

Book Reviews

Français aux États-Unis (1990–2005): Migration, Langue, Culture et Économie François Lagarde. Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang, 2007. Pp. xiv + 269. ISBN 978-3-03911-293-7 (pbk): €43.00/US\$51.95.

Lagarde sets out to establish a contemporary inventory of the French presence in the United States. Since participation in the war of independence, France has not played a major role on American soil and, from the 19th century, French immigration remained low relative to that from Germany, Italy, Britain and elsewhere. Considering the most recent trends in this immigration, Lagarde begins with a discussion of the difficulties of defining 'French'. 'French cuisine' in the United States, for example, is considerably altered for the American palate (*tellement adaptée au goût local*) and is French more by name than anything else.

The first and second chapters describe the number of French persons in the United States, the types of visas on which they were admitted, and their geographical distribution. In the category called 'non-immigrants' (tourists, students, exchange visitors, scholars and professionals), France ranked fifth in 2005 – after the United Kingdom, Mexico, Japan and Germany – although providing only 4% of all entrants in that category. The number of French who have the status of 'permanent resident alien' (green card holders) is even lower: only 0.39% in 2005. Lagarde concludes that French migration to the United States is largely temporary and that the number of French who become permanent residents or American citizens is minuscule; he also acknowledges the possibility of a small number of illegal French immigrants, mostly in the restaurant business or among students who choose to overstay their student visas. He contends that the French population in the United States is better educated and better off than the general American population, although one in ten French people are 'poor' – a

situation that he does not define or elaborate.

French immigrants live mainly in California, New York, Florida, New Jersey, Texas, Massachusetts and Illinois because of the commercial and service industries in those states. In 2000, the foreign-born population of New York City was estimated at 2,871,032. The French-born (including hexagonal French and those from several overseas French Departments) accounted for only 2,823 of these – compared to 180,632 Dominicans, 61,122 Jamaicans, 59,944 Ukrainians, and 30,489 Haitians – putting France in fifty-second place in terms of the foreign ancestry of the Big Apple's population.

In Chapter 3, Lagarde interviewed 66 French adults living in Texas about their migratory experiences in the United States. He concludes that all the interviewees had undergone some acculturation, but that this had not turned into complete assimilation for those of the first generation. However, the second and third generations were more prone to assimilation. In the next chapter, Lagarde focuses his attention on literature written by French people in the United States; as much of it is autobiographical, it can provide valuable information about the immigrant experience. Some novels reveal a non-traumatic experience in which the protagonist is content to have relocated in America. Lagarde cites Pierrette Fleutiaux's hero, who feels that 'there is room in this city for the semi-integrated (*semi-intégrés*)... he is ready to be a first-generation [French] immigrant, to be the father of an American. America does not frighten him' (p. 118). In another novel by Françoise Ulam, the protagonists are 'always happy to find again [their] American lifestyle, in a country where society is not as stratified as in France and where there exists an irresistible feeling of individual liberty' (p. 122). However, in some novels, the process of acculturation is more painful: the immigrant is split in two (*dédouble*); he is here, he is not from

here, he is similar, he is different, his past is cut off from his present.

Chapter 5 deals with the French language in the United States, and with those who can be classified as a French speaker. The Franco-Americans (persons of French ancestry) are generally found in New England and New York, but they do not constitute a 'critical mass' and their language is in the process of disappearing. In Louisiana, 'Cajun' French is no longer passed from one generation to the next, and is also in decline. With regard to other non-hexagonal francophone groups (from Africa, Belgium, Switzerland and elsewhere), regional French varieties also gradually give way to English. The *Québécois* 'snowbirds' reside in Hollywood, Florida, also known as *Little Quebec*. Lagarde acknowledges their presence, but he does not say how much French language use there actually is among these Canadians, who numbered 100,000 in 2001. Among the Haitians, the great majority are Creole speakers, and therefore French is not a vernacular language for them. Overall, Lagarde concludes that linguistic *francophonie* is minute (*infime*) in the United States, while warning that census language data can be misleading; for example, Patois, Cajun, and French Creole (presumably Haitian Creole) are all grouped under 'French'. The chapter ends with a list of French schools in the United States.

In Chapter 6, Lagarde suggests that there is no French ethnic culture *per se* in America. He suggests that, nowadays it may be reduced to a few 'emblems', such as a French painting collection in the Museum of Modern Art, or in the Guggenheim. In addition, he provides some information about cultural activities sponsored by the French embassy and other agencies. There is a note of resignation when he asks: 'what place could elitist culture find in a country of popular culture? One will be hard put to update the antiquated image (*l'image vieillotte*) that Americans have of French culture' (p. 167). The last two chapters assess the state of so-called French businesses in the

United States. Lagarde notes that – as with cuisine – French products (e.g. wines) are made for the American market; the embassy in Washington advises professionals in the import/export business to 'Americanise their products and remain more flexible in their approach' (p. 183). In short, Lagarde contends that, in the United States, French enterprises are French only *en partie*. The book ends on a sombre note: 'one will have to concede that there is practically no [real] French presence in the United States today' (p. 259).

Français aux États-Unis is a solid descriptive book, but it could have been analytical as well. Lagarde presents a numerical and factual profile of the French in the United States, but at no point does he discuss the climate of American reception. Since it is well documented in the literature that modes of immigrant incorporation are affected by the limits and possibilities offered by the host society, one could reasonably expect some discussion of this literature; its absence is, in my opinion, a major flaw. Why is the French immigrant population in the United States able to succeed better than other immigrant groups (Mexicans, Haitians, Vietnamese, Polish, and so on), to the point of being '*plus instruite et plus riche que la population nationale*' (p. 31)? Why are the French able (and willing) to acculturate so well that their presence is so *infime*? What structural mechanisms exist in the host society that facilitates such an acculturation? What baggage of 'things past' do the French bring with them? These remain unanswered questions.

However, this is a useful book, providing readers with a wealth of information about immigration patterns, residential distribution, diasporic literature, business and culture. General readers as well as specialists will benefit from reading it.

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Beyond Biculturalism: The Politics of an Indigenous Minority

Dominic O'Sullivan. Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers, 2007. Pp. viii + 239. ISBN 1-86969-285-8 (pbk): NZ\$45.00.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a deeply divided society. On one side are the different Maori tribes who comprise the indigenous inhabitants, and who have occupied the islands for centuries prior to European contact. Representing about 16% of the population, most Maori remain politically and economically marginalised, despite gradual improvements in standards of living. Most now live in cities, but have not severed their rural and tribal ties. On the other side are the non-Maori (the Pakeha), consisting largely of the descendants of British and European settlers, although there are also growing numbers of people from Asia. Insofar as the principles of New Zealand's constitutional order remain highly Eurocentric and systemically colonialist, no one should be surprised to learn that 'white' Pakeha continue to monopolise the prevailing distribution of power, privilege and resources.

In light of such deep divisions, is it possible to construct a non-colonial relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, between indigenous Maori peoples and the New Zealand state? One might have thought a commitment to the principles of biculturalism as a framework for governance would provide a working solution. Apparently not, however – and this book sets out to demonstrate why biculturalism is working against, rather than for, Maori. A commitment to the principles of self-determination and the politics of indigeneity is proposed, instead, as a post-colonial social contract for 'living together differently'.

According to its author, the theme of the book is relatively straightforward. Of Te Rarawa, Ngati Kahu and Irish descent, Dominic O'Sullivan provides a clinical analysis of contemporary government Maori policy. He argues that the bicultural political discourses dominating Maori–Crown relations have transformed

Maori into a junior partner in a colonial relationship that breeds dependency and underdevelopment. A clash between competing governance paradigms has evolved – involving, on the one hand, a state-determination model with its thinly veiled commitment to assimilation and, on the other, Maori-inspired self-determination models with a commitment to tribally based self-determining autonomy over land, identity and political voice. Ironically, the conflict of interests in both cases pivots around the politics of biculturalism.

The principle of biculturalism has been widely touted as a preferred framework for government policy and organisational practice. The concept itself attracted attention with the publication of Eric Schwimmer's *The Maori People in the 1960s* (1968). Nevertheless, it languished in political limbo until the mid-1980s, when the ideals of biculturalism displaced those of monoculturalism at the level of government-speak. Biculturalism assumed the status of *de facto* government policy in 1986, following passage of the State Owned Enterprises Bill, which read: 'nothing in the Act shall permit the Crown to act in a manner that is inconsistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi' (an 1840 accord between the Crown and many Maori chiefs, widely regarded as New Zealand's foundational constitutional document). A Court of Appeal ruling in 1987 reaffirmed the bicultural partnership, and passage of the State Services Act in 1988 confirmed the 'biculturality' of Aotearoa by instructing state institutions to incorporate the Treaty obligations of partnership, participation and protection.

In reminding us that people can use the same words but speak a different language – thus speaking past one another – state interpretations of biculturalism continue to differ from those of Maori. For the state, reference to biculturalism tends to focus on institutional accommodation by incorporating a Maori *dimension* into state practices and national symbols – including the adoption of Maori names for government departments, increased use of Maori language and protocols for

ceremonial occasions and the printing of official reports in both Maori and English. As an accommodative exercise in state-determination, biculturalism seeks to preserve the *status quo* by depoliticising differences through institutional inclusion, making New Zealand safe from diversity, and safe for diversity. The conclusion seems inescapable: insofar as the objective is to make institutions more respectful of Maori diversity, more reflective of this diversity, and more responsive to it, what passes for biculturalism is really a multiculturalism for Maori – one that reduces Maori to individuals with needs, or a population with problems, rather than a people with rights.

For Maori, however, biculturalism is inextricably linked with self-determination and the creation of tribal models of self-determining autonomy. A binational-based biculturalism is neither an exercise in accommodating indigenous demands by way of institutional inclusiveness, nor is it about a discharging of Crown obligations by righting historical wrongs through grievance settlements. Proposed instead is the re-crafting of a constitutional agenda around a new social contract rooted in the principles of partnership, difference and self-determining autonomy. With its notion of resistance and change through the politicisation of differences, thereby making indigeneity safe from New Zealand, as well as safe for society, a binational biculturalism challenges the structural and ideological foundations of New Zealand's constitutional order. Or, as O'Sullivan puts it:

Biculturalism cannot realize greater autonomy because its primary concern is with relationships among people in institutional settings, and within and among bureaucratic institutions. Self-determination is in contrast concerned with creating, to the greatest extent possible, independence and autonomy for groups, not necessarily in isolation from wider society, but certainly apart from the controls and regulations imposed from outside. (p. 4)

Later, he writes of the contrasts between state-biculturalism and self-biculturalism:

Biculturalism offers colonial dependence. Self-determination at least legitimises and to some extent offers autonomy, not as an act of government benevolence, but as an inherent right of indigeneity ... Biculturalism is a state strategy to manage resistance and a limited concession seeking strategy for Maori. It modifies assimilation, while protecting the nation's state assumed exclusive jurisdiction. It offers cultural space, while self-determination is more concerned with wider issues of citizenship, language, and political participation. Biculturalism misses the point of overlapping and interdependent Maori/Pakeha relationships and ignores the possibility of non colonial relationships beyond Pakeha, which makes it inevitably limiting. (p. 209)

The author should be congratulated for synthesising the existing literature into an informative read. Drawing on Australian and Canadian comparisons also helps to anchor O'Sullivan's key thesis: biculturalism as currently articulated in policy discourse promises much but delivers little; worse, it also compromises Maori aspirations as *tangata whenua* (peoples of the land). Like any ambitious work, the book has some minor flaws. Its failure to acknowledge oppositional meanings within key concepts may be problematic. Biculturalism can consist of weak versions (as pointed out in the book) or strong binational versions that embrace the notion of indigenous peoples as fundamentally autonomous political nations (or peoples). The concept of partnerships is no less polyvalent: it can reflect a junior partnership model or a senior one with the connotation of equality. 'Determination' can invoke either state models for managing resistance or indigenous Maori models of self-determining autonomy over relevant jurisdictions. The book is also somewhat repetitive in hammering home the message that biculturalism is bad and self-determination is good. A self-determination that emphasises mate-

realistic improvement and measures success in terms of socioeconomic indicators may well prove more assimilatory than even the blandest biculturalism.

These criticisms are quibbles, however. The author provides a valuable service in reminding us that, when it comes to social reality, appearances can be deceiving; that any Maori determination must be multidimensional, incorporating both political and economic initiatives as co-partners in Maori renewal; that Maori are tribal peoples whose differences cannot be subsumed under a one-size-fits-all agenda; and that the differences between state- and self-determination boil down to one key variable: power. In privileging power as pivotal, O'Sullivan seems to propose a radical biculturalism that might be called binationalism, by which Aotearoa New Zealand is defined as a nation-state of two founding peoples with power-sharing control over the national agenda.

Sprachenpolitik und Sprachkultur

Detlev Blanke and Jürgen Scharnhorst (eds). Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang, 2007. Pp. 280. ISBN 978-3-631-55592-7 (pbk): €48.00/\$57.95.

Contributions to this volume are based on presentations given at a German symposium in 2005. The main topics addressed here are language policy in the EU, and the role of languages of international communication (e.g. Esperanto and English). There is an introduction, seven essays on specific topics, and supplementary material.

In his introductory essay, Jürgen Scharnhorst discusses the main categories into which the volume's topics fall: linguistic situation, language culture and language policy. With regard to the last, the author affirms the importance of differentiating between two meanings of the term *language policy*, which can be rendered in German as both *Sprachenpolitik* and *Sprachpolitik*. The former denotes the relation between different (state) languages, while the latter relates to the politics of language planning within a particular language. Next, Gerhard Stickel

That is the theory, however practice may prove more thorny. Inasmuch as governments generally prefer institutional accommodation and grievance settlement, rather than any re forging of constitutional bases, central authorities will continue to misread the politics of Maori indigeneity and its implications for a binational coexistence. The miscalculation is understandable: as a binational agenda constantly interrogates the colonial structures and mindset that organise indigenous people–Crown relations, its potential for disrupting the constitutional *status quo* is potent.

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provides an informative overview of EU languages, including data on the number of speakers of each. He then concentrates on the European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL), which, while not opposing the international role of English, was established to preserve and develop European language diversity. It recommends that Europeans receive an intensive education in their own standard variety while also acquiring oral and written skills in two other European languages. The article poses the challenging question of how one's own language and cultural identity – and loyalty to both – can be reconciled with internationalised communication. One chapter topic that deserves more attention is the reflection of European language diversity in the practical work of EU institutions. Stickel also summarises the results of empirical investigations of views (in both old and new EU countries) of the foreign languages considered the most useful.

Three contributors discuss the language policies surrounding particular European languages. First, Johannes Klare gives an extensive overview of the culture and politics of language in France, Spain,

and Italy. He considers the history of French, Spanish and Italian, their present situations at home and abroad, and the status of regional variants and minority languages. Wim Jansen does much the same for Dutch. Of particular interest are the official organisations and private societies that support Dutch in the face of a general 'invasion' of English. For example, the *Stichting Nederlands* (Dutch Foundation) organises monthly nominations for the 'best use' and 'worst abuse' of the Dutch language. As the author suggests, the 'healthy' desire to preserve one's native language might easily play into citizens' 'unhealthy' fear of immigration. Finally, Vit Dovalil's contribution is dedicated to language policy in the Czech Republic; the chapter enumerates nationalities and native languages, and discusses the language regulations contained in legal statutes and conventions.

The next three contributions raise new issues related to the aforementioned topics. Rudolf-Josef Fischer analyses English language competence in Germany, presenting the results of an empirical study that shows that English-language competence among Germans is not age-related. Moreover, the informants – particularly younger people – tended to be overly optimistic in their self-assessed English knowledge. These findings have implications for the future of English among Germans: students who are overly positive in such assessments are generally less motivated to study the language further. Thus, the goal that motivates more than one-third of all German students to study English at university level – the intention of using English as a lingua franca – remains out of reach, at least for the time being.

Sabine Fiedler discusses English and Esperanto as lingua francas. She argues that the dominance of the former relates not only to geographic expansion, but also to other factors, (such as the role of America in youth culture). There are some interesting observations about English as a lingua franca (ELF) that call for further investigation. For example, it may be too optimistic to claim that ELF is not

related to the prestige of any group of native speakers and that it is a distinct variety of English over which 'no nation can have custody' because it 'belongs to all its users'. While recognising the inadequacy of comparing ELF and Esperanto, Fiedler points out some similarities between the two – in particular, the idea that participants in communication in either language are on equal footing because there is no ideal or privileged group of native speakers. Unfortunately, Esperanto and ELF have both evoked negative attitudes in some quarters because they are perceived as artificial and/or simplified. Detlev Blanke discusses language policies surrounding international auxiliary languages, particularly Esperanto. He provides some historical background, emphasises the Esperantist effort to promote European integration, and pleads for more consideration of the model of international democratic communication represented by Esperanto.

The book's supplementary materials include Scharnhorst's concluding remarks at the symposium and his selected reference list for the topics covered here. The book provides inspiring and interesting material for applied linguists, sociolinguists and all those interested in language policy, lingua franca communication, and the position of the many languages of the EU. It discusses the possible conflict between language rights and diversity in EU institutions and the need for practical international communication. Individual contributions show how language policy and planning involve a number of political, social and ethical questions – for example, that of the relationships among language, nationalism and globalisation. Many other related topics are mentioned only in passing, and some of them – the language situations in countries not dealt with here, to cite an obvious instance – certainly deserve more attention.

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The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature

Steven Pinker. London, New York: Allen Lane / Viking, 2007. Pp. ix + 499. ISBN 978-0-713-99741-5 (hbk): £25.00. ISBN 978-0-670-06327-7 (hbk): \$29.95.

Why We Talk: The Evolutionary Origins of Language

Jean-Louis Dessalles. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 384. ISBN 978-0-19-927623-3 (hbk): £35.00 / \$65.00.

The Origins of Meaning: Language in the Light of Evolution

James Hurford. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xiii + 388. ISBN 978-0-19-920785-5 (hbk): £20.00 / \$45.00.

Of the three books under review, Steven Pinker's *The Stuff of Thought* is the most entertaining, although not necessarily the most informative. It is written in the style now familiar from his earlier books (*The Language Instinct*, *How the Mind Works*, *Words and Rules* and *The Blank Slate*), a style that might now be termed Pinkerese, with its seemingly endless repertoire of anecdotes and jokes, ranging from cartoon strips to American politics to Shakespeare. Pinker is besotted with words. He is nevertheless a serious scholar, and his books have important things to say, although the message sometimes gets buried in the stylistic froth.

My sense is that the impact of the four earlier books has declined slightly but steadily since the triumph of the first one (*The Language Instinct*), perhaps because readers have begun to habituate to Pinkerese. *The Stuff of Thought* nevertheless includes one chapter that is bound to ensure the book's popularity in pubs and schoolyards. 'The Seven Words You Can't Say on Television' is a no-holds-barred discussion of words that are taboo in polite society but commonplace in the workaday world. At various times in history, taboo words have been based on religion, excreta or sexual material, and, more recently, on racial prejudices. Once the reader overcomes the titillation of

seeing so many shocking words, the psychological messages come through, and Pinker concludes that taboo words do serve a necessary function. Let's hope there are always things that our betters tell us we shouldn't mention.

More generally, Pinker is concerned to understand the human mind through the lens of language, polite as well as impolite. In some respects, he has moved on from *The Language Instinct*, which was essentially an attempt to explain Chomskyan linguistics in a way that people might actually understand. But Chomsky seemed almost to insulate language from other aspects of human thought, with highly abstract accounts of how syntax works. Here, Pinker does almost the reverse, opening up language to unravel the nature of the mind. One senses that he has now strayed some distance from Chomskyan orthodoxy, and this adds a spark to the book – to some almost as shocking, perhaps, as all those taboo words.

The Stuff of Thought steers a middle course between Fodor's absurd notion that all of our concepts are innate – that 'we are born with some fifty thousand concepts', as Pinker puts it – and the opposite extreme, radical pragmatics, which holds that there are no fixed concepts underlying our use of words. Pinker argues that thought is built from a handful of basic units that are more or less universal, if not innate. These include 'events, states, things, substances, places and goals'. Behind the glitter of Pinker's prose lies a sensible story that perhaps comes closer to 'how the mind works' than his earlier blockbuster with that title.

Jean-Louis Dessalles was the organiser of the Third International Conference on the Evolution of Language, held in Paris in 2000, and wrote *Aux origines du langage*, published in the same year. There is a poignancy to both events, since the Linguistic Society of Paris had banned all discussion of the evolution of language in 1866. In *Why We Talk*, the English translation of his book, Dessalles has a further dig at Chomsky, hinting that he may have been partly responsible for the continuation of the ban into modern

times, on the grounds that Chomsky saw questions about the evolution of language, or about its biological function, to be pointless – views that Dessalles finds ‘astonishing’. But he is equally dismissive of many of those who have proposed biologically based theories of language evolution, including those linking it to bipedalism, general intelligence, social intelligence, brain size or the lowering of the larynx.

He is also rather dismissive of one of my own favourite theories, which is that language evolved from manual gestures. Here, and in other respects, the book suffers from being out of date. Although the English version was published in 2007, there is no reference to work published since 2000, the year in which the French original appeared. There is no mention of mirror neurons, which have since come to feature prominently in discussions of language and language evolution, or of the related work showing close ties between manual and oral movements. Mirror neurons, first discovered in the monkey brain, fire both when the animal makes a grasping movement and when it observes the same movement made by another individual. This discovery calls to mind the motor theory of speech perception, which holds that speech is perceived not in terms of its acoustic properties, but rather in terms of how it is produced.

A wealth of recent evidence shows close ties among the neural mechanisms involved in intentional manual acts, speech and signed language, and speech itself can be profitably understood as a gestural system. Fossil evidence indicates that speech probably evolved very recently, perhaps only in our own species from less than 200,000 years ago. Identifying language with speech then raises the difficult question of how such a complex structural system could have evolved in so short a time. But if language is regarded as composed of gestures, whether vocal, manual or a combination of the two, the burden of tracing its evolutionary history is considerably eased.

None of this has a great impact upon the main theme of Dessalles’ book, though, since he is not so much concerned with the mechanics of language as with the evolutionary pressures that drove it. He considers conversation to be the true essence of language, and after a rather tortuous journey through various hypotheses focusing on the importance of coalitions to human survival, he settles on the idea that language evolved as a means of trading relevant information for status. Language is a kind of showing off – which may well underlie not only the books under review, but also this review itself. But although there may well be some subtle truth to Dessalles’ intricate analyses, I do wonder if language may bestow fitness in more obvious ways, such as the simple sharing of knowledge.

James Hurford’s *Origins of Meaning*, as its title indicates, focuses on meaning, and we are promised a second book on the origins of syntax. He begins with a useful survey of animal cognition, with the aim of specifying the precursors of meaning. The critical step in human evolution, Hurford suggests, was the evolution of a new kind of memory, unique to humans. This is what Endel Tulving called *episodic memory*, or memory for individual events. Episodic memory is now also understood as part of the more general notion of mental time travel, whereby we can consciously move both back and forward in time, mentally reliving past events and imagining future ones.

In an interesting paragraph, awkwardly inserted as though an afterthought, Hurford writes: ‘Perhaps there is some connection between humans’ unique episodic memory capacity and their unique syntactic abilities’. To my mind, he missed a golden opportunity to expand this idea, perhaps to the point of explaining language itself. To bring to mind events that are not in the present requires a large vocabulary of stored concepts, ways of combining them, and ways of locating events in time as well as space. The combinations of concepts that make up specific episodes, whether past, present or future (or fictional, for that

matter) are essentially limitless in their potential variety. If language evolved as a way of communicating episodes, then many of its properties follow immediately, including the vast vocabulary of words to refer to concepts, ways of expressing time through tense (or other means), and generative rules to express the combinations. Perhaps the next book on syntax will provide Hurford with the opportunity to explore this.

In the rest of the book, Hurford treads much the same path as Dessalles. He considers such mechanisms as kin selection, reciprocal altruism, sexual selection, Zahavi's Handicap Principle, and even Dessalles' notion of trading information for status, but none of these suffices on its own as an explanation for language. As he admits, this is disappointing; something as singular as human language seems to cry out for a single evolutionary principle, but if there is none that does the trick, what's an honest bloke to say? But perhaps he too overlooks the gain in biological fitness, especially at the group level, to be derived simply from the sharing of knowledge. As Pinker put it in *The Stuff of Thought*, 'language is adapted to every feature of our experience that is shareable with others'.

Taken together, the three books illustrate something of the current state of play on language and its evolution. One overriding impression is that language has been wrested away from the narrow focus of many linguists, including the once-dominant Chomsky. He is there of course in all three books, but matched by references to Darwin, and the impression is that both are now history – perhaps Chomsky more so than Darwin. In place of the view of language as an encapsulated symbol-processing system, we now see language as part of the much broader canvas of human cognition and biological adaptation. Nevertheless, there are not many solutions here to the question of how and why language evolved in our species, and not in any other. Either we need to keep working on the problem, or it's time for another ban.

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