INTRODUCTION

Within those monographic issues of the *RCEI* that have been devoted to language and linguistics it was due time to pay attention to the standardization of English. The topic is certainly not new, in the twentieth century renewed care about it has filled books and articles, to mention just a few: Sandved (1981), Gómez-Soliño (1986), Fisher (1996), Görlach (1991), the *CHELL* (Lass, 1999), and in the year 2000 Wright's edition of *The Development of Standard English*.

From the modern point of view and with the well-preserved and analyzed data the tendency is to talk of a process of homogenization of the language variants though, contradictorily, exposing that they are full of particularities. In most cases, studies have concentrated on the formation and development of the Standard itself looking for the common features. Therefore, when analyzing dialects or any type of variant it is to the extent of their contribution or accommodation to what we nowadays consider the standardized form, but not usually to their *per se* qualities or to the attitude of people towards them. This is one of the main problems of history and also of linguistic history, building the past on the pillars of modern structures. Were the Early Modern English speakers aware of being persuaded to use a standard, a uniform language? Did they want such thing? When talking of a standard we tend to forget it is essentially a conventional concept. There might be a common set of accepted rules that educated speakers follow, basically to maintain that status, but these rules may change or be adapted to an everyday reality that is also changeable because we modify it.

It has been our endeavor to use a different approach that might help the definition of the process of standardization and the standard itself maintaining, as much as possible, the perspective from their own context. We have tried to reach our objective by referring mainly to the non-standards that will in a way or another contribute to a more unified variety, always respecting the line of each of the specialists that have participated in this issue of *RCEI*.

This volume starts with a title that suggests that volition for a standard. "Thirteen Paston Letters in Search of a Standard," provides a good summary of the extant approaches towards the Standardization and makes an analysis based on morphology rather than on the traditionally spelling line. Görlach continues with one of the mostly discussed dialect/language that failed to achieve a status of standard and was nearly subsumed by the English one. "Canting Terms in Early Monolingual Dictionaries" also talks of a marginal variety and the inclusion of its vocabulary within the boundaries of what would seem reserved for the Standard English. The degree of adaptation of subsidiary offices to Chancery English is the aim of Alonso Almeida and Rodríguez Álvarez. This desire for a recognized language is revealed by different means when analyzing the attitude of speakers and contemporary scholars towards the understanding of *cant* and Old English. Finally, Blake

tackles the difficult problem of edition and how it might alter the original when the modern point of view is applied, especially when referring to pragmatic markers that form part of an informal use that can be disguised if inaccurately punctuated.

These essays have started from the non-standard to the standard and, in doing so, the complete volume provides a new perspective for delimiting the borderlines of the process of standardization extending it in time and avoiding the conveyance of fundamental truths. All the works included in this monograph lead to further and necessary research but they say much by themselves and are worthy of careful reading by anyone interested in the development of what we have come to call "Standard English."

Our special gratitude goes to the contributors that considered this approach was a valid one and devoted time and effort in producing this joint work that might establish a different angle for the study of English and its forsaken or hidden varieties.

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