

Dictionary of Jamaican English. Edited by F. G. Cassidy and R. B. Le Page. Second edition. Cambridge University Press, 1980, lxiv + 509 S., £ 30.00.

Dictionary of Bahamian English by John A. Holm with Alison W. Shilling. Cold Spring, New York: Lexik House Publishers, 1982. xxxix + 228 S., \$ 29.40.

The two dictionaries under review are on the same region, the languages treated in them are historically connected, and the *Dictionary of Bahamian English* (DBE) is explicitly modelled on the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (DJE): "later prunings required more precise guidelines, drawn from the *Dictionary of Jamaican English*, as Cassidy and Le Page drew on the principles of the *Dictionary of American English* before them, which in turn followed the historical principles of *The Oxford English Dictionary*" (DBE: xii). All this is enough to justify a joint review which also tries to bring out the advantages and drawbacks of each through a comparison, on the assumption that one of the objectives of each book – important as they are for their respective speech communities – is to contribute to a better understanding of the complex relations of varieties of English and English-based creoles in the region (including the U.S.), and ultimately towards a monumental *Historical Dictionary of English in the Caribbean*¹. This wider use is also stated in the Foreword to DBE by F. G. Cassidy, co-editor of DJE, and editor of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*: "The DBE, unique for its own area, will be of great value for the wider comparative studies to come in the future" (DBE: ii).

When the first edition of the DJE came out in 1967, it was greeted with much enthusiasm, and deserved it: after all, this was the first "Third World" dictionary using the methods and principles of the OED. Only information which adds to the OED and its Supplements is included (new entries, new meanings, and antedatings, or later dates for words marked as obsolete). As regards the scope of the dictionary, the editors decided to include the whole range of varieties from broad creole (locally known as 'patois' or 'dialect', and always labelled "dial." in the book) to West Indian Standard English, since the existing continuum permits a rough classification of the use of a word as typical for one of the two poles, while the overlap along the continuum would make two separate dictionaries questionable. (The book's title is, then, as misleading as it would have been if it had been named *Dictionary of Jamaican Creole*).

The Oxford pattern is also apparent in many other respects, which range from typographical presentation, designations for parts of speech, usage labels, to the detailed documentation: Although oral sources were extensively used, as is appropriate for a dictionary that includes creole, the Oxford principle that printed evidence is somehow better or more reliable shines through. It is also in the Oxford tradition that historical evidence is given as much room as it is in DJE: this is not

a dictionary only of present-day varieties (contrast the long-awaited and much needed *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*), but also of Jamaica's creole roots.

There are, among the ca. 10 000 entries, two groups distinguished by typography: words recorded from printed sources are in upper case letters, those from oral sources (almost all of them "dial.") in lower case. The more standard groups (1–3) comprise (p.xii):

1. Words or senses now (or once) general in English but of which the earliest or latest record is in a book about Jamaica...
2. (a rather dubious category) Words not otherwise especially associated with Jamaica, but recorded earlier or later, in a book about Jamaica, than they are known to be recorded elsewhere.
3. Words, spellings, or senses used in Jamaica though not a part of the English language outside the Caribbean.

It is here that it becomes clear that the dictionary makers saw Jamaica as a representative of the larger English-(or creole)-speaking Caribbean community, and one of the new features of DJE² was to introduce sigils for other countries of the region for which the use was also recorded. However, this additional information, though a step in the right direction, is patchy and unreliable: the evidence is based on a single informant per region², and there is of course no information on how frequent the word is elsewhere, nor on what persons use it in what contexts, let alone on dates that could elucidate linguistic history.

The 'dialect' words are classified in groups (4–7) as:

4. Dialect words that have been given written forms more or less in the manner of traditional orthography.
5. Dialect words written down by their collectors in naive spelling, whose spoken form is unknown.
6. Dialect forms known only from oral sources.
7. Dialect forms which, though sometimes printed in dialect literature, have no established spelling and are known chiefly from oral sources.

Words of groups (1–5) are often accompanied by a broad phonemic transcription, with tone indicated where necessary; this orthographic system, specifically developed by Cassidy for Jamaican Creole is always used for words of type (6–7), which makes an indication of their pronunciation only necessary where variants are to be recorded³.

Finally, the editors' historical slant is expressed in the weight given to etymologies and the reconstruction of the sources and development of creole phonology. Cassidy was the first to draw attention to how widespread mixed etymologies are in Jamaican Creole, and how plausible it is that they are so frequent in all creoles: the slaves' rapid acquisition of rudimentary English would make the conflation of an African and an English expression very likely wherever the senses were identical or similar. There are hundreds of words with unknown etymologies, and wherever parallels from African languages are to be found that could have been related to present-day Jamaican words,

these are duly noted (especially from Twi, Ewe, Akan, Bambara); the use of a wedge (<) in etymologies is, however, dangerous since it suggests that the derivation is certain.

The "Linguistic introduction" comprises a single chapter, "The historical phonology of Jamaican English" (xxxvi-lxiv), a painstaking analysis of the bases of individual Jamaican phonemes, which are related to Dobson's reconstructions of EModE sounds and to EDD's statements about dialect pronunciations of the second half of the 19th century. The editors here encounter the same difficulty that Bliss (1979) met with when interpreting 17th-century literary Hibernian English, viz. that Dobson almost exclusively treats London usage, an area that settlers in Ireland and Jamaica are least likely to have come from (a problem compounded by the differences in social background). However, together with the known or reconstructed geographical provenance of the early white settlers and overseers, the history of Jamaican phonemes makes it likely that BrE dialect pronunciations, especially North country, Scot and Irish, have had an important influence on the formation of the new language¹. Syntactical information is not, as many might have wished, summarized in the introduction, but broken up into dozens of lexical entries. Reading the entries A³⁻⁷, A-GO, DA¹⁻³, DE³⁻⁴, DO vb², DONE adv, GWINE etc. is no substitute for a grammar of the Jamaican Creole verb phrase, and the form in which it is here given, without a coherent syntactical frame, will not make all linguists satisfied with the treatment.

All this is not meant to detract from the great achievement that the first edition was; it was with high expectations based on DJE¹ that one turned to DJE², but the book is not the "completely revised edition" that the flap promises. The "greatly extended supplement" (491-509) has some 700 entries, and one cannot help feeling that there could have been more: Rastafarian uses, one important source of innovations in the seventies, appear to have been tapped only sporadically²; and the addition of sigils to indicate the distribution of "Jamaicanisms" elsewhere in the Caribbean, or to mark them as a common heritage of the Atlantic creoles, is – as has been stated above – far from complete. On the whole, one can only assume that the editors did not continue their editing and collecting of material with the same energy that they invested in preparing the first edition. It is cause of additional regret that the price of £ 30.00, though justified for a difficult book, will restrict DJE² largely to the European and U.S. market: few copies are likely to find their way to native speakers of Jamaican English – who would then find that the book is no help with their sociolinguistic problems of usage and 'correctness'. As a scholarly monument, DJE stands a great achievement, and it is hoped that there will be similar dictionaries from the Caribbean, but also from other English-speaking countries especially from the Third World.

Whereas Jamaica has been the centre of linguistic interest for creolists around the world for a long time, research into Bahamian English dates back only to the seventies, and is still represented largely by the names of the two editors of the DBE. The present book is accordingly based on Shilling's early collections connected with her 1977 dissertation, and Holm's preliminary work with written sources, and intensive and quite exacting fieldwork by both authors and their students³. Eight major Bahamian islands in 1979, which made it possible to verify the first 4,000 lexical items as well as add some 1,500 new ones. These activities resulted in a first draft in 1980, and the publication of the finished book some 4-5 years after it was first conceived, which must have set a record at least in modern lexicography⁴.

The introduction, substantial portions of which appeared in Holm/Shilling (1980), provides the best survey of the sociocultural history of the islands, including settlement and present-day varieties, available for the Bahamas so far. One of the major stimuli that the dictionary is meant to give (and which makes it of especial interest to US scholars, and to creolists in general) is the renewed discussion of the possible creole roots of American Black English. Holm takes it for proven (or granted?) that BahE forms a (if not *the*) missing link between Caribbean creoles and Black E. since here "American plantation creole of the eighteenth century was preserved by the slaves of American loyalists brought there in the 1780's. The creole English has not only survived but flourished, developing along its own lines in this predominantly black country" (p. iii). A proper evaluation of this claim will rest on various factors: It will be necessary to learn more about early Bermudan E., since the Bahamas were settled from there from 1648 on. Holm admits that the infusion of American Blacks is likely to have "altered the identity of the creole speech" (v), but that "It is unclear what sociolinguistic forces prevailed in the eventual blending of what were almost certainly two distinct varieties of creolized English" (v). However, he sees a realistic chance of reliable reconstruction because "on the out islands that had been largely unsettled before the coming of the loyalist plantations, it is certain that the American creole predominated in that it had no real competition, especially after the white owners who presumably spoke uncreolized English abandoned these plantations" (p. v). If speech forms from such islands as San Salvador and Exuma were treated in isolation (as more likely to continue early Black E.), these could be compared with that other evidence from US slaves is available, in the US, possibly in a few features in Krio and Liberia (where US Black E. was added to local pidgin in the early 19th century) and especially from the Samaná peninsula (Dominican Republic), settled by Blacks from the Philadelphia region in the 1830's and almost completely isolated from other forms of E. ever since (cf. Holm 1983:17).

Von
It

17 of
J

w/

17 based on field
by Jose' Vigo.

is justified at all, because of its wide-ranging implications for the history of creole languages. The internal distribution, incomplete as it is as a consequence of the limitations of the fieldwork, is a valuable beginning. It is interesting to find that the label 'Black' is most frequent (with very few items marked 'white'), but that the items marked 'Gen' (general throughout the Bahamas) are much less frequent than those current on individual islands (mainly the ones investigated more thoroughly: San Salvador, Exuma, New Providence, Andros, Eleuthera, Inagua, Mayaguana) if taken together – no doubt a consequence of the great isolation of many island communities at least up to the 19th century.

The two dictionaries are milestones on the road towards a proper description of the complex relations obtaining among varieties of Caribbean Englishes and English-based creoles. Apart from the great value that they have for the respective regions, they are likely to be of eminent value for other dictionaries of the Caribbean – and ultimately, one hopes, for a Dictionary of Caribbean English on Historical Principles which could complement the projected Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage. Hirshberg (1982) has shown what the incomparable larger resources of DARE permit one to retrieve for Black E., and although the aim of a future Dictionary of Black E. – listing intra-American race-bound features – is different from both DJE and DBE, his conclusions can show what, ideally, remains to be done for the Caribbean: some sort of quantification of uses of lexical items, meanings and phrases according to region, class, race, age (of speakers), and obsolescence of words. Finally, Hirshberg points out that "the most salient characteristics of the glossary are rather the restricted or unique senses attached by blacks to words known or used by virtually every other speaker of the language; and the combinations of similarly common words to create new phrases and expressions largely unknown to the nonblack community" (1982: 169). It is easy to see that such a detailed description is beyond the possibilities of the existing Caribbean dictionaries, whether finished or in the planning stage.

HEIDELBERG

MANFRED GÖRLACH

- Bliss, Alan J., *Spoken English in Ireland 1600-1740* (Dublin, 1979).
 Branford, Jean, *A Dictionary of South African English*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town, 1980).
 Fyle, C., and Eldred Jones, *A Krio-English Dictionary* (London and Freetown, 1980).
 Hirshberg, Jeffrey, "Towards a Dictionary of Black American English on Historical Principles", *American Speech*, 57 (1982), 163-82.
 Holm, John, *The creole English of Nicaragua's Miskito Coast: its sociolinguistic history and a comparative study of its lexicon and syntax* (Ph. D. thesis, London, 1978).
 – "On the relationship of Gullah and Bahamian", forthcoming in *American Speech* (1983).
 –/ Alison Shilling, "Accountability and verification in regional lexicography", *English World-Wide*, 1 (1980), 229-34.
 Stewart, William, *A Dictionary of Gullah English Usage* (forthcoming).

¹ Related projects have either not been published (Holm 1978), or are very provisional (Dayley 1979), or are in the planning stage, such as L. Winer's *Dictionary of Trinidadian English*, or Highfield's vocabulary of the US Virgin Islands dialect. Of great comparative value – whatever historical conclusions can be drawn from the evidence – will be William Stewart's forthcoming *Dictionary of Gullah Usage*, and a new *Dictionary of Black English* (Hirshberg 1982).

² Informants as listed on p. xv: Walter Edwards for Guyana (G), Donald Winford for Trinidad (T), Richard Allsopp for Barbados (BA), Barbara Assadi and John Holm for Nicaragua (N) and Colville Young for Belize (BL). The frequency of occurrence of individual sigils in DJE entries does not appear to reflect present similarities or historical relations of a variety with Jamaican Creole: What is, for instance, the numerical significance of the fact in letter L there are, for a hundred entries unmarked (= assumed to be restricted to Jamaica?), ca. 20 parallels for Guyana, 15 for Belize, 12 for Barbados but only 3 for Trinidad and 2 for Nicaragua? Has the ratio anything to do with settlement history, decreolization, language contact in the various communities, recent influence of Jamaican abroad, or is it mainly owing to different standards of information or knowledge?

³ In the absence of any orthographic norm, the DJE has already exerted great influence on how creole words/texts are represented in scholarly writing in the Caribbean (cf. DBE). Cassidy/Le Page unfortunately did not consider a possible extension of their system to other Caribbean varieties; fitting new sounds into the system has resulted, e. g., in the infelicitous combination *ohy* for /oy/ in DBE. Problems of the choice of a lemma, and the need for frequent cross-references, are illustrated by such words as *asumi* (pronunciations: 5 spellings), *banjo* (3:9), *carry* (8:3) or *coratoe* (4:9).

⁴ There appears to be a contradiction in the underlying assumptions, which is unresolved in DJE: if – as is widely admitted – the phonology is the most tenacious element carried over into a new language, then African features are most likely to be retained in the pronunciation (and illocutionary acts), a view that would seem to conflict with the editors' claim, viz. that etymologies are frequently mixed, but that the sounds are more likely to derive from dialects of BrE.

⁵ V. Pollard's research into Rasta talk is not mentioned, and insufficient use is also made of other important research of the seventies by Alleyne, Allsopp, Lawton, and in various dissertations submitted to the UWI and US universities.

⁶ Considering the speed with which the project was completed, typographical errors are few – except in the introduction, where even the slip-in errata list only mentions a fraction of the actual errors, and where the important double page illustrating lexicographical conventions is made up of entries at proof stage (xxvif., taken over from the Prepublication Special advertisement).

References

Since the creolist lexicographers' eyes (whether in DJE or in DBE) are focussed on differences from international English, which again are more plentiful in early speech, it is not surprising to find that their aims become very similar to those of traditional dialectologists, who also wanted to document individual words of however rare occurrence, and likely to come from NORMs (non-mobile, old, rural males) – the linguistic present becoming more and more homogeneous, at least as far as lexis is concerned:

With the coming of black leadership in government in 1968 and independence from Britain in 1973, many middle-class jobs have opened to blacks. In the rush to join the middle class (whose badge of identity is the ability to speak standard English), the creolized English of the Bahamian dialect is losing ground to the standard except in very poor or isolated communities (DBE: vii).

The Introduction is also significant because it provides much more detail than has been usual about the techniques and the history of the data-collecting for DBE. One of the points that the user should bear in mind when judging the lexis represented in DBE is that the fieldworkers systematically searched for regional words in certain onomasiological fields which appeared most promising; this could indicate that some other areas are not represented as fully because these received less attention.

For an item to be included in DBE, it must add information not found in other dictionaries such as OED, DAE, W3 etc. In fact, "with only a slight modification of DJE guidelines to retain certain items of particular cultural, sociolinguistic, or historical interest which would have to be excluded otherwise, (the editors) accepted as Bahamian regionalisms:

1. those words whose first occurrence in print was in a book written on the Bahamas (...).
2. words or idioms occurring in the Bahamas that have become obsolete elsewhere (...).
3. words whose Bahamian form differs from that used elsewhere (...).
4. words whose Bahamian meaning differs from that elsewhere (...).
5. words whose frequency of occurrence is notably higher in the Bahamas than elsewhere (...).
6. words or expressions apparently coined in the Bahamas (...).

It is obvious that there must have been hundreds of doubtful cases of whether a word ought to be in or not (5. is an especially subjective category), and while it was good that the editors opted for inclusiveness, it might have been interesting to know the ratio of the six categories among the 5,500 entries (or to have a sigil in each entry giving the reason for its inclusion), or, by way of an appendix, to be supplied with lists of retentions (2.) and innovations (6.), for the intrinsically interesting information such lists would provide, and because

new information about the lexis of other creoles is likely to change such lists, giving the remainder a better claim to being 'Bahamianisms' than the normal entry words.

Like other creole dictionaries, DBE includes grammatical function words which supplement the core grammar of the introduction (but which are of course no substitute for a much needed exhaustive grammatical description of BahE): *a¹⁻³, be¹⁻², da¹⁻⁴, de¹⁻², does, and gwine* etc. There is also a category of entries that readers will be especially grateful for if they should happen to browse through DBE: a number of encyclopedic entries are constructed so as to provide a coherent text which includes as many cross-references to items from certain encyclopedic fields as possible; I found it of particular interest to read through *African words, Agriculture, Buildings, Bush medicine, Conch, Cooking, Courtship and marriage, Death, Fishing, Games, Obeah, Pregnancy and birth*.

Fauna and flora are, expectedly, among the most frequent entries, and one wonders how current the knowledge of various designations (a great number of them are heteronyms) can be. Whether such words should be included at all is always an open question; compare Jean Branford's decision against inclusion (1980: xx): "It is not, I think, justifiable to attempt a detailed treatment of flora and fauna in a dictionary, since it is not designed as a biological glossary". Another marginal type of entry is represented by a dozen or so Haitian creole words (*lapli* 'rain' etc.), few of them, probably, of general currency, and most of them used only if speaking to immigrant Haitians – a topic that would deserve an investigation to itself.

A typical DBE entry can contain information on 1. variant spellings (up to four, with cross-references if necessary), 2. pronunciation (DJE system), 3. etymologies and parallels from other creoles (drawing on the most important historical dictionaries), 4. part of speech, 5. obsolescence, 6. meanings and encyclopedic information, 7. syntactic restrictions, 8. citations from written and spoken sources preceded by the year, and with the island indicated if from fieldwork, 9. cross-references to semantically related items, 10. usage notes, and 11. social and regional distribution. Some of these reward closer attention: 3. covers the external, 11. the internal distribution of an item; and 3. also clearly shows the supplementary aim of DBE, as is shown by information such as "W3 idem; not in DAE, OED", "Scots idem CSD; US dial. North, Mid DARE". ~~References to other Caribbean dictionaries or wordlists are fewer than expected; in most cases the external distribution is given without evidence~~ in descending order: 'Pan-creole' (equivalents found in French and Portuguese creoles etc.), 'Atlantic' (found in Caribbean and West African English-based creoles), 'Car' (found throughout the Caribbean), 'W Car' or 'E Car' (found only in the parts of the Caribbean indicated). It is obvious that the information available is much too fragmentary to be exhaustive; in our present state of knowledge some may even doubt whether a category such as 'Atlantic'

H done,

(revised