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Gender Shifts in the History of English

How and why did grammatical gender, found in Old English and in other Germanic languages, gradually disappear from English and get replaced by a system where the gender of nouns and the use of personal pronouns depend on the natural gender of the referent? How is this shift related to "irregular agreement" (such as *she* for ships) and "sexist" language use (such as generic *he*) in Modern English, and how is the language continuing to evolve in these respects? Anne Curzan's accessibly written and carefully researched study is based on extensive corpus data, and will make a major contribution by providing a historical perspective on these often controversial questions. It will be of interest to researchers and students in history of English, historical linguistics, corpus linguistics, language and gender, and medieval studies.

ANNE CURZAN is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Michigan. She has written extensively on history of English, lexicography, and pedagogy, and is co-author of *First Day to Final Grade: A Graduate Student's Guide to Teaching* (2000). Professor Curzan is also co-editor of the *Journal of English Linguistics*.

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For my parents,
who have always believed
their daughters could do anything

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