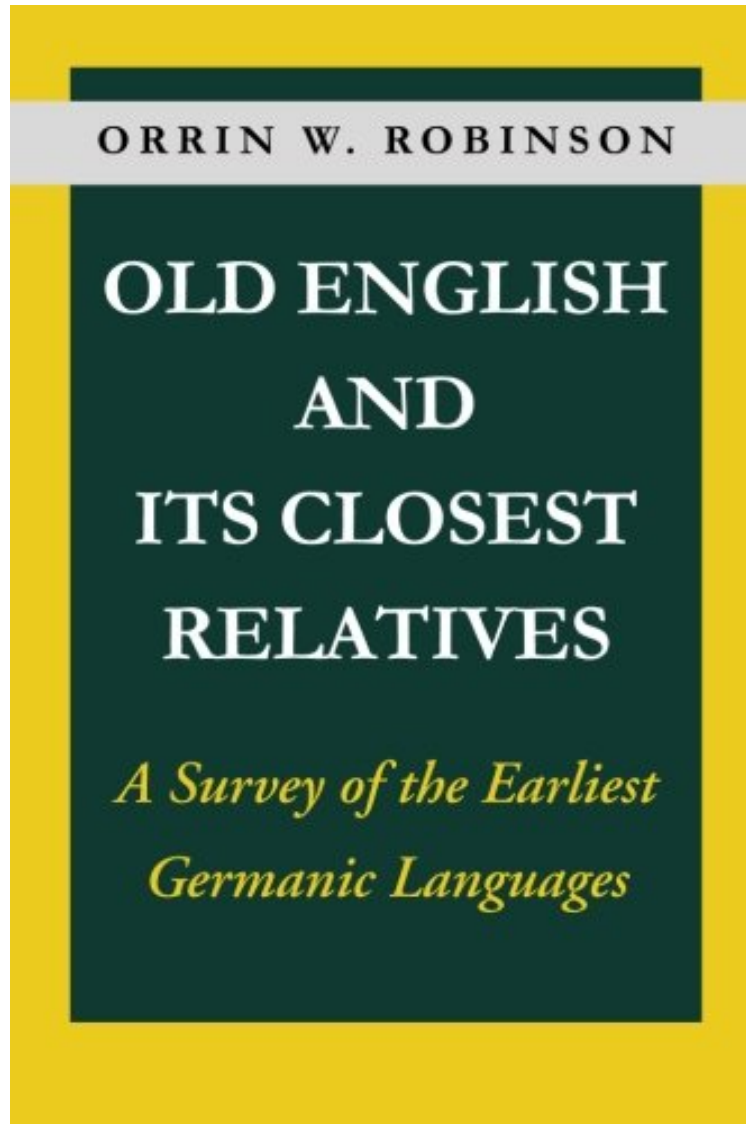


[Download] Old English and Its Closest Relatives: A Survey of the Earliest Germanic Languages

Old English and Its Closest Relatives: A Survey of the Earliest Germanic Languages

Orrin W. Robinson

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Orrin W. Robinson : Old English and Its Closest Relatives: A Survey of the Earliest Germanic Languages before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Old English and Its Closest Relatives: A Survey of the Earliest Germanic Languages:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An evaluation of "Old English and Its Closest Relatives" By Terrell Rodefer Although strictly more interested in the various languages English came out of, there was a terrific amount of

history in this volume. I haven't gotten through it all. Actually, am skipping about looking for specific info of interest to me, mainly, how English developed into a language without nouns having gender, as all languages that I've read about so far have--Latin and its derivatives, Germanic variances, which the author claims are the largest influence/roots. Seems to have been an almost universal requirement for languages across the globe that nouns have gender--masculine, feminine, and in many cases, neuter--and with English developing out of the hodgepodge of languages of England's various invaders, how did it escape that fate? It's probably in there, but I haven't discovered it yet. Still, anyone interested in the history of England as well as much of Europe will find this book extremely informative. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant Way to Showcase old Languages By Michael J. Rentner This is one of my favorite books of all genres of all time. It's positively brilliant how it is structured to force you to try to understand the original languages. It uses the same Bible passage from each language, all of which are told in slightly different ways. It starts with describing each language and its rules, and then posts the original text and puts hints to certain words in the margins. Often the hints are in modern German! This method really worked well for making me think I could understand the flavor of each language. I found this on accident a long time ago, and I've bought this for friends too. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding book! By Derrick I think it appropriate to include a bit of background on myself first since it probably affects my impression of the book - over the years I've taken 8 semesters of German, 7 semesters of Russian, and two of French and I lived in Germany for two years so while I am not a professional linguist I do have some background that helps me better to understand the material. Robinson states his purpose for this book (to create a book for his introductory class on Germanic languages that includes some background and history on the people who spoke the languages) on the first page of the preface and he nails it. Other books might cover the individual material in more depth but I don't know of any that pulls it all together like this at just the right level to provide a good introduction to the subject. I made an effort to read the passages in each of the languages. I wasn't particularly successful with Gothic or Old Norse but I think I did well with the west Germanic languages. Actually something that surprised me is the order I would place the languages in in terms of the ease with which I could understand them. Starting from easiest to most difficult: Old Saxon, Old Frisian, Old English, Old Low Franconian, Old High German, Gothic, Old Norse (although for the last two all I could really do was pick out recognizable words). One might have thought that as a native speaker of English and someone who is relatively fluent in German that Old English and Old High German would have been easier to understand but that is just not the case. Just for fun I went out on the web and found some examples of spoken Niederdeutsch, the modern language descended from Old Saxon, at radiobremen.de and listened and found that I can understand it reasonably well. Not as well as German of course but considering that I can barely understand a word of spoken Dutch I was a bit surprised. Before I finish I'm going to give one criticism, a nit-pick really, which might be the only I've seen in all the reviews: while the book is an outstanding work and is still sitting on my nightstand so that I can pick a section to review for 15 minutes or so before I go to bed at night, I think it would even better still if it included a CD or link to a website where you could listen to someone pronouncing the sounds that are unfamiliar to a monolingual English speaker and maybe even someone reading some of the passages aloud so that you could hear how they are supposed to sound. I realize of course that Robinson wrote the book as a text for his class and presumably if you took his class he would provide those pronunciations and readings but for the general audience who are not fortunate enough to take the class this would be a great boon. (Hmmm...now that I think about it, I bet if I google it I can find something like that out there. Still, it would be nice if it were included).

At first glance, there may seem little reason to think of English and German as variant forms of a single language. There are enormous differences between the two in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, and a monolingual speaker of one cannot understand the other at all. Yet modern English and German have many points in common, and if we go back to the earliest texts available in the two languages, the similarities are even more notable. How do we account for these similarities? The generally accepted explanation is that English and German are divergent continuations of a common ancestor, a Germanic language now lost. This book surveys the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the earliest known Germanic languages, members of what has traditionally been known as the English family tree: Gothic, Old Norse, Old Saxon, Old English, Old Frisian, Old Low Franconian, and Old High German. For each language, the author provides a brief history of the people who spoke it, an overview of the important texts in the language, sample passages with full glossary and word-by-word translations, a section on orthography and grammar, and discussion of linguistic or philological topics relevant to all the early Germanic languages but best exemplified by the particular language under consideration. These topics included the pronunciation of older languages; the runic inscriptions; Germanic alliterative poetry; historical syntax, borrowing, analogy, and drift; textual transmission; and dialect variation.

"The task of writing a book like Robinson's is very difficult. His contains much to be admired and is a worthy handbook ... Good students can learn much from the wealth of information in the present work, and it is to be recommended to them." (Journal of English and Germanic Philology) Orin W. Robinson's Old English and its closest

relatives makes an extremely valuable contribution to the group of texts that specialists in one or more of the historical Germanic dialects can safely rely upon for introducing students to comparative Germanic historical linguistics." (American Journal of Germanic Linguistics)"This book certainly fills a gap. Without it, one would have to assemble a set of handbooks of the old dialects. These would have the disadvantage of various degrees of outdatedness and divergent arrangement of materials. Robinson brings the grammatical material into alignment in a manageable number of features, selected for their significance as means of comparison. . . . The readings give some impression of the variety of language and genre, while the tribal histories add a touch of life to a possibly dry topic. . . . The focus of the work is linguistic, and in this respect there is much to admire in the selection and parallel organization of the material." (Seminar)"General textbooks introducing the Germanic languages are scarce. This work claims to provide a resource available to monolingual English speakers with a minimal background in linguistics. The task seems hardly possible, but Robinson accomplishes it and he does so with flying colors. . . . In general, Robinson's text is pedagogically sound and definitely recommended either on the undergraduate level or in an introductory class for graduate students filling in a linguistics requirement." (Scandinavian Studies)This well-structured, terse account of the early Germanic languages fills an obvious gap in reference books on historical linguistics. Striking an excellent balance between readability for the nonspecialist and sufficient detail for classroom usage, the volume begins with a straightforward chapter on the background of English and German in the Germanic family of languages and the Indo-European system at large. . . . Extremely useful for linguistics and medieval literature courses at all levels; belongs in all college and university libraries.Humanities"There is much to be valued in this book, the strength of which lies in bringing together representative texts and concise but generally informative discussions of historical background, grammar, versification, and the like, and unified by chapters on the Germanic language family and its grammatical system." (Germanic Notes and s)"This generally engaging work is well-thought out and well-organized. . . . Robinson has written [a book] that deserves attention." (Colloquia Germanica)"[Old English and its closest relatives] is well designed and well written. It is thorough, yet not too encumbered by linguistic facts and linguistic jargon. . . . [Robinson's] goal, to introduce the reader to the earliest Germanic languages and their interdialectal relations, has been masterfully accomplished." (The German Quarterly)"The execution of Old English and its closest relatives is workmanlike and conscientious. It is appropriate as a textbook for students who have had no prior exposure to [the Germanic] discipline and who require only a general introduction; it will certainly appeal to the curious lay reader. The book's serviceability in the classroom is assured in a sense for the simple reason that there is no other single work that covers the material summarily." (Language)"Robinson has produced a highly useful book. Designed for an "Introduction to Germanic Languages" course, it will also be a welcome supplement for courses in the history of English, German, and the other Germanic languages. . . . [A] book that instructors would be wise to bring to the attention of students, since it will contribute clarity as well as understanding of important matters in philology and linguistics, in addition to the opportunity for ready introduction to the early Germanic languages. Instructors as well as students will be grateful to Robinson. . . ." (Michigan Germanic Studies)From the Inside FlapAt first glance, there may seem little reason to think of English and German as variant forms of a single language. There are enormous differences between the two in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, and a monolingual speaker of one cannot understand the other at all. Yet modern English and German have many points in common, and if we go back to the earliest texts available in the two languages, the similarities are even more notable.How do we account for these similarities? The generally accepted explanation is that English and German are divergent continuations of a common ancestor, a Germanic language now lost. 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