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G. L. Bursill-Hall

A CENSUS
OF MEDIEVAL LATIN
GRAMMATICAL MANUSCRIPTS

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TO THE MEMORY OF OUR NEPHEW
MARK ELIOT BURSILL (1951-1971)

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Simon Fraser University.

G. L. Bursill-Hall.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the study of grammar held a privileged position in the curriculum of the medieval university; it is also recognised that the medieval schoolmen developed a sophisticated theory of language and that this in combination with the other parts of the Trivium contributed much to the success of medieval intellectual speculation. What is not so well known are the details of the developments in grammatical theory that took place in the schools of Northern Europe between the time of the earliest criticisms of Priscian in the second half of the eleventh century (more adequately formulated by William of Conches in the early years of the 12th century) and the advent of the Italian humanist grammarians in the second half of the 15th century; these have been taken as the termini for our investigation of the medieval manuscript tradition relating to grammatical theory.

During the last ten years there has been an astonishing increase in interest in the history of linguistics, and the Middle Ages is one period that has attracted considerable attention for the simple reason that themes were discussed then which are of great concern to the modern linguist, e.g. deep and surface grammar, language universals, grammar and meaning, natural and idealised language, theory and data orientation (Robins 1974). It is not our concern whether history repeats itself or not; themes and topics do recur and this gives value to the history of linguistics. The duty of the historian is in part to explicate those events which are of interest to us today in terms of their context of situation; unfortunately, as far as the grammatical theory of the Middle Ages is concerned, this is no easy task to perform for reasons that are not immediately the fault of the historian. Despite the richness of the manuscript tradition, much of the primary source material is difficult of access and a complaint, all too frequently heard, is that the scholar is seriously handicapped by the absence of satisfactory critical texts of medieval grammatical treatises. This is especially trying for the historian of linguistics who is much more likely to be a linguist rather than a medievalist by training. Nevertheless, it is important for the historian to realise that he may have to be responsible for the preservation and publication of the primary materials of his history. This gap in our critical apparatus is being removed albeit very slowly (Bursill-Hall, 1974, 1975), but one cannot help wondering whether one reason for the gap must be attributed to the fact that few scholars know anything of the extent of the manuscript tradition. In recent years Professor Kristeller (1963-67; 1965) has made us aware of the richness of the tradition, and the significance of the problem, being a compound of the extensive uninvestigated material on the one hand and the importance of medieval language theory on the other compels us to reiterate his warning that if the scholarly world does not make more use of and thus make public the resources of the medieval scholarly world "medieval and Renaissance civilisation may suffer the same fate as ancient civilisation did, through the destruction of the library in Alexandria" (Kristeller 1965: xviii).

This recension is not nearly as extensive as Kristeller's if only for the sufficient reason that it is restricted to medieval grammatical writings. Even so, a casual perusal shows that we are nonetheless dealing with a great deal of material, most of it unedited; no wonder that it could be reported that during the period under investigation grammatical research was going on everywhere (Robins 1951, 80). If statistics have any meaning, it must be pointed out that this census includes more than 4000 manuscript books which contain more than 7000 treatises and more than 3000 different initia. It is impossible to hazard a guess about how much of it has actually been investigated but it is certain that most of it still awaits the scholar's scrutiny; it should also be noted that even if certain students of medieval intellectual history are more familiar with this material than published editions would suggest, it remains nevertheless true that almost all of it is in its present form beyond the ability of the typical historian of linguistics to handle adequately.

It is not difficult to demonstrate that much of the extant manuscript material relating to the study and teaching of grammar in the Middle Ages has not been the object of our concern; there is one study (Pinborg 1967) which is beyond question the most detailed account of grammatical theory in the Middle Ages but it makes no reference to most of the material contained in this census. Elsewhere (Bursill-Hall 1976, 1977) reference has been made to the amount of material, still unpublished, and this despite the fact that certain teaching texts enjoyed enormous popularity; Hunt (1950) refers to the problem with reference to the creation of teaching texts in relation to the growth of universities and concomitant growth in student population; the position has also been described (Bursill-Hall 1975) in terms of masters who are known to have written grammatical works, and this does not take into account the many anonymous commentaries on Priscian, Donatus, the *Doctrinale* and the *Modistae*. Clearly, although the primary material is there, it is not yet a corpus sufficient to allow us to give an adequate account of theoretical developments in the Middle Ages.

It was intended at first that this census would be the first stage in a long-term research project which would include commentaries on the principal grammarians and accounts of major aspects of grammatical doctrine and which would culminate in a history of linguistics in the Middle Ages. The census began very modestly since it was at first the intention to include only those treatises which could clearly be seen to belong to that part of the tradition that was concerned with grammatical theory as such. The principal stages and figures in the development of grammatical theory were already well known and have been set down (Pinborg 1967; Bursill-Hall 1974, 1975), so that the project concentrated on that part of the medieval grammatical literature that could be used to expand our knowledge of the details of the theoretical developments.

This was soon seen to be an unworkable procedure because one cannot decide whether a treatise is relevant or not unless one has collected and examined more treatises from which selection can be made. Another complicating factor resides in the word 'grammar' itself, for

what exactly do we mean by grammar? One thing is certain and it is that in the medieval world just as much as in the contemporary world there was no general agreement on the exact meaning of 'grammar'. For some, it was clearly the means whereby students were instructed in the rudiments of the structure of a particular language, for others it was the key to the study of literary texts, whereas for others there was a necessary intimacy between grammar, logic, and metaphysics in order to explain man's view of reality. All this produced different forms of grammatical literature, and there is a wealth of difference between Kilwardby's commentaries on Priscian and the *Summa grammaticae* of Gutolfus de Heiligenkreuz; add to that a further aspect of the literature, i.e. how to teach grammar and this too brought with it its variants, i.e. the teaching of grammar for the purposes of language pedagogy or the teaching of grammar for theoretical speculative purposes, and one can begin to appreciate the rich variety of the material to be examined.

What then have we tried to do in this census? The primary aim was to bring together in a single work details of all the available manuscript material, published and unedited alike, which dealt with grammar and which was written or copied in the period already mentioned, i.e. 1050–1500 – the dates are approximate. This way the student and research scholar would be spared the tedium and frustration of the endless search in journals and catalogues for the location of particular treatises or of the many copies of particular treatises; one reason for the size of the corpus is that there are a great many copies extant of some of the important teaching texts (Bursill-Hall 1977), but the scholarly literature has often been far from complete when reporting the location of manuscript versions of certain well-known treatises.

Despite its very modest beginning, the census has grown enormously once it was realised that it had to include a much greater portion of the literature than was the original intention. The International Conference on Medieval Grammar at the University of California at Davis in 1976 made it quite clear that it was much more appropriate to talk about medieval language theory rather than medieval rhetorical theory, medieval grammatical theory, etc; it would, however, be quite impossible to compile a census of the manuscript material relating to the medieval Trivium and keep it within reasonable bounds. Professor J. J. Murphy of the University of California at Davis has been investigating medieval rhetorical literature with a view to a census of the extant manuscript material, and we know a great deal about medieval logical literature thanks to the work of scholars such as Professor L. M. de Rijk, Father C. H. Lohr, S. J. and Fr. G. E. Mohan, O. F. M.

The census has therefore tried to include all the manuscript material dating from the 11th to the 15th centuries which deals with grammar (in the broadest sense of the term) still preserved in the manuscript collections of libraries in Europe and North America. This includes the treatises of Latin grammarians such as Donatus, Phocas, and Priscian; for reasons of convenience, we have referred to the shorter treatise of Donatus which starts "*Partes orationis quot sunt?*" as the *Ars minor* and the larger treatise as the *Ars maior* –

these are not the titles normally used and are not to be compared because of their different implications to the Priscian maior and minor which is the frequent reference to the two parts of his *Institutiones grammaticae* and which in a sense do have their own independent existence. We have also included Priscian's *Institutio de nomine*, the *Accentus* wrongly attributed to Priscian, and the *Ars de nomine* of Phocas, because the number of extant copies (particularly of the latter treatise) clearly indicates that they were widely read (Jeudy 1974). Indeed, the position of Priscian in the grammatical literature of the Middle Ages was quite exceptional since one could in a way say that almost all the theoretical work produced in the Middle Ages was a form of commentary on Priscian; one possible explanation for the absence of exemplification in the treatises of the Modistae is that the medieval student was required to know Priscian's grammar and would therefore be referred to Priscian for examples to illustrate the texts of Modistic grammar. One finds, therefore, a great deal of important grammatical material in the form of commentaries on Priscian and Donatus, most of it anonymous and unedited.

The census includes treatises by grammarians known to be substantial figures in the history of medieval grammatical theory, e.g. William of Conches, Petrus Helias, Jordan of Saxony, Nicholas de Paris, Robert Kilwardby, the Modistae and the nominalist grammarians of the 14th century as well as commentaries on their work. There are in addition a great many anonymous treatises on grammar and syntax, substantial in nature which warrant careful examination. We have included the many versions of the important teaching texts and other concomitant material, e.g. the *Liber Derivationum* of Hugutio Pisanus (we have indicated by (M) those versions that have been reported in Marigo), the *Catholicon* of J. Balbis de Janua, the *Elementarium* and *Ars grammatica* of Papias, the *Doctrinale* of Alexander de Villa-Dei (we have indicated by (R) those manuscript versions that have been reported in Reichling's edition of the *Doctrinale*), the *Graecismus* of Eberhardus Bethuniensis, and the many treatises attributed to Johannes de Garlandia. In addition, we have listed the many commentaries on the *Doctrinale*, the *Graecismus* and the works of Johannes de Garlandia, since they along with other treatises with titles such as *Quaestiones de grammatica*, *Regulae grammaticales*, *Summa de constructione* will without doubt throw a great deal of light, not only on the developments in grammatical theory which lead up to the sophisticated theories of the Modistae and the Nominalists, but also on the influence of grammatical theory on pedagogical theory and practice; one subject that calls for extensive investigation is medieval instruction of grammar. In the Middle Ages, grammar was often described as being divided into four parts, i.e. prosodia, orthographia, etymologia, and diasintastica, and we have included in the census a motley collection of treatises, largely teaching material, which deal with these topics including treatises on metrics, etc.; treatises on syntax (diasintastica) are especially important since it is generally recognised that the schoolmen made significant and original contributions to syntactic theory and in this way link up with medieval semantic and logical theory. For this reason, we have included in the material

various collections of *Sophismata*. Finally, we have included the manuscript material of the Italian humanist grammarians, e.g. Guarinus Veronensis, Laurentius Valla, Georgius Trapezuntius; the decision to include them was a late one which will perhaps explain the lacunae in their inventory. With the collapse of Modistic and Nominalist grammar the way was open for the humanist grammarians to fill the gap; it has been shown (Percival 1975) that the humanist tradition comes much earlier in the history of grammatical work than the 15th century which is the date usually assigned to it. This too represents a very rich tradition which is important for its links not only with medieval grammatical work but also with the grammatical work of Greek and Latin antiquity as well as its implications for the philosophical and rationalist grammars of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The inventory has been divided into three sections, of which the first is by far the largest; the arrangement is first of all in terms of the town or city in which a library is located, and if there is more than one library in one locality, the rule is alphabetical order, as, for example, the college libraries of Oxford and Cambridge. Section A, therefore, constitutes a list of the manuscript books and the treatises they contain; each entry gives the shelf-mark of the codex, the date, the folio numbers, author (if known), title and initium of each treatise. Spelling has been standardised and proper names are usually given in their latinised form. The second section contains the initia of the treatises in section A listed in alphabetical order; all the initia are cross-indexed by a system of numbers explained at the beginning of the section with their occurrence in section A. The third section is an index of names and subjects which is cross-indexed with section A in the same way as in Section B. A bibliography has been added; this is in two parts, the first of which lists the libraries and printed catalogues available while the second part consists of items that refer to manuscripts and manuscript collections.

One of the difficult problems in working with collections of medieval manuscripts is with the catalogues; in most instances, every collection has some sort of inventory though there is no absolute guarantee of this, and in addition, the inventories are rarely complete or adequate. There is, however, no uniformity among catalogues and one can only marvel at the human ingenuity in devising so many disparate methods of describing and listing the contents of manuscript collections. It is unfortunate that so many libraries including most of the very rich (i.e. in terms of size of collections) have to make do with catalogues that were compiled long before bibliography became the precise art that it is today; there are in fact many libraries that have to depend on hand-written or typewritten inventories (Kristeller 1965, xxii). This is in no way a criticism of those libraries but rather an expression of sympathy; it is an expensive and demanding task to construct a manuscript catalogue and something that may well be beyond the resources of many of the smaller libraries. There is no escaping the fact that a great many manuscript collections are incompletely and inadequately catalogued, i.e. we are suggesting that at the very least the catalogue should provide the shelf-mark, the date of the manuscript, the folio numbers, author (where known), title,

the initium (which does not necessarily coincide with the first line), and the explicit. Nothing however is achieved by wringing hands; this is yet another demand that the scholarly community take appropriate steps to ensure that this valuable material is properly catalogued, more carefully preserved, and made available to all.

The result, however, in terms of this census, is that exhaustiveness is an ideal that we have not achieved; there is still a great deal of material in many libraries that we have not been able to examine. Our hope is that colleagues and co-workers will inform us of mistakes and lacunae so that eventually a supplement may be published to compensate for the gaps and shortcomings of the present census. As far as the first part of the bibliography is concerned, we have tried to be exhaustive, but we may well have overlooked some printed catalogue of a collection or even part of a collection. In the second part, we have not aimed at exhaustiveness; to do so would be folly, so that the list contains those items that we have been able to consult.

The study of language theory in the Middle Ages is important and fascinating; it is always of the greatest interest to examine attempts to produce a fully developed theory of language in the light of an intellectual environment so very different from our own. There were many problems exercising the medieval student of grammar which have continued to interest students of language and which still exercise the modern student of linguistics. The material contained in this census is sufficient for many life-times of study; it is our hope that it will provide a basis on which we will one day be able to provide an adequate picture of this marvellous aspect of medieval intellectual and cultural life. We have much to learn from the medieval grammarian.

15th May 1978.

G. L. Bursill-Hall.

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