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CHRISTINE EHLER, *Verschriftung and Verschriftlichung des Altenglischen. Eine methodisch-exemplarische Untersuchung.* (Neue Studien zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 76.) Frankfurt: Lang, 1999. 217 pp.

Reviewed by URSULA LENKER

Ehler's book is one of the more dubious results of an otherwise very stimulating and successful research project on the interface between "orality" and "literacy" at the University of Freiburg ("Übergänge und Spannungsfelder zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit"; 1986–1996). Since the 1960s, when the interest in these issues started to grow in anthropology, cultural studies, and linguistics, scholars have tried to establish the parameters and implications of the basic dichotomy "oral" vs. "literate/written" or have postulated clines in an attempt to overcome this strict dichotomy. One of the results of the Freiburg project, mainly developed by the Romance linguists Koch and Oesterreicher, is a strict methodological distinction between "medium" and "concept(ion)" and, accordingly, between *Verschriftung* and *Verschriftlichung* (cf. Oesterreicher 1993; for the English terms see Ehler/Schaefer 1998:4–5). *Verschriftung* (scripting) refers to "medium" only, and deals with the act of transcoding from the oral to the graphic code, e. g. alphabets, use of different writing systems/scripts, layout of texts, etc. *Verschriftlichung* (textualization), on the other hand, refers to the conceptual differences between "orality" and "literacy", which in this view are not concrete entities with clear-cut boundaries, but rather are found on a continuous scale. "Textualization" hence refers to the changes a language undergoes when it is also (or even predominantly) conceived as a written language.

Old English prose is certainly an excellent area for testing these questions of scripting and textualization in the early Middle Ages. The extant texts provide the earliest records of the English vernacular, so that problems of scripting a hitherto essentially non-scripted language can be traced (for the different quality of runes, see 27–43). More importantly, Old English stands out from the Germanic languages because of its impressive corpus of different prose texts from the eighth to the eleventh century, thus furnishing texts which may testify to the process of the textualization of a vernacular in its earliest stages.

A study of the kind envisaged by Ehler was therefore highly desirable, and she indeed tries to give a comprehensive account of the questions involved: properties of scripting are investigated through a study of the graphic modes in Old English charters (45–96), features of increasing textualization are approached by an analysis of different versions of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* (97–119) and the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (121–67).

Unfortunately, however, Ehler's study is not very useful because of its many grave mistakes, its methodological inconsistencies, and, above all, its superficial and careless handling of the medieval sources, of research, and also her own text itself. The countless typographical errors (three alone in footnotes 26 and 27, in which she marks another author's mistake by [sic!]) and layout flaws (the little word *des* needs one whole line on 109, and on the same page the Old English parts of example b) are missing) are an overt sign of the hurry in which the book seems to have been planned, written, and published, and its deficiencies with regard to concept and content. I will have to restrict myself here to a small selection of the problems posed by the study. The macrolevel analysis of the relative amount of Latin and English used in the charters does not result in more than what is already common knowledge, namely the simplistic assessment that the percentage of Old English in charters increased from the seventh to the eleventh century. However, her wide definition of "charter" and thus the inclusion of *charters* proper (Latin), *writs* (vernacular), and wills (vernacular), obscures the fact that the development might not have been as simple as that: "Writs happen to survive in quantity from the period during which charters appear to be on the decline, but it does not follow (. . .) that the outmoded charter was superseded by the more adaptable writ. The two types of record complemented each other . . . the charter was addressed in Latin to posterity, . . . , whereas the writ was addressed in the vernacular to contemporaries, making it known that an estate had changed hands" (Keynes 1999:100). Ehler disregards these highly relevant functional differences (*writs* were "written to be spoken") and rather dubiously analyses alleged formulaic patterns in the final sentences of the Latin (!) text of mixed Old English-Latin sources (among them many determiners such as Latin *hic (haec),* etc.; 72–7). Through this analysis, she finds that Old English (!) has become more textualized in the course of the centuries.

The statistics Ehler uses to reach these results are also highly untrustworthy (48–67). In the summary of the results (52–3) there are (at least) three arithmetical errors (e.g., *2 + 3 + 30 + 6 = 40??), the most absurd ones being in column II where the number of charters excluding forgeries is higher than the number of charters including them. Ehler obviously forgets here that she has changed the order (with/without forgeries) at some point during her work (cf. the—probably—correct tables in the "appendix", 177–8). The result are senseless rows of figures. The micro-analyses of the Charters of Burton Abbey, Rochester, and Sherborne (68–94) and the Paris Psalter (87–94) again result in the well-known facts that the layout of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts became more elaborated over the centuries and that, from the middle of the tenth century, scribes used different scripts for the Latin and Old English parts of the texts (Caroline Minuscule vs. Anglo-Saxon minuscule). Yet it is doubtful whether reliable and detailed information on scripts and punctuation marks can be gathered from our extant charter sources, which are predominantly twelfth- to eighteenth-century copies (and often forgeries) of the original charters, all the more so since Ehler does not use microfilms or manuscripts of these post-Anglo-Saxon cartularies, but mainly relies on information given in modern editions.

In her chapters focusing on the textualization of Old English, Ehler first analyses differences in personal pronouns (103–7), verbal concord (108–111), inflection of adjectives (111–2), and changes from dative to accusative after certain prepositions (113–9) in different manuscripts of the eight homilies in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies (Second Series)* which are extant in three different versions/recensions. Each of these linguistic features, which are assumed to foster textual coherence of Old English, is granted only two to six pages and no references to Old English grammars; additional examples are listed in the appendix (179–203). This meagre analysis is probably due to the fact that Ehler sees and partly also admits (107, 165) the methodological problems, namely that almost no systematic changes are to be detected in manuscripts which are only 50 to 150 years apart and which basically also belong to the same manuscript tradition. Her examples are therefore merely lists of scribal errors found in single manuscripts (not versions or recension stages!), but not instances of e. g. a more sophisticated use of personal pronouns and therefore systematic textualization of Old English. This is most obvious in the many cases when a scribe changes only one of the pronouns in a sentence, e.g., ". . . to þam Iudeiscan folce. þæt hi [MS O: he] sceoldon ærest gif hi [no change in MS O] woldon to fulluhte bugan" (105, 181; *he* is not possible at all, because OE *folc* is neuter and *-on* plural). More systematicity is observable in the changes from dative to accusative after certain prepositions, in particular *þurh* and *on* (113–9, 197–203). These systematic changes have, however, long been noted and discussed in the research literature. They indicate that the manuscripts have been carefully revised, in Ehler's view a sign of increased textualization of Old English (117).

Ehler's more detailed analyses and the translations also reveal many problems with Latin and Old English (and linguistic terminology—there is no such term as "Flektion" in German). Let me just cite the most striking example: In the OE example "gewitað fram me ge awyrigedan into ðam ecan fyre" (106, 161), Ehler mixes up the Old English verbs *witan* 'know, perceive' and *wītan* 'depart, go from' and translates "Vernehmt von mir, . . ." instead of "Weicht von mir, Ihr Verdammten, in das ewige Feuer" (*Know from me/Away from me, you (that are) cursed, to the eternal fire"). The same mistake appears in the second (111) and third use of the example (189), in the appendix additionally with the ridiculously incorrect Latin form **discredite* instead of *discedite* (189). This is not only annoying, but also ruins Ehler's arguments. Moreover, it is absurd to regard the deletion of *ge* in one of the manuscripts as a more textualized (i.e. sophisticated) form, and not as a scribal error. The passage is a translation of Matt. 25:41 ('The Final Judgement') and the deletion of *ge* makes Jesus declare that he himself is one of the cursed ones!

Blunders like that (and also typographical errors) are fortunately rarer in chapter V, in which Ehler presents a comparatively solid philological analysis of differences in three manuscripts of the Old English translation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (Book 3, chapter 18; 121–67). However, augmentations and differences in these manuscripts, which belong to two different traditions, show that there is no textualization of the Old English *Historia Ecclesiastica* independent of manuscript traditions. The older manuscript (T; 900–950) is often, but by no means as consistently as Ehler suggests (164), closer to the Latin exemplar than the later version in manuscript O (1000); manuscript B, which belongs to the manuscript tradition of T but is chronologically closer to O (1000–1050), basically gives the same text as T. This shows that there is no systematic textualization of the Old English Bede or Old English: the changes are the achievement of a single scribe who revised the text of his Old English exemplar according to his ideas of idiomaticity.

The analysis also reveals a much more important methodological problem. "Textualization" here is equated with increased idiomaticity. The linguistic features of "textualization" used in the analysis of Ælfric's homilies (more sophisticated employment of personal pronouns, of verbal concord, etc.) are obviously no longer valid. Chapter V is even introduced by a new summary of research on "orality" and "literacy" (121–6) which is quite different from the one given at the beginning of the study (11–19). The notion of "idiomaticity" employed here is a vague and subjective one (which Ehler admits on 173) and no linguistic features are used to objectify the analysis of increased idiomaticity and therefore textualization. Some of the examples are also highly problematic if we accept that "textualization" is supposed to show an increase of features of the language of "communicative distance" (Koch/ Oesterreicher's term for a language which is conceptualised for written discourse); for this "language of distance", Koch/Oesterreicher postulate a number of universal features (1985:27–9). Yet the problems associated with this fact are ignored by Ehler: The Latin of Bede is certainly a highly textualized language. When patterns of Latin are imitated in Old English (passive or infinite constructions, relative clauses, subordination, etc.), these would also—if we want to objectify research on textualization and agree on Koch/Oesterreicher's universals—testify to a high level of textualization of Old English. If, however, as Ehler suggests (152, etc.), independence from the Latin text and alleged idiomaticity are signals of increased textualization, then properties which prototypically belong to the (more oral) "language of communicative immediacy" suddenly become signals for increased textualization (coordination instead of infinite constructions in example 3, active instead of passive voice in examples 3, 6, 19, 20, etc.).

In sum, it seems that an opportunity was wasted. The massive corpus of Old English texts (and their early Middle English copies) could have served to establish (additional) linguistic features testifying to the process of textualization in a Germanic vernacular, and could therefore have helped to support or to refine the theoretical background of the study. The application of the idea of scripting and textualization to Old English and their complex interdependence (169–76) would certainly have merited a rather more competent handling.

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ALAN HUFFMAN, *The categories of grammar: French* lui *and* le. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1997. xiv + 378 pp.

Reviewed by NIGEL LOVE

This thought-provoking monograph exemplifies some of the principles of the "Columbia school" linguistics associated with the name, among others, of the late William Diver. General theoretical matters are discussed, as well as a number of issues in French grammar, the core of the book being a detailed study of the distribution of the third-person clitic pronouns *le* (*la, les*) and *lui* (*leur*).

As Huffman observes, comparing and contrasting the uses of these pronouns does not usually constitute a topic in its own right in traditional grammars of French:

> The question of their functions arises only obliquely, as a result of asking how universal categories of grammar, e.g. Direct and Indirect Object, or underlying categories such as "dative", are manifested in French. These categories are *assumed in advance* . . . and the question of their realisation yields analyses based on truth value, logic, and features of messages and of the real world.
>
> The present approach, by contrast, represents an attempt to *discover* categories of grammar . . . (p. 257).

The categories of traditional grammar are assumed in advance ultimately because of "the premise of an intimate and necessary connection between language and thought" (p. 258), and more proximately because of a semantic doctrine that Huffman dubs "fractional meaning", which requires that

> each fraction of linguistic communication is "mapped" to a linguistic form in the utterance. Thus . . . in *je lui prends la main,* glossed 'I take his hand', the 'I' element of the message will be assigned to *je,* 'take' to *prends,* 'hand' to *la main,* and