MERJA KYTÖ, MATS RYDÉN, and ERICK SMITTERBERG, Ed.. (2006). *Nineteenth-century English: Stability and change.* (Studies in English Language). Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press. xix, 295.

This volume provides a survey of literature on topics in Nineteenth-Century English, which, as the editors point out, because of its “perceived similarity” to twentieth-century English and its status as an “intermediate” period (1), has been the object of relatively little attention among students of historical and comparative linguistics (xix). The essays here, which aim to compensate for this relative dearth, employ data bases, primarily the Corpus of Nineteenth Century English (CONCE), to trace the occurrence (and co-occurrence) of features across the period, along the several genres, and between genders, to gain insight into language variation and change, or, on the other hand, the stability of features under consideration. Under the conditions of increasing literacy, including among women, and the further development of genres, both published and informal, the period witnessed a rich output of textual material (4). As authors of individual studies in the volume discuss their findings, they make observations also about the limitations of the corpora and available search methods, relative frequencies of items found, and adjustments that must be made to render the products of electronic searches useful and relevant to the purpose of a study.

Beginning with “Words in English Record Office Documents of the Early 1800s” (56 – 88), by Tony Fairman, this review will comment on highlights and relate them to developments over the period. This study, based on a survey of documents in County Records Offices, leads to recognizing degrees of literacy and the observation that handwriting itself constitutes an essential index of literacy (58). He notes that the level of “signature literacy,” i.e., literacy that rises to the level of being able to sign one’s name, varies among counties from as low as 28 percent to as high as 72 percent, and across counties varies between men and women from 12 to 19 percent

(78). The “unconventional” orthographic products of these lower standards of “letteracy,” as F puts it, make for a fascinating study in themselves, although in comparing the process of decoding such graphemes to transliterating Chinese characters to roman letters (61), F goes too far. After all, as de Saussure pointed out in his *Lectures*, given a conventional orthographic unit, an iconic relation exists with this putative standard.

Spelling at lower levels of literacy seem to continue to reflect the phonetic principle, as demonstrated in the cluster of spellings found for names, such as Ewans (Ewens, Youens, etc.) and Alcock (Accott, Accock, etc.), depending on the speech of the borough where the variant is found (68 – 70); Samuel Johnson’s famous remark about the disparate spellings he encountered when compiling his dictionary come to mind here. These examples also reflect the conflict between prescribed (schooled) spellings and those that follow this purely phonetic principle (71).

The sociolinguistic situation is further exemplified by the observation that in the efforts of less literate writers are found a concentration of verbs and phrasal verbs of Anglo Saxon origin, while among the highly literate are distributed their Latinate equivalents (78, f), along with examples of the effects of Latinophile prescriptions like avoiding prepositions in sentence final positions (81). Along with these I found particularly fascinating evidence of the *u*-stem plural surviving into the nineteenth century in *childer* (79, Ex. 15). These observations serve to underscore the reality that the greatest proportion of published and preserved materials that form the record of Nineteenth-Century English reflect one morsel of tenderized beef in the great meat pie of the English(es) of the period.

Ingegerd Bäcklund, in “Modifiers Describing Women and Men in Nineteenth-Century English” (17 – 55), points out challenges in formulating semantic categories for data drawn from electronic corpora. These data (Table 1.4, 26, f) show a decrease in “interpersonal modifiers,” which “describe the referent in relation to society or other people” (31), and an increase in "intrapersonal modifiers," which refer to the individual qualities of the person referenced (26) over the period. The difference in usage of such items between male and female referents over the period is found not to be significant (27). Two important points arise in evaluating these results in any case. In the largest semantic category, Attitude, 84 percent of such adjectives are accounted for by two forms, *dear* and *poo*r (31); these items participate in consciously popular and quasi-obligatory social formulae, e.g., *Farewell, my dear old man* (30, Ex. 18), and in phrases like the target of the well-known Spoonerism, *The queer old dean*. Furthermore, in the first third of the period they are found "mostly" in Drama, and from the last third are drawn from Fiction (31), which genres, whose products seek to amuse and entertain, reflect popular commonplaces and stereotypes more than they record authentic speech.

Peter Grund and Terry Walker, in "The subjunctive in Adverbial Clauses in Nineteenth-Century English" (89 – 109), observe a decline in the frequency of both subjunctives and surprisingly, based on expectations from recent literature, modal verb paraphrases, over the period (93). Likewise noteworthy is the observation that *be* and *were* make up by far the greatest proportion of verbs found, 92 percent together (101). Perhaps this is to be expected, given the reduction in verb morphology after the Early Modern period.

The role of the passive in science writing in the nineteenth century is put in the context of a three-century trend by Larisa Oldireva Gustafsson in "The Passive in Nineteenth-Century Scientific Writing" (110 – 135). Data from CONCE in this study show that the frequency of passives in the genre remains stable throughout the period (113, f; Tables 4.1 - 3). Citing data from D. Atkinson (1996, "The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, 1675-1975: A Sociohistorical Discourse Analysis", *Language in Society*, *25*, 333-71), G points out that data from A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER) demonstrate a "dramatic change from an author-centred rhetoric to an object-centred and more abstract" approach in scientific writing, which, according to ARCHER data, occurred substantially between 1775 and 1825 (111). To this could be added the observation that, as Hugh Blair (1783) commented in *The Belles Lettres*, Cicero did not use the same word with the same meaning in the same passage, which became a principle of good style during and after the Renaissance. In this respect, an important stylistic benefit of passive sentences is that through their use endlessly repeating Agent/Subject NPs and their synonyms can be avoided.

It is difficult to assimilate the raw numerical data reported, as we do not see the frequency in a given sample size (e.g., x per10,000 words), yet the findings that the frequency of use of passive constructions is genre-specific do appear conclusive.

In “Relativizers in Nineteenth-Century English” (136 – 182), Chirstine Johansson shows that during the period *wh-* forms, in both restrictive and non-restrictive clauses, appeared “much more frequently” than *that* (136). It is often observed, especially in American English, that *that* appears most frequently in restrictive clauses while *wh-* forms are reserved for non-restrictive clauses, but *that* is “less frequent” in this context in nineteenth-century English (145). J finds that in the genres Trials and Letters, 30 percent of instances of *that* occurred with a personal antecedent (149). This is not at all surprising, given the more oral quality of such discourse. It is likewise noted that in the data “[s]tranding is most common” in spoken genres (145), as in Present-day English. But the observation, “in Present-day standard English, personal antecedents are referred to by the relativizer *who* and nonpersonal antecedents by *which*” (151), must be adjusted for the ubiquitous appearance of *that* with all antecedents in speech.

Comments like, “animacy and case contrasts signaled by the *wh-* forms contribute to the kind of clarity and conciseness required of a scientific text” (137) and the notion that “[n]aturally, *wh-* forms are used in formal scientific texts according to norms for good writing” (ibid.) support the case for diglossia in English as well. Interestingly, it is noted that, as in Present-day English, *whom* was marked for formality in the nineteenth century, and that data from CONCE demonstrate hypercorrect use of *whom* in the period (169). It is a shame, though, that forms like *what* as a relativizer, e.g., *Here is a man what's eighty* are disregarded as "nonstandard" (136). This paper offers a rich discussion of numerous developments in relativization during the period, and makes a further contribution in the semantic categorization of relativizer referents (e.g., 150, f).

In "Anaphoric Reference in the Nineteenth Century: *That/those + of* Constructions" (183 – 193), by Mark Kaunisto, structures such as observed in *The action differed considerably from that of phosphorus* , examples of which are reported for Science, History, Drama, Letters, and Debates, are identified as a more formal alternative (186). The data suggest that a correlation between anaphoric distance and formality could be made, as in Drama and Trials the mean distance is lowest (192), supporting the notion that in these genres features of lesser formality are found.

Much has been made in recent years of the presumed shift from inflectional to isolating comparative/superlative morphemes in adjectives. Merja Kytö and Suzanne Romaine, in Adjective Comparison in Nineteenth-Century English" (194 – 214), outline the development of the isolating (*more/most*) forms from the Middle English period, with the outcome of a hybrid form, e.g., *more easier*, along with *easier* and *more easy* (195, 96). The data show that the inflectional type repelled the invasion by the isolating type and returned to dominance during the Late Modern English period (196, 97), in contrast to the general drift in English toward more isolating forms, and that the isolating type decreased in frequency over the nineteenth century (199). Variation is still heard, with isolating forms surviving in the vernaculars. Thus when in a recent campaign video President William J. Clinton uttered, *and make California more safe*, he was most likely reflecting a feature preserved in the speech of rural Arkansas (in the Western extension of Appalachian English).

The authors go well beyond the statistical results by examining the influence of idiolect, genre, word length, gender, semantic field, pragmatic stress, and sample size and constitution on the selection and distribution of forms in this excellent study.

In “Nonfinite Complement Clauses in Nineteenth-Century English: The Case of *Remember*” (215 – 228), Christian Mair begins the discussion with a synopsis of the situation in Present-day English, that *remember + -ing* is retrospective and *remember + to* is prospective, from the standpoint of the time of remembering. In this study the OED Corpus proved useful in establishing two significant points. Examples of the retrospective can be found as early as 1776, *I remember slumping on a sudden into the slough of despond, and closing my letter in the dumps* (220), and data for the nineteenth century show the frequency of the construction increasing throughout the period. On the other hand, no “historical anteriority” may be established for the oft-prescribed use of possessive/genitive forms with the construction (224, f). Typical are examples such as this from 1827, *I remember Miss S-, at Drury … having to pay one hundred and ninety-eight pounds*” (225). In this study, as in others, challenges in sample size and selection had to be overcome, and useful information on this question is to be gleaned from it.

Juhani Rudanko, in “The *in -ing* Construction in British English, 1800 – 2000” (229 – 241), discusses the pattern of preposition *in* in the matrix clause followed by a clause with verb + *-ing*, as in *The Titans delight in upsetting the odds* (229, Ex.1). The covert subject of the subordinate clause is coreferential with the matrix clause subject (230, f) in many cases, although in examples 11a, 11b (239), this is not the case. Table 9.4 (239) lists and enumerates matrix verbs in the Spoken British English subcorpus; here it could be pointed out that *lie* is stylistically preferable to *be* in some contexts, and thus instances may be seen as (synonymous) tokens of *be*.

In the final essay of the collection is “Partitive Constructions in Nineteenth-Century English” (242 – 271) by Erick Smitterberg. Partitive constructions, as discussed here, refer to phrases that signify a ‘part of a whole’ relationship. Evidence cited suggests that in such phrases as *a bit of advice*, where a classical syntactic analysis depicts *bit* as the lexical head of an NP which includes the PP *of advice*, a reinterpretation has resulted in *bit of* participating in a determiner structure pointing to *advice*. This tendency is apparent in consequences on verbal concord in the first part of the period, as in the following examples:

> *In time of peace … the unwillingness, which a particular class of persons feel to divert their funds …* (260, Ex. 20)
>
> *There are a vast number of ways …* (ibid. Ex. 21)

Some evidence exists that for some speakers the reduced form *there's* has become a lexicalized unit, and therefore resists concord. In examples like the second one above, though, it comes out the other way, as object of preposition/notional head controls, despite the fact that the notional concord trigger *ways* falls farther from the verb than the putative syntactic head. This study provides excellent evidence for the proposition that the syntax alone, independent of meaning, does not provide enough good information to comprehend language systems.

This collection is aptly titled. Although evidence of diachronic change may generate more excitement, evidence of the stability of features is equally significant. The papers produced here make a significant contribution to our understanding of the period while explicating the apt utilization of electronic data bases. In this respect, in addition to the information gleaned about their primary topics, the writers represented in this volume make contributions in the increasingly important sphere of computational linguistics.

Robert D. Angus
California State University, Fullerton