

Review of Castro-Chao, Noelia. 2021. *Argument Structure in Flux: The Development of Impersonal Constructions in Middle and Early Modern English, with Special Reference to Verbs of Desire*. Bern: Peter Lang. ISBN: 978-3-034-34189-9.  
<https://doi.org/10.3726/b17694>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

To provide some background information about this volume and the author, which would have been included in the missing acknowledgement, the book under review is based on Noelia Castro-Chao's PhD thesis submitted to the University of Santiago de Compostela and defended in May 2020. Given that all the quoted online resources were last accessed before the end of 2019 and no publication from 2020 onwards is acknowledged, and judging from words like "[a]s of 2019" (p.80), the actual content of the book may be essentially identical to that of the thesis.

Anyone with serious interest in English historical syntax knows that there is a substantial amount of critical literature on impersonal constructions. Nevertheless, this book demonstrates that it is possible to make a new contribution. By examining the historical development of three formerly impersonal verbs of Desire after the general demise of impersonal constructions, Castro-Chao has successfully expanded the scope of research mainly in two respects: focus on the Early Modern English (EModE) period and a corpus-based investigation with *Early English Books Online Corpus 1.0* (EEBOCorp 1.0; Petré 2013). Most scholars have concentrated on Old English (OE) and/or Middle English (ME) because these are the periods when impersonal constructions are abundantly attested, and the transition to personal constructions is said to have been complete by the end of ME. EModE is often overlooked as the period of investigation,



despite its potential for offering insight into the situation immediately after the transition. In addition, previous studies tend to discuss examples extracted from dictionary entries or print editions. Extensive diachronic corpus-based research has therefore been lacking.

## 2. CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The book has nine chapters. The first five chapters set the context by describing the aims and the outline of the study (Chapter 1), reviewing previous studies (Chapter 2), introducing the theoretical framework for the research (Chapter 3), defining verbs of Desire (Chapter 4) and explaining the data and methodology (Chapter 5). Chapters 6, 7 and 8 form the main part of the book and are devoted to case studies of *lust*, *thirst* and *long* respectively. These three chapters have the same organisation: the first section concerns the origin and development of the verb in question based on the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), *Middle English Dictionary* (MED) and previous studies; the second section surveys the complements of (im)personal patterns historically recorded with the verb, based on the same sources; the third section looks at (im)personal patterns found in EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700), with subsections for personal patterns arranged in decreasing order of frequency of complements; and the last section presents a summary and conclusions. Chapter 9 concludes the book.

### 2.1. Chapter 1: Introduction

The aims of the study are reproduced below (Section 1.1, see especially p.13):

- 1) To determine the time when the selected formerly impersonal verbs of Desire effectively ceased to be recorded with impersonal constructions.
- 2) To provide a diachronic overview of the personal syntactic patterns which came to replace impersonal constructions with these verbs from late ME onwards.
- 3) To describe the syntactic and semantic properties of the arguments of each individual verb studied.
- 4) To reflect upon factors which have been claimed to affect the loss of impersonal patterns in the history of English.
- 5) To assess which factors may have influenced the direction of the development of impersonal verbs of Desire after they started to appear in personal use.

Verbs of Desire constitute a syntactically coherent class in Present-day English (PDE; Levin 1993: 194–195), with some of them having alternated in OE and/or ME between

impersonal use with an objective Experiencer (e.g. *to þe me longeð swuðe* ‘I feel a great desire for you’) and personal use with a nominative Experiencer (e.g. *Ich langy so swiþe after Gorloys his wifue* ‘I have such a great desire for Gorloys’s wife’). The thing desired, Target of Emotion (ToE), is expressed today either as a direct object (*Dorothy needs new shoes*) or as a prepositional object (*Dana longs for a sunny day*). Castro-Chao duly justifies why EModE is a historically interesting period for impersonal constructions and how important it is to look closely at individual verbs. The ensuing chapters are outlined in Section 1.2.

## 2.2. Chapter 2: The function and development of English impersonal constructions

The chapter starts with a definition of ‘impersonal’ verbs and constructions (Section 2.1). Impersonal verbs are those predicates which occur in impersonal constructions though they may appear in other constructions and which subcategorise for an Experiencer as an obligatory argument, while personal verbs are restricted to personal constructions with a nominative Experiencer. Impersonal constructions lack a grammatical subject controlling verbal agreement, whereas personal constructions involve such a subject.

The next two sections introduce some of the crucial previous studies. Section 2.2 is concerned with those from the twentieth century, which all discuss the causes for the loss of impersonal constructions. The account begins with Jespersen’s (1961[1927]) well-known reanalysis hypothesis, which proposed that morphological ambiguity between a nominative noun phrase (NP) and a dative NP after the syncretism of these case forms primarily brought about the reanalysis of formerly impersonal constructions as personal constructions. This scenario has been criticised, especially on the grounds that impersonal constructions continued to be productive well after the simplification of the case system. Castro-Chao also draws attention to Allen’s (1986) study of OE/ME impersonal verb *like*, the very verb used in Jespersen’s hypothesis, which occurred with two nominal arguments only very infrequently. She then refers to alternative theories presented in Fischer and van der Leek (1983, 1987) and Allen (1986, 1995). Section 2.3 summarises more recent approaches which bear on the semantics of verbs and constructions: Trousdale (2008), Möhlig-Falke (2012) and Miura (2015).

Next (Section 2.4), the author presents a historical overview of impersonal constructions based on Möhlig-Falke (2012). As impersonal constructions disappeared

between 1400 and 1500, they were replaced with five syntactic alternatives: i) Experiencer-subject constructions (e.g. *She likes money*); ii) Experiencer-object constructions (e.g. *Her decision pleased me*); iii) (h)it-extraposition constructions (e.g. *It seemed to him that the weather would not last*); iv) middle-reflexive patterns, which are now obsolete (e.g. *They rate the goods without reason as they lust themselves*); and v) passive/adjectival patterns (e.g. *I am not quite pleased with your looks*).

The chapter finishes with a brief description of the semantic-pragmatic function of impersonal constructions (Section 2.5). According to Möhlig-Falke (2012), the OE impersonal construction expressed a shift of perspective by backgrounding/suppressing a nominative subject and foregrounding a dative/accusative Experiencer. It is considered functionally similar to the middle construction (Kemmer 1993) because they both involve an unvolitional event/process without any conceivable Causer.

### 2.3. Chapter 3: The nature of verb meaning and constructional meaning

Section 3.1 on verb meaning introduces key concepts such as State of Affairs (SoA) and semantic frame. The SoA of verbs of Desire is characterised by dynamicity, control and causation. Causation is further related to the force-dynamic relationship between an Initiator and an Endpoint or the causal chain which represents the transmission of force between the two participants. Then introduced is Dowty's (1991) concept of Proto-role and the Argument Selection Principle, which postulates that the argument with the largest number of Proto-agent properties is encoded as subject and the argument with the largest number of Proto-patient properties is encoded as direct object. Furthermore, in Dowty's Corollary 2, the non-subject argument with the largest number of Proto-patient properties is encoded as direct object, and the non-subject argument with the fewest Proto-patient properties is realised as an oblique or prepositional complement. Corollary 2 is concerned with three-place predicates (e.g. *John put the lamp on the table*), but Castro-Chao proposes extending it to two-place predicates with a prepositional phrase (e.g. *be afraid of NP*).

Section 3.2 addresses constructional meaning within Goldberg's (1995, 2006) model of Construction Grammar. The author carefully describes some terms and concepts pertinent to the data analysis in the book, such as participant/argument role and

(in)definite null complement. The section ends with a short discussion of perspective, whose relevance to impersonal constructions is proposed in Möhlig-Falke (2012).

Sections 3.3 and 3.4 deal with the semantic domains of Physical Sensation and Emotion respectively, which are both relevant for verbs of Desire. The semantic frame of verbs of Physical Sensation has the Feeler (Experiencer), the Body-part (Location) and the Cause (Stimulus). Verbs of Physical Sensation may denote either a process with a physical change of state (e.g. *Mary hurt John in the leg*) or a state (e.g. *My eyes are itching*), lack intention and control on the part of the Feeler and can be either causative or non-causative. In turn, verbs of Emotion typically involve an Experiencer and a Stimulus (more specifically a Cause or a ToE), encode a dynamic process between an Initiator and an Endpoint and exhibit a two-way causal relation where, on the one hand, the Experiencer as Initiator may direct their attention to the ToE (= unaffected Endpoint; e.g. *Mary likes John*), and on the other, the Cause as Initiator may bring about a mental state in the Experiencer (= affected Endpoint; e.g. *John pleases Mary*). This bidirectional relation allowed the same verb in early English to alternate between a nominative Experiencer and an accusative/dative Experiencer.

#### 2.4. Chapter 4: The class of verbs of Desire

Castro-Chao first explains how she selected the three verbs to study (Section 4.1). She looked up the label ‘impersonal’ in the OED and MED entries of Levin’s (1993) twenty PDE verbs of Desire, and only four (*hunger*, *long*, *lust*, *thirst*) turned out to be documented in impersonal use in the definition of this book and in the sense ‘to desire’. All four verbs take a prepositional complement in PDE as members of Levin’s *long* verbs. *Hunger* is excluded from the investigation because it is very close to *thirst* in the development of the emotion sense and complementation patterns, as far as we can tell from their OED and MED entries. However, this reason does not justify why *thirst* deserves more attention than *hunger*. It is also left unexplained why *yearn* did not join the final list, except that the author may have dismissed its impersonal use in late ME, which is explicitly acknowledged in the MED entry (s.v. *yernen*), as a nonce expression.

Section 4.2 describes the semantic classification of verbs of Desire in the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* (HTOED). ‘Desire’ (02.05.03.07) is a subfield of ‘Wish or inclination’ (02.05.03), comprised under ‘Will’ (02.05), one of the

seven subcategories of the major division ‘The mind’ (02). Not all of Levin’s twenty verbs of Desire are members of the HTOED category ‘Desire’, but the three verbs examined in the book all belong to this category.

Section 4.3 offers a semantic characterisation of verbs of Desire in the framework introduced in Chapter 3. The semantic frame of verbs of Desire has Desirer (Experiencer) and Desired (ToE). The SoA denoted by these verbs has a dynamic relationship, where the Desirer/Initiator directs their attention to the Desired/Endpoint. The SoA also possesses the feature of control in that the Desirer is volitional, but it lacks causation because the feeling of desire is not directly caused by the Desired. Moreover, the Desirer and the Desired differ only in the Proto-agent feature of volition and the Proto-patient feature of change of state. The Desired even lacks all the features of a prototypical Endpoint. Thus, verbs of Desire are semantically low in transitivity.

Finally, Section 4.4 outlines the syntactic patterns of PDE verbs of Desire according to Levin (1993). All these verbs occur in Experiencer-subject constructions. Some have developed adjectival patterns, specifically combination of a copula verb and either a past participle (e.g. *She was amazed/ashamed/disgusted/surprised*) or a related adjective (e.g. *He was afraid/angry/happy/hungry/sad/thirsty*), though only the latter seems to be relevant to verbs of Desire. These adjectival constructions usually have a stative interpretation and, just like impersonal constructions, background the Initiator and foreground the Endpoint of the SoA.

## 2.5. Chapter 5: Data and methodology

The chapter first presents basic information about *Early English Books Online* (EEBO; Davies 2017), its Text Creation Partnership (TCP) version and EEBOCorp 1.0, a 525-million-word corpus covering the period 1473–1700, from which Castro-Chao drew data for this study (Section 5.1). Next, Section 5.2 describes how she selected texts randomly from EEBOCorp 1.0 and compiled four fifty-year subcorpora, each with about five million words, for a diachronic study of the whole of EModE (1500–1700). Texts written at least partly in verse were excluded for fear of metrical interference on the choice of syntactic patterns. When the four subcorpora were finalised, the author used *AntConc* (Anthony 2019) to create a list of forms and spellings attested for the three verbs studied and to run a concordance search (Section 5.3). After false hits, repeated instances and

direct quotes of Biblical verses were all manually removed, *lust*, *thirst* and *long* respectively had 273, 304 and 341 valid examples. These instances were annotated according to ten variables (Section 5.4): i) subperiod of the corpus; ii) subject domain of the source text; iii) type of syntactic construction (impersonal or personal) and complements for personal patterns; iv) main or subordinate clause; v) type of subordinate clause; vi) formal realisation of the Desirer/Feeler; vii) formal realisation of the Desired; viii) type of preposition for the Desired; ix) person and number of the pronominal Desirer/Feeler; and x) Proto-role properties of the verb's participants.

## 2.6. Chapter 6: Lust

*Lust* originates in ME *lusten* (Section 6.1) and was found in impersonal constructions from the twelfth century to the mid-sixteenth century (Section 6.2.1). Impersonal constructions in subordinate clauses, especially those introduced by *as* or *when*, have a variant called NO PROP constructions, where the proposition is ellipped but easily recoverable (e.g. *Do as thee lust [to do] the terme of al thy lyf* ‘Do as it pleases you [to do] for the duration of all your life’). Personal patterns started to occur in the late fourteenth century (Section 6.2.2).

In EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700), *lust* decreases remarkably in its overall frequency and is mostly confined to religious and Biblical contexts in each fifty-year subperiod (Section 6.3). The PDE specialised sense ‘to have a carnal desire’ gradually becomes more common as the general sense ‘to desire’ decreases. Impersonal constructions account for just about three per cent of all the tokens of *lust*. They all belong to the first subperiod (1500–1549) and are restricted to NO PROP constructions (Section 6.3.1).

Personal constructions have four complementation patterns (Section 6.3.2): patterns with clausal complements, patterns with zero complements, prepositional patterns and patterns with NP complements. Clausal complements are by far the most common choice in the first subperiod but sharply decrease over time, whereas zero complements show a parallel increase and overwhelm other patterns in the seventeenth century. Prepositional complements also become more prevalent, and NP complements are only sparsely attested in the first and the last (1650–1700) subperiods. Except for zero complements, all these patterns distinctly prefer pronominal Desirers.

Clausal complements in personal patterns have some NO PROPs taking the form of (SOV) fused relative constructions, where the referent of the subject of the main clause is given a free choice (e.g. *every man hath his fre will to doo what him lusteth* ‘every man has his free will to do what pleases him [to do]’) (Section 6.3.2.1). Castro-Chao proposes that patterns with clausal complements and patterns with (pro)nominal complements are functionally different, particularly in the Proto-patient property of independent existence. She then hypothesises that as clausal complements declined around the turn of the seventeenth century, and as semantic specialisation of *lust* proceeded, verbs which express more general meanings (e.g. *please, wish*) took over the functional space occupied by clausal complements.

Patterns with zero complements include examples with an adjunct prepositional phrase (PP), which account for almost 60 per cent of all the occurrences of zero complements (Section 6.3.2.2). These adjunct PPs are always headed by *against* or *contrary to*, and nearly 40 per cent of them are found in the fossilised expression *the flesh lusts against/contrary to the spirit* and its variants. Apart from this expression, which becomes more frequent over time, the overall frequency of zero complements is attributed to religious discourse, where the unexpressed object of desire tends to be implicitly assumed to refer to sin.

Prepositional patterns generally prefer a nominal Desired (Section 6.3.2.3), and patterns with NP complements invariably take a nominal Desired too (Section 6.3.2.4). Castro-Chao puts forward the hypothesis that patterns with NP complements arose in the sixteenth century as an alternative to prepositional patterns, only to go out of use by the end of the seventeenth century because the Desired lacks typical Proto-patient properties to maintain its status as NP object.

## 2.7. Chapter 7: Thirst

*Thirst* is of native origin and had two meanings in OE, ‘to feel thirst’ and ‘to desire’ (Section 7.1). The first physical-sensation sense encompasses a Feeler and a Needed in the semantic frame of the verb, though only the Feeler is lexically profiled. The sense ‘to desire’ is an extension from the physical-sensation sense and has the same semantic frame as *lust*, lexically profiling a Desirer and a Desired. Impersonal patterns with *thirst* are recorded from OE to the fifteenth century (Section 7.2.1). Personal patterns were already



available in OE but were less frequent than impersonal patterns and mainly occurred in texts with some Latin influence (Section 7.2.2).

During EModE, *thirst* decreases remarkably in its overall frequency and is mostly restricted to the religious domain (Section 7.3), just like *lust*. The sense ‘to desire’ is more common than the sense ‘to feel thirst’ in the early sixteenth century and gradually expands until the last subperiod (1650–1700), when the sense of thirst notably increases. EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700) lacks instances of impersonal patterns, suggesting that the transition to personal constructions was virtually complete before 1500.

Personal patterns in the corpus are all Experiencer-subject constructions with either a prepositional complement, zero complement, NP complement or clausal complement (Section 7.3.1). All complementation patterns generally prefer pronominal Desirers. Only patterns with zero complements are regularly associated with the sense of thirst, and the other three patterns are all consistently connected with the sense of desire.

The Desired in prepositional patterns is mostly nominal (Section 7.3.1.1). Almost 30 per cent of Desirers are also nominal, and the author draws attention to body-part subjects like *heart* and *flesh*, which locate the emotion in a specific part of the body and cause an unvolitional interpretation of the SoA. The potential functional connection between body-part subjects and impersonal constructions leads Castro-Chao to hypothesise that body-part subjects were introduced to compensate for the meaning formerly expressed by impersonal constructions. She also discusses sentences where a drink noun occurs as part of the prepositional complement (*this drinke let vs thurst for*). She proposes to label this prepositional construction the MOVE-ATTENTION construction, where the Desirer moves or directs their attention to the Desired. The MOVE-ATTENTION construction is a metaphorical extension of the INTRANSITIVE MOTION construction (e.g. *The boy ran to the house*). Both constructions profile only the Experiencer/Theme argument and express the Target/Goal as an unprofiled oblique complement.

Patterns with zero complements were eventually replaced by the adjectival construction *to be thirsty* (Section 7.3.1.2). The data in EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700) indeed show that *to be thirsty* steadily increases in frequency up to the third subperiod (1600–1649), when it overwhelms *thirst* with zero complement. Castro-Chao hypothesises that *to be thirsty* superseded zero complements with *thirst* because the stative interpretation of the adjectival construction and the semantic properties of the subject match the type of SoA expressed by *thirst* better than zero complements.

The Desired in patterns with NP complements is always nominal (Section 7.3.1.3). The author assumes that NP complements practically went out of use after the sixteenth century because the Desired lacks the Proto-patient properties for a prototypical object. Similarly to clausal complements of *lust*, clausal complements of *thirst* lack the Proto-patient property of independent existence and express an event in an unrealised future time (Section 7.3.1.4).

## 2.8. Chapter 8: Long

The native verb *long* lexically profiles Desirer and Desired (Section 8.1). It is recorded in impersonal patterns from OE until the first half of the sixteenth century (Section 8.2.1). Personal patterns began to appear in the early thirteenth century (Section 8.2.2).

Like *lust* and *thirst*, *long* decreases in frequency in the course of EModE and is often found in the religious domain (Section 8.3). EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700) has no example of impersonal use, which implies that sixteenth-century instances in the dictionaries are only marginal. All the instances of personal patterns illustrate Experiencer-subject constructions, which take a prepositional complement, clausal complement, zero complement or adverbial complement (Section 8.3.1). Prepositional patterns are the most frequent in each subperiod and show a slight tendency to increase. In contrast, clausal complements gradually decrease while remaining the second most frequent pattern. The other two complements are very scarce, and NP complements are unattested. Desirers are generally pronominal irrespective of the type of formal realisation of the Desired.

The discussion of prepositional patterns includes patterns with adverbial complements because they share some functional properties (Section 8.3.1.1). All five instances of adverbial complements are realised by *therefore* ‘for that’. Castro-Chao suggests conceptualising the Desired *therefore* as a metaphorical Goal, just as *thereat* ‘to that place’ and *upward*, which are illustrated with *long* in the OED, express the Goal of literal directed motion. The construction with *therefore* is then considered as a variant of the above-mentioned MOVE-ATTENTION construction.

Patterns with clausal complements have sporadic instances of finite clauses introduced by *till/until* (e.g. *Christ longs till thou be in heaven*; Section 8.3.1.2). These clauses function as an equivalent of clauses with the declarative complementiser *that*

rather than their prototypical use as adverbial subordination of time. A number of adverbial subordinators (e.g. *as if/though*, *if*, *lest*, *like*) are known to have acquired the role of the major declarative complementiser *that* while retaining their original semantic features. Castro-Chao regards the use of *till/until* with *long* as another illustration of this development. It would be interesting to know how widespread the complementiser *till/until* was historically, especially in EModE, and if there are any generalisations to be made about the semantic categories of co-occurring verbs.

Zero complements with *long* parallel those with *lust* in that they involve definite null complements: the lexically profiled Desired argument is left unexpressed because it may be co(n)textually recoverable (Section 8.3.1.3). Therefore, *long* and *lust* are sometimes coordinated with each other in religious context where the unexpressed Desired is understood to refer to sin. In contrast, zero complements with *thirst* involve indefinite null complements which cannot be co(n)textually inferred. As a result, EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700) has no example of *long* coordinated with *thirst* in patterns with zero complements.

## 2.9. Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusions

The first three sections (Section 9.1 to 9.3) address the first three aims of the study presented in Chapter 1 by summarising the findings for *lust*, *thirst* and *long* respectively. One noteworthy point in my view is that all three verbs decreased in overall frequency in the course of EModE. *Lust* may have become gradually infrequent as its semantic specialisation proceeded, and *thirst* with zero complements came to be replaced with *to be thirsty* especially in the sense ‘to feel thirst’. However, it is not clear from Chapter 8 or the summary in Section 9.3 why *long* decreased in frequency, if not as much as *lust* and *thirst*. It would be worth examining whether other verbs of Desire became more frequent in parallel or if there was any large-scale shift in conceptualisation of desire in EModE.

The next two sections deal with the last two aims of the study. The author’s findings confirm some of the previous accounts about the disappearance of impersonal constructions (Section 9.4). On the other hand, the loss of case distinctions and the rigidification of word order –the two morphosyntactic changes which are often quoted in the literature to explain the demise of impersonal constructions– do not necessarily match

the period of transition from impersonal to personal constructions with the three verbs in question. Castro-Chao's most crucial counterargument is against Jespersen's (1961[1927]) reanalysis hypothesis. She adds to criticisms in previous studies with her EModE data, where Desirers are mostly realised as pronouns for all three verbs. Just as OE/ME *like* governed two nominal arguments highly infrequently (Allen 1986), Jespersen's syntactic scenario with two morphologically ambiguous nominal arguments was not frequent with EModE *lust*, *thirst* and *long* either.

Section 9.5 addresses questions as to why verbs of Desire adopted Experiencer-subject constructions and why they developed prepositional patterns rather than patterns with NP complements. The corpus data showed that Desirers are predominantly pronominal while Desired is more likely to be nominal and can also be a PP or a clausal complement. The principle of end-weight inevitably placed the lighter Desirer in the preverbal position, and when SVO word order was fixed, the Desirer became the best candidate for subject. In addition, the Desirer shows the Proto-agent feature of volition, which is eligible for a subject rather than an object. This may be why *thirst* and *long* never occur in Experiencer-object constructions or (*h*)*it*-extraposition constructions. However, *lust* is attested in Experiencer-object constructions (SOV fused relative constructions; see Section 6.3.2.1) in EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700) and (*h*)*it*-extraposition constructions during ME. This issue is left for further research. The answer to the second question above concerns interaction between verb meaning and constructional meaning: since verbs of Desire are apt to be conceptualised as a metaphorical inclination/movement towards something, they came to be associated with prepositional patterns, that is, the MOVE-ATTENTION construction, a metaphorical extension of the INTRANSITIVE MOTION construction which takes a prepositional Goal. The Desired in the MOVE-ATTENTION construction is an unaffected Endpoint without the majority of Proto-patient properties and suitable to be realised as a prepositional complement rather than a direct object, following Dowty's (1991) Corollary 2 (see Section 3.1). Consequently, *long* never takes a NP complement in EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700), and *lust* and *thirst* cease to do so in the course of the sixteenth century. Whilst Castro-Chao's scenario sounds intriguing, Levin's (1993) PDE verbs of Desire consist not only of *long* verbs which indeed take a prepositional complement but also transitive *want* verbs (e.g. *covet*, *desire*, *fancy*, *need*, *want*). It is vital to investigate why verbs of Desire have these two subclasses or if there

are any subtle semantic distinctions between them which cause different complementation patterns.

A comparison between *long* verbs and *want* verbs is suggested in Section 9.6 as a topic for further research. Other ideas include extending the chronological coverage to late ME, enlarging the corpus especially in terms of genre, studying other impersonal and non-impersonal verbs of Desire such as *desire* and *hunger* and conducting a corpus-based study of the MOVE-ATTENTION construction in ME and EModE.

### 3. FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The book is based firmly on previous studies, most notably Möhlig-Falke (2012), and presents a fine piece of qualitative and quantitative research with rich empirical evidence and theoretical contribution. Furthermore, Castro-Chao has demonstrated that the historical development of these verbs is not just about the loss of impersonal patterns and shift to personal patterns. It bears on a number of other aspects such as the rivalry among different complements, Proto-role properties of verbal arguments, the principle of end-weight and information structure, the MOVE-ATTENTION and INTRANSITIVE MOTION constructions, the shift from adverbial subordinators to complementisers, among others. The author has thus successfully widened the scope of research about impersonal constructions. Other remarkable benefits include detailed descriptions which allow readers unfamiliar with impersonal constructions and all the tools/theories employed to follow the account effortlessly and confirm each crucial step in research, such as how the three verbs in question were determined and how data from EEBOCorp 1.0 (1500–1700) were collected. Finally, the author provides meticulous in-text acknowledgement and cross-references throughout the book and writes in readable English with accurate grammar and idioms. Obvious typos are only very sporadic, though there are some regrettable typesetting errors.

I entirely agree with Castro-Chao about suggestions for further research (Section 9.6). I even think some of them could have been attempted in this book. Focus on EModE is one of the unique features of this work. Nevertheless, given the objectives of the whole research cited in Chapter 1 (especially the first two), a close investigation into the last few decades of late ME would have reinforced the conclusion about the shift from impersonal to personal constructions and reflected *Middle and Early Modern English* in the title of

the book more accurately. EEBOCorp 1.0 starts from 1473, so even though it is impossible to create a fifty-year subperiod corpus before 1500, we would have obtained some data for comparison. A discussion of at least one near-synonymous non-impersonal verb of Desire would also have been appreciated. After all, only three verbs were examined, though thoroughly, and all of them are rather infrequent. Their development may have been affected by rivalry with more frequent near-synonyms which were never used impersonally.

Notwithstanding these minor criticisms and desiderata, I believe that Castro-Chao has produced a substantial work which will be essential reading for those interested in impersonal constructions, diachronic lexical semantics, diachronic Construction Grammar and corpus-based syntactic research.

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