This volume brings together fourteen papers from a conference on dictionaries and borrowing. The proceedings open with a remarkably rich Présentation written by the four co-editors, who make a very convincing case for the need for this historical, meta-lexicographical investigation of the treatment of borrowing. As part of the ‘institution de la langue’, dictionaries play an important role in constructing relationships with other languages, since they must account for words that are linguistically ‘other’ (p. 5). Although the word emprunt is not used in its linguistic sense until the nineteenth century, the editors show that borrowings were very much a concern of even the earliest French dictionaries. The papers that follow are arranged chronologically and cover five centuries of dictionary making, from the sixteenth century to the present day. Together, they examine the choice of items included in the dictionaries, lexicographers’ discourse on borrowing, the markers used to indicate the external origins of the borrowings, the level of integration of borrowings into French, and their degree of linguistic adaptation. By focusing on just one aspect of lexicography, the authors are mostly able to offer relatively detailed and probing accounts of the way in which different dictionaries have treated borrowings. The articles on individual dictionaries will be of particular use to scholars working on historical periods. These include, Mathilde Thorel on Nicot’s Thresor de la langue françoyse (1606), Gilles Petrequin on Richelet’s Dictionnaire françois (1680), Agnès Steuckardt on Féraud’s Dictionnaire critique (1787–88), and Christophe Rey on the four editions of the Dictionnaire de l’Académie française published in the eighteenth century (1718, 1740, 1762, and 1798). Although the French tradition is the primary focus of the volume, some papers on more recent centuries widen the geographic spread to include eighteenth-century Polish dictionaries (Anna Bochnakowa), the Romanian Lexicon de Buda (Maria Aldea), and a comparative analysis of Anglicisms in contemporary French and German dictionaries (John Humbley).

Reading the papers side by side highlights the constantly changing context in which lexicographers choose how to treat borrowings. The word’s origin is particularly likely to lead to variation among dictionaries, with special treatment reserved in the French tradition for words of Latin and Greek origins on the one hand, and Anglicisms on the other (see Christine Jacquet-Pfau on the second half of the nineteenth century, and Aino Niklas-Salminen and Camille Martinez on current dictionaries). The co-editors remind us that this is also true at the textual level, where the absence of systematic marking of borrowings is evident even in contemporary dictionaries such as the Trésor de la langue française and the Petit Robert. In short, this is a very successful volume, of clear theoretical and practical value for French scholars. It highlights an important set of questions about dictionary making, and many of the individual pieces will serve as guides to scholars across various fields who use dictionaries as tools in their research.