Epilogue: On Compiling this Web-Site
David's Reflections on Aspects of the Sentence

David A Reibel (Tübingen and York)

These 16 texts have been posted on the web between November 2013 and January 2015 and have been widely consulted by visitors and downloaded. In total, they comprise 346 pages — a fragment of my lifetime's corpus of articles and compilations in critical bibliography.

What follows are some reflections on the process of compiling them for publication in this format. They are arranged in the same order as the texts posted.

1. Cara, vale. Robert Lowth's Latin epitaph on the monument (1768) of his daughter Mary (1755-1768).

When I started out, I had nothing further in mind than to create an idle collection of the many published versions of this little quatrain, of which there is a surprising range of variants. The reference text is Lowth's own version as printed in Hall's *Miscellany*. When I had completed this in a rough form I saw that Lowth's original text was a periodic sentence with an introduction and a *conclusio* that fitted together tightly and is justifiably famous. I devised a method for representing the structure of such a text, which fitted the other derivative versions of the epitaph very neatly. The individual authors may have thought that by preserving the *words* of the text that they were preserving the actual text, but they were mistaken.

It was only later, when I had begun the syntactic analysis of Lowth's text, that I saw, using the system of punctuation he expounds in his *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (chapter on Punctuation) that his version was quite rightly the only authentic and viable version. (To convince yourself of this, compare Lowth's text with any of the others.) His version, in other words, is the only one that makes any coherent sense, including the use of the colon. I show all this in a syntactic analysis of Lowth's intended original text. Why have all the others eschewed Lowth's exact text, deviating so capriciously from his original? It is a combination of ignorance, carelessness and the imposition of modern conventions on Lowth's neo-classic system.

The French versions in the French edition of the *Praelectiones de Sancta Poesia Hebraeorum* come close to being self justifying. The Wesley hymn settings and other modern hymn versions that come complete with electronic text corruptions are self-explanatory oddities, having nothing to do with Lowth's original intentions. Thomas Moore's Memorial version shows what can happen when a text of this type is committed to memory and begins its long journey through quite lengthy passages of time.

So the original text is the ultimate source of all the metatexts based on it, however arrived at. They should not be quoted as instantiating Lowth's carefully crafted original. The whole compilation can be read with a certain feeling of *Schadenfreude* at the misjudgements that arise.

Among the derivative texts which caught my fancy are those generated by Empson's seven types of ambiguity. Empsonites will be pleased if not impressed by the variety of Empson texts which I have derived from Lowth's original. These variants are what Chomsky calls epiphenomena. The method of derivation is easy to see: fiddle the syntax of the original to produce the desired results — a fine parlour game for rainy afternoons.

The other analysis for which I have some reason to be satisfied is my detailed syntactic deconstruction of Lowth's text.

2. George Eliot and Lindley Murray

Time immemorial, further back than which the memory of Man runneth not.

Anyone who thinks they can use George Eliot's text of *Middlemarch* as a device for reconstructing her own past is sadly mistaken. One has only to read the contemporary novels of the 1830s to see how far the text of *Middlemarch* is suffused with the mores of the 1860s and 1870s. Much water had passed over and under the dam created by the 1851 Great Exhibition, generating a plethora of new life that obliterated all that came before it. This goes for education as well as engineering. In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot creates an optimistic view of the consequences of all of these generative events.

Lindley Murray's *English Grammar* (1797) was one sacrifice to this holocaust of earlier thinking about language and education. The new system of sentence analysis based on the German model completely obliterated all traces of earlier, 'traditional' grammar, as it is now erroneously called. In fact, 'traditional' grammar, as it is still known, continues and was derived from the new system carefully worked out by Sonnenschein around the turn of the 18th/19th centuries. George Eliot's older readers, whose memory was stuffed full of garbled versions of Murray's *English Grammar*, might not even recognise the allusions to his work. For Eliot herself, a brief mention, as given here from Mary Garth, shows how her memory created a new use for the original.

3. Illocution and Perlocution

This article was prepared for the Festschrift for Professor Bob Le Page (published as *York Papers in Linguistics* 8, in 1980). The subject and content were stimulated by the question posed by my dinner hostess that appears in the article as the use of push as a locutionary verb rather than as a transitive verb of motion. Like all of my work, it originates as a response to an urge to put down on paper as rapidly and succinctly as possible the germ of an idea whose exposition in the article is by no means complete. The article should be viewed as a sketch, not a full blown study of illocution and perlocution as such. It is easy to see that the boundaries of the concept of illocution and perlocution can be expanded almost indefinitely to include all manner of uses of verbs of almost whatever type in erecting a complete edifice of 'doing things with words'.

To my great delight, the tree structure readily provided an outline of the interrelations of the elements of illocutionary or perlocutionary forces. I used the conceit that nodes carrying pragmatic meaning may be mixed with formal syntactic structure. The pragmatic components have definable syntactic structures which easily allow this.

Popular speech, newspapers, novels, any piece of language, can be a locus for a telling example of the infinite versatility of such constructions. An entertaining guest lecture can be created by a cursory examination of newspapers from *The Sun* to *The Radio Times*, which will supply a multitude of ready examples. Write the individual examples on file cards and shuffle them into some kind of order. An entertaining, thought-provoking talk is immediately available. One such talk elicited a po-faced observation from a syntactician colleague that 'you have some interesting examples here, David' — rather like the logician who used ordinary language for the structure of his examples and then firmly believed that the sentence *Not everybody knows this* could mean only *Nobody knows this* and not its natural language interpretation, *This is not known by everybody*.

4. Potential Mood

In this article, I have endeavoured to present in its entirety Murray's carefully crafted account of the grammar and semantics of the potential mood, which gives an insight into the diligence with which he worked. His use of the term 'potential mood' is said to derive from Charles Coote's *Elements of the Grammar of the English Language* (1788), according to Colin West, *Lindley Murray — Grammarian* (1953/1996). The term 'potential mood' has long been a commonplace in traditional grammar.

Dickens' use of Murray's potential mood is a straightforward mechanical reproduction.

5. Traditional Grammar and Corpus Linguistics

The term 'corpus linguistics' has in fact no reference to the substance of this study unless any arbitrary collection of examples can be called a corpus. Lowth's list of examples of the construction he choses to study is gleaned from a miscellaneous though deep experience of reading English texts for their syntactic oddities. His preface makes his method clear. The examples of English language oddities are divided into those that do and those that do not 'violate' English structure. In order to justify the division, Lowth invokes the 'principal' rule to separate the wheat from the chaff. I have simply taken Lowth's examples and given them a more rational structure.

They serve his descriptive purposes well, and for his pains he has been vilified by generations of grammarians for their arbitrariness. Even so, it is not the choice of examples but the methodology which, surprisingly enough, is at fault. That is because Lowth's method stirs in admissible with inadmissible examples, as my own description shows. The structure of contrastive phrases like *a man we invited for dinner but didn't come* with *the man who came to dinner but we didn't invite*, are both long-term features of English structure. Modern counterparts of Lowth's examples of admissible and inadmissible structures are found in everyday usage and were known even in Lowth's day. What happens next, is due to the grammarian's choice of theory.

6. Language Learning Strategies for the Adult

In the course of developing his argument in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), Chomsky introduced the contrast between competence and performance, which are ontologically different. Ever since, the distinction between the two has been picked up and turned into a kind of industry seeking to prove that Chomsky's distinction has important ramifications which have eluded him. These miss the point that the terms were used as a way of developing another argument on the difference between abstract behaviour and real behaviour and Chomsky had no intention of developing a full-blown discussion of this distinction. In fact, the distinction between competence and performance finds its place readily in the full model of all of the skills and systems of knowledge that one needs in order to speak.

I use the distinction to highlight the difference between knowledge of language and ability to perform it. The terms can be extrapolated as applying not just to language use but to language learning, as my article was intended to show. Just as speaking is not the same thing as the knowledge of language that makes it possible, so the language capacity is not the same as what makes us able to learn language. In my article, I develop specially the idea that the capacity for language enables us to learn our native language and must be also the root of our ability to say even such a thing as a simple sentence in a foreign language (see the Case Study, below). The attempts by generations of scholars to obliterate this parallel have failed to make a convincing case, for the simple empirical reason that they do not account for the vast number of people who have successfully learned foreign langages, nor for the difficulties encountered by those who have failed and all the infinite stages in between.

Without any special effort I have learned to produce a form of German that sometimes leads Germans to ask me if I am Dutch. This 'accomplishment' is nothing unusual. In learning a foreign language in depth, one gains facility in all manner of linguistic ephemera, which no-one has ever specifically set out to learn or teach. How is this possible if it is impossible? A famous MIT linguist [MH] firmly believes that 'learning' foreign languages is impossible, but his own English is evidence to the contrary.

In my 20 years as examiner in English language in the Seminar für Englische Philologie at the University of Tübingen, I have examined a very large number of candidates taking their final examinations. Their abilities in English language range from nigh on incompetence to a effortless mastery of Berkeley California student discourse. Surely there must be some explanation for this? Why not just say that some people are very good at learning foreign languages and others are not? The fine nuances of this distinction are the basis of my article.

Here is a further short case study. During the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, many Yugoslavs visited Germany to collect usable used furniture and other oddments on the occasion of the regular dates on which virtually any rubbish could be deposited for collection on the street. On one such date, DAR encountered a trilogy of father, son and elderly relative collecting the makings of a bed from the basement bedroom of the Reibels. The middle man spoke excellent German and his little boy perfect German. When DAR engaged the middle man in conversation, the older man intervened, jabbing at his chest with his finger and saying: 'Ich hier'. DAR said to him in German, 'you were

wounded here?'. He nodded vigorously and said, 'Deutscher Arzt'. DAR said to him in German, 'You were treated by a German physician?'. Again, he nodded his head vigorously, saying 'Ja, ja'. Is this not the evidence of a language-learning capacity that eschews all language structure until some form of more advanced capacity is acquired? I look to the reader to develop this point to its logical conclusion.

7. An Abundance of Negatives

Multiple negation is shown in this article to be a type of epiphenomenon deriving from the properties of the negative elements in the overall negative structure. I was anxious to correct the false impression that Lowth had introduced the infamous 'double negative' rule of English in the first edition of his *English Grammar* of 1762. In fact it does not appear anywhere in this work. The rule that 'Two Negatives in English destroy one another, or are equivalent to an Affirmative' was added in *The Second Edition, Corrected*, of 1763. This suggests that numerous commentators on the history of English have failed to read the original sources.

     Scholars working on Shakespeare's English generally do no more than list incidences of multiple negative constructs and so fail to give a satisfactory account. In contrast, Franz, working with nothing but his own intuition, provides a good account of multiple negation almost 100 years before later scholars. The purpose of syntactic investigation is to explain phenomena, not merely to list them.

8. From Logos to XP: Materials for the History of the Concept of the 'Sentence'

Very little needs to be added to the historical synopsis provided here. Although it runs from ancient Greece to Chomsky, it is incomplete (as can easily be seen) because of its bias towards the early American structuralists, whose 'analysis by definition' deliberately sought to avoid other traditions. It is sufficient to show by these many examples how the linguists of that day — including Bloomfield whose later examples turned the whole process into a science — all thought that they could solve problems of linguistic definitions and structure by juggling the words of the object-language.

9. Hidden Parallels in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*
10. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876): The 19C Context of Klesmer
11. Freudvoll, Leidvoll, Gedankenvoll

These three articles form a suite of historical detective work and as such require little elaboration. The short title 'Hidden Parallels' reveals how productive is George Eliot's method of novelistic creation. Among the many discoveries is the parallel between Wagner's personal encounter with the secretary of the Philharmonic Society and Klesmer's encounter with the philistine Mr Bult (nomen est omen).

     Another significant discovery was to find a copy of the German original of Praeger's account of *Wagner as I Knew Him* and to be able to demonstrate that the English version, presented at the time as the original, was not so. How and what stood

behind the publication of these two volumes is a mystery in itself, but Wagnerians will believe that they have the solution.

12. Charlotte Brontë and the Education of Women in the 19th century
This article was inspired by my work on Lindley Murray and the subtle but far-reaching influences he had on writers of the day.

  Like George Eliot, but unlike the mechanical reproduction of Dickens, Charlotte Brontë produces real uses of Murray's precepts without a slavish adherence to the exact form of their original presentation.

13. A terminological *jeu d'esprit*: Holzfeuer in einem hölzernen Ofen
14. Physics and Mathematics versus the Language of Literature and Ambiguity
15. The Influence of German Language, Literature, and Culture on English and American Language, Life, and Letters (and *vice versa*)
16. Women, Language, and Education. With an Appendix on the Portrayal of Women in 19thC Fiction
The two *jeux d'esprit* and the two annotated bibliographies are self-explanatory and require no further comment.