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BOOK REVIEW

Glossing Practice: Comparative Perspectives. Edited by Franck Cinato, Aimée Lahaussais & John B. Whitman. Lanham etc.: Lexington Books, 2023. xi, 262 pp. ISBN 978-1-7936-1280-9 \$110.00/£85.00 978-1-7936-1281-6 \$45.00/£35.00

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In his monumental encyclopaedia, the *Etymologies*, Isidore of Seville (c. 560–646 CE) defined ‘gloss’ with reference to its etymological roots in the Greek word γλῶσσα [*glossa*], meaning ‘tongue’. A gloss, according to Isidore, “defines the utterance in question by means of one single word [*verbum*]: in one word it declares what a given thing is” (*Etymologies*, I. xxx.1, Isidore of Seville, 2006, p. 55). In his description, Isidore captured both the definitional and declarative purposes of a gloss; a gloss explains as well as interprets. The volume presently under review, *Glossing Practice: Comparative Perspectives*, picks up on Isidore’s theme of the multivocal gloss by examining instances of glossing from a variety of periods and geographic areas. Through adopting a diachronic and cross-cultural comparative approach across three sections (“Comparative glossing practice”, “Glosses as tools for access to knowledge” and “Glosses and linguistics”), the volume explores varied purposes of glosses in different contexts. By drawing parallels and examining divergences the contributors to the volume propose to offer new interpretations and perspectives on the purpose of glossing and its value.

Chapter 1, “Continuity and Discontinuity: Glossing as a Dynamic System”, the first of two chapters on “Comparative Glossing Practice”, offers a thought-provoking survey of the development and purposes of the practice of glossing. The authors (Franck Cinato, Aimée Lahaussais and John Whitman) take care to distinguish between a more generalised definition of what a gloss is – “small bits of discontinuous text” – and to offer, instead, a narrower definition which informs the approach of this volume, namely that to qualify as a gloss, “the linguistic object must have a relation to/with a text” (p.10). Glosses, by this reading, should be analysed in terms of their relationship to the text (with regard to the function of the pairing of gloss and lemma) and with respect to their semantic content. The authors’ narrow definition of what a gloss is, one that is inherently sensitive to the relationship between the gloss and its textual context, sits alongside their appraisal of glossing as a physical action. Glossing is the materialisation of an annotating practice, an action which itself merits study, perhaps even serving, as the authors tease, as “a universal cognitive behaviour” (p.22). A



gloss is defined, therefore, not only by what it says, but also by the act of saying it. The introduction offers some interesting diachronic and cross-cultural comparisons (such as debating the influence of changes in writing materials on the act of glossing) while also equipping the reader with some basic information concerning Western Medieval and East Asian glossing practices. This chapter offers a survey of the key elements which are interrogated throughout the volume, but could serve as a valuable free-standing introduction to glossing for a generally interested reader.

The potential fruits of cross-cultural comparisons between glossing traditions are demonstrated in Chapter 2, “The Five Services of Sanskrit Commentaries and Diomedes’ Grammar”. Here Franck Cinato compares the functionalities of glossing in the medieval Sanskrit and Latin traditions, looking in particular at the role of glosses in facilitating the reading and interpretation of a text. Cinato’s chapter is illustrated by a few examples of close readings of Servius’s commentary on Virgil, usefully walking the reader through various functions of glosses: providing grammatical information, helping to construct meaning, explaining syntax. Cinato touches on a number of interesting commonalities between the evolution of Sanskrit and medieval Latin glossing traditions, such as the fact that both developed in a context of *scriptio continua*, where words are not separated on the manuscript page. In the absence of word separation, a reader who is seeking to understand the morphology and syntax of a word or phrase is provided with no additional visual cues, a factor that can complicate understanding. Although Cinato admits that the resultant glossing practices require further investigation, he suggests that the medieval Latin and Sanskrit traditions share a common approach to the base function of a gloss, namely its role in the transmission of an (accurate and invariable) text. In identifying the fundamental role of glossing in both of the traditions studied as that of facilitating textual transmission, Cinato makes the important point that the oft-discussed pedagogic function of glossing may best be interpreted as an amplification of this primary function of transmission, not as an end in itself.

One of the strengths of this volume is its attention to non-European glossing contexts. However, carrying out comparative study of the type proposed by the essayists of this volume requires careful attention to terminology, particularly given the granular nature of the textual correspondences upon which glossing strategies depend. In the first of four chapters on “Glosses as Tools for Access to Knowledge” (Chapter 3, “Glossing Glosses: Methods for Transcribing and Glossing Japanese *Kundoku* Texts”), Matthew Zisk proposes a set of transcription and glossing rules to be used in English publications when citing examples from *kundoku* texts – word-by-word transpositions of literary Sinitic into Japanese. Following an explanation of the *kundoku* process, Zisk examines the various reading

strategies and gloss types which characterise *kundoku* texts. Before offering his own set of rules, Zisk usefully surveys the history of *kundoku* transcription conventions; for those interested in the development of scholarly practices concerning glosses, this discussion is an engaging read. As Zisk notes, while the study of European glossing traditions is still a relatively niche area, that of Japanese glossed texts is thriving, highlighting the relevance of this chapter for those wishing to extend their studies of glossing into the comparative realm.

The advanced development of the scholarly tradition on East Asian glossing is evident from Teiji Kosukegawa's treatment in Chapter 4, "Issues in Dictionaries Recording *kunten* Glosses", of dictionaries of *kunten* glosses (characters and codes added to Chinese characters in texts read through Japanese). As Kosukegawa notes, some of these dictionaries number entries in the hundreds of thousands. Kosukegawa demonstrates that in spite of the impressive array of reference materials which are available for the study of *kunten* glosses, one should still exercise interpretative caution and return, when possible, to an examination of the original source from which the gloss was recorded. The chapter is usefully illustrated with annotated photographs of *kunten* glossing, which aid the non-specialist in following the line of argument. Although this chapter will be of most interest to specialists with specific knowledge of the field, Kosukegawa offers a punctilious examination of what can be determined through attentive readings of glosses, drawing attention to how even barely visible details (such as the use of glosses written in white ink) can reveal minutiae of meanings.

In Chapter 5, "Interconnecting Knowledge in Early Medieval Glosses", Sinéad O'Sullivan looks at how practices of word-pairing and code-switching are utilised within the glossing tradition of the early medieval Latin West. Examining Latin, Greek and vernacular glosses, she explores how glossing could serve as a means to interconnect information, forming one aspect of what she terms "the scholarly predilection for collecting and synthesising knowledge" (p.103). In line with the tone of the volume as a whole, O'Sullivan uses a variety of examples to make her case, referring within one sample section to Old Welsh glosses to Martianus Capella along with Old High German glosses to Prudentius. One notable highlight is her discussion of the antique Tironian shorthand used to gloss Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. F. 2. 8, a copy of the works of Virgil. O'Sullivan notes that here the glossator utilised both miniscule and shorthand, on occasion offering the gloss in both Latin and Tironian notes. This practice of "correlating" Latin and Tironian shorthand is a form of explicit decoding, and demonstrates how glossators sought to interconnect or even align segments of information in the margins and interlinear spaces of their texts. Although frequently operating within conventional frameworks (by using well-known word-pairings or common glossing formulations), medieval glossators demonstrated a thirst for interconnect-

ing and organising knowledge, and echoed broader trends that characterised the vibrant intellectual life of the early Middle Ages.

In the final chapter of the volume's section on "Glosses as Tools for Access to Knowledge", Deborah Hayden turns to a new linguistic context, that of the medieval Irish grammatical tradition (Chapter 6, "*Auraicept na nÉces* and the Art of Medicine"). As Hayden notes, the compilation under examination, *Auraicept na nÉces*, is an intriguing case. Although parts of the text date from c. 700–900, it continued to be used and glossed into the late medieval period, and its various recensions contain evidence of multiple layers of scholarly interactions with the text. Hayden focuses on the medical content of the compilation, and explores how it may have served as an educational resource for Irish medical scholars. One particularly fascinating section (pp. 116–119) examines the anthropomorphising of grammatical terms through a series of corporeal analogies, a practice that Hayden suggests may show a particular interest on the part of the glossator in the human body. Here and elsewhere in the essay, Hayden explores the somewhat open-ended nature of medical knowledge in Ireland in the medieval period, and how the *Auraicept*, although in essence a grammatical work, served as a vehicle for disciplinary interchange. The chapter is based on an extensive wealth of detail (drawn from editions and manuscript examinations) and, although her argumentation is modestly cautious, Hayden's generous references to her source materials display the richness of Irish medical studies from the early to the late medieval periods.

The final section of the volume, which comprises four chapters, deals with the theme "Glosses and Linguistics". In chapter 7, "Dry-point grammatical glosses", Andreas Nievergelt interrogates the presence and function of glosses which were traced with a "colourless instrument" onto the parchment medium. These barely legible glosses present, as Nievergelt shows (using examples from the Old High German glossing context), a number of issues. Our knowledge about the instruments used is necessarily limited, and the glosses are by their nature challenging to read. While some dry-point glosses were clearly intended to be inked, and may represent a preparatory stage of correction or composition, others (including the grammatical types studied here) should be understood as completed interventions. Their near-illegibility suggests, according to Nievergelt, that grammatical dry-point glosses were highly personal, interactions with the text primarily intended for use by the person by which they were traced. Nievergelt's study of the Old High German corpus of dry-point grammatical glosses, which he notes tend to be accurate and individuated, leads him to conclude that such glosses were added by well-educated scholars. Nievergelt's contribution regarding this complex and understudied form of gloss fits well into the theme of the volume as a

whole. As he notes, dry-point glosses are common in non-European contexts, and within the European context appear in Latin and vernacular traditions alike.

Chapter 8, “The pragmatics of paratextual paraphernalia”, was co-written by David Cram and Alderik Blom. The authors ably intersect their discussion of glossing with various theoretical perspectives: Genette’s notion of the paratext, Searle on speech-acts, Gombrich on framing. At the heart of the piece is a discussion of medieval and early modern perspectives on glossing activities within the theoretical cadre of pragmatic theory, distinguishing between the “sentence-meaning” (i.e. semantic understanding) and the “speaker-meaning” (i.e. pragmatic understanding) of such perspectives. The text is rich with references and allusions – from the Old Irish poetic tradition to eighteenth-century novelists, from Chaucer’s *Friar’s Tale* to anecdotes regarding the study practices of Charles Darwin’s grandfather. The density of allusions and references to primary and secondary texts alike make this chapter demanding work for the reader, but the authors offer a number of helpful metaphors to aid the process. These include their central informing comparison between gloss as “paraphernalia” (in a historical sense, items that belonged to a woman and remained her property even after marriage) versus “dowry” (items that became the property of a husband upon marriage), thus illuminating the essential hermeneutical quality of the gloss in relation to the text when compared to other paratexts present in the manuscript or printed book.

A further useful metaphor is offered by the authors to describe the differences between medieval and early modern glossing, that of the status of scaffolding on a building. Scaffolding is necessary to allow access to a building in progress and to facilitate its construction, but is not part of the building itself and is intended to be dismantled upon completion. The authors compare these varied functions of scaffolding to medieval and early modern perspectives on the gloss: “The medieval view of it [glossing] focuses on its functional necessity, the early modern view focuses on its essential dismantlability” (p.160). The authors, therefore, identify a shift between the medieval understanding of the gloss as (inter-)dependent on the text (a dependence that the authors note is “bidirectional”), and the early modern understanding of text and gloss as “correlative”, where more allowances are made for individual reader interpretations. The chapter refers at various points to glossing contexts outside the Western European tradition, but is primarily of value on account of its diachronic approach to the European context.

In chapter 9, “A Revised Typology for the St Gall Priscian Glosses”, Pádraic Moran offers a new assessment of the typology proposed by Rijcklof Hofman to classify the over 10,000 glosses made to St Gall Stiftsbibliothek, MS 904, a ninth-century copy of Priscian’s *Institutiones grammaticae* copied by Irish hands. Such a reappraisal of Hofman’s typology, which numbers 75 subtypes, is timely,

as Moran notes, not least on account of the readily available digital edition of the glosses (Bauer et al., 2003), which eases access and quantitative analysis, but also on account of the increasing self-reflection on method which characterises much recent scholarship on glossing traditions. Moran goes through the various main groupings of glosses to the St Gall Priscian in turn, a critical analysis which offers valuable insights into their relative distribution and emphases. Moran then suggests some improvements to Hofman's typology, focusing on instances where categories could be combined, clarified or redefined. Moran's revision (tabulated on p. 218) notably diverges from Hofman's typology by including a linguistic category for "discourse" glosses, glosses that extend beyond the syntactic analysis of a single sentence, capturing the flexible nature of glossing for textual analysis. Moran's chapter ends with a useful reflection on the merit of typologies noting that, in spite of essentially being constructed notions, they can facilitate meaningful comparisons between corpora of glosses, an observation which is particularly valid within the context of the comparative approach of this volume.

The final chapter, "Glossing practices in 1850–1911: Descriptions of Languages with Complex Verbal Morphology" by Aimée Lahaussais, brings the volume to a close with a discussion of historical scholarly treatments of Kiranti (Eastern Nepal) and Algonquian (North American) languages. Lahaussais surveys (in chronological order) a number of grammars of these languages, examining in detail how they present their paradigms and examples, annotate data (through translation) and distinguish between various grammatical categories. This section is helpfully illustrated with images of sections from the various grammars, which convey the nature of Lahaussais's corpus. As was the case with Moran's essay, Lahaussais considers in her analysis older scholarship on glossing, drawing comparisons between the approaches of her nineteenth- and early twentieth-century grammars and the development of the *Leipzig Glossing Rules* in the early 1980s. Her work, along with that of other contributors to this volume, demonstrates that as glossing itself attracts increased scholarly interest, the resulting scholarship merits critical attention, encouraging meta-reflection from both inside and outside the immediate discipline.

Following these ten essays, the volume concludes with two indexes, of terms and manuscripts, and a set of author biographies. No conclusion to the collection as a whole is offered. This strikes me as a missed opportunity; as its chapters are largely free-standing with only occasional cross-references, much of the work of making connections between the various traditions and practices illuminated in the volume is left up to the reader. The inclusion of a summative conclusion or response-piece could have eased this process, and pointed to various angles that would merit further investigation and research. Although its comparative angle means that some chapters of this volume will inevitably be of more interest to cer-



tain readers than others, those who are willing to persist with reading the volume as a whole will gain valuable insights into a range of perspectives on the multifaceted nature of glossing. This is a thought-provoking study of both the nature of a gloss and how we, as scholars, approach and have approached its functionalities and content.

This volume builds upon growing international scholarly interest in glossing, as demonstrated by the founding of a Network for the Study of Glossing in 2015, and contributes to the lively discourse on the subject evident in recent significant publications such as Teeuwen and Van Renswoude's edited collection, *The Annotated Book in the Early Middle Ages: Practices of Reading and Writing* (2017). Comparative approaches to glossing have also recently attracted attention (as seen, for example, in Moran and Whitman, 2022). Its publication is, therefore, timely, and as my consultation of the well-presented digital (provided for review) and physical (borrowed from my university library) copies confirms, the volume is a useful resource which will appeal to readers from a variety of disciplinary approaches and levels.

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