JS Journal of Historical Syntax
Volume 4, Article 3: 1–17, 2020

REVIEW OF VAN GELDEREN (2018), *ANALYZING SYNTAX THROUGH TEXTS**

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Van Gelderen, Elly. 2018. *Analyzing Syntax Through Texts: Old, Middle, and Early Modern English* (Edinburgh Historical Linguistics). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. xix + 201 pp. Hardbound: ISBN 978 14 744 2037 2 | £90 · Paperback: ISBN 978 14 744 2038 9 | £24.99 · ebook: ISBN 978 14 744 2039 6 | £90.

1 Introduction

With *Analyzing Syntax Through Texts*, Elly van Gelderen (EvG) proposes a new way of organising a historical linguistics textbook. Most introductions to the history of English provide a bird's eye view of the development of the language and illustrate the changes with examples from the extant texts (e.g., Fischer, van Kemenade, Koopman & van der Wurff 2001; van Gelderen 2014; Los 2015). In this volume, which is published in Edinburgh University Press's new historical linguistics series, EvG takes the texts themselves as the starting point for the discussion of the grammatical changes. There are, of course, numerous readers and anthologies of early English (e.g., Marsden 2015 for Old English or Burrow & Turville-Petre 2005 for Middle English), but unlike EvG's book these only rarely discuss syntax at any length, if at all. This alone makes the present volume quite innovative and worthy of attention. In addition, EvG includes facsimiles of all the manuscripts (and a few incunabula) under discussion and invites the students to try to read the original texts themselves.

In this review article I first provide a summary of the book (Section 2) and then point out what I believe are three serious shortcomings. From least to most critical, these are the unclear overarching goals of the volume (Section 3.1), the poor quality of many of the facsimiles and transcriptions (Sec-

* I am grateful to Marieke Olthof, Olga Fischer, and two anonymous reviewers for their careful reading and pertinent comments. Of course, all remaining mistakes — as well as all opinions expressed — are entirely my own.

tion 3.2), and the many mistranslations and analytical mistakes (Section 3.3). I illustrate each of these with examples from the book and propose alternative readings of a number of passages. Section 4 concludes.

2 Summary

Analyzing Syntax Through Texts contains five chapters, three appendices, a glossary of linguistic terms, and the usual front- and backmatter. The first two chapters provide a very brief introduction to grammatical analysis and language change (Chapter 1; pp. 1–13) and a somewhat more detailed overview of the history of English syntax (Chapter 2; pp. 14–44), the latter focussing on constituent order, changes to the inflectional system, and pronouns and determiners. The changes are illustrated with examples from editions of some of the key texts in the history of English, including well-known works like *Beowulf* and *The Canterbury Tales*.

The three main chapters then guide the reader through the history of English, taking individual text excerpts as the starting point and always providing facsimiles and transcriptions of the original texts. Chapter 3 (pp. 45–95) on Old English (OE) includes excerpts of Orosius's history of the world, Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi*, the Gospel translations, and two of the poems from the Exeter Book. Chapter 4 (pp. 96–140) on early Middle English (ME), i.e. the period *c.* AD 1100–1300, discusses excerpts of the Peterborough Chronicle, the *Life of Saint Katherine*, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the description of the lion in the *Physiologus*, and Richard Rolle's commentary on the Psalter.[1] Chapter 5 (pp. 140–174) on the period *c.* AD 1300–1600, i.e. late Middle English and early Modern English (eModE), includes discussions of *Cleanness* (also known as *Purity*), Chaucer's treatise on the astrolabe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Caxton's *Morte Darthur*, and two ego documents, one by the diarist Henry Machyn, the other by Elizabeth I. Appendix I (pp. 175–179) repeats the grammatical information found in tables throughout the volume, showing the most frequent inflections and pronominal paradigms in Old and Middle English. Appendix II (pp. 180–182), which bears the unwieldy and misleading title "Background on the Old English Texts That Are Discussed, Alphabetically", gives a line or two of background information on most of the texts (not just the Old English ones) mentioned in the book. Finally, Appendix III (pp. 183–186)

1 The last of these is obviously misplaced and belongs properly in the following chapter. EvG includes it in Chapter 4 "because there are few northern early Middle English writers" (p. 125). This is of course true, but it does not alter the fact that Richard Rolle wrote in the fourteenth century and that the manuscript under discussion (Huntington Library HM 148) is only from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, a detail EvG fails to mention; see eLALME (Benskin, Laing, Karaiskos & Williamson 2013), LP 406. The text is also not included in the overview in Appendix II.

provides a key to the exercises found at the end of each chapter.

The three central chapters are organised in the same way. First the most important scripts of the period are briefly introduced, after which the text excerpts are treated one by one, always including a facsimile and transcription of the text, a sentence-by-sentence (or paragraph-by-paragraph) analysis with a more or less literal translation, and some final comments on the dialect and historical stage of the language as it appears in the text. Each chapter concludes with a few exercises and some suggestions for further reading.

The style throughout is relaxed and informal and makes frequent use of contractions and other colloquialisms. Old English has "lots of case" (p. 21), there is "a lot of V2" (p. 105) in the Peterborough Chronicle, auxiliaries may have "lexical flavor" (p. 51), and sentences can be "quite embedded" (p. 165). While this degree of informality may irritate some readers, others will find EvG's style refreshing and more readily approachable than the style of more technical treatments. The text certainly gives the impression of an author who is enthusiastic about the study of historical syntax and wants to make it accessible to as many students as possible. This makes it all the more regrettable that the book contains so many mistakes and inaccuracies. In the following section I will first provide some general comments on the overall aims of the book before moving on to the more specific criticisms on the quality of the texts, translations, and grammatical analyses.

3 THREE CRITICAL POINTS

3.1 Why look at manuscripts?

The market for introductions and textbooks on the history of English is obviously quite lucrative. Just the past half decade or so, we have witnessed the publication of Johnson (2016), Horobin (2016), Smith & Kim (2017), Kretzschmar (2018), and a number of revised editions of titles already on the market, including van Gelderen's own textbook (2014, first edition 2006). In addition, a number of introductions to English historical syntax have appeared, such as Los (2015) and Fischer, De Smet & van der Wurff (2017). It thus seems fair enough to ask of a new textbook how it differs from the many other available options and what particular readership is expected to benefit from it. EvG explains this in the preface: the textbook is "meant for readers who are somewhat familiar with the history of English", and it "emphasizes the original version and provides *a careful, in-depth analysis* of the text" (p. xii; emphasis added). The latter statement may reasonably be called an exaggeration. The three main chapters, which run just short of 130 pages, discuss excerpts from more than fifteen different texts, covering some 600 years of language

history. Chapter 5 in particular feels rushed, with facsimiles, transcriptions, translations, and linguistic analyses of six different texts covering only about thirty pages. If anything, it is the book's breadth rather than depth which is its main selling point.

EvG goes on to explain her motivation for including facsimiles of the original manuscripts and prints. This is to make students familiar with the medieval and early modern texts as they were written, not as modern editors have interpreted and emended them. In particular, modern editions often add hyphens and other punctuation not present in the original text, thus forcing the editor's own interpretation of word and clause boundaries on the reader. EvG explains:

> My goal in writing this book has been to go back to manuscripts and not to rely on editions that may, once in a while, make (unfortunate) editorial judgements. This allows the reader to makes his/her own decisions. (p. xiii)

However, this is not an accurate description of the way EvG approaches her material. For most of the texts discussed in the book, the transcription is not based on the facsimile, but on an edited version, which is then reverse-edited, as it were, to reflect the content on the manuscript page. EvG thus continues to rely on modern editions and the judgements they make. Most of the editions used are not diplomatic single-witness editions, but critical editions which aim to present a corrected "best text" based on multiple manuscripts.[2] This methodological choice has some rather unfortunate consequences. Some of the editions used differ substantially from the corresponding facsimiles in the book, either because the edition emends the text, or because it is not even based on the same manuscript. EvG repeatedly fails to notice such differences, leading to transcriptions which contain at best minor inaccuracies, at worst major deviations from the manuscript texts (see Section 3.2 below for examples). It is particularly surprising to see editions from the TEAMS Middle English Texts Series used as the basis for two of the transcriptions (*The Book of Margery Kempe* and *Havelok*). This series, intended especially for literature students, aims to present the texts "within the parameters of modern reading conventions" (University of Rochester n.d.) and often substantially alters them in order to meet this goal.

2 This crucial difference — between diplomatic editions, which aim at a faithful transcription of a manuscript text, and critical editions, which typically aim to (re)construct an approximation of the original text — is not explained anywhere. References to some of the many diplomatic editions that are freely available online would also have been appropriate, e.g. Fredell (2013), Kiernan (2015), the texts in the LAEME corpus (Laing 2013), the Norman Blake editions of *The Canterbury Tales* (University of Sheffield 2013), or the ongoing Cotton Nero A.x. Project (2010–).

For a book with the stated aim of going back to the sources, there is also preciously little background information on the genre conventions and the purposes and practices of text production in the Middle Ages. It is unclear if such background knowledge is presupposed on the part of the reader or has simply not been considered. As for genre, the section on the poems of the Exeter Book states without further explanation that "[w]ord order in poetry is of course much freer than in prose" (p. 92), but later the role of genre is overlooked when EvG remarks that the word order in the *Physiologus* is "still very much in flux" (p. 124) without considering that the excerpt under discussion is written in alliterative metre. In the introduction, one of the examples used to illustrate Old English verb-final word order is taken from the gloss to the Rushworth Gospels (p. 18), with no mention of the fact that the Old English text is a word-for-word translation of the Latin.[3] As for text production, the most obvious omission is a description of medieval scribal activity and the copying of manuscripts. This is all the more striking because EvG devotes so much space to dialectal variation and tries to locate each text geographically. As has long been known, this is often impossible because a text may contain several "layers" of dialects from successive copyists, resulting in a non-localizable *Mischsprache* (Benskin & Laing 1981; see also Laing 2001 for the issue of scribal errors). There is no mention of this or other problems in medieval dialectology in the book.[4]

In sum, while EvG argues for a return to the sources, she continues to rely on (sometimes substantially altered) editions and fails to equip the student with background information on medieval genres, text production, and the various types of modern editions. Furthermore, EvG's main argument for using manuscripts — that editors frequently change the punctuation and make judgements about clause boundaries — is less forceful if one takes into consideration the existence of many diplomatic editions which aim to reproduce the manuscript text as faithfully as possible. Many such resources are

3 The failure to take the nature of the glosses into account recurs several times in Section 3.4 on the Gospels. EvG interprets an occurrence of the form *were* instead of *was* in one of these as "a sign of morphological simplification" (p. 70), but the past-tense subjunctive *were* is simply the direct translation of the Latin form (*esset* 'be.3SG.PST.SBJV'). Later, the existence of double glosses like *hia ł ðа* 'they or those' is taken as evidence of "ambiguity between personal and demonstrative pronouns" (p. 73), but this may rather be the glossator trying to be as thorough as possible by providing several alternatives; see Bolze (2016) for a similar argument regarding multiple glosses with *beon* 'to be'.

4 In addition to the issues of word order discussed in this paragraph, an anonymous reviewer points to the oversimplified treatment this topic receives on pp. 17–19. Of course, a degree of simplification is inevitable in a textbook, but EvG's claim that in Old English subordinate clauses "all verbs (finite and non-finite) typically occur at the end" (p. 18) is inaccurate. In fact, less than half of the Old English subordinate clauses in Heggelund's (2015) recent corpus study were unambiguously verb-final. I thank the reviewer for drawing my attention to this point.

freely available online, but EvG does not point the reader to any of these (see footnote 2).

3.2 Quality of facsimiles and transcriptions

While the book may fail to make a case for the necessity of looking at manuscripts, it might still make students interested in seeing the sources for themselves and getting acquainted with medieval writing. In total, the volume contains some twenty-five facsimiles from manuscripts and early printed books, but unfortunately the quality of many of these reproductions is so poor that they are close to unreadable. In the paperback edition I received from the publisher, the facsimiles from Wulfstan (pp. 57–59), "The Wanderer" (p. 84), the *Cura Pastoralis* (p. 94), the Parker Chronicle (p. 134), *Cleanness* (p. 143), Chaucer (pp. 149–150), and Machyn (p. 166) are so grainy that I do not think one can reasonably expect an as-yet untrained student to make much sense of them. Other facsimiles, such as the ones from the Peterborough Chronicle (pp. 99–100) and *The Book of Margery Kempe* (pp. 154–155), are of decent quality, but some are rather too small, such as the one from Bede (p. 15). The ones from Rolle (p. 126), the Paston letters, and the Cicero translation (pp. 171–172) are both too grainy and too small.

It is clearly not because only low-quality images were available. The facsimiles from "The Wife's Lament" (p. 81) and "The Wanderer" (p. 84) come from the same manuscript, but the former is much clearer than the latter; and the reproduction from Rolle's Psalter commentary which appears on the cover of the paperback edition looks significantly better than the one inside the book. Fortunately, many of the facsimiles are available online in much better quality, and EvG gives links to many of these at the end of the chapters and in Appendix II. One might perhaps argue that this reduces the need to include high-resolution facsimiles in the book. But then, this would seem to me to defeat much of the purpose of EvG's textbook and the inclusion of facsimiles at all — students could then just as well acquire one of the many other history of English textbooks and look up the relevant manuscripts online.[5] One might also argue that the quality of the facsimiles is less relevant because EvG provides transcriptions of all the text excerpts under discussion. However, as I have already mentioned in Section 3.1, most of the transcriptions are not based on the manuscripts themselves, but are "back-edited" versions of existing editions. These reconstructions of the manuscript versions have generally not been carried out with much attention to detail, and they have obviously not

5 Or go exploring online on their own, for that matter. There are many options available, e.g., the digital collections of the British Library (https://bl.uk/manuscripts), the Parker Library (https://parker.stanford.edu), or the Harvard Library (https://library.harvard.edu).

been checked properly in the reviewing process. I give a few representative examples below.

Even in cases where the transcriptions are relatively accurate, the principles behind them are inconsistent. Sometimes the Old English letter wynn is reproduced faithfully as <ƿ> (pp. 98–101, 121), sometimes it is modernized to <w> (pp. 69, 113); thorn <þ> is generally kept, but sometimes it is rendered by <ƿ> (pp. 144, 149–151), and occasionally it is modernised to <th> (p. 113); sometimes an attempt is made to render the thorn with stroke <ꝥ> faithfully, at other times the stroke is ignored. The same is true of other scribal abbreviations, such as nasal marks, which may be either kept (e.g., <õ>), expanded silently <on>, expanded between brackets <o(n)>, or ignored <o>. I have not been able to discern any guiding principle behind this variation. EvG writes (p. xiii) that she has generally followed the editorial principles suggested in Clemens & Graham's (2007) introduction to medieval Latin manuscript studies, but this is clearly not the case. Clemens & Graham (2007: 75) state explicitly that abbreviations should be expanded between brackets,[6] and that one should always use the received letter forms (i.e., the *litterae*) rather than attempt to imitate the shapes of the letters in the individual manuscripts (the *figurae*). EvG does exactly the opposite when she substitutes <ƿ> for <þ> (see the Chaucer excerpt below) and <ȝ> for insular g (which she confuses with its Middle English descendant yogh <ȝ>, p. 69).

Not counting missing diacritics (and ignoring unnecessary imitated letter forms), I found 11 transcription errors in the excerpt from Wulfstan (pp. 57–59),[7] about 30 in Rolle (pp. 127–129),[8] and more than 40 in Chaucer (pp. 149–151). Some are simple misreadings of the facsimile, whereas others appear to be variant readings taken over from editions based on other manuscripts. To briefly illustrate, I give the first six lines from EvG's transcription of Chaucer in (1) along with my own transcription in (2). (One of the lines in EvG's

6 Critical editions of Old and Middle English texts often expand the abbreviations silently; this is the current editorial policy of the Early English Text Society (2020: 12). The practice is obviously problematic for linguistic investigations because the editor has to reconstruct what the abbreviation must have meant; for discussion of this issue see, e.g., Lass (2004) and the introduction to LAEME (Laing 2013), in particular Chapter 3.

7 Specifically, on p. 57: *nu* missing, *ærost* for *ærest*, *eȝerlican* for *egeslican*, *þt* for *ðæt*; *ȝepeorþeð* for *gepeorðeð*, *halȝu bocu* for *halgu*(*m*) *bocu*(*m*), *us* missing (p. 58); *ȝepritu* for *gepritu*(*m*), *sæȝað* for *sæcgað*, *iudeiscus* for *iudeiscu*(*m*), *þon* for *þon*(*ne*) (p. 59). In addition, thorn with stroke is ignored throughout.

8 There may be more, but it is impossible to discern all the letters in the poor facsimile, and the manuscript does not appear to be available online. Some of the certain misreadings are *gastly* for *gastli* (line 2), *thaime* for *þame* (l. 5), *sant* for *saut*(*er*) (l. 7), *deuocionus* for *deuocioune* (l. 14), *rays* for *raise* (l. 14), *lyfne* for *lyffne* (l. 14), *schosime* for *schosine* (l. 24), *bitt* for *bitt*(*er*) (l. 26), *lodes* for *ledes* (l. 28), *fosterand* for *norisand* (l. 30), *wonudfulle* for *wounderfulle* (l. 47), *thorogh* for *thorow* (ll. 48, 62), *inglis* for *ynglis* (l. 60), *sonne* for *soune* (l. 61), *ouerer* for *ouer part* (l. 62).

transcription is broken, so the six lines appear as seven in the book.) My expansions of the scribal abbreviations are given between brackets. Note in particular that EvG's misinterpretation of the abbreviation marks results in the unetymological forms *heygty/hepgtij*. The actual form in the manuscript is the expected *heygth*(*e*), corresponding to Modern English *height*.[9]

(1) Thyn astrelabie haꝑ a ring to put
ten on ꝑe thombe of ꝑi ri3th hõnd
in takyng ꝑe heygty of ꝑingys. and ta
ke kepe fro from hennes forward I wil
call ꝑe
hepgtij of eny thing take be ꝑe ri3le. ꝑe
altitude wtowte mo wordis. (EvG, p. 149)

(2) Thyn astrolabye haaþ a ring to put
ten on þe thombe of þi rigth ho(o)nd
in takyng(e) þe heygth(e) of þingys. and ta
ke kepe fro hennes forward j wil cal þe
heygth(e) of eny thing(e) take be þe rwle. þe
altitude w(ith)owte mo wordis.
(Houghton Library MS. Eng. 920, f. 5^{v}; my transcription)

While some of the transcriptions, like the one from Chaucer in (1), suffer primarily from misreadings of individual letters, some are substantially altered and reproduce emendations made by previous editors. The transcribed excerpt from Havelok, which is "adapted from Herzman et al. 1997" (p. 138), is particularly distant from the manuscript text (on p. 137). Among the many editorial corrections are *yete* for the manuscript reading *þrie* (1st column, line 9), *lere* for *here* (l. 10), *his* for *is* (l. 14), *lamprey* for *laumprei* (2nd col., l. 5), *I* for *y*, and *hem* for *þe* (both l. 30). Most of these were suggested in the edition by Skeat (1902: 27–29), and have been followed by Herzman, Drake & Salisbury (1997). They certainly make the text more readily accessible to the modern reader, but they are not in the original text and represent precisely the kind of editorial interventions which EvG warns against in the introduction.

9 A digital facsimile of the manuscript is available in the online collection of the Harvard Library at <https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:7400889> (last accessed 25 March 2020). My expansion of the abbreviations is based on the scribe's spelling elsewhere in the manuscript, e.g. <hoond> 'hand' (f. 6^{v}), and the variation between spellings like <whyche> with *-e* spelt out (f. 10^{r}) *vs.* <which˙> with an abbreviation mark (f. 11^{v}). The latter would thus become *which*(*e*) in the transcription.

3.3 Mistakes and mistranslations

The low quality of the facsimiles and transcriptions might be mitigated somewhat if the book provided interesting syntactic analyses or insightful new readings of difficult passages. Unfortunately, it also disappoints in this regard. While the introduction, in particular the section entitled "Change: how and why" (pp. 8–11), suggests that EvG will tackle broader questions about how to explain syntactic change, the two explanatory principles invoked — Universal Grammar (UG) and grammaticalization — appear to be of limited use to EvG in the remainder of the book. UG is never mentioned again, and I found only a single reference to grammaticalization (p. 51). The book in fact does little to explain the changes observed in the *c*. 600 years covered, and it is unclear to me how either UG or grammaticalization is supposed to account for, for instance, the gradual loss of V2, the reduction and loss of endings, or the changing uses of reflexive pronouns (pp. 55, 111). Regarding the analyses of the texts, Chapter 5 in particular contains too much material for any in-depth treatment. For the letter by Elizabeth I, which is about two handwritten pages long, EvG offers less than a single page of "general comments" (p. 170); the Chaucer text gets a slightly longer treatment, short of two pages, but the analysis consists mainly in some remarks on the morphology and in determining whether the clauses have V2 order or not (pp. 151–153).

What is more troubling, however, is the large number of analytical mistakes. Many of the translations are inaccurate or incorrect, words and morphemes are misidentified, and there are several obvious errors in the syntactic analyses. Of course, interpreting historical texts always involves a degree of qualified guesswork, and it is an admirable and sound didactic choice that EvG writes in the first person throughout and repeatedly stresses that her interpretations are just that, interpretations of the material rather than truths carved in stone. If one then disagrees with a particular reading, one is prompted to consider the arguments for and against and recognise that one's own opinions are not hard truths either. My critique in the remainder of this section does not concern such matters of discussion, but only readings and statements which are quite obviously incorrect.

Many of the mistakes can be readily identified even if one has no background in Old and Middle English at all, for EvG's analyses often directly contradict her own translations or information given elsewhere. In the *Physiologus*, the form *is* is — I think correctly — identified as a 3PL pronoun, but is missing from the translation (example 37, p. 122).[10] In the text by Richard

10 A reviewer questions this reading, arguing that there is no obvious referent for a 3PL object pronoun in the context. While I agree with the reviewer that the reading is uncertain, I think there is an antecedent, namely *Alle hise fet steppes* 'all his footprints/tracks' in the preceding

Rolle, the verb *helles* 'pour' is translated correctly (example 46, p. 129), but in the commentary immediately following the translation it is said to be a noun in the genitive. The excerpt from the *Morte Darthur* is said to contain "no present tense verbs" (p. 165), but looking over the passage again I found seven different present-tense forms, some of them occurring several times (*suppose*, *counceille*, *departe*, *am*, *hath*, *knowe*, *sekest*). In the prepositional phrase *on þa(m) earmsceapenan men* 'in the wretched man' in Wulfstan, the determiner *þa(m)* and the adjective *earmsceapenan* are identified as dative, and the noun *men* is said to be "the appropriate plural in Old English" (p. 62), but from the table presenting the definite adjectival endings (p. 60), it is clear that *earmsceapenan* cannot be a plural form: the dative plural should end in *-um*, not *-an*. The solution to this apparent contradiction is that *men* is actually a singular form, as Old English *man* is an irregular ("athematic") noun with *i*-mutation in the dative singular (see Campbell 1959: §620).[11] Students will have to search for this information themselves, as EvG does not include the Old English minor declension classes in the grammatical summaries.

Other mistakes are less obvious but no less problematic. These concern both the identification of early English forms and the interpretation of the passages under discussion. An example of the former problem is the treatment of the Old and Early Middle English verbal prefixes, where the morphological developments are repeatedly misrepresented. In the sections on the Old English Gospel translations, it is suggested that the prefix *ge-* is occasionally reduced to *a-* in the participial forms *acenned* 'born' and *awriten* 'written', although it is also noted that other participles in the same texts have the unreduced form *ge-* (pp. 72, 79). EvG offers no explanation for this variation, or for the fact that *a-* only occurs in the two verbs *acenned* and *awriten*. There is a straightforward explanation, however, namely that *a-* is not a reduced variant of *ge-*, but a different prefix. This can easily be gleaned from the many entries with *a-*, including the two verbs in question, in the *Dictionary of Old English* (*DOE*; Cameron, Amos & Healey 2018, s.vv. *a-cennan*, *a-writan*) and the *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*; McSparran 2000–2018, s.vv. *akennen* v.2, *awriten*). Later in the book, it is suggested that the prefix *i-* in Middle English — the actual reflex of the Old English *ge-* prefix — has been extended to finite forms when it occurs in forms like *iseo* 'see.1SG.PRS': "it must be an analogical extension to the finite forms of the participle prefix" (p. 110). EvG here overlooks that *ge-* was not only used as a participial prefix in Old and

sentence (l. 4 in Wirtjes 1991: 3). The 3PL enclitic pronoun *is* occurs elsewhere in the text, see Wirtjes (1991: xxv).

11 The declension is, in the singular: NOM/ACC *man*, GEN *mannes*, DAT *men*; in the plural: NOM/ACC *men*, GEN *manna*, DAT *mannum*. If the noun phrase had a plural referent, we would thus expect (unattested) **on þa(m) earmsceapenum mannum*.

Middle English, but occurred in a number of verbs throughout the paradigm. Old English *geseon* (Bosworth & Toller 1898, q.v.) and its Middle English reflex *isen* (*MED*, q.v.) is precisely such a verb.[12]

As for the syntactic analyses and translations, there are numerous inaccuracies throughout the book, and I will discuss just two excerpts here, from the Middle English *Cleanness* (or *Purity*) and *The Book of Margery Kempe*. EvG characterises the style of these two religious texts as "very complex" (p. 142) and "complex in structure" (p. 155), respectively. This is difficult material indeed, but the treatment it receives here does not help to make it much easier. The comments on the texts often contradict the translations, which in turn distort the meaning and occasionally add material which is not in the text. An example from *Cleanness*, which I comment on line by line below, is given in (3). This alliterative poem is an exhortation to spiritual and bodily purity (the "cleanness" of the title it has come to be known by), which uses a number of biblical exempla to illustrate how God punishes sinners and rewards the virtuous. EvG discusses the very beginning of the poem, where the narrator introduces the main theme and reminds the reader that appearances can be deceiving: even some members of the clergy, while outwardly performing their clerical duties as they should, commit grave sins in private and provoke God's anger. The passage in (3), which I reproduce as it appears in the book, describes the conduct of the clergymen. EvG uses boldface to indicate the subjects and underlining for the verbs. (Only the first verbs in the lines are indicated, however; *temen*, *rychen*, and *vsen* are also verb forms.)

(3) **Thay** teen vnto his temmple 7 temen to hym seluen
reken with reuerence [þay rychen his auter]
Ƿay hondel þer his aune body 7 vsen hit bope
'they proceed to his temple and are dedicated. They approach with reverence as to enrich his altar; they handle there his own body and use it both.' (p. 145)

EvG explains the verb *temen* with a reference to the *MED*: 'of a pagan temple: to be dedicated (to the devil)' (s.v. *temen* v.1, sense 2d), but according to her own translation it is the priests who are dedicated, not the temples. The *MED* in fact includes this particular line as an example of another sense of *temen*, 'to give allegiance (to Christ)' (s.v. *temen* v.1, sense 2c). The prepositional phrase *to hym seluen* is not included in EvG's translation, but the commentary

12 In lieu of the relevant entry in the *DOE*, I refer to the older standard dictionary by Bosworth & Toller (1898). At the time of writing (December 2019), the *DOE* has published the letters A to I. The prefix *ge-* is ignored in the alphabetization of entries, so the verb *geseon* will eventually be included under S.

states that *hym seluen* is a 3PL pronoun. However, the scribe of this manuscript generally uses the form *hym* for 3SG 'him' and *hem* or *hom* for 3PL 'them', and *hym seluen* here is rather a 3SG pronoun referring to Christ.[13] In the second line, EvG analyses *reken* as a verb "whose subject may have been left out" (p. 145). It is unclear to me exactly what the square brackets in this line are supposed to indicate, but the translation 'as to enrich his altar' suggests that EvG analyses this part as an infinitival clause. This is incorrect: *rychen* is not an infinitive meaning 'enrich' (*MED*, s.v. *richen* v.2), but a 3PL form 'arrange, prepare' (*MED*, s.v. *richen* v.1; see also Andrew & Waldron 1978: 111); *reken* is not a verb, but an adjective meaning 'righteous' (*MED*, s.v. *reken* adj.); and there is only one clause, with *þay* 'they' as the subject. In the third line, *vsen* has the more specific meaning 'consume, receive the Eucharist', and the clause-final use of *boþe* in Middle English corresponds to Modern English 'as well', not 'both' (see *MED*, s.v. *bothe*, sense 4). EvG also overlooks the endingless 3PL form *hondel* in the analysis when she writes that the "verbal plural endings are *-en*" (p. 145).

In sum, these three lines from *Cleanness* contain between six and eight grammatical or lexical mistakes, and also distort the meaning of the passage: it is precisely the narrator's point that the clergymen are not necessarily dedicated and pure in their hearts, even if they perform all their clerical duties properly. I provide my own transcription and translation in (4). The transcription follows the principles outlined in Section 3.2 above.

(4) Thay teen vnto his te(m)mple ȝ teme(n) to hy(m) seluen
reken w(ith) reu(er)ence þay rychen his auter
þay hondel þer his aune body ȝ vsen hit boþe
'They come to his temple and give allegiance to him;
Righteous with reverence they make his altar ready;
There they handle [or 'touch'] his very body and consume it as well.'
(British Library, Cotton MS. Nero A.x, f. 61^{r})

In the section on *The Book of Margery Kempe*, many translations again stray far from the text and fail to properly convey the meaning. One is example 23 on p. 157, where a whole clause appears to be missing (*whech synful caytyf many yerys was in wyl and in purpose*), and the translation introduces first-person pronouns which are not in the text.[14] On the page following, one passage is

13 For this "emphatic" use of the reflexive pronoun, see the examples in the *MED* (s.v. *him-self*, sense 2). For the spelling of the pronouns in the manuscript, see eLALME (Benskin et al. 2013), LP 26.

14 e.g., 'a wicked wretch like me' (p. 157), 'I then spent many years' (pp. 157–158). There are no first-person pronouns in the manuscript text, which in fact owes much of its characteristic

particularly confusing. I reproduce it in (5) with EvG's square brackets and translation:

(5) Thus alle this thyngys [turnyng up so down this creatur [whych many yerys had gon wyl and evyr ben unstable]] . Was parfythly drawen and steryd [to entren the wey of hy perfeccyon …

'thus all these things happening, which for many years had gone well though always had been unstable, drew this creature in and steered it to enter the way of high perfection' (p. 158)

Again, it is not entirely clear what the square brackets are supposed to indicate. If they mark subordinate clauses, this would seem to leave *Thus alle this thyngys … Was parfythly drawen and steryd* as the main clause. But this is not how EvG appears to interpret the passage:

> For modern readers, there is no obvious subject to the main verb group *was drawen* and *steryd*. The *creatur* that seems the object of *turnyng* is also the subject of the main verb. (p. 158)

I am not sure I understand this. What does it mean that there is no "obvious" subject for "modern readers"? And what syntactic analysis are we supposed to assume for a noun phrase which "seems the object" of one verb but is also the subject of another? The matter is cleared up instantly if one looks at the manuscript (see Fredell 2013 for a facsimile with diplomatic transcription): there is a virgule indicating a clause boundary between the adverb *vp so down* 'upside down' (*MED*, s.v. *up-so-doun*) and *þis creatur*, the subject of the main clause. The verb in the gerundial clause is thus intransitive, the subject *alle þis thyng*(*ys*) referring to the health and prosperity which the narrator had previously enjoyed. The adverb *wyl* in the relative clause means 'astray', not 'well', and of course pertains to *þis creatur*. I give my transcription and suggested translation in (6):

(6) thus alle þis thyng(ys) t(ur)nyng vp so down ·/ þis creatur whych many ȝerys had gon wyl & eu(er) ben vnstable · was p(er)fythlý drawen & steryd to entren þe wey of hý · p(er)feccyon

'thus, with all these things turning upside down, this creature, who for many years had gone astray and always been unstable, was

style to the third-person narration. The narrator, Margery Kempe (whom EvG consistently misnames "Margery of Kempe"), refers to herself throughout with phrases like *þis creatur* 'this creature/being'.

> completely drawn and stirred to enter the way of sublime perfection' (British Library, Additional MS. 61823, f. 1^{r})

The most striking thing about this passage is that while EvG argues that we should get closer to the original sources, she fails to notice that the clause boundary in (6) is unambiguously marked in the manuscript.

The two passages from *Cleanness* and *The Book of Margery Kempe* are by no means exceptions to the types of mistakes which occur in the early English material throughout.[15] In addition to the errors pertaining to the Old and Middle English texts, there are also quite a few mistakes of a more general linguistic nature, such as the definition of synthetic languages in terms of alignment type (p. 4),[16] the conflation of the concepts of mood and illocutionary force (pp. 7, 190), the confusion of elision with ellipsis in the glossary (p. 189), and the entry for *subject* (p. 192), which fails both to provide a definition and correctly represent agreement: "In Modern English, the subject agrees with the verb in person and number". It is, of course, the other way round.

4 Conclusion

It should come as no surprise to the reader that I cannot recommend this textbook, either for classroom use or self-study. While it is written in an engaged and accessible style, it contains so many mistakes in all relevant domains — transcription, translation, terminology, and grammatical analysis — that I would not be comfortable asking students to acquire it. This is a pity, for there is much to like about EvG's overall goal of getting students acquainted with the sources historical linguists rely on.

Unfortunately, the book completely misses the opportunity to achieve this goal. The case for working directly with facsimiles is not argued convincingly,

15 I cannot give a full inventory of these, but a few examples ought to show that the errors discussed in Section 3.3 are by no means isolated cases: on p. 20 a result clause is mistaken for a relative clause; the Old English adverb *nealles* 'not at all' is incorrectly glossed 'No.less' (p. 29); the fricatives in *mihte* and *dryhten* are claimed to be the result of palatalisation (p. 38); Moses receives the Tables of the Law 'in the hell of Sinai' (p. 41); *acenned* 'born' is mistranslated 'recognised' (p. 63); the infinitives *sturien* and *steoren* are said to be finite verb forms (p. 110); existential *nis* is said to be an auxiliary in *nis buten an god* 'there is but one God' (p. 110); and the noun *sine* 'sin' (*MED*, s.v. *sinne*) is mistaken for the conjunction *sin* 'because' (*MED*, q.v.) (p. 130). There are also several other examples of a clause in the text missing from the translation, e.g., *wæron … on geogoðfeore* (p. 31), or, conversely, of a clause in the translation not being in the original text, e.g., 'that they could not all dwell there together' (p. 98).

16 "Synthetic languages indicate the function of subject either by a marking on the subject, called nominative case, or by marking the person and number of the subject on the verb, called agreement" (p. 4). Following this definition, it would seem that languages with ergative-absolutive alignment cannot be synthetic, whereas any language with subject-verb agreement is.

almost no attention is paid to the issues of genre and text production in the Middle Ages, and the different types of modern editions are not introduced to the student (Section 3.1). The facsimiles themselves are often of poor quality, and the transcriptions are at best inconsistent, at worst full of mistakes (Section 3.2). Finally, many of the translations and analyses of the Old and Middle English material are questionable or outright wrong (Section 3.3). I have provided examples from the book to illustrate all of these issues above.

To conclude, EvG has written a textbook with admirable intentions but poor and slovenly execution. While I am certainly sympathetic to EvG's suggestion that "we need to get as close to the sources as possible" (p. 1), I do not think *Analyzing Syntax Through Texts* does much to take us in this direction.

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