

GOTHENBURG STUDIES IN ENGLISH
EDITOR: ALVAR ELLEGÅRD

20

THE EVANS STATEMENTS

A CASE FOR FORENSIC LINGUISTICS

by

JAN SVARTVIK



Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis

Re-produced from a facsimile and re-published at the Forensic Linguistics Institute website www.thetext.co.uk by kind permission of Professor Jan Svartvik with the co-operation of Gothenburg University. Original copyright is reserved to the author and the University of Gothenburg.

Part 1 of 2

Jan Svartvik

THE EVANS STATEMENTS
A CASE FOR FORENSIC LINGUISTICS

Published with the aid of grants from
Statens Humanistiska Forskningsråd
and
Publikationsnämnden vid
Göteborgs Universitet

Distributors:
ALMQVIST & WIKSELL
STOCKHOLM
GÖTEBORG UPPSALA

GÖTEBORG 1968
ELANDERS BOKTRYCKERI AKTIEBOLAG

PREFACE

This study is based on the "Report on a Linguistic Analysis of Statements Made by Timothy John Evans on 30th November and 2nd December 1949", which was submitted to the public Inquiry held at the Royal Courts of Justice, London, between 22nd November 1965 and 21st January 1966.

This sally into the relatively uncultivated field of "forensic linguistics" has been interesting for a number of reasons, but two in particular. Firstly, it has provided the linguist with one of those rare opportunities of making a contribution that might be directly useful to society. Such a statement does not imply that utility should be the goal of linguistic research, only that, once in a while, it is good for the linguist to know that he can be useful, and that applied linguistics need not be identical with language teaching or machine translation. Secondly, it has highlighted our present inadequate knowledge of how language is used in various situations. One feels that sociolinguistics is neglected in comparison with other branches of language study.

I want to thank Herbert Wolfe, Darlington, who as Secretary of the Timothy John Evans Committee asked me to undertake the linguistic analysis for the Inquiry, and put his vast knowledge of the case at my disposal. I am also grateful to Henry Carvell, Rugby, for doing the statistical calculations of the tables. Other friends and colleagues have taken an interest in this study by making valuable comments, in particular, Alvar Ellegård, Bryan Errington and Göran Kjellmer (Göteborg), Erik Tengstrand (Uppsala), and Derek Davy, Sidney Greenbaum and Michael Rhodes (London).

The Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey, London, Svea Hovrätt, Stockholm, and Rådhusrätten, Uppsala, have kindly made available documents relating to the Evans and Helander cases.

Göteborg, November 1967

Jan Svartvik

On 30th November 1949, Timothy John Evans entered the Central Police Station at Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, and said, "I want to give myself up. I have disposed of my wife." This brief statement was the beginning of a series of events that will forever be remembered in criminal history. It involved in particular two men, Timothy John Evans and John Reginald Halliday Christie, who occupied the same sordid house in London, No. 10 Rillington Place, and who were both to be executed for murder. The Hon. Mr. Justice Brabin gives the following picture of these two men as they were in 1949:¹⁾

"Evans was 25 years of age on 20th November 1949. He had spent much of his boyhood in Merthyr Vale where he was born. In about 1935 his family moved to London but Evans later returned to Merthyr Vale for about two years. Beryl Evans was aged 18 at the time of their marriage on 20th September 1947. She was then employed as a telephonist at Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London. After living with the Evans family for about seven months the young couple went to live at 10 Rillington Place. On 10th October 1948 their daughter Geraldine was born. Evans was last employed as a van driver by a firm of confectioners in Lancaster Road, London, W. 11. Save for writing digits, single letters and his signature or reading a few simple words Evans could neither read nor write, having missed much schooling due to an injury to his foot when he was about eight years of age.

In November 1949 Christie was 51 years of age. He was of above average intelligence and was employed as a ledger clerk at the Post Office Savings Bank at Kew. He had served in the army for part of the 1914-1918 war. From September 1939 until December 1943 Christie had served as a War Reserve Police Officer attached to Harrow Road Police Station. He had lived with his wife at 10 Rillington Place since about 1937. It was not known in the neighbourhood that between 1921 and 1933 Christie had served four terms of imprisonment and had once been put on probation. His offences were of larceny, false pretences and malicious wounding. After his last

¹⁾ *The Case of Timothy John Evans. Report of an Inquiry by The Hon. Mr. Justice Brabin* (Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty; Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, October, 1966), p. 7.

term of 3 months hard labour in 1933 Christie and his wife, who had lived apart for about ten years, were reunited. But it was known to Christie alone that during his wife's absences from home in 1943 and 1944 he had murdered two women by strangulation and buried their bodies in the garden at the back of 10 Rillington Place."

Evans made four statements to the police, referred to as MT 1, MT 2, NH 1, and NH 2, which are reproduced in full below. Since the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, New Scotland Yard, has not agreed to make the original statements available, the text has been taken from the official *Report* (pp. 8-9, 11-13, 50, 99-101, respectively). For easier reference, the sentences are successively numbered in each statement. In the discussion, "NH 2:5", for example, means "Statement NH 2, sentence 5".

Statement MT 1

(made at Merthyr Tydfil, 30th November, 1949)

(Sentence)

1) "About the beginning of October, my wife, Beryl Susan Evans, told me that she was expecting a baby. 2) She told me that she was about three months gone. 3) I said, 'If you are having a baby, well you've had one, another one won't make any difference.' 4) She then told me she was going to try and get rid of it. 5) I turned round and told her not to be silly that she'd make herself ill. 6) Then she bought herself a syringe and started syringing herself. 7) Then she said that didn't work and I said, 'I'm glad it won't work.' 8) Then she said she was going to buy some tablets. 9) I don't know what tablets she bought because she was always hiding them from me. 10) She started to look very ill and I told her to go and see a doctor and she said she'd go when I was in work but when I'd come home and ask her if she'd been she'd always say that she hadn't. 11) On the (Monday) Sunday morning that would be the (seventh) sixth of November she told me that if she couldn't get rid of the baby she'd kill herself and our baby Geraldine. 12) I told her she was talking silly. 13) She never said no more about it then, but when I got up Monday morning to go to work she said she was going to see some woman to see if she could help her. 14) Who the woman was she didn't tell me and that if she wasn't in when I came home she'd be up her grandmother's. 15) Then I went to work. 16) I loaded up my van and went on my journey. 17) About 9 o'clock that morning I pulled up at a Transport cafe between Ipswich and Colchester. 18) I can't say exactly where it is, that's the nearest I can give. 19) I went up to the counter and ordered a cup of tea and breakfast and I sat down by the table with my cup of tea waiting for my breakfast to come up and there was a man sitting by the table opposite me. 20) He asked me if I had a cigarette I could give him. 21) I gave him one and he

started talking about married life. 22) He said to me, 'You are looking pretty worried, is there anything on your mind?' 23) Then I told him all about it. 24) So he said, 'Don't let that worry you I can give you something that can fix it.' 25) So he said, 'Wait there a minute, I'll be back,' and he went outside. 26) When he came back he handed me a little bottle that was wrapped up in brown paper. 27) He said, 'Tell your wife to take it first thing in the morning before she has any tea, and then to lay down on the bed for a couple of hours (on the bed) and that should do the job.' 28) He never asked no money for it. 29) I went up to the counter and paid my bill and carried on with my journey. 30) After I finished my work I went home, that would be between seven and eight. 31) When I got in the house I took off my overcoat and hung it on the peg behind the kitchen door. 32) My wife asked me for a cigarette and I told her there was one in my pocket, then she found this bottle in my pocket and I told her all about it. 33) Then I had my tea and sat down and read the papers and listened to the wireless. 34) We went to bed at ten o'clock. 35) I got up in the morning as usual at six o'clock to go to work. 36) I made myself a cup of tea and made a feed for the baby. 37) I told her then not to take that stuff when I went in and said 'Good morning' to her and I went to work, that would be about half past six. 38) I finished work and got home about half past six in the evening. 39) I then noticed that there was no lights in the place. 40) I lit the gas and it started to go out and I went in the bedroom to get a penny and I noticed my baby in the cot. 41) I put the penny in the gas and went back in the bedroom and lit the gas in the bedroom. 42) Then I saw my wife laying in the bed. 43) I spoke to her but she never answered me, so I went over and shook her, then I could see she wasn't breathing. 44) Then I went and made some food for my baby. 45) I fed my baby and I sat up all night. 46) Between about one and two in the morning I got my wife downstairs through the front door. 47) I opened the drain outside my front door that is No. 10 Rillington Place, and pushed her body head first into the drain. 48) I closed the drain then I went back in the house. 49) I sat down by the fire smoking a cigarette. 50) I never went to work the following day. 51) I went and got my baby looked after. 52) Then I went and told my governor where I worked that I was leaving. 53) He asked me the reason and I told him I had a better job elsewhere. 54) I had my cards and money that afternoon then I went to see a man about selling my furniture. 55) The man came down and had a look at my furniture and he offered me £40 for it. 56) So I accepted the £40. 57) He told me he wouldn't be able to collect the furniture until Monday morning. 58) In the meanwhile I went and told my mother that my wife and baby had gone for a holiday. 59) I stopped in the flat till Monday. 60) The van come Monday afternoon and cleared the stuff out. 61) He paid me the money. 62) Then I caught the five to one train from Paddington and I come down to Merthyr Vale and I've been down here ever since. 63) That's the lot.

[(Signed) T. J. EVANS.]

Statement MT 2

(made at Merthyr Tydfil, 30th November, 1949)

(Sentence)

1 1) "The only thing that is not true in the statement I made to you this
 afternoon is the part about meeting the man in the cafe and about disposing
 of my wife's body. 2) All the rest is true. 3) As I was coming home from
 work one night, that would be about a week before my wife died, Reg Christie
 who lived on the ground floor below us approached me and said, 'I'd like
 to have a chat with you about your wife taking these tablets. 4) I know
 what she's taking them for she's trying to get rid of the baby. 5) If you
 or your wife had come to me in the first place I could have done it for you
 without any risk.' 6) I turned around and said, 'Well I didn't think you
 knew anything about medical stuff.' 7) So he told me then that he was
 training for a doctor before the war. 8) Then he started showing me books
 and things on medical. 9) I was just as wise because I couldn't understand
 10 one word of it because I couldn't read. 10) Then he told me that the stuff
 that he used one out of every ten would die with it. 11) I told him that I
 wasn't interested so I said goodnight to him and I went upstairs. 12) When
 I got in my wife started talking to me about it. 13) She said that she had
 been speaking to Mr. Christie and asked me if he had spoken to me. 14) I
 Part (a) said 'Yes' and I told her what he had spoke to me about. 15) I turned
 round and told her that I told him I didn't want nothing to do with it
 and I told her she wasn't to have anything to do with it either. 16) She
 turned round and told me to mind my own business and that she intended
 to get rid of it and that she trusted Mr. Christie. 17) She said he could
 do the job without any trouble at all. 18) On the Monday evening, that
 was the seventh of November when I came home from work my wife said
 that Mr. Christie had made the arrangements for first thing Tuesday morning.
 19) I didn't argue with her, I just washed and changed and went to the
 20 K.P.H. until 10 o'clock. 20) I came home and had supper and went to
 bed. 21) She wanted to start an argument but I just took no notice. 22)
 Just after six I got up the following morning to go to work. 23) My wife got
 up with me. 24) I had a cup of tea and a smoke and she told me, 'On your
 way down tell Mr. Christie that everything is alright. 25) If you don't
 tell him I'll go down and tell him myself.' 26) So as I went down the
 stairs he came out to meet me and I said, 'Everything is alright.' 27) Then
 I went to work.

28) When I came home in the evening he was waiting for me at the
 bottom of the staircase. 29) He said, 'Go on upstairs I'll come behind
 you.' 30) When I lit the gas in the kitchen he said, 'It's bad news.
 31) It didn't work.' 32) I asked him where was she. 33) He said, 'Laying
 on the bed in the bedroom.' 34) Then I asked him where was the
 baby. 35) So he said, 'The baby's in the cot.' 36) So I went in the
 bedroom I lit the gas then I saw the curtains had been drawn. 37) I
 30 looked at my wife and saw that she was covered over with the eiderdown.

38) I pulled the eiderdown back to have a look at her. 39) I could see that she was dead and that she had been bleeding from the mouth and nose and that she had been bleeding from the bottom part. 40) She had a black skirt on and a check blouse and kind of a light blue jacket on. 41) Christie was in the kitchen. 42) I went over and picked my baby up. 43) I wrapped the baby in a blanket and took her in the kitchen. 44) In the meanwhile Mr. Christie had lit the fire in the kitchen. 45) He said, 'I'll speak to you after you feed the baby.' 46) So I made the baby some tea and boiled an egg for her, then I changed the baby and put her to sit in front of the fire. 47) Then I asked him how long my wife had been dead. 48) He said, 'Since about three o'clock.' 49) Then he told me that my wife's stomach was septic poisoned. 50) He said, 'Another day and she'd have to have gone to hospital.' 51) I asked him what he had done but he wouldn't tell me. 52) He then told me to stop in the kitchen and he closed the door and went out. 53) He came back about a quarter of an hour later and told me that he had forced the door of Mr. Kitchener's flat and had put my wife's body in there. 54) I asked him what he intended to do and he said, 'I'll dispose of it down one of the drains.' 55) He then said, 'You'd better go to bed and leave the rest to me.' 56) He said, 'Get up and go to work in the morning as usual' and that he'd see about getting someone to look after my baby. 57) I told him that it was foolish to try to dispose of the body and he said, 'Well that's the only thing I can do or otherwise I'll get in trouble with the Police.' 58) He then left me. 59) Before I went to bed I took the eiderdown and one blanket off the bed and put them in a cupboard in the bedroom. 60) I got up next morning about six o'clock. 61) I made myself a cup of tea and made the baby some breakfast and fed her and changed her and put her back into her cot. 62) Christie had told me that he was going to look after the baby that day so I went to work. 63) I saw Christie before I went and he told me that he would slip up and feed the baby during the day. 64) I had wanted to take the baby to my mother the night before but he said not to as it would cause suspicion straight away. 65) He also told me in the morning that he knew a young couple over in East Acton who would look after the baby and he'd go over and see them. 66) When I came home from work on that Wednesday night at five or six Christie told me that the young couple from East Acton would be in Thursday to take the baby. 67) I fed the baby that night and was playing with her by the fire when Christie came in. 68) He said, 'In the morning when you get up feed the baby and dress her then put her back in the cot, the people will be here just after nine in the morning to fetch her.' 69) He said, 'I've told them to knock three knocks and I'll let them in.' 70) He also told me to pack some clothes for the baby. 71) I did all that in the morning before I went to work. 72) I saw him as I was going out that morning about half past six and told what I had done. 73) About half past five that evening I came home. 74) I went upstairs and as I got in the kitchen, he came up behind me. 75) He told me that the people had called and took the baby with them and to pack

40

50

Part

60

70

the rest of her things and he had a case and would take them over to East Acton with the pram and her chair later in the week. 76) I then asked him how did he dispose of my wife's body. 77) He said he put it down one of the drains. 78) That's all he said to me then he went downstairs. 79) Later that evening I went around to see my mother, Mrs. Thomasina Probert, at No. 11, St. Marks Road, London, W. 11. 80) She asked me where Beryl and the baby was. 81) I told her they had gone away on a holiday. 82) When I left my mother's place that night I went up to the K.P.H. to have a drink. 83) I didn't go to work on the Friday as I had finished there on Thursday. 84) On that Thursday evening Christie said, 'Now the best thing you can do is to sell your furniture and get out of London somewhere.' 85) I just said, 'All right.'

86) On the Friday I went up to see a man in Portobello Road about selling my furniture. 87) He came down on the Friday afternoon and said it was worth £40. 88) He told me he would pick it up on the following Monday. 89) On the Friday I went to the pictures and the pub then went home to sleep. 90) On the Saturday I did the same thing. 91) On Sunday afternoon I went to see a rag dealer. 92) I met him outside a cafe in Ladbroke Grove, that's where he lives. 93) I told him that if he came down to my place on the Monday there was quite a lot of rags he could have. 94) I got up about six o'clock on the Monday morning and ripped up all my wife's clothes and the eiderdown and cut up the blanket. 95) The man came around just after nine o'clock and he took about two sack fulls and I didn't take nothing off him for them. 96) About three o'clock the furniture van came. 97) They cleared all the furniture out and the bed clothes and lino and the furniture man paid me £40 which I signed for. 98) The only things left in the house then was the vases, a clock, some dishes, saucepans and a bucket and the case with the baby's clothes, her pram and small chair. 99) Christie had all that stuff. 100) He asked me where I was going to go and I told him I didn't know. 101) Then I got my case I took it up to Paddington, left it in the luggage department until half past twelve that evening. 102) I went to the pictures and a pub and then I went to Paddington again and picked up my case about half past twelve that evening and caught the five to one train to Cardiff. 103) I got into Merthyr Vale about twenty to seven in the morning, then went to 93, Mount Pleasant and I've been there ever since.

[(Signed) T. J. EVANS.]

This statement was made to me between 9.10 p.m. and 11.50 p.m. on Wednesday 30th November 1949, at the Criminal Investigation Department, Central Police Station, Merthyr Tydfil. It was read over to Evans in the presence of Detective Sergeant Gough before he signed it as being true.

(Signed) G. H. EVANS. D/Cons. 53

(Signed) G. H. GOUGH. D/Sgt.]

Statement NH 1

(made at Notting Hill, 2nd December, 1949)

1) "She was incurring one debt after another and I could not stand it any longer so I strangled her with a piece of rope and took her down to the flat below the same night whilst the old man was in hospital. 2) I waited till the Christies downstairs had gone to bed, then took her to the wash house after midnight. 3) This was on the Tuesday 8th November. 4) On Thursday evening after I came home from work I strangled my baby in our bedroom with my tie and later that night I took her down into the wash house after Christies had gone to bed.

[(Signed) T. J. EVANS. 9.55 p.m. 2/12/49"]

Statement NH 2

(made at Notting Hill, 2nd December, 1949)

(Sentence)

["I have been cautioned by Chief Inspector Jennings and told that I am not obliged to say anything unless I wish to do so and that anything I say will be taken down in writing and may be given in evidence.

(Signed) T. J. EVANS.]

(1) 1) I was working for the Lancaster Food Products of Lancaster Road, W. 11. 2) My wife was always moaning about me working long hours so I left there and went to work for the Continental Wine Stores of Edgware Road. 3) I started at 8 a.m. and finished at 2 p.m. and the job was very nice there. 4) In the meanwhile my wife got herself into £20 debt so I borrowed £20 off the Guvnor under false pretences, so he give me the £20 which I took home and gave it to my wife. 5) I asked her who she owed the money to but she would not tell me, so a week later I got sacked. 6) I was out of work then for two or three weeks. 7) In the meanwhile I had been driving for two or three days a week. 8) I was earning 25/- to 30/- a day. 9) This was for the Lancaster Food Products I used to give her this money and she was moaning she wasn't getting enough wages, so one of the regular drivers at the Lancaster Food Products left so the Guvnor asked me if I would like my regular job back at a wage of £5 15s. od. a week. 10) I was doing quite a lot of overtime for the firm working late, which I used to earn altogether £6 to £7 a week. 11) Out of that my wife used to go to the firm on a Friday and my Guvnor used to pay her £5 what she used to sign for. 12) Perhaps through the week I would have to give her more money off different people from which I used to borrow it. 13) I used to pay them back on a Friday out of my own pocket. 14) I had to rely on my overtime to pay my debts and then I had a letter from J. Brodericks telling me I was behind in my payments for my furniture on the hire purchase. 15) I asked her if she had been paying for the furniture and she said she had, then I showed her the letter I had received from Brodericks then she admitted she hadn't been paying it. 16) I went down

1

10

Part (a) to see Brodericks myself to pay them my £1 a week and ten shillings off the arrears so then I left the furniture business to my wife. 17) I then found she was in debt with the rent. 18) I accused her of squandering the money so that started a terrific argument in my house. 19) I told her if she didn't pull herself together I would leave her, so she said "You can leave any time you like," so I told her she would be surprised one day if I walked out on her. 20) One Sunday, early in November, I had a terrific row with her at home so I washed and changed and went to the pub dinner time. 21) I stopped there till two o'clock. 22) I came home, had my lunch, left again to go out, leaving my wife and baby at home, because I didn't want any more arguments. 23) I went to the pictures—A.B.C. Lancaster Road, known as Royalty, at 4.30 p.m. 24) I came out when the film was finished, I think about 7.15 p.m. 25) I went home sat down and switched the wireless on. 26) I made a cup of tea. 27) My wife was nagging till I went to bed at 10 p.m. 28) I got up at 6 a.m. next day, made a cup of tea. 29) My wife got up to make a feed for the baby at 6.15 a.m. 30) She gets up and starts an argument straight away. 31) I took no notice of her and went into the bedroom to see my baby before going to work. 32) My wife told me she was going to pack up and go down to her father in Brighton. 33) I asked her what she was going to do with the baby, so she said she was going to take the baby down to Brighton with her so I said it would be a good job and a load of worry off my mind, so I went to work as usual so when I came home at night I just put the kettle on, I sat down, my wife walked in so I said, "I thought you was going to Brighton?" 34) She said, "What for you to have a good time?" 35) I took no notice of her. 36) I went downstairs and fetched the pushchair up. 37) I come upstairs she started an argument again. 38) I told her if she didn't pack it up I'd slap her face. 39) With that she picked up a milk bottle to throw at me. 40) I grabbed the bottle out of her hand, I pushed her, she fell in a chair in the kitchen, so I washed and changed and went out. 41) I went to the pub and had a few drinks. 42) I got home about 10.30 p.m. 43) I walked in she started to row again so I went straight to bed. 44) I got up Tuesday morning and went straight to work.

(ii) 45) I come home at night about 6.30 p.m. my wife started to argue again, so I hit her across the face with my flat hand. 46) She then hit me back with her hand. 47) In a fit of temper I grabbed a piece of rope from a chair which I had brought home off my van and strangled her with it. 48) I then took her into the bedroom and laid her on the bed with the rope still tied round her neck. 49) Before 10 p.m. that night I carried my wife's body downstairs to the kitchen of Mr. Kitchener's flat as I knew he was away in hospital. 50) I then came back upstairs. 51) I then made my baby some food and fed it, then I sat with the baby by the fire for a while in the kitchen. 52) I put the baby to bed later on. 53) I then went back to the kitchen and smoked a cigarette. 54) I then went downstairs when I knew everything was quiet, to Mr. Kitchener's kitchen. 55) I wrapped

my wife's body up in a blanket and a green table cloth from off my kitchen table. 56) I then tied it up with a piece of cord from out of my kitchen cupboard. 57) I then slipped downstairs and opened the back door, then went up and carried my wife's body down to the wash house and placed it under the sink. 58) I then blocked the front of the sink up with pieces of wood so that the body wouldn't be seen. 59) I locked the wash house door, I come in and shut the back door behind me. 60) I then slipped back upstairs. 61) The Christies who live on the ground floor were in bed.

60

(iii) 62) I went into the bedroom to see if my daughter was asleep. 63) When I looked in the cot she was fast asleep so I then shut the bedroom door and laid on the bed all night fully dressed until it was time to get up and go to work. 64) I then got up, lit the gas and put the kettle on. 65) I made my baby a feed and fed it. 66) I then changed her and put her back into the cot wrapping her up well so that she would not get cold, then went to the kitchen and poured myself out a cup of tea. 67) I then finished my tea and slipped back into the bedroom to see if the baby had dropped off to sleep. 68) It was asleep so I went off to work. 69) I done my days work and got home about 5.30 p.m. that Wednesday evening. 70) I come in, lit the gas, put the kettle on and lit the fire. 71) I fed the baby, had a cup of tea myself, sat in front of the fire with my baby. 72) I made the baby a feed about 9.30 p.m. 73) I fed her then I changed her, then I put her to bed. 74) I come back into the kitchen sat by the fire until about twelve o'clock, then went to bed. 75) I got up at 6 a.m. next day lit the gas put the kettle on, made the baby a feed and fed it. 76) I then changed her and dressed her. 77) I then poured myself out a cup of tea I had already made. 78) I drank half and the baby drank the other half. 79) I then put the baby back into the cot, wrapped her up well and went to work. 80) I done my day's work and then had an argument with the Guvnor then I left the job. 81) He give me my wages before I went home. 82) He asked me what I wanted my wages for. 83) I told him I wanted to post some money off to my wife first thing in the morning. 84) He asked where my wife was and I told him she had gone to Bristol on a holiday. 85) He said "How do you intend to send the money to her" and I said, "In a registered envelope." 86) He paid me the money so he said "You can call over tomorrow morning for your cards."

Part (b)

70

80

(iv) 87) I then went home picked up my baby from her cot in the bedroom, picked up my tie and strangled her with it. 88) I then put the baby back in the cot and sat down in the kitchen and waited for Christies downstairs to go to bed. 89) At about twelve o'clock that night I took the baby downstairs to the wash house and hid her body behind some wood. 90) I then locked the wash house door behind me and came in closing the back door behind me. 91) I then slipped back upstairs and laid on the bed all night, fully clothed.

90

100
Part (c) (v) 92) I got up the following morning, washed, shaved and changed, and went up to see a man in Portobello Road about selling my furniture. 93) I don't know his name. 94) During the same afternoon he came to my flat, looked at it and offered me forty quid for it. 95) I told him I would take £40 for it and then he asked me why I wanted to sell it. 96) I told him I was going to Bristol to live as I had a job there waiting for me. 97) He asked me why I wasn't taking the furniture with me. 98) I told him my wife had already gone there and had a flat with furniture in it. 99) He then asked me if it was paid for. 100) I said it was. 101) He said he would call Sunday afternoon to let me know what time the driver would call on Monday for it. 102) I said I would wait in for him. 103) Between 3 and 4 p.m. on Monday this man took all the furniture all the lino, and he paid me £40 which I signed for in a receipt book. 104) He handed me the money which I counted in his presence. 105) I waited till he went then picked up my suitcase which I took to Paddington. 106) The same night I caught the 12.55 a.m. train from Paddington to Cardiff and made my way to 93 Mount Pleasant, Merthyr Vale, where I stayed with my Uncle, Mr. Lynch. 107) The rest I think you know. 108) I have been asked to read this statement myself, but I cannot read. 109) It has been read over to me and it is all the truth.

[(Signed) T. J. EVANS.]

Statement taken by Chief Inspector Jennings, C.I.D. "F" Division, written down, read over and signature witnessed by James N. Black, Detective Inspector "F" Division.']

Evans made his first statement, MT 1, at Merthyr Tydfil between 3.20 and 5.10 p.m., 30th November. The statement, just over one thousand words, is reproduced on pages 8-9.

Officers from Notting Hill Police Station in London went to 10 Rillington Place to search for the body. It took as many as three men to remove the lid of the drain outside the house, but no body was found. When Evans was further asked about how he managed to lift the lid himself, he made a second, and much longer statement, referred to as MT 2, which is given on pages 10-12. This was dictated between 9.10 and 11.50 p.m., 30th November, i.e. later on the same day as MT 1, and to the same police officer, Detective Constable G. H. Evans.

On 2nd December Evans was taken to Notting Hill Police Station and confronted with two piles of clothing, which had been taken from the dead bodies of his wife and daughter. He then made two statements, referred to as NH 1 and NH 2. The first of these, just over a hundred words, was written down between 9.45 and 9.55 p.m. (see page 13).

NH 2, the longest statement of all, totalling over 1900 words, was made shortly after NH 1. It ended at 11.15 p.m., having taken at most one hour and 15 minutes to dictate and read back (see pages 13-16). Both the NH statements were taken down by Detective Inspector J. N. Black.

On the following day, 3rd December, Evans was charged with the murder of his wife Beryl and later with the murder of his fourteen months old daughter Geraldine. On 13th January he was found guilty of the murder of Geraldine, and hanged at Pentonville on 9th March 1950.

On 24th March 1953, a tenant who had taken over the Christie ground flat at 10 Rillington Place (where the Evans family had occupied the second floor) discovered three female bodies in the alcove of the kitchen, and later that night the police found Mrs Christie's body under the front room floor boards. A couple of days later, the bones of two skeletons were collected from the garden.

On 25th June, Christie was found guilty of the murder of his wife, and hanged at Pentonville on 15th July 1953, little more than three years after Evans.

On 6th July 1953, after the trial and before the execution of Christie, Mr. Scott Henderson Q.C. was appointed to hold a private Inquiry which has become known as the Scott Henderson Inquiry. In his Report, dated 13th July 1953, he makes the following "Summary of Findings":

"(1) The case for the Prosecution against Evans as presented to the jury at his trial was an overwhelming one;

(2) Having considered all the material now available relating to the deaths of Mrs. Evans and Geraldine Evans, I am satisfied that there can be no doubt that Evans was responsible for both;

(3) Christie's statements that he was responsible for the death of Mrs. Evans were not only unreliable but were untrue."²⁾

Following a debate in the House of Commons on 29th July on the Report of Inquiry, Henderson produced a Supplementary Report on 28th August 1953. After considerable discussion of the case in the press and elsewhere, the Home Secretary, Sir Frank Soskice, appointed on 23rd August 1965 the Honourable Sir Daniel James Brabin to hold a public Inquiry. Under "Findings" in his Report he writes, "I have come

²⁾ F. Tennyson Jesse (ed.), *Trials of Timothy John Evans and John Reginald Halliday Christie* (London, 1957), p. 319.

to the conclusion that it is more probable than not that Evans killed Beryl Evans. I have come to the conclusion that it is more probable than not that Evans did not kill Geraldine" (page 6).

On 18th October 1966, Mr. Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary, gave a posthumous free pardon to Timothy John Evans, hanged 16 years earlier, after having been found guilty of the murder of his daughter Geraldine.

In the debate preceding the Brabin Inquiry considerable attention was drawn to the statements made at Notting Hill Police Station (NH 1 and NH 2), which contain Evans' confessions. Ludovic Kennedy goes as far as to say that "both these 'confessions' are demonstrably false".³⁾ It was felt by many that these statements include a large number of features that are not expected in the language of an illiterate, as well as remarkable internal differences of style. The last point may be illustrated by juxtaposing sentences 33-34 and 46-49 of NH 2:

"I asked her what she was going to do with the baby, so she said she was going to take the baby down to Brighton with her so I said it would be a good job and a load of worry off my mind, so I went to work as usual so when I came home at night I just put the kettle on, I sat down, my wife walked in so I said, 'I thought you was going to Brighton?' She said, 'What for you to have a good time?'"

"She then hit me back with her hand. In a fit of temper I grabbed a piece of rope from a chair which I had brought home off my van and strangled her with it. I then took her into the bedroom and laid her on the bed with the rope still tied round her neck. Before 10 p.m. that night I carried my wife's body downstairs to the kitchen of Mr. Kitchener's flat as I knew he was away in hospital."

In this study we shall discuss some linguistic aspects of the Evans statements. We cannot hope to arrive at any firm legal conclusions; the interest of this study is primarily of a linguistic, and only secondarily of a legal nature. The analysis is an attempt to find out whether the intuitively based observations mentioned above have any support from a more rigid, objective linguistic scrutiny.

There are various problems involved in a linguistic analysis of this kind, in particular the small size of the material and the illiteracy of Evans. The total corpus consists of 4861 words, distributed as follows through the four statements. (Contracted forms, 'd for *had/would*, 've for *have*, 's for *is/has*, etc. have been counted as separate words.)

³⁾ Ludovic Kennedy, *Ten Rillington Place* (London, 1961), p. 104.

MT 1 = 1038 words
 MT 2 = 1782 words
 NH 1 = 105 words
 NH 2 = 1936 words

 Total = 4861 words

The Senior Medical Officer at Pentonville Prison, Dr. P. M. Coats, M.D., assessed Evans' mental age at 10½ years. "Doctor Coats explained that this meant the standard that Evans had reached at school, and he put his intelligence quotient in the region of 75." Professor Curran, member of the Statutory Inquiry of 1950, "said that Evans' intelligence was measured at 10-11 years because of his lack of education, but that he had a vocabulary of a person of 14 years".⁴⁾

Under the conditions the statements were made, their linguistic form was, necessarily, in part determined by the editorial principles of the person taking down the spoken accounts. It would be unrealistic to expect two persons taking down the same spoken statement to produce two statements of identical written form. This factor may affect not only punctuation within sentences or the form of single items (as the choice of variants, such as contracted instead of uncontracted forms, for example, "he'd" instead of "he *would*"), but also the form of larger units such as sentence division.

Some sort of editing is bound to take place, consciously or unconsciously, in the written reproduction of a spontaneous spoken statement. In the present case, it seems for example unlikely that the illiterate Evans would have said "the 12.55 a.m. train" (NH 2:106), particularly since in two previous statements (MT 1:62 and MT 2:102) and in the witness-box at the trial, he is recorded as saying "the five to one train" in describing the same event. Table 1, giving the hourly time indications in all the four statements in order of occurrence, shows that, in MT 1 and MT 2, Evans consistently used the type "about half past six in the evening" (we may call this Type 1). There are no instances of time indication in NH 1, if we exclude the formulaic ending: "(Signed) T. J. Evans. 9.55 p.m. 2/12/49." In NH 2, however, the "a.m./p.m."-type (Type 2) is predominant. In this final statement there are fifteen instances of Type 2 as against only three of Type 1.

⁴⁾ *Report*, pp. 108 and 111, respectively.

Table 1. Time indications in the four statements, arranged in sequential order.

	Type 1	Type 2
MT 1	<p>About 9 o'clock between seven and eight at ten o'clock at six o'clock about half past six about half past six in the evening Between about one and two in the morning the five to one train</p>	
MT 2	<p>until 10 o'clock Just after six Since about three o'clock about a quarter of an hour later next morning about six o'clock that Wednesday night at five or six just after nine in the morning that morning about half past six About half past five that evening about six o'clock on the Monday morning just after nine o'clock About three o'clock until half past twelve that evening about half past twelve that evening the five to one train about twenty to seven in the morning</p>	
NH 1	(no occurrences of either type)	
NH 2	<p>till two o'clock</p> <p>until about twelve o'clock</p> <p>At about twelve o'clock that night</p>	<p>at 8 a.m. at 2 p.m.</p> <p>at 4.30 p.m. about 7.15 p.m. at 10 p.m. at 6 a.m. next day at 6.15 a.m. about 10.30 p.m. at night about 6.30 p.m. Before 10 p.m. that night about 5.30 p.m. that Wednesday evening about 9.30 p.m.</p> <p>at 6 a.m. next day</p> <p>Between 3 and 4 p.m. on Monday the 12.55 a.m. train</p>

From this distribution of the two types we can infer that Detective Constable G. H. Evans and Detective Inspector J. N. Black had different editing principles, and that they applied these almost consistently.

Although linguists would agree that some sort of editing is bound to take place in circumstances such as these, there is no clue to what extent this is the case in the recorded statements. Nor is it necessary for us to give too much consideration to this question here, since this study will be largely restricted to internal analyses of separate statements. The authenticity of the wording of the statements has never been in doubt. "Evans made the statement [NH 2] voluntarily and spontaneously and dictated it without any preliminary questioning and virtually without interruption" (to quote the words of the Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell Fyfe).⁵⁾ In the last Inquiry it was stated that both police officers "say that there was no questioning save to remove any ambiguities".⁶⁾

In the material there are indeed traces of such spontaneous speech as might be expected from an illiterate person. Among instances of substandard usage are the following (*italics added here*).

Double negatives (all four in the MT statements):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| (1) "She <i>never</i> said <i>no</i> more about it then, . . ." | (MT 1:13) |
| (2) "He <i>never</i> asked <i>no</i> money for it." | (MT 1:28) |
| (3) ". . . I didn't want <i>nothing</i> to do with it . . ." | (MT 2:15) |
| (4) ". . . I didn't take <i>nothing</i> off him for them." | (MT 2:95) |

Substandard verb forms:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| (5) "She asked me where Beryl and the baby <i>was</i> ." | (MT 2:80) |
| (6) ". . . I sat down, my wife walked in so I said, 'I thought you <i>was</i> going to Brighton?'" | (NH 2:33) |
| (7) "I <i>done</i> my days work and got home about 5.30 p.m. that Wednesday evening." | (NH 2:69) |
| (8) "I <i>done</i> my day's work and then had an argument with the Guvnor then I left the job. He <i>give</i> me my wages before I went home." | (NH 2:80-1) |
| (9) "Then I caught the five to one train from Paddington and I <i>come</i> down to Merthyr Vale and I've been down here ever since." | (MT 1:62) |
| (10) "I <i>come</i> back into the kitchen sat by the fire until about twelve o'clock, then went to bed." | (NH 2:74) |

⁵⁾ Letter from Sir David Maxwell Fyfe (now Lord Kilmuir) to Mr. Geoffrey Bing, Q.C. (*The Times*, 1st October, 1953).

⁶⁾ *Report*, p. 102.

- (11) "I *come* upstairs she started an argument again." (NH 2:37)
- (12) "I locked the wash house door, I *come* in and shut the back door behind me." (NH 2:59)
- (13) "I *come* home at night about 6.30 p.m. my wife started to argue again, so I hit her across the face with my flat hand." (NH 2:45)
- (14) "In the meanwhile my wife got herself into £20 debt so I borrowed £20 off the Guvnor under false pretences, so he *give* me the £20 which I took home and gave it to my wife." (NH 2:4)
- (15) "I said 'Yes' and I told her what he had *spoke* to me about." (MT 2:14)

A number of the substandard features in the statements recur in his answers as given in the transcript of his trial:⁷⁾

- (16) "Well, she asked me if Mr. Christie had *spoke* to me on my way in." (p. 63)
- (17) "Then I went to the pictures in the afternoon, Sir, and I *come* out of the pictures and I went to the public-house." (p. 70)
- (18) ("Why did you come back?") "I *come* back to see Mr. Christie." (p. 70)
- (19) "That was the only reason I *come* to London, Sir." (p. 71)
- (20) "I *done* the usual thing;" (p. 67)
- (21) "Yes, Sir, my wife was *laying* on the bed." (p. 64)
- (22) "I knew she was *laying* on her right side;" (p. 65)

There are also other notable features in the transcript, for example,

- (23) "... he just said only *him* and a doctor would know how to do that sort of thing." (p. 63)

Substandard use of relative pronouns (the following three occur in adjoining sentences at the beginning of NH 2):

- (24) "I was doing quite a lot of overtime for the firm working late, *which* I used to earn altogether £6 to £7 a week. Out of that my wife used to go to the firm on a Friday and my Guvnor used to pay her £5 *what* she used to sign for. Perhaps through the week I would have to give her more money off different people from *which* I used to borrow it. I used to pay them back on a Friday out of my own pocket." (NH 2:10-13)

⁷⁾ Since it has not been possible to have access to the official transcript, references are given to pages in Jesse, *op. cit.*

In the statements there are also instances of colloquialisms, i.e. usage which is characteristic of spoken rather than written language, for example, repetition of lexical items, such as the series of *used to* in the previous example, where it occurs in six out of eight consecutive finite verb clauses. Finally, we may mention "mixed constructions", as in:

- (25) "He told me that the people had called and took the baby with them and to pack the rest of her things and he had a case and would take them over to East Acton with the pram and her chair later in the week." (MT 2:75)

On the other hand, in the NH statements, certain words and phrases occur which appear to be uncharacteristic of the idiolect of an illiterate:

- (26) "She was *incurring* one debt after another and I could not stand it any longer so I strangled her with a piece of rope and took her down to the flat below the same night *whilst* the old man was in hospital." (NH 1:1)
- (27) "*In a fit of temper* I grabbed a piece of rope from a chair which I had brought home off my van and strangled her with it." (NH 2:47)
- (28) "He handed me the money which I counted *in his presence*." (NH 2:104)
- (29) "The same night I caught the 12.55 a.m. train from Paddington to Cardiff and *made my way to* 93 Mount Pleasant, Merthyr Vale, where I stayed with my Uncle, Mr. Lynch." (NH 2:106)

The difficulty of comparing the four statements (or rather the two sets of statements MT 1/MT 2 and NH 1/NH 2, since we must recognize the possibility of different editing standards having been used) can be minimised by analysing each statement separately. This will enable us to find out the extent to which it is internally consistent with respect to its linguistic features. However, such a procedure imposes certain restrictions, since the separate sets of material become very small.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that we shall want to make separate analyses not only of the several statements but also of parts of them, in particular of NH 2, which is crucial to the case.

We have already stated as a general requirement that the analysis should be maximally objective: in our case this means that the features can be unambiguously stated and open to outside inspection, and that they can be quantified and subjected to significance testing. The small

size of the material drastically limits the possibilities of quantification, since only high-frequency features can be used. This limitation immediately rules out individual lexical features. In studies on authorship identification, methods have been worked out by which results can be obtained on texts of as little as 2000 words, but in those cases the linguistic criteria have been set up on the basis of extensive background material.⁸⁾ In the present case there is no such background material available. It is true that we have the spoken evidence of Evans given during the trial (see page 23). This material is, however, a sub-variety of dialogue, whereas the statements are narrative English. Moreover, for the purpose of this study the transcript is of limited value, since it mostly consists of short answers to questions.

The difficulty is increased by the fact that the available texts do not come directly from the hand of Evans, since he could neither read nor write. The statements were dictated by him to two police officers. He could not even check the written versions by eye, but they had to be read back to him. (This is at least the case with MT 1, MT 2, and NH 2; there is no mention of a reading of NH 1.)

Since NH 2 is of central importance to the case, this statement will naturally be our chief concern. However, MT 2, which makes an interesting foil to NH 2, has also been subjected to a fairly exhaustive analysis. There are two reasons for this: firstly, it is the only statement that Evans at the trial said was true in its entirety; secondly, its timing of the course of events is partly parallel to that of NH 2. A brief summary of the contents of MT 2 and NH 2, divided into the three parts (a), (b), and (c), is given in Table 2 (page 26).

There are two reasons for this breakdown. Firstly, the middle part, (b), as opposed to the surrounding parts (a) and (c), is crucial to the case in containing the two confessions of murder. (Later on, part (b) will be further split up into three subparts in accordance with the judge's division of the statement into five paragraphs, i, ii, iii, iv, v; see the statement on pages 13–16.) Secondly, this tripartite division makes

⁸⁾ See Alvar Ellegård, *A Statistical Method for Determining Authorship. The Junius Letters, 1769–1772* (Gothenburg Studies in English 13, Göteborg, 1962). For the linguistic studies made in connexion with the Helander case in Sweden (in 1953 and 1962) by Ture Johannisson, Erik Welander, and others, the situation was also quite different, since it involved a highly placed professional man who had published a number of books and articles.

Table 2.

	Statement MT 2	Statement NH 2
Part (a)	<p>Sentences 1-27: Evans talks to Christie, who offers to carry out an abortion on Mrs Evans. Evans is against, but Mrs Evans in favour of this. Christie makes arrangements for Tuesday, 8th Nov. Ends: "Then I went to work" (i.e. on Tuesday morning).</p>	<p>Sentences 1-44 (Paragraph i): Talk of jobs, financial worries, matrimonial rows. Evans accuses his wife of squandering money. She threatens to go down to her father in Brighton. Ends: "I got up Tuesday morning and went straight to work."</p>
Part (b)	<p>Sentences 28-85: Tuesday: arrival home in the evening. His wife found dead. Christie says the abortion attempt "didn't work", puts the body in Mr. Kitchener's flat. Wednesday: Evans at work, discusses with Christie who is to take care of the baby. Thursday: Christie says the people from East Acton have fetched the baby. Christie says he has put the wife's body "down one of the drains".</p>	<p>Sentences 45-91: (Paragraph ii): Tuesday: arrival home at about 6.30 p.m. Evans has row with his wife. Strangles her, puts the body in Mr Kitchener's flat, later in the wash house. (Paragraph iii): Wednesday: feeds the baby, goes to work, arrives home at about 5.30 p.m., feeds the baby. Thursday: feeds the baby, has row with the "Guvnor". (Paragraph iv): Thursday evening: strangles his daughter Geraldine, hides the body in the wash house.</p>
Part (c)	<p>Sentences 86-103: Friday: no work, sees furniture dealer, goes to the pictures and the pub. Saturday: goes to the pictures and the pub. Sunday: talks with the rag dealer. Monday: rag dealer calls, furniture sold at £40, which is signed for. Tuesday: departure from Paddington at 12.55 a.m.</p>	<p>Sentences 92-109 (Paragraph v): Friday: sees furniture dealer, who takes the furniture on Monday and pays £40, which is signed for. Tuesday: departure from Paddington at 12.55 a.m.</p>

it possible to compare Statements MT 2 and NH 2 because of their parallelism.

The two (a) parts deal with different things and are parallel in time only at their terminal points (Tuesday morning). The (b) parts differ sharply in content: NH 2(b) is a confession of two murders, whereas

MT 2(b) is simply an account of Evans finding his wife dead and handing over his daughter to Christie. At the trial, Evans explained his admissions in NH 2 in this way: "... I was upset and I do not think I knew what I was saying".⁹⁾ The two (c) parts are closely similar in content, and often also in wording. See Table 2.

If we first compare the number of words per sentence in the three parts of NH 2, we get the following distribution, showing that (a) sentences are, on the whole, somewhat longer than (b) and (c) sentences. ("Sentence" is defined as a sequence of words beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period, exclamation mark, or question mark.)

NH 2 (a): 44 sentences of 867 words = 19.7 words/sentence

NH 2 (b): 47 sentences of 789 words = 16.8 words/sentence

NH 2 (c): 18 sentences of 280 words = 15.6 words/sentence

An analysis of the number of finite verb clauses per sentence shows greater variation for (a) than for (c) and, in particular, (b), considering that (b) contains the most sentences (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Clauses per sentence	Parts			Total
	(a)	(b)	(c)	
1	12	7	1	20
2	14	17	8	39
3	9	15	6	30
4	3	4	2	9
5	1	4	1	6
6	1	—	—	1
7	1	—	—	1
8	1	—	—	1
9	1	—	—	1
10	—	—	—	—
11	—	—	—	—
12	—	—	—	—
13	—	—	—	—
14	1	—	—	1
No. of sentences	44	47	18	109

⁹⁾ Jesse, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

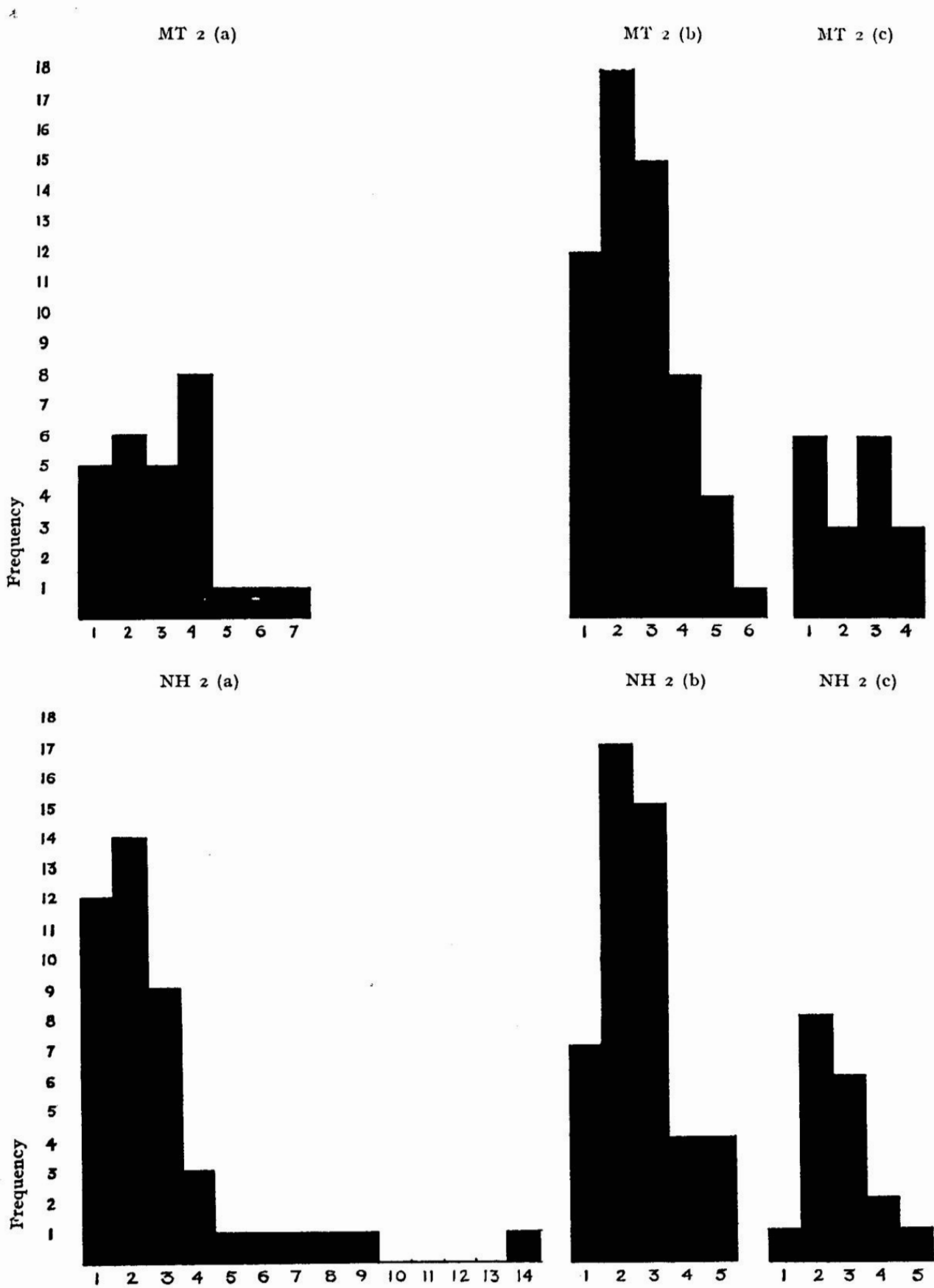


Figure 1. Number of clauses per sentence in Statements MT 2 and NH 2

In Figure 1, where the number of clauses per sentence in Parts (a), (b), (c) of NH 2 is compared with the corresponding parts of MT 2, it is noteworthy that NH 2(b) has a rather steeper contour on the right hand side than the rest. The two (a) parts have the longest “tails”, indicating that they have a small number of sentences with many clauses. The extreme instance is sentence NH 2:33 which has fourteen clauses.

Continued in *Evans Statements Part 2*