

ROSEMARIE GLÄSER

A TRIBUTE TO ANTHONY PAUL COWIE

(19<sup>th</sup> June 1931 – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2015)

British Lexicographer – Lexicologist – Phraseologist and Foreign Language Teacher

WorldCat Identities identifies Anthony Paul Cowie as author of publications of Oxford University Press. In the first place, WorldCat Identities lists the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. This most influential dictionary, originally a joint project of A.S. Hornby and A.P. Cowie, reached “250 editions published between 1963 and 2000 in 4 languages and held by 1,948 WorldCat member libraries worldwide”. It was constantly updated, enlarged and finally edited by A.P. Cowie after A.S. Hornby's death.

The centre of Cowie's extensive work as a lexicologist and phraseologist (both as a researcher and a dictionary compiler) – and to no lesser degree as a lecturer with world-wide connections – was the School of English at the University of Leeds. Born on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1931 at Catterick, North Yorkshire, he attended The Harvey Grammar School. He showed an early interest in languages and literature as well as in the arts.. Between 1952 and 1955 he studied Romance languages (French, Italian, Spanish) at Lincoln College, University of Oxford. He continued his studies at London University, Institute of Education, which he completed with the Postgraduate Certificate in Education in 1956. The next stage of his academic training was the University of Edinburgh, Department of Applied Linguistics, where he came into contact with Ronald Mackin, the later co-author of his phraseological dictionaries. He achieved the Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics (with distinction) in 1964, and in 1965 he received his M.A. at Oxford University.

A.P. Cowie's academic career was interspersed with periods of language teaching, both in Britain and abroad. But finally he became permanently linked with the University of Leeds. Be-

tween 1964 and 1966 he was Temporary Lecturer in English Language and General Linguistics at the School of English; between 1966 and 1976 Lecturer in Modern English Language and 1976–1992 Senior Lecturer in Modern English Language. From 1992 onwards he was Reader in Lexicography.

Throughout his working life at Leeds University, A.P. Cowie was a restless lexicologist, lexicographer and language teacher. In the position of an Educational Officer he was an English lecturer in the Western Region of Nigeria (1956–1960), where he represented the British Council in 1963/64. Since the late 1970s he received numerous invitations from European and Asian universities to give guest lectures at English Seminars. These journeys widened his own teaching experience in ELT, gave him many insights into the foreign language teaching situation in African countries (e.g. Uganda and Cameroon) and were an extraordinary accumulation of exotic cultural impressions. He visited Japan (Tokyo, Hiroshima), China, Hong Kong, and Korea. He gave guest lectures in Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands (Amsterdam and Maastricht), Sweden, Belgium, Norway and (West) Germany.

But A.P. Cowie also undertook lecture tours to Eastern European countries “behind the Iron Curtain”, at a time of political tensions. Thus, he visited Poland (Poznan) and Romania (Bucharest) and also cooperated with lexicographers in the USSR in connection with a special edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* by the Russian Language Publishers, Moscow.

In this respect, he acted as a bridge-builder. In the early 1970s, Tony Cowie (as he was known to his colleagues and friends) made an attempt to establish contacts between the Universities of Leeds and Leipzig on a departmental level, notably by cooperation between the Centre of General and Applied Linguistics, especially the Division (Department) of Translation Studies at the University of Leipzig and the School of English at Leeds University. This contact led to some temporary visits of select students and staff members from the English and Translation Studies Department in Leipzig to their partners in Leeds. And, in return, there were student and faculty visits from the School of English. On the German side, the main problem was

the shortage of foreign currency, since the East German currency ostmark was only convertible into Russian rubles.

After several futile attempts to be included in this exchange scheme as an English philologist working on phraseology and ESP text analysis, I finally received the permission of East German authorities to accept an invitation to guest lectures in Leeds, linked with a stay at London and Edinburgh in autumn 1973. I am most grateful to Tony Cowie for providing this opportunity and for his kind hospitality. And six years later, I had another chance of giving lectures on phraseology at Leeds University when I had already embarked on writing a course book on this subject for German University students. I owe Tony Cowie valuable material from his dictionaries and professional advice for my book *Phraseologie der englischen Sprache*. VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie Leipzig 1986, licensed edition Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen 1986.

As a lexicographer, A.P. Cowie focused his work on two areas: first and foremost, on general dictionaries of present-day English, starting with the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, a joint publication by A.S. Hornby, A.P. Cowie and J.W. Lewis, Oxford University Press, 1974.

Some years later, A.P. Cowie became the chief editor of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary* (based on the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, fourth edition). The Chinese equivalent appeared at Oxford University Press and Commercial Press in Oxford and Beijing in 1994.

In 1999 A.P. Cowie published a separate volume on *English Dictionaries for Foreign Learners: A History* (Oxford Clarendon Press), a survey of the development of monolingual dictionaries since the 1930s. The paperback edition of this book had a Chinese imprint in 2002 and a Japanese translation in 2003.

A.P. Cowie's next monograph, *Semantics (Oxford Introductions to Language Study)*, appeared at Oxford University Press in 2009 and was followed by a Chinese imprint in 2012. Being aware of the research tradition in British lexicography, Tony Cowie honoured his close co-operator and long-time friend A.S. Hornby by editing a Special Issue of the *International Journal of Lexicography* entitled *A.S. Hornby 1898–1998: Commemorative Issue*. Oxford University Press 1998.

Also worth mentioning are international conferences on lexicography in which A.P. Cowie had an essential share. He was the plenary speaker at the Inaugurate Conference of the European Association for Lexicography (EURALEX) at the University of Exeter in September 1983. In April 1985 A.P. Cowie organized the Seminar on 'The Dictionary and the Language Learner' at the University of Leeds.

The second area of extensive lexicological research in which A.P. Cowie wrote books that pointed the way for later generations of linguists, was phraseology. He initiated the two introductory dictionaries on English Idioms and Phrases that provided a standard compendium for phraseologists, and especially for foreign language learners. The joint work of three authors bore lasting fruit: A.P. Cowie and R. Mackin, *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English. Volume I. Verbs with Prepositions and Particles*. London: Oxford University Press 1975, and A.P. Cowie, R. Mackin and J.R. McCaig, *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English. Volume II. Phrase, Clause and Sentence Idioms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983. Both dictionaries had several editions throughout the 1980s. The 13<sup>th</sup> edition of Volume II appeared in 2009.

In these unique reference books, the authors offer the user a thorough linguistic introduction, both as a theoretical foundation and the practical application. This regards the structural properties, the connotations (stylistic colouring), the cultural background and the situational context of idioms and (sentence) phrases, illustrated by authentic examples from written sources.

In the Introduction to the first edition of Volume II (1983), A.P. Cowie and his associates outline the scope of this dictionary and the type of idioms considered. As a broader concept, sentence idioms also include proverbs (*the early bird catches the worm; when/while the cat's away, the mice will play; like son, like father*), sayings (*one lives and learns; no news is good news; the coast is clear*), catchphrases (*the buck stops here; you don't say (so)! No names, no pack-drill*) and quotations (*no man is an island; all men are created equal*).

As an experienced language teacher, A.P. Cowie emphasized the importance of idioms for developing a foreign learner's linguistic competence and performance in present-day English.

In addition to his lexicological and phraseological ground work, A.P. Cowie followed current issues in these fields by attending international conferences, or by stimulating an exchange of ideas on special occasions. Thus, in April 1994, together with Peter Howarth, he organized the ‘International Symposium on Phraseology’ at the University of Leeds and acted as plenary speaker. It was a happy experience that this venue was attended by quite a number of participants from the former USSR who now were fortunate to travel freely, just as I was after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. And two years later, in April 1996, Tony Cowie was a plenary speaker at the ‘Second International Symposium on Phraseology’. It was held at the Lomonossow Moscow State University. At this conference, I experienced Tony Cowie as a lively and competent speaker at the plenary sessions and in the discussions, but also as a very sociable person at an evening get-together. Thus, for our enjoyment he suggested a joint recital from memory of English poetry – he started himself by setting an astounding example, and some of us followed suit. Although it was a marginal episode of this phraseological symposium, this heart-warming evening with English poems in a Russian environment was an unforgettable experience.

The proceedings of the Leeds conference appeared under the title *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis, and Applications*. Ed. by A.P. Cowie, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998. Its Paperback edition of 2001 was issued as Japanese translation in 2009.

Most remarkable as a new perspective is the editor’s concluding article on “Phraseological Dictionaries: Some East-West Comparisons”. It provides a well-founded synopsis of the work done by earlier and present lexicographers in the United Kingdom and in Russia as well as in the former Soviet Union.

Also worth mentioning is A.P. Cowie’s visit to Israel in February 2000. In June 2001 he was the plenary speaker at the International Workshop of the European Association for Phraseology and Paremiology, ‘New Perspectives and Research Fields’, held in Ascona, Switzerland.

In the following years, A.P. Cowie took responsibility on the Advisory Council of the European Society for Phraseology and also served on the Editorial Board of *Cahiers de lexicologie*. In

the years 1998–2002 he was the editor of the *International Journal of Lexicography*.

Throughout his life, Tony Cowie was a prolific academic worker. The list of his books (both co-authored and independent titles) and articles, as well as of his lecture and conference tours is impressive. No less important is the survey of his functions on boards of international associations and councils. He received numerous academic distinctions from national boards and councils. However, one is tempted to wonder why this list does not include any honorary doctorate from an overseas university where he did most valuable ground work.

Tony Cowie was not only a competent linguist, he was also a warm-hearted language teacher and outgoing towards his students in foreign countries and cultures. He was always unselfish, generous, and co-operative. In his cultural outlook and teaching experience he was truly a world citizen, but at the same time in his heart he remained a true Yorkshire man.

In his family, together with his wife Bernadette and his three children whom the couple had adopted as orphans from Manizales in Columbia and brought to their home in Leeds in 1982, he found intense happiness and intellectual energy. It was also this homely atmosphere that inspired him to write private and often intimate poems. A few of his lyrical texts were recited by his children at the service of his funeral on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015, in Oakwood Church in Leeds.

Tony Cowie will be remembered by his colleagues and friends with high esteem and gratitude.

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