

Ayumi Miura, *Middle English Verbs of Emotion and Impersonal Constructions: Verb Meaning and Syntax in Diachrony*, Oxford Studies in the History of English (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). xvii + 290 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-994715-7. £51.00.

Numerous studies have been conducted of impersonal constructions in English from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, but the whole picture of their use in Middle English (ME) is still unclear. In this book, Ayumi Miura tackles this tough topic by focusing on impersonal verbs of emotion in ME and attempting to unearth how their lexical meanings differ from those of their near-synonyms that appear only in personal constructions. To achieve this goal, Miura first scrutinizes verb entries listed in the section 'Emotion' in *Historical Thesaurus of Oxford English Dictionary* (*HTOED*) and checks them against *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*) to examine which of them appear in impersonal constructions in Old English and/or ME (chapter 4). Then she conducts a comprehensive survey of illustrative quotations from entries in *MED* and compares impersonal verbs of emotion and their near-synonymous non-impersonal counterparts with respect to their constructional patterns and semantics, in an attempt to reveal distinctive properties for a given verb to be recognized as 'impersonal' (chapter 5). Miura concludes that, although it is hard to set a single clear-cut criterion to distinguish impersonal verbs of emotion from non-impersonal ones, there is a general tendency for a given verb to be used in impersonal constructions if (i) it occurs in the syntactic causative construction where the Target of Emotion (ToE) appears as the subject, (ii) the ToE is inanimate, (iii) it has a low transitivity, or (iv) it expresses an episodic meaning with relatively short duration of the relevant emotion. Another important finding is that these distinctive factors blurred after the fifteenth century and thus the category of 'impersonal verbs of emotion' was not homogeneous throughout ME.

Apart from its contribution to the study of impersonal constructions in particular, this study also has an impact on (historical) linguistics in general. From a methodological point of view, Miura convincingly demonstrates how dictionaries such as *HTOED* and *MED* are effective tools for qualitative studies targeted at particular lexical items. More specifically, she classifies ME verbs of emotion on the basis of seven categories selected from the section 'Emotion' in *HTOED* (pleasure/enjoyment, mental pain/suffering, anger, hatred/enmity, pity/compassion, humility, and fear), and she reveals that verbs in each category behave somewhat differently over the course of ME. Furthermore, in the description of individual (non-)impersonal verbs, she makes the most of the editorial characteristics of *MED*, where at least one illustrative quotation is provided for every sense of a word for every quarter of a century, irrespective of its frequency.

From a theoretical perspective, this book has successfully bridged the gap between studies on psych-verbs in modern languages and historical studies of impersonal verbs by paying attention, among other things, to the relation between the availability of ToE-subject transitive constructions and the availability of impersonal constructions. Previous syntactic and semantic studies on psych-verbs in modern languages including English have provided a variety of insights, but they have rarely been applied to the historical investigation of impersonal verbs. This book strongly suggests that issues around this topic will be a fruitful area for future study.

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Annick Sperlich, *Family and Friends: Generation in Medieval Romance* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2014). vi + 316 pp. ISBN 978-3-8253-6138-9. €55.00.

Annick Sperlich's monograph focuses on the four 'ancestral' Middle English romances: *King Horn*, *Havelok*, *Bevis of Hampton*, and *Athelston*, using the 'generation' theory of Karl Mannheim, dating from the late 1920s, to frame its analysis. The approach is essentially structural; the characters of each romance are distributed between the parental generation or the children's generation, occupying, in Mannheim's terms, a particular 'generational location'. The children's generation (the hero, his friends, and the bride) then join forces in a 'generational unity', and – in part thanks to the hero's charisma, in part to the loyalty of the friends and the bride – the hero regains his birthright, becoming king (or a king's father), marrying his love, and breeding a good number of heirs to carry on the dynasty. The pattern comprehends initial social trauma: the hero's loss of his father and his disinheritance. Then, through the activities of the children's generation a new and better social order is established: a 'generation entelechy' as Mannheim puts it. The hero is a force for radical change, his effectiveness facilitated by the group's loyalties, and by the emergence of the cohort's shared moral values. In some of the romances, the change actually entails a return to a status quo of sound rule, but now the hero's dynastic success means that his children will grow to adulthood and are able to perpetuate and expand the lineage.

Once the 'generation theory' has been laid out, the book analyses each of the key figures: father, guardian, enemy in the older generation; hero, friends, bride in the younger. Inevitably this leads to some repetition; scenes which involve figures from different categories tend to be revisited when considering the role of both parties. Nevertheless, Sperlich's readings are acute and insightful. The inclusion of *Athelston* is particularly valuable in this regard as, in many respects, it deviates considerably from the model proposed for the other three romances,