



Review: [untitled]

Author(s): D. Terence Langendoen

Reviewed work(s):

From Deep to Surface Structure: An Introduction to Transformational syntax by Marina K. Burt

Source: *College English*, Vol. 34, No. 8 (May, 1973), pp. 1150-1151

Published by: National Council of Teachers of English

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/374913>

Accessed: 12/05/2009 12:15

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=ncte>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



National Council of Teachers of English is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *College English*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

search Association really should not have let a contributor define it as a group for bibliographers (p. 331)—or is this a revealing Freudian slip by contributor and editor alike? Delany's periodical is called *Warp* on p. 352 and (rightly) *Quark* two pages later. The bibliography on pp. 351-52 omits such basic books as Parrinder's on Wells, messes up three out of twenty-four names (of Professors Franklin, Kagarlitski, and Philmus), misquotes Dr. Plank's book title, and omits all publishers—it is almost useless. If I may further cite a personal example, he has me teaching at the University of Montreal (p. xiv), though he has been for some years corresponding with me at McGill University, which happens to be in Montreal too. Obviously, the editor did not bother to check his data. He apparently did not much bother to check the texts either; thus Leibnitz's "pre-established harmony" becomes "pre-stabilized" (sic!) on p. 323, etc. Some of this may, perhaps, be explained as due to inadequate proofreading, which is distressingly apparent in the book. But even so, it is

evidence of such carelessness that one cannot assume it is possible to trust other information in the book. To top it all, it does not have an index; this cuts its usefulness for scholarly purposes in half.

One hopes, especially in view of their planned continuing publications on SF writers, that the "popular" in "Bowling Green University Popular Press" will continue to refer to its subject-matter—the so-called or miscalled "trivial literature"—and not to a trivial approach. As it is, though *SF: The Other Side of Realism* still remains necessary to students of SF because of a number of valuable contributions it contains, it will have to be used with great prudence. As the first anthology of SF criticism and scholarship, it had a unique opportunity to skim the cream of the field, and give us a much-needed introduction to it as well as a much-needed companion to teaching a balanced course. This opportunity has been blown.

DARKO SUVIN
McGill University

FROM DEEP TO SURFACE STRUCTURE: AN INTRODUCTION TO TRANSFORMATIONAL SYNTAX Marina K. Burt (New York: Harper and Row, 1971, xi + 256 pp.).

Though the word "introduction" appears in the subtitle, the book will not strike many readers of this journal as falling within that genre. It perhaps embodies the humanistically-trained and oriented English teacher's worst nightmare about transformational grammar. Each page bristles with tree-diagrams and formal statements of transformational rules. The prose, such as it is, is in single-spaced typescript reduced in half from pica. Magnifying glasses are not provided.

The book is based on lecture notes taken from the introductory syntax course at M.I.T. as it was taught rough-

ly four years ago. (I am told that it is not taught quite that way anymore.) It starts out, in typical fashion, with arguments to show that there is such a thing as a grammar of English, that it has the formal properties now customarily ascribed to it, and that English speakers have internalized its rules. It then proceeds to consider how one could construct an argument that there are at least two transformational rules in English grammar, one which creates reflexive pronouns (*myself, yourself, etc.*) out of nonreflexive ones (*me, you, etc.*) and another which deletes the subject *you* of imperative sentences, and that these two rules apply sequentially; first Reflexive and second Imperative. The argument is a classical one; if there can be said to be a traditional lore in the field of transformational grammar, the

argument about Reflexive and Imperative certainly belongs to it. Its chief virtue lies in the way in which it illustrates the role that simplicity plays in linguistic argumentation. That is, the Reflexive rule achieves its simplest form if it is assumed to precede the Imperative rule. This concern to arrive at the simplest statement of the rules of grammar consistent with the facts of language has always been the major driving force of transformational linguistics. This book, if worked through carefully, provides a wealth of illustrations of how to evaluate alternative approaches in terms of the relative simplicity of their outcomes.

Unfortunately these illustrations are nearly all of the same sort: which ordering of the transformational rules yields the simplest statement consistent with the facts? Comparatively little attention is paid, for example, to the question of how the existence of particular transformations is motivated on simplicity grounds (although there are excellent discussions on why there must be Passive and Relative-Clause Formation transformations in English). Worse, no attention at all is paid to alternative statements of the same rule, with the result that practically none of the transformations listed is given in its simplest possible form (again, consistent with the facts presented), and in many cases there are mistakes in the rule statements. In my review of the book to appear in *Language*, I have given a fairly exhaustive list of corrections and the interested reader is referred to that discussion.

Assuming that the book is corrected along the lines I have suggested, the question remains how the book can be used by student and instructor. As the author herself notes, it is definitely not usable by itself for a course either in English syntax or in transformational theory. Rather, she tells us, it should be used as a supplementary workbook for an introductory course on either

subject.

But what work? There are no exercises. The rules are presented—nothing more—and the arguments for rule ordering are painstakingly worked out. There is nothing for the reader, instructor or student, to do except to notice or be confused by the mistakes. One must therefore use one's own ingenuity. I have found, for example, that the mistakes in the book provide useful bases for problem exercises. Moreover, it is possible to ask students to work out other rules of English grammar, such as Particle Movement and Cleft-Sentence Formation, using the formalisms of the book, and to integrate these into Burt's grammar. Finally, it is possible, though not easy, to discuss and to ask students to work out the linguistic theory that underlies the work. Parts II through IV of the book are quite clearly based on Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. So is Part I, though the rules given there are largely drawn from Chomsky's earlier work, primarily *Syntactic Structures*. Aside from illustrating "possible" rules within the theory, however, the book does not force the reader to consider its crucial aspects—what motivates it, what kinds of data would falsify it, etc. Perhaps out of consideration of its proclaimed "introductory" character, none of the critical problems now under intensive investigation are considered: the interactions of quantifiers and negation, how noun-phrases are introduced, conjunction reduction, etc. And perhaps that is just as well, since it is very possible that standard theory will emerge relatively unscathed by the attacks it is now suffering, and that the only changes will be in the statement of certain rules, not in the theory in which they are couched.

D. TERENCE LANGENDOEN
Brooklyn College, City
University of New York