

# Renæssanceforum

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## Latin and the Vernaculars in Early Modern Europe

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## Preface

The Latin/vernacular bilingualism of early modern culture is a phenomenon which only in recent years has begun to attract serious scholarly attention. The dynamics of the multilingual culture of early modern Europe go from rivalry to cross-fertilisation, from an agenda of defence of Latin – or matter-of-fact statements of the superiority of the Latin language – and newly found assertiveness of the vernaculars to concerted bilingual strategies of propaganda and outreach. The studies assembled in this volume throw spotlights on a diverse array of factors in play in the multilingual culture of early modern Europe.

The Italian humanists of the Quattrocento trying to come to grips with the bilingualism of their culture had to develop a theoretical framework and a Latin terminology for the relationship between Latin and the *volgare*, since – even though some humanists believed that ancient Rome had already been bilingual – such phenomena were discussed, if at all, only indirectly in classical literature. Ramminger’s contribution examines the spectacular rise in the fifteenth century of the central terminus technicus, the word *vernaculus*, also used in the title of this collection. A century later, the situation had changed dramatically. In the literary landscape of sixteenth-century Italy Latin was inexorably receding against Tuscan in the hierarchy of languages. Laureys brings forward the little known *Pro lingua Latina* of Gabriel Barrius, which tries to shore up support for Latin by emphasizing both its international importance, its preeminence over all other languages as the language of the Christian faith, and (by arguing for a muted form of Ciceronianism) its versatility.

Despite its theoretical loss of status, Latin was not easily replaced, and all over Europe a dazzling variety of bi- and multilingual dictionaries tried to link rapidly evolving vernaculars to the semantic norms offered by Latin. Adams and Zeeberg throw a light on the complexities of Danish-Latin dictionary production of the Renaissance, the bewildering variance of the information offered, and discuss modern strategies to make a coherent database out of a mass of bilingual entries which are neither consistently spelt nor arranged in compatible systems. Due to the asynchronous spread of Latin humanist culture, the literary landscape of early sixteenth-century Europe is rather uneven. When Renaissance humanism arrived in Denmark, Paulus Helie, a Danish intellectual and translator of Erasmus, was in the vanguard of the new cultural and literary movement. His contribution to Danish Renaissance culture is put into relief by Rübner Jørgensen’s analysis of Helie’s adroit combination of strands of medieval and classical Latin lit-

erary traditions. At the same time in France, as shown by Ford, the ambience of the *Pléiade* is characterized by a strong influence of Italian vernacular Petrarchist poetry on a literary production proceeding in Latin as well as French. The functional difference between Latin and the vernacular is nowhere as evident as in parallel publications of similar content. A spectacular example is the *Imago Primi Saeculi* and its Dutch adaptation, the *Afbeeldinghe*, published in celebration of the first centenary of the Society of Jesus. The differences in content and presentation between the Latin *Imago* and its Dutch adaptation are the subject of Tjoelker's contribution, which focuses on their use as rhetorical instruments for Jesuit propaganda.

The threefold Roman, Celtic, and Anglo-Norman past of the British Isles offered considerable challenges to the establishing of a unified cultural identity. One of the most successful attempts was William Camden's *Britannia*, a 'wikipedia' before the word. Eatough discusses the framework offered by Camden which reconciles Roman traditions and the traces left by later inhabitants of the British isles, and integrates them into a consolidated view of the social fabric of contemporary Britain. The trilingual identity of sixteenth-century Ireland serves as the background for Sidwell's examination of Dermotus O'Meara's epic poem *Ormonius*, which weaves together Gaelic vernacular traditions, the influence of the English-speaking culture of the politically dominant stratum of society and the force of the literary tradition of Latin epic poetry. Certainly, in the competitive environment of transnational European culture, literary artefacts in the vernacular could only play a role if accessible in Latin translation. The unabated importance of Latin as a vehicular language well into the seventeenth century is thrown into relief by Harris and Nic Cárthaigh who showcase Latin translations of Old Irish poetry through which Irish emigrés attempted to bolster their claims concerning the richness of the vernacular Catholic Irish culture.

The articles contained in this volume are based on papers presented at the conference "The Role of Latin in Early Modern Europe", hosted by the University of Aarhus, held at the Sandbjerg conference centre, 17.–20.5.2007, and organized by Marianne Pade (Aarhus).

Other aspects of the interaction between Latin and the vernacular were treated by several papers read at the conference which are not published here for a variety of reasons. Amongst these were Hans Carl Finsen (Aarhus): "Du Bellay, La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francoyse (1549)", Andrew Laird (Warwick): "Latin and Mexican Identity: Indigenous and creole cultures 1550–1680", Ruth Monreal (Hamburg): "Basic Nahuatl for Seventeenth Century Travellers. On the Linguistic Information Given in De Laet's *Orbis Novus* (1633)", Claudia Schindler (Hamburg): "Gastfreundliche Indianer, erfinderische Chinesen, ahnenstolze Japaner: Zum Bild der

Fremden in der neulateinischen Lehrdichtung”, Lene Schøsler (Copenhagen), “The Rise and the Fall of the French -ant-Construction. The importance of (alleged) Classical Imitation for the Survival of a Construction”, and Cathy Shrank (Sheffield): “Learned ‘cottacyon’. Latinate learning in sixteenth-century English cheap print”.

Further papers illustrated a broad range of topics from neo-Latin literature and early modern culture: Christoph Brandhuber (Salzburg): “*Nulli parcat honori* – Latin Baroque Epitaphs in Salzburg”, George Hinge (Aarhus): “Linguistic consciousness in Erasmus Desiderius’ *De conscribendis epistolis* and *De recta Latini Graecique sermonis pronuntiatione*”, Heinz Hofmann (Tübingen): “The Shield of Aeneas in the Hands of Columbus. Weapons and their Decorations in the Old and New World”, Ruth Kritzer (Salzburg): “How the *urbs* looked like – advising the public of Roman antiquities”, Cristina Neagu (Oxford): “The influence of the Flemish school of illumination over the English book market – Horenbout, Dürer and Cardinal Wolsey’s commissions for ‘Cardinal College’”, Gerhard Petersmann (Salzburg): “Ancient history and historical figures at the *Alma Mater Benedictina Salisburgensis*”.

The conference was part of the “Texts & Contexts” series of conferences which explore the factors influencing the composition and reception of Latin texts in the Early Modern Age. Previous conferences have been held in Lampeter–Cork, Salzburg and Tübingen. The conference was generously supported by the University of Aarhus and the The Danish Council for Independent Research: Humanities.

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Trine Arlund Hass & Johann Rammingner, editors of *Renæssanceforum 6*

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