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ABSTRACT

From the beginnings of English grammar in the early sixteenth century, our language has been described by men, and the usage promulgated as the "standard" has been that of men. Because men have been able to effectively control English through their control of the communications media and educational institutions, they have made our language an effective instrument in the continuing oppression of women and the perpetuation of sex-role stereotypes. The effects of male control of English are seen most clearly in the "gender classification system," which most grammarians have described as a system of "natural gender." In fact, however, our nouns are not classified on the basis of "natural" gender, except insofar as it has been defined by men. Aside from a very small number of animate nouns, e.g., "nurse," "secretary," "mother," "prostitute," every other human noun in English is inherently masculine, and carries the semantic feature + male as part of its lexical entry. Modern linguists have simply continued the tradition of male control of language, as evidenced both in their descriptions and in their illustrative examples in textbooks. Neither English nor its grammars have changed much in four centuries. (Author/CLK)

Sexist Grammar

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The history of language, at least what we know of it, is an example of the longevity of male social control and the effects of that control. The documents that we have were written by men for the edification of other men, and, as such, they deal with male concerns from a male point of view. The tradition of male control of language has been endorsed and promulgated within the Judeo-Christian religion as "divine right," and the standard-bearer of male linguistic prerogative has been Adam. Adam, the husband of Eve, you'll remember, has been credited with the naming of the animals. One translation of Genesis describes the event in the following way:

> So from the soil Yahweh God fashioned all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven. These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each one was to bear the name the man would give it. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of heaven and all the wild beasts.
>
> (The Jerusalem Bible, Genesis 2:19-20)

But it isn't enough for men to claim the first act of naming as their own; they have used their claim as the final proof of their superiority and inherent right to control the world. In Naming-Day in Eden, one author's pride and enthusiasm illustrate what men will make of a story.

> Adam was barely one hour old on that fateful fall morning in the springtime of the world. . .when the Lord assembled the inhabitants of the newly formed earth and paraded them before Adam to see what he would call them. Adam grasped the situation at a glance. He surveyed the lineup before him and, his moist eye, unencumbered by glass or monocle and in a fine frenzy rolling, gave to each of the marchers, whom he now beheld for the first time, a local habitation and a name. In the very infancy of the world man was able to create a symbolic net to capture the fleeting objects

> he perceived and make them part of his intellectual knowledge. With his invisible breath he devised unheard-of names, substantial enough to be freighted with deep thoughts and mobile enough to waft their precious cargo down the ages. God created the earth, and Adam festooned it with a web of words. With this second creation man gave the world its first constitution.
>
> (Noah Jonathan Jacobs, pp. 1-2)

The religious significance of Adam's "invisible breath," its intimate connection with divinity in male religions, can be seen in the New Testament, in John I:1, where Christ is identified with The Word.

> In the beginning was the Word:
> the Word was with God
> and the Word was God.
> He was with God in the beginning.
> . . .
> The Word was made flesh,
> he lived among us,
> . . .
>
> (The Jerusalem Bible, John I:1-14)

The contemporary discipline of linguistics, "the scientific study of language," is only the latest development in the tradition of male control of language that traces its origins to patriarchal religion.

Early in the sixteenth century, when Latin was losing its importance as the language of scholarship and English was beginning to rise in its importance, men made their first attempts to record English usage in the form of grammars. Pooley (1933), however, attributes modern attitudes toward language to the grammarians of the eighteenth century.

> Eighteenth-century theories of language resulted in attitudes and specific rules

> concerning usage which became fixed and arbitrary in nineteenth-century schoolbooks, and which still persist in the textbooks of today in total disregard for the objective facts of English usage.
>
> (p. 12)

On the contrary, these "fixed and arbitrary" rules date from the first attempts to write English grammars in the sixteenth century, and the usage that is still perpetuated in modern textbooks merely reflects the long tradition of male presumption and arrogance first recorded for us in Genesis. When a contemporary writer, L. E. Sissman, says that the sentence, "Everyone knows he has to decide for himself," is both "innocuous" and "correct," he is merely appealing for authority to the men who have gone before him. When Sissman uses the label "correct" to describe usage of the "generic he," he is relying on the prejudice of Jonathan Swift, who, in 1712, first announced "the ideal of grammatical correctness." Pooley is right in one respect, at least: Much of the pontificating about "correct usage" ignores "the objective facts of English usage." That this statement is historically valid is especially clear in the controversial area of gender in English nouns and pronouns.

Few grammarians who have tried to describe English have claimed that it has "grammatical gender," and modern writers on the subject describe the "natural gender" of nouns in English as the basis of grammatical classification. John Lyons (1969) has described the function of gender in English.

> Gender plays a relatively minor part in the grammar of English. . .. There is no gender-concord; and the reference of the pronouns he, she, and it is very largely determined by what is sometimes referred to as 'natural' gender--for English, this depends upon the classification of persons and objects as male, female or inanimate.
>
> (Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics, pp. 283-4)

In 1712, Michael Maittaire stated the situation more succinctly: "The gender signifies the kind or sex." Murray, in his English Grammar of 1795, was even more concise: "Gender is the distinction of sex."

English did, of course, like most of the Indo-European languages, have a noun-classification system based on grammatical gender early in its history, but primary stress and the consequent coalescence of vowels in final syllables, where grammatical gender was signaled, resulted in the loss of grammatical gender as a functional category. The male grammarians, following the Latin grammars of the Middle Ages, began to describe gender in English as a "natural" category based on sex. R. Harrison (1777), in his section entitled "Of Gender," defined the English gender system as follows:

> Nouns have properly two GENDERS; the Masculine, to denote the male kind; and the Feminine, to denote the female.
> When there is no distinction of sex, a Noun is said to be of the NEUTER Gender.
> The feminine Gender is sometimes expressed by adding ess to the Masculine.
>
> (p. 4)

James Beattie, in The Theory of Language, 1788, describes the function of sex as a notional category in English.

> Another thing essential to nouns is gender. For language would be very imperfect if it had no expression for the sex of animals. Now all things whatever are Male, or Female, or Both, or Neither.
>
> The existence of hermaphrodites being uncommon, and even doubtful, and language being framed to answer the ordinary occasions of life, no provision is made, . . .for expressing, . . .Duplicity of sex.
>
> (p. 134)

And in 1784, in An Essay Towards an English Grammar, John Fell pointed to the importance of pronouns as signals for gender in English.

> The English Language applies the distinction of genders only to animals: all other words are neuter, except when, by a poetical or rhetorical fiction, inanimate things, and qualities, are spoken of, as if they were persons; then they become either Masculine or Feminine. This is done, for the most part, by the use of the pronoun, which, in the English Language, is more distinct and forcible, than in some other languages. [My italics] In poetical or rhetorical expressions of this kind, moral qualities, such as wisdom, truth, justice, reason, virtue, and religion, are of the feminine gender. The passions must be determined according to their different natures: the fiercer and more disagreeable are masculine--the softer and more amiable are feminine. Mind is masculine, soul feminine; for the latter term more of the affections are frequently implied than in the former. The sun is masculine, the moon feminine, the Heaven neuter--the earth is feminine; mountains and rivers are commonly masculine; countries and cities are feminine--and nature, as comprehending all, is feminine.
>
> (pp. 5-6)

Fell explains to us, following the usage of the "best" authors in English, (all men, of course), that the gender of inanimate objects and qualities is determined in accordance with the sex-

role stereotypes established by the Judeo-Christian tradition. Is he merely describing the situation in English as though there were no values attached to usage? I doubt it. In his grammar of 1646, Poole defines the values inherent in the genders of English.

> The Masculine gender is more worthy then the Feminine, and the Feminine is more worthy then the Neuter.
>
> (p. 21)

By 1795, Murray could make the following observations regarding the use of gender in English.

> Figuratively, in the English tongue, we commonly give the masculine gender to nouns which are conspicuous for the attributes of imparting or communicating, and which are by nature strong and efficacious. Those, again, are made feminine which are conspicuous for the attributes of containing or bringing forth, or which are peculiarly beautiful or amiable. Upon these principles the sun is always masculine, and the moon, because the receptacle of the sun's light, is feminine. The earth is generally feminine. A ship, a country, a city, &c. are likewise made feminine, being receivers or containers. Time is always masculine, on account of its mighty efficacy. Virtue is feminine from its beauty, and its being the object of love. Fortune and the church are generally put in the feminine gender.
>
> . . .
>
> Of the variable terminations, we have only a sufficient number to make us feel our want; for when we say of a woman, she is a philosopher, an astronomer, a builder, a weaver, we perceive an impropriety in the termination, which we cannot avoid; but we can say that she is an architect, a botanist, a student, because these terminations have not annexed to them the notion of sex.
>
> (pp. 24-25)

It is from Murray, then, that we first learn that the -er suffix is a masculine morpheme in English. He repeats the idea

that the gender of nouns is derived from their inherent nature as partaking of either feminine or masculine characteristics, and connects this idea with female or male sexuality, respectively.

However, it was James Beattie, in 1788, who provided the religious context of gender-classification in English.

> Beings superiour to man, although we conceive them to be of no sex, are spoken of as masculine in most of the modern tongues of Europe, on account of their dignity; the male being, according to our ideas, the nobler sex. But idolatrous nations acknowledge both male and female deities; and some of them have given even to the Supreme Being a name of the feminine gender.
> When we personify the virtues, we speak of them as if they were females; perhaps on account of their loveliness;. . .
> (p. 137)

Finally, Goold Brown pulled together all the previous statements of the male grammarians, and made from them a systematic collection of "rules" in his compendious, and bulky, The Grammar of English Grammars (1851). His is the most explicit description of the male traditions regarding gender in English that I have discovered. Because of the length, I will quote only brief portions of two of his "Observations on Gender," from one and six.

> 1.--The different genders in grammar are founded on the natural distinction of sex in animals, and on the absence of sex in other things. In English, they belong only to nouns and pronouns; and to these they are usually applied, not arbitrarily, as in some other languages, but agreeably to the order of nature. From this we derive a very striking advantage over those who use the gender differently, or without such rule; which is, that our pronouns are

> easy of application, and have a fine effect when objects are personified. Pronouns are of the same gender as the nouns for which they stand.
>
> . . .
>
> 6.--The gender of words, in many instances, is to be determined by the following principle of universal grammar. Those terms which are equally applicable to both sexes, (if they are not expressly applied to females,) and those plurals which are known to include both sexes, should be called masculine in parsing; for, in all languages, the masculine gender is considered the most worthy,* and is generally employed when both sexes are included under one common term. Thus parents is always masculine, . . .
>
> * "The Supreme Being (God, . . .) is, in all languages, masculine; in as much as the masculine sex is the superior and more excellent; and as He is the Creator of all, the Father of gods and men." --Harris's Hermes, p. 54.

It is, of course, irrelevant that most of Brown's statements are entirely independent of the facts of known languages, especially the ones about which he was speaking. His reliance on a quotation from Harris also illustrates the way in which men have used each other as supporting authorities in what might otherwise be a ~~complete~~ vacuum. The key words in the preceding quotations from Goold Brown are: "natural," 'not arbitrarily," "advantage," "rule," and "principle of universal grammar." In only a few sentences, he manages to both establish the "rightful" pre-eminence of the masculine gender and claim that the English method of classifying nouns is superior. How many of us could hope to accomplish as much?

Of special interest to me is the fact that none of the grammars I examined had anything to say, explicitly, about either man or he as "generics" in English usage, although all

of them use both man and mankind in their discussions of the origins and function of language, and they consistently replace such nouns as child, student, youth, and writer with the masculine singular pronoun, he. In this manner, the men who set themselves the task of describing English usage also established their usage as authoritative, without having to offer explanations or apologies. Joshua Poole, writing in 1646, explained the purpose of an English grammar as follows:

> My drift and scope therefore is to have a childe so well verst in his Mother's tongue, before he meddle with Latine, that when he comes to the construing of a Latine Authour, he shall from the signification of his words in construing, be in some good measure able to tell distinctly what part of Speech every word is,. . .
>
> (Epistle to the Reader)

Roger Ascham, in 1570, in an effort to justify the undertaking of his grammar, addressed himself to the objections other men might make to his work, dismissing their objections as the result of ignorance.

> Yet some men, frendly enough of nature, but of small iudgement in learninge, do thinke, I take to moch paines, and spend to moch time, in settinge forth these childrens affaires. But those good men were neuer brought vp in Socrates Schole, who saith plainlie, that no man goeth about a more goodlie purpose, than he that is mindfull of the good bringing vp, both of hys owne, and other mens children.
>
> Therfore, I trust, good and wise men, will thinke well of this my doing. And of other, that thinke otherwise, I will thinke my selfe, they are but men, to be pardoned for their follie, and pitied for their ignoraunce.

From the content of the prefaces to their works, it is clear that all of the early grammarians were writing books about English for the educated class, and the educated class in England at that time was the male sex. The immediate consequence of their social and economic position was the exclusion of women from discussions of learning and language use.

> Men, to express their thoughts, make use of eight Kinds of Words, called the eight Parts of Speech, . . .
>
> (Daniel Duncan, A New English Grammar, 1731)

> Many wise and learned men have made use of our language in communicating their sentiments to the world, concerning all the important branches of science and art.
> . . .
> Some men, whose writings do honour to their country and to mankind, have, it must be confessed, written in a style that no Englishman will own:. . .
>
> (John Fell, An Essay Towards an English Grammar, 1784, pp. vi-vii.)

> As the Knowledge of Letters is of great Importance to Men, both in their Civil and Religious Capacities, so their Advances in it depend very much upon the first Steps. . .
>
> (Henry Dixon, "Preface," The English Instructor, 1728.)

Echoing the statements of these grammarians regarding the importance of language in the everyday affairs of men, Thomas Stackhouse, in his Reflections on the Nature and Property of Language of 1731, emphasized the role of language in social contexts: "Words are the Means whereby Men agree on all Things;. . ." He might just as well have pointed out that words are also the means whereby men disagree, but such negativity about the function of

language has never been in fashion.

The right of women to an education has only recently been acknowledged, and it is still believed (by men) that educating women is a waste of time and money. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was unthinkable, and it is both strange and heartening to hear one grammarian arguing that his text is intended for women as well as men, since women also use English.

> But yet i am not able to find any tolerable reason, why even any station or sex should be excluded from the benefit of the Languages. . . .As for that tender Sex, which to set off we take so much care and use such variety of breeding, some for the feet, some for the hands, others for the voice; what shall i call it, cruelty or ignorance, to debar them from these accomplishments of Speech and Understanding; as if that Sex was (as certainly we by experience find it is not) weak and defective in its Head and Brains.
>
> (Michael Maittaire, The English Grammar, 1712)

The radicalism of Maittaire's argument, if not immediately obvious from its social context, comes through to us when he calls the exclusion of women from learning cruel and ignorant. More importantly, the structure and content of his argument on behalf of women is written for the eyes of males, as evidenced in his use of we in the parenthetical statement.

One aspect, then, of the social oppression of women, has been our exclusion from access to education, and one important method of implementing that debarment has been to refuse us the right to the English language as speakers. The usage of man, mankind, and he in the early grammars of English was not generic in any sense of that term, however one might wish to construe it. Men were the educated ruling class in England,

and these first descriptions of English usage and structure were written with the male sex as their only audience. There are two immediate consequences for the history of English linguistics that may be traced to the exclusion of women from education. The first, and, I think, most obvious, has been the continuation of the myth that man, mankind, and he function as "generics" in English. Not one of these early grammarians mentions any such "generic" usage in their descriptions of English, yet all of them constantly refer to man, men, and mankind, as I have illustrated. However, beginning in the nineteenth century, these nouns of masculine reference began to be touted as "generics," including both women and men, and it is not until the twentieth century that such male usage becomes firmly fixed as "correct" in American grammars. There are two ways in which he crept into our grammars as the dominant pronoun of reference: (1) because the traditional rule for pronominal replacement maintains that a pronoun must "agree with its antecedent noun in gender, number, and person," and because, according to these grammarians, most of the nouns in English were masculine, unless marked with a special "feminine marker"; and (2) when grammarians began to take notice of the "indefinite pronouns," anyone, everyone, everybody, etc., they decided that he was going to be the pronoun of reference.

I have previously quoted John Fell, James Beattie, and Goold Brown on how the gender of nouns in English reflects the "natural" distinction of sex in animals. In 1856, the Reverend Peter Bullions linked the belief in the "natural" distinction

in animals to the grammatical distinction in nouns.

> No certain rule, however, can be given as to the gender to be used, except that nouns denoting objects distinguished for strength or boldness usually become masculine, ~~which~~ while, on the other hand, those denoting objects noted for softness, beauty, and gracefulness, are considered feminine.
>
> Many masculine nouns have no corresponding feminine; as, baker, brewer, &c.: and some feminine nouns have no corresponding masculine; as, laundress, seamstress, &c.
>
> (An Analytical and Practical Grammar of the English Language, 1856, p. 23)

In 1924, Otto Jespersen was to make a similar observation on page 232 of The Philosophy of Grammar. In his text, Rev. Bullions goes on to observe that we assign genders to animals on the basis of what we believe to be their inherent characteristics, those traits associated with human sexuality.

> In speaking of animals whose sex is not known to us, or not regarded, we assign the masculine gender to those distinguished for boldness, fidelity, generosity, size, strength, &c., as the dog, the horse, the elephant. Thus we say, "The dog is remarkably various in his species." On the other hand, we assign the feminine gender to animals characterized by weakness and timidity; as, the hare, the cat, &c., thus, "The cat, as she beholds the light, draws the ball of her eye small and long."
>
> (p. 24)

The long tradition of male prerogative in descriptions of English usage undoubtedly made it possible for Kruisinga, writing in 1925, to point enthusiastically to the English classification of nouns on the basis of "natural" gender.

> The gender of English nouns depends exclusively upon their meaning, not on their form. . . .The gender of English nouns. . . seems to be free from traditional elements; it is a living classification of nouns.
> . . .
> . . .The use of the neuter pronouns to refer to nouns denoting persons is the clearest proof that English gender depends upon meaning: the pronoun does not really refer to the noun but to the idea in the speaker's mind.
>
> (A Handbook of Present-day English, 1925, pp. 67-68)

The "clearest proof" of what is actually in the speaker's mind, therefore, is present in the following observations of Kruisinga's concerning usage of the masculine gender pronoun to replace nouns of indefinite or unknown gender.

> . . .When speaking of children without distinguishing sex the masculine pronouns are also used.
>
> (p. 68)
>
> . . .He is also used as a correlative of somebody, anybody, someone, etc., rarely of one in the meaning of anyone;. . .
>
> (p. 91)

As recently as 1974, I found statements in textbooks on English usage that indicate the strength of the male tradition in both language and grammars of language. The following quotation defines the situation accurately, and without apology.

> For human nouns, masculine appears to be the general feature, feminine the special one: that is, unless a human noun is specifically marked feminine, the noun phrase of which it is the head noun is replaced by he, his, or him.
>
> (Walter Earl Meyers, Handbook of Contemporary English, 1974, p. 113)

I am not arguing against the validity of Meyers' description of

the classification of nouns in English. In the course of my own research, I have found too much evidence that indicates that most of the nouns in English are used for exclusive masculine reference. After all, that's what we were taught when we began to "learn" English grammar. We have learned the male rules for male usage of a language that remains in their control.

The best evidence for this assertion lies in an examination of the development of grammatical descriptions and rules concerning the usage of the "indefinite" pronouns in English, which I have pointed out as the second way in which male grammarians have fixed he as the pronoun of "general" reference.

The earliest reference I could find to usage of the masculine third person pronoun as the "correct" replacement for the indefinite pronoun any one was in Murray's grammar of 1795. Both the context in which the reference occurs, and the nature of the reference itself are significant, because they reveal how completely men have taken for granted their "natural" right as the only interpreters and correspondents with reality. Under Rule V - Pronouns and antecedents, Murray lists the following quotation as an example of a violation of pronominal concord, even though his definition of pronoun agreement does not explicitly cover the example, and the example seems, for this reason, to be purely gratuitous.

> "Can any one, on their entrance into the world, be fully secure that they shall not be deceived?"
>
> (p. 96)

Without additional comment or explanation, Murray simply corrects

the "error" to read as follows: "on his entrance," and "that he shall." Baker, writing in 1770, made the following observation on English usage of one, which he did not extend to other pronouns such as everyone or anyone.

> The One here is not the Unit in Number. It has the sense of the On in the French tongue, from which it is taken, and does not suffer a relative pronoun. . .. No person of tolerable taste would endure she or her in this use,. . .
>
> (Reflections, pp. 23-4; cited in Leonard, 1962, p. 225)

As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, it is still possible to find grammarians who include she and they, along with he, as pronouns of general reference, when no distinction in sex is desired or necessary. Bullions, in 1856, and Kerl, in 1859, although Bullions offers only one example that contains he, and Kerl's examples of the ~~of the use of~~ pronouns are clearly sex-specific in their reference.

> He, she, and they, are frequently used as general terms in the beginning of a sentence, equivalent to 'the person,' &c., without reference to a noun going before; as, 'He [the person] that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man.'
>
> (Bullions, An Analytical and Practical Grammar of the English Language, p. 45)

> He, she, and they, sometimes refer to any one or any ones of a certain class of persons.
> Ex. 'He who trifles away his life, will never be rich in honors.' 'She who knows merely how to dress, dance, and flirt, will never make a good wife.'
>
> (Simon Kerl, A Treatise on the English Language, 1859, p. 105)

By 1906, American grammarians, all men, had decided that

he was the "correct" pronoun to use for generalized reference, and Henry Froude had no doubts regarding the appropriateness of its usage.

> It is a real deficiency in English that we have no pronoun, like the French. . .to stand for him-or-her, his-or-her. . .. Our view, though we admit it to be disputable, is clear--that they, their, &c., should never be resorted to,. . .With a view to avoiding them, it should be observed that . . .(b) he, his, him, may generally be allowed to stand for the common gender; the particular aversion shown to them by Miss Ferrier in the examples may be referred to her sex; and, ungallant as it may seem, we shall probably persist in refusing women their due here as stubbornly as Englishmen continue to offend the Scots by saying England instead of Britain. . ..
>
> (The King's English, 2d ed., 1906, p. 67)

One of his examples from Miss Ferrier, whose usage Froude attributed to her sex, is the following sentence: "The feelings of the parent upon committing the cherished object of their cares and affections to the stormy sea of life." Froude "corrects" the disliked usage of the third person plural pronoun to his (p. 68).

C. C. Fries, in his American English Grammar, 1940, cautiously pointed out that, since the Middle English period, collective nouns in English followed a concord "which depended on the meaning emphasized rather than on the form of the noun" (p. 49). Toward the end of his book, after he has argued that teaching and grammar must deal with actual usage, rather than those "grammatical usages that have no validity outside the English classroom" (p. 287), he again states that "The indefinites every-

one, everybody, etc., with a plural reference pronoun or a plural verb separated from the indefinite by other words" (p. 287). But at the same time that Fries was advocating acceptance of the third person plural pronoun as a replacement for indefinite pronouns, his contemporaries were pushing harder for the "generic" he. In 1941, Foerster and Steadman formulated the following "rule."

> Make the pronoun agree with its antecedent in gender, number, and person.
>
> WRONG: Each one should be polite in their manners.
>
> RIGHT: Each one should be polite in his manners.

When I read such statements, I am tempted to congratulate Murray for his cunning; at least he wasn't stupid enough to be quite as blatant in his definition. And in 1942, Eric Partridge, in his Usage and Abusage: A Guide to Good English, included the following observation in his notes: "they, their, misused for he, his as in 'Anyone thinks twice, when their life is at stake: read 'his life' (p. 335).

Although Jespersen pointed out, in his Modern English Grammar, that another form of the same pronoun replaces the indefinite one in Modern British usage, he went on to observe that: "But the old practice, which is still frequent in Scottish and U. S., is to use forms of he" (p. 156). (He also said that use of person as an indefinite was "most frequent in the mouth of a woman.") Before Jespersen, Robert Pooley, in 1933, had this to say about American usage of proniminal substitutes for the indefinite pronouns: "It must be added, however, that American usage, far more than

British usage, tends to keep these pronouns singular whenever possible" (p. 88). It is true; American grammars are more conservative in their rigid formulations and strictures regarding usage. I remember clearly, in 1957, having to memorize the following "rule" in Warriner's English Grammar and Composition, published in the same year:

> The words each, either, neither, one, everyone, everybody, no one, nobody, anyone, anybody, someone, somebody are referred to by a singular pronoun--he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its.
>
> EXAMPLES Each of the men had removed his parachute.
> Nobody in a position of authority had given his approval of the bill.
> If anyone calls, tell him I'll be back later.
>
> (English Grammar and Composition, p. 93)

When someone in the class asked why all the examples used the masculine pronoun, our teacher replied with equanimity: "As long as there is one male in the group, you must use the masculine pronoun. Since there is the possibility in each of these examples that there is a male in the group referred to, you must use the pronoun he."

Scattered here and there throughout the literature on English usage are maverick discussions of the pronouns, in particular she, that either expand or add a new twist to the more standard explanations of usage. Pooley, for example, writing in 1933, felt that he had to deal with a "popular" or "ungrammatical" use of gender, "which is so common as to be part of the idiom of almost every speaker of English. This phenomenon is the regular use of 'she' or 'her' to refer to inanimate ob-

jects" (1933: 68-9). In support of his description of usage, he cites an article by Svartengen, "Feminine Gender in Anglo-American" (American Speech, III, 83), who provided the following explanation and characterization of how the feminine gender is used. Svartengen, at least, knew whose usage it was.

> The use of the feminine for inanimate objects is native--masculine in character--and quite widespread. The she seems to be regularly used with three classes of nouns:
>
> I. Concrete things made or worked upon by man.
> II. Actions, abstract ideas.
> III. Nature, and natural objects not worked upon by man.

As nearly as I can tell, the single feature held in common by at least two of these categories is the use of their "relationship" to man as a distinguishing characteristic. Apparently, anything may be referred to by the feminine pronoun if men think it's their possession, or something they'd like to possess.

My next quotation, from Elizabeth Closs Traugott, writing in 1972, provides a startling contrast to the statements by male grammarians I have been quoting. Regarding the usage of the sex-specific pronouns in English, she has this to say:

> There is also a different 'affective' system that can be used to indicate emotion in the spoken language;. . .nonanimates may be pronominalized by she if a positive, he if a negative approach is implied.
>
> (A History of English Syntax, p. 85)

The traditional approach taken by male grammarians in their analyses of the "proper" relationship between the indefinite and personal pronouns has been to focus attention on whether or not the indefinite pronoun is understood to function as a singular

or as a plural noun. By explaining meticulously why this or that indefinite pronoun refers to one or more persons, they have made the problem appear to center on the function of number in determining the appropriateness of they or he as pronominal replacements. But the problem is not one of number, and never has been, except for the treatment given the subject in traditional grammars. The real question remains: While native speakers of English have consistently used they for the indefinite pronouns, at least since the Middle English period, why have the grammarians during those centuries pushed the pseudo-generic he as the "correct" pronoun? They have successfully used number as the superficial basis for agreement, at the same time inserting the masculine pronoun and ignoring the question of gender agreement, or pointing out that the masculine is "more worthy" and therefore in better "taste."

Nor have the contemporary linguists, including the transformationalists, significantly altered the situation. Only one or two have even questioned the "propriety" of using the masculine pronoun for everyone and anyone, and they go ahead and inform students to use it anyway. Paul Roberts deals with the topic in the following way:

> Perhaps the most important point to bear in mind about the indefinite pronouns is that, though they are often semantically plural, they are always syntactically singular, at least in conservative usage. . . .The tendency for the meaning to dominate is strongest in the use of they (them, their) in reference to an indefinite pronoun: 'Everyone averted their eyes.' Conservative usage prefers 'Everyone averted his (or her) eyes.' It's a niggling point but one on which many people niggle.
>
> (Modern Grammar, 1967, p. 20)

Roberts' discussion of the problem, in spite of his effort to trivialize it, doesn't take much away from the traditional grammarians. In lieu of trying to avoid the problem, which is the typical gambit, we might just as well use definitions such as that provided by Susan Emolyn Harman:

> The third person singular he, his, him and the plural they, their, theirs, them may refer to masculine antecedents or to nouns having common or unknown gender: Every man should do his work;. . .
> The third person singular feminine gender forms (she, her, hers) are used to refer to nouns whose gender is known to be feminine or the personified nouns of objects that are thought of as having feminine characteristics:. . .Mother Earth has her charms.
>
> (Descriptive English Grammar, 1950, p. 49)

In fact, some writers put so much faith in the truthfulness and validity of grammars of English, that we often find statements like this one, from Born to Win by James and Jongewald:

> The common pronoun 'he' refers to persons of either sex except when 'she' is definitely applicable.
>
> (p. 2)

They give this as a footnote in their introduction and assume that it explains everything to the reader.

In the 1970's, the use of the masculine singular personal pronoun is so taken for granted that no one mentions that he is, in fact, masculine. Statements now seem to avoid the question of gender in English altogether, and descriptions of pronominal replacement for the indefinite pronouns usually mention that the pronoun that replaces the indefinite can be singular or plural. Finally, male grammarians have succeeded in

their efforts to promote number concord as the primary issue. A recent description of contemporary English, regarded as one of the most important grammars of English even before its publication, provides an example of how entrenched the usage of the masculine pronoun has become.

> . . .Every and each can have a singular or plural pronoun for co-reference:
>
> {Everyone / Each / Each one} of the students should have {their / his} own books.
>
> (Quirk, et al., A Grammar of Contemporary English, 1972, p. 219.)

Gender, as a matter of fact, has virtually disappeared as a subject heading in modern grammar books, but the topic itself has merely been disguised, and appears most frequently in discussions of "semantic features."

Although I will give examples of the ways in which gender in English has created problems in semantic analysis, I would like to concentrate for a moment on how problems with gender in English have been glossed over by transformationalists, especially in their analyses of "pronominal replacement." Jacobs and Rosenbaum (1968: 96-7) provide the following representation of how the pronouns she, it, and he are characterized by semantic features in transformational grammar.

[he <+N> <+PRO> <+III> <+masculine> <+singular>]

[she <+N> <+PRO> <+III> <+feminine> <+singular>]

[it <+N> <+PRO> <+III> <-masculine> <-feminine> <+singular>]

Before I go on to discuss the implications of this feature analysis for the process of pronominalization as it is presented in transformational models of English, there are two peripheral observations I'd like to make. (1) The "features" for the pronouns she and he are the old labels from traditional grammarians, feminine and masculine. Although the use of these features implicitly acknowledges gender in English, the discussion in the text deals only with number and case. (2) The pronoun it has two features for gender, [-feminine] and [-masculine], instead of the traditional label, neuter. Of course, this will insure that it does not replace nouns that carry either the feature [+feminine] or [+masculine]. However, as I will illustrate, there won't be any nouns that aren't marked for one of these features, and it will rarely occur as a result.

This use of the two sex-specific labels exposes the modern definition of noun classification in English as a function of the animate/inanimate distinction, once the nonhuman animate or collective pronoun is defined by its lack of gender

When transformational grammarians explain pronominalization, how a given pronoun replaces an antecedent noun, they rely on the condition of "co-referentiality." That is, a pronoun can replace a noun only under those conditions in which it meets the condition of being co-referential with the antecedent noun. This condition is met if both the noun and the pronoun share the same semantic features in their lexical entries. In texts, pronominal replacement is illustrated only with sample sentences in which the antecedent noun is a proper noun like Mary, Artemis, Zeus, or John. Since proper nouns in English are sex-specific, the choice of examples insures that there will be no questions regarding either the feature system or the transformational

process being demonstrated, and the explanation looks convincing, as far as it goes. According to this formulation, the second occurrence of a noun is replaced by a pronoun that is co-referential with it. The sentence in (a) will result in (a'), and the sentence in (b) will become (b'), by pronominalization.

(a) Mary wished Mary had been there.

(a') Mary wished she had been there.

(b) John wished John had been there.

(b') John wished he had been there.

What transformationalists do not explain is how common nouns like poet, general, individual, and the indefinite pronouns, everyone, anyone, and one, will be marked in the lexicon in order to insure that pronominalization will occur under the condition of co-referentiality. The answer, of course, is obvious, but no one talks about it. In their examples involving common nouns, Jacobs and Rosenbaum, explaining that they will mark nouns only for those features relevant to the immediate discussion, ~~[illegible]~~ mark poet and who as [+human], without specifying sex, but ballerina is not even marked as [+human], and none of the common nouns in their grammar are marked for sex.

The fact of the matter is, although transformationalists have not leaped forward to claim it, that the transformational model of English does accurately describe the gender system in English. Almost every noun, and all the indefinite pronouns in the lexicon of a transformational grammar, will carry the feature

[+masculine] or [+male], and only a small subset of nouns, e. g., ballerina, waitress, wife, secretary, prostitute, nurse, etc., will be marked as [+feminine] or [+female]. As I've said, no one is talking about this, but within the framework of transformational theory the description will account for male dominance in the English vocabulary.

In the late 1960's, there was a brief flurry in theoretical writing on the subject of semantic features and their function in descriptive analysis. Katz and Fodor (1964: 496), in "The Structure of a Semantic Theory," use Female and Male as "semantic markers" for sex-antonymous pairs of words, e. g., bachelor and spinster, bride and groom, and cow and bull. There were objections to this system of marking features, on the grounds that this particular description lacked "simplicity," and other grammarians suggested the adoption of a binary feature system of description, either [±Female] or [±Male].

Geoffrey Leech, Towards a Semantic Description of English (1969), developed a systematic method of using binary features to describe English semantics, which he calls "systemic" or "componential" analysis. According to Leech, "Components (or semantic features) are the factors, or contrastive elements, which it is necessary to posit in order to account for all significant meaning relations" (p. 20). Interestingly enough, his first example of the ways in which these features account for meaning relations involves the four gender-related terms, girl/boy, woman/man. In order to characterize the gender distinction, he posits the features [±Male]. [+Male], obviously, is the

relevant feature for both boy and man. Not so obviously, or comfortably, the feature [-Male] is used for girl and woman. Notice, however, that Leech defines these features as "contrastive elements." In the case of gender, [-Male] must be the significant feature of girl and woman, because female^s are defined traditionally as "non-males," since males are the standard of comparison for the entire species, and women are the beings who "contrast" with them. Furthermore, Leech can justify his analysis on the grounds of simplicity; that is, in contemporary linguistics, a mode of description is chosen over alternative methods of description on the basis of the amount of data it accounts for with the fewest rules. Since almost all the^animate nouns in English must be marked [+Male] in the dictionary, selecting [+Male] as the significant feature will suffice for virtually every^such term in the language. The few words that apply exclusively to females can then be marked [-Male] to set them apart from the rest of the lexicon.

Only one transformational grammarian has registered a protest against male dominance in English, but he is still obliged by the facts of language^use to present he as the "correct" pronoun in those instances when the sex of a person is "unknown."

> However, many animate nouns do not specify gender, for example cook, teacher, student. In a fine display of masculine superiority, the English language treats these unspecified animate nouns as masculine, that is, if we are forced to use a third person pronoun to replace a human noun when we do not know (or care about) the gender of the person referred to, we usually use he.
>
> (Mark Lester, Introductory Transformational Grammar of English, 1971, p. 48)

In general, however, those modern grammarians who do mention the problem of gender in English treat masculine dominance as a "given." But, by and large, most grammars written in the past decade ignore gender and the indefinite pronouns in their descriptions of English structure.

On page 12 of this paper, I mentioned that there are two consequences of the exclusion of women from education that have affected the history of grammars of English. The first, the gradual movement toward semantic dominance of the masculine pronoun he, I have illustrated. The second, which I will not dwell on, nevertheless deserves some attention here: Because women have been defined as inferior by men, because we were therefore denied the right and the opportunity to seek an education in male institutions of learning, the examples used to illustrate specific grammatical points usually refer to men and their occupations and interests. In those examples that do mention women, we are always cast according to the social roles men have reserved for us. I will provide a few samples from several grammar books in order to illustrate my point.

> The pronouns him, his, we, it, stand instead of some of the nouns, or substantives, going before them; as him supplies the place of man; his of man's; we of men (implied in the general name man, including all men, of which number is the speaker;). . .
>
> (Robert Lowth, A Short Introduction to English Grammar, 1762, p. 12)

> A noun Substantive is, suppose the Name of a Thing, that standeth by himself, and requireth not another Word to be joined with him, to shew his Signification, as Homo a Man.
>
> (Richard Johnson, Grammatical Commentaries, 1706, p. 6)

He saw the train
He gave me the cup
He is tall
He made me angry

(Leech, Towards a Semantic Description of English, 1969, p. 98)

(1) a. I saw Joe and Carl
b. I saw Joe, Carl, and my mother's brother
c. I saw Joe, Carl, my mother's brother, and the boy whom you don't like
d. I saw Joe, Carl, my mother's brother, the boy you don't like, and a horse. . . .

(Jacobs and Rosenbaum, English Transformational Grammar, 1968, p. 268)

A man was waiting. ⇒
There was a man waiting.

A girl was mopping the floor. ⇒
There was a girl mopping the floor.

(Paul Roberts, Modern Grammar, 1968, p. 158)

It is bad enough that the authors of texts on English grammar continue to include examples that reflect the sexist attitudes and stereotypes that have been with us for so long. Worse, however, such examples, when they serve as the basis of grammatical definitions and explanations, can influence the analysis. When this occurs, we have an analysis that either ignores important points or misrepresents them. I am not saying that such examples do not abound in the language; I am saying that they are not the only ones.

I am heartily weary of reading about the horrible things that "Miss Fidditch" does to little boys in the pages of College English. I know that we all have to laugh sometimes, but I'm tired of laughing at other women. The stereotype of the unhappy,

withered, bitter, spinster schoolteacher, (unhappy because she is unmarried!), is a fiction created by men, and perpetuated by men. Of course she's unhappy! Of course she's bitter! Wouldn't you be thoroughly miserable if you had spent your life teaching female children that he and man included them? Wouldn't something have withered inside you, too, as you watched them grow up as you had? Those 'schoolmarms' that men use derisively in their treatises on the evils of traditional grammar have been doing the job that the male system pays them to do. That they have done it too well merely testifies to their competence.

As the quotations from recent linguistic texts illustrate, however, it is not just those old-fashioned "traditional grammars" that enforce usage. Usage is still what is taught under the guise of data, and it's still male usage that we teach in our linguistics courses. One way to change usage is to rewrite the textbooks. Another approach would change usage so that the grammar books would have to be rewritten. Both approaches are needed, and neither will work alone. Ultimately, however, the only approach that will yield acceptable results is an end to male domination. I have presented enough evidence, I think, to give some indication of how long alternatives to the usage we know have been around in the language. That those alternatives have never "caught on" can be attributed to male control of the language through their media and their institutions, and, as a consequence, American English still reflects the social realities of "woman's place." Until the oppression of women ends, we might as well teach Goold Brown's grammar, or write our own.

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