Book Review

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Dealing with linguistic items and phenomena that show fuzzy morphosyntactic features and behaviors and that can therefore be rubricated under different categories is notoriously not an easy task. This is precisely the case with "nominalization", which Lehmann (2021) defines as "a grammatical or lexical operation that convert a non-nominal expression into a nominal one". For example, the verb *arrive* can undergo nominalization into *arrival*, which is thus a "verbal noun". Despite displaying nominal morphosyntax, verbal nouns do not denote animate or inanimate entities (first order entities, as Lyons [1977] calls them) as typical nouns do, but rather events and unobservable propositional contents (Lyons' [1977] second and third order entities), as verbs typically do. Consequently, verbal nouns also exhibit verbal properties, such as the expression of arguments, (lexical) aspect, and voice. This categorial fuzziness makes nominalization and verbal nouns challenging to identify, name, describe, and analyze.

Olga Spevak's monograph, *Nominalization in Latin,* successfully takes on this challenge. While focusing on verbal nouns in Latin, this volume also offers fresh insights into broader and still-debated questions, such as how to detect, classify, and name the so-called *nomina actionis*; the distribution and functions of verbal nouns across different textual types and registers; and the role of verbal nouns in comparison to competing non-finite verb forms. After a brief preface, the volume unfolds into six chapters, the main contents of which are summarized below. The six chapters are followed by general conclusions.

Chapter 1 provides the reader with the necessary background for following the subsequent analyses of Latin data. Specifically, it discusses the different approaches to nominalization: Quirk et al.'s (1985) descriptive approach, Comrie and Thompson's (1985: 349–357) derivational or lexical approach, and Lehmann's (2021; see also Lees 1960) transformational approach. The chapter then highlights the key phenomena that must be considered when dealing with nominalizations, regardless of the approach adopted. First, verbal nouns usually retain the same number of valency slots as their related verbs, though they often reduce the number of expressed arguments. Second, while verbal nouns show a loss of sentential properties (Lehmann's 1989 "desententialization") and a reduction of syntactic complexity (Mackenzie 1997), they are useful

in allowing for generic reference and condensation of information, thus fostering discourse coherence. Third, despite exhibiting nominal syntax (e.g., verbal nouns can be heads of noun phrases and take adnominal modifiers), verbal nouns express verbal categories: specifically, they encode lexical aspect and thus can be classified according to boundedness (telicity, referred to as "end/limit/boundary" by Spevak), dynamicity ("change of state"), and durativity ("temporal extension"). Additionally, while verbal nouns do not overtly mark voice, they can express active, passive, de-causative, and auto-causative values.

Chapter 2 delves deeper into the state of the art regarding verbal nouns in Latin. At the beginning of the chapter, Spevak offers her own definition of verbal nouns as "nouns that are nominal counterparts of a clausal expression and that retain, to a certain extent, verbal properties" (p. 15). She clarifies that her category of verbal nouns neither overlaps with deverbal nouns (e.g., *observatio* 'observation' from *observo* 'to observe' or *adventus* 'arrival' from *advenio* 'to arrive'; Spevak e.g. includes *spes* in her study, from which *spero* 'to hope' derives) nor with the category of "abstract verbal nouns" (German *Verbalabstrakta*), a label traditionally used for verbal derivatives regardless of their function and syntactic behavior. The discussion of *Verbalabstrakta* allows Spevak to explore the claim that Latin is supposedly not inclined to express abstract concepts. In contrast, Spevak intriguingly shows that verbal nouns are used to express routinized, institutionalized, conceptualized acts, such as in legal contexts as early as in Early Latin (see also Chapter 6). Later, the chapter thoroughly reviews previous studies dedicated to Latin verbal nouns, critically highlighting that they mainly adopt a morphological approach that does not distinguish between abstract and concrete uses of verbal derivatives (e.g., *ambulatio* 'stroll' vs. 'promenade') and focus on their resumptive function. Spevak then specifically scrutinizes studies on nouns in -*tio* and -*tus,* which compare their voice values (Marozeau 1913), different degrees of subjectivity/objectivity (Benveniste 1948), productivity and distribution (Fruyt 1996), aspectual nature (Pultrová 2011), their features of transitivity, duration, and control by the agent (Garzón 2018). Further attention is given to previously stated criteria for identifying verbal nouns and their general properties, including different strategies of argument marking (genitive, accusative, dative cases, various prepositional phrases including agentive *ab* + ablative phrases, possessives, complement clauses); the number of arguments expressed; the occurrence of verbal nouns in support verb constructions and other collocations; the use of the reflexive pronoun *se*; and their temporal and voice values. The chapter concludes with a very useful summary of the main criteria Spevak adopts to identify verbal nouns, particularly their ability (i) to take arguments and (ii) collocate with time adjectives (e.g., *diutinus* 'long-lasting'), adjectives implying an agent (e.g., *voluntarius* 'voluntary'), and the reflexive *se*. Conversely, Spevak notes the constraints against collocating with spatial adjectives (e.g., *imus* 'the lowest').

Chapters 3 and 4 mirror each other in structure and content: they analyze the properties, syntactic functions, and complexity (at both the clause and phrase levels), as well as the argument marking of verbal nouns in narrative texts and technical texts, respectively. Each chapter begins with a section on the methods and corpus used for the analysis – however, the total number of tokens in each corpus is not provided, making the interpretation of frequency data and their qualitative analysis somewhat challenging. Then, each specific narrative or technical text included in the corpus is treated separately. For each text, frequency data regarding the case forms of verbal nouns and the expression of their arguments are presented, described, and qualitatively discussed, with a rich array of examples drawn from the author's corpus (additional examples from other works are also used when appropriate). Both chapters are further enriched by sections dedicated to adjectival modifiers of verbal nouns, their lexical aspect and voice values, and their usage at the noun phrase level. Finally, both chapters conclude with a brief section summarizing the main findings. Despite these similarities, Chapters 3 and 4 differ significantly. Chapter 3 takes into account all nouns formally related to a verb, though the analysis, as programmatically stated, is not limited to deverbal nouns (recall the noun *spes* mentioned earlier, which is morphologically related to the verb *spero* but does not derive from it). In contrast, Chapter 4 focuses on nouns containing the most commonly used derivational suffixes, specifically *-tio* and *-tus* (cf. in the volume, fn. 33 at p. 172). This narrower focus does not make Chapter 4 less rich than Chapter 3; in fact, Chapter 4 is complemented by sections specifically dedicated to (i) *-tus* nouns, which are predominantly non-productive common use terms (however, the primary concern of Chapter 4 is constituted by *-tio* nouns, which are more frequent and especially productive in and typical of technical texts for naming concepts, procedures, and techniques specific to certain disciplines); (ii) *-tio* nouns with concrete meanings (both resultative, e.g., *concameratio* 'vaulted roof', and non-resultative, e.g., *ruderatio* 'rubble'), which are often overlooked by dictionaries but can be distinguished from verbal meanings based on collocations with spatial adjectives; (iii) the polysemy of technical terms in *-tio*, which often belong to the terminologies of different disciplines (e.g., *adiectio* 'addition', used in architecture, medicine, commerce, grammar, rhetoric); and (iv) the alleged competition among terms in *-tio*, *-tus*, and *-tura* in technical texts. The main findings, which Spevak presents separately for the two textual genres analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4, are as follows: in both narrative and technical texts, verbal nouns serve as a privileged means of condensing clausal content, as evidenced especially by their use in subject position within definitions and in extremely complex noun phrases in technical treatises. In narratives, verbal nouns also contribute to textual coherence. Regarding the expression of arguments, both narrative and technical texts primarily use verbal nouns for de-agentivization. In technical texts, generalized objects are also frequent with verbal nouns and are

employed to provide general information without referring to specific circumstances. At the phrase level, verbal nouns show restricted distribution, as they typically modify other nouns referring to second- and third-order entities and/or other nouns that require a complement.

Chapter 5 begins by revisiting the misconception introduced in Chapter 2, specifically the alleged "inaptitude of the Latin language to express abstract concepts" and the related claim about a "lack of abstract nouns in Latin". By comparing the frequencies, contexts of usage, and restrictions of verbal nouns with their competitors – such as gerunds and gerundives, participles, supines, and infinitives – Spevak effectively disproves these widely held assumptions. In particular, verbal nouns are found to be much more frequent than their competitors at the clause level, while frequency distributions are more evenly balanced at the noun phrase level. Moreover, Spevak highlights that in many cases where gerunds and gerundives are used instead of verbal nouns, the two constructions are not true competitors: while verbs are polysemous, and this polysemy carries over to their non-finite forms, verbal nouns are narrowed to a fixed (and often technical) meaning, which cannot encompass the full semantics of their corresponding verb. Additionally, certain minimal pairs of gerunds/gerundives and verbal nouns discussed in Chapter 5, such as examples (58) and (59) on p. 179, further demonstrate that verbal nouns tend to be selected in more technical contexts compared to their competitors. Regarding participles, they are argued to be chosen over verbal nouns because they allow for explicit reference to relative temporality. In sum, Spevak correctly sees all these expressions characterized by low sententiality within a system with partly overlapping and partly complementary elements.

Finally, Chapter 6 serves as a very welcome *addendum* to the main contents of the volume. This chapter focuses on the use and competition of *-tio* and *-tus* nouns in Latin legal texts. As seen in other domain-specific technical texts, *-tio* verbal nouns prove to be highly productive in specialized languages and are often selected to denote and name conceptualized, routinized, and institutionalized legal actions and procedures. In contrast, clausal expressions are used to describe legal actions step by step. Regarding the expression of arguments with verbal nouns in legal texts, explicit arguments are more frequent than in the other textual genres analyzed, which can be explained by the specific need in legal texts to identify the cases or groups of people to which certain legal actions apply. Constructions with *-tio* nouns typical of the legal genre are identified, particularly *-tio* nouns used with the verb *sum* 'to be', especially in the imperative mood. Interestingly, this construction is also found in Plautus' (and Terence's, to a lesser extent) comedies in indignant questions, which is understood as a way to mimic official language for comic effect. This parallel, already noted by Boegel (1902: 92–102) and discussed by Spevak, serves as further evidence of the recognizable role of verbal nouns in legal texts.

In the more general introductory chapters (Chapters 1 and 2), the volume succeeds in maintaining an appropriate level of informativeness. For instance, the discussion on lexical aspect and voice is not overly detailed and does not engage with the most recent scientific literature on these topics. However, these are just two of the phenomena to consider in relation to verbal nouns, and a more in-depth treatment might have been overly distracting. The review of the state of the art is thorough and complete given the monograph's objectives (e.g., it does not cover nominalizations and verbal nouns in ancient Indo-European languages other than Latin). What stands out most positively in these chapters is the original insights Olga Spevak brings to the state of the art (including some critical remarks) and the synthesis she achieves at the end of Chapter 2.

The greatest strength of the analytical chapters (Chapters 3, 4, and also 6) is perhaps the author's adoption of what might be termed a variationist approach, analyzing the specific uses and syntactic characteristics of nominalizations across different textual genres. This approach has the undeniable advantage of not treating an ancient language like Latin as a monolithic entity, flattening it toward a particular variety, but rather treating it as a composite system – an approach more typically applied to modern languages. Moreover, the volume addresses the use of verbal nouns in textual genres that are usually disregarded, namely technical and legal texts, highlighting how these nouns constitute one of the most recognizable features of these varieties. Chapter 6 is particularly instructive in this regard, as it shows, among other things, how the theatrical genre of comedy could employ patterns codified in another and distant genre, like legalese, to achieve comic effects. Furthermore, Spevak's sharp analysis also demonstrates how a thorough and careful corpus-based approach can effectively challenge deeply rooted misconceptions about a language.

Finally, in addition to providing new data on verbal nouns, the volume also discusses new data on non-finite verbal forms, especially gerunds and gerundives. As a final remark, the structure of the analytical chapters proceeds text by text, which has the advantage of offering a very detailed overview of each Latin work examined. However, this content organization makes it more challenging to identify the common and differing characteristics of verbal nouns across various textual genres. Nonetheless, this potential difficulty is mitigated by the concise conclusions at the end of each chapter and the general conclusions that close the entire volume.

Overall, the volume *Nominalization in Latin* is extremely rich and will undoubtedly serve as a valuable starting point for future research on verbal nouns in Latin. Some directions for future research are suggested by Spevak herself: for instance, investigating the extent to which verbal nouns can be replaced by gerunds and gerundives at the noun phrase level (p. 189). Moreover, the functions and

syntactic behavior described for Latin verbal nouns will be an indispensable benchmark for examining the behavior of these linguistic items in other ancient Indo-European languages.

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