The Old English Metrical Calendar (Menologium) is the first complete modern edition of the late tenth-century Old English Metrical Calendar, which has traditionally been known as Menologium. This poem summarizes the major course of the Anglo-Saxon liturgical year; when the first month of the year starts, how many days there are between any two consecutive major feasts and by what name each month is called. More importantly, it focuses on the comprehensibility of the annual cycle and the interrelationship of feasts, festivals, solar turning points, seasons and months based on a ‘strikingly local-English or even British perspective’ as Karasawa suggests (p. xii), which makes this poem unique and incomparable to its analogues in Latin and Old Irish. It is chiefly concerned with time in late-tenth-century England. For readers today, it is interesting to discover how time was perceived by people in pre-conquest England, and learn which holidays were well known.

Karasawa’s edition offers a detailed and wide-ranging survey of research into the Menologium, which is preserved in the unique manuscript, London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.i. His research also extends to the prose version and analogous works in Latin and Old Irish. There are at least seventeen editions of
this poem available including unpublished ones and those that are not based on
the manuscript. Such a proliferation, Karasawa thinks, demonstrates that the
poem has garnered high interest amongst Anglo-Saxonists during the 300 years
since *Menologium* scholarship first began in the early eighteenth century (p. xi).
However none of these served as a full edition of this poem, and as he points out,
little knowledge has been shared on the nature and the purpose of the poem itself.
One of the most striking items offered by this new edition is that Karasawa identi-
fies the poem’s place in the literature, which he calls the ‘*Menologium* tradition’ (p.
51) and its significance to the people living in the Anglo-Saxon period. Tradition-
ally, there have been shared assumptions that the verse *Menologium* has a close af-
finity to Latin metrical calendars or Old Irish calendar poems. However, Karasawa
demonstrates that the *Menologium* is quite unique and different kind from poems
written for the purpose of education or instruction. Though it is often said that the
poem only deals with ‘universal feasts,’ what he reveals is that these were espe-
cially important in England at that time. The analogues tend to list more than twice
the number of feasts and festivals, and moreover vary to a considerable extent
from one work to another. Karasawa’s edition also offers us an easily comparable
table that shows which Anglo-Saxon calendars mark which feasts, and whether or
not each feast is mentioned in the prose *Menologium*, the verse *Menologium* or the
‘Metrical Calendar of York’ (see Appendix 6).

The volume is divided into three sections: An ‘Introduction,’ ‘The Old English
Metrical Calendar (*Menologium*): Text and Translation’ and ‘Appendices.’ In the
Introduction, Karasawa explores many intriguing questions that the poem raises
with regard to content, style and context. The second section presents the text
accompanied by a facing translation and commentary that deals with the issues
regarding the reading of the text. The last section, the ‘Appendices,’ is much more
extensive than is usual; ranging over the texts and translations of a number of
analogous works including the rather widely known ‘Metrical Calendar of York’
(Appendix 1–4), a list of Anglo-Saxon calendars (Appendix 5), a table of immov-
able feasts in Anglo-Saxon calendars (Appendix 6), a table of vigils in Anglo-Saxon
calendars (Appendix 7), a table of dates of the solar turning points written in each
calendar (Appendix 8), as well as a discussion of Latin and Old English month-
names in Old English written tradition and in the verse *Menologium* (Appendix
Throughout the book, especially in the introduction, Karasawa argues that the *Menologium* does not have any close affinity to its analogues other than the prose *Menologium*. He explores the idea that the verse and prose *Menologium* are based on the same literary tradition since they share a ‘peculiar but methodical structure’ (p. 18). Following the poet’s own words at the end of the poem, he explains that ‘the main purpose of this poem is to provide a method of locating the major feasts and festivals observed in contemporary Anglo-Saxon England’ (p. 52).

In the second section, we take a guided tour over the course of the year as presented in the poem, and can notice some of the interesting peculiarities of the poem. One of the most noticeable traits is the dual use of month-names in Latin and Old English. Getting acquainted with the original English month-names, which became obsolete, is an interesting and intriguing process. For example, *Februarius* ‘February’ is preceded by Old English *Solmonatð* (line 15b–9a) which probably means ‘muddy month’, while *Martius* ‘March’ appears with its Old English equivalent *Hlyda* as in the following passage:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{þænne he furðor cymeð} \\
ufor anre niht & us to tune, \\
hrière gehyrsted & hagolscurum færð \\
geond middangeard & Martius reðe, \\
Hlyda healic. (33b–7a)
\end{align*}
\]

then it comes forth among us to town one night later, decorated with hoarfrost and hail-showers, March the fierce, *Hlyda* the great, comes over the middle-earth. (p. 75)

*Hlyda* might have meant ‘noisy (windy) month’ since Old English *hlud* is cognate with *loud* in modern English. As is mentioned above, the poem was written to enable the reader to get a clear picture of the course of the year, and the poem itself portrays the natural cycle of the year with vivid imagery. The native terms for the months often sound more vibrant in expressing how the weather changes as a new
month begins. Another notable feature is the use of *monad* ‘month’ after the Latin month-names as in *Aprelis monad* ‘April month’ (line 56a) and *Iulius monad* ‘July month’ (line 132a). In the latter case, no Old English equivalent appears and Karasawa reports that this is rather rare in this poem since the poet uses almost all the Old English names for the other months, excepting January, which is mentioned only as *forma monad* ‘first month’ (line 9a). He writes that the heavy use of Old English month-names is one of the most striking features in the verse *Menologium* (p. 182), and indicates that the following lines clearly suggest that the Old English month-names were still dominant in the spoken language at the time of composition:

   October on tun   us to genihte,
   Winterfylleð,   swa hine wide cigð
   igbuende   Engle and Seaxe,
   weras mid wifum. (183–6a)

          October comes to town for our abundance, or *Winterfylleð*, as the island-dwelling Angles and Saxons, men as well as women, widely call it. (p. 83)

He explains that the poet uses several ‘techniques,’ which can be seen in the frequent use of *monad* ‘month’ after the Latin names (p. 197). He maintains that given the fact that the Latin month-names are less familiar to the intended readers, the poet treats them with considerable care since they are important in helping to remember key dates and thus grasp the course of the year (pp. 195–9). For some readers today, there is the question of when the Latin month-names took the place of native terms; in Appendix 9, Karasawa offers us a useful discussion on the Latin and Old English month-names.

Karasawa begins by saying ‘The Old English verse *Menologium* is a lively poem which takes the reader through the cycle of the year’ (p. xi), and this poem indeed carries a vibrant air of Anglo-Saxon England. The book presents a cogent picture of the background of the poem supported by exhaustive research. The fact that the major frame of the calendar is still in use and people still count and perceive time largely as they did in the late tenth-century may come as a surprise to some,
as might the fact that this complete modern edition is compiled by a Japanese scholar. Certainly, *The Old English Metrical Calendar (Menologium)* is an informative and thought-provoking edition, showing the flow of time in the Anglo-Saxon period, as well as being a very detailed study on the medieval computistical works. Even those who are not familiar with computistical study or Old English calendars will find valuable and stimulating ideas here.