

**Review of Maiden, M. and Ledgeway, A. (eds), *Oxford Guide to the Romance Languages*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2016):**

After the publication of the two-volumed *Cambridge History of the Romance Languages* (Maiden, Smith and Ledgeway 2011, 2013), the editors have recently published another monumental volume which runs to over 1000 pages covering all aspects of Romance linguistics with contributions from leading experts. Romance linguistics is a rich and long-standing field whose earliest scholarship goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century philological approaches to the comparative history of the Romance languages (e.g. Diez 1876, Meyer-Lubke 1900), and contemporary Romance linguistics has witnessed a growth in the use of Romance languages for theoretical research, as seen in the annual conferences and proceedings of *Going Romance* and *Linguistic Symposium of the Romance Languages*. The editors of the *Oxford Guide* recognize (p. liii) that the longevity of Romance linguistics has left behind not a lack of scholarship or research areas but a need for coherence in putting all the various strands of research together in a state-of-the-art volume, and this is exactly how the *Oxford Guide* is designed with its first two parts ('The Making of the Romance Languages', 'Typology and Classification') dealing with some traditional questions regarding the comparative history of Romance languages, followed by a part ('Individual Structural Overviews') on individual Romance varieties, and then a grammatical survey ('Comparative Overviews') from a pan-Romance perspective followed by several parts which deal with each grammatical domain in detail ('Issues in Romance Phonology', 'Issues in Romance Morphology', 'Issues in Romance Syntax', 'Issues in Romance Syntax and Semantics', 'Issues in Romance Pragmatics and Discourse'), and finally a collection of chapters ('Case Studies') on some important morphosyntactic phenomena in Romance. This is an exhaustive coverage of Romance linguistics from its beginnings to its modern trends, and it goes without saying that the *Oxford Guide* is an extremely ambitious undertaking which has provided us with a definitive guide to Romance linguistics.

The overall structure and quality of individual chapters are also ingenious. In the first two parts, Clackson ('Latin as a source for the Romance languages'), Wright ('Latin and Romance in the medieval period: a sociophilological approach') and Frank-Job and Selig ('Early evidence and sources') provide detailed historical accounts which are much more modern than classics like Elcock (1975 [1960]) and Palmer (1954) and more oriented towards the formation of the Romance languages than Clackson and Horrocks (2007), and the comparative-historical accounts by Vincent ('A structural comparison of Latin and Romance'), Ramat and Ricca ('Romance: a typological approach'), Bossong ('Classifications') and Goebel ('Romance linguistic geography and dialectometry') are also far more detailed than short surveys like

Manczak (1991). The language overviews are exhaustive as all Romance varieties are covered, namely Romanian, Istro-Romanian, Megleno-Romanian and Aromanian (Maiden), Dalmatian (Maiden), Friulian (Beninca and Vanelli), Ladin (Salvi), Romansh (Anderson), dialects of northern Italy (Beninca, Parry and Pescarini), Italian, Tuscan and Corsican (Ledgeway), dialects of central Italy (Loporcaro and Paciaroni), dialects of southern Italy (Ledgeway), Sardinian (Mensching and Remberger), French and northern Gallo-Romance (Smith), southern Gallo-Romance (Olivieri and Sauzet), Francoprovençal (Kristol), Catalan (Alsina), Spanish, Astur-Leonese, Navarro-Aragonese, Judaeo-Spanish (Tuten, Pato and Schwarzwald), Galician and Portuguese (Dubert and Galves) and Creoles (Bollee and Maurer), which is much broader and detailed than the language surveys in the classic Harris and Vincent (1988). The grammatical overview is also exhaustive in that it covers all major areas of Romance linguistics from a theoretical perspective with chapters on Phonology (Schmid, Marotta), Morphology (Maiden, Rainer, Forza and Scalise), Syntax (Giusti, Cruschina and Ledgeway), Semantics and Pragmatics (Dworkin, Sohrman, Cruschina), and Sociolinguistics (Jones, Parry and Williams, Kabatek, Pountain) with further more in-depth accounts of each sub-field, namely Phonology (Maiden, Repetti, Sampson, Finbow), Morphology (Maiden, Capellaro, Pescarini), Syntax (Ledgeway, Poletto and Tortora, Roberts, Loporcaro), Syntax/semantics (Bentley, Poletto, Bentley and Cicconte), Pragmatics and Discourse (Giurgea and Remberger, Ledgeway and Smith, Ashdowne)) and a collection of chapters on individual syntactic topics, namely Case (Dragomirescu and Nicolae), Gender (Loporcaro), Tense and Aspect (Bertinetto and Squartini), Mood (Quer), Voice (Cennamo), Complex Predicates (Sheehan), Word Order (Salvi), Clausal complementation (Ledgeway) and Relative clauses (Stark). The grammatical description of Romance, therefore, is much more extensive, detailed and up-to-date than any existing Romance manual, and the perspective here is more synchronically-oriented than the diachronic accounts in Maiden, Smith and Ledgeway (2011, 2013). All in all, the *Oxford Guide* is an exhaustive volume on all aspects of Romance languages and linguistics and its scope encompasses every facet of diachrony, sociolinguistics, dialectology, grammar and linguistic theory.

A by-product of such a huge piece of work is that it is very unlikely that anyone would read the *Oxford Guide* from cover to cover and it may be much more constructive to use it selectively by choosing individual chapters and sub-sections in searching for what one wants and needs, and fortunately the *Oxford Guide* is extremely well-organised with an elaborate content menu (p. xii-xxxix) which makes it relatively easy to navigate through. However, given its aim in detailing all aspects of Romance linguistics, all contributions in the *Oxford Guide* are necessarily short and the contributors do not have space to do much more than presenting the empirical

facts and providing a brief analysis. Here the references become crucial, since each chapter is very well-referenced to the latest works in its respective subfield so the reader can (and should) follow up leads in order to achieve breadth and depth in his/her topic(s) of interest. Another consequence of having so many short chapters is that although all contributions here are written by leading experts, given the space constraint there is not much original research here, since, as mentioned, there is simply no room to express much else other than the main facts. In this regard, the *Oxford Guide*, while extremely useful for students and young researchers of Romance linguistics, may not be of much use to advanced researchers in the field as it does not contain much new or exciting material to the experienced mind, which reinforces my point that readers should not treat the *Oxford Guide*, impressive and detailed though it is, as a book of solutions to research questions but a starting point for bibliographical searches and further investigation. Finally, given the many thematic parallels and overlap between the chapters in the *Oxford Guide*, there could be even more coherence if there were yet more references not only to current literature but also between the chapters, since more cross-chapter references can guide the reader from one section of the volume to another thematically, which may make an even more effective and constructive read.

It is beyond any shred of doubt that Maiden and Ledgeway have produced a seminal masterpiece in the *Oxford Guide* which has significantly enriched the field of Romance linguistics and is a must-read for all students, researchers and scholars of Romance linguistics who can benefit much more from reading this state-of-the-art volume alone than synthesizing all the diverse manuals and handbooks.

#### References:

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