

A electronic milestone

● Alert readers may feel that there is something different about this issue – a milestone, in fact, in the development of *ET*. Our format and headings are the same, but everything else has changed, because with this issue production has become wholly electronic. *ET* is now the outcome of DTP: the abbreviation of that marvellous misnomer *desk-top publishing*.

For the techies, the facts are as follows. The text is keyed in Microsoft Word or converted into it from other word-processing systems on contributors' disks. It is then imported into a page-making program called QuarkXPress. In the process – a significant development in the history of print – the control of page make-up has passed from the typesetter to the designer, who applies typography (here, Bitstream Charter as opposed to Linotype Plantin, as in the past), and incorporates scanned images of illustrations, and supplies a PostScript file to the printers.

Peter Ducker, our designer, now has greater control over the end-product, within the constraints of a tight budget, and can manipulate texts to achieve various special effects. We have always taken pride in our panels; the making of such information-focusing structures has now become easier still, and I hope will prove ever more effective: for example, see the box within a box on p. 63, with two text widths and authentic massed signatures scanned in from a typed letter and shrunk to fit.

● When I first commented on that rare but promising pronoun *themselves* (in this space in *ET*22, Apr 90), I could hardly have foreseen the climax reached in this issue, in a letter and article from Ontario (Donald Revell *et al.* p. 10). Clearly, this gender-linked usage has been gaining momentum and is now well launched. I cordially invite lexicographers and grammarians to take note.

They should also take note of indefinite *a* before a vowel (as in *a aircraft*), whose progress in the US is compellingly described by Penny Stewart & Richard Fawcett (p. 18) in a report that includes many citations. This usage has made serious headway in recent years while *an* before *h* (as in *an historic occasion*) has paradoxically also been doing well in the US. This is certainly a odd state of affairs.

Tom McArthur

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English Today (ISSN 0266-0784) is a quarterly.

ISBN 0 521 467225

Publisher:

Cambridge University Press,
Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury
Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU.
Telephone (0223) 312393.

Subscriptions:

the current annual subscription price (excluding VAT) for four issues for libraries and institutions is £46 outside North America; £22 for individuals; £18 for students and the retired; airmail £10 per year extra. EC subscribers (outside the UK) who are not registered for VAT should add VAT at their country's rate. VAT registered subscribers should provide their VAT registration number. Apply to Jane Crossland at the above address.

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USA, CANADA AND MEXICO:

Publisher:

Cambridge University Press, 40
West 20th Street, New York, NY
10011-4211. Telephone (212) 924
3900.

Subscriptions:

the current annual subscription price in USA, Canada and Mexico for libraries and institutions is \$77; \$36 for individuals; \$25 for students and the retired. Copies are air-freighted to New York to arrive with minimum delay. Apply to Lynda DiCaprio at the above address.

Advertising Sales:

write to Elaine Rowland at the above address.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: send address changes in USA, Canada and Mexico to *English Today*, Cambridge University Press, 110 Midland Avenue, Port Chester, New York, NY 10573-9864.

Japanese prices for institutions (including ASP delivery) are available from Kinokuniya Company Ltd, P.O. Box 55, Chitose, Tokyo.

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Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge