

INTRODUCTION



By Johann Ramminger

The aim of this introduction is not so much to give an overview of the individual contributions; rather, it attempts to show how and where the authors and works discussed here fit together on the land- and timescape of early modern Europe. Proper names in capitals indicate contributions contained in this volume.

‘Linguistic identity’ has been defined in the following way: “[...] linguistic identities may refer to the sense of belonging to a community as mediated through the symbolic resource of language, or to the varying ways in which we come to understand the relationship between our language and ourselves. These are closely related aspects of how we position ourselves in social context through language”.¹ This definition was developed within global studies. If we understand ‘global’ as a communicative and social construct encompassing all ‘civilization’ known at a given time and place, the concept is no less valid for the Early Modern period than for our own age. If English is now considered the “global language par excellence”,² “a kind of global-hegemonic, post-clerical Latin”,³ preceded by French as the “Latin of the moderns”,⁴ Latin had the same reach in Early Modern Western culture. The communicative space of the Latin speakers discussed in this volume extended over the whole of the civilized world as they understood it.

This communicative space is what has recently been called the “Neo-Latin World”,⁵ those parts of Europe (and the Americas) where there existed a stratum of society capable of producing and/or reading and appreciating works in Latin. The existence of a communicative space defined by Latin predates the period indicated in the title considerably; just as with English nowadays it was originally the result of a colonisation process extending in late antiquity from the Euphrates to the Atlantic Ocean and from North Africa to the Rhine and Danube. Over the millennium preceding our period its geographical expanse contracted and shifted, loosing much of the East

¹ Park 2012, 1080.

² Park *ibid.*

³ Anderson 2006, 207.

⁴ Casanova 2004, 58.

⁵ Ford, Bloemendal & Fantazzi 2014.

and gaining in the West and North. Later regional expansion happened mostly outside of Europe (initiated by the missionary activities of Catholic orders). Any sense of Latin as an externally imposed and colonizing force had been lost when the empire using it disintegrated. In the fourteenth century armies emanating from Italy had long ceased to be a threat or even a possibility.

The ‘story’ of Neo-Latin and this volume begin with a call by Italian intellectuals to renew antiquity, if not as a political, at least as a cultural force in the Latin world (PADE). The first step to cultural leadership was a war of independence from the French models of the Late Middle Ages – with a rather aggressive logic Lorenzo Valla put the conflict in terms of the fight for survival of the Romans against the aggression of the Gauls when they were laying siege to the Capitol of Rome in 390 BC. The development of a cultural counter-model saw Italy ascend to undisputed cultural dominance – despite a political impotence which culminated in the *Sacco di Roma* of 1527. The political implosion was countered by a cultural ascendancy that would establish the ‘Neo-Latin World’, the linguistic and literary bond of a fragmented political landscape.

Setting time limits to this cultural development (and to this volume) is to some extent arbitrary. The volume begins with Petrarch who in his biography as well as his literary production exemplifies the decisive remodelling of the intellectual landscape of early modern Europe of which he was a prime architect. At the other end, by 1800 the use of Latin had receded from many areas, although significant contributions continued to be made well into the nineteenth century (see SCHAFFENRATH; also Walter Savage Landor [1775–1864], who was the topic of a paper delivered by Dirk Sacré at the conference which is not contained in this volume).

The construction of Italian humanist identity by laying claim to the linguistic and cultural past of the Italian peninsula against the competing claims of French Latin culture is the theme of PADE’s paper. Italian humanists defined their identity as rooted in their innate superior ability to speak/write Latin, unlike the French who were born without the ‘DNA’ of classical antiquity – though it was to their credit that they, despite their lack of capability, had tried to acquire a smattering of Latin culture. The repurposing of classical literature within a contemporary framework often came with major adaptations. Humble (in a paper on Latin and vernacular translations of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, which is not included in this volume) discussed the differences in target audiences of the Latin translations following the confessional divide in Europe; the prefaces to the vernacular translations used the matrix of the Latin precursors to introduce topics of specific importance to vernacular readers. As GWYNNE shows, the

technological developments of warfare reduced the space for the traditional ‘epic’ display of individual heroism, so much at the core of classical epic narrative – even though, we might add, modern war movies make clear that the public’s admiration for individual heroism continues unabated. Classical influence long remained functional in poetry. Bucolic poetry had from antiquity onwards been used as a ‘private’ cloak for a public message, and its messaging strategies remained applicable throughout the long history of the genre. In another paper presented at the conference but not included in this volume Trine Hass presented a case in which antiquity is in full force as an intertext. In the example presented the private setting was the marriage of a high-ranking Danish clergyman; opposed was a contrasting public event, the outbreak of the Danish-Swedish war of 1563. The poem acquired an ulterior dimension by allusion to the *Bucolica* of the contemporary renowned Danish poet Erasmus Laetus, a literary compliment and at the same time an affirmation of the poet’s own appurtenance to the same cultural ambience. Since Laetus was professor of theology and thus a person of social significance (his *Bucolica* were dedicated to the king), there was a public/political message of loyalty as well. The weaving of such a mesh of messages was a feat no less of literary than of social sensibilities; it could only be – and was without difficulty – decoded by a readership attuned to ‘messages by imitation’, as it were.

William Camden (1551–1623) (EATOUGH) stood in a tradition of English humanism that has broadly been termed ‘civic humanism’, a strand of humanism which, like its earlier Italian namesake, brought philological rigour to interpreting the texts and their historical settings, and valued civic engagement.⁶ Thus, Camden’s use of classical models was rather utilitarian; certainly it took second place to what he perceived as the role of his authorship in the body politic. Historiography (encompassing ethnography) at the turn of the seventeenth century was (outside of Italy) still an endeavour in Latin,⁷ and Camden was no exception; still, it is important to note that many of his works were available in vernacular versions within a brief span of time. In writing history Camden did not abandon classical literature. As EATOUGH remarks, he claimed to be *antiquitatis amator* and as such he had a ‘role model’ from antiquity, namely Tacitus, whose arid style suited his own way of presentation. However, constitutive elements of the classical genre, such as speeches, were not admitted as mere stylistic devices any more; the historian could only insert them if, and in the form in which, they actually were delivered (the speeches are *ipsissimae* [preface to

⁶ Anderson 2010, 13.

⁷ Völkel 2009, 240.

the *Annales*, sig.A4v], though Camden admits to some abbreviation). He saw himself as *praesentium non incuriosus* (“not without [i.e. with a great deal of] interest in present day matters”). The office of the historian is for Camden the presentation of the “why, how and to what end and what [had happened]”, a maxim which he had borrowed from Polybius; his own opinion he considers to be without importance. He claims the historians’ right to say it “as it is”, and indeed a dry statement such as “church and state cannot be considered separately“ (*Inter religionem enim et rempublicam divortium esse non potest*, from the preface to the *Annales*, sig.A4r) confirms this stance.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the role of Latin in society became successively more sharply defined. Paradigmatic is the second phase of the *questione della lingua* in Italy which reflected the diminishing role of Latin within a speech community developing a shared literary language other than Latin. All over Europe, the Latin republic of letters was fragmenting into ‘national’ subgroups.⁸ As a number of contributions to this volume show, the communicative function of Latin remained undiminished, even as communities that had formerly been exclusively Latinate developed alternative communication strategies. Latin had been *très-utile* to the sciences, as d’Alemebert wrote in the *discours préliminaire* to the *Encyclopédie* in 1751,⁹ an observation confirmed by the explosive expansion of Neo-Latin in the sciences. In his opening contribution, HELANDER discusses the central role that Latin played in many parts of the early modern society. Language change was governed by a variety of factors and proceeded unevenly from domain to domain. Public administration and law valued stability as paramount to their continued functioning; technology (weapons!) and science, on the other hand, were at the vanguard of language change in Latin. It was in the natural sciences, as HELANDER shows, that Latin shone in its flexibility, providing words as well as Greek and Latin models of word formation; a common factor was the emphasis on abstractions, absent from classical Latin but vital for the terminology of the new branches of knowledge. d’Alembert had observed with acerbity that the French had initiated the abandoning of Latin, the English had followed, even the Germans showed signs of succumbing, and other countries, such as the Danes, Swedes and Russians (!) were no doubt soon to follow. However, even in the newly empowered national languages, Latin retained a vital role via loans, not least in the sciences.¹⁰

⁸ cf. Celenza 2009, 242.

⁹ Helander 2012, 307; the whole passage in Mazzolini 2013, 68 n.1.

¹⁰ Mazzolini 1976, 317.

Latin as the language of international communication appears in several papers. Under the leadership of religious orders, humanist education spread to the New World, establishing a ruling class imbued with European values and able to communicate effectively with their new overlords, the Spanish crown. The Latin letter by the chieftain of a Mexican city to the Spanish Crown, presented by LAIRD, is an example of Erasmian epistolography with its characteristic flexibility of structure. (European) literary traditions familiar to the addressee and the indigenous cultural heritage of the sender appear closely linked. Thus this letter is a remarkable example of humanist education *in limine*, integrating, as it does, not only a syncretistic imagery developed by the Franciscan educators, but also the proud and deceptively submissive voice of the Nahua heritage of the letter writer.

The shared identity created by a Latin education served as a base for successful communication, though not necessarily pleasant interaction, as is shown by TJOELKER in the case of the Irish Franciscan community in Innsbruck. The Irish expatriate community offended their local brethren not least because their widespread network permitted them to travel a lot more than was deemed suitable by the others. Latin in this case allowed not only mutual comprehension of the German-, Italian-, and Irish-speaking monks, it also supplied a canon of insults which could be levelled at (and understood by) the object of one's displeasure: the offending brother O'Callahan at one point was characterized as *varius et instabilis* (restless and fickle). This is an insult that depended for its full force on being expressed in Latin; the same phrase had been applied by the great Bellarmino to Luther (*disp. contr. fid.* I 1 p.179 from 1586), and Petrus Canisius had lobbied against any change in the feast days of the Church, lest the Catholics appear *vari[i] et instabiles* in the eyes of the Lutherans (*ep.* 1387 from 1597). With one Latin phrase the speaker had not only defined his opponent as a character of unreliable doctrine, but had anointed himself with a reliably orthodox identity.

Mexico was on or even beyond one border of the Latin world. DAHLBERG, on the other hand, discusses a literary environment on another cultural fault line: the Neo-Latin writings produced in Sweden, Denmark and Russia in connection with the Great Northern War. Polemic writing as a rule has a two-fold public: on the one hand it re-enforces the sense of grievance, triumph, etc. on the side with which the writer himself identifies, on the other it intends to communicate contempt and disdain to the opponent. This system collapsed when one party of a polemic had no reading public with knowledge of Latin. Thus in this conflict the Neo-Latin production by the Czar's propaganda minister, the Jesuit-educated Feofan Prokopovich, was exclusively aimed at the enemy and provided satisfaction to the home public only through translations into Russian. Swedish Latin

writings ridiculing Prokopovich, on the other hand, could mostly please Swedish readers, but annoyed only a very limited number of the enemy.

Austriana (1687), one of the Neo-Latin novels presented by SCHAFFENRATH, nearly contemporary with the *Simplicissimus*, and preceding *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by only thirty years, straddles the two worlds of its reader and its narrative with a certain virtuosity. The storyline is monolingually Latin, even though the plot is set in Arabia and in an ill-defined Mesopotamia and East Africa. The queen sings Latin songs in prison, one of the villains has a Latin device (p.120), and in general a common language – rather in the manner of one of the more turbulent Handel operas set in the East – is taken for granted. The interior Latin communicative space of the novel transgresses into the Latin cultural sphere of its reader continuously. Already the title contains a double message: it indicates the plot (it is the name of the main heroine) and expresses the author’s political allegiance to *Austria* explicitly. The Latin device mentioned had ‘in real life’ belonged to the French king Henri II (1519–1559); the queen’s songs have interwoven bits and pieces of Latin catholic hymns. In the end, fact and fiction unite: in the novel’s kingdom the poets after the happy end begin to write down the events, amongst them our writer, who begins the last sentence of the novel with *Ego* and ends it with a riff on the dynastic AEIOU of the Habsburg empire.

The identity put forward by writing in Latin obviously did not mean the same to all the Latin speakers (or writers) appearing in this volume. Writing in Latin allowed them to claim status for themselves and the political entities they belonged to, such as the Italian humanists setting themselves up against French medieval literature (PADE). It also allowed them to formulate allegiance to prominent parts of society, heightening the significance of political successes by dressing them in a prestigious literary vest (GWYNNE) or just generally supporting the political vicissitudes of their country (DAHLBERG) or ruling dynasty (SCHAFFENRATH). A public sphere larger than the state (and its opponent) – although retaining a link to the state – was envisaged by some authors: Camden’s sober annals were meant to influence a larger public via their (ultimately failed) reception into a larger work of history (EATOUGH), and the *Threnodia Hiberno-Catholica* of the Irish Maurice Conry was an appeal for help for the oppressed Irish to a larger European public (TJOELKER).

The Neo-Latin writings discussed in this volume are thus very much a product of the ‘public sphere’, a term which Habermas defined “as the arena where private persons who gathered outside of the state [...] discuss matters of public import, including issues concerning the state”.¹¹ Habermas’

¹¹ Quotation from Squires 2010, 608.

definition emphasizes an important aspect where the public sphere known to our writers was different from later developments: a public sphere outside of the *res publica* would not have been an attractive proposition for the writers presented in this volume. All of them saw themselves and their products as part of the body politic, of the *res publica*. A public sphere in which the state took no interest would have robbed their writings of a great part of their perceived importance. Erasmus had in 1504 insisted on the importance of the public sphere as the communicative space where panegyric writing would exert its effect: not only would the prince addressed be encouraged to acquire the virtues ascribed to him (an optimistic proposition at best), but it was “in the public interest” (*publicitus interest*) that the subjects of the prince – even (or especially) when he was undeserving – respected their ruler (GWYNNE). Thus the public addressed in many of the texts discussed here differed in important aspects from a modern cultural elite. It needed to be literate in Latin to a high degree so as to be able to decode praise, blame, insult, and allegiance, which in many cases would be expressed only as a subtext within the imitative texture of the text. It would need to have the economic means to acquire the texts as such and it would need to have some kind of allegiance to, or at least connection with, the ruler or polity in question.

The communities that the writers in this volume expressed allegiance to were quite different from each other, and the importance of Latin and the reasons for using it varied no less. Latin was the prestige language of Italian humanists; it maintained its prestige throughout the period under purview. From the sixteenth century onwards, the fact that Latin (more than other European languages) allowed communication across political and linguistic borders became more and more important. Obviously, the Franciscan school curriculum in Mexico reflected the cultural values imported by the Franciscans from Europe. Latin allowed not only a participation in this value system, but also effective communication with the Spanish crown. Camden, in using Latin, could look for a readership beyond the British Isles, and certainly the Irish monks in Innsbruck were dependent on Latin as their medium of communication. The combination of these two functions was an ongoing process of renegotiation, and outcomes were as varied as the situations they proceeded from: no one other language could match the versatility of Latin for the diverse needs of early modern European society.

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