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BOOK REVIEW

Marchello-Nizia, Christiane and Prévost, Sophie, *Le français en diachronie : Douze siècles d'évolution–Nouvelle édition actualisée*. Paris : Éditions Ophrys, 2025, 210 pp., ISBN: 978 2 7080 1725 2
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Christiane Marchello-Nizia's *Le français en diachronie : Douze siècles d'évolution*, originally published in 1999, appears here in a *nouvelle édition actualisée*, now with Sophie Prévost as co-author. The strengths of the original version remain, including its concision, while many updates appear in the form of updated and new references, additional discussion when warranted by recent developments (e.g., to language policy) or particularly productive research domains, and slight reorganization. The sequencing of chapters remains unchanged from the original.

The introduction clearly articulates the book's diachronic linguistic orientation on internal history (as opposed to the broader approach of numerous available *histoires de la langue*); the authors' intense interest in *spoken* language—the most primordial form of language—even in the case of historical varieties, for which direct access to spoken data is no longer possible, is immediately apparent in the expanded discussion of research on *l'oral représenté*, to use the term from Marchello-Nizia (2012), a particularly fecund area of diachronic research over the past 15 years. Chapter 1 relates French to its proto-Indo-European origins, its Romance siblings, and tackles the thorny question of periodization, refining the approach in the original version by distinguishing early Old French (*le très ancien français*) from (later) Old French. Chapter 2 offers a concise external history of the language; here, updates point out recent preferences for speaking of *latin parlé* (*populaire* or *cultivé*) rather than the somewhat problematic term *latin vulgaire*, and expanded discussions of the role of French in the world today. Chapter 3, on declarative word order, is one of the most reworked in the book; in addition to a partial reorganization, the sections on subject expression, subject position, and verb-second are expanded to reflect recent scholarship (including by the authors). Chapter 4, on word order in other types of clauses (interrogatives, incises, subordinates), sees expanded discussion of the interrogative particle *-ti*, incises, and injunctives, whereas the discussion of the rise of intonation questions, which present declarative word order, is somewhat streamlined compared to the original. In Chapter 5, which takes to the domain of noun phrases (determiners, nominal morphology, etc.), absolute genitives (e.g., *l'amour Dieu*) and possessives benefit from expanded discussion. Chapter 6 addresses issues in the verb phrase, including for example regularization of verbal morphology, the rise of obligatory subject expression, agreement, and sentential negation. In Chapter 7, which groups prepositions, adverbs, and various connectors, the section on adverbs is

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considerably reorganized. Chapter 8, dedicated to the origins and (continuing) development of the lexicon, benefits from an expanded discussion of the feminization of profession titles and the influx of anglicisms, potentially controversial, which obviously stand to shape the future of the lexicon, and which are treated here in a refreshingly clear-eyed and rationale approach. Chapter 9 logically combines sound change and spelling and includes a new paragraph on spelling conventions in text messages.

The authors' decision to designate this a *nouvelle édition actualisée* rather than a second edition is appropriate; the fundamentals of the book have not been changed, nor did they need to be to continue to serve the book's role as a succinct reference of major linguistic changes over 12 centuries (and sometimes more, given the authors' references to tendencies in Latin that set the stage for subsequent developments in French). Rather, additional and more recent references have been provided, along with expanded discussions and additional footnotes, especially for areas that have seen particularly active research in the past quarter century. Specialists will note that the authors' choices of new references are selective rather than exhaustive, in keeping with the spirit of the volume. Nonetheless, the lack of acknowledgement of considerable recent work on the role of information structure in linguistic change in French, on verb-third word orders and clausal peripheries, and on the (continuing) evolution of negation strikes this reviewer as a missed opportunity. But the volume's numerous strengths far outweigh minor criticisms. Written in clear and flowing French, with abundant examples from a wide variety of texts and sources (including the invaluable journal of Jean Héroard), this efficiently concise volume (at 210 pages, only moderately longer than the original 170) deserves a place on the shelf of any reader—including those already in possession of the original—with an interest in French linguistics, historical stages of French, or the diachronic development of the language.

References

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