

CALIBAN AND THE LANGUAGE FAIR

A magazine needs a little serendipity to help it along, and a little serendipity is what I got when Benjamin Lease's article on American literature arrived. I had only just completed my own current chunk of the ABC of World English, having at last decided to mention the etymological link between 'Caribbean', 'cannibal' and 'Caliban' (p. 26).

Professor Lease confirmed my decision, because he has Caliban too (on p. 41). The double reference says something worthwhile, I think, about both *The Tempest* and the impact of the New World on the old in Shakespeare's day.

When we began to plan *ET* in 1983 it seemed to be as isolated an event as my mentioning Caliban, but in much the same way it has proved not to be. In September last year the British Council celebrated its 50th anniversary in London with a conclave of Anglicists, who will in due course publish their proceedings. The following month in the same city the first ever English Language Fair was held at the Barbican Centre, a commercial exhibition for English 'as a prime means of communication – the lifeblood of understanding', which is not far removed from what we said in our own prospectus at the same time, about English as 'an international resource as valuable and as useful as currencies, computers and oil'.

Now, in addition, we learn that the BBC in Britain and MacNeil-Lehrer-Gannett Productions in the United States plan to screen in the near future an eight-part series on the past, present and future of the language. Title – 'The Amazing English Language'. If this kind of thing goes on, we'll have to call it a trend.

The rash of *Todays* certainly goes on. In planning this magazine we often admired *History Today* – in our preview we mentioned the piquant *Japalish Today* – and in this issue we have reprinted an important article from *Psychology Today* (p. 31), while also reporting on another

new magazine, *Spanish Today* (p. 20).

In this second issue of *English Today* the theme is the standard language viewed from the unique perspectives of Peter Strevens in the UK and Orlando Taylor in the US. Hugh Howse takes us behind the scenes in the BBC and even lets us *hear* as well as read about the Corporation's English courses. Lee Huebner as an American in Paris talks frankly about his 'global newspaper', and Mary Brown Parlee writes about the games and gambits of people talking with, at and down to each other. The new 'Longman-Johnson-Webster' dictionary is described, the names of African cattle and video monsters unravelled, and three significant books on dialect, education and social identity reviewed – while David Crystal provides us with another challenge on usage.

My own gazetteer gets down as far as the intriguing history of 'creole', and I would be glad to hear at any time from readers with additional insights into the geopolitical usage of English. The Post & Mail section opens in this issue, a section that we hope will rapidly grow in size, strength and significance. Many thanks to those who have already started writing in. We also welcome feedback on such regular features as *Crossworld* and *A Way with Words*, as well as ideas on what the magazine should generally be doing for and about English today.

Tom McArthur
Editor

The editorial policy of *English Today* is to provide a focus or forum for all sorts of news and opinion from around the world. The points of view of individual writers are as a consequence their own, and do not reflect the opinion of the editorial board. In addition, wherever feasible, *ET* leaves unchanged the orthography (normally British or American) and the usage of individual contributors, although the editorial style of the magazine itself is that of Cambridge University Press.



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