

facts which were not available in 1998, Stafford moves seamlessly through Barthes's early years as a war orphan and a victim of tuberculosis; the 'false starts' (p. 40); the engagements with Marxism, popular theatre, and structuralism; May 1968; the Collège de France years; the period of mourning following the death of his mother in 1977; and the 'posthumous life'. As in his earlier book, Stafford stresses the political elements of Barthes's writings, and he concludes that the author 'might be placed in a much wider tradition of moralists (Nietzsche, Sartre, and even Lacan and Lévi-Strauss) who want to explain, philosophically, how we behave as humans' (p. 156). The mention of 'moralists' might, particularly in the anglophone context, connote a figure of prim piety, but Stafford instead likens Barthes to Houdini, 'as this implies, in his attempts to break out from institutional and societal closure and control, a notion of creativity', in which we find 'a highly original critique of self and personality' (p. 158).

Samoyault's biography of Barthes runs to over 700 pages; Gil's is only a little shorter. Stafford's book contains fewer than 200 pages, but this should not be taken as a sign of slightness. *Roland Barthes* is an illuminating, readable work of concision and precision by one of the most knowledgeable figures in the field.

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A Comparative Grammar of Borgomanerese. By CHRISTINA TORTORA. (Oxford Studies in Comparative Syntax) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2014. xviii+401 pp. £32.99. ISBN 978-0-19-994564-1.

The result of many years of in-depth investigation of the Gallo-Italic variety of Borgomanerese, spoken in north-western Italy, this book presents and analyses a number of peculiar morpho-syntactic phenomena. The monograph is staggeringly rich in data and highly comparative in nature: taking Borgomanerese as a starting point, it draws together evidence from a number of other (Italo)-Romance varieties, offering novel understandings of the links existing between the various phenomena, on which, in turn, exhaustive and comprehensive explanations are built. Quite simply, the result is impressive: the investigation of the morpho-syntactic features specific to Borgomanerese, set against the wider Romance context, affords the opportunity to re-evaluate accepted analyses in syntactic theory and revisit poorly understood syntactic facts.

The word 'grammar' in the title needs some clarification, as it is not used in its more traditional acceptance of an overview of the phonology, morphology, and grammar of a variety, but in its narrower, more specific meaning, i.e. the morpho-syntactic structure, analysed within a transformational framework. In spite of the book being theoretically driven, Christina Tortora goes to great lengths to explain in terms as accessible as possible and crystal-clear prose the theoretical infrastructure, and how the phenomena she investigates pose a challenge to current theory. Some background knowledge of the transformational theories of syntax is needed for the reader to appreciate fully the impact of Tortora's novel accounts and revised analyses,

but the book is unusual (if compared with similar contributions in the field) in that it does not rely on the reader's familiarity with the latest theoretical developments. As such, the monograph is of great interest to both the more theoretically minded linguist and any Romance linguist with a background in syntactic theory, and it is also easily accessible to graduate and advanced undergraduate students.

Turning now to its contents, the book is organized in six chapters, including the Introduction (Chapter 1). Each chapter offers an astonishingly rich collection of data, all accounted for in very detailed and comprehensive analyses. In this brief overview it is not possible to do justice to such wealth: I will mention as many of the phenomena as possible, but only summarize a selection in some detail. Chapter 2 investigates Borgomanerese subject–verb inversion constructions that co-occur with a locative. These are shown to have an unusual syntactic behaviour that Tortora accounts for by interpreting the locative element as simultaneously expletive-like and the phonologically null realization of the locative argument of the unaccusative verb. By analysing the element as lexically weak, puzzling and so far unexplained restrictions on parallel constructions in Italian and English are accounted for. Chapter 3 addresses the syntactic behaviour of object clitics with, among others, simple and compound tenses, restructuring (i.e. modal plus infinitive) predicates, imperatives, and causative constructions. Borgomanerese displays enclisis with simple finite tenses, and unexpectedly both verbs and a selection of adverbs can act as hosts. Tortora compares the positioning of object clitics across Romance, and suggests that there exist two domains for clitic placement, a higher one (the I(nflection)-domain) and a lower one (the V(erb)-domain). The choice available to languages is subject to parametrization. The author also recognizes that the nature of the clitic itself contributes to the variation in placement. Chapter 4 builds on Chapter 3, turning to the interaction of object clitics and locatives, locative prepositions in particular, and aims at reaching a deeper understanding of their syntactic behaviour. Tortora's contribution in this chapter can be summarized in three points: there exists an Aspectual head in the lower functional field of the clause; only those locatives that are lexically specified with the relevant aspectual properties can occupy that position; there is a clear distinction between the currently investigated phenomenon of apparent 'prepositional enclisis' and the type of enclisis found with a different class of locatives. The Borgomanerese cliticization facts call into question a purely syntactic analysis of clitic placement: morpho-phonological factors also play a role, albeit one that is not yet fully understood. Chapter 5 turns to subject clitics, a challenging area since it exhibits great intra- and inter-speaker variability. Interpreting this as the result of the development of individual grammars based on what can be highly ambiguous data, Tortora is able to disentangle the complexity of the evidence and offers a lucid account of the developmental path of, among others, the way speakers understand the vowel [a], which can be either a subject clitic or an epenthetic vowel. Finally, Chapter 6 offers a description of interrogative clauses in Borgomanerese, focusing on the behaviour of interrogative pronouns (and the syntactic differences of the pair *cus* and *que*, both meaning 'what'), the preposition *a*, and cleft questions.

With its richness of data, insights, reflections, and novel analyses, this book is comparative syntactic investigation at its best.

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Dante and Islam. Ed. by JAN M. ZIOLKOWSKI. New York: Fordham University Press. 2015. viii+372 pp. \$85. ISBN 978-0-8232-6387-5.

Of all the vexed and troubled questions in Dante Studies, the issue of Dante's knowledge of and attitudes towards Islam is one of the most vexed and troubled. *Dante and Islam*, appearing in the series 'Dante's World: Historicizing Literary Cultures of the Due and Trecento', edited by Teodolinda Barolini, is indeed a most welcome collection of essays, a long-anticipated and desperately needed intervention into debates that have run up against a lack of even the simplest accord on the basic terms of discussion or the recognition of the ideological implications and motivations behind scholarly postures. Jan M. Ziolkowski's wonderfully lucid Introduction wades boldly into the quagmire and successfully manages to create a sense of order and direction within the issues. A survey of the terms involved is a necessary starting point: are we to ask about Dante's conceptions of the Arab/Arabic? or Islam/Muslim? Arabicizing or Islamicizing? He proposes a catch-all term, 'Islamicate'. And then the collection sets itself a series of ambitious goals. To generate new insight into Dante's perspectives on Islamicate culture, it is necessary to look more broadly at the effects of Islam on Latin Christendom in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and at what the poet could have learnt about this culture from texts or from other people. The less direct and less textual modes of transmission are much more difficult to prove or assess, but are without doubt hugely important to any comprehensive approach to the question. Ziolkowski traces the history of the study of Dante's perspectives on Muslims from Asín Palacios's volume of 1919 (not as a starting point, but as the point that galvanized study of the issue). The discussion of the reactions to that book, begun in the Introduction and continued through the volume, constitutes in itself a general investigation of the national, religious, and political ramifications of any examination of 'Dante and Islam'. Ziolkowski warns in his Introduction of the dangers of both Islamophilia and Islamophobia in our critical work. There are temptations to frame our questions and answers about the past with our hopes and concerns for the present moment, but Ziolkowski cautions that ceding to such temptation can lead to fabrications of the past in the name of forging a better future.

Following the Introduction, the book is divided into five sections. The first, 'Approaches to a Controversy', includes two previously published landmark essays by Vicente Cantarino and Maria Corti. The second section, 'Dante and Knowledge of the Qur'an', includes essays by Thomas E. Burman and José Martínez Gázquez. The Friar Minor Riccoldo of Monte Croce constitutes a central node in the book as a possible channel for the transmission of information about Islam to Dante,