

Recent Developments in Germanic Linguistics

EDITED BY
Rosina L. Lippi-Green

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN GERMANIC LINGUISTICS

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Edited by

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For William Moulton

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PREFACE

From April 12 through 14, 1991, the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures of the University of Michigan hosted the Second Annual Michigan/Berkeley Germanic Linguistics Roundtable. Thirty-six scholars from the United States, Canada, England, Germany and Austria came together for four days to present their work for discussion. The credit for the conception and creation of this annual meeting belongs to Robert Kyes of Michigan and Irmengard Rauch of Berkeley, who in the course of an informal discussion in 1989 agreed that we required more opportunities to meet as colleagues.

The animated discussions which followed each presentation and which were often pursued over coffee breaks and meals proved them right. Person-to-person exchange vitalizes; it promotes productivity. It is from such exchange that we experience encouragement and difference of opinion, both elements crucial to the creative process. At the Roundtable, we were reminded that controversy is a necessary tool in our trade: it is dissention, not unreflecting advocacy, which fuels our work and which fosters innovation.

Those of us who have had the pleasure of knowing and working with William Moulton were distressed at the last-minute misfortune which kept him from presenting to us his work on phonological variation in manuscripts A, B, and C of the *Nibelungenlied*. While our first concern was his well being (he has, as of this writing, recovered sufficiently to begin working for a short time every day), I was personally disappointed that the graduate students would not have the opportunity to meet him. In my own graduate education I profited greatly from my contact with him. He was then and has remained the model of professionalism, innovative and insightful technique, sharp but constructive and nurturing criticism, and not least, of kindness.

Many people were helpful in the organization of the Roundtable and in the preparation of this volume. I would like to thank Konrad Koerner for his assistance and encouragement; Bob Kyes for his calm reassurances and the benefit of his experience; Joe Salmons for his always useful and often amusing commentary; the anonymous reviewers for their hard work, high standards, and invaluable contributions; Monika Dressler for her efficient and often innovative resolution of various problems along the way; Desiree Baron, Anne Dickens, David Fertig, George Hinman and Michael Liebe for the great deal of work they did in making the conference run smoothly; Bob Ebert for getting on a train to come to Ann Arbor; and the staff of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, particularly Mechthild Medzhradsky, for reliable support in the face of the usual last minute requests and disasters.

Here at Michigan, the Roundtable was made possible by the contributions of the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the Max Kade Foundation. To all these organizations, our thanks.

Rosina Lippi-Green
Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 1992

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**THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN EUROPEAN NATIONALISMS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO THE GERMAN-SPEAKING AREA***

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This article is divided into two parts: I shall first examine some of the characteristics of nationalism, and in particular discuss the part played in it by language. In this I shall draw on research and writing by social and political scientists and linguists. In the second part of the article I shall move to specific examples of the role of language in particular nationalisms. This part of the article is more impressionistic and speculative; detailed research on this topic remains to be done.

There can be no denying that nationalism is still a potent political force in Europe. This is of course clearest in those nations, for example in eastern Europe or in Spain, which have recently shed authoritarian regimes who ruthlessly suppressed any nationalism other than that of the majority in the state; but it is also a factor elsewhere: Irish, and to a lesser extent Scottish and Welsh nationalisms are important political factors in the United Kingdom, and even in France, perhaps the classic unified, centralized nation-state, Breton, Basque and Occitan movements cannot be ignored.

Some of the cases cited here immediately face us with one of the central problems in discussing nationalism, the problem of definitions. How large must a unit be before it qualifies as a nation, and before a movement to uphold or establish its autonomy can be called nationalism? (Are not some of the movements mentioned simply regional particularisms?) What characteristics must the members of a unit share before it qualifies for nation status?

Questions of definition prove to be extraordinarily difficult, simply because the idea of the nation, although dependent on certain external criteria, is to a considerable extent subjective; if, and only if, an appreciable proportion of the members of a group consider it to be a nation, does it become a candidate for such status. And, of course, there is scope for widespread disagreement between those whose perspective is different; many Northern Irish Catholics see themselves as Irish, as citizens of Ireland wrongly bound into a British state, while many of the British political elite have traditionally seen them as an essentially religiously-defined group, disaffected because of social and economic discrimination.

Turning now to objective external criteria, the following characteristics seem to be important: a certain population size, a national territory, shared cultural characteristics

* I am grateful to Rüdiger Görner for useful discussions on German nationalism.

such as language and religion, and either political sovereignty or an aspiration to acquire political sovereignty.

If we examine the criterion of size, we notice that a population of several hundred thousand seems to be normal, though smaller nations are found where the group is either extraordinarily geographically isolated from other groups, say on a remote island or in a mountain valley, or where it sees itself as highly culturally distinctive from neighbouring or surrounding groups.

A definable territory is important to a nation, and distinguishes it from other types of unit, particularly from the many important groups based on religion, which may be scattered across a wide territory, interspersed with members of other groups. Many would argue that 18th century Greeks were a religious group rather than a nation, the Greeks being roughly co-terminous with the Orthodox Christian inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps only after they became identified again clearly with a territory can we speak of the modern Greek nation.

A nation depends crucially on shared cultural characteristics. Language is important here, and so, often, is religion. Many nations also place great importance on shared political assumptions.

You will notice that I have not mentioned membership of a particular ethnic group as a characteristic of the membership of a nation. This is because the notions 'ethnic group' and 'nation', though related, differ in very important and complex ways. From a European, particularly western European, perspective it is all too easy to assume that this relationship is a very close one, with ethnic groups seen virtually as potential nations, as nations which do not (yet) occupy a definable territory of appropriate size. While the view of ethnic groups as nations-in-waiting is widespread, it is far from typical, as an examination of North American work can immediately remind us; given the ethnic composition of the United States and Canada, the view of the nation as typically multi-ethnic is a commonplace in such work, and ethnic groups are seen as units of a distinct order from nations (cf. Royce, 1982: *passim*). Adequate discussion of the concept of 'ethnic group' and its relation to 'nation' is not possible within the scope of this article.

In the modern world system of sovereign states, nations either possess, or aspire to sovereignty (whatever that means in real terms), or at least to a high degree of autonomy. There are many groups which are, in their own view at least, nations, but who do not possess sovereignty, so we can distinguish nations from nation-states. In the view of many of their citizens Scotland, Wales, Lithuania and Armenia are nations, but they are not (yet) nation-states (by the time this book appears, the two last-mentioned are very likely to have achieved this status). Conversely, there are states which are not nations, usually because they are very small, and their populations are scarcely distinct from those of neighbouring states; it is at least questionable whether Liechtenstein is a nation.

I have been able here merely to touch on the issues involved in the nature and definition of nations. For further discussion cf. Smith (1983 *passim*).