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COMMENT

## On Latin, English, and capable hands

Not long ago, I came across Tore Janson's *A Natural History of Latin: The story of the world's most successful language* (2004) – and I thought: 'That's an odd claim.' Then four things came to mind: the Roman Empire, which lasted for centuries; the Roman Catholic church, which has lasted longer; Latin as Europe's international language, and the Romance language family ('Latin' under other names). In the later twentieth century, the teaching of Latin itself fell on hard times, which for me – a teacher of the language some decades ago – is a matter of regret. It was a pleasure therefore to encounter Janson's book, which (*mirabile dictu*) came out first in Swedish then in English.

Can 'dead' old Latin really be the world's most successful language? Hasn't *ET* since the 1980s been focused on the truly first-ever global tongue? But hang on a minute. It isn't as simple as that. Inside English there is a vast store of Latin (and Greek through Latin), as with *curriculum* (and *syllabus*), *transformation* (and *metamorphosis*). Would English have been so successful as a global lingua franca if those two Classical streams hadn't flowed (with French) into Anglo-Saxon? Indeed, English lexis isn't *mono-* or *bi-* but *trilingual* – think *starry*, *stellar*, *astral* or *womanly*, *feminine*, *gynecoid*, and dozens more such sets: an on-going linguistic mosaic.

*ET* contributors have also created a mosaic. Some examples over the years: in *ET9* (Jan 87), Len Masterman, 'Managing the media'; in *ET18* (Apr 89) Anna Dunlop, 'Parliamo Itagliano'; in *ET20* (Oct 89) Andrew Taylor, 'Hong Kong's English newspapers'; in *ET41* (Jan 95) Gordon Graham, 'World publishing and the English language'; in *ET45* (Jan 96) Agnes Scott Langeland, 'Rushdie's language'; in *ET57* (Jan 99) Adeyeye Samson Dare, 'English and the culture of the Yoruba'; in *ET62* (Apr 00) Steven Levey, 'Language change and adaptation in a Tok Pisin newspaper'; in *ET66* (Apr 01) Rahela Banu and Roland Sussex, 'Code-switching in Bangladesh'; in *ET87* (Jul 06) Melinda Reichelt, 'English in a multilingual Spain.'

The present double issue, *ET91–92* (with its three indexes,

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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* generally leaves unchanged the orthography (normally British or American) and the usage of individual contributors, although the editorial style of the journal itself is that of Cambridge University Press.

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*ET*1–90), is my last as editor. I would like to thank *everyone* who has *ever* taken part – especially Peter Ducker our designer, Kate Ducker our proof-reader, colleagues in Cambridge University Press, and members of the Editorial Board. *ET*'s new editorial team are Kingsley Bolton, David Graddol, and Raj Mesthrie, scholars I have long counted as friends. The international review of the English language is now in their capable hands. *Tom McArthur*

### From the Publisher

On behalf of Cambridge University Press we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to

Tom McArthur for dedicating over twenty years to *English Today*. Over the course of nearly 100 issues he and his contributors have taken us on a linguistic odyssey through the English language and we have been grateful armchair travellers. Few journals can boast having such a long-standing, energetic editor: Tom has left a unique stamp on *ET*.

As with the best journeys in life, one never wants it to end. Fortunately, the *ET* voyage does not stop here. So please join me in welcoming on board our new travel companions: Kingsley Bolton, David Graddol and Rajend Mesthrie. May the English odyssey continue!

*Martine Walsh*

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## From the new editors

WE FACE the task of editing *ET* with a mixture of trepidation and excitement. Trepidation because our editorial efforts will follow those of Tom McArthur who has been editor of *English Today* since its inception, and who has made such an immense contribution to scholarship in this field. Indeed, it is no small measure of Tom's stature and capabilities that it has been decided at least three new editors are required to take his place. We have large shoes to fill.

At the same time, this is an exciting challenge for each of us. The spread of English worldwide has been and continues to be one of the most important stories of the contemporary age. It is a phenomenon of interest not only to linguists but to academics across multiple disciplines, as well as a much wider audience of educators, teachers, communicators, and many others with an interest in language and language matters. It is also a story that needs to be told from a range of different viewpoints.

It is a mark of the success of *ET* over the last twenty-two years that the journal has included a fascinating variety of perspectives: linguists,

grammarians, lexicographers, broadcasters, and publishers. Part of the story (as we can see from the latest index, included in this double issue) has been concerned with the geographical spread of the language. In *ET*, the coverage of world Englishes has included so-called 'established' varieties in countries such as Britain, the USA, and Australia, the 'New Englishes' of Africa and Asia, as well as English across Europe, the former Soviet Union, and China. At another level, articles on questions of structure and usage have ranged from lexicography, syntax, and corpus linguistics to international advertising, digital communication, and electronic communication. *English Today* has been able to give space to all this and much more in inimitable fashion.

In addition, Tom McArthur has been unfailing in his support of young (and not-so-young) contributors from the developing world, who have often provided immediate and first-hand accounts of English in societies from Nigeria to Macedonia, and from Cameroon to Uzbekistan. At a personal as well as a professional level, he has shown unstinting generosity to new scholars in the field from many different