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Preface

A history of the English language can be visualised as a map. Like a map it must decide on a particular scale with which it depicts a particular area. If a small scale is chosen, the focus is on the details of a town or a district. If a large scale is used, many of the details are ignored in order to represent an entire country, a continent or the entire world. None of these representations can be thought of as more accurate than any other, but they serve different purposes. They give the details or the large overviews. The present history of the English language unabashedly opts for the large overview. It is designed to provide a first overall orientation rather than