been brought in to examine how much power named and anonymous mediators actually have.

The last few essays deal with television. An analysis of interpersonal meaning in daytime talk shows by Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenbergen is especially noteworthy for its comparison of question style and distribution in talk shows, courtroom discourse, and therapeutic discourse. Rather like Ljung, she suggests that clusters of linguistic features might be used to identify particular genres of speech based on family resemblances. More immediately, she shows how talk show hosts change their footing from supporter to accuser, always remaining in control. This is followed by Renate Bugyi-Ollert's innovative comparison of how visual turn-taking (moving from one camera angle or participant to another) is integrated with linguistic turn-taking. Her conclusion is that with evolving technology, producers have increasing power over turn-taking, and they tend to be focused on the guests rather than the hosts; thus the locus of control is not where it appears to be. Although the findings in these two papers appear to contradict one another, it should be noted that the guests in Bugyi-Ollert's study were celebrities while those in Simon-Vandenbergen's were vox pop, that is, ordinary people.

Finally, Ingrid Piller's examination of second languages in German television advertisements should be of broad interest to socio-linguists. She identifies a cline of second language content, from isolated code-switching in brand names to complete native second languages presentation, and identifies particular second languages with particular meanings. For German viewers, Romance languages have positive associations of holiday resorts and sensuality, while English is both the language of Others (particularly Americans) and the second language of the viewers themselves — "the language of consumerism" as Piller puts it, or historically viewed, a lingua franca of trade.

Books produced from symposia sometimes cleave too closely to the original format, and I speculate that this may have happened here. Some of the titles and openings are not as descriptive as they might be, and the article ordering (which I have adjusted slightly here) adds to the confusion. Specifically, the book would be easier to follow if the sections on newspaper development and newspaper genres had been merged, since questions of genre and history are deeply intertwined. The two articles on headlines and the three on advertising (one of which appears in the television section) could have been grouped into separate sections, since both of these have emerged as substantial topics of study in their own right. These small criticisms should not deter readers from a useful resource that points the way toward further development of typological, cognitive, and semantic approaches to news discourse.

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Naomi S. Baron, *Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading.* London/New York: Routledge, 2000. ISBN 0–415–18685–4.

Reviewed by Susan C. Herring (Indiana University)

In 1984, Naomi Baron published a provocative article in the journal *Visible Language* in which she predicted that computer-mediated communication — then known mainly to a limited technological and academic elite residing in the United States — would lead to a decline in the complexity, creativity and civility of English language usage. After a 15-year hiatus, in *Alphabet to Email* Baron again takes up the topic of mediated communication and language change, arguing that "teletechnologies" such as the telegraph, the telephone and email contribute to blurring the distinction between speech and writing in the direction of informal, spoken English.

Baron studied historical English linguistics (under, among others, Elizabeth Traugott) at Stanford, and her approach combines a socio-historical sensibility with prescriptive concerns about the fate of what she terms "traditional" written English, stemming from years of teaching English composition to non-native speakers of the language. Both of these perspectives are evident throughout the

book, notably in the choice of topics selected for inclusion and the evaluations ascribed to the putative changes that are taking place. The book is targeted at a non-specialist audience — Baron mentions teachers of composition in first place. However, the fact that it is one of the very few works by a linguist to engage computer-mediated communication (CMC) and language change recommends it to the attention of historical linguists.

In fact, the scope of *Alphabet to Email* is considerably broader than just email. As the title somewhat obliquely suggests, it is a historical overview of writing technologies ranging from scripts to the printing press to the typewriter to the teletechnologies mentioned above, of which email is currently the most widespread (the book makes only limited reference to the World Wide Web). Baron's goal is to explore "the impact of technology on the written (and spoken) word" (xii). In articulating her goal thus, she raises the specter — mostly implicit but acknowledged explicitly at several points — of technological determinism. "In principle," Baron writes, "language technologies are the servants of their makers. [...] But do language technologies also affect the very nature of our communication?" (228). The answer, for Baron, is yes. Dictation to an amanuensis leads to more verbose, rambling composition than writing with one's own hand. The requirements of early typesetting encouraged abbreviation and spelling variations, both of which allowed for flexibility in fitting words on a line or page. The typewriter improved spelling (and resulted in an increased sale of dictionaries), because ambiguous handwriting could no longer be used to mask uncertainty about how a word was spelled. The use of the telegraph to broadcast news wire stories resulted in an increased journalistic use of "telegraphic language". The telephone (here Baron cites Peter Berger) leads to an impersonal, precise, superficially civil style which carries over into non-telephonic communication. By analogy, Baron predicts that the speechlike properties of "e-style" will spill over into traditional forms of writing. This, she suggests, is a worrisome trend.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis that contemporary spoken and written English are losing their identity as distinct language forms. Baron posits a cycle from an earlier oral culture to a literary culture in the eighteenth century back to an oral culture in (post)modern times (cf. Ong's notion of "secondary orality"; Ong 1982). This cycle is evident in four domains, which are summarized as questions in Chapter 10: What does writing represent? Who is an author? What is a text? and Who is a reader? The answers to these questions provide a synopsis of much of the content of the book.

For example, Chapter 2 discusses the early history of the language, in which writing represented (formal) speech — intended to be read aloud — and provided a durable administrative record. By the eighteenth century, a shift from oral to silent, individual reading led to the development of writing as an autonomous entity, as reflected in grammatically-based, rather than rhetorically (spoken-language)-based, rules of punctuation (Chapter 6). By the late twentieth century, writing and speech were seen as increasingly interchangeable, and even educated people today incorporate (informal) spoken features into their writing (Chapters 6–8).

Chapter 3 raises the issue of authorship. In early times, there were relatively few authors (the original author being God, in "dictated" religious texts), and texts were widely copied and embellished by scribes. Starting in the eighteenth century, and bolstered by copyright laws, texts became fixed, the property of individual authors. At present, texts on the Internet are fluid (copiable and modifiable) documents, and notions of individual authorship and copyright are increasingly called into question.

Baron situates the causes of these cyclical trends in the social history of written English, and particularly, in the rise and subsequent decline of a written, literary standard (Chapter 4). In the period leading up to and culminating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, orthographic reform, lexicography projects such as Samuel Johnson's dictionary, grammatical prescriptions and concern with spoken elocution functioned politically to legitimate the English language (weakened by French dominance after the Norman Invasion), and thereby the British nation state.

With English well-established and spreading as a global language via British imperialism, however, different social forces came into play, leading to a shift towards increasing acceptance of spoken language norms in writing. These forces included rising literacy rates among the non-elite classes (cf. Biber and Finegan 1989), a trend towards description rather than prescription in dictionary making and linguistics in general (cf. the anthropological linguistic turn in the United States in the early twentieth century, which took spoken language as its primary object of interest), and a reduced concern with social class distinctions — and hence, with written-language based prescriptive linguistic standards — in the United States, where, according to Baron, there is no standard language variety and "prescriptivism is anathema in many pedagogical and publishing circles" (259). It is primarily U.S. varieties of English that are being diffused globally at present, via mass communication technologies such as television, film and popular music, and teletechnologies such as the Internet.

A broad social perspective is less evident in the parts of the book that deal with contemporary technologies (Chapters 7–9). In discussing computer-mediated writing, in particular, Baron tends to slip into technological determinism, as for example in the speculation that word processing makes writers less coherent in their prose, because editing more than a few pages onscreen can be confusing (214), and the assertion that CMC discourages people from reading and reflecting: "the technology propels us to view rather than analyze, cruise rather than ponder, 'hit' rather than read" (158). Such deterministic statements ignore a growing body of empirical research that demonstrates that computer-mediated communication is flexible and variable according to situational factors such as user purpose and task type (Herring 2002).

There are other infelicities in Baron's discussion of early CMC. The book contains historically inaccurate statements, including that computer conferencing predated individual email exchanges, that smileys and rude behavior were more common in the "early days of email", and that the WELL (an early San Francisco-based computer conferencing system) was the first successful online community, from which "chat groups, listservs and social email exchanges can be said to have grown" (162). Email technology was available several years before group conferencing; indeed, the former is a logical prerequisite to the latter (Hafner and Lyon 1996). Empirical studies of one of the earliest online "communities" — the ARPANET-based MsgGroup, which predated the WELL by ten years — show that smileys and rude behavior were rare (Herring 1998). Moreover, chat groups, listservs and social email exchanges all have independent developmental trajectories that have been described in the CMC literature (Herring 2002), but of which Baron appears unaware. Another, more, minor, infelicity is that the research cited in endnote 44 in Chapter 5 refers back to "chat groups, MOOs and MUDs" —all synchronous forms of CMC— on page 160, but the works cited (including Ess 1996; Herring 1996; and Jones 1995) focus predominantly on asynchronous CMC such as newsgroups and listservs.

The book closes with an attempt to characterize email as a bilingual contact system in which the contact is between speech and writing, on the model of pidgins, Creoles and bilingual languages (Chapter 9). This claim is problematic, as Baron herself admits, in that it treats spoken and written English as different "languages". More generally, I was troubled by what seemed like an inconsistency between the claim that email is inherently "speechlike" and the claim that it provides "the opportunity to use *a written standard English* that potentially reveals nothing of geographic or social origins" (142; emphasis added). Baron's

prediction (242) that "two distinct styles of email will emerge", one formal and the other informal, while reductionistic, is probably closer to the mark. Email is not simply a technology-created "language centaur — part speech, part writing" (248), but rather a flexible communication medium that allows expression of a wide range of language functions, depending upon its users and social circumstances of use.

Alphabet to Email is organized roughly in chronological sequence according to age of technology, with chapters on non-technology-specific topics such as authorship, standards, English composition, and punctuation clustered together in the middle. This organization does not present the author's main argument, which is laid out primarily in the first and last chapters, to best advantage — a rationale for the organization of the book would have been helpful. The anecdotal style, which includes some interesting historical tidbits, is inconsistent in terms of the level of sophistication it presupposes of the reader. The book uses scholarly, Latinate terms such as "patristic", "amanuensis" and "procrustean" without glosses, alongside markedly colloquial American English expressions such as *divvy up*, *the skinny* and *by golly*, and a sometimes overly simplistic exposition of ideas. It is generally well edited; I noted only four typographical errors: 'grammer' (xii), 'outstriped' (245), 'Nancy (for Natalie) Maynor' (249), and 'upmost (for utmost) importance' (252).

As in her 1984 article, Baron has once again put forward provocative ideas about technology and language change. As with the earlier article, the ideas should prove controversial among those who read them.

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