

Glossing the Psalms: The Emergence of the Written Vernaculars in Western Europe from the Seventh to the Twelfth Centuries. Alderik H. Blom. De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2017. pp. xvi+332. €99,95. ISBN 978-3-11-050037-0.

In his *Glossing the Psalms*, Alderik Blom sets out to compare glosses on the psalms in Old Irish, Old English, Old High German, Old Saxon and Old Frisian from the period between 700 and 1200. His comparative approach centres around the psalter since this text was of central importance in medieval monastic life and was thus intensively studied and glossed. While glosses in Breton and Welsh also exist from this period, none of these pertain to the psalter, and these languages are therefore not represented in the book. The book has a tripartite structure in which it discusses glossed psalters and glossed commentaries (the Southampton and St. Caimín Psalters as well as the Milan and Vatican commentaries), interlinear versions (the Old Alemannic Psalter Fragments, the Vespasian Psalter, the Lublin/Wittenberg Fragments, the Regius Psalter, the Paderborn Fragment, the Lambeth Psalter, and the Old Frisian Psalter Fragment), and glossaries in various vernaculars (the Rz glossaries and the Mondsee glossaries, with a particular focus on two manuscript copies of the Mondsee family), as well as providing the reader with a thorough introduction to the practice of glossing in the medieval west and to the psalms themselves.

Together, all glossed psalters and glossaries and commentaries on the psalter constitute, in the words of Blom, ‘an early medieval “paratextual network” which should be studied as a whole’ (p. 4). This ‘whole’ to which Blom refers does not only indicate the variety of vernaculars that are included in his approach but also his treatment of the manuscripts as objects and the multiple forms of glossing discussed. Thus, he stresses that the *mise-en-page* of the glossed manuscripts as well as forms of non-verbal glossing, such as construe marks and punctuation, need to be taken into account in order to fully understand the relation of the glosses with the main text. Another aspect essential to Blom’s approach is that the book includes 15 images of manuscript pages, sometimes in colour, most of which are not available online. These images help to demonstrate the importance of lay-out when studying glosses. Additionally, in some of the transcriptions, the lay-out of the manuscript page is mirrored by the lay-out in the book, which gives the reader a good idea of the visual representation of the glosses.

The definition of glosses used by the author is that of Franck Cinato: ‘the sum of paratextual accretion which specifies and diversifies the information contained within a principal text’ (p. 11); this is sufficiently broad to include a wide range of material but not so broad as to become over-inclusive. This paratextual material is then further classified according to its function in a threefold typology, developed by the author but based on the existing glossing typologies of Ralph Hexter, Ernst Hellgardt, Rijcklof Hofman, and Franck Cinato (p. 26): ‘a gloss has three possible relations with regard to its principal text: a gloss *substitutes*, *supplements*, or *comments* on its lemma’ (p. 29). Each of these categories has its own subcategories (pp. 29–35): substitution glosses, for example, consist of synonyms/translations (SUB1), explanatory replacement of words (SUB2), and paraphrases (SUB3). Supplement glosses may supply a constituent to further clarify an element in the principal text (SUP1) or may supplement a constituent (SUP2). Commentary glosses may provide lexical or etymological commentary (COM1), grammatical commentary (COM2), *ecdotique* (medieval textual criticism, COM3), or explicative commentary, like exegesis (COM4).

Occasionally, perhaps due to the breadth of this book, the author seems to gloss over issues that could be of importance to his argument or that at least deserve some further attention. For instance, the application of his typology raises questions about medieval glossing practice that are not always answered or addressed. Take the difference between

substitution glosses and supplement glosses: a SUB1 replaces a lemma with ‘more or less exact lexical equivalents or perceived equivalents’ (p. 29) but, due to the structural differences between Irish and Latin, what constitutes a precise or perceived equivalent deserves further discussion. For example, while the dative case may appear in Latin without a preposition in a variety of functions, the use of a dative case without a preposition in medieval Irish was very restricted (*GOI* §251). Also, Latin does not use articles to denote definitiveness, while Irish does. Accordingly, when the Irish glossator of Milan glosses the Latin *gyro* ‘to the circle’ with Irish *dunchuairt* ‘to the circle’, can we say that the preposition (*do* ‘to’) and the article (*-n*) have been supplemented with a SUP2, as Blom states, or do we merely witness the glossator’s ‘perceived equivalent’ (SUB1) of Latin *gyro* (p. 101)? Contrasting with this interpretation is Blom’s categorisation of the Milan gloss *incáse* ‘the cheese’ of Latin *casseum* ‘cheese’ as a SUB1 (translation), even though it contains the article *in*. He later states that ‘the Irish forms have received a SUP2 article to indicate the definiteness of the Latin lemmas’ (p. 97), but the implications of this SUP2 addition are not discussed further and Blom simply states that ‘all the Irish glosses are of type SUB1’ (p. 97). Perhaps the difference lies in whether these elements are added in order to further clarify the meaning of the Latin phrase in its context or whether they were added because they were perceived to be equivalent translations of the Latin. Since Irish glossators seemed to have operated with a fairly consistent approach (see, for example, Moran 2015; Ó Muircheartaigh 2018), it should be possible to make this distinction more clearly. This matter is, in fact, touched upon by Blom with regard to the ablative absolute when he states that ‘the Latin ablative absolute does not exist in Old Irish, and could therefore not be rendered form-for-form’ (p. 107). Yet, he maintains that this is a sign that the glossators in these cases ‘were mainly preoccupied with rendering the meaning, rather than the construction’ (p. 107).

The bilingual nature of the material is another issue that often comes up but that is perhaps not as well embedded in the current scholarly debate as it could have been. While Blom usually defines his terminology in clear terms – like the term ‘gloss’ itself or the categories of glossing – the work offers no definition of terminology describing the bilingual aspects of the texts, despite the fact that such terminology is frequently used in evaluating the material. This undefined use of terms like code-switching, triggering, and matrix language makes it difficult to place Blom’s findings within the general framework of research into historical code-switching and bilingual texts. In the case of code-switching, it is clear that Blom’s definition may differ depending on the approach that is taken: from the perspective of language production, not all bilingual glosses may be examples of code-switching, since they may not have been composed by the same person (Bisagni 2013–14); from the perspective of reception, however, these glosses may be included as examples of code-switching, especially if the compiler has shown attempts at integrating the material into a coherent gloss (Stam 2017: 134–45). Blom does not give a definition of code-switching, but from his statements it appears that he leans towards the side of language production as a prerequisite for code-switching: ‘Even so, it appears that genuinely bilingual glosses do not occur. In fact, most of the bilingual phrases can be shown to have been compiled from separate sources. This does not imply, however, that these glosses were not read as a single utterance, but the compilatory nature of the gloss resulted in a paratactic structure (*uel* [...] *uel*) in which the two languages are not integrated in terms of syntax’ (with regard to the first stratum of the Southampton Psalter, p. 69). Statements such as these, however, are unhelpful since the use of a subjective and undefined word like ‘genuine’ causes the concepts to remain rather vague (Stam 2017: 50–65). They also do not help us to determine what happens in glosses where there is some form of integration in terms of syntax. The gloss discussed on p. 75, for example, *fructus sicomiris uel merenn* ‘the fruit of the mulberry or mulberry’, is analysed by Blom as two SUB1 glosses probably derived from separate sources. However, Blom seems to overlook the

possibility that the form of Irish *merenn* may be a genitive singular of OI *mér* ‘berry’ (dil.ie/31984; Hamp 1973), making the Irish dependent on Latin *fructus* and demonstrating, therefore, that the two elements were not simply ‘derived from separate sources’ but that an attempt at integration was made by the glossator. Similarly, Blom states that the Irish *luib* ‘plant, herb’ ‘does not interact with the Latin syntax of the main clause’ in the gloss *.i. luib cuius fumus rectus est ad caelum* (p. 124), where *luib* glosses Latin *incensum* ‘incense’ in the same case and number (nom. sg.); here, it is unclear whether ‘main clause’ refers to the gloss as a whole or to the sentence in the commentary that it glosses, but it could be argued that in both cases Irish *luib* does in fact participate in the syntax, since it is an antecedent to a Latin relative clause and therefore shows more linguistic involvement than other types of interclausal switches (Bisagni 2013–14: 20–1 n. 53; Stam 2017: 257–62). Furthermore, it remains unclear whether the ‘recognisably Irish versions of biblical names inserted in Latin’ are considered by the author to be examples of code-switching (p. 69).

In the case of *triggering*, it seems that usage in this book is not in line with usage in studies on (historical) bilingualism. On p. 72, Blom discusses the gloss *corrici cith besti beoa indaarben uainn dixit dauid* ‘to the extent of even living beasts, banish them from us, says David’, which occurs in the Southampton Psalter. He states that ‘the code-switch into Irish appears to be triggered by the Latin verb *dicere* denoting reported speech’ (similarly pp. 126–7). Leaving aside the matter of whether this gloss demonstrates a code-switch into Irish rather than a switch into Latin, the use of ‘triggering’ here is confusing, as this is a linguistic term that, in code-switching research, is only used in very specific linguistic circumstances, i.e. to denote accidental code-switches that are caused by words that are part of both languages (Clyne 2003: 162; Stam 2017: 406–8). While it is common knowledge that forms of the Latin *dicere* are often used to introduce direct speech in Irish (see for example Müller 1999), this is a functional aspect of code-switching – often termed ‘flagging’ – that should not be confused with its linguistic mechanics.

An instance in the glosses that might, in fact, be considered an example of triggering is the Irish *canóin* occurring in a Latin gloss, which is explained away by Blom as an error for the intended Latin word *canon* since ‘the context hardly demands a specifically Irish term’. Whether or not the context requires a specifically Irish or Latin term should not influence the determination of the language here, since research has shown that it is almost impossible to predict when context ‘requires’ a code-switch (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 143). This example could just as well be interpreted as an accidental code-switch triggered by the similarities between the Irish and the Latin word, as bilingual homophones or visual diamorphs are notorious for triggering (Clyne 2003: 162).

The concept of *matrix language*, too, is highly problematic: it is certainly not a term that can be used without discussion as it is far from clear how a matrix language should be determined and how it influences syntax (Bisagni 2013–14: 32–8; Muysken 2000: 64–9; Myers-Scotton 2002; Stam 26–7; 31–7; 68–77). Blom’s statement that the matrix language is Latin in the phrase *de ind randgabál* ‘from the participle’ is therefore not straightforward. The phrase is part of the gloss *ocus is oendlum de ind randgabál de postfetans a uerbo de postfeto* ‘and it is an aggregation (*óen-dlum*) from the participle *de postfetans* from the verb *de postfeto*’, and Blom determines the matrix language based on the preposition *de* (p. 67). However, the matrix language is generally determined for clauses (or Complementizer Phrases, if you are a follower of Myers-Scotton) and not phrases, and the basis for such a determination might range from first word of a clause to the main verb or constituent structure, or even a combination of all these elements. Aside from that, the simple determination passes over the fact that this could be a fascinating and rare example of code-switching in which the prepositional phrase is neither correct Latin (*de randgabál*) nor correct Irish (*dind randgabáil*), which allows the possibility that this is an example of zero

morphology (a neutral form of the word that is not adapted to either grammatical system (Bisagni 2013–14: 46, 46 nn. 126–8). In this instance, however, the use of concepts such as matrix language or zero morphology might be inappropriate altogether, as previous translations of this gloss have taken the element *de* to be the adverbial use of the Old Irish preposition *de* with a suffixed pronoun meaning ‘consequently’ (see *eDIL* s.v. 1 *de*, *di* or *dil.ie/14787* (XLVa)). The translation of the clause in both *Thes* i 5.29 and in Ó Néill (2012) is thus: ‘that is, when they afterwards produce; and the participle is consequently a compound’. Unfortunately, Blom does not refer to these existing translations nor does he explain why he deviates from them.

While some of these examples may only point to small differences in interpretation, with which one may or may not agree, it is important that they are made explicit, as this book is aimed at an interdisciplinary audience, not all of whom may have the necessary expertise in the various areas involved. Taking into account these alternative interpretations of the dependency of the two languages and of the terminology used may problematise the author’s statement that ‘it appears that genuinely bilingual glosses do not occur’ in the case of the Milan glosses (p. 69). It also contrasts with the author’s analysis of the Vatican glosses, which contain ‘genuine code-switches’ (p. 126) but which, he insists, must not be seen as a ‘bilingual text’ (p. 115).

A minor, more general point concerning the book would be that a schematic presentation of the numbers involved would make it much easier to follow the argument. For example, on p. 114, the author states that ‘vernacular glosses are dwarfed by Latin’, but the proportion of this dwarfing is unclear from the context. Similarly, on p. 124, Blom sets out to analyse 16 substitution glosses that are sometimes further divided along categories like ‘nominal’ or ‘verbal’, but not always, and it appears that he does not always discuss the number of glosses that he claims to (‘I discuss four examples’ but it appears that there are only two; p. 123).

Blom’s approach to the material does produce many valuable insights. Firstly, the benefits of including *mise-en-page* and non-verbal glossing in the analysis become particularly evident in Chapter 5 on the Milan Commentary and Chapter 12 on the Lambeth Psalter. The Milan Commentary contains glosses in Irish and Latin as well as two forms of non-verbal glossing: the linking system (L-system), which links headwords with modifiers, and the sequential system (S-system), which clarifies the order in which clauses are to be read. Blom shows that there is a division of labour among these various forms of glossing: the S-system is used to identify the basic reading sequence, the L-system is used to connect the main constituents, the Latin glosses supply additional information regarding the principal text while the Irish glosses supply lexical information (p. 103). Together, these different systems provide the reader with all the information necessary to interpret the Latin text.

The eleventh-century Lambeth Psalter, which is the subject of Chapter 12, uses a complex system of glossing, punctuation and diacritical marks, and a unique version of the S-system of construe marks. These unique construe marks, consisting of sublinear dots with ancillary commas and virgules, have been the subject of some controversy, as they seem to rearrange the word-order of the text into one that is highly marked or even uncommon in Old English (p. 212). Blom argues, however, that previous debate did not take into account the diacritical marks added to the Old English text; when these, too, are incorporated into the analysis, it leads to an interlinear version that approximates to regular, idiomatic usage of Old English. This finding is illustrated by a number of examples, not all of which, however, are equally well explained by the author, who sometimes assumes the reader is as adept at following the medieval diacritic systems as he himself undoubtedly is. For example, on p. 218, it is not further explained why the ‘wavy quilisma’ used in the interlinear version generates the reading that the author provides; the lengthy explanation on the following page,

on the other hand, is very helpful, but this turns out to be a long citation from Pádraig Ó Néill. This is not entirely clear from the context due to a missing quotation mark, but it explains the confusing reference to a marginal gloss that is part of Ó Néill's argument but not of Blom's. Be that as it may, the significant conclusion of the analysis in this Chapter is that the Lambeth interlinear version is a readable, idiomatic Old English text and stands in sharp contrast to many other interlinear versions.

This leads us neatly to a second highlight of this book, namely that Blom's comparative approach brings to light subtle differences between texts that are considered to be of the same genre. One example of this is the contrast that the Lambeth interlinear version presents when compared to other interlinear versions, like the Old Alemannic Psalter Fragments and the Vespasian Psalter, in which the interlinear version is much more dependent on the Latin in terms of syntax. Furthermore, this approach really brings out what the author calls 'paratextual networks', since it demonstrates that there is a great degree of overlap between the different paratextual genres and that each of these genres was able to draw on a well-established tradition of exegetical material. This is illustrated by – among other things – vernacular Irish glosses that reflect commentaries now only extant in Latin as well as vernacular Irish glosses that appear in a relatively stable form across several manuscripts. This, in turn, underlines the observation that glosses 'did not merely result from "spontaneous" interaction with a given text (...), but constituted a carefully planned activity' (p. 14), a fact also borne out by the lay-out of many of the manuscripts under discussion, which explicitly leaves room for ample paratext.

As a whole, this book is a valuable achievement and a welcome contribution to the field of glossing by one of the founders of the Network of the Study of Glossing (<http://www.glossing.org/>). Its inclusion of the *mise-en-page* and of non-verbal glossing adds a worthwhile new dimension, and the book succeeds very well in highlighting the complex and multi-layered nature of the glosses, as well as the consistency of the material across genres and time. Its comparative approach, encompassing several languages, brings out well the similarities and differences between several European glossing traditions, and it is only to be expected that, after the recent conference 'Glossing from a Comparative Perspective' (June 2019), more exciting research is soon to come out of Marburg.¹

NIKE STAM

Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies

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WEBSITE

‘Glossing from a Comparative Perspective’, conference held at Marburg University, June 2019:
<https://www.uni-marburg.de/fb10/iksl/sprachwissenschaft/aktuelles/events/program.pdf>.