

Joseph Wright: An English Neogrammarian Language Collector

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“a good Yorkshireman—hearty, simple, unaffected, affectionate, vigorous, undismayed, and one of the great scholars of the age”

(Michael Sadler, cited in Kellet, n.p.)

This essay undertakes an overview of the philological work of Joseph Wright (1855-1930), with an emphasis on how and why his linguistic data were gathered (and from where), in the context of late nineteenth-century ideas about dialects, languages, and methods of linguistic research. It shows how his first encounters with philology and publication reinforced his characteristic bent toward practicality and (mathematical) patterned regularity, and thus molded all his subsequent practices and productions. The first part of this essay provides a language-oriented biographical sketch of Wright. The second part describes his production of non-dialectological grammars with an emphasis on his sources. Part 3 looks at his dialectological productions: *The Grammar of the Dialect of Windhill in the West Riding of Yorkshire* (1892), the *English Dialect Dictionary* (1888-1905) (*EDD*), and the *English Dialect Grammar* (1905) (*EDG*), again discussing the collections of language that formed the basis of these works. The concluding comments bring together these parts, reasserting that three significant elements were intertwined and formative of Wright’s methods and productions: his early life and its

character-formation, his philological training in Germany, and practices of collecting language for the specific purposes of writing and publishing grammars.

Part 1: Biography of a language collector

Joseph Wright started life as an illiterate dialect speaker from a remote part of England, and became a self-taught, multilingual expert in Indo-European languages, a professor of comparative philology at Oxford University with a PhD from Heidelberg University, and the holder of many awards and honorary degrees. He was one of the first English professors of the philology of non-classical languages, a friend and colleague of the leading philologists in Germany and England, and a teacher and mentor to the next generation of English philologists of the Germanic languages, including J.R.R. Tolkien. At a time when women were not given equal education at the universities, he provided the highest standard of teaching to his many female students, including his future wife Elizabeth Mary Lea (1863-1958), and he encouraged them in their careers. Wright was an enthusiastic promoter and practitioner of the principles and methods of historical and comparative linguistics as it was being developed by his German teachers and colleagues, being part of the group known as the Neogrammarians. Among his other language books, he published several grammars of (older) Germanic languages, as well as two scholarly grammars of English dialects. He is most famous for his great, six-volume *English Dialect Dictionary* (henceforth *EDD*).

The main source for biographical and methodological details is the two-volume biography (here cited as *EW*), written by Elizabeth Mary [Lea] Wright, and it is just about as authoritative as it can be, the early parts of it (up to 1882) having been written together with Wright and being, thus, “autobiographical,” and the bulk of the rest addressing his professional life and coming from “dictated notes” and the memories of his friends, colleagues, and students, including those of Elizabeth, who was all of these (*EW* I:v). His rise from poverty and illiteracy to academic eminence was well known in his lifetime, and it is a pertinent way to enter

enquiry into his approaches and attitudes to both language and research, since his work choices, practices, and even methodologies were products of an early life of imminent destitution, in which every moment had to be spent profitably. The extraordinary and lifelong efforts he exerted in educating himself and others demonstrate how these experiences and habits integrated with his character and abilities, resulting in a man who made of learning "a dedication of himself, almost a religion," who extended and made full use of his exceptional talents, and who followed "a gospel of Work" all the days of his life (EW I:96-97).

His earliest memories were as a five-year old child in the workhouse, and a year later laboring as a donkey-boy in a quarry; from age seven he worked as a bobbin-changer in the progressive Saltaire textile mill, where pay and prospects were marginally better (EW I:26-29; Markus, 11).¹ Working for extra pennies even in the few breaks that work allowed, and taking on any nearby odd jobs he could, Wright was exceptionally industrious from his very beginnings. He attended the Saltaire factory school, but it provided only very rudimentary teaching, and after three years "reading and writing remained [for him] as remote as any of the sciences" (EW I:31). In 1868 he moved to the Baildon Bridge Mill where he became a fast-learning apprentice wool-sorter, and by 1870, aged 15, a fully qualified sorter (EW I:32, 35).

From this time, apparently urged by a desire to read newspaper reports of the Franco-Prussian War, he undertook a rigorously pursued habit of private study, teaching himself reading and writing with some help from a literate workmate (Kellett n.p.) and mostly from the Bible and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (EW I:36-37). He then learned other subjects from the fortnightly Cassell's *Popular Educator*,² from French and German teaching grammars, and also from night schools and classes at a Mechanics Institute in Windhill and in Bradford (Kellett n.p., EW I:38-40); he learned (among other things) French, Latin, German, Mathematics, and Pitman's system of shorthand (a first encounter with transcribing living speech into written symbols). At age 18, while continuing these courses and still working as a wool-sorter, he started offering night classes

to his fellow-workers (including two from the Saltaire Mill) for an affordable price (EW I:40, 47).

In 1876 the mill was temporarily closed, and Wright left his life as a mill worker forever. He used his savings to go to Germany. He told a fellow passenger aboard ship that he was hoping to improve his German enough to earn a good salary as “a correspondent in a merchant’s office” (EW I:57, 58 n. 1), but he did not pursue this idea. He spent 11 weeks at Heidelberg University, improving his German while studying mathematics (EW I:60). On his return, and now determined to pursue a career in the intellectual life, he became a schoolmaster (EW I:57, 61), meanwhile continuing his studies at the Yorkshire College of Science (now the University of Leeds), while also teaching himself Greek. He taught in various schools in Bradford, Wrexham, and Margate, and at the same time continued to advance his knowledge in many areas (including math and chemistry), and practiced his foreign languages (including some Welsh) with any native speakers he encountered, briefly going to France for that purpose (Kellett n.p.). He matriculated and passed the BA intermediate exams at London University (1878), although (being too busy teaching) he never obtained the full BA (EW I:67).

In 1882 Wright returned to Heidelberg as a fully inscribed student, intending to read mathematics but soon moving to the discipline of philology. He supplemented his savings with private tuition in mathematics, and later in Old English and philology and by becoming a teacher at a nearby school for English boys (EW I:81, 95). He also earned money from writing and revising modern language teaching grammars, for which he was contracted to the Heidelberg publishers Julius Groos Verlag. He was to write grammars throughout his life, and also to maintain that philology could not be properly pursued without a good grounding in mathematics. He completed his PhD in 1885 with a thesis on *Changes of the Indo-Germanic Vowel System in Greek*, supervised by Hermann Osthoff, one of the founding Neogrammarians, whose lectures on comparative philology had attracted Wright away from mathematics (EW I: 74).

Wright was an enthusiastic part of the *Junggrammatiker*, or neogrammarian, group of scholars and school of thought (EW I:86-87), keeping by his bed a copy of Hermann Paul's *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte* (first published in 1880, and a cornerstone of neogrammatical phonology), which he treated, as his fellow-student (later Professor) Sütterlin reported, "as anybody else would a bible" (EW I:90). Intellectually, he had come to Germany well primed for this approach to language, being already familiar with the earlier writings of Grimm, Schleicher, and Curtius (EW I:74), while the Neogrammarian emphasis on regularity of language change rules to be extrapolated from real linguistic data (as then understood) appealed to his ideas of scientific methods and his demand for practicality of explanations. Studying the historical Germanic languages, he also "devoted a considerable amount of attention to the study of Modern English dialects for the important light which they throw upon the general principles of language" (EW I:76). His ineradicable habits of constant work, with his dedication to education (in receiving and giving) joined his concepts of science and practicality to shape—in effect determine—his approach to language, his career as philologist, and all his publications.

In 1886, he moved to Leipzig to study phonetics, German literature, and Lithuanian (Kellett n.p.), and there he was asked by Karl Brugmann, another foundational Neogrammarian, to make an English translation of the first volume of his *Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen*. This was published in England in 1888 (EW I:97; Wright, "Translator's Preface" ix), as *Elements of the Comparative Grammar of the Indo-Germanic Languages* (5 Vols. 1886-1900).³ This book was one of three "Syntheses of Indo-European comparative grammar" to be produced in Germany in the nineteenth century, and Wright's translated volume was the first important work of historical philology on the new principles to be published in English. Brugman (and its translation) is still used, and remains "a reliable handbook and the most comprehensive collection of comparable material" (Bynon 1223). Toward the end of his life, his colleagues and successors acknowledged that, with

this translation, his other publications, and his teaching, Wright “did more than anybody else towards the naturalization of German scientific philology in England, [...] developed in the practical form of a “made language a living subject of study” in his own country (Hoops in EW I:87, Giles in EW I:96).

In December 1886 Wright signed a contract with the Heidelberg publishing firm Julius Groos Verlag for examining and revising “all the educational books published by the firm dealing with the English, French, German, and Italian languages” (EW I:99). In this year he was found writing an elementary French grammar (Curtis in EMW I:93), perhaps for Groos, at the same time as working for Groos on *The Accidence*⁴ of the *German Language* (1887), a condensation of the grammar parts of Otto’s *German Conversation-Grammar* (1st edition 1853) (Kemmler 229, 234).⁵ Two years later, Groos issued Wright’s revised edition of Otto’s *Elementary German Grammar*, the book he had used when first learning German at night school (EW I:40). Wright’s contract guaranteed him a constant supply of work, and unequaled practice, continuing over the following twenty-six years (1886-1912), in the revision and supervision of, eventually, twenty-nine teaching grammars (EW I:99).⁶ At the same time, and while still in Leipzig, he started his own first grammar book, a grammar of Middle High German, that would be published as a Primer by the Clarendon Press (EW I:84).

Return to England in 1888 took Wright directly to Oxford University, where Max Müller, the first Professor of Comparative Philology, obtained for him the position of lecturer to the Association for the Higher Education of Women at the University, teaching Gothic, Old English, and Old German (Kellett n.p.); and he was also appointed as deputy lecturer in German at the Taylorian Institute. In 1901, soon after Müller’s death, Wright succeeded him as Professor of Comparative Philology (Markus, “Introduction to Part I” 12). He worked in Oxford for the rest of his life, undertaking a large amount of teaching and continuing to produce and co-produce (with Elizabeth) both descriptive and teaching grammars of older languages, until his death in 1930.

Part 2: The Non-Dialectological Grammars

As a self-taught man with an avowed mission to continue learning and, especially, to teaching the new ideas of philology to others (EW I:96 et passim), Wright was already convinced of the practical benefits of educational publications. His first hands-on encounters with the Groos series (and his awareness of their promise of extendable profit) presented him with a normalized form for introductory grammars and may have primed him to the idea of creating a series of similar publications in his own field (older and mostly Germanic languages) for English students. In Oxford, the Clarendon Press⁷ had been producing instructional language books and works of philological interest for some years, having been reconceptualized in the 1860s as the school-books and educational division of the University Press; it was still actively commissioning new works and reprinting other materials aimed at the growing education sectors and markets. It produced large numbers of grammars, primers, and dictionaries, sometimes appearing as part of the "Clarendon Press Series," usually under the imprint of the publisher Henry Frowde (who also produced non-Clarendon OUP books). OUP asked Wright to produce grammars of the Teutonic languages that he had been appointed to teach (Sutcliffe 112) for this Clarendon list—thus their printing of his *Middle High German Primer (MHGP)* and *Old High-German Primer* in 1888 and then of all of his subsequent books, including the *EDD* (which they did not, however, finance).^{7, 8}

Many of Wright's primers and grammars have been reprinted and used up to the present day (Markus "Introduction to Part I," 12; Sladen "Idle Scholar"). His Prefaces and Introductions attest to their importance within his educational and philological mission. At first, grammars of old languages like these were produced for a restricted projected readership of specialists, as the Preface to the first (1888) edition of *MHGP* acknowledged. But the market picked up alongside educational developments, and by the third edition (1916) Wright could claim that "the interest in the study of these language has grown so much that Honour Courses and Examinations in them have been established at all our universities" (v).

He went on to sole-author six grammars of older languages: Primers of Old High German (1888), Middle High German (1888), and Gothic (1892), and then fuller treatments of languages in an *Historical German Grammar* (1907), a *Gothic Grammar* (1910), and a *Comparative Grammar of the Greek Language* (henceforth “*Greek Grammar*”) (1912). These were the first English-language grammars of Gothic and older German, and the first large-scale English language grammar to compare ancient Greek to other Indo-European languages, following neogrammarian principles. These books brought together carefully selected and considered ideas and language materials that had already been published, mostly in Germany and mostly quite recently. With Elizabeth⁹ he coauthored an *Old English Grammar*, an *Elementary Old English Grammar*, an *Elementary Middle English Grammar*, and *An Elementary Historical New English Grammar* (1908, 1923, 1923, 1924, respectively), none of which was the first publication in its field.

Ever practical, publication was an aim as much as an outlet for Wright’s linguistic work: he was primarily a neogrammarian teacher of old Germanic languages, and his grammars and even the *EDD* were written for the use of students and philologists. He did not write new theories of language, and outside of his extension of linguistic scrutiny to dialects he did not originate new ideas. He remained a teacher presenting students and fellow scholars with information about and guides to languages, focusing on rule-based explanations of historical language change in accordance with the accepted ideas and practices of the comparative philologists and neogrammarians he had trained with. His grammars presented a collected and categorized “inventory of forms” (Linell 4) with the aims of presenting and explaining old languages in ways that could be learned or understood, through appealing to the axiomatically existent underlying structures and phonological processes deemed to be inherent in languages. The fundamental systematicity of languages remains the key to the very idea of a grammar books, and appeals to systematicity were (and are) reinforced by the ways in which languages are presented in classrooms and in grammar books.

All of Wright's grammar books were ordered and structured in what had become a conventional format, at least for grammar books published in English (including all the Frowde grammars).¹⁰ These books present all or most of the following sections, in this order: Introduction, Alphabet and Pronunciation, Phonology, Accidence, Syntax, Texts, Notes, Glossary/Index. While following the same outline of contents, Wright's grammars characteristically have more chapters dedicated to phonology than other historical grammar books of his time. After the *MHGP*, their expanded phonology parts covered many chapters, and the primers and the Gothic grammar include long Texts sections. Perhaps most importantly, both in terms of the organization and practicality of presenting linguistic information and in terms of Wright's own language-collecting practices, all these grammar books, whether single or co-authored, provide detailed, and usually indexed, glossaries or word lists, which were often compiled by Elizabeth. The Index to the *Historical Grammar of German* has, as Wright announces, over 4,000 words (v), and almost the same number of words are in the Index to the *Elementary Historical New English Grammar* (vi).

From what sources did Joseph and, later, Elizabeth Wright collect the linguistic material upon which their grammars and glossaries of old languages were based? Like other English publications about older stages of the Germanic languages, Wright used and acknowledged the philological work coming out of the German universities. New books and earlier books on this subject (in England as in Germany), used linguistic materials from each other as well as from much earlier publications, such as printed versions—and where possible scholarly editions—of old texts. Increasingly, and evident in most of Wright's productions, some care is given to cite and acknowledge sources—but none of these grammarians show which forms/words come from which sources, let alone explain in any detail the extents to which their grammars and lists are dependent upon cited sources. Providing such information was still a very new idea for this area of publication (that is, reference books and handbooks) (Tieken-Boon van Ostade 3).

Even though his methods of data collection, selection, and use are not discussed in these grammar books, Wright's conception of a scientific study

evidently includes the provision of some citations and of some bibliographic information, and thus, with one exception (the coauthored *Elementary Old English Grammar*), indicates the main sources of his grammars, and, through giving the sources of his sample texts and mentioning other useful books, he indirectly indicates some possible sources for the forms (words and sentences) that the grammars are based upon. The extent to which individual sources were used in the compilation of his grammars is not mentioned or retrievable, but he followed what was perhaps the normal practice of selecting words from sources as illustrations of principles he was setting out in his grammar, rather than conducting a grammatical analysis of the languages as found. Thus, he says, for instance, “In selecting examples to illustrate the sound-laws I have tried as far as possible to give words which also occur in the other Germanic languages [...]” (*Grammar of the Gothic Language* iii). In these books we find no indication that Wright went to manuscript or even early printed materials for his sources—there is also no mention of such a practice or even desire in the biography. Wright was collecting language data and linguistic information for his non-dialectological grammars only from edited and published works, then, and the majority of these works had emerged within the previous decade. It serves no purpose to provide full details of every book mentioned (especially as the extent to which they were or were not used is often unknown); the works that Wright singled out as the most important of his sources, and the dates of publication of his cited sources, are given below.

Middle High-German Primer (1888, and subsequent editions)

Weinhold’s and Paul’s (separate) grammars of Middle High-German (1883 and 1884); Texts (extracts): the sources are cited for all but three; these cited sources (updated in later editions) date between 1833 and 1889.

Old High-German Primer (1888, and subsequent editions)

Braune *Althohochdeutsche Lesebuch* (1881) and *Althohochdeutsche Grammatik* (1886); Texts (extracts): sources cited for all but one; sources (updated in later editions) date between 1832 and 1892.

***Gothic Primer* (1892, and subsequent editions)**

A list of books relating to the language is given (144-47), but none is named as a source. Acknowledged sources and recommended grammars (including one in English, by Douse) date from the 1880s, updated in later editions of the primer; Texts (extracts) from *Ulfilas* by M Heyne (9th Edition 1896), fragments selected from Massmann (1834) and Sievers (1891).

***Historical German Grammar* (1907)**

"A list of the chief books used in the writing of the grammar" (vi) [xiii-xiv] provides 29 titles, mostly German works and all published within the previous 20 years; there is also the *Histoire de la langue allemande* (H. Lichtenberger, 1895), *A History of English Sounds* (H. Sweet, 1888), and Wright's *Old High German Primer*, *MHGP*, and *Primer of the Gothic language*. In the Introduction, Wright recommends other texts to readers for further reading.

***Gothic Grammar* (1910)**

The same sources and lists of books as given in the *Gothic Primer*, updated and with additions. There are "specimens" taken from the same 1896 edition of *Ulfilas*, with its grammar and glossary (198). The list of glossaries now includes a glossary with grammar and list of related English words by Skeat (1868). There is a Supplementary Bibliography.

***Comparative Grammar of the Greek Language* (1912)**

"Examples," he states, were selected "from the vast amount of material which I had collected to illustrate the sound-laws of the various dialects" (v). This work is "based upon the philological books and articles of the best workers of the present day in the wide field of Comparative Philology" (vi), and he gives "a select list of the books and articles which I have found most useful in the writing of this book." He mentions being specially indebted to "the works of Brugmann, Hirt, Gustav Meyer, Osthoff, Johannes Schmidt, and Wackernagel" (vii). His "select list of

books used” contains 53 items, produced in German, French, and English, the earliest dating to 1876, but most being mid-1880s or later. Wright’s *Gothic Grammar* is the only one of his own works in this list.

***Old English Grammar* (1908) [coauthored]**

Wright again gives “a select list of the books which we have found most useful” (vi). There are 22 books in this list; again, most are German titles published within the past 20 years. He claims special indebtedness to Karl D. Bulbring, *Altenglisches Elementarbuch (Lautlehre)* (1902); P. J. Cosijn, *Altwestsächsische Grammatik* (1883-1886); and Eduard Sievers, *Angelsächsische Grammatik*. (1898). The English titles in his list are: John R Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary for the use of students*. (1894); A.L. Mayhew, *Synopsis of Old English Phonology* (1891); Henry Sweet, *The Student’s Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon* (1897); T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, based on the manuscript collections of the late Joseph Bosworth* (1882-1898); and Wright’s *Old High German Primer* (1906), *Primer of the Gothic Language* (1899), and the *EDG* (1903).

***Elementary Old English Grammar* (1923) [coauthored]**

Provides no bibliographic details at all.

***Elementary Middle English Grammar* (1923) [coauthored]**

“Indebted” to Lorenz Morsbach, *Mittelenglische Grammatik* (1896) and Karl Luick, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache* (1914-1921), Bernhard ten Brink (ed. E Eckhardt), *Chaucers Sprache und Verskunst* (1920), and Erik Björkman, *Scandinavian Loan-words in Middle English* (1900-1902). The authors say they have used much information from modern dialects, but do not cite the *EDD* or *EDG*.

***Elementary Historical New English Grammar* (1924) [coauthored]**

The authors acknowledge, in cross references, the *Elementary Middle English Grammar*, and explicitly grant indebtedness especially to Ekwall,

Ellis, Franz, Horn, Jespersen, Kaluza, Kluge, Luick, Morsbach, Skeat, Sweet, Vietor, Wyld, and Zachrisson, and among these particularly to Horn's *Historische Neuenglische Grammatik* (1908); Jespersen's *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles Part I* (1909); Price's *A History of Ablaut in the Strong Verbs from Caxton to the End of the Elizabethan Period* (1910); Zachrisson's *Pronunciation of English Vowels 1400-1700* (1913); and the *New English Dictionary* (NED, later called the *Oxford English Dictionary* or OED).

As we can see, Wright compiled his non-dialectological grammars from recently published sources, many of which were written by his friends, fellow neogrammarians in Germany, and many of these books would have become known to him while he was working on his PhD. But Wright's grammars were no slavish copies of the earlier materials he used. In the first of his grammars, the *GMHG*, for which Wright acknowledges two main sources (both grammars of Middle High German), there are differences in both structuring and content. In organization of the phonology and accidence sections, for instance, Wright's book is closer to (though not identical with) Weinhold's clearer and simpler organizing and ordering of the chapters than to the rather harder-to-navigate book by Paul, even though Wright admired and presumably followed more closely the neogrammatical approach to the language that Paul's Grammar used; and, perhaps more significantly, the linguistic content of Wright's and Paul's grammars is different. Neither Weinhold nor Paul present their readers with Middle High German texts as Wright does, and Weinhold has no glossary or word list at all. Paul, however, provides a word list (*Wortregister*) with abbreviated grammatical information and page references, while Wright compiles a glossary with the English definitions his readers need, as well as similar grammatical notations and page indexing. The contents of Paul's word list and Wright's glossary differ more than they resemble each other, however, each list containing many words that do not appear in the other. It is safe to say that, while taking his basic ordering of chapters and inclusion of new features from existing but

still quite recent conventions in publishing (i.e., the Groos grammars), and collecting language data from printed sources, Wright's first grammar book was entirely his own, as were his others.

Part 3: The dialectological publications

There was at this time a commonly held belief that "pure" regional dialects were being eroded and rapidly lost due to universal education in the standard language, ease of travel within the country (railways), and population-mixing in cities (Markus, "Joseph Wright's" 266). Wright was reported as claiming that "there is a great deal of dialect [... that] will undoubtedly be extinct in the course of a generation or two" (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 December 1894, cited in EW II: 358-59). The English Dialect Society (EDS), founded in 1873 by the indefatigable Rev. William Walter Skeat, to whom Wright later dedicated the *EDD*, was established explicitly "for the collection and preservation of our provincial words" (W.A. Wright [1870, 271] in Shorrocks 1556); it was a necessary adjunct to the projected *NED* (*OED*), that had encountered repeated difficulties in "where to draw the line" between "provincial" and less regionally restricted words, especially given the historical principles of that work (Skeat [1896], cited in EW II:350).¹¹ To that end it was collecting, inviting, and publishing written accounts of regional dialects, with Alexander Ellis's ongoing research into all English dialects in mind. Once "the true size of this project became apparent," however, Ellis modified his project, to the eventual production of the more historically restricted *On Early English Pronunciation*, in five Parts. This work, and especially the Classified Word List and index of parts IV and V, was to be acknowledged and to be very useful to Wright in his three published works on English dialects.¹² Ellis's extremely detailed and condensed Classified Word List and its essential Index (Ellis, "Preliminary Matter" 17*)¹³ gave Wright regionally, etymologically, and phonologically categorized and annotated material, and an alphabetized list of dialect words with pronunciations and (sometimes) example usages and sources.

The *EDD* (and then the *EDG*) were explicit aims of both the EDS and Wright's established interest in the English dialects. Materials and

methodological issues encountered in Ellis's work also contributed here also, as did the unrecorded discussions about the *EDD* that Wright, Ellis, Murray (working on the *NED*), and Skeat had while the work was going on. These volumes were immediately acclaimed for their "fulness of vocabulary, and [...] minuteness of the account of the phonology and accidence [that] leave nothing to desire" (Skeat [1911, 105], in Shorrocks 1561). In spite of methodological weaknesses relating to especially the lack of sociolinguistic insights at that period, the *EDD* and *EDG* remain the most complete record of English dialect, and all subsequent dialect surveys have used them as valuable resources (Gneuss [1996, 62] in Markus "Introduction to Part I" 17; Shorrocks 1558; Upton 193).

A Grammar of the Dialect of Windhill in the West Riding of Yorkshire

As students in Germany Wright and his fellow philologists wrote grammars both of the historical languages they were studying and, as we have seen, of living languages. It is not surprising that they should have turned their skills to any other language they encountered or were interested in. Having started work on his native dialect some years before, Wright's proposal for a grammar of this language was accepted by the EDS a year before he left Germany (EW II:351); *A Grammar of the Dialect of Windhill in the West Riding of Yorkshire* (*Windhill*), was duly published a few years later, in 1892, "to furnish specialists in English philology with an accurate account of the Phonology and Accidence of one of the most interesting of the Yorkshire dialects" (*Windhill* v). It was "the first truly scientific monograph on an English dialect" (Shorrocks 1560). This was the extraordinary thing about *Windhill*, and what makes it, conceptually, of even greater significance than the production of the *EDD*. For—instead of considering the dialect as a minor variant of "our" [single] language," as a less elaborated, less valued, and somehow incorrect subsidiary—by analyzing and presenting the dialect independently from what he called "literary" English, Wright was claiming and acknowledging it as a free-standing language (linguistic system) of equal scientific interest, linguistic and expressive complexity,

and competency. As shown, it (and by implication all other regional dialects) had its own syntax, morphology, phonology, and lexis, and it was related to all other varieties that make up the supra-language called *English*, not as a subordinate offshoot, but as one of many cognates, separate but parallel and coeval historical developments.

Wright's *Windhill* was the first non-teaching grammar that he wrote, the third grammar he compiled independently, and the first of his grammars to deal with the English language. It was his first published study of English regional dialects, preceded by his short contribution to Paul's 1891 *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, a chapter ("Englische Mundarten" [English Dialects]) providing a categorized bibliography for the study of English dialects. In *Windhill*, he was focusing on a single, very narrowly localized dialect (in the 1820s Windhill was described as a hamlet, in the 1970s as a village ["Windhill, West Riding"]), and to show how its phonology, accidence, and syntax derived from earlier forms (knowledge of which came from previously created grammars, based on edited and selected texts). The materials available or potentially available to Wright for *Windhill* included some "dialect words as are not in use in the Modern Literary language" and that he had collected and recorded for himself (which appear as "a few specimens" within the grammar) (viii), all or most of the items in "Englische Mundarten," and any relevant material from the English Dialect Society's collection—to which this grammar would be added, on publication. He extracted much useful material from Ellis's "remarkable wealth of data (there are 835 closely-printed pages in Part V alone)" (Shorrocks 1559), and benefitted from Ellis's classification of dialects and phonetic transcriptions, even though he did not fully adopt either.¹⁴ On pages 11-12 he provides a list of sixteen "Works referred to in the Grammar" (including productions of the Early English Text Society as a single item), which we may assume to be his main, although evidently not his only, source of collected material. The Windhill dialect pronunciation indicated by his carefully designed phonetic notation, and many of the expressions used as illustrations of the local language, are, as is either overtly stated or strongly implied, from

Wright's own notes, memory, and intuition, his credentials being that he was a native speaker of "the dialect pure and simple" until adulthood (vii).

We know from his biography that Wright collected from local speakers more than just a list of local words. This is the first time (that we know of) that Wright was collecting first-hand, living evidence of a spoken language, and it is intriguing to speculate on how he coped with the methodological decisions and practices he had to set up and practice simultaneously, when faced with variable and unexpected speech forms. Problems were bound to arise in applying to a living and non-standardized language phonological rules that had been formulated from generalized observations of older and written languages, and that were axiomatically held to apply without exception within languages. Perhaps he hoped to avoid some of these problems by his decision to select only words that also existed in standard English, but this did not help enough. He touches upon this issue of unconformable data (pronunciations), with words that indicate his principles of empirical priority and scientific lucidity:

I have taken special care to include in the Phonology fairly complete lists of the words which are in common use in the dialect and also exist in the literary language. This method of treatment has sometimes involved me in great difficulties; [...] in the case of words which seem to have had an abnormal development [...]. These are difficulties which every writer of a scientific dialect grammar has to contend with. But it would manifestly have been dishonest on my part to have omitted any word or form which did not seem to have had a regular development. The result is that the grammar contains dozens of words the vocalism of which I have not been able to explain satisfactorily, but I have nevertheless registered them in separate paragraphs, as being in common use in the dialect and of equal importance to the English. (*Windhill* v-vi)

Other than that comment, we can only infer from his grammar that Wright gathered and treated any and all of the materials he collected personally in

much the same way as he had learned to treat other variant languages in the comparative studies he pursued in Germany. The philologist Ferdinand Holthausen, a close friend from Heidelberg, spent the 1886 summer vacation in Windhill with Wright, and there, he recalled, “we studied dialect. It was a very stimulating occupation, for we discovered almost daily new sound laws and etymologies” (in EW I:85). This originally collected data was simply added to the other examples of the dialect that Wright collected from printed sources; there is no indication of which examples of the dialect were taken from which source.

Wright mainly used the fifteen published works named in his bibliography (on pages xi-xii), which included three books by German neogrammarians. The bibliographies of the books on English language that are in Wright’s bibliography show how these foundational works were referring to each other, often within a year of publication. The names Henry Sweet, Walter Skeat, Alexander Ellis, and James Murray are found in each others’ books; after publication of *Windhill*, *EDD* and *EDG* they were joined by Joseph Wright. In *Windhill*, Wright used and drew attention especially to Sweet’s *History of English Sounds* and A.L. Mayhew’s *Synopsis of Old English Phonology* for Old English (xii), Sweet’s *Primer of Spoken English* for “present pronunciation of literary English” (vii, 1), and Ellis’s *Early English Pronunciation* (Vol. V) for pronunciation of dialect forms (1). This latter work was extremely useful to Wright for its word lists, and for the conveniently alphabetized Index, from which he could exclude all words not from the region and not part of the Windhill dialect as he knew it. He also included a few of the dialect “specimens” that he had been “collecting [...] for a great number of years” (viii).¹⁵ Older examples were taken from books published by the Early English Text Society.¹⁶

In *Windhill*, the mixing of inherited, redacted (printed and re-printed) data with newly (directly and indirectly) gathered material was characteristic of the shift of perspectives that Wright had witnessed in the eclectic practices of German universities, where linguists who, earlier in the nineteenth century, had been “content to start with documented data

[...] within the bounds of the known," now started to show a preference for "active discovery of the demonstrable [...] over passive acceptance of the ideational" and developed methods of research that incorporated their new and relatively "empirical, and non-aprioristic stance" (Collinge 1212). Using new analytic methods and perspectives on hitherto ignored material, but also including older edited sources, and literary renditions (e.g., in skits and newspaper reports) as well as (we assume) Wright's and others' first-hand records, the collection of data for *Windhill*, as for the *EDD* and the *EDG*, was following the precepts laid down in the Neogrammarian Manifesto (1878), that stated that "principles regarding the way languages 'live and change' should be based on the observation of living dialects and on recent well-documented language history" (Bynon 1225).¹⁷ Thus, the *Windhill* grammar can be seen as existing halfway between "an early, pre-scientific, antiquarian-sentimental phase in [English] dialect study" and "a more systematic, scientific, modern phase associated with the development of Comparative Philology" (Shorrocks 1561).

With respect to reliance representation of a living language, however, this mixed approach to data collection was problematic. In *Windhill*, as in his other dialectological works, Wright's continued habit of relying on various earlier written sources together with originally transcribed materials relegated the latter to the status of mere useful contributions, not primary evidence as they would be considered now. Some of them may have been among the many words and usages that he could not use as evidence of that dialect. For in this grammar, where forms could not be explained in accordance with the axiomatically invarying rules of sound change, they were considered anomalous, and thought to have been, at some stage in their history, influenced by the standard or by words imported from other dialects. Wright was aware that he should "honestly" acknowledge their existence, and he did include them in his work (in "separate paragraphs"), at the same time as relegating them to marginalized positions and not including them in the phonology that is the main part and purpose of the work proper (*Windhill* v-vi).

Windhill was published by The Clarendon Press (who also published Sweet and Ellis) for the EDS. The contents follow those of the non-

dialectological primers and grammars described above, and show the same grammatical divisions and ordering of parts. There are six phonology chapters, in which Wright shows in great detail how the present Windhill forms of Old English origin had developed out of their originals (vi), which he identified from his named sources: Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary*, Stratmann's *Dictionary of Old English*, Siever's *Angelsächsische Grammatik* and "Murray and Bradley's" ongoing *NED* (*OED*). He acknowledged that this method is based on the assumption that in Anglo-Saxon times English regional variation was less divergent than it later became (vi); this assumption was, of course, reinforced through the relative shortage of published Old English evidence available to him, and the heavily edited/standardized texts he used as reference works.¹⁸

Wright did not attempt historical reconstructions of the Windhill pronunciation of French-derived words since these "words have come into the dialect at various periods and through various channels," an omission he recognizes as unsatisfactory, but unavoidable (vii). He must have been alerted to this difficulty by Ellis's preliminary comments to his Classified Word List, but he discarded Ellis's solution, which was to turn to "the modern French forms" where possible, and to use Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary* for Old French forms as a last resort (Ellis, "Preliminary Matter" 23*). Instead, Wright compared the local sounds in these words with those in their modern "literary English pronunciation" (as found in Sweet's *Primer of Spoken English* 7-8). He shows, for instance how "Lit. Engl. has **ei** (written a), but W[indhill] dial. [has] **a** in **apr̥θn** *apron*, **stapl** *staple*" (*Windhill* vii, 57). Following the Accidence and Syntax chapters there are forty-two pages of "Specimens" (with two pages of notes) from two (short) elicited tasks and seven printed texts, all of which are cited (169), and all of which are presented in or with transcriptions in Wright's own phonetic notation. The book ends with the Index of all the words used in the grammar ("a laborious piece of work" [viii]), taking up forty pages with two columns per page. Throughout the book, the Windhill forms are given in their phonetic forms, just as Gothic or High German words are presented in their grammars; this visually reinforces the treatment of the

Windhill dialect as a freestanding language, separate from standard, written English.

English Dialect Dictionary (EDD)

Excellent papers analyzing and contextualizing the linguistic practices and contents of the *EDD* have been published as a result of the research and interest aroused by the *Innsbruck University EDD Online Project*, initiated by Manfred Markus. The paragraphs below therefore need not refer to the *EDD*'s linguistic details nor even to the details of organization, which, indeed, are not central to this essay's concerns. Rather, they discuss this work's language collection (data set) and how it relates to the published outcome, in the continuing context of Wright's linguistic biography.

The English Dialect Society had published eighty dialect glossaries from the late modern period (1700-1900), with a few older ones added, under the editing aegis of Skeat (Markus, "Joseph Wright's" 267) and with the intention of making a larger Dialect Dictionary out of them; after Ellis's decision to restrict his work to an earlier period, a comprehensive dictionary of English dialects of modern times was still required. To this end Skeat first proposed to Wright the idea of being "final editor" of a "big Dialect Dictionary" in a letter of 1887. Wright had started work on this project in the 1880s (Markus, "Introduction to Part I" 12), and it is likely that *Windhill* was written with this in mind, too, given its publication by the English Dialect Society. In 1889 Wright was telling Holthausen that he would "edit the projected Dialect Dictionary" (EW II:353); and in that year the editorship, which was far from being in its final stages, was handed over to him, along with a one-ton (EW II:355) starter-pack of over a million paper slips.¹⁹ The official appointment came in 1891, after Wright's accession to the position of Professor of Comparative Philology.

Wary of definitional fuzzy boundaries (when is a word a "dialect" word and when is it not?) and of the potential for his collection to grow monstrously beyond all possibility of publication, Wright directed the collection of "words which differ from the literary language [...] in

meaning”²⁰ and not just in pronunciation, thus sidestepping, to some extent, his admitted difficulties in “knowing what to do about words which appear both in the literary language and in the dialects” (*EDD* I:v). Each slip, once completed, presented its lexical entry annotated with the precise regions where it was recorded, the source of information, as well as pronunciation details, its etymology, its meaning(s) and illustrative sentences.

Wright realized that, vast as this quantity of inherited material was, it could not be sufficient to cover “the complete vocabulary of all dialect words still in use or known to have been in use during the last two hundred years,” as the subtitle of the *EDD* would claim; he would need at least twice as much material. He organized and spoke at public meetings, and sent out notices to all the main newspapers and public libraries, with the repeated request for collectors of local materials, for helpers to “cut [...] up glossaries” and other printed sources to make slips (*EW* II:358), and for “contributions of dialect words, however small” (Letter sent to newspapers, in *EW* II:356),” to be sent to him or to one of the local groups set up as a gathering centers. In this way he obtained further data from over a thousand correspondents and six hundred helpers (*EDD* I:vii; *EW* II:355), responding to more than twelve thousand queries sent from his workshop in Oxford (*EDD* I:vi), and he received over one and a half million slips in addition to those he had started with (Markus, “Joseph Wright’s” 268; *EW* II:55). He was, furthermore, given use of “the MS collections and the library of the late Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte” for two years, which provided him with materials from “many thousand [sic] words and quotations from hundreds of small local books not to be found in any of our public libraries” (*EDD* I:vi). When asking for “original matter” (*EW* II:357), he required his correspondents to use the specially adapted phonetic alphabet he had devised for this dictionary.²¹ In 1900 he tried to collect dialect material, and specifically sounds, using gramophone recordings, but was unsatisfied with the voices that were being recorded, finding their language to be overly standardized (Markus, “Introduction to Part I” 15; *EW* II:424); the respondents had most probably responded to

the artificial circumstances or recording with consciously or unconsciously altered language, something we can today better understand from a sociolinguistic perspective. All of his language data, whatever its origins, came to him in written form, therefore—and most of it had originated from earlier written sources, too. In brief, there are “three basic types” of *EDD* sources: “written documents referring to dialect,” “books of general reference,” and “unprinted collections and information by correspondents” (Markus, “Joseph Wright’s” 270).

As both Wright and Skeat knew, the compilation of this dictionary required exceptional organization skills, while the editing required philological knowledge. This huge data-gathering and organizing campaign could not be orchestrated and organized in what would be its final form before work on the dictionary proper started. When bringing the slips together into dictionary form, Wright found gaps where some regions were less well represented than others (such as Scotland and Dorset) (EW II:383), and many others where further information or illustrative material about words was needed. He enjoined his correspondents to track down more usages and even at times requested that they use questionnaires he prepared (e.g., for the item TO BE). In putting the dictionary together, he could rely upon the alphabetical and lexical format of a dictionary (like an index) to provide an accessible structure for the otherwise unstructurable mass of material he had gathered, and with the precedent of Ellis’s word list before him, he developed systems of abbreviations and phonetic notations to ensure that each word’s geographic and textual origins were noted, as well as its pronunciation. But editorial constraints were still needed when moving slips to processed dictionary entries. These constraints were definitional in several ways: some recorded utterances may or may not be defined as a word, for instance, and others may not be easily defined in terms of their meanings. The definition of dialect areas and borders could be a concern, as was the problem of defining whether words were dialectal, geographically speaking, or more generalized features of informal spoken language; again, some words might be technical terms related to a local industry, rather than local words per se.

Each slip was considered in the light of these and similar considerations, and accepted, rejected, or set aside for further research, depending on Wright's decision. In volumes I through V there are lists of "words for the present kept back for want of further information," often excluded from the main dictionary because of "meaning unknown" and also because of unsure locality or even no locality given. The separate lists varied in length between one and three pages. In Volume VI the Supplement lists all of these, indicated by a small symbol, and others—the reason given for previously excluding these words is that "The authority for many of these words is unsatisfactory"; and "when no definition is given it means that the word is used over a greater area than is given in this dictionary," which last point is well illustrated by the first meaning of the very first word in the supplement, simply described as "**A** *indef. art.*" (Vol VI Supplement 1).

The *EDD*, presenting 4,600 printed pages, contained 79,598 headwords and over 100,000 compounds, combinations, phrases, and variants (Markus, "Focus" 142), covering most of the British Isles from Shetland to Cornwall, and recording usages from 1700 through to 1900 (Markus, "Joseph Wright's" 263), has never been surpassed in scope. It was completed with the publication of the sixth volume in 1905. Wright's preface to Volume I included these and other numbers, such as the numbers of slips, workers, and words. Here he also provided: lists of sources (published and unpublished), a selected bibliographical list (also in vols III-VI), which is also a key to the named sources' abbreviated forms as used in the dictionary proper, a list of other abbreviations (with abbreviations used for the 152 regions presented at the end), a list of 142 UK counties, lists of correspondents and readers, and the volume's list of words "for the present kept back."

Wright found, early in the project, that the only way to get this work published (since the Clarendon Press's commitment to the apparently never-ending *NED* had precluded their financial support) was to find the money for it himself, and he therefore hoped that the dictionary would be paid for by subscription. As each volume came out, then, it was presenting to the subscribers, in a way, a countable progress report; so, the details of

the prefatorial matter of the first volume comprised an implied promise of the scale and scholarly scrupulosity of the volumes to come, and the consistent quantity and quality of information in the subsequent volumes supported and fulfilled this promise. With the publication of the sixth and last volume Wright's implied promise was surpassed, with the inclusion of further significant material: there is a Supplement of 179 pages giving full entries for words that belonged in earlier volumes but, for whatever reason, had not been included at the time of those volumes' publication, as well as all words kept back (marked by a special symbol); a full, 59-page Bibliography, (divided and subdivided into types of references and sources, and into regions, and with its own index) is then provided, followed by a 3-page list of correspondents and unprinted word collections; and bound into this volume, at the very end, is the Grammar (EDG).

As a monument and archive of rarely recorded and possibly disappearing words it is a remarkable tour de force. With the enormously varied and largely uncontrolled number of sources used, its strength (for individual entries) comes from numbers: a well-attested form is better authenticated than one-offs. Thus, although Wright seems somewhat, perhaps unnecessarily, obsessed with numbers and lists in his prefatorial and end matter, for this dictionary they may be seen as his best witnesses to the scholarly and scientific professionalism of the work, and the overall reliability of the information contained within it.

English Dialect Grammar (EDG)

In 1905 Wright's *English Dialect Grammar* came out, published by the Oxford University Press (not under the Clarendon imprint), at first at the end of Vol VI of the *EDD*, and then as a separate volume. The language collection underpinning it is the same as that of the *EDD*. It is undoubtedly the most original of his grammars, and the most philologically significant according to Wright and many later scholars (Shorrocks 1557), given that it attempted to synthesize and present all the English regional dialects in a single grammar, along with the implication that, like any other language,

this synthesized language was worthy of serious and systematic study—just as he had done for the single dialect of Windhill.

Windhill had shown that regional dialects could be treated linguistically as systematically as any other language, and the *EDD* provided an alphabetical listing of tens of thousands of words from all regional dialects of English (including even forms attested overseas). As with *Windhill*, instead of basing his grammar on authoritative (edited) texts, he was working from a collection of language fragments. This time, though, the scale and disparity of the collected data was immeasurably greater, and his task was to take these pieces of evidence of cognate dialects and synthesize them, as Brugmann had done for Indo-European languages in the *Grundriss*, into a grammar of all the dialects. For this there could be no authoritative sources, only the collected materials from which the *EDD* had been created. On every slip and for each entry in the *EDD* Wright had included the word's phonological and etymological details, alongside illustrative sentences, and this annotation, after selection and arrangement, could bring some sort of linguistic unity to the disparate materials, bringing with it the model of a composite language (that of "English Dialects") that would direct a single grammar of all English dialects over two hundred years. The *EDD* and *EDG* therefore "share both corpus and methodology" (Shorrocks 1557), and with *Windhill* they share the Neogrammarian habit of using mixed and redacted data, too.

It seems, then, that in the course of editing the *EDD* and bearing in mind a future *EDG*, Wright understood that he was also creating what we would now call an annotated corpus, a type and idea of linguistic source whose authority arises from its size and the spread of its collected components. Present day linguists design and use corpora in very different ways from Wright's use of materials from the *EDD*, but it is nevertheless noteworthy that he had made an all-important first step away from a top-down (rules explaining carefully selected sample(s) of literary language) to a—partially—bottom-up (usage directing a search for regularity) way of describing and analyzing language.

The task of creating, even envisaging, the *EDG* could not have been done without the underlying assumptions of neogrammarian phonology, which saw variation (between dialects, in this case) as the end product of regular and retrievable, but regionally differing, changes from less variable origins. A single grammar for the dialects of 152 regions (with their sub-regional divisions) would otherwise be conceptually impossible. The etymological and phonological information that Wright had so carefully recorded for each entry in the *EDD* were thus more than mere descriptive details; they had explanatory force, and provided the substantial mechanisms through which this otherwise diverse and even disparate material could be reconfigured into a single and encompassing Grammar.

It was nevertheless and evidently impossible to write a grammar that treated "each and every dialect [...] with that minuteness which ought to be given in a grammar dealing with one single dialect," and this work, as Wright claimed, was instead directed toward "bring[ing] out as far as possible the main characteristic features of all the dialects" (*EDG* iii). This was still to project a task of mind-boggling complexity, and Wright soon discovered that, with each word and form having a different geographic spread, he would not be able to organize his grammar, and in particular his phonological chapters, around the dialectal forms, but that he would have to "base [his] material for the most part upon words which occur both in the literary language and in the dialects" (*EDG* iii). This has the obvious disadvantage at the conceptual level of presenting all dialects as variants of the literary (prestige, standard) language, and not allowing the most characteristically non-standard forms and usages to be included or even acknowledged in the grammar. Furthermore, the decision to account for only those words that occur also in the literary language did nothing to help with the need to find words which also "extend throughout all or most of the dialects" (*EDG* iv). With these restrictions, however understandable they are as ways to organize a too-varied corpus of potential source material, Wright was writing a grammar of an artificially homogenous and constructed language, made conformable to the patterns of an already known standardized language, even while still able to show some noticeable differences from it.

Conclusion

In looking at Wright's work as part of his personal and linguistic biography, this essay showed that his working practices and attitudes, and his linguistic methods of data collection and linguistic analysis remained consistent throughout his life. In all his philological work Wright vigorously practiced what he called "our cause," which was the promotion and application of Neogrammarian principles and methods, or, in Wright's words, "the systematic and scientific study of languages, based on firm and rigid principles" (preface to Brugman ix). He repeatedly used one or more of the key words "systematic," "scientific," and "historical" in the prefaces to his grammars.

A very strong practical understanding of the world underlay everything he did. As Tolkien reported, Wright had asked him:

"What do you take Oxford for, lad?" "A university, a place of learning." "Nay, lad, it's a factory! And what's it making? I'll tell you. It's making *fees*. Get that into your head, and you'll begin to understand what goes on."

(Tolkien, *Letters* 336, cited in Doughan 300)

Research, intellectual fascination, the progress of humanity and knowledge: these existed for Wright, but they could not exist separately from materially supporting establishments (in fact, from the society's infrastructure), and in this material world any work was primarily for the production of something profitable, regardless of the idealistic and intellectual benefits of that work. Such a view of life, and such a lifetime of experience, drove his clear-sighted and productive professionalism. It was perhaps better described as the *Abgeklärtheit*, "the state of one who had worked through all difficulties and was left with a clear view of life, or of the subject studied," that Sütterlin identified in Wright from early days in Heidelberg (EW I:90 and n.2). From the start of his career as a linguist his teaching and publishing contracts were the sources of income for him (as his work was also a source of income for the educational and publishing establishments). Thus, as this essay found, publishers and their projects became inextricable from Wright's work: from his language

collecting to the formatting of his grammars. Working for publishers who aimed at the education market, in broad terms, and used the concept of a series (even if it was not always a named series) as a marketing device, the consistency found in Wright's personal and linguistic biography finds its way into his productions: his last grammars were written in the same way and even in the same order as his first, his collected data continued to mix recently produced authoritative printed editions with whatever empirical data he could obtain, and he produced his word lists, indexes, and even the *EDD* with the same interest (and annotations) related to historical and phonological forms.

The conflict between academic and scientific ideals and the practicalities of method in nineteenth-century philology are evident, to present-day readers, in the circular connections between data (and data collection) and publishing, which is of an essential and potentially disturbing nature. In England, and possibly elsewhere, the rise and shaping of this academic discipline cannot be separated from the accelerating growth in this area of publishing. As evidenced in the surveys of the source materials presented in this essay, new linguistic work on previous states of English was ultimately based on (re)printed and edited versions of old manuscripts. Working together in universities or learned societies, by the 1880s scholars encouraged the (re)publication of increasing amounts of older material that could be used as data in their research, which was then published and duly built upon and referred to in other philologists' publications. In this way, great advances in the analysis of the language were quickly made, and a framework for later studies was both created and reinforced; but an unfortunate result was that the historical study of English was entirely based on a concept of the language put together by nineteenth-century scholars, editors, and compilers of reprinted texts. In basing their studies upon such collections of language materials, we may wonder if they were building an understanding of the language scientifically through induction (as Wright would have claimed)—or through serial redaction. Sweet, Ellis, and Wright were all aware of the dangers of building a grammar, let alone a history of the language, upon a

selected, edited, and regionally restricted body of works, but in the production of grammars they all sacrificed worries about using a tidied-up version of the language, for the sake of reconstructing from it an explicable and regularly structured language that was subject to retrievable and systematic processes of sound change. They explained their position as one of practicality, for they were producing books that were both practical for learners, and detailed and careful enough to be of use to their fellow researchers.

Emphasis on practicality was also a matter of personal mission for Wright since he was dedicated to education in the broadest sense (EW I:96 et passim). He had in fact criticized the Neogrammarians' German productions for lack of practicality, perhaps especially in respect of their use of empty theoretical terminology, which impeded the easy communication of their ideas (Sütterlin in EW I:89). In his own (English) works, in the guiding notes to usage written in prefaces to his grammar books, and in the repeated and simple design of his grammars, we find clarity put in the service of both education and practicality. This last point, and Wright's aim for his grammars, is succinctly made in the epigraph on the title pages of *Windhill*, the *Greek Grammar*, *EDD*, and *EDG*: "*Nur das Beispiel führt zum Licht; Vieles Reden thut es nicht*" ("only the example leads to the light; a lot of talking does not do it").

When dealing with language collections that had not been analyzed before (his dialectological work), Wright encountered the conflict between neogrammarian beliefs in linguistic and historical regularity and the diversity and variation presented by larger, more eclectic and sometimes more authentically empirical materials presented. In the prefaces to *Windhill*, *EDD* and *EDG* he honestly, if briefly, mentions the great difficulty arising from this. Never questioning the principles and purposes of the neogrammatical mission, he silently relaxed its claim to empirical reality by excluding large amounts of—to him uncategorizable—material from his dialectological publications. As explained in the prefaces, he cut out from most of *Windhill* and all of the *EDG* words that did not also occur with the same meanings in the literary language, and from the *EDD* words

that also existed in the literary language or that were spread over too many regions of the country. He indicated awareness of the methodological and explanatory weaknesses that these compromises led to, but (as ever, in his life and work) prioritized practicality and the continued investigation of linguistic regularity (a neogrammarian axiom). Undoubtedly, the weakest part of his attempts at scientific methods lay in the almost teleological molding of his method to his beliefs, and even in the usually redacted, often unregulated, and variably unreliable collections of language he relied upon.

Middle East Technical University

Notes

¹ This enormous manufacturing plant was constructed in 1853 by the philanthropist Sir Titus Salt, who then built Saltaire, "the most complete model manufacturing town in the world," to house some of its workers (Carr 214). The factory school was set up in 1860.

² This was a book based upon a series in that name, that first came out in 1852 (EW I:38).

³ The five-volume work, three volumes of which were written by Bertold Delbrück (1893-1900), was titled *Grundriß der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen*. Brugmann's Volume II and the indices were translated into English by Robert S. Conway and William H.D. Rouse (1892, 1891). See Johannes Hoops, "Introduction," *Englische Studien*, Vol. 60, 1925. The first half of this publication formed a Festschrift in honor of Joseph Wright's seventieth birthday.

⁴ *Accidence* was the word used for what linguists now call inflectional morphology. In effect, it looked at the rule-based changes in the forms of words (such as in conjugation and declension), presented in terms of their syntactic categories (or parts of speech).

⁵ Dr. Konrad Friedrich Emil Otto (1813-1878), former Mühlburg revolutionary pastor turned language teacher at Heidelberg (from 1852), "with his French and German textbooks for a Germanophone, Francophone and Anglophone target audience must be viewed as being

ultimately responsible for the incredible variety of translation variants of the ‘conversation grammars’ and the corresponding ‘elementary grammars’ belonging to the MGOS [Method Gaspey-Otto-Sauer] universe which spread from 1851 on for more than 160 years and for several dozens of languages throughout the World” (Kemmler 228, 233, 235).

⁶ The Groos MGOS grammars and language guides were, effectively, teaching languages through what is now known as the Grammar-Translation Method (Kemmler and Sanchez 122). Their contents may have influenced Wright in the ordering and contents of his philological grammars. After brief guides to pronunciation, the MGOS books presented the accidence in sections related to syntactic categories, taught in many smaller “lessons,” each of which provided not only the grammar points but vocabulary lists and numerous phrases and conversations for practice and as translation exercises. There were many additional pages of passages for reading and practice, including idiomatic expressions and conversational snippets and phrases, and then a lengthy Appendix that included numerous and often lengthy “specimens” of the literature, and ending with a glossary.

⁷ The Clarendon Press was the name by which the Oxford University Press (OUP) had been known since the eighteenth century, and it became reused as an imprint name under the banner of the OUP in the 1860s. Its new remit was educational material, with the aim of selling books in large (affordable) quantities to students. A reprint of Bosworth’s *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* was one of the first books it desired to publish. The use of the names Clarendon Press for books published in Oxford, and OUP for those published in London, continued until the 1970s (Sutcliffe 19ff.).

⁸ When setting up the Clarendon Press imprint, the delegates had in fact specifically decided against using it for any “systematic series” (Sutcliffe 19), although the words “Clarendon Press Series” did appear before, and separate from, the title page in at least some of their publications (for instance on Wright’s *MHGP*). The Clarendon Press books offered a “very liberal remuneration” (Sutcliffe 20) for such work, making the idea of publishing multiple books attractive to its writers. It

was the revived and vastly expanded OUP, however, that published the *Transactions of the Philological Society*, the reprints and scholarly Works produced by the Early English Text Society and the selected materials from the English Dialect society that Wright would use in the *EDD*. Similarly, the OUP had been committed to the continuing work on the *New English Dictionary* (now the *Oxford English Dictionary*) since 1879. The *OED* 1st edition was completed in 1928.

⁹ Wright mentored Elizabeth Mary (then Lea) in her first writing of a grammar ("The Language of the Northumbrian Gloss to the Gospel of St. Mark," *Anglia* 16 [1894], 62-134). She worked alongside him thereafter, and independently researched and produced *Rustic Speech and Folklore* (1914). She was an indispensable member of the team working on the *EDD*.

¹⁰ For example, the format is followed exactly in Henry Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Primer* (1882), *First Middle English Primer* (1884), and *Icelandic Primer* (1895).

¹¹ William Aldis Wright's call for the Society had been written in that crucial year 1870—the year of the Education Act that was thought to work toward eradication of local dialects, and the year in which fifteen-year-old Joseph Wright had taught himself reading and writing—and thence so much more. Closure of the Society occurred as soon as the first volume of the *EDD* appeared, in 1896 (Kellett), which shows how the Society's sole focus and aims remained those of the collection, preservation, and production of a comprehensive survey of English dialects.

¹² It identified 42 different dialect districts, provided extremely detailed descriptions and discussions, and included a Classified (by region) Word List and index of the 971 words that he had used to elicit local pronunciations (Ellis 16-29). Parts IV (1875) and V (1889) included these original descriptions and lists, and became essential reference words for subsequent work on English regional language (Shorrocks 1556, 1559). It was "the first detailed, reasonably systematic, wide-ranging, geographical survey of English dialects [...]; and it is based upon spoken materials, collected using both the direct and indirect methods" (Shorrocks 1559). As Wright was to do, Ellis benefited, *inter alia*, from the elicited dialect

specimens collected in 1877 by Louis-Lucien Bonaparte, the first to attempt “a somewhat more detailed classification of modern English Dialects” (Shorrocks 1558) than had appeared before. Before Bonaparte, one has to go back to the seventeenth century to find a distinction of English regional dialects—only six—made by Gill in 1619 (Shorrocks 1553).

¹³ Ellis’s “Preliminary Matter,” part of the fifth volume of his work on the history of English dialectal pronunciation, was separately paginated, as page number plus asterisk; the rest of the book shows page numbers (starting at 1 all over again) without asterisks.

¹⁴ Ellis’s “phonetic notation was overtaken almost as soon as [it] appeared in 1889 because of the publication of the International Phonetic Association’s more accessible alphabet in August 1888” (Shorrocks 1559).

¹⁵ The size of Wright’s own collection cannot be assessed from the grammar since many of the examples would be replicated in Ellis’s list, others would come from other printed sources, and Wright did not indicate which examples came from where, anyway.

¹⁶ The E.E.T.S. had, like the EDS, been established to aid the collection of materials for the ongoing *NED* (*OED*) project. All these societies, large projects, and contributing informants and philologists were intimately connected by a relatively small number of editing scholars, publishers, and printers.

¹⁷ The “Neogrammarian Manifesto” is set out in Osthoff Hermann and Karl Brugmann’s “Vorwort” to the *Morphologische Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiete der indogermanischen Sprachen*, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1878 iii-xvi. An English translation is provided in Winfred P. Lehmann, ed. & transl., *A Reader in Nineteenth-Century Historical Indo-European Linguistics*. Indiana University Press, 1967. 198-209.

¹⁸ Later dialectologists and historical phonologists would choose to refer to the Middle English reflexes of forms, a practice which has become conventional.

¹⁹ Samuel Johnson, in the previous century, seems to have come up with the idea and practice of using slips for the recording of lexicographical

data; he was at any rate the first English lexicographer to do so (Reddick 160). It had become the conventional way of compiling information for dictionaries by this time, and the transcribing onto and collecting of slips for the *NED* was already underway in another part of Oxford when Wright started his work on the *EDD*. The slips that Wright inherited at the start came from multiple sources and transcribers, who had laboriously copied, "a word to a slip," dialectal forms from "all the known glossaries of the different dialects," most of which were published by the Dialect Society, and "idioms and illustrations of usage" taken as quotations from "books and pamphlets as are written in dialect," in addition to "incidental notices and uses of provincial English which lie scattered here and there [...] in plays, novels, guide-books, county histories, newspapers etc." (3rd Annual Report of the English Dialect Dictionary Fund, 1890, cited in EW II:354). Each slip gave the "pronunciation, meaning, county where the word is used, and an illustrative sentence."

²⁰ See Onysko for a thorough investigation of the repercussions of Wright's perhaps unexamined use of concepts such as "meaning" in the *EDD*.

²¹ Wright's phonetic alphabet for use in transcribing regional English was devised just a few years after the International Phonetic Alphabet had come out (1886) (Markus, "Introduction to Part I" 13-14).

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