REVIEWS

Kirsten Middeke, *The Old English case system: Case and argument structure
constructions* (Brill's Studies in Historical Linguistics 12). Leiden and Boston: Brill,
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The title of this book reflects Kirsten Middeke's first objective, as set out in the
introductory chapter: to describe the Old English case marking system, explaining the
associative links between verbs and argument structure. The investigation intends to
demonstrate how a Construction Grammar approach can deepen our understanding of
this system. A second aim is to show that this case study can play a role in the
development of Construction Grammar in demonstrating how the challenges posed for
this framework by languages that depend on case marking to convey states of affairs
can be met. The main challenge that the author identifies for Construction Grammar in
dealing with languages like Old English is the fact that the combination of case
marking and rich verbal morphology 'allows us to account for the event-structural part
of clausal meaning without recourse to unified argument structure constructions' (p. 5).
That is, with such morphology, meanings of clauses are generally compositional.
Middeke aims to show that this is not really a problem, because cases can be studied as
constructions in their own right – case constellations can be associated with the abstract
event types that are central to all variants of Construction Grammar. Essential to
understanding Old English cases is the assumption that they are family-resemblance
categories and that their functions must be understood in terms of structured networks.
These networks can only be properly understood when the historical development of
the cases is taken into account, since some uses of specific cases are only explicable as
lexicalizations of previously transparent meanings.

The introductory chapter '*And gefnǣs þone tōþ* ...' (pp. 1–12) is followed by a
methodological chapter outlining the data collection methods employed (pp. 13–23).
The primary source of data is the *York–Toronto–Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old
English Prose* (YCOE; Taylor *et al.* 2003), although other sources have been
'consulted selectively where appropriate' (p. 13). The general methodology of the
study is both sound and innovative, but careful scrutiny of the text and captions to
tables in the chapters and the appendix is needed to work out details that are not given
in this rather sketchy summary. First, a database of all verbs was composed to look at
the case frames they appear with and it was then annotated for various features relevant
to the study. The verbs were then grouped semantically and constructions established,

then arranged into a semantic network. The YCOE-based findings were then supplemented with frequency counts of individual words or case constructions and collexeme analyses. Middeke's final step was to create a database of all verb forms in the electronic corpora used and lemmatize it. This step, which must have been enormously time-consuming, made it possible to carry out systematic searches for individual verbs and their case configurations.

In the remainder of the methodology chapter, Middeke demonstrates an appreciation of the problems associated with working with the unbalanced and comparatively small corpora provided by the available electronic corpora. One of the difficulties which the investigation could have gone a bit further in dealing with is the fact that the YCOE contains some very late texts that belong to the Early Middle English period although they are copies of Old English compositions. Middeke does show an awareness of this problem and states that she has made efforts to check examples deviating from usual patterns to make sure they are not from these late texts. She has not been completely successful here. In the discussion in chapter 5, she gives a sole example (her example (5.20)) in which she says that the instrumental case has apparently been extended to the usual sphere of the dative, namely to express an external possessor. In treating *mine* as instrumental in this example, Middeke is following the tagging of the YCOE. But the example in question is from a text found in a manuscript from the second half of the twelfth century. *Mine* almost certainly represents the copyist's rendering of the phonological reduction of the dative *minum*, common in this period. However, it should be emphasized that this single example does not mean that Middeke's inclusion of late texts has materially affected her overall conclusions, nor does the fact that a few examples are problematic.

Chapter 3 (pp. 24–50) covers the theoretical preliminaries necessary to an understanding of the arguments of the succeeding chapters concerning the best explanations for the results. A sketch like this cannot be expected to give a deep understanding of a theoretical framework, but this chapter does a good job of pointing readers to important sources, most notably Goldberg's (1995) seminal work, but also many others. In this chapter, Middeke develops her arguments about how cases are constructions with their own meanings, and emphasizes a theme that runs through the book, namely that although these meanings interact with the meanings of verbs, they are not derivatives of verb meanings.

The next four chapters are each devoted to an individual case, starting with the genitive case in chapter 4 'Origins, wholes, stimuli – and aspect? The genitive' (pp. 51–139). As Middeke notes, the numerous studies that have been carried out into the history of the genitive case in English have focused on genitive modifiers of nouns, rather than on verbal arguments. She also correctly notes that scholars have had difficulties in finding one basic meaning for the genitive case that covers all uses. Middeke argues that the Old English genitive is a family resemblance category, based on an ORIGIN prototype. In addition to the discussion of genitives, this chapter contains helpful discussions of prototypes and also the difference between polysemy and homophony of constructions.

Middeke is only able to produce one putative example from the YCOE of a genitive used to refer to the literal movement in space away from an origin, her example (4.1), which she repeats as (4.2). Unfortunately, the example is mistranslated; *oðhran* is the preterite of *oðhrīnan* 'to touch' here, but Middeke has confused it with *oðran*, the preterite of *oðiernan/oðyrnan* 'run away'. It turns out that the example refers to a lion not touching a corpse, rather than a lion not running away from the corpse. The example therefore belongs in table A 4.5 of verbs of touching and should be added to the number of twenty-nine examples that the table records.

The same tricky look-alike pair has also caused problems with her example (4.6), which is from a portion of the Metres of Boethius not included in the electronic corpora. The example is worth discussing in some detail. Middeke's presentation is as in (1):

(1)   He   ðære   eorþan   æfre   ne   oþrineþ
      he:NOM the:GEN earth:GEN ever not runs-away
      'He [the moon] never runs away from the earth'
      (Metres of Boethius, Metre 20, l. 138; Sedgefield 1900: 181)

Although Middeke cites Sedgefield (1900), Sedgefield (1968 [1899]) must be intended, since Sedgefield (1900) is a translation of the Old English into Modern English. What Sedgefield (1968 [1899]) actually has for Metre 20, l. 138 (stripped of his square brackets indicating editorial restoration of lacunae) is *7 þeah þære eorþan næfre ne oðrineð*, so also in the authoritative most recent edition, Godden & Irvine (2020). Sedgefield's glossary cites this line in his entry for *oðhrīnan* 'touch', and Godden & Irvine translate *oðrineð* here as 'touches'. The only source where I have been able to locate the wording in (1) is Bosworth & Toller (1898), a source listed in the references to the book, but not mentioned as a data source in the text. In this dictionary, the sentence is erroneously found under the headword *óþ-irnan* 'to run away, escape'. This error, prompted by the omission by the scribe of the [h] distinguishing the two verbs, was corrected in Toller's (1921) Supplement, a correction which has been incorporated into the online version of Bosworth–Toller. Toller emended the sentence to replace *he* with *se rodor* 'the firmament' and shifted the example to the entry for *oþ-hrínan* 'to touch'. Thus the meaning is 'and however never touches the earth', rather than 'never escapes/runs away from the earth', and the example joins Middeke's (4.1) in adding to the well-attested pattern of *oþhrīnan* with a genitive complement. As a methodological aside that does not of course reflect on Middeke's work, it can be noted that Toller's correction still changes the text by silently eliding substantial material and presenting the clause as main, rather than subordinate. This illustrates why although dictionaries are essential resources, it is important for a linguist to check out examples taken from them whenever possible; the goals of the lexicographer are not identical with those of the syntactician.

We are thus left with no genuine-looking examples in Old English of what Middeke argues to be the original function of the genitive, i.e. literal movement in space away from an origin. However, this does not mean that Middeke's etymological argument

relating synchronic uses of this genitive to a single meaning historically does not deserve serious consideration; it is, for example, entirely plausible that the use of genitives to express time after an event is a metaphorical expression of movement away from an origin, namely a point in time. An etymological argument of this sort must be speculative to some degree, but it may or may not be persuasive, something that readers will judge for themselves.

Chapter 5, which deals with instrumentals ('Place, time and manner: The instrumental', pp. 140–68), is a welcome addition to our understanding of this case, usually treated as marginal in Old English grammar and pretty much ignored. Middeke argues for two conceptually unrelated semantic networks, a LOCATION network encompassing meanings of location in both space and time, and another network covering interconnected INSTRUMENTAL, COMITATIVE and MANNER meanings. The latter network involves a good deal of polysemy, and the divergence of meanings can be explained from a historical perspective as deriving from the syncretism of the PIE locative, ablative and instrumental cases. Middeke also demonstrates that while the dative case was usurping the functions of the instrumental, the reverse is not true. Middeke has here provided another piece of evidence that when case marking distinctions are disappearing, speakers are not simply confused. The chapter also has a good discussion of frequency versus productivity.

The dative case, the subject of chapter 6 ('Recipients, beneficiaries and experiencers: The dative', pp. 169–233), is arguably the most semantically cohesive of the cases in Old English, but the uses that are easily treated as extensions of what Middeke treats as the semantic core of the dative case, i.e. the EXPERIENCER role, are less obviously related to some other roles. The chapter makes a convincing case that the polyfunctionality of the dative is due to its syncretic nature.

One of the constructions that Middeke discusses in this chapter is the Dative External Possessors. Her observation that the sense of affectedness that the dative case adds to the external possessor construction is hardly a new one, nor is the assumption that the dative argument has a sematic role. Middeke argues that these are possessive constructions only epiphenomenally and that the dative is a type of dative of interest. Her account does not address the question of how to capture the syntactic differences between these possessor constructions and 'free datives' that have been discussed in the literature. I was a bit disappointed to find no explicit discussion in this chapter of the variation between dative and genitive objects with the verb *helpan* 'to help' in particular, but there are some hints in the book on possible historical origins of these case frames in terms of semantic roles. Despite what seem to me to be shortcomings of the treatment of the Dative External Possessor constructions, I found this chapter worthwhile reading, especially for its argument for a core meaning of RECIPIENT, rather than GOAL, as has sometimes been argued, for the dative case.

Chapter 7 'Patients, targets, direct objects? The accusative' (pp. 234–49) tackles the problem of showing that it is not necessary to treat the accusative case as one that is assigned on the basis of syntactic function, rather than semantics, as is done in most syntactic theories, which make a distinction between syntactically assigned cases and lexically assigned ones. Because of the diversity of the semantic roles that the

accusative case plays, this is no easy task, and not one that I consider was achieved. Middeke points out that accusative case is not typically assigned to arguments with some semantic roles, such as STIMULI or CAUSES. This does not seem a convincing refutation of the idea that accusative case is syntactically assigned, since arguments with these semantic roles would normally be assigned to an object role grammatically. Middeke argues that the senses of the accusative form a radial category with PATIENT at its centre, and TARGETS at the margin. The default status of the accusative as the case of objects is treated as a consequence of the fact that people conceptualize transitive events as being directed at something, a PATIENT in a very broad sense.

The following chapter 'Affectees: Oblique case and impersonal constructions' (chapter 8, pp. 250–97) does not deal with only one case, but rather pulls together the discussion of the previous chapters to look at how the different case combinations found with impersonal verbs can be explained. An interesting observation in this chapter is the fact that Ælfric's attempts to regularize the impersonal constructions in favour of the dative case suggest that the distinction between dative and accusative experiencers had become blurred by his time.

Chapter 9 goes back to examining a single case, the nominative: 'Agent, topic, subject? The nominative' (pp. 298–320). Like the accusative, the nominative is treated as a syntactically assigned case by linguists who distinguish between these and lexically assigned or semantic cases, and as with the accusative, Middeke argues against this treatment. She agrees that the nominative is virtually semantically unrestricted, but argues that it is not available for all types of arguments. For example, as is well known, in the passives of verbs whose objects are normally dative, the dative argument remains in the dative case; this is the basis of the treatment of such objects as having lexical case marking in frameworks which incorporate it. She claims that nominative case was available in the passives of ADDRESSEES, however, in the equivalent of *I was promised a pay rise*. This claim goes against the generally held consensus that such passives are not to be found in Old English – a fact not mentioned by Middeke, who does not refer to studies of the advent of these passives by Visser (1963–73) or Allen (1995). This being so, we need to see the 'several examples' of such passives that Middeke refers to, but in her section on passives (§9.2.2) she only offers two, both of which, it should be noted, involve an NP and a clause, rather than the two NPs of Middeke's Modern English example. Whether or not this is significant, neither of the examples supports Middeke's claim. Example (9.26) involves the phrase *wæs forlæten*. The object of the verb would have been in the accusative case, not the dative, in the corresponding active sentence, as the online *Dictionary of Old English* indicates under its headword *for-lǣtan* in its sense 1.d 'to let, allow, permit (someone/something *acc.* to perform an action *inf.*)'. Example (9.27), from Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, turns out to be mistranslated. Middeke's presentation of the sentence is as in (2):

(2)   ic   eom   forgifen from þam   ælmihtigan gode […]
      I:NOM am   allowed   from the   almighty   gode

eow   to gegingienne
you:DAT   to intercede
'I am allowed by Almighty God to intercede for you'
(Ælfric's Life of Saint Lucy, coaelive, +ALS[Lucy]134.2250)

Middeke has appropriately indicated an elision in the sentence. Elisions of material that lengthen an example in ways not pertinent to an author's point are standard practice and entirely acceptable. It turns out, however, that the elided material is crucial to the meaning and syntax of the example. I present the complete clause, taken from the YCOE, in (3):

(3) swa ic eom forgifen, fram þam ælmihtigan Gode nu þyssere byrig Siracusanan eow to geþingienne [NB Middeke's *gegingienne* is a typo]

The meaning 'allow' that Middeke has understood here is certainly one sense of the verb *forgyfan*, but this verb can also mean 'give' or 'grant', with a dative recipient. The *Dictionary of Old English* in fact cites this particular example of *for-gyfan* to illustrate its sense A.1.d. 'to give, grant (something acc. to someone / a city dat.)'. Skeat (1881–1900) (the edition used by the YCOE for this text) renders the sentence 'so am I allotted by Almighty God now to this city of Syracuse, to intercede for you'. In other words, *þyssere byrig Siracusanan* is the dative recipient, and we have the unusual case of a human being the given thing; Saint Lucy is being given to/assigned to Syracuse as its patron saint. The second dative, *eow*, is the beneficiary object of *geþingienne* 'to intercede'. Thus this is the usual interchange between an accusative in the active and a nominative in the passive.

Unless convincing examples can be adduced, Middeke's contention that 'indirect' passives were already starting to replace dative passives in Old English must be rejected, especially given the volume of scholarship that has reached the opposite conclusion. The position that the nominative had spread out from its original core of AGENT much earlier is plausible enough, however, although entirely speculative. The arguments against syntactic case marking are not likely to be convincing to linguists who think it is necessary, but some of the observations about the uses of nominative case will be of interest to all.

The final chapter offers a synthesis and a discussion of theoretical implications (pp. 321–43). Middeke pulls together here various observations on how the greater compositionality of Old English syntax raises some issues for Goldberg's approach, but can nevertheless be fitted into a Construction Grammar framework. The mixture of compositionality and non-compositionality that she has found adds to the body of evidence supporting the view that non-compositional structures arise out of compositional ones. One important theoretical argument in this chapter is against the *principle of no synonymy*, commonly held by adherents of Construction Grammar. Middeke notes that it is difficult to account for how one construction can replace another in a language if we do not assume a period of synonymy.

Middeke also recaps the evidence for the blurring of distinctions between the cases at a time when case marking categories were still robust and makes the sensible observation that a loss of semantic distinctions between the cases is an essential prerequisite for the eventual loss of case marking.

The concluding chapter is followed by a number of appendices, consisting of tables, to chapters 4, 5, 6 and 8. Except for the appendix to table 5, the tables are frequency counts, mostly drawn from the YCOE, but sometimes including statistics with examples from other sources. The appendix to chapter 5 presents the results of a collocational analysis to demonstrate the association of the instrumental versus dative case forms of determiners with specific nouns. I expect that these tables, which contain much valuable information, will be much used by future researchers. After the detail of the appendices, it is disappointing that the following index is so skimpy as to be of very little use.

The book is beautifully produced, and errors in the text are not overly frequent, although I noticed a few incorrect references to figures and examples, as well as a few typos. More serious is the insufficient checking of the translations and the glosses. I have already pointed out two crucial errors of translation. I also noticed some other errors of translation and glossing that are not relevant to the argument being made. It should be emphasized that there are a very large number of examples in the book, and most of them are glossed and translated accurately, and presumably the mistakes do not change the overall picture of case marking possibilities in the data, apart from the ones concerning indirect passives noted above. I mention these mistakes only to indicate that anyone wanting to use examples from this book would do well to check the examples out thoroughly, a caveat that applies generally to examples cited from secondary sources. In fairness to Middeke, it should also be noted that in some instances of surprising examples, she has examined images of manuscripts. This is to her credit; it is further than most linguists are willing to go.

Despite the shortcomings, as I see them, this book represents a genuine advance in our understanding of the uses of Old English cases. Middeke makes good use of comparisons with other Germanic languages and sometimes languages further afield to present her case for possible semantic pathways that have resulted in the synchronic constructions of Old English, and how her approach makes the prospects for syntactic reconstruction more promising than is often assumed because of the lack of cognate sets in syntax. The book will be of interest to anyone working not only in the history of the morphosyntax of English but also to researchers in other Germanic languages, and to linguistic typologists. For linguists working in a Construction Grammar framework, Middeke has shown some ways in which historical studies present challenges for some assumptions but can provide evidence deciding between different possible analyses. For all these researchers, this book is well worth reading.

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Mel Evans, *Royal voices: Language and power in Tudor England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xi + 269. ISBN 9781107131217.

Reviewed by Minna Nevala, University of Helsinki

Mel Evans' *Royal Voices* is a compelling linguistic exploration of how power and authority were coded into texts produced by and concerning Tudor royalty. The goal of the studies in the book is, as the name suggests, to find and to discuss the royal voice, meaning the way in which the specific written and spoken characteristics of their language implemented the sixteenth-century English monarchs' position as heads of state and, as it was believed at the time, as descendants of God. In the introduction to the book, Evans describes 'the sociolinguistic voice' (p. 15) as comprising three central elements, i.e. the utterance (signs), the means to convey the utterance (production and dissemination), and the social recognition of the utterance (enregisterment; see further Agha 2005). These voices, or registers, are not seen in the