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REVIEWS

Gender Shifts in the History of English. By Anne Curzan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xii, 223. Hardcover. \$65.00.

Reviewed by CHARLES JONES, *University of Edinburgh*

This monograph sets out to discuss, describe, and provide reasons for changes to the classification of nouns with respect to whatever is meant by “gender.” The author explores in some detail the discrepancies of various types that can arise in a language like early English, where nouns appear to be classified in the user’s lexicon with reference to criteria that, on the whole, are nonrecoverable. That grammars of early English group nouns into three “types” (not altogether helpfully labeled masculine, feminine, and neuter) probably reflects an awareness of a typology based (among other things) on the value of a particular noun’s stressed vowel (long, short, front, back, and so on), a basis that over time, altered by the workings of phonological change, has become opaque to the language user, so that what has turned out (possibly completely randomly as a three-, rather than a two- or four-way grouping) represents a fossilization of a previously transparent set of alternations. That this three-way grouping of nominal elements is mapped onto a pronominal system that, at least partially, is also tripartite, leads the observer, and perhaps also the language user, to seek some kind of correlation between the two sets. And since pronominal usage in English, possibly at all periods of its history, can be mapped onto extralinguistic concepts such as sex and animacy differences, there is the obvious temptation to likewise categorize the fossilized nominal divisions along the same kinds of lines. Thus, we find a situation in the earliest English where the majority of male and female referent nouns belonged to the masculine and feminine gender groups, while type three—the neuter—was the domain of the inanimate referent. Ross (1936) claimed that this “imperfect” match was rectified in late Old English through the reclassification of those female and masculine gender nouns that represented nonhuman or inanimate entities into the neuter category, a process Ross called *neutralization*. The main subject of this book encompasses the debate centering around this claim, particularly as it affects the relationship between the surface

form of the third person pronouns *he*, *she*, and *it* in relation to the sex/gender specification of their referent noun.

But we have to wait for many pages before this issue of syntactic and semantic change is fully addressed. Much of the introductory chapter is given over to praise for the usefulness of feminist linguistic theory (although it is never quite clear subsequently how this model affects the central issue of the book), while the reader is expected to share the author's enjoyment of the fact that the pronoun *she* was voted "Word of the Millennium" by the American Dialect Society: "*She* as a feminine linguistic marker represents a fundamental social category and its ascendance can be seen as symbolic of the gains by women at the end of the millennium. ... *She* is just the kind of word that is the focus of this book" (1). In fact, this last claim is not the central issue of this monograph: its scope is much wider than that. Yet it is difficult to see what relevance such blatantly political statements have for what that central issue turns out to be. Chapter 1 makes a useful contribution to the debate on defining English gender, and the author is to be commended for setting to one side some worn-out theses concerning gender classifications (especially those resulting from often farfetched personifications) and for stressing the importance of attitudinal (often socially motivated) criteria. She is to be commended too for highlighting the serious difficulties involved in attempting classifications that are binary rather than scalar, although she could have done more to develop this important issue. Yet the discussion of the history of gender description and analysis in English through time is very disappointing and marred by comments which, at best, can be described as unfortunate. Although Mark Twain's views on the complex issues of gender reclassification can safely be ignored by the serious scholar, Curzan's claim that the observations by scholars such as Jespersen and Baugh on this topic are motivated by "the assumption of English's obvious advantages or superiority" (38) are surely misguided. At the same time, one would like to see Curzan's rationale for statements like "[l]anguage histories, much like dictionaries, are ways to legitimize, if not glorify, a language. And the loss of grammatical gender is often presented as a tribute to the English language and to the English mind believed to have molded it" (41). One wonders if this author would be so ready to make such a claim about grammars and dictionaries of Inuit or Navaho. In particular the criticisms of Jespersen are wholly unnecessary and taken out of the context of his work as a whole as well as that of the period in

which he was writing. The present-day community of historical linguists would be the richer if it could boast a scholar of Jespersen's caliber.

The author recognizes that gender change affects morphological as well as pronominal agreement in the late Old English period and, for reasons that are never quite made clear, claims that these two phenomena are interdependent. But it is the claim that "[n]atural gender is, therefore, able to triumph should morphologically determined gender break down" (44) that can only be described as a non sequitur, especially given the evidence from early Middle English texts such as the *Peterborough Chronicle* where, alongside massive changes to adjective and noun morphology (rather than any breakdown to the same), gender classification in pronominal usage according to some kind of biological animacy/sex distinction is active. Again, in a late Old English Northumbrian gloss like the *Durham Ritual*, the glossator is prepared to innovate in his own language by producing a contrast like *bissum/passum* (the *a* on the analogy of the object feminine *pas* shape) to translate the Latin gender contrast *hoc/hac*. But it is particularly disturbing to read (45) of "the introduction of the new pronoun *she*" in the *Peterborough Chronicle*. There is no reason whatever to believe that there is anything other than evidence for phonological change in this case, certainly not for lexical innovation. The Old English *he/heo* contrast merely surfaces in Middle English as *he/scael/she/sho* as a result of a change such that [heo] through diphthong stress shifting, is interpreted as [hjo] with the [hj] component interpreted as [ʃ]. While she recognizes Britton's work in this area, the author still sees such a development as phonologically "unnatural" on grounds she never explains; she ought to have known that for many Scottish English speakers, for instance, lexical items such as *she* and *shoe/Hugh* are homophonous.

The history of gender alternation is bedeviled by appeals to a variety of influencing factors. *Genuswechsel* is attributed to a wide range of sources, many of them completely fanciful, but language contact is an area worthy of consideration. Curzan explores, only to more or less reject, the creole theory for language change (especially morphological depletion) in late Old and early Middle English, while some of her observations on the status of English and its dialectal variants are too obvious to be worth stating: "This recognition of dialectal variation immediately disrupts any linear conception of English as it affirms that 'English' is, in fact, a conglomeration of related dialects, not one standard language with subsidiary dialects; the history of English is the

history of its dialects” (54). Since the beginnings of major changes to the Old English gender system appear in Northern dialectal texts—notably in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* and *Durham Ritual*—it would not seem unreasonable to posit a scenario where a northern speaker might utilize a gender classification of a noun under the influence of a contemporary Norse word; so too Southern speakers might be similarly influenced by Norman French. But the problem with such suggestions lies in their untestability; why do language “borrowers” target a particular foreign word as synonymous with their native one, thus changing the latter’s gender? What happens if there are several near-synonyms in the foreign language for native speakers to associate with their native lexical item? Which one do they chose? Why do they not always go for the foreign item whose gender is shared with their native word? How do they come to know the gender of the foreign word in the first instance?

Curzan reiterates the well known fact that the majority of male and female referent nouns in Old English were classified as masculine or feminine respectively. Even in those (well attested) cases where this match is not found, “nouns such as the masculine noun *wifmann* ‘woman’, and the neuter nouns *wif* ‘woman’, *mægden* ‘young woman, maiden’, *bearn* ‘child’, and *cild* ‘child,’ for which the biological sex and grammatical gender do not correspond—natural gender almost always prevails in the anaphoric pronouns” (62). Curzan points out (64) that other factors are involved as well when such mismatches occur, factors such as age: “Through *cnihtad* ‘boyhood,’ the child is *hit*, but upon hitting *gioguphad* ‘youth, adolescence,’ it becomes *he*”; she feels compelled to continue “and continues to be *he* until he hits old age, blindness, and the other rewards of the gendered adult world” (whatever this last phrase means). But there is no doubt that she is correct in stressing that gender shifting (if this is really the most appropriate term in such cases) is influenced by a multitude of factors in addition to biology. Curzan’s emphasis on factors relating to discourse are very important and will deserve further detailed investigation, and it is helpful to see suggestions that lexical factors are also an issue, “resilient” nouns being less ready to show the same degree of anaphoric reference variation. Curzan makes the interesting suggestion too that the gender content of anaphoric reference may well be constrained by what she calls the relative “distance” from the pronoun in the discourse from its nominal referent. She rather crudely assesses the number of words separating pronoun from antecedent as a factor in the selection of the former,

whereas an equally important factor may well be the syntactic complexity or otherwise for the discourse itself. Is pronominal agreement influenced by the degree of embedding (syntactic distance) from its antecedent: Is there a “default” pronoun in such cases? Better this, surely, than a suggestion like the one that there is a “passage in which the feminine noun *þunorrade* ‘thunder’ is referred back to with a masculine pronoun, probably because it directly follows a passage about *þunor* ‘thunder’, a masculine noun” (102). In any event, she never explores the basis on which such low-frequency items like *þunorrade* are assigned a gender value in the first place: Does the native speaker actually “know” what all the correct genders of all the items in the lexicon actually are? Can variance be ascribed to unfamiliarity?

Curzan, probably correctly, concludes that before 1250 “grammatical gender agreement appears robust in the anaphoric pronouns, and after this period, grammatical gender agreement appears infrequently and mostly with resilient nouns” (106). This has been the opinion of scholarship in this field for over fifty years. But there are two problems: Why did this system break down, and why did it break down in the way it did? The first question she answers by the claim that as long as adjective/noun gender agreement was robust, so too was that for anaphora. When the former began to change, that left the way open for mutations in the latter. The rationale for the second question Curzan states as follows (107):

As the natural gender system gradually extends from animate nouns to inanimate ones in early Middle English, it is the masculine inanimate nouns as a whole that are affected first, before feminine nouns. This important general finding from the study makes intuitive sense: it represents a logical consequence of a grammatical reanalysis that triggered the extension process. With the reinterpretation of the pronouns *his* and *him* as possible neuter forms in reference to masculine inanimate antecedents, the underlying syntactic construction can be interpreted as natural gender concord. In other words, if a speaker sees or hears *him* used to refer to a masculine noun, this speaker can easily interpret this pronoun as neuter instead of masculine (i.e., natural gender reference instead of grammatical gender), particularly if the gender system demonstrates instability; the speaker is simply extending the system of natural gender reference already in place with animate nouns.

And again (111): “Ambiguity with the masculine form undoubtedly plays a role in the replacement of dative *him*, by accusative *hit* with reference to neuter nouns; this ambiguity also seems to drive the ‘culprit’ ambiguous forms *his* and *him* out of use for both masculine and inanimate nouns.” But this is surely an oversimplification as an explanation for “case syncretism” in the third person pronoun. The loss of a possessive marker for inanimate marking in pronouns is hardly surprising given the semantics of inanimate possession, where that of the inalienable type is all that is (nonmetaphorically) appropriate. Indeed, the subsequent history of the inanimate possessive shows that an *s*-morpheme was a late arrival (recall *it lifted up it head* in Hamlet), while even today, wherever it occurs, *its* is still graphically confused with *it’s*. There is also some evidence from sixteenth-century materials for the (mis)interpretation of the *s*-morpheme as a contraction of the *his* pronoun: vide *Cleopatra his beauty* as a rendering of *Cleopatra’s beauty*. On the other hand, a strong argument could be made for interpreting such pronominal syncretism as being “driven” by case marking (that is, noun/verb relationships) rather than factors relating to animacy “ambiguity.” For instance, the female pronoun is, by early Middle English, characterized by an agentive (*she*) versus nonagentive (*hire*) bifurcation; the neuter/inanimate by a system whereby only relationships like possession versus nonpossession are marked (an agentive being “inappropriate” for inanimates; *it moved* infers ‘some agent caused it to move’), the possession component itself subsequently effaced. Only in the male third person pronoun do we find a wide range of case marking with agentive *he*, possession *his*, and a location/absolute conflation under *him*. Taken in its entirety, this set of changes has one defining characteristic: There is no longer any unique way of marking the absolute/objective case in third person pronouns in the early Middle English period.

The sections on changes in the lexical fields of sex/gender indicating lexical items like *wif*, *wifmonn* and *mann* in the early history of English represent one of the few attempts in recent scholarship to trace the important semantic innovations and refinements taking place under a variety of influences, social as well as linguistic, although Curzan is careful to leap to (perhaps otherwise attractive) explanations in this area (163): “that the Norman Conquest and the subsequent imposition of a feudal system wrested away the more equal rights that woman had enjoyed in Anglo-Saxon times ... could well be reflected in the lexical

developments of gendered words; in retrospect, however, it is difficult to determine—and probably dangerous to assume—any straightforward connection between, for example, the loss of economic independence of women and the specification of *wife* from ‘woman’ to ‘married woman, homemaker’.”

It is difficult for this reviewer to see the relevance of the last section of this book, “Implications for nonsexist language reform,” on its central arguments. Curzan concludes: “The details presented over the past few chapters about the history of gender in English pronouns and selected nouns depict in part a history of sexism in both the English language and in grammars describing the English language. They also demonstrate the complexity of grammatical and semantic change—that generic *he* did not arise in a cultural vacuum or as the simple result of prescriptivism, and that the historical generic meaning of *man* does not transparently transfer to Modern English. One of the goals of this book is to make this kind of linguistic information more accessible to a wider audience who may chose to participate in discussions of how we wish to negotiate the relationship of gender in our speech community and gender in our language” (183–184). And given the emphasis placed upon the evolution of generic *he*, it is disappointing that this study fails to look at relative pronoun *þe/þat* distribution in early Middle English as it may, or may not, reflect the sex/animacy/gender of its antecedent, especially when there are such interesting cases in texts like the *Lambeth Homilies* appearing to attest “generic” constructions using the neuter form of the reflexive: *þe mon þat* ‘the man who (that is, anybody who)’. There are also two major omissions from the bibliographical section: Wyss 1982 and Millar 2002. That there is any real sense in which the English grammatical tradition is overtly sexist is never convincingly demonstrated in this book, while it fails to offer a sustained and testable solution to Ross’s claim (1936:321) that “[t]he loss of grammatical gender in later English is one of the most difficult problems of English philology.”

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Department of English Language
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh EH8 9LN
United Kingdom
[Charles.Jones@ed.ac.uk]

Negative Constructions in Middle English. By Yoko Iyeiri. Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2001. Pp. 252. Hardcover. ¥7,000.

Reviewed by ANS VAN KEMENADE, *University of Nijmegen*

Iyeiri aims to give a descriptive account of the development of Middle English negation, where the term “descriptive” clearly means that the various occurrences of negative elements and combinations of them are tracked by their relative frequencies over time. There is little or no attempt to come to an interpretation of why the historical development should be the way it is, although the facts themselves are organized in such a way that this study could fruitfully form the basis for pursuing such more theoretical questions. Iyeiri’s study is clearly inspired by the work of George Jack, who initially supervised the graduate work leading to this book, and to whose memory the book is dedicated.

Chapter 1 gives a survey of the literature on negation in the history of English, and an overview of the textual sources used for the study.

Chapter 2 takes Jespersen’s cycle as its starting point and tracks the relative frequency per text of negation by *ne* alone, by a combination of *ne* + *not*, and of negation by single *not*. Much space is devoted here to the observation that, while according to Jespersen’s cycle, negation by *ne* + *not* should be a separate stage in its own right, there is no historically attested stage (no one text) where this forms the dominant pattern of negation.

Chapter 3 is on variations on the standard patterns of negation as in the previous chapter. These include some very interesting patterns,

occurring with varying degrees of robustness. One pattern reported is that the negative element *ne* sometimes occurs separated from the finite verb. The interesting thing about this pattern is that the negative element is often doubled, and the first *ne* behaves like a reinforcing negator, following a pronominal subject (see also van Kemenade 2000). This pattern occurs with some frequency in the Northern *Cursor Mundi*. It would be interesting to consider it in more detail and in a wider context: Los (2000) observes that infinitival *to* in *Cursor Mundi* shows a similar doubling pattern. Further patterns include a quite robust one where negative *not* follows a finite verb + a pronominal object, as analyzed in Roberts 1996, and one in which *not* precedes the finite verb. Iyeiri equates this latter pattern with the present-day English restrictions on negation. This is probably incorrect—it can be shown that the distribution of *not* in this pattern is different from that of present-day English (van Kemenade forthcoming).

Chapter 4, “Negative constructions and the nature of the finite verb,” provides quantitative data on the frequency of *ne* as the single negative marker with the verbs *witen*, *will*, *be*, and *have*. These verbs are more often found with *ne* alone than others. *Ne* as sole negator also tends to be more frequent with other auxiliaries than with lexical verbs. This chapter also gives figures on contraction of *ne* and certain types of finite verb. Few texts exhibit both contracted and uncontracted *ne* forms: They either contract or do not contract, making it difficult to identify what factors trigger contraction.

Chapter 5, “Negative constructions and syntactic conditions,” investigates negatives used in a variety of clauses: interrogative and conditional clauses, *that*-clauses dependent on a negative clause, and on verbs that are inherently negative like *douten* ‘to doubt’ and *forbeden* ‘forbid’. Also included are imperative and optative clauses, and the expletive negation after conjunctions like *before*, *unless*, and *lest*. The findings confirm earlier studies in that *ne* as sole negator is found in nonassertive contexts that do not require emphatic marking of the negation. Some important observations are the following: When the conjunction *ne* ‘nor’ precedes the finite verb in a negative clause, the negator *ne* is hardly ever present, which, according to Iyeiri, avoids the sequence *ne ne*. *Ne* as single negator is rare with subject-verb inversion (after a nonsubject first constituent). This is strikingly different from the situation in questions, which in contrast have an extended use of *ne* as sole negator. Jack (1978:307) interprets this difference as the search for a

formal distinction between declaratives and interrogatives; Iyeiri suggests that rhythm may play a role, but this would seem to fail to account for the observed difference between inversion after nonsubjects and question elements. The situation in Middle English is in fact a natural continuation of that in Old English, where the absolutely predominant pattern of negation in main clauses is clause-initial *ne* + finite verb. Nonsubjects preceding the negated finite verb in main clauses are quite restricted, and even subjects are not very frequent in that position (Traugott 1992:268; for an analysis of this phenomenon, see van Kemenade 2000).

Chapter 6, "Multiple negation," presents figures on the decrease of multiple negation in the Middle English period. The decline of *ne* is an important factor here, but the use of *and* and *or* instead of the older *ne/nor* conjunctions is also relevant, as well as the rise of *any* and *ever*. Latin influence, often cited as the cause of the decline, is less likely to have played a part in Middle English in view of Iyeiri's finding that multiple negation is more frequent in formal than in informal Middle English texts.

Chapter 7 is on negative contraction (meaning here: contraction of the negative clitic *ne* with the finite verb, as in *Nis* for **Ne is* 'not-is'). The reason for the considerable overlap between chapter 4 and this chapter is unclear. The chapter describes the considerable variation in space and time of negative contraction.

Chapter 8 presents a summary of the findings.

There is a good deal of hard work on basic data in this book and the facts are meticulously recorded. They should be of great help to anybody interested in negation, and the history of English negation in particular, but the scope of the book is limited in that I have not found a single attempt at systematic interpretation of the data. Of course, any scholar must make his or her own choices with respect to an analytical framework and balance it against descriptive coverage, but the very absence of any analytical framework in this book tends to pall as the reader finds yet another series of tables and graphs. Even a very basic analytical distinction between various types of negative elements could have given the book a considerable extra dimension, precisely because the facts are so interesting. For instance, in chapter 2, negative elements are divided into two groups, a group A comprising *ne* and *nor*, and a group B comprising *not*, *neither*, *never*, and *no*. Iyeiri goes on to observe that members of group B cannot be easily combined in one sentence,

whereas they are freely combined with group A. This begs the question why that should be the case, and this question is nowhere addressed in the book. A basic distinction between negative prefix *ne* and negative conjunction *nor* on the one hand (group A), and negative adverbs on the other (group B), which is in line with uncontroversial assumptions in the literature, accounts in some measure for this basic observation. Moreover, it shows how important and exciting the small number of examples in chapters 4 and 7 is in which *ne* is doubled and can occur separated from the finite verb. This is only one example where an opportunity seems to have been missed. It is the absence of any analysis in the book that makes it hard going, although I recommend it heartily for the facts it presents.

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University of Nijmegen
Department of English
Postbus 9103
6500 HD Nijmegen
Netherlands
[A.v.Kemenade@let.kun.nl]

And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche. Essays on Medieval English. Presented to Professor Matsuji Tajima on his sixtieth birthday. Edited by Yoko Iyeiri and Margaret Connolly. Tokyo: Kaibunsha, 2002. Pp. xiv, 270. Hardcover. \$65.00.

Reviewed by NIKOLAUS RITT, *University of Vienna*

As academic disciplines evolve and grow, they typically diversify in the process. Since the social structure of academia appears to evolve at a slower rate than its subject matter, academic communities and disciplines hardly ever map onto each other. This fact of life becomes particularly obvious when a scholar receives a *Festschrift* from his academic peers: the social coherence of the contributors is hardly ever matched by the thematic coherence of the contributions. This is also true of the *Essays on Medieval English* dedicated to Professor Matsuji Tajima on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, and edited by Yoko Iyeiri and Margaret Connolly. A brief curriculum of the festschrift is followed by a personal address by E. F. K. Koerner and fourteen papers on a variety of topics which in the nineteenth century would have belonged to the discipline of English historical philology but would now be attributed to areas such as comparative linguistics, historical phonology, historical metrics, lexicography, medieval history, literary criticism, philology in the narrow sense, or simply medieval studies. The volume will therefore make stimulating reading for scholars who enjoy looking beyond their own areas of specialization and who want to be reminded of the different angles from which their subject may be approached.

The volume is divided into a linguistic and a literary section. The first two papers of the former address phonological issues: Hans Frede Nielsen brings the evidence of (reconstructed) phonemic systems to bear on the question of whether Old English, Old Frisian, Old Saxon, and Old High German should be classified into an Anglo-Frisian versus a German sub-branch of West Germanic, or rather into a North Sea Germanic one (including Old English, Old Frisian, and Old Saxon) versus a Southern West Germanic one (with High German as a single member). Nielsen discusses vowel and consonant systems, adduces opinions from relevant literature concerning their likely values at different stages of the four languages, adds his own interpretations of some of the substantive evidence, backs it up with arguments based on functional and

structuralist considerations, and attempts to infer which language sets were likely to have shared which phonological apomorphies. The paper is informative, carefully argued, and indicative of how challenging the issues still are.

Jeremy Smith focuses on Old English breakings of palatal vowels before consonant (cluster)s such as /x(C)/, /rC/ or /lC/. He suggests that (at least some of) these breakings may have resulted from dialect contact between West Saxon and Anglian, arguing that the changes did not result in a divergence of the two dialectal branches but rather emerged when differences that had developed earlier came in contact with each other. Like Nielsen's paper, Smith's contribution highlights how many questions historical English phonology still harbors, and reflects, at the same time, one of the reasons why it does indeed pay to read *Festschriften*: Being asked to write one may occasionally motivate scholars to go public with an idea they would be too cautious to present in less personal settings. Sometimes, today's *Festschrift* contributions may become tomorrow's handbook lore.

The third contribution, by Eric G. Stanley, discusses what noun phrase types OE *deofol* 'devil' could occur in, and why, if it took a determiner, it was so often the neuter *þæt*, rather than the masculine *se*. While the topic is certainly very specific, Stanley's treatment of it is comprehensive. He describes (albeit only by way of example) the distribution of the possible construction types in many genres and in various stages of the Old English period, and demonstrates his broad and deep knowledge of the textual evidence. However, the main problem on which Stanley focuses is why neuter gender got attached to *deofol*, and it does not receive much of an answer. In the end, I found myself wondering whether the issue really represents very much of a problem, given that Old English had grammatical rather than neutral gender.

In the fourth essay, Yoshiyuki Nakao deals with the modality of Middle English *trewely* and particularly with the way Chaucer seems to have played with its ambiguity in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Nakao's discussion is insightful, and highlights how one of the main questions in the poem—namely how “true” Criseyde's intentions of remaining “true” to Troilus really were—is reflected in a cunning use of *trewely*, which can often be interpreted both as a typical adverb (modifying verbs of speech, for example) and as an epistemic, indicating the narrator's attitude to the truth value of a proposition. In addition to its central part, which focuses on Chaucer's *Troilus*, the paper provides a statistical

survey of uses of *trewely* not only in Chaucer's other works, but also in the works of other Middle English writers.

Sadahiro Kumamoto compares the rhyme words in the Old French *Roman de la Rose* with those in its English translation. He does so systematically, dealing with one word class after the other. The conclusions he draws from his descriptive survey are not really spectacular, however, which may be due to limitations of space.

Thomas Cable's paper (the sixth) deals mainly with the metrics of fifteenth-century poets such as Lydgate and Hawes. He demonstrates that established views about the metrical defects of their verse are most likely unjustified and derive from false phonological reconstructions, or misconceptions about what may have counted as a well formed line at the time. Since the paper demonstrates how easily historical texts can be misinterpreted and misjudged, its relevance clearly goes beyond the specific cases it discusses.

Next, Yoko Iyeiri adduces extensive corpus evidence to test the hypothesis that the rise of nonassertive uses of *any* is causally related to the decline of multiple negation. As far as his data go, a case for a direct causal relationship is difficult to make. This is the seventh paper and concludes the linguistic section.

Like the linguistic contributions, the papers in the literary part of the collection are diverse in kind. Jun Teresawa makes the case that *wiste* 'feast(ing)' in line 128 of *Beowulf* could refer to Grendel's feasting on the Danes rather than to the Danes' banquet. His view contradicts established opinion and is backed up by collocational evidence.

Next, Laurence Eldredge discusses whether Benventus Grassus, a thirteenth-century ophthalmologist, is likely to have studied at Montpellier. An intertextual analysis of Grassus's treatise *De probatissima arte oculorum* suggests that he did not. While the paper reads well, one wonders if interested readers will expect to find it in a volume on Medieval English.

The third "literary" essay is by Robert E. Lewis. In it, he explains the rationale behind some editorial decisions taken in the production of the Middle English Dictionary, such as the decision to give more easily determinable manuscript dates priority over doubtful composition dates.

Joseph Wittig deals with lines 958–1087 of book four of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. They represent a speech by Troilus which is taken over from Boece's *Consolatio*. Wittig develops a well argued, novel interpretation, according to which the passage makes an important

contribution to the central meaning of the poem and can thus be understood as artistically well integrated rather than as a tedious digression, as some earlier research had it.

One of the most substantial contributions is Margaret Connolly's, who offers a critical edition of a Late Middle English devotional text on charity that has so far not been edited as a text in its own right (although it is derivative of a text that has been). Her article can be read as an introduction to the edition. Together they make a valuable whole.

Edward Donald Kennedy describes the image of King Arthur as it emerges from Caxton's edition of Malory's *Morte Darthur*. He attempts to reconstruct Caxton's intentions and the ways in which the text may have been received and evaluated by contemporary readers. The paper provides a good view of Arthurian literature, the degree to which it might have been known to Malory, Caxton, and their readership, and the way in which knowledge of earlier textual traditions may have influenced the reception and interpretation of later texts. Like Cable's paper on fifteenth-century meter, it reminds us of some of the aspects that need to be taken into account when one interprets and evaluates historical literature.

The final essay, by Hideki Watanabe, traces the history of the phrase *while the world standeth* from Old English to Early Modern English times. It provides many textual examples and complements the picture by looking at selected competitors of the phrase, such as *whil that the world may dure* or *world without end*.

The book will certainly have made a nice present for Professor Matsuji Tajima. The editors have done a good job, and the volume is well produced. If one knows how to deal with the genre *Festschrift*, and takes an interest in medieval English language and literature, reading one or the other essay will certainly be worthwhile.

English Department,
University of Vienna
Uni-Campus AAKH, Hof 8
Spitalgasse 2
A-1090 Vienna
Austria
[nikolaus.ritt@univie.ac.at]