

MONTES, Catalina; FERNÁNDEZ, María Pilar & RODRÍGUEZ, Gudelia 1995:  
*El Inglés Antiguo en el marco de las lenguas germánicas occidentales*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. 513 pp.

The CSIC press has published recently a very interesting analysis about Old English and its relation to the Western Germanic Languages, written by Prof. Catalina Montes, Dr. Pilar Fernández and Dr. Gudelia Rodríguez. This book forms part of a greater editorial project -patronized by the University of Salamanca- which intends to publish a series of handbooks about the old indoeuropean languages following the methodological approach adopted on this study. This work is an introductory analysis which provides the university student with a basic and initial knowledge of diachronic linguistics, specially of Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German in their relation to the primitive Germanic language, or Proto-Germanic. This is precisely one of the main singularities of this work because until now the Spanish academic community had not been provided with a study relating the Proto-Germanic to the aforementioned Germanic languages. This study has a very well-defined structure. It is divided in six parts:

- Introduction (9-28)
- Phonetic and Morphological evolution of the Old Western Germanic Languages (29-178)
- Old English (179-486)
- Bibliography (487-500)
- Abbreviations (501-502)
- General Index (503-513)

Following the tradition set up by previous works on diachronic linguistics, in our own environment (Fernández, 1982: 37-72; Cruz & Cañete, 1992: 45-84) as well as abroad (Hogg, 1992: 1-24; Robinson, 1992: passim), this handbook begins presenting some considerations about external history.

They are brief, perhaps, in comparison with the wide thematic scope of the volume, but very useful from a didactic point of view (in the style of the excellent linguistic and historical summaries offered by Hans Frede Nielsen in his work on the dialectal interrelations in the Germanic languages).

The introduction -elaborated by Dr. Montes- is a good historical and linguistic *résumé* of what we could call “status questionis”. As a sort of methodological background, this section -subdivided in four parts- sets forth some brief questions about defining the boundaries of the Germanic area, both in historical (subsection II, pp. 11-18) and linguistic terms (subsection III, pp. 18-26), and also brings up the problems about what dialects must be treated and what textual sources we must rely on when dealing with them. The author herself offers in detail (subsection IV, pp. 26-27) the basic research guidelines the work intends to follow. She also explains -just as O. W. Robinson did- the exclusion of bibliography about Indoeuropean, exception made of those books relating it to the Germanic tongues. The new and thorough study recently presented by Dr. F. R. Adrados brings this bibliographical question up to date.

The second chapter, due to its length and contents, constitutes one of the main pillars of the handbook. In this section Dr. Fernández deals with the relations between Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German, adopting Germanic as a starting point. Beginning with Indoeuropean and its subsequent evolution into Germanic -mainly in the epigraphs devoted to the study of the vocalic and consonantal systems- this chapter offers an exhaustive linguistic taxonomy of the Germanic languages analyzed.

This section is stated as a descriptive analysis in the line of Hans Krahe’s superb handbook, which complete the parts related to Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German offered, f.i., in the works of Robinson and Nielsen. Perhaps, the inclusion of an additional epigraph would have been necessary, as a sort of complement to this taxonomic and highly descriptive section, as well as a summary of the conclusions obtained after studying the relation between Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German. At the end of this chapter we are given an appendix -summing up the nominal, adjectival, pronominal and verbal inflections of Germanic, Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German- and a list of the Germanic words mentioned in this chapter. As a modest pro-

posal for future editions, we suggest the addition of an index with cross-references to complete the appendix and the quite large table of contents.

The third chapter is the thematic heart of the book we are reviewing. Dr. Rodriguez undertakes the task of making a descriptive analysis of Old English - an *enta geweorc* indeed- which intends to be a revision of all its basic topics in its traditional classification (Hogg, 1992; Mitchell & Robinson, 1994; Quirk & Wrenn, 1957; Fernández, 1982). That is to say: Spelling, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Dialectology. This chapter is written with a less taxonomic style than the previous one, and it is clearer and more reflective when presenting the data. Compared with the rest of the sections, the syntactic part and the one dealing with Old English dialects are somewhat reduced. Just as in the second chapter an appendix and a new list of words are included. The university student will find this very useful.

Finally, we are faced with the bibliography, which is very useful in its contents but quite lineal in its ordering. Bearing in mind that this handbook is intended as an introductory course it would have been useful to organize bibliographical items in different sections to facilitate the subsequent desire for further reading.

Guided by the praiseworthy toil of making a comprehensive analysis, the authors offer a table of contents too exhaustive in its description. As we have pointed out before -taking into account its future use as an introductory handbook- the addition of an index at the end of the book would have been desirable, as well as the shortening of the table of contents as it can be found in the traditional handbooks on diachronic linguistics (Mitchell & Robinson, 1994; Hogg, 1992). It is anecdotic to mention the irregular placing of the abbreviation list, at the end of the book, when it commonly appears at the beginning.

If we leave these unimportant trifles aside -which will be undoubtedly modified in the next editions- we must congratulate the authors of this handbook for having presented to us an exhaustive taxonomic and relational analysis of Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German. Although it is not innovative in the analyzed data, it is original in the way of presenting them. We also think that this handbook is a very good methodological introduction for the rest of the manuals which will be offered soon. It also foresees a good future for that research project on the preverbatation in the old Germanic language-

ges, which was presented to the academic community by Prof. Montes and Dr. Fernández in *SELIM* 4.

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