On Being Inexplicit and Stuff in Contemporary American English

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One of the most familiar characters of contemporary American cartoon land is a father figure called Homer Simpson (from the television show and comic strip known as *The Simpsons*). In one of his attempts to characterize the speech style of younger, less well-educated people, Homer Simpson produced the following commentary, incorporating an imitation of their talk: "It's like, they're all stupid and stuff." The final conjunct *and stuff* appears to be used as an indicator of ignorant or sloppy talk. This treatment of *and stuff* and a number of related expressions (*and things, and everything, and that, or something, or anything, or whatever*) as stigmatized speech is not unique to one American cartoon figure. In Australian English, according to Dines (1980, 19), such forms are associated with lower-class speakers and stigmatized "because they are assumed to reflect vague and inexplicit speech." Their negative value, because of their vagueness or their use as "performance fillers," is also noted by Channell (1994, 120) in a study using British English data.

In this article, we shall present another perspective on the uses of such expressions in contemporary American English and offer some observations on their varied forms and functions. From this alternative perspective, the referentially inexplicit nature of these forms may be viewed as having positive value. Instead of representing failure on the part of speakers to achieve some referential function, these forms may actually be conventional indicators of how certain interpersonal functions are accomplished. Their most general function appears to be as markers of intersubjectivity in that type of implicit communication through which speakers indicate solidarity, an assumption of shared experience, and social connection.

The forms in question can be characterized as a class of clause-final expressions that have the syntactic structure of conjunction plus noun phrase. In the absence of a traditional grammatical label for this class, we will refer to such expressions as

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general extenders. They all have nonspecific or "general" reference, and they "extend" otherwise grammatically complete utterances. They can be divided into one subset called adjunctive general extenders (typically beginning with *and*) and another called disjunctive general extenders (beginning with *or*). Some of the most frequent forms occurring in spoken English are illustrated in the following examples. A broader treatment is presented in Overstreet (forthcoming).

1. I came to class but they had a bomb threat *or something*.
2. I was looking at him you know—knowing that he was gonna like—marry her *and stuff*.
3. I'm not trying to fall in love *or anything*.
4. You have to move—you know thirty days notice *or whatever*.
5. She was gonna follow up and I guess he had a lawyer *and everything*.
6. They're like "Wull we'd have to like mail it to you *and blah blah blah*."
7. I've been vacuuming and washing clothes and dusting *and all that stuff*.
8. I'm management and I'm sworn and under orders *and all that*.
9. She was supposed to testify that there were four men at the crime scene *and so on and so forth*.
10. They were not prostitutes as long as they took gifts—um food, clothing, *etcetera*.

This list of examples[1] could be continued with a large number of other forms, variations, and idiosyncratic creations that all follow the same basic structure.

In previous studies, the occurrence of these forms has been noted in American English (Ball and Ariel 1978; Jefferson 1990), Australian English (Dines 1980), English English (Aijmer 1985; Channell 1994), and Scottish English (Macaulay 1991), as well as in Swedish (Aijmer 1985) and Canadian French (DuBois 1993). Descriptive terminology has varied, with some of the forms being described as "tags" (Ward and Birner 1992), "generalized list completers" (Jefferson 1990), "extensions particles" (DuBois 1993), and "vague category identifiers" (Channell 1994). There has been a general assumption, most clearly expressed in the labels "set marking tags" (Dines, 1980) and "vague category identifiers" (Channell 1994), that speakers use these forms to refer to sets or categories of items. By noting the particular named item(s) preceding the form (e.g., *tents an' stuff*), listeners are assumed to be able to interpret the set or category of items that the speaker intended to refer to. We shall briefly discuss the potential categorization function of these forms, but we shall avoid limiting their function in this way. These forms are not only, and not even primarily, used to mark sets or identify categories or complete lists, so we have not used a label that would thus define them. In the discussion that follows, we shall use the more comprehensive term *general extenders* to characterize all such forms. The potential categorization function of general extenders is explored in greater detail in Overstreet and Yule (1997).

This study is based on the analysis of original data from telephone conversations and face-to-face interactions among familiars (mostly in dyads). The recorded speakers (American English) were eleven females and seven males, in their twenties (five), thirties (five), forties (four), fifties (two), and sixties (two), all middle or lower-middle class and all personally known to the researchers. The primary database, consisting of ten hours of conversation, was recorded using ultra-miniature tie clip microphones and a telephone pickup device. The portions of the recordings containing general extenders were transcribed to include relevant context in the form of preceding and subsequent utterances. Since every instance that occurred was transcribed, this database can be used to make claims of a quantitative nature.

For the purpose of comparison, a second database was collected. This database consists of ten hours of spoken interaction among nonfamiliars in more formal contexts (i.e., face-to-face academic discussions, news radio interviews, televised courtroom deliberations, televised political debates). An examination of these two databases revealed that while general extenders appear in both formal and informal spoken interaction, they are most frequent and most varied in informal spoken interaction among familiars. In our corpus of ten hours of recorded spoken interaction among familiars, we found 158 occurrences of general extenders. In contrast, during the ten hours of recorded formal talk among nonfamiliars, there were only 30 occurrences of general extenders. As illustrated in Table 1, there is also a distinction between the types of forms that are characteristic of formal versus informal talk. Considering only those extenders that had several occurrences (three or more), it is clear from Table 1 that *or something*, *and stuff*, *or anything*, *or whatever*, and *and everything* are predominantly informal, whereas *and so on* and *etcetera* are more frequent in formal talk. It is also worth noting that disjunctive general extenders were relatively rare in the formal spoken data we examined.

In the discussion that follows, we shall present some observations on the basic functions of these forms within informal conversational interaction among familiars. Throughout this article, in addition to examples from our informal database, we will also include examples from other sources to illustrate points and demonstrate that the phenomena are not restricted to our database.

It has been noted by some researchers (e.g., Channell 1994; Dines 1980) that general extenders appear to be used as categorization devices. More precisely, the general extender can be combined with one or more exemplars to implicate a category. In rare instances, as shown in (11), the category is actually stated and the general extender is attached to an exemplar, almost as a way of explaining the category intended. In example (11), a father (in his sixties) is speculating, during a phone conversation, about the kind of trees found where his daughter (in her thirties) is living.

TABLE 1
Relative Frequencies of General Extenders

	Formal Talk	Informal Talk
or something	3	42
and stuff	0	29
or anything	0	19
or whatever	0	16
and everything	0	12
and blah blah blah	0	4
or what	0	4
or something like that	0	4
and all that stuff	0	4
and all	0	3
and things like that	1	3
and all that	4	1
and so forth	3	0
and so on	8	1
etcetera	7	0

11. Most of 'em are evergreens around there I guess—pine trees *an' stuff.*

In the case of example (11), we have a clear instance of a lexicalized category (*evergreens*) being referenced via an exemplar (*pine trees*) and a general extender (*an' stuff*). It is, however, much more common for general extenders to be used to reference nonlexicalized categories, or what Barsalou (1983) called ad hoc categories. Such categories are created fairly spontaneously in the course of conversation and have no lexicalized (i.e., a single lexical item) category label.

As illustration, consider example (12) from Dines (1980, 28), where the final adjunct *and things like that* is combined with two examples of physical action to categorize a kind of behavior.

12. She's sort of a child who swings and does somersaults *and things like that.*

This process of characterizing a kind of behavior is accomplished by providing some exemplars, then inviting the listener, via the general extender, to infer the kind of category.[2]

An important element in this analysis is the observation that the general extender represents an appeal to the listener to construct a referential category. In example (13), the speaker is assuming that the listener will understand (without having to be told) the difficulties or troubles associated with having a baby and, in (14), that the general extender will summon up the activities associated with having a close childhood friend.

13. She's gonna go through labor and delivery *and all this stuff* y'know.
14. y'know, back when we were buddies and we used to ride our bikes together *and stuff.*

Occasionally, a speaker will elaborate on the type of information that she has signaled, via the general extender, that the listener is assumed to be able to infer. Notice how, in (15), the speaker initially describes her cat's behavior briefly with a general extender (*he didn't howl or anything*) but then elaborates, giving more exemplars, and once again uses a general extender to implicate the referential category (kinds of misbehavior by a cat at the vet?).

15. (the vet) y'know stuck the thermometer up his butt an' he didn't howl *or anything*—he didn't fight or hiss or scratch *or anything.*

A crucial element in the categorization analysis of general extenders is the implicit appeal to shared experience or knowledge. In many cases, the speaker evokes a kind of ad hoc category that is based on a similar background experience of the world rather than any objective knowledge base. In example (16), the speaker assumes that the kind of person she is referring to, in those terms, will be identifiable by her listener without further elaboration.

16. She looks like she works in a grocery store *or something.*

The function of the general extender, as in (16), may only be incidentally related to categorization. That is, categorizing the referent is potentially one outcome of using the general extender (plus descriptor), but the crucial aspect of the process is that the general extender signals an assumption of shared experience and hence social closeness. In more technical terms, we can propose that general extenders are indicators of intersubjectivity.

The negative value attached to the inexplicit nature of general extenders appears to be based on an assumption that the only valued purpose of language use is to convey referential information. In interactive talk among familiars, however, there may be an overriding concern with interpersonal connection and the maintenance of social relationships. As a number of scholars have pointed out (e.g., Cicourel 1974; Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984), a great deal of what we say is tied to establishing social connections, having similar interpretations of events, and behaving as if we share a coconception of the world with our interlocutors. This assumed coconception is often described as intersubjectivity (cf. Rommetveit 1974; Schegloff 1992; Schiffrin 1990). Individual subjective experiences of the world are necessarily distinct, yet we often indicate that we assume others share our experiences and hence our knowledge of how things are. This intersubjectivity is perhaps the simplest explanation for the frequent occurrence of *y'know* in casual conversation, indicating an expectation that the listener, in some sense, can share an experience or an interpretation (cf. Schiffrin 1987). We would like to propose that general extenders have a similar basic function in contemporary English. They are markers of intersubjectivity.

Just as the transparently intersubjective marker *you know what I mean* is typically reduced in conversational speech to *y'know*, so too are many appeals to assumed knowledge via general extenders reduced to short versions. An organizer of a meeting, addressing a large hostile group, may use a more elaborate general extender, as shown in (17), but the appeal to the audience's assumed knowledge is still obvious.

17. Nothing can be accomplished by heckling, booing, *or anything of that nature* (quoted in *The New York Times*, June 16, 1996).

It is much more common to find shorter general extenders, as in (18), which is from a conversation between two nurses concerning a patient who had recently died. There is presumably a long list of people who might know the patient, but after mentioning the absence of some minimally expected representatives, the speaker marks, with the brief general extender, that the interlocutor will know what she means.

18. I felt so sad for him—and no family *or anything.*

In interpersonal talk, the two markers *y'know* and a general extender often occur together. In addition to their co-occurrence in examples (2), (4), (13), (14), and (15), they are present in examples (19) through (21), which represent points in their respective interactions where one speaker indicates an expectation that the other will be able to complete the message.

19. I'm sure she's not gonna call me or *you know* write me *or anything like that.*
20. Until she gets really bored—*you know* with her life or confused *or whatever.*
21. On the other side of the family *you know* there's all their side of the family *and all that shit.*

Rather than view the inexplicit nature of general extenders as having negative value, we might note that for the participants in conversation, being inexplicit in this way is a form of assumed social closeness and connection.[3] Generally speaking, using a marker of assumed shared knowledge will function as an indication of invited solidarity or positive politeness.

When speakers indicate, via adjunctive general extenders, that more could be said, yet is not being explicitly said because the interlocutor already knows the *stuff*,

they are inviting the interlocutor to assume common ground. In terms of pragmatics (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; Yule 1996), this would represent a strategy of positive politeness known as invited solidarity. By acting as if the interlocutor has similar background knowledge and experience, the speaker is using intersubjectivity as a basis for saying less while communicating "there is more." Adjunctive general extenders simultaneously convey that "there is more, but I don't have to spell it out because you can fill in the details yourself." When a person is telling a friend about moving to another town and starting to look for a new job, she doesn't have to spell out all the details. She can use *an' stuff like that*, as in (22). When two friends are talking together about carrying light camping gear on a hiking trip, they can cover most of it with *an' stuff*, as in (23). Or when a woman is talking (not for the first time) about her fear of caterpillars, she knows her friend will understand the use of *an' stuff* in (24).

22. start sending out my resume *an' stuff like that*
23. just pack out our clothes and tents *an' stuff*
24. I've been dreaming about 'em turning up in my bed *an' stuff*

It is not actually relevant to any of these preceding examples that there must be "more" details for the *an' stuff* to refer to, or that the speaker could explicitly mention other details if asked. The form appears, in contemporary American English, to have become primarily a marker of invited solidarity, an indication that the speaker is treating the interlocutor as one who shares (or is willing to act as if they share) the same background knowledge or experience. It is predictable that, with such a function, the form *and stuff* may cease to be attached to named exemplars, indicating categorization, and will become like *y'know*, a much more widely distributed marker of intersubjectivity. However, that is a topic for future studies.

Rather than focus on the referentially inexplicit nature of expressions like *and stuff*, we might actually develop a better understanding of certain aspects of the contemporary uses of American English by focusing on the positive functions of such expressions. They represent a kind of implicit communication whereby speakers indicate an assumption of shared experience and hence closeness or common ground. While close personal friends having a private conversation may tend to say *and stuff* or *and things like that*, the implicit communication of "there is more, but we're close and so you know what I mean" is actually no different from the political commentator's use of *and so forth* in a public broadcast. To take one example, when Rush Limbaugh (in a July 1996 televised broadcast) commented ironically on the claims of the Clinton administration, as in (25), he was also appealing implicitly to common ground shared with his audience.

25. They told us that they were ethically pure, they were going to set a higher standard than anybody ever set, *and so forth*.

Having provided a means of identifying some elements of both the distribution of general extenders and what they appear to be used for, we may now be in a better position to explore other aspects of their variation, both regionally and socially, within the scope of English linguistics.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, examples are from the conversational database described. Example (8) is from a news interview with university president Kenneth Mortimer, published in *Ka Leo*, University of Hawaii's student newspaper, on 4 May 1994. Example (9) was spoken by Michael Kinsley on CNN's *Crossfire*, a television program on current political issues, during March 1995. Example (10) was spoken by a woman (describing life in the Depression) interviewed on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* in February 1995.

2. It is worth noting that, under one interpretation, the noun phrase within the adjunctive general extender in (12) is conjoined with two verb phrases. In many other ways, general extenders do not seem to be constrained by strict grammatical agreement requirements. As well as syntactic category differences, number differences between the conjuncts, as in *pine trees and stuff* (not 'and things'), and gender differences, as in *Miss America or something* (not 'or someone'), can also be observed.

3. There is often an implicit appeal to shared opinion or evaluation in the form of some general extenders. In addition to *and all that shit*, in (21), we have noted a number of other pejorative expressions (e.g., *crap, junk, mess*) in the head noun slot of adjunctive general extenders. When reported talk is being treated as predictable (and uninteresting), variations on the form *and blah, blah, blah*, as in (6), are often found. See Overstreet (forthcoming) for further discussion.

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REVIEWS

Cleft and Pseudo-Cleft Constructions in English. By Peter C. Collins. Theoretical Linguistics series. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1991. xvi + 230 pp. ISBN 0-415-06328-0.

Reviewed by Pieter de Haan
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This is a study into the syntactic, semantic, and communicative properties of cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions in contemporary English. More precisely, it is a corpus-based study of these constructions in Modern British English. The corpora examined are the London-Lund (LL) corpus, comprising 435,000 words of spoken language, and the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen (LOB) corpus, providing around one million words of written language.

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the study, while Chapter 2 describes the database used. In Chapter 3, the author defines the classes of pseudo-cleft and cleft sentences. Readers who are familiar with the terms *cleft* and *pseudo-cleft* only through general handbooks (e.g., Quirk et al. 1985) will learn that Collins has not only looked at the most elementary types of clefts (it BE . . . who/that/where, etc.) and pseudo-clefts (Wh- . . . BE . . .) but has included variant forms in his description. I shall return to this below.

Chapter 4 describes syntactic and semantic properties of the highlighted elements in clefts and pseudo-clefts.

The central chapters of the book are Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 5, the author discusses communicative meanings of clefts and pseudo-clefts. He draws heavily on Halliday's work on information structure in texts. In Chapter 6, the communicative meanings of clefts and pseudo-clefts in the corpus are studied.

Chapter 7 deals with clefts and pseudo-clefts and register variation. Chapter 8, finally, sums up the main findings of the study. The book is concluded with notes to the various chapters (which I personally would have preferred to see as footnotes at the bottom of the pages in the text itself), a bibliography, and an index, which consists mainly of references to the mentioning of authors in the text but fortunately also contains references to some of the major key phrases in the book (although I do not find a direct reference, for instance, to the informational classification of clefts, which is discussed on pages 110 ff.). A list of tables and figures and a survey

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of abbreviations and symbols used (mainly referring to the prosodic transcription of the spoken examples from LL) can be found in the beginning of the book.

In Chapter 3, the author sets out to define the class of clefts and pseudo-clefts. He basically distinguishes three subtypes of pseudo clefts: wh-clefts, th-clefts and all-clefts, represented, respectively, by *what he wanted was a glass of water*, *the thing he wanted was*. . . and *all he wanted was*. . . . Distinguishing the latter two as pseudo-clefts (after all, they could also be looked upon as regular noun phrases with postmodifying clauses) seems to be based on the consideration that there exists a close semantic relationship between these types rather than on anything else.

Cleft constructions include cases where the highlighted element is not realized, as in *it's not that Mervyn's totally unreliable*. The author here fails to convince me that the alternative analysis of cases like this, in which they are said to be derived from extraposed constructions, is in fact inferior to the one proposed here. I would have thought that the example above could be said to have been derived from *it's not the case that Mervyn's totally unreliable*. Collins admits (35) that "convincing evidence is difficult to find." Unlike the discussion of the pseudo-clefts, where exact figures for the three subtypes are given (about 75 percent of the pseudo-clefts are indeed wh-clefts), the discussion of the clefts does not give any clue as to the proportion of cases without overt highlighted element, which makes the figures for clefts a little harder to assess.

The great value of this study, it seems to me, is found in Chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters, Collins shows that he has a competent grasp of the description of textual structure. A very valuable aspect of these chapters is that he relates instances of clefts or pseudo-clefts to the contexts and cotexts in which they occur, showing how it is precisely this, rather than any of the other types of highlighting, that is the most appropriate in the given textual situation. A nice example is his extensive discussion (102) of an example quoted earlier by Gundel:

A How am I going to get this spot out of the rug?
B What my mother always uses is vinegar.
?It's vinegar that my mother always uses.

In Chapter 5 ff. more prominence is given to the division of pseudo-clefts into two subgroups: the so-called basic pseudo-clefts, as in *what he wanted was a glass of water*, and the so-called reversed pseudo-clefts, as in *a glass of water was what he wanted*. Collins shows convincingly that these are not just positional variants of each other but that each of them has its own special role to play in the informational structure of texts.

There are also some critical remarks I must make, however. In the first place, the layout of the tables makes them hard to interpret at times (e.g., Table 5.2 on page 106), and more than once the tables contain inaccurate information, as in Table 4.1

(56), where PPs are indicated as functioning as comp. prep in 162 cases, which is clearly a misprint, but where, moreover, an ADJ P is said to function as "subject" once, which should clearly be "subject complement." Also the reference in the text to information in the tables is sometimes inaccurate. For instance, in Table 6.2 an indication is given of the relative frequencies of various types of cotexts and contexts in LL and LOB. The figures show 1.2 occurrences per 10,000 words for directly similar cotexts in LL and 0.1 for LOB. Yet, in the text this relation is described as "almost four times as common in the spoken as in the written data" (121).

Further examples of somewhat sloppy typesetting are the completely erroneous inclusion of example 5b on page 30, which should not be there at all, and the position of the left square bracket in the formula on page 36, which now makes it look as though the copula BE is optional in cleft constructions, which can hardly be intended.

The most surprising thing I found was a passage on page 205, in a more general discussion on word length (by which, incidentally, is not meant word length, but the length of constituents expressed in terms of the number of composing words). Here Collins writes,

> The relative grammatical simplicity and lexical density of writing ensures that clauses will be longer on average in that mode than in speech, with its grammatical complexity and lexical sparseness.

This runs completely counter to my own findings (e.g., de Haan 1992) that it is precisely grammatical complexity that is responsible for longer clauses and grammatical simplicity that makes for shorter clauses.

Despite these criticisms, I think that this is an excellent study, which has taught me a great deal about text structure in general and the phenomenon of cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences in particular.

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The Meaning of Syntax. By Connor Ferris. London: Longman, 1993. xi + 235. ISBN: 0-58-221012-7.

Reviewed by David Lee
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The main aim of this work is to provide a semantically and syntactically based explanation for the distribution of English adjectives. Chapter 1 introduces the overall theoretical framework. Subsequent chapters develop the argument for a taxonomy involving eight different constructions:

(a) Chapter 2: Prenominal attributive (*The hungry passengers*)
(b) Chapter 3: Predicative (*The passengers are hungry*)
(c) Chapter 3: Postnominal attributive (*The man responsible*)
(d) Chapter 4: Predicate qualifying (*She buys her dresses ready-made*)
(e) Chapter 4: Clausal (*We believe the detective innocent*)
(f) Chapter 5: Adverbial (*Ellen shook the keys loose*)
(g) Chapter 5: Postverbal (*He fell ill*)
(h) Chapter 9: Extraclausal (*They persevered undaunted*)

Chapter 6 is concerned with "minor structures" such as *a total stranger, a distant cousin, a mere kid*; Chapters 7 and 8 deal respectively with the restrictive/nonrestrictive distinction and intensional grouping (i.e., structures containing more than one adjective).

Ferris argues that the distribution of adjectives across the above eight constructions can be explained in terms of the semantic relationship between the adjective and other structural elements on the one hand and the semantics of the construction on the other. For example, whereas the predicative construction involves an "assignment" relationship (i.e., the adjectival property is ascribed to the noun referent), the attributive is not one of assignment, merely one of "qualification," which explains why **The expert is meteorological* is ill formed. The use of the adjective here is associative rather than ascriptive in that the property designated by the adjective applies not to *expert* but to some associated entity (in this case, the relevant field of activity). This distinction can also be used to account for certain ambiguities. For example, if the adjective in *his Italian diary* is used ascriptively, then the property *Italian* is assigned to the noun referent (the most salient reading in this

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case being that the diary was made in Italy). If the adjective is used associatively, the property applies to some entity other than the noun referent (in this case, a journey perhaps). A similar argument is used to explain the fact that examples such as *a true poet, a total stranger, a mere kid* do not have predicative counterparts.

Although this argument is clearly substantially correct, there are problems with some of the details of the proposed taxonomy, particularly the distinction between constructions (d), (e), and (f) above: predicate qualifying (PQ), clausal (CL), and adverbial (AD). One (minor) difficulty has to do with the terminology, none of which captures the semantic relationship between the adjective and the relevant NP in each structure. A more serious problem has to do with the nature of the argument for treating these as different constructions. The justification for the analysis relies heavily on differences relating to question patterns. Consider the following:

1. She buys her dresses ready-made. (PQ)
2. They believe the detective innocent. (CL)
3. Ellen shook the keys loose. (AD)

The principal diagnostic cited by Ferris for this taxonomy involves contrasting question patterns:

4. How does she buy her dresses?
5. What do they believe the detective to be?
6. What did she do to the keys?

The main semantic distinction postulated is that in the CL structure, the relationship between the object NP and the following adjective is said to be clauselike, whereas this is not true in either of the other constructions. One reflex of this is that only the CL structure allows *to be* to occur between the object NP and the adjective. The distinction between the PQ and the AD structures is that in the latter, the adjective is more closely associated with the verb than in the former (in spite of the name "predicate qualifying")—one reflex of this being that the adjective can occur between the verb and the object NP (*Ellen shook loose the keys*). One further property of AD constructions is that they often have a resultative reading.

It is doubtful, however, whether these factors correlate systematically enough to justify postulating different constructions here. Consider an example such as *Alistair likes his beef tea strong*. Ferris assigns this to the CL structure, since it is questioned by *how*, but he also recognizes that it allows insertion of *to be*. This suggests (counterintuitively) that this sentence should be ambiguous between the CL and PQ readings and, moreover, that the ambiguity should be related to the contrast between (1) and (2).

Further, consider an example like *He kept the location secret*. The question test does not provide a clear answer to the problem of how to classify this structure, since **How did he keep the location?*, **What did he keep the location to be?*, and *?What did he do to the location?* are all odd. Possibly Ferris would assign this example to the AD construction on the grounds that the adjective can (perhaps) be positioned between the verb and the direct object (*? He kept secret the location*). However, if this is correct, the example is still awkward in that it does not have a resultative reading.

There are, moreover, other semantic differences in this area that are not discussed here. For example, in many of the so-called predicate-qualifying constructions, the process is contingent on the direct object referent having the property designated by the adjective. For example, in (1) the process of her buying dresses is contingent on their being ready-made, and in *Alistair likes his beef tea strong*, the process of his liking his beef tea is contingent on its being strong. But this is not true of all examples in this category—it does not apply, for example, to *The jury found the defendant guilty*.

These complexities suggest that it may be preferable to analyze all of (d), (e), and (f) as a single syntactic construction, with internal semantic differentiation of the kind that we have come to expect with any syntactic category rather than attempt to justify separate constructions on the basis of selective syntactic and semantic criteria that do not show strong correlations.

These criticisms aside, there is much that is valuable in the book. The ascriptive/associative distinction that runs as a major theme throughout is clearly an important one and provides the basis for an explanation of a wide range of phenomena:

> Most nominal modifiers are used associatively rather than ascriptively (*army maneuvers, a piano factory, a sea monster, an angle bracket*, etc.)
> Associatives do not allow an intensifying adverb (**They bought some rather clerical collars*).
> Associatives do not occur generally in structures where the semantic relation is one of assignment (**Buildings official will be closed for three days*, **We believe the theorem nuclear*).

The discussion in Chapter 10 of the mode/comment distinction is also valuable. One example illustrating this distinction is *an amazing gap*, where the adjective may refer either to the fact of the existence of the gap or to the nature of the gap. A wide range of examples is discussed in which this kind of ambiguity is at work, and there is a suggestion that the contrast is related to other distinctions, such as count/mass and restrictive/nonrestrictive. Ferris is clearly right to suggest that the distinction has general significance, since it is also found in adverbial adjuncts. For

example, in *Carefully John closed the door*, there is an ambiguity relating to the question of whether it was the manner or the fact of John's action that was careful.

The argumentation is clear with ample exemplification, which makes the book highly accessible. The careful and often insightful discussion of semantic nuances will recommend itself particularly to readers whose major interest is in (relatively unformalized) semantics rather than in syntax.

The Disintegration of the English Strong Verb System. By Marcin Krygier. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994. viii + 271. ISBN: 3-63-147565-9.

Reviewed by Hans F. Nielsen
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This volume, originally written as a doctoral dissertation for the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan (Poland), deals with the transference of strong verbs to the weak verbal category, a shift that affected numerous verbs between Old English (OE) and 1500, the upper time limit of Marcin Krygier's study. In his "Introduction" (18-30) Krygier says that to the extent that scholars have been concerned with the causation of the shift at all, analogy with the weak verbal category has been the explanation most frequently offered. Granting that the model of the weak verbs was indeed "the ultimate influence, determining the direction of the shift," Krygier wants to investigate whether other factors—phonetic, systemic, or external—could have been of any significance in bringing about the shift (20).

Krygier's source of Old English is chiefly Bosworth & Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (along with Toller's *Supplement*), and for the subsequent period (twelfth to fifteenth centuries), Krygier's primary sources are the *Middle English Dictionary* and representative texts from each of the four centuries (*Peterborough Chronicle*, the AB group of texts, Chaucer's works, and, finally, the works of Thomas Malory). Although it is doubtful that it would have made much difference to the results of his investigation, it is to be deplored that for the OE period, Krygier did not have access to some of the recent computerized OE corpus material.[1]

Chapter 2, "Old English," lists the 367 OE strong verbs distributed in seven classes. Sixty-one of these exhibited weak forms during this period, the number increasing especially in the tenth century. Krygier demonstrates that the tendency toward a shift from strong to weak is most outspoken in Classes VI and VII, which both have only two alternating stem vowels (63-65, 75-76).

In his investigation of the *Peterborough Chronicle* (Chapter 3), Krygier is able to identify thirteen shifted verbs, six of which had weak forms also in OE. The shift of six of the remaining seven verbs was due to the influence of parallel weak verbs (87-90), a factor that had also played a role in OE where *funde*, 1/3 pt.sg.ind. of *findan*, emerged (cf. OE weak *fundian* 'strive for,' 60-61, 77, 88). No new factors relevant for the shift thus intervened in the first half of the twelfth century.

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In Chapter 4, "The Twelfth Century," and subsequent chapters Krygier wisely abandons the OE diachronic division of the strong verbs into seven classes[2] in favor of a synchronic approach distinguishing between stems with two, three, or four vowel alternants. Only 271 of the 367 strong verbs in OE are evidenced after 1100; 48 of these exhibit weak forms, and Krygier's material suggests that a stem-final dental was conducive to a shift in the direction of weak forms in the twelfth century (115-16). Krygier notes that there was a tendency to generalize one of the preterite vowels for the preterite (107) and that bialternant stems were preferred as potential candidates for the shift (120).

A drastic increase in the number of weak verbs took place in the thirteenth century (Chapter 5, 122-49): as many as 99 out of the remaining 253 strong verbs exhibit weak forms, and no phonetic factors such as dental stem elements can be pinpointed as especially relevant to this shift (141-49). It may be added that the strong verbal system was simplified during this period. In numerous cases, one vowel was generalized at the expense of the other past vowels, and only 18 strong verbs retained different vowels for all four grades (136, 149). In comparison, Krygier's investigation of the literary and highly conservative AB language (Chapter 6) reveals shift patterns characteristic of the transitional period (twelfth century) preceding Middle English (ME) proper.

The dramatic changes seen in early ME in general were reinforced in the fourteenth century (Chapter 7), where a record number of 166 out of 230 remaining strong verbs showed weak forms. The shift had gained momentum, "even though the triggering factors had been removed" (194). Krygier's study of the works of Chaucer (Chapter 8) provides a much more conservative picture of the situation than evidenced by Krygier's data in Chapter 7. In view of the literary nature of Chaucer's English, this is hardly surprising. The same applies to the material gleaned from the works of Malory (Chapter 10), where the percentage of strong verbs with weak forms is much smaller than the figures for the fifteenth century as a whole (Chapter 9), which shows a level comparable to that seen in the fourteenth century in general. In the fiftenth century, 151 out of 208 strong verbs exhibit shifted forms. Krygier concludes "that the strong verbs [sic] status as irregularities had been established by 1500," and that the introduction of printing "helped stabilize the situation by fossilizing some verbs as shifted and others as strong or irregular" (232).

In the final chapter of the book, Chapter 11, Krygier summarizes the major findings of his investigation. It seems to me that Krygier underestimates (or ignores) the fact that in the history of English, the weak verbs were always the productive category and not just "the quantitatively dominant pattern" (250). Throughout the book, Krygier has an open mind toward the possible significance of external influence in bringing about the shift. Chronologically, Krygier is right in consider-

ing the Norman conquest a turning point in the process (251). But I find implausible and speculative Krygier's hypothesis of the development of a fashionable, "normalized" variety of English associated with the court, in which English strong verbs with dental elements were reanalyzed as weak and where native English speakers would conceive of strong verbs turned weak as "a feature of the more prestigeous dialect of English" (251-53). The massive shift of strong verbs to the weak category after 1200 calls for an explanation, and it is, in my view, hardly a coincidence that the increase tallies chronologically with the strongest period of French lexical influence on English (cf. Jespersen 1962, 87; Baugh and Cable 1993, 173-74). I would be quite happy to accept the scenario posited by Strang (1970, 276) and mentioned by Krygier (23), in which it was the large influx of French verbs (following the weak conjugation) between 1170 and 1370 that changed the balance, making weak verbs so forceful a factor that this category attracted more strong verbs than it would otherwise have done. But I realize that this is something that cannot be ultimately proved.

"Appendix B" (255-67) gives an overview of the history of strong verbs till 1500 in tabular form. The organization of all strong verbs occurring during this long period into the traditional seven OE classes gives the reader a comprehensive view of the development of the various verbs that could otherwise have been obtained only with great difficulty.

The merit of Marcin Krygier's book lies especially in its excellent numerical and statistical analyses of English strong verbs going weak up to 1500 and its concise and clear presentation. No scholar working on the history of Old and Middle English can afford to ignore this study. But I do think that Krygier is somewhat off the mark in the manner in which he assumes French influence to have been at work in the shift.

In general, the book is well written, and the number of misprints are small. I have spotted only: *aller klasses* (21), *ahnlicher* (23), *seise* (36), *occassional* (148, 165), *aprroximately* (164), *ulowen* (164), *langauges* (232), and *intrduction* (245). A list of "Symbols and Abbreviations" (1-14) precedes the text proper, which on its part is followed by a "Bibliography" (268-71). Throughout most of the volume the symbol S stands for "shift" (cf. 14), and it is therefore annoying that in "Appendix B" (255-67) S represents "strong" but in another case (248) it signifies "sonorant." In the "Bibliography" there is no entry for Seebold (1970), despite a reference to it in the book (78). Krygier would have been well advised to include van Coetsem 1956 and 1970 (and now also 1994) in his bibliography and in his discussion of the Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Germanic verb system (31-34).

As a point of interest it may be mentioned that about one hundred of the just over two hundred irregular verbs occurring in present-day English were originally members of the strong category, most of them having infinitive, preterite, and past participle forms all differing among themselves. Other formerly strong verbs follow

the weak verbs (including most irregular weak verbs) in having preterite and past participle forms that are identical but differ from the infinitive (Nielsen 1985).

Notes

1. As Krygier is himself aware, a major drawback to working with Bosworth & Toller's *Dictionary* is that the sources of its forms and quotations cannot always be identified (66).

2. Krygier is not entirely consistent in his classification of OE strong verbs: tēon (tēah, tugon, togen) 'accuse' and ðēon (ðāh, ðigon, ðigen) 'thrive' are both listed as Class I verbs (37) even if, etymologically, the latter verb belongs in Class III (and, synchronically, the former belongs in Class II).

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SHORT NOTICE

Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West. By M. B. Parkes. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. xvi + 327. ISBN: 0-520-07941-8.

One of the questions I answer most frequently about the history of the language is not actually about language per se but about punctuation (in recent years, for example, by William Safire about paragraphs). This book, prepared by one of the great paleographers of our time (and dedicated to three others: R. W. Hunt, Neil Ker, and Stephen van Dijk), demonstrates the development and application of marks of punctuation from antiquity through Virginia Woolf. In quarto format, the volume is richly illustrated with seventy-four plates of manuscript pages. The text is scholarly—this is no mere coffee table book—but highly accessible. Parkes has both informed us and offered a real delight for lovers of books and writing.

— WAK

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