Schleswig, is one of an increasing number of detailed studies focusing on European urban microdialects. From a methodological point of view, this is an interesting study. The basic fieldwork was completed by 1984. Aware that the approach to sociolinguistic data had shifted from an essentially quantitative model to one allowing greater qualitative assessment, the author reworked his data. While the result is still rich in minute detail, it merits consideration as a serious attempt to satisfy the demands of sociolinguists with quite different biases. The reader interested in this aspect of the present work will do well to probe the chapters devoted to the approach to the material (22–69), assessment of attitudes toward use of standard High German and dialect (70–115), and data analysis (116–62).

A very full treatment is given of Low German's use with certain interlocutors and in specified situations (178–217). A much briefer, yet detailed account of developmental trends in this variety of Low German (218–31) merits the attention of historical and descriptive dialectologists. Some sections, however, might have been developed just a bit more fully. The chapter 'Mundartorientierung' (163–77), for example, deals with such important factors as the dialect speaker's self-identification not only with other speakers but also with members of various occupational, generational, and other social groups. It would have been helpful, however, to know more about how such issues relate to the author's understanding of 'mental maps', a topic about which he claims to have written (163), albeit in a study not cited in the volume's otherwise comprehensive bibliography. The chapter on borrowings and transfers between High and Low German (232–39) is sparse.

All in all, this study has the potential to evoke considerable interest among dialectologists and sociolinguists dealing with urban Low German. [PHILIP E. WEBBER, *Central College, Pella, Iowa.*]

What else can I tell you? A pragmatic study of English rhetorical questions as discursive and argumentative acts. By CORNELIA ILIE. (Acta universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm studies in English, 82.) Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994. Pp. vii, 248.

This book is a useful and thorough discussion of the nature of rhetorical questions: what rhetorical questions typically have in common, especially in terms of their discursive function, and what distinguishes them from other nonstandard questions (examination, expository and leading questions, etc.). In places, the book disguises commonsense as theoretical insight, and it contains more than its share of repetition and less-than-exciting taxonomy. However, though Ilie's book would have been twice as good were it half as long, there is more than enough genuine wisdom here.

The book is eclectic: it introduces earlier work in rhetoric, structural linguistics, transformational generative grammar, translation studies, and pragmatics. Though billed as a discussion of English rhetorical questions, it presents data from numerous languages (unfortunately, without always including a gloss). It thus serves as a helpful literature survey—though, oddly, one which omits relevant writings in the Government and Binding framework, in analytic philosophy, and, strangest of all, work in Systemic Functional linguistics. The book is also novel: it contains the author's corpus-based findings, a detailed discussion (in Part II) of rhetorical questions in political speeches and in the courtroom, and the results of a questionnaire which she developed.

The most interesting part of the book is the plausible and insightful defense of its central claim: that rhetorical questions are a special USE of questions, not a special CATEGORY of questions, either syntactic or semantic. (Compare: questions in poems or in jokes aren't special categories of questions; they're special uses.) I's view, as I reconstruct it, is this: a rhetorical question is an utterance of an interrogative which elicits an obligatory mental response on the part of the hearer—the hearer is supposed to recognize and accept the obvious-but-implicit answer to the question which the interrogative expresses. So, for example, a rhetorical use of 'Who would intentionally marry their mother?' is intended to elicit agreement to the implicit answer: no one would intentionally marry their mother. This single feature distinguishes rhetorical questions from all others—other questions being intended to elicit information, action, or answer. I's characterization nicely brings out a fundamental feature of rhetorical questions: the discrepancy between their interrogative form and assertive function. This, in turn, explains why rhetorical questions conform to constraints

on both questions and statements: they have the form of the first, and the function of the second.

Despite the attractiveness of I's view, one is left with a nagging doubt: if rhetorical questions are distinguished exclusively by use, why are there languages—I notes any number, including Otomi and Ese Ejja—which mark rhetorical questions syntactically? Having noted the problem, she never faces it squarely. Nevertheless, the book as a whole is impressive. [ROBERT J. STAINTON, *Carleton University*.]

A linguistic history of Italian. By MARTIN MAIDEN. London: Longman, 1995. Pp. xviii, 287.

This book comprises five chapters: 'Introduction' (1–23); 'History of the sound system' (24–91); 'Structural evolution of nouns, adjectives and verbs' (92–196); 'History of sentence structure' (197–228); and 'Variation in modern Italian' (229–75). Its cover advertises it as the 'only major "internal" history of Italian currently available in English'. This is true if 'available' means 'in print', but at least two others—Charles Grandgent, *From Latin to Italian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), and Mario Pei, *The Italian Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941)—exist, are generally worthy, and are undoubtedly available in many libraries. They should have been included in the bibliography (276–87). The author/editor must be certain to correct one spelling error if the book is reprinted: *vocal chords* should be *vocal cords* (33).

In scope of coverage, this book merits no significant criticism. It is comprehensive although, as the author acknowledges (2), it does not achieve the scope of major earlier studies like Gerhard Rohlfs' *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana i dei suoi dialetti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966–69). In the extent to which it conveys a sense of the evolution of the system as such, however, this book, like all of its predecessors, is vulnerable. The chapter on sounds does not attempt to reconstruct the evolving inventory of segments at various stages, each reflecting the result of certain sound changes. Like previous expositions of its kind, it presents reflexes of the segments of Latin under familiar headings, e.g. loss of [h]; diphthongization of low mid vowels; unstressed vowels; palatalization and affrication by [j]. The chapters on morphology and sentence structure may also be criticized for their somewhat atomistic approach. In the discussion of conjugation (122–65), for example, verbal formations are discussed independently of each other although there were inherited connections between certain formations (e.g. between the preterite and the imperfect subjunctive) as well as connections established within Italian (e.g. between the preterite and the past participle) which were relevant in the evolution of contemporary forms. The discussion of sentence structure is even less systematically oriented, providing only the briefest discussion of assorted, largely unrelated topics (e.g. interrogation, negation, complementation).

One procedural decision especially relevant to the discussion of morphology bears mention: the adoption of Classical Latin as opposed to Vulgar, or Late, Latin as a point of reference. Maiden recognizes that Classical Latin was not, in fact, the origin of contemporary Romance languages (11–12) but nevertheless adopts it as his point of departure because it is 'probably the best approximation we have to the structure of the forebear of the Romance languages' (12). This is an assumption with which many will disagree. We are able to reconstruct the forms and paradigms of Late Latin with reasonable certainty, and they should be, and elsewhere have been, used in histories of the Romance languages. M does make some reference to the characteristics of late paradigms, e.g. in the discussion of nouns (99), but the reference is sporadic and incomplete. It is further vitiated by the pervasive reference to classical paradigms and the grammatical oppositions characteristic of them, which are not directly relevant to the evolution of the contemporary Romance languages, particularly in their nominal systems. We also note that M's decision to 'take no particular theoretical stance' (2) makes it difficult to evaluate his arguments and conclusions. In a book which aims 'to provide some answers to the question "Why is Italian grammar the way it is?"' (2), it is important for the reader to have some notion of the author's conception of linguistic systems and their organization.

These difficulties do not detract significantly from the value of M's contribution as a comprehensive handbook of the facts. It also provides a good synthesis and intelligent discussion of existing views on issues and areas of uncertainty in the history of Italian. [MARK J. ELSON, *University of Virginia*.]