

A Historical Syntax of English

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as lyrical. He sees this narrative situation as Coetzee's response to anti-lyricism in South Africa and abroad. Where many South African black writers in the 1970s turned towards ostensibly objective narrative situations, Coetzee's lyric narrative mode in combination with his texts' rhythmicity creates "emotional intensity" (p. 91) and has "affective potential" (p. 110). Where the *nouveau roman* rejects liberal-humanist subjectivity, shifts between lyrical passages and spare ones in *Waiting for the Barbarians* make readers feel the threat of a loss of the lyrical and of the romantic-liberal self, and of the consequential bareness.

Zimbler reads the protagonist Michael K in *Life & Times of Michael K* as a personification of Coetzee's "poetics of reduction" (p. 150). Described through metaphors of "existential reduction" (p. 149) (people are figured as animals or things) and aiming at "a bare form of life" (p. 150) in order to escape the Manichean struggle, Michael K stands for a mode of being and writing that Coetzee had come to attach social value to. Contrasting Coetzee's metaphors with South African novels in English, Zimbler exemplarily analyzes Nadine Gordimer's works, in which metaphors compensate for the bareness of apartheid society. The final chapter centres on what he calls Coetzee's middle fictions (*Foe*, *Age of Iron*, *The Master of Petersburg* and *Disgrace*), in which, Zimbler argues, a stylistic shift has taken place. In these works a theological lexicon is introduced, and the effect is that prose and fictional worlds become "more profound" (p. 196). He indicates that this lexicon is characterized as "necessary and inadequate" (p. 193), making us feel what would be needed to overcome the bareness of the earlier fictions but what the novels' realities remain resistant to.

Zimbler's relational stylistic analyses constitute accounts of the linguistic and rhetorical strategies at work in Coetzee's novels, thereby bringing to consciousness what is at the basis of a shared reading experience of those who describe his prose as bare and stark but also lyrical and intense. Reading these strategies as a response to the South African historical context, Zimbler advances his larger aim—"to propose a mode of stylistic analysis that leads from and back into a preoccupation with literary, political, and social contexts; and to contribute to a re-orientation of postcolonial criticism towards questions of literary technique" (p. 24). He moreover reveals misconceptions about the South African literary landscape and unearths neglected texts in which Coetzee reflects on stylistics and rhetoric. Zimbler's monograph lends a new dimension to Coetzee studies and invites us to take his approach to other of Coetzee's novels and to the study of other authors, and to incorporate relational analyses in narratological inquiries. This valuable contribution to Coetzee criticism thus holds interest also for scholars in postcolonial literatures and narrative theory.

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A Historical Syntax of English by Bettelou Los, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, x + 284 pp., ISBN: 978-0-7486-4144-4, £70.00 hb, ISBN 978-0-7486-4143-7, £19.99 pb

Given the lack of an adequate textbook, teaching historical English syntax proved to be a wearisome task in the past because lecturers had to refer students to various books, such as the syntax sections in the different volumes of the *Cambridge History of the English Language*. This textbook thus fills a gap, especially since Los takes great effort to elucidate the factors that

have influenced syntactic change. In line with her earlier research, Los primarily identifies these as discourse-pragmatic factors (rather than, e.g., issues of language contact or sociolinguistic factors), thus replacing a narrow understanding of syntax as a system of hard and fast rules by one looking, for example, into preferences in word orders speakers choose for discourse-pragmatic reasons. This makes the book interesting also from a cross-linguistic perspective and native speakers of Dutch and German in particular will be enlightened by the parallels drawn to their languages. This focus on explanation rather than mere description, however, also implies that some “formal machinery” in the form of *X'* structures is used and readers not familiar with formal syntax will need some guidance, especially in the later chapters, which address more controversial issues such as modelling the rise of the *to*-infinitive, Old English word order asymmetries or the loss of Verb-Second.

The book is structured along three parameters considered to be the main areas of syntactic variation, namely: whether functional information is expressed in syntax or in the morphology (Chapters 2 to 4); the different ways in which semantic roles are expressed (Chapter 5 on “Complementation”); and word order variation (Chapters 6 to 8).

Chapter 2 illustrates losses and streamlining in gender, case and number marking, and shows how these inflectional losses were, for example, compensated for by the grammaticalization of prepositions (see Chapter 2.7 on *to* and *of*). Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the rise of verbal periphrasis: while Chapter 3 looks at the rise of periphrastic forms involving grammaticalization of *be* and *have* (perfect, progressive and passive), modal auxiliaries and other means used for marking tense, modality and aspect are the central subject of Chapter 4. Readers not aware of the importance of the so-called NICE-properties (negation, inversion/question formation, code/ellipsis and emphasis) for the status of modal auxiliaries may perhaps be puzzled by the fact that essentials in historical English syntax, such as negation or the rise of *do*-support, are presented in various sections of a chapter entitled “The Rise of Modal Auxiliaries” (but they are easily retrievable by the book’s very comprehensive index).

Chapter 5 charts the rise and spread of three non-finite complements: the *to*-infinitive and the gerund (which are shown to have developed along similar lines) as well as the present participle. Los decides to stick to the term “gerund”, which indeed allows a more clear-cut differentiation of the nominal and verbal origins of today’s *ing*-form, but even if she repeatedly points out that the forms are hard to distinguish in later stages of English, students might be confused by sentences such as “the other difference is that PDE *ing*-gerunds ... can be fully verbal and take proper direct objects” (p. 131).

The chapters on the two major word order changes English has undergone—the change from OV to VO (Chapter 6) and the loss of Verb-Second (Chapter 7)—concentrate on word order asymmetries in sub-clauses, which are said to preserve an older order (in contrast to main clauses, which are considered innovative because of their higher functional load). As a “diagnostic” for change, Los identifies discourse-pragmatic motivations. This approach is further developed in Chapter 8 where assertion and grounding are shown to be particularly relevant for historical syntax, an analysis typical for the book’s basic understanding that “discourse routines become syntax”, when a word order that may once have been just one option out of many becomes so strongly associated with a particular function (e.g. fore- or back-grounding) that it is no longer optional.

This broad perspective of historical syntax, incorporating findings of current research into the discourse factors motivating syntactic change, makes this book an outstanding accomplishment. It is entirely appropriate for its target audience, that is, advanced students of (English) linguistics. As Los tries to exemplify as many of the structures as possible through present-day English examples or otherwise flawlessly glossed Old and Middle English examples, the book is also accessible to those who do not have a good command of earlier English. Each chapter is

also concluded by a very helpful “summary of points” (not only addressing syntactic changes but also methodology) and suggestions for further reading as well as very well-designed exercises, all of them using authentic language materials. Even if students not familiar with formal syntax will need some guidance, this book will be an indispensable textbook on English historical syntax for many years to come.

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Spatial Engagement with Poetry by Heather H. Yeung, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 209 pp., £55.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-137-48836-7

Spatial Engagement with Poetry offers a theoretical account of spaces in and of the poem and uses that to illuminate the work of four contemporary poets: Thomas Kinsella, Kathleen Jamie, Mimi Khalvati and Alice Oswald (confusingly the blurb refers to them as British poets although Kinsella is Irish). The appeal of this monograph lies in its breadth of discussion and deep erudition—Yeung enlists Stéphane Mallarmé, James Joyce, Northrop Frye and Julia Kristeva amongst a wealth of contemporary critics of lyric and space, and touches upon topics as diverse as Chinese poetry, neuroaesthetics and behavioural science, all within 180 pages.

The monograph is divided into two parts, each with a number of subdivisions. The first part is devoted solely to theoretical inquiry. Here, Yeung explores what she identifies as the three key spatial natures of the poem: “the poem *as* space”, “the poem *of* space” and “vocalic space and affective engagement”. The first of these natures is grounded in the idea that “the poem not only represents a certain space and time, but, due to formal principles, is also in itself a space” (p. 15). If this sounds like a call to a kind of visual criticism, particularly attractive in relation to typographically experimental work, Yeung warns against a privileging of any of a poem’s spaces. Yeung illustrates the notion of the “poem *of* space” through reference to Heaney’s poetry, which in its later stages, she pertinently suggests, reflects “the movement and process that characterizes the complexities of a globalised world” (p. 39). After an interlude looking at the “poem *in* space”, the “interaction between poetry and the world of the plastic arts” (p. 47), Yeung broaches the central topic of her theorisation: vocalic space. She seeks to offer an account of the way in which the reader’s voice, and his/her act of reading, is a further, often neglected, dimension of the poem. Discussions of a poem’s voice conventionally engage with the voice of the poet or the poem’s speaker. Yet, “[v]oice is also a part of the poem’s reader, as they engage in the strangely ventriloquial, and often silent, act of reading a poem” (p. 60). If this blind-sides the New Critic, accustomed to hearing only the various tones and inflections of the speaker, it blind-sides too the deconstructionist preoccupied with the “material nature of poetic language as it is printed on the page” (p. 60)—such challenging of established critical practices is one of the monograph’s strong points. Voicing a poem (which incidentally does not need to be done aloud) is a means of “affective engagement” as the reader’s voice encounters the poem’s language. This “highly personal initial act of vocalic, identificatory, play” is, however, commonly neglected as the literary critic becomes “inextricably bound up in the satisfyingly technical mechanisms of analysis”