohemia*, referring to their lifestyle) written by US sociologist Nels Anderson (1889–1986) under a pen-name. He explains the title in a description of the hobo's intimate connection with the American railroad:

'Often the hobos speak of a railroad as a "milk and honey route". The original milk and honey route was a railroad from Salt Lake City southward through the valleys of Utah. Along this line were the Mormon villages so euphoniously named, Moroni, Manti, Nephi, Lehi and Juab. In the early days, before the Latter Day Saints got disillusioned by the great influx of bums and yeggs [burglars], or, what is worse, the auto tramps, this was the greatest feeding ground for hobos. Hence the name, milk and honey route, which has since become a household term among hobos. Any railroad running through a valley of plenty may be called a milk and honey line.'

Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1946)



And when it was early in the morning, I sent for twenty kegs of palm-wine, after I had drunk it all, then I started to investigate more about the lady. So it was the market day, I started the investigation from the market, but as I was a juju-man, I knew all the kinds of people in that market. When it was exactly 9 o'clock a. m., the very complete gentleman whom the lady followed came to the market again, and at the same time that I saw him, I knew that he was a curious and terrible creature.

"THE LADY WAS NOT TO BE BLAMED FOR FOLLOWING THE SKULL AS A COMPLETE GENTLEMAN"

I could not blame the lady for following the skull as a complete gentleman to his house at all. Because if I were a lady, no doubt I would follow him to wherever he would go, and still as I was a man I would jealous him more than that, because if this gentleman went to the battle field, surely, enemy would not kill him or capture him and if bombers saw him in a town which was to be bombed, they would not throw bombs on his presence, and if they did throw it, the bomb itself would not explode until this gentleman would leave that town, because of his beauty. At the same time that I saw this gentleman in the market on that day, what I was doing was only to follow him about in the market. After I looked at him for so many hours, then I ran to a corner of the market and I cried for a few minutes because I thought within myself why was I not created with beauty as this gentleman, but when I remembered that he was only a —

A page from the author's MS. showing the publisher's 'corrections'

came to the market again, and at the same time that I saw him, I knew that he was a curious and terrible creature.

"THE LADY WAS NOT TO BE BLAMED FOR FOLLOWING THE SKULL AS A COMPLETE GENTLEMAN"

I could not blame the lady for following the Skull as a complete gentleman to his house at all. Because if I were a lady, no doubt I would follow him to wherever he would go, and still as I was a man I would jealous him more than that, because if this gentleman went to the battle field, surely, enemy would not kill him or capture him and if bombers saw him in a town which was to be bombed, they would not throw bombs on his presence, and if they did throw it, the bomb itself would not explode until this gentleman would leave that town, because of his beauty. At the same time that I saw this gentleman in the market on that say, what I was doing was only to follow him about in the market. After I looked at him for so many hours, then I ran to a corner of the market and I cried for a few minutes because I thought within myself why was I not created with beauty as this gentleman, but when I remembered that he was only a Skull, then I thanked God that He had created me without beauty, so I went back to him in the market, but I was still attracted by his beauty. So when the market closed for that day, and when everybody was returning to his or her destination, this gentleman was returning to his own too and I followed him to know where he was living.

The Palm-Wine Drinkard was the first novel of Amos Tutuola (1920–97), written in 1946 and published in London in 1952. Using themes from Yoruba oral folk tales, it tells the surreal adventures of an addicted palm-wine drinker in a world inhabited by fantastic supernatural beings. It was controversially received in Nigeria, where many felt that it reinforced negative stereotypes of the people as superstitious drunkards with primitive traditions (using cowrie shells as money, for example). Other West African writers strongly defended the book, however, which today is acclaimed as a classic of African literature.

Another cause of criticism was Tutuola's narrative style, called by some 'pidgin English'. In fact the language is nothing like pidgin (compare the example on p.155), though it is certainly a different kind of English from anything people had read before. A contemporary critic, Eric Larabee, described the novel as a 'work of fantasy, written in English, but not an English of this world'.

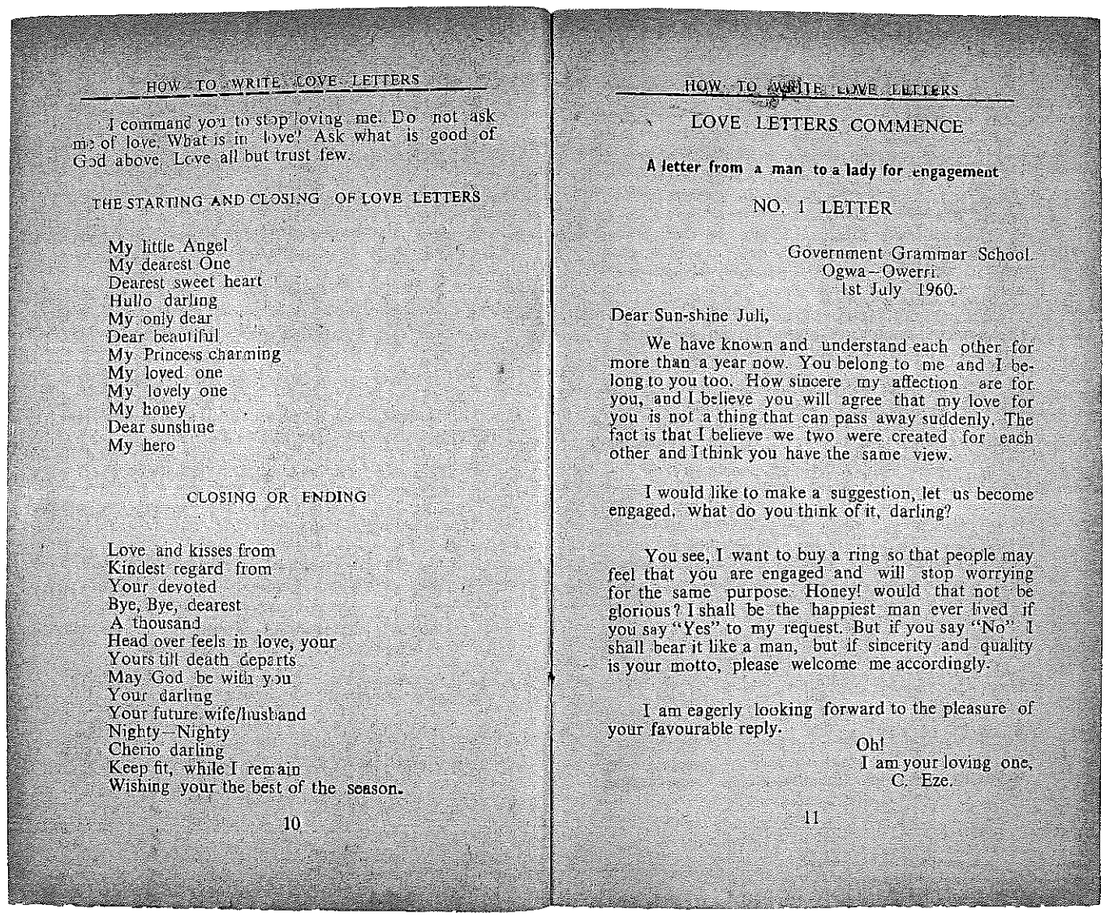
The British publishers Faber and Faber were unwilling to standardize Tutuola's writing, despite the author's own concerns. In an exchange with the publishers, Tutuola noted that: 'I am not capable of writing English correctly and that I do not know so much where the commas and the full-stops should be, I am pleased how you put everything in good order.' Faber replied: 'We agree that your English is not always conventional English as written in this country, but for that very reason we think it would be a great pity to make it conform to all the rules of grammar and spelling. Just as no one but a West African could have had such a strange tale to tell, so your manner of writing has a charm of its own. We propose therefore that our reader should go through the manuscript before it is set up in type, correcting what are evidently copying errors, accidental omissions, confusions or inconsistencies, but leaving intact all those expressions which, though strictly speaking erroneous, are more graphic than the correct expressions would be'.

Faber and Faber were so concerned about this that they included the above page of the manuscript in the published novel to explain their light editing policy. It was not quite as light as they claimed. Changes such as altering *go* to *went*, *see* to *saw*, *why I was* to *why was I* and so on result in a somewhat inconsistent narrative style, with the influence of the writer's mother tongue shifted in the direction of a traditional British standard English. Nonetheless the bulk of the text was left alone, as the example illustrates.

SOME TUTUOLAISMS

- I had no other work more than to drink palm-wine in my life
- I was seriously sat down in my parlour
- this old man was not a really man, he was a god
- the strings of the drum tighted me
- he was living lonely
- I lied down there awoke
- it was about two o'clock in the mid-night
- I would jealous him more than that
- when the people of the town saw his havocs
- only deads were living there
- we saw a pond and we branched there
- his both arms were at his both thighs

Nathan O. Njoku, *How to Write Love Letters* (1965)



HOW TO WRITE LOVE LETTERS

I command you to stop loving me. Do not ask me of love. What is in love? Ask what is good of God above. Love all but trust few.

THE STARTING AND CLOSING OF LOVE LETTERS

My little Angel
My dearest One
Dearest sweet heart
Hullo darling
My only dear
Dear beautiful
My Princess charming
My loved one
My lovely one
My honey
Dear sunshine
My hero

CLOSING OR ENDING

Love and kisses from
Kindest regard from
Your devoted
Bye, Bye, dearest
A thousand
Head over feels in love, your
Yours till death departs
May God be with you
Your darling
Your future wife/husband
Nighty–Nighty
Cherio darling
Keep fit, while I remain
Wishing your the best of the season.

10

HOW TO WRITE LOVE LETTERS

LOVE LETTERS COMMENCE

A letter from a man to a lady for engagement

NO. 1 LETTER

Government Grammar School,
Ogwa–Owerri.
1st July 1960.

Dear Sun-shine Juli,

We have known and understand each other for more than a year now. You belong to me and I belong to you too. How sincere my affection are for you, and I believe you will agree that my love for you is not a thing that can pass away suddenly. The fact is that I believe we two were created for each other and I think you have the same view.

I would like to make a suggestion, let us become engaged. what do you think of it, darling?

You see, I want to buy a ring so that people may feel that you are engaged and will stop worrying for the same purpose. Honey! would that not be glorious? I shall be the happiest man ever lived if you say "Yes" to my request. But if you say "No" I shall bear it like a man, but if sincerity and quality is your motto, please welcome me accordingly.

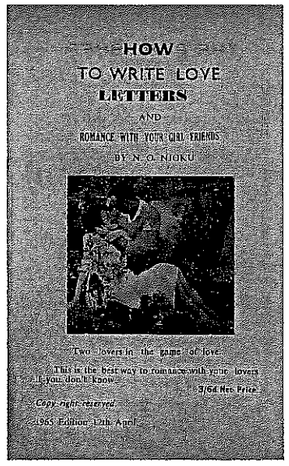
I am eagerly looking forward to the pleasure of your favourable reply.

Oh!
I am your loving one,
C. Eze.

11

Nathan O. Njoku was one of the leading contributors to a genre of popular writing in Nigeria known as Onitsha Market Literature. It was published locally in the town of Onitsha in the southeast of the country, an important trading centre. The works were short, cheap and extremely popular, consisting of prose fiction, plays and moral pamphlets of various kinds – usually offering some form of advice about how to deal with difficult social or romantic situations. Onitsha Market Literature evidently met a growing demand for reading material among an increasingly literate population. Little is known about the authors, other than how they are presented on the book covers. Several used pseudonyms. Nathan Njoku, for example, who wrote over 20 books of the kind illustrated above, also wrote as Felix Stephen.

To well-read Europeans, aware of established traditions of sophisticated romantic writing in English and reluctant to give a public airing to private sentiment, Onitsha literature can seem primitive or naive. It has sometimes been ridiculed, but it leaves a very different impression if viewed in its own terms, as a genuine attempt to come to terms with the unfamiliar social conventions of a new and powerful language. African literature is usually characterized by its well-known authors, such as Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutuola (p.153). Onitsha literature is a reminder that alongside these acclaimed international writers exists a huge body of unremarked writing, conveying its own insight into African history and identity.



British Library, X0909/588.(161.)

Laurel Levi, *Kuk Buk* (1964)

TAMATO SOS
Tomato Sauce — Grills, etc.

3 Tamato.
1 liklik sipun Anian (katim).
½ (hap) kap Wara.
Pepa na Sol.
Mint na Herbs.

Katim tamato liklik, putim long sosipan, putim anian, wara, pepa na sol wantaim.

Tekewei lip long mint, katim liklik, putim wantaim arapela long sosipan.

Sopos yu nogat mint, pasli, putim liklik herbs, tispela daraipela lip, oli ken baiem long stuwa, istap long galas.

Long taim tamato i kuk pinis, nau i no sitrong, kisim wantaim pleit na basin, igat planti liklik hul long im, putim antap long arapela sosipan, nau kapset tomato long im.

Tanim long sipun, long taim skin long tamato tasol istap.

Nau sos igo wantaim moa long stov, putim wanpela bikpela sipun plaua long im.

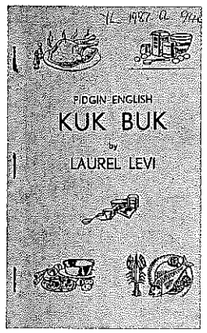
Tantanim long sipun gutpela, lukim i no gat sitrongpela plaua long im, tanim gutpela.

Nau putim tamato na ologeta samting wantaim, tanim, tanim long taim em i boil.

33

Tok Pisin (literally 'pidgin talk') is an example of what can happen to English as it spreads around the globe. The name suggests its origins in the eighteenth century as a pidgin language, used to facilitate communication between people who have no language in common. It is also called Melanesian Pidgin English, a term that reflects its historical origins more clearly, though the present-day language has also been influenced by other languages in the region. Tok Pisin has now evolved into a separate language, with its own pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary and grammar. One of the official languages of Papua New Guinea, it is used in newspapers and magazines, and on radio and television. It is also the medium of a growing literature, including several major translations (such as those of Shakespeare and the Bible).

The routine domestic role of the language is here illustrated in a cookery book, written by the wife of a missionary in the region. Its aim is educational, in the tradition of domestic science, though some spellings are unusual, suggesting that the author was not entirely confident in the language. Some of the words are easy to interpret, as they are the same as English or slightly respelled, reflecting local pronunciation. But this is not just a simplified English – several grammatical rules are different. In the extract, for example, we see *'–pela'* used as an adjective ending, while *'–im'* or *'–em'* indicate that a verb is followed by an object. The letter 'i' is also used after *'–em'* or a subject noun to show that a predicate follows.



GLOSSARY

anian onion
antap on top, up
arapela other, another
baiem buy
bikpela big
daraipela dry
em he, she, it
galas glass
gat, igat got
gutpela good
hap half
hul hole
i he, it
igo it goes
im it, him
istap [*expressing continuous action*]
kap cup
kapset turn over, pour
katim cut
ken can
kisim get, take
kuk cook
liklik little, slightly
lip leaf
long [*as preposition*] in, from, to, on...
moa more
na and
nau now
nogat don't have
oli all, anyone
ologeta all
pasli parsle
pepa pepper
pinis finish [*expressing past time*]
planti a lot, much, many
plaua flour
pleit plate
putim put
samting something, about
sipun spoon
sitrong strong
sol salt
sopos if
sos sauce
sosipan saucepan
stov stove
stuwa store
tamato tomato
tanim stir, turn
tantanim turn around
tasol only, just
tekewei take away
tispela this, that
wanpela one, a
wantaim together,with
wara water
yu you

British Library, YL.1987.a.940

ɔhn Agard, 'Listen Mr Oxford don' (1985)

Listen Mr Oxford don

Me not no Oxford don
me a simple immigrant
from Clapham Common
I didn't graduate
I immigrate

But listen Mr Oxford don
I'm a man on de run
and a man on de run
is a dangerous one

I ent have no gun
I ent have no knife
but mugging de Queen's English
is the story of my life

I dont need no axe
to split/ up yu syntax
I dont need no hammer
to mash/ up yu grammar

I warning you Mr Oxford don
I'm a wanted man
and a wanted man
is a dangerous one

Dem accuse me of assault
on de Oxford dictionary/
imagine a concise peaceful man like me/
dem want me serve time
for inciting rhyme to riot
but I tekking it quiet
down here in Clapham Common

I'm not a violent man Mr Oxford don
I only armed wit mih human breath
but human breath
is a dangerous weapon

So mek dem send one big word after me
I ent serving no jail sentence
I slashing suffix in self-defence
I bashing future wit present tense
and if necessary

I making de Queen's English accessory/to my offence

44

Who owns English? The answer has varied according to time and place, encompassing Anglo-Saxons, monasteries, monarchs, authors, grammarians, lexicographers, printers, editors, the British, the Americans... All have had their part to play in shaping the language's development over the past 1500 years. Yet now that English is a global tongue, used in all countries, talk of ownership becomes meaningless. The reality is that anyone who has taken the trouble to learn English can be said to have a stake in it – and today that means around a third of the world's population.

A recurrent theme of this book is the relationship between language and culture. It is inevitable that, as soon as a community introduces English as a useful means of communication, the language will change to reflect a place's individual identity. The consequence is the emergence of dialects on an international scale, as we have seen throughout this chapter. It is an ongoing process, and it remains to be seen how far new communities of practice, such as those in China, will take the language in fresh directions.

When English is established within a culture, an early outcome is a new literature. Writers relish its diversity, creating fresh and often highly original varieties of the language to express their ethnicity. During the twentieth century one of the most distinctive of these new 'voices' came from the Caribbean. Here authors from many of the region's countries adapted English orthography to portray their local creole accents, rhythms and grammar, and used them to draw attention to the tensions and clashes in an increasingly multicultural society. The poetic manifesto of Guyanese writer John Agard (1949–), 'Listen Mr Oxford don' is an illustration of the many kinds of 'new Englishes' adding novel dimensions of expressiveness throughout the English-speaking world. The poem has been widely acclaimed for its simplicity, directness, humour and confidence, and in its focus on language it provides a fitting conclusion to this anthology of evolving English.

British Library, X.950/44681, f.44

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