STUDIES IN THE LANGUAGE
OF FIELDING

By YOSHIJIRO NAGASAWA

The study of the English language in the eighteenth century has been rather neglected, and I have aimed in this paper to show the difference between the languages then and now. Fielding was born in 1707 and wrote his chief works in the middle of the century. The works I have perused for this study are 'Joseph Andrews' (1742), 'Tom Jones' (1749), and 'Amelia' (1751), through which I have tried to make clear how different the dictions of that century are from those of today. The works I have quoted in this study are given below with abbreviations,*

I. NOUNS.

Unchanged Plural.

The invariable plurals are employed in such substantives as foot, pound.

(a) Her masculine person, which was near six foot high. (T. J. II. 6.)

Mr. Didapper was a young gentleman of about four foot five inches in height. (J. A. II. 158)

What are all the ringing of bells and bonfires, to one that is six foot under ground? (T. J. III. 130.)

* The edition employed:

Tom Jones. In four volumes. The Shakespeare Head Edition. (T. J.)
Joseph Andrews. In two volumes. ditto. (J. A.)
Amelia. In three volumes. ditto. (Am.)

The list of the works quoted:

Jespersen: A Modern English Grammar. (MEG)
Lannert, Gustaf L: son: An Investigation into the Language of Robinson Crusoe. (R. C.)
The New English Dictionary. (NED)
Sweet: New English Grammar. (NEG)
Storm: Englische Philologic. (E. P.)
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(b) One thousand pound I have given to you. (T. J. I. 245.)
These are the old plural forms. Schmidt in his ‘Shakespeare Lexicon,’ and G. L. Lannert in his work given above, give the frequency of the use of these unchanged plurals.

(c) All his acquaintance were the acquaintance of Mr. Allworthy. (T. J. II. 73.)
This word is now usually singular, but in his time it was used plurally as above.

II. PRONOUNS.

(1) 
Every and neither are used as plural pronouns.
Every remedy were called for. (T. J. I. 269.)
Every one in the house were in their beds. (T. J. II. 142.)
Every one of which are necessary to this order of historians. (T. J. II. 257.)
Neither of these men were fools. (T. J. I. 111.)
These contrary usage, however, can be found in the NED.
Every one sacrifices a Cow or more, according to their different Degrees of Wealth or Devotion. (1735 Johnson)

(2) Oneself for ourselves.
We (=the author) have saved our self that trouble. (T. J. III. 128.)
In the present literary language an author speaks of himself as ourselves if he uses the plural.

(3) t'other, the t'other.
Mrs. Miller returned with an answer, “that the t'other, as she called him, was coming.” (T. J. IV. 243.)
I saw an old woman here t'other day a begging at the door. (T. J. IV. 17.)
Tell her I'm her father, and of the dreadful punishment of it in t'other world. (T. J. IV. 261.)
These two forms are used for the other. These forms must have been considered quite literary, for Swift in his letters very frequently uses the forms though he always strongly objects to all sorts of abbreviations. (Cf. Lannert R. C. p. 57.)
Sweet explains the origin of these forms in his NEG § 1125.
T'other is sometimes used in the sense of another.
If she would give him t'other bout. (T. J. I. 158.)
The similar phrase the tone may be found frequently in the writings of Fielding's time.

(4) other for others.

Among other of his conquests, this fellow had triumphed over the heart of Betty Seagrim. (T. J. I. 234.)

Lannert quotes in his R. C. p. 58:

I had loaded my Gun and bad Xury load both the other.

(5) Detached Relative Pronouns.

Relative pronouns are used detachedly.

My reader is not then to be surprized, if my history sometimes seems to stand still, and sometimes to fly. For all which I shall not look on myself as accountable. (T. J. I. 54.)

Jespersen ascribes this use to the imitation of Latin. He quotes in his MEG III. 105:

To whom Cecile answerde boldly. (Chaucer)
To whom thus Eve with perfect beauty adornd. (Milton)

(6) Omission of Relative Pronouns in the Nominative Case.

Who was it gave you authority to mention the story of the robbery? (T. J. IV. 15.)
The lord above knows who it was told her. (T. J. IV. 16.)
It is you alone have given a relish to that prosperity. (T. J. IV. 298.)

Even today this omission is common in colloquial speech, especially when preceded by the phrase 'there is.'

(7) thou.

Thou is sometimes used to express dignity, anger, contempt, etc.

Some things perhaps here said, may have hit thee or thy friends, but I do most solemnly declare they were not pointed at them. I question not but thou has been told...... (T. J. IV. 223.)

"Thou art one of those wise men," cries she, "whose nonsensical principles have undone the nation." (T. J. II. 79.)

III. Adjectives.

(1) Comparison of Adjectives.

The mode of comparison of adjectives in Fielding's time is as yet unsettled. The Germanic comparison is used where we have now
the French.
(a) The honestest fellows. (T. J. I. 156.)
Adams continued his subject till they came to one of the
cutifullest spots of ground in the universe. (J. A. II. 57.)
The cruellest manner. (Am. II. 40.)
much seldom. (Am. II. 159.)
Conversely we have sometimes the periphrastic comparison when
we might expect the inflexional.
The British fair ought to esteem themselves more happy
than any of the foreign sisters. (T. J. I. 64.)
What is perhaps more rare. (T. J. IV. 195.)
(b) Double Comparison.
The most handsomeest. (T. J. I. 200.)
more properer (T. J. II. 28.)
In the course of the 17th century the use of double comparatives
gradually decreased and in the middle of the 18th century it was
regarded decidedly vulgar. Fielding puts them into the mouths
of such vulgar people as Mrs. Honour, Mrs. Slipslop, etc.
(2) Enough and enow.

Enow is used plurally and enough, singularly.
(a) enow.
I fancy we have sluts enow too. (T. J. I. 65.)
I have marks enow about my body to show of his cruelty
to me. (T. J. I. 78.)
I can tell you stories enow. (Am. II. 11.)
(b) enough.
"Matter enough," answered Western. (T. J. IV. 259.)
One who hath sense enough. (Am. II. 118.)
Suppose I should have interest enough to introduce you
into the presence? (Am. III. 49.)

IV. Articles.
(1) The use of an before u, h.

Fielding writes an exclusively before u, and often before sounded
h.
(a) An use. (T. J. IV. 262.)
An uniform behaviour. (J. A. I. 39.)
An university. (J. A. I. 143.)
An union. (Am. II. 112.)
(b) An happiness. (J. A. I. 174.)
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An hypocrite. (J. A. II. 103.)
An hundred excuses. (Am. II. 87.)

(2) I may mention here, concerning the use of the article, such constructions as the following:

Her second son lies ill of a quinzy. (T. J. III. 236.)
It may in some instances resemble a consumption. (T. J. IV. 142.)
One of us had the good fortune to die soon after of the small-pox. (T. J. IV. 23.)

Today in most cases we have no article before the names of diseases. According to Sweet the indefinite article in these cases suggests the idea of an isolated case, while the definite article has a generalizing meaning, often implying that there is an epidemic. (Cf. NEG § 2033.)

V. Verbs.

(1) In the early period of Modern English, the inflexional endings of the weak verbs suffered a phonetical change. The weak vowel in ‘-ed’ of verbs dropped altogether in the spoken language, except in such verbs as mended, rooted, etc. We find, in Fielding’s works, such apostrophized endings as:

approach’d, begg’d, bestow’d, cry’d, drop’d, enter’d, express’d, famish’d, heighten’d, press’d, receiv’d, etc.

or ‘t’ is substituted as in:

confest, dismist, dropt, equipt, past, slipt, stopt, stript, whipt.

These are attempts at a phonetic orthography. We are reminded of Tennyson’s predilection for this spelling, but the tendency nowadays is to return to the spelling with ‘ed.’

(2) Hath and doth.

Fielding writes exclusively hath and doth instead of has and does, but the endings in ‘-eth’ in other verbs are never met with.

(3) Perfect Tenses with be.

Perfect tenses of intransitive verbs indicating motion, change of condition etc., are formed, as a rule, with be instead of with have.

Miss Bridget was arrived. (T. J. I. 2.)
Jones was grown very intimate with Mr. Western. (T. J. I. 135.)
I am very considerably altered since that day. (T. J. IV.
And are your eyes opened to him at last? (T. J. IV. 268.)
The orator then, being mounted on a bench begun as
follows. (Am. III. 74.)

(4) Preterite Participles used for preterites.
My father sprung from the floor. (Am. III. 106.)
Mrs. Miller sung forth the praises of Jones. (T. J. III. 247.)
He sunk down into a chair. (T. J. III. 245.)
Who immediately writ this letter to me. (T. J. IV. 25.)
The whole neighbourhood sung with several gross and
scandalous lies. (Am. III. 2.)

(5) Preterites used for Preterite Participles.
They had drank. (J. A. I. 41.)
To have your corpse buried in the highway, and a stake
drove through you. (T. J. II. 96.)
He had rose. (J. A. I. 67.)

In Early Modern English, there was a general tendency to
supplant preterite participles by preterite forms.

(6) Strong verbs conjugated weakly.
A pebly channel, that with many lesser falls winded along. (T. J. I. 12.)
Storm in his E. P. gives such examples as shined, shaked,
wrimged, thrived, strided. He adds that such forms as blowed,
knowed, seed were already vulgar in the 18th century.

(7) Archaic Conjugations.
They could not be supposed to have holden (=held) none
but wrong principles. (T. J. I. 111.)
That monarch very quietly eat (=ate) his mutton.

(8) Negatives and Interrogatives without do.
The strife between the periphrastic and non-periphrastic forms in
negatives and interrogatives continued till the end of the 18th
century.

(a) Jones closed not his eyes. (T. J. IV. 28.)
They breathed not. (T. J. I. 248.)
Mrs. Fitzpatrick failed not. (T. J. III. 209.)
The world regards not. (T. J. III. 55.)
It signifies not much. (T. J. III. 40.)

(b) What think you of a collection? (T. J. II. 39.)
How came you, sir, not deliver me this message? (T. J.
IV. 266.)
The direct combination with not of the verbs know, doubt is oftener than in other verbs.

(9) Gerund with the.
When Mrs. Deborah was acquainted by her master with the finding the little infant. (T. J. I. 9.)
As the reading it should be always attended with a good ale. (T. J. I. 137.)
Archimedes was found at the taking Syracuse. (J. A. I. 201.)
The being undeceived gave me pleasure. (Am. I. 39.)

(10) (a)
In the sentences given below, the use of being is obsolete now.
All the sword being hung up in the room were secured by the French officer. (T. J. II. 128.)
The goods being found upon the person, were sufficient evidence of the fact. (T. J. III. 37.)

(b)
In the following quotations it is uncertain whether being is to be taken as a participle or as a gerund.
The consequence of this was an excellent cold chine being produced upon the table. (T. J. IV. 156.)
Lady Bellaston, who was ignorant of any other woman being there but herself. (T. J. IV. 70.)

Allow me to quote here Jespersen in his Philosophy of Grammar p. 125. "In cases like the following it may be doubtful whether we have a participle or a verbal substantive: the Squire's portrait being found united with ours, was a honour too great to escape envy. (Goldsmith.) And is a wench having a bastard all your news? (Fielding.)"

(c)
Fielding, however, knows such constructions as:
It is in your honour's power to prevent any possibility of this dream's coming to pass. (Am. III. 33.)
Every apprehension of another's sharing the least part, fills his soul with such agonies. (Am. III. 36.)
I heard of my stepmother's being delivered of a boy. (Am. II. 119.)
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Taking this into consideration, I am inclined to take being treated in (b) rather as a participle than as a gerund.

(11) Lamenting the robbery which is then committing. (T. J. I. 168.)

The form "The house is being built" did not come into existence till towards the close of the 18th century. The NED gives Harris (1779) as the first example: Sir Guy Carton was four hours being examined.

(12) You was instead of you were.
You, my Sophia, was always my superior. (T. J. III. 72.)
He told me indeed you was the finest lady in the world. (T. J. III. 49.)

When addressed one person, was was used instead of the present were almost universally in the 16-18th century. Dialectally was is used in all persons today.

(13) Was was used for were in the subjunctive preterite in 17-18th century.
Hogarth would do if he was to paint. (T. J. IV. 3.)
If it was daylight, we might see now. (T. J. III. 172.)
I wish I was at the top of this hill. (T. J. II. 202.)

(14) The subjunctive was used where we have now the conditional.
If it had been out of doors I had not mattered it so much. (T. J. I. 77.)
That advice, which I had been happy had I followed. (T. J. IV. 261.)

VI. Adverbs.

(1) The so-called flat adverbs are frequently used by Fielding and his contemporaries.
This lady's fortune would have been exceeding convenient to him. (T. J. IV. 112.)
I sat up with her near a fortnight. (Am. II. 64.)
She believed Jenny had scarce left her equal behind her. (T. J. I. 46.)
Sure never was any thing so good-natured and so generous. (Am. II. 53.)

(2) As young as you are, replied the lady, I am convinced you
are no stranger to that passion. (J. A. I. 14.)
The antecedent as is now omitted.

(3) Double negatives.
Reminiscences of older double negatives survive in:

Allworthy made no answer to this neither. (T. J. IV. 269.)
I believe, Mr. Allworthy, you would not have known me neither. (T. J. IV. 261.)

VII. Prepositions.

(1) ‘in.’
It is very generous in you. (Am. III. 14.)
It would be cruel in me to suffer...... (T. J. II. 199.)
It is unkind in you to suspect me. (T. J. II. 197.)
In this case of is used nowadays.

(2) ‘of.’
Some verbs are construed with of for the transitive construction of the present day.

If you have not hitherto considered of this matter. (T. J. II. 75.)
For two years I continued of the calling. (T. J. II. 232.)
Such a scene as this could not fail of affecting the heart. (T. J. I. 132.)

VIII. Conjunction.

That substituted for another conjunction.

Who flocked together to see them with as much curiosity as if there was something uncommon to be seen, or that (=as if) a rogue did not look like other people.

IX. Narration.

(1) The use of the conjunction, quotation-marks and capital letters differs from that of today.

She herself said, “She had always esteemed Jenny as a very sober girl.” (T. J. I. 20.)
Jones answered coolly, He was very sorry for it. (T. J. III. 191.)
One asked, “whether she was to be indicated for a highwayman?” (J. A. I. 156.)

(2) The quotation-marks are freely added or dropped.

She entreated her aunt “to have mercy upon her.” (T.
J. II. 76.)
He cried out, "Bless us, you look extremely pale."
Pale! Mr. Adams, says she, O Jesus, and fell backwards in her chair. (J. A. I. 167.)

(3) Sometimes both direct and indirect narrations are mixed together.

Jones answered, "That he believed no person living would blame him; for my part," said he "I confess I should have done the same thing." (T. J. III. 218.)