TWO EXTREMES OF ENGLISH OUT OF THE STANDARD: *CANT* AND OLD ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The present article shows how the so called standardization of English is more than a process of normalization of the written language a matter of attitude of its speakers. The stigmatization of a variety such as *cant* by its compilers, who considered it an obscure language, contrasts with the positive attitude towards Old English, which seems to have been understood only by a few antiquarians. An example of the Anglo-Saxon revival is the reproduction of Ælfric's "Sermo in die Pascae" in *A Testimonie of Antiquitie,* the first book in which old characters appear printed. Diverse reasons lie behind the rejection and appraisal of these two forms of English, however, both reveal the attitude of those in search of a standard. This is precisely what typifies the standardization, a manifested need for a standard that will give rise to the later elaboration of it.

KEY WORDS: Standardization, attitude, *cant*, Old English, *A Testimonie.*

RESUMEN

El presente artículo expone cómo el llamado período de estandarización de la lengua inglesa responde más que a un proceso de normalización de la lengua escrita a una cuestión de la actitud de sus hablantes. La estigmatización de una variedad como el *cant* por parte de sus compiladores, quienes lo consideraban un lenguaje oscuro, contrasta con la actitud positiva hacia el inglés antiguo que sólo parece haber sido inteligible para unos pocos anticuarios. Un ejemplo de la recuperación del anglo-sajón es la reproducción de una homilía de Ælfric, "Sermo in die Pascae," en *A Testimonie of Antiquitie*, el primer libro donde aparecen impresos los caracteres del inglés antiguo. Diversas razones subyacen al rechazo y alabanza de estas dos formas del inglés, de cualquier modo, ambas revelan la actitud de aquellos que buscaban un estándar. Es este hecho precisamente el que caracteriza a la estandarización, la "manifiesta" necesidad de un estándar que llevará a su posterior elaboración.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Estandarización, actitud, "*cant*," inglés antiguo, *A Testimonie.*

1. STANDARDIZATION AND STANDARD

If the concept of standard poses problems to scholars the process of standardization might be even more difficult to tackle. It is conventionally assumed that

after the Middle English period we come to the acceptance of English as "the language" and that this language is the result of the confluence of several factors and dialects (Baugh (1978) 1993, Pyles & Algeo (1964) 1982, Millward, 1996). Such confluence of factors is not fortuitous or a providential outcome, not even, in terms of Leith (1997:33):

> a matter of communal choice, an innocent attempt on the part of society as a whole to choose a variety that can be used for official purposes and, in addition, as a lingua franca among speakers of divergent dialects. It involves from the first the cultivation, by an elite, of a variety that can be regarded as exclusive.

Sandved (1981:31) seems to follow the same line when he says that the term *standard language* "is essentially a sociolinguistic term. It reveals little or nothing about the internal characteristics of the language in question, but it tells us something about people's attitude towards it." Attitudes of praising and segregation are our objective here since those are the ones that come to define the future standard and the ones that typify the period of standardization.

The process of standardization, conventionally situated between the years 1470-1500, is characterized by a tendency towards homogenisation[1] in the written language but it is still a period when we will not find in every text the single, well-established, accepted official variety that constitutes the concept of a standard; moreover, even during the so called Early Modern English period (1500-1800, according to the same conventions) we do not find a completely regularized language. Variation is one of the main features of Early Modern English in its most important aspects: orthographically, phonetically, morphologically, syntactically, and also in its lexicon. According to Görlach (1991:8), "E.Mod.E could indeed be taken as a typical example to illustrate the fact that languages are neither homogeneous nor stable." Therefore, it could be said that formal standardization took longer than conventionally established and perhaps it was just the attitude in favour of a standard what was already well rooted and had started to grow. The situation of a language with an apparent chaotic profile can be better defined by paying attention to the perspective of the speakers: what they aimed to and what was not considered as part of a longed for standard.

Inserted in its socio-cultural context, the process of standardization is a planned project. As stated by Fontana (1994:98) part of the struggle against the "rustic culture" was carried out in the field of language:

> Pero la lucha contra una cultura subalterna que, después de haber usado el latín macarrónico, se había desarrollado esencialmente en las lenguas vulgares, obligaba a dar batalla en su mismo terreno, lo cual vendría reforzado, en los países donde

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[1] See this same volume Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño and Montoya Reyes.

triunfó la Reforma, por la necesidad de traducir los libros sagrados al vulgar. La consecuencia fue que los letrados decidieron apropiarse de las lenguas vulgares y "elevarlas" al nivel de lenguas cultas

After the process of appropriation comes the time for elaboration and here is when we find the proliferation of proposals for reforming the spelling (Cheek, Smith, Hart, Bullokar, Mullcaster or Gil), the failed academy (backed by figures like Dryden, Defoe, or Swift), the dictionaries and grammars that give advice on "good English" (Johnson, Lowth, Priestley...). All these strategies move forward to a clear definition of *one* English, if there was ever such. But this only happens after its speakers have accepted they should share a "proper" means of expression of their culture.

The non-standards during the period of standardization could be many assuming our first asseveration on variation; in this volume we can see the inclusion of personal letters, legal documents, dialects that could have achieved the status of language, an antilanguage and also "falsely" regularized texts as a result of a modern edition. To all these we could add other forms out of the limits of a "standard" the early Lollard's writings that need deeper study, the macaronic business writing (Wright, 1996) and, furthermore, a less known reconsideration of the earlier stages of English, Anglo-Saxon writings that by this period were regarded as strange but relevant when establishing one's origins.

The attitude towards two extremes of all this variation, *cant* and Ælfric's Old English, discloses what was expected of an English standard.

2. THE STIGMATIZED VARIETY: *CANT*

One of the best examples of non-standard in the 16th and 17th centuries is *cant*, which in fact is said to be the first marginal variety ever recorded in the history of English. Originated in a group of people opposed to the official, legal, society, it has been usually defined as the language of the underworld. False beggars, because they were unlicensed, petty thieves, swindlers and prostitutes were its main users according to the *Rogue Pamphlets*. Authors like Copland (1535/6), Awdeley (1561), Harman (1566), Greene (1591, 1592)[2], Dekker (1608, 1612), or Rid (1610) mention in their treatises the existence of this group of people and their singular way of speaking. The vocabulary they collected and reproduced appeared later in normalized dictionaries (cf. Gotti this same volume) what certainly seems an indicator of the importance it achieved. Originally the pamphleteers state in prefaces and letters

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[2] Greene is one of the most prolific pamphleteers but for our purpose two of his first works might suffice: "A Notable Discovery of Cozenage" and "The Second Part of Cony-catching."

to the readers that their intention when dealing with such base matters is to prevent honest citizens from being attacked by "these peevish, perverse and pestilent people" (Harman 1566:111). While they devout great part of their works to reveal the criminal practises of the *canting-crew*, one of their main concerns is the language they use. Having emphasized that *cant* is considered to be the first English marginal variety ever registered, it should also be said that, more important than this fact itself, is that this is precisely done in a moment when English was struggling to achieve a status.

In their treatises most pamphleteers object to the vocabulary used by *canters*, but not to the pronunciation, morphology or syntactic constructions of their language and, even the less, to the orthography, since it is them, the pamphleteers, who are reproducing in written form the terms, dialogues and songs of an essentially oral language. Here follow some of the opinions about this antilanguage as expressed by their first collectors in their works:

– Come none of these, pedlars this way also, / with pack on back, with their bousy speech, / jagged and ragged, with broken hose and breech? / Enow, enow [...] And thus they babble, till their thrift is thin, / I *wot not what, with their babbling French* (Copland 1535:24).
– Good fortune [...] make port sale of her wished wares, to the confusion of their drowsy demeanour and *unlawful language* (Harman 1566:62)
– Here I set before the good reader the lewd, *lousy language* of these loitering lusks and lazy lorels [...] which language they term *pedlar's French, an unknown tongue* only but to these bold, beastly, bawdy beggars and vain vagabonds, being half mingled with English when it is familiarly talked (Harman 1566:113-14)
– Of him I desired some knowledge in their *gibberish*, but he swore he could not cant (Dekker 1612:367).
– And this people are strange both in names and in their conditions, so do they speak *a language proper only to themselves, called Canting, which is more strange* (Dekker 1608:216)
(My italics)

The qualifications of *cant* seem to point to the difficulty in understanding it (*bousy speech, babble, unlawful language, unknown tongue, pedlar's French, proper only to themselves, strange language*) and the perniciousness of its speakers that is more often underlined. Nevertheless, a good part of *cant*'s vocabulary is a metaphorical use of the English one (Mele 2000); with more or less complexity, what can be found is the relexicalization alluded by Halliday (1978) as part of antilanguages. This can be made clear just by appealing to the designation of the members of the *canting-crew*: *ruffler*, upright man, hooker/angler, rogue, wild rogue, *prigger, palliard, frater*, abraham man, fresh water mariner, counterfeit crank, *dummerer, jarkman, patrico*, tinker, *swaddler*, swingman, *curtal,* Irish *toyle*, washman, queer bird, *glimmerer*, bawdy basket, *autem* mort, walking mort, doxy, dell, *kinchin* co, *kinchin* mort.[3] Of these, only the ones in italics are considered un-English by a

global text processor programme; even though this might not be an adequate scientific procedure, it is visually revealing. A further approach will show that the italicized words (with the exceptions of the uncertain origins of prigger, jarkman, autem, mort and kinchin cove) also contain English elements or Latinate etymons that already appeared in words in use at least since the Middle English period (see *OED* s.v.):

– *palliard* from the French *paille* is also found in the word for 'bed', *paillet,* used by Chaucer.
– *dummerer* is most probably related to the onomatopoeic *dummy* or *dumb*
– *frater* and *patrico,* shared etymons with *fraternal* and *pater* or *patriarch* well known during the Middle Ages
– *swaddler*, is related to *swathe* with an Old English root, a bandage usually of linen or wool.
– *curtal*, used for the horse with a docked tail;
– *toyle*, meaning 'strife' was also used in the Middle Ages, though obsolete nowadays.
– *glimmerer*, has a Germanic etymon, *glim*, it is just the derivation the one not recognized.

Other compounds have an English flavour for the modern reader even if its meaning is obscure, these are the cases of: abraham man, fresh water mariner, swingman, queer bird or bawdy-basket. At least the same must have been true for contemporary speakers. What is more, as far as dialogues and songs reveal, *cant* is, in terms of Harman, "*half mingled with English.*" It seems clear that *cant* must have been difficult to understand for those who had not read the *Rogue Pamphlets* or were not members of the *canting-crew* (there could be a considerable distance between the original meaning of the word and its *cant* referent) but not so difficult as to be compared with a foreign language. In spite of this, we find contemporary references to *cant* as the already mentioned Pedlar's French, or Egyptians's language:

> Heretofore we have to run over the two pestiferous carbuncles in the commonwealth, the Egyptians and common Canters [...] The speech which they used was the right Egyptian language, with whom our Englishmen conversing with at last learned their language. (Rid 1612:265) [4]

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[3] Basically these refer to different types of male thieves (*ruffler*, upright man, hooker/angler, rogue, wild rogue, *prigger*), beggars (*palliard, frater*, abraham man, fresh water mariner, counterfeit crank, *dummerer, jarkman, patrico*, tinker, *swaddler*, swingman, *curtal,* Irish *toyle*, washman), prostitutes (bawdy basket, *autem* mort, walking mort, doxy, dell) and their children (kinchin co, kinchin mort).

[4] Though there are some words in cant of a possible Romany origin "Gypsies spoke a language which differed both form the native population and from the canting language" (Mayal 1996).

The secrecy of *cant* can be attributed (in terms of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1993)) to the appropriation of the extensions of the used part of a structural metaphor or to the extreme use of the idiosyncratic ones (Mele 2000) and though there are words with unknown etymons or pointing to foreign borrowings, it is still essentially a variety of English.[5] This does not contradict its designation of antilanguage, also characterized as that generated by an *antisociety*, with a partial relexicalization of the vocabulary of the official language with which it holds a continuity, learnt by the members of its social group and creating their reality (Halliday 1978:165-81).

The rejection of this variety is a continuation of that of its speakers; as the first *Rogue Pamphlets* reveal, their authors' intention was to prevent the harm these "criminals" were causing to the Commonwealth. The stigmatization of *cant* is the one towards its speakers. The variety of the underworld cannot form part of a prestigious standard and the lowest social classes can also be segregated by denying them the access to the "elaborated" language of the higher ones. The popularity of vagrant writing obeys to the attractiveness of what is forbidden but also because the unveiling of the underworld constitutes a means of control.

> As an actor, as forger, as con-man, the vagrant in his wandering threatens the associated orders of the Commonwealth and stable signification. The notorious 'canting' or professional language of the cony-catcher and other vagrants is, then, only one particularly notable element in this wider counter-order of writing. In fact, the 'unlawful language' (Harman) of the vagrant is perhaps the most readily recuperable of his semiotics transgressions. (Taylor 1991:10).

Old English could at this stage be considered a variety in disuse with a vocabulary at least as difficult as that of *cant*, nevertheless, the attitude towards it is rather different because its revival conforms to other factors.

3. THE OBSCURELY PRAISED VARIETY

The abandonment suffered by Anglo-Saxon after the Norman conquest is not so clear on the side of its common speakers but yet easier on that of those who controlled the written word. Blake (1996:10) considers that the replacement of English by Latin and/or French causes a break in the history of the language: "This hiatus in the History of standard English meant that when there were attempts to create a new standard, that standard would not necessarily model itself upon the

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[5] Unfortunately, we do not know how far its pronunciation would depart from the same words out of cant, though there are some rhyming songs these do not provide enough information for reliable conclusions.

original West-Saxon variety which had formed the previous one." The submission and evolution of English goes to the extreme of considering Old English as an obscure and nearly different language. This is proved by the apparent need of glossing texts (the tremulous hand of Worcester is a well known example) and by the manifested opinion of diverse authors:[6]

– "And also my lorde abbot of westmynster ded do shewe me late certain evidences wryton in olde englysshe for to reduce it in our englysshe now vsid/ And certainly it was wreton in suche wyse that it was more lyke to dutche than englisshe *I could not reduce ne bringe it to be vnderstonden*" (Caxton, "Prologue to Eneydos" 1490:8)
– "The third language apparantlie knowne is the Scithian or high Dutch, induced at the first by the Saxons […] *an hard and rough kind of speech*, God wot, when our nation was brought first into acquaintance withal, but now changed with us into a farre more fine and easie kind of vtterance" (Harrison, The Description of Britaine 1587:17)
– "If we could set it [the Lord's Prayer] downe in the antient Saxon, I meane in the tongue which the English vsed at their first arrival here, about 450 yeares after Christs birth, it would seeme *most strange and harsh Dutch or gebrish*, as women call it; or when they first embraced Christianitie, about the yeare of Christ 600." (Camden, Remaines Concerning Britain, 1605:25)

The need of translating Old English texts for the educated reader also reveals how distant it was from the modern forms. Notwithstanding, there will be a revival of Old English, a "variety" that for the English speakers might have been even more obscure than *cant*.

3.1. The Anglo-Saxon revival

The 16th century saw a growing interest in Anglo-Saxon studies that served two purposes: satisfying a reverence for the past and backing the move forward by means of a recalling of ancient times. Collecting Old English manuscripts, after the dissolution of monasteries, studying, translating and printing them may have obeyed in certain cases to more specific reasons but these are not always clear to modern eyes. Much of the Anglo-Saxon revival was due to figures like Mathew Parker[7] (1504-1575), first Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth's reign (1558-1605), Leland, Talbot, together with the later Parker circle of Joscelyn, Nowell and Lambarde

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[6] Extracts quoted following Bolton's edition (1966) and its pagination plus my italics.
[7] He compiled the collection of MSS now at Cambridge

(whose main works appeared in the mid-late 16th century), and the Elstobs (William, b. 1673 and Elizabeth, b. 1683) with works corresponding to the early 18th century.[8] Their notes, transcriptions, translations, and editions according to Murphy (1982:4), may have benefited from Ælfric's *Grammar* and *Glossary* that were first intended to teach Latin to Anglo-Saxon monks. Early modern scholars could have used them reversing the purpose thanks to their great knowledge of Latin. Nevertheless, their study of other Anglo-Saxon sources seems to be evident.

Ælfric's works seem to have been of special interest for the earliest scholars. His *Grammar* and *Glossary* offered the possibility of having access to an "ancient form of the language," but for his homilies, a previous work (late 980's-995), the concern might have been quite a different one. Elizabeth Elstob considered them "for the most part very orthodox" and when she tried to have them published, Hickes (Anglican theologist and philologist 1642-1715) recommended her work since it "will be of great advantage to the Church of England against the Papists" (Collins 1982:11-113). The possibility of interpreting Ælfric's homilies as against the transubstantiation in the Eucharist, made them relevant for the Reformers that were looking for some type of continuation and support from the past. The purpose of the initial copies seems to have been more pragmatic than doctrinaire. Ælfric's homilies, issued in two series of forty, were apparently intended to facilitate the work of novice preachers and give them some "ready-made lecture" for the Church year and for the most outstanding celebrations. This would, in turn, provide a more uniform instruction of the parishioners.

Ælfric's "Sermo in Die Pascæ" forms part of the Second Series and is the one reproduced in *A Testimonie of Antiquitie* printed by John Day under the patronage of Archbishop Mathew Parker about 1566.[9] Its complete title reveals the main target of its editors: "*A Testimonie of Antiquitie, shewing the auncient fayth in the Church of England touching the sacrament of the body and bloude of the Lord here publikely preached, and also receaued in the Saxons tyme, aboue 600. yeares agoe.*"

The text is composed of a preface, where the identity of Ælfric is clarified, and the homily "In Die Pascae" translated on facing pages by John Joscelyn (1529-1605), the secretary of Parker. The book is completed with some letters in Latin by Ælfric, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. At the end a sort of appendix of one page is added where there is a brief explanation of the Old English characters, punctuation and their equivalents in Early Modern English.

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[8] L. Nowell prepared a text on Anglo-Saxon laws, *Archaianomia*, published in1568 by his friend and pupil W. Lambarde (1536-1601). He also compiled a dictionary based mainly on Ælfric's *Grammar and Glossary*. Joscelyn prepared a glossary based on Nowell's and a grammar but they were never published, Wheelock did the same type of work, his grammar being published in W.Somner's *Dictionarium* (1689).

[9] For a complete discussion on the date of the book see Kelemen (1997).

3.2. *A Testimonie* of Old English

Besides the topic, this text has called the attention of scholars because it is considered to be the first printed text reproducing Anglo-Saxon characters. The making of the fonts has been attributed to John Day himself, though it is also possible that "the roman letters were of Flemish origin and the runes mixed with them were made in London by one of Day's foreign journeymen" (Clair 1976:260). *A Testimonie* reveals great care in replicating its source and underlines such care.[10]

The analysis of the text reveals to what extent the O.E. reproduced reflects the typical features of this period, but its contrast with the E.Mod.E. translation indicates the distance between them.

The visual impact of Old English characters such as <æ, ʒ, þ, p, ð, ʃ, τ, ɲ> is also highlighted by the general type used that imitates a mixture of Carolingian with older insular scripts. This contrasts with more cursive type used for the modern English translation where the old characters are also substituted by <a, e, th, w, g, gh, r, t>.[11] Morphologically, the Old English text presents the expected inflectional endings for nouns and adjectives, and use of demonstratives which maintain their grammatical gender concordance, e.g.: *ðisum andreardan dæʒes* (20), *ðæs lambes flæsc* (21), *þone halʒan lichaman* (37), *seo haliʒe masse* (47), *ðæs halʒan ʒastes* (57).[12] The translation obviates this concordance since demonstratives are substituted by the definite article or the modern forms *this / that*; in nouns and adjectives (if not replaced by different words) distinctive marks for gender and case have also disappeared (though genitive in nouns is usually maintained), correspondingly: *this present day, the lambes flesh, that holye body, that holy masse, of the holy ghost.* Verbs have also reduced their endings and more periphrastical constructions appear.

Syntax shows a freer word order as compared to the modern English translation, but nothing excessively strange except for some passive and impersonal constructions such as: "swa swa hit sor oft ʒeswutelod is; Vs is eac to-smeaʒenne " (47). The modern English translation adding auxiliaries (my emphasis): "as it <u>hath bene</u> often declared. We <u>oughte</u> also to consider."

It is the lexicon what makes the great difference, many words of Old English had disappeared already from Middle English and the amount of French bor-

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[10] Contrasting the Old English version of *A Testimonie* with the edition of Ælfric's homilies by Godden (1979) it can be appreciated that the minimal differences seem to obey to typographical errors or to Parker's manuscript.

[11] <s> appears in final position, whereas the long type <ʃ> is maintained initially and medially. The evolved open form of thorn resembling <y> is also preserved for contractions such as *y*ᵉ, "*the*."

[12] In these and following examples we have substituted some of the Old English characters for modern ones in order to facilitate printing. Numbers of pages are quoted from the electronic facsimile; therefore, we indicate the number and O.E. or Mod.E. version but not folium recto or verso. From page 75 onwards the pages are not numbered so we will supply the corresponding cipher following the previous numbering.

rowings to substitute the Germanic words is evident mainly in the abundant compounds of the latter, in these examples we give the Old English word and the one used in the translation: æriste > resurrection (20); soþ > verely (28); ʒerinu > mystery (47); switelunʒe > demonstration; ʒetacniendlice > signifying (52); forþfarenna manna > pilgrims (58).

From the examples given it can be seen that for a native speaker the Old English vocabulary would be much more obscure than that of *cant*. The question is why the Old English version is maintained if no one was going to understand it and also why explanatory notes were added if no one was going to challenge the translation. The reproduction of Ælfric's *In Die Pascae* must have been a rather planned work and not just an anecdotic revival of the past. Its authors try to prove the reliability of the text continuously and they are rather careful in giving a faithful reproduction, maintaining even some compromising passages.[13] In case this was not sufficient, the names of two archbishops and thirteen bishops who are said to subscribe the veracity of *A Testimonie* are included. There are few mistakes when comparing the reproduction of the homily with Godden's edition (1979), in some cases letters have been confused probably due to a wrong transliteration of the manuscript, thus rendering <p> for a wenn or long <s> for an <f>. We have also noticed how the Modern version can betray the composer and for example on page 47 the expected ending for a definite declension adjective in "se wis-**a** Agustinus" is mistaken for an "-e" and the upside-down Carolingian type for <a> is unnoticed by the printer.

The basic idea behind *A Testimonie* was to prove, not only the Anglo-Saxon origins[14] of the Anglican Church but specifically find an ancestry that favoured the protestant principle about transubstantiation.

> Parker and his associates —his learned secretary John Joscelyn, the printer John Day, Lawrence Nowell, and other advisors— believed that Ælfric's writings upheld Anglican Eucharistic belief as outlined in the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563: "The body of Christ is given, taken and eaten, in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner" (Leinbaugh 1982:52).

The purpose of the annotations to the text is to subtly lead the reader to the assumption that Ælfric defended the non-corporeal existence of Christ in the Eucharist. The objective of Parker was fulfilled because the text was credible and was reedited several times. The "veracity" of *A Testimonie* was achieved basically by means of maintaining the Old English version with its forms and, perhaps more important, the visually different characters.

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[13] About the influence of Ratramnus and Paschasius on Ælfric and, therefore, his apparent contradictions see Leinbaugh (1982:55).

[14] For further references see also: Holder, Arthur G. 2002. "Whitby and All That: The Search for Anglican Origins," in: http://cdps.edu/freshthinking/sawp-whitby.html

Behind this main objective of *A Testimonie* there is also a linguistic interest suggested by paragraphs like:

> Nowe because verye fewe there be that doe understande the old Englishe or Saxon (so much is our speech changed from the use of that time, wherein Elfrike lived) and for that also it maye be that some will doubt how skilfullye these wordes of Elfrike be translated from the Saxon tounge. We have thought good to set downe here last of all the very wordes of his latine epistle... (71)

The difficulty in understanding Old English (*so much is our speech changed* or *the Saxon tounge*) is softened further on when the prayers are reproduced trying to show: "That it is no new thing to teache the people of God the Lordes prayer, and the articles of their beliefe in the English tounge" (78). Also, before the prayers are reproduced the authors indicate: "But for the better vnderstanding of any worde that may seeme harde vnto the reader, we have thought good to place ouer the Saxon the familiar wordes of our own speech" (80). In these quotations the distinction of the two speeches is maintained but now the *English tounge* seems to be one and words may just *seeme harde*. That the difficulty is still there may be seen by just reproducing the first line that follows the previous quotation:

> Verely when ye pray
> Soþlice ðonne ʒe ʒebiddan

Finally, the inclusion of a sort of appendix where the Old English characters and punctuation marks are commented goes farther from stating the truth of a text, what is more, it could have been contrary to the translation offered, since sometimes the alteration of the punctuation may have slightly modified the meaning of the sentence.

It seems, therefore, that *A Testimonie* vindicated not only the Anglican doctrine of transubstantiation, but also the necessity of translating sacred texts into the vernacular. They tried to state that the Anglican Church had an origin in Anglo-Saxon times as "shown" in old texts written in a different speech but avoiding the qualifications of previous quotations: *Dutch like, hard, tough, strange, harshe, or gibberish*, which would produce a negative effect on the side of the reader.

The Anglo-Saxon revival was part of a religious crusade but it also involved the appraisal of the origins of the vernacular. Even though at this stage Old English might have been quite incomprehensible it was necessary to state it was *English* and *good English*, since prayers and homilies had been written in it before.

4. CONCLUSION

The process of linguistic standardization is also the history of the emergence of a middle class longing for a language representative of their identity. A means of expression that should be both valid and respected, something that should be clearly distinguished from that spoken by the lower classes and even more from that of the underworld.

Cant, per se, is not a better or worse variety of English, its difficulty resides in its partial secrecy though it does not make it more complex than Old English. The interest in the unveiling of *cant* by the early Pamphleteers constitutes a means of control, even though it could not challenge the future standard it was perceived as a menace for the stability of the English society. Disclosing its secrecy was dispossessing its speakers of their unity. The attitude of repudiation of *cant* results from the rejection of *canters*.

The nostalgia for the past, as typical of the Renaissance, and the Reform favoured the revival of Old English, no matter how difficult to understand but a praised variety as compared to *cant*. A standard needs a reputable origin and nothing could be better than recovering, even if as a relic, the variety used for the first vernacular prayers. This pride about their linguistic past was also the one felt by those reformers, purists and archaizers who intended to recover the old English words and means of derivation and compounding.

The process of standardization is basically the vindication of a non yet established official language only delimited by what it should not be. This attitude justifies the emergence of writings concerned with the different varieties of English and the later elaboration of the *Standard*.

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