RAVEN IOOR McDAVID, JR. (16 October 1911 - 21 October 1984)

Raven McDavid was born in Greenville, South Carolina, but spent most of his adult life *in partibus infidelibus.* He did his undergraduate work at that impeccably Southern institution, Furman, and his graduate work at that Northern University plunked down in the midst of Dixie, Duke. His teaching career was predominantly in the North. After a brief tour of duty at The Citadel, he taught at Michigan State, Southwestern Louisiana, Illinois, Cornell, Case Western Reserve, and Chicago, from which he retired after twenty years of service.

Despite McDavid's long sojourn in the North, he never forgot his roots in the South. Nor did he ever cease to sound like a South Carolinian. The folks down home used to accuse him of living so long among the Yankees that he had begun to sound like one; but nobody in metropolitan Chicago ever mistook Raven for a Midwesterner. He was sometimes mistaken on the telephone for a black, a mistake which delighted Raven because it confirmed his belief that there is no overwhelming distinction between black and white speech in the South. In cases of such telephonic confusion, Raven was known to lead the confusee, with Menckenian glee, rather far down the garden path.

McDavid is best known in the scholarly world for his work on the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada (LAUSC) projects—more particularly as a fieldworker and editor for the Linguistic Atlas of the North Central States (LANCS) and the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS). Part of the fruit of his dialect work can be seen in *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States* (1961), which he coauthored with Hans Kurath. Eventually, McDavid became editor-in-chief of LAMSAS and, after the death of Albert Marckwardt, also of LANCS.

McDavid's interest in language, however, was by no means limited to dialect geography. One of his great services was to condense the three treasure-filled volumes of the fourth edition of H.L. Mencken's *American Language* into a single abridged edition (1963) and, moreover, to supplement H.L.M.'s work with more recent tidbits and citations, incorporated so skillfully into Mencken's text that only the iden-

tifying brackets distinguish the disciple's from the master's words. McDavid was one of those persons (Thomas Pyles was another) who had early come under Mencken's powerful spell. Discovering Mencken was rather like falling in love for the first time, an experience never to be forgotten. Mencken had shown that scholarship on the language of Americans was not only important, but could be fun as well. The Mencken style and the Mencken wit were infectious: McDavid was bitten by the bug and never recovered.

McDavid was an indefatigable conference-goer. He was a man who seemed to be always on the move, brimming over with ideas and enthusiasms. No conference on dialect study was quite complete without a paper by Raven McDavid; and no paper at a conference he attended, on any subject whatever, was quite finished without a comment by McDavid. In his professional behavior at meetings and elsewhere, he belonged to the Old School. That is, his wit could be trenchant, but was never savage. He never picked on those who were littler than he, and there were few who could lay claim to being bigger. He had the accomplishments of a scholar and the instincts of a gentleman.

To be sure, McDavid was hipped on certain subjects. He was a data man. He thought that those who speculated about language ought to have some information on which to found their speculations; and he was always concerned that existing data be used before time, energy, and funds were expended searching for more. Use of the Linguistic Atlas materials was a refrain in McDavid's lyrics. It bothered him to see the vast resources of the Linguistic Atlases overlooked, so he continually called attention to them.

McDavid's concern for use of LAUSC materials sprang partly from his personal involvement with many of the Atlases—we all like to see what we have laboriously produced be put to use by others. There is something satisfying, ego-stroking, to have others in our intellectual debt. But his concern sprang also from the sense of economy, elegance, beauty—call it what you will—that has motivated all good scholarly work in the Western World. As a governing principle, Ockham's Razor, that one should not needlessly multiply entities, is usually taken to mean that the simplest of competing theories is preferable. But it also means that it is needless to gather new data until we know whether existing treasure troves of facts will fill our need. The Linguistic Atlas projects, those of McDavid and others—especially Hans Kurath's *Linguistic Atlas of New England,* Harold B. Allen's *Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest,* and Lee Pederson's *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States*—are such treasure troves that are too often overlooked by students of American English.

McDavid's career was suitably crowned with honors. He had Fulbrights to Mainz (1965), Odense (1980), and Trondheim (1981), returning the American view of dialectology to Europe, where it began. His accomplishments were recognized by honorary degrees from his alma maters, Furman and Duke, and also from the Sorbonne. His students are scattered far and wide doing good things. Various of his essays were collected as *Dialects in Culture* (1979) and *Varieties of American English* (1980). His life was full, productive, and beneficial to others.

Raven McDavid was a member of the American Name Society since the early years of the organization, and he was always supportive of onomastic work, in recent years increasingly so. There is, indeed, an intimate connection between dialect geography and onomastics—toponymy, of course, but other sorts as well. The first fascicles of the *Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States* (1980-) are devoted to place names: phonetic transcriptions for the pronunciation of the names of counties in which the informants lived and of other places in their vicinity, of the names of regions such as New England, of states, and of principal cities. From the Linguistic Atlases we can certainly find out how place names are pronounced, both in the areas where they are native and elsewhere. McDavid knew how closely onomastics is related to other disciplines. Indeed, being one of the pioneers in the discipline of sociolinguistics, he saw the study of all aspects of human life as interrelated.

Raven I. McDavid, Jr., was one of the great figures in the study of language in America. The work he leaves behind him is a monument to the importance of the study, and his scholarly achievements are a fitting memorial. Words may or may not be mightier than the sword, but his will surely outlast marble and granite.

John Algeo

University of Georgia