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SUMMARY

The goal of this book, a revised version of author's doctoral dissertation, is to clarify the word order differences between the Old English personal pronouns and full nominals, and discover whether the indefinite pronoun man 'one' can be classified as one or the other, or must be relegated to a third category. On the basis of its ordering properties, van Bergen groups man with the pronouns, and proposes an analysis of the pronouns as clitics.

Chapter 1 reviews the work that has been done on the word order of subjects and objects in Old English, drawing particular attention to an ordering difference between personal pronouns and full nominals. Pronominal subjects tend not to invert to a postverbal position after a topicalized (fronted) constituent, while nominal subjects do invert in this context. Similarly, pronominal objects, unlike nominal objects, are frequently preverbal. Van Bergen later uses the noninversion of pronominal subjects as an important diagnostic for the pronounhood, as opposed to nounhood, of man. Chapter 1 also contains a discussion of the corpora that were used for data searches; these were primarily the Toronto Corpus (13), and secondarily the Helsinki Corpus (17).

The entirety of Chapter 2 is devoted to examining pronominal subjects' resistance to inversion after topics, and whether man is similarly resistant to inversion. Van Bergen marshals a number of statistical comparisons of the behavior of various elements in inversion contexts. She finds that subjunctive and negated verbs make pronominal subjects more likely to invert after a topic. Once the effects of subjunctives and negatives are taken out, pronominal subjects rarely invert. Van Bergen concludes that man tends not to invert in the same contexts as pronominal subjects, suggesting that it is to be analyzed as a pronoun.

Chapter 3 refutes a possible argument that man exhibits ordering characteristics of nominal subjects; specifically, that man follows object pronouns when they are inverted to postverbal position, and when they follow the subordinator in subordinate clauses. Traditional pronominal subjects, by contrast, precede object pronouns in these contexts. Van Bergen demonstrates that the only peculiarity of man compared to other subject pronouns is that it follows, rather than precedes, the object pronouns. In support of the pronominal status of man, she shows that it forms a cluster with the other pronouns that cannot be separated from the verb in postverbal position, and that cannot be broken up by other words. By contrast, inverted nominal subjects can be separated from the verb by a number of adverbial constituents (96), and from preceding object pronouns by various light adverbs (101).

Chapter 4 presents van Bergen's clitic analysis, the meat of which is found in Section 4.3. The chief arguments that the personal pronouns are clitics are that they are strictly verb-adjacent in inversion, they do not alliterate in verse (indicating that they are, at least sometimes, unstressed, 163-166), they are strictly ordered within their cluster in the order SUBJECT > OBJECT > man, and this cluster cannot be interrupted by other elements, even light adverbs. Nevertheless, van Bergen acknowledges that the evidence for clitichood is not unequivocal (155). The final section of the chapter argues against a possible analysis of some or all Old English pronouns as "weak pronouns" rather than clitics (see Critical Evaluation).
Chapter 5 considers various proposed clause structures for Old English, comparing them using the Government and Binding framework. The significant points of variation between the proposals are whether topics move to the Specifier of IP or CP, whether the finite verb moves to the head of IP or CP when it is in Verb-Second position, and whether such verb movement is obligatory or optional. Van Bergen adopts most of the proposal of Kroch & Taylor (1997), concluding that topics move to the Specifier of CP, pronominal clitics are adjoined to IP, and the verb moves to the head of IP or of CP, depending on context (197). In a final section, she concludes that topicalization and verb movement to the head of CP are in principle independent, though they usually do not cooccur (206).

Chapter 6 briefly summarizes the book's main conclusions and offers some suggestions for future research. Van Bergen observes that the ordering of object pronouns and other possibly pronominal elements remains to be studied exhaustively, and proposes to pursue in future work a diachronic study of English pronoun orders.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

This book is clearly intended for scholars of Old English and the Germanic languages. In addition, van Bergen sets out explicitly (21-23) to make the book accessible to both philologists and theoreticians by separating the data sections of the book (Chapters 2 and 3) from the theoretical discussion (Chapters 4 and 5). This strategy enables a clear examination of the data on pronoun orders before a theoretical analysis is attempted.

However, readers without some knowledge of Old English may have difficulty following the examples, as certain peculiarities of Old English spelling and morphology are not explained. These include the free variation between orthographic thorn (þ) and edh (ð) (representing interdental fricatives), and between the vowels <a> and <o>. The variation between the forms _man_ and _mon_ is not mentioned until page 167, though this is key to understanding examples containing _man_. Van Bergen also does not gloss verbal mood, assuming some ability on the part of the reader in distinguishing indicative verbs from subjunctive verbs, which is needed in order to understand many of the data on inversion, especially in Section 2.4.

For a linguist not familiar with the literature on Old English syntax, the presentation is at times a bit hard to follow. For example, it is often difficult to keep track of whether we are currently concerned with the order of all pronouns or just of _man_, or with all clauses or just clauses with topicalization. This is due mainly to the tendency for a single point to run to several pages of examples and discussion, without enough reminders to help the reader keep up. This problem might be alleviated by more frequently summarizing the conclusions so far, and by more generous use of commas and paragraph breaks. It would also have been very helpful to provide more syntactic diagrams to illustrate the discussion of Old English clause structure in Chapter 5 -- e.g. during the discussion of the interaction of cliticization with topicalization on page 185.

On the other hand, the book is thoroughly and carefully edited. I found only a single typographical error (page 167, paragraph 3 "but if it the change") and one cited reference not listed in the bibliography ("Tomic (1996)", mentioned on page 150).

In keeping with the book's grounding in philological tradition, there are several untranslated quotations from Fourquet, a French scholar of Old English (3fn1, 9, 18, 121, 181-182). Admittedly, the import of the French is always plain from van Bergen's remarks.
Aside from these complications, however, linguists and students of Old English will find a wealth of useful and illustrative examples, scrupulously checked and referenced. Indeed, by far this thesis's strongest point is its basis in a large data corpus, and the author's thorough treatment of the data. Copious examples are provided, yet all examples in the text were checked in printed editions (16). In addition, van Bergen corrects corpus examples when it appears warranted (15-16), and in several cases of Old English translations from Latin, checks the original Latin for influence on the word order. Van Bergen's willingness to conduct repeated corpus searches in order to settle small questions of description sheds light on some important theoretical points, as when she digs up several rare examples to demonstrate the possibility of topicalization in subordinate clauses (202-203).

The book's greatest contribution to linguistic theory is in its analysis of Old English clause structure. Though van Bergen adopts a rather conservative version of the Government and Binding framework, she acknowledges that revision of syntactic theory is not a goal of this work (22). Rather, the theoretical contribution of Chapter 5 is to test various analyses of Old English clause structure from the past 15 years against a mass of hard data.

Unfortunately, this book sheds little light on the prosodic status of Old English clitic pronouns (163-170), beyond observing that they do not alliterate in verse, and that _man_ was reduced over time to _me_ by the Middle English period. The pronouns' strict verb-adjacency in postverbal position suggests that here, at least, they are enclitic on the verb. However, whether they lean on a preceding or following prosodic host when in preverbal position, and in what contexts they can be stressed, must be determined by indirect means. Nevertheless, van Bergen gleans as much as possible from the available evidence, rightly acknowledging that the term "clitic" is tentatively applied to the Old English personal pronouns.

The occasional references to the literature on clitics omit some recent work, possibly because the original writing of the book predates this work. For example, the discussion of apparently arbitrary orderings of clitics within clitic clusters on pages 149-154 does not mention the principled account of Spanish clitic cluster orders in Grimshaw (2001), nor the account of the order of Serbo-Croatian _je_ in Boskovic (2001:125-131).

The straw man analysis of the personal pronouns as weak pronouns that is refuted in Chapter 4 is set up rather half-heartedly, and van Bergen does not try overly hard to make it workable. This is due in large part to the fact that none of the scholars cited -- primarily Cardinaletti & Starke (1996, 1999) and Laenzlinger & Shlonsky (1997) -- has articulated a weak pronoun analysis specifically for Old English, and to the fact that they have significantly different conceptions of what a weak pronoun is. Here again, increased use of diagrams might have made the reasoning easier to follow.

Although scholars of the history of English will be very interested in this book, it is not about the diachronic development of English pronouns. It is a synchronic study covering the heyday of Old English literature, i.e. mainly the tenth and eleventh centuries. However, several references are made throughout the text to the possible chronology of changes in the word order of pronouns (117-118, 147, 154fn33, 157fn35, 167). Van Bergen also states her welcome intention to pursue a diachronic study in future work.

REFERENCES


ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Adam Werle is a PhD candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His interests include clitics and the syntax-phonology interface, language change and typology, and the Wakashan languages. He periodically conducts fieldwork on Ditidaht, a First Nations language of British Columbia.