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**THE ROLE OF LATIN IN THE
EARLY MODERN WORLD:
Linguistic identity and
nationalism 1350–1800**

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Preface

José Manuel Barroso's plea in his 2011 presidential address to the European Commission for greater integration in the EU recalls another Portuguese politician's advocacy of European unity in the interest of smaller nations, 150 years before. In *A Guerra e a Democracia* (1870), António José Enes proposed the foundation of a "Pan-Latin state" (made up of Belgium, France, Spain, Italy and Portugal) in order to stand up to the already existing Germanic and Slavic federations. Following a congress in Madrid in 1902, another Pan-Latin alliance – between France, Spain and the South American nations – was urged as a response to what became President Roosevelt's "corollary" of the Monroe Doctrine, asserting the United States' right to military intervention in Latin America.

The focus of the present collection, *The role of Latin in the early modern world: Linguistic identity and nationalism 1350–1800*, is on authors who chose to write in the Latin language, prior to the emergence of the nation state, not the more modern question of Pan-Latin identity. Nonetheless, the Pan-Latin movements have one thing in common with an important attribute of Latin itself in the "republic of letters": the protection and promotion of smaller cultures, countries, or language groups. That function of Latin in the early modern age has long been overlooked. The fundamental aim of the discussions assembled here has been to explore a number of cases, in Europe and beyond, in which Latin served as a convenient vehicle for the definition or expression of linguistic, regional and incipient national identities.

Such an end might at first appear to have been best achieved through the use of modern languages, especially if those languages are seen as helping to constitute a particular cultural identity. Yet Latin came to convey ethnic and national difference in all kinds of ways. It could be a medium for the transmission or promotion of local knowledge, for which classical history and antiquarianism were also appropriated. Works of literature and even literary canons established in Latin could also dignify the history of a particular territory, or of an ethnic or linguistic group. Latin also realised this objective in other contexts – for instance as an element of political or confessional propaganda, involving the use of pictures as well as words. The example of Italian humanism deserves first mention both because of its primacy in chronological terms and because of the extent of its impact on the rest of the Latinized world. For fifteenth-century Italian humanists, the use of Latin was nearly always characterized by a disdainful rejection of the vernacular. Nevertheless, Marianne PADE argues, it is thanks to their ex-

traordinary influence that Latin and its heritage remained a defining feature of the modern Italian cultural landscape.¹

Similar considerations apply to authors and texts from other countries. The classical tradition has always been regarded as an effective guarantor of the past history of many modern nations. Hence its legacy came to be used or abused whenever the search for an uninterrupted lineage from antiquity was perceived as an urgent need. This process naturally secured *gravitas* and glory for a nation, but it could also provide historians with a valuable heuristic tool. Camden's choice of Latin for his masterpiece of historiography, *Britannia* (first edition, 1586), may appear to be directed at a learned and supranational audience; at the same time, as Geoffrey EATOUGH shows, the work makes a genuine attempt to acknowledge the importance of Roman antiquity for early modern Britain – to such an extent that Britons are invited to view their own identity in terms of habits and customs derived from the Roman world.

The desire to provide a convincing portrayal of a people's ancient past would push humanist scholars to produce sophisticated forgeries, for which the field of epigraphy was the perfect testing ground. An eloquent example pertaining to early modern Spain is proposed by Joan CARBONELL MANILS, Helena GIMENO PASCUAL and Gerard GONZÁLEZ GERMAIN: they highlight the scale of the phenomenon in relation to the spread of scholarly documentation and techniques, and highlight its implications for the methods and agenda of the modern discipline of epigraphy. Even in cases where one would have expected resistance, if not outright hostility, to the overpowering presence of Latin, the final result is the substantial assimilation of Latin culture, rather than the rejection of it. Sixteenth-century French humanism as it was represented by Henri Estienne is a case in point: Estienne evidently aspired to challenge the supremacy of the Italians by eschewing the literary culture of Latin in order to favour that of Greek, as a more appropriate model for the French. Yet the standards and criteria he devised, as David COWLING suggests, reveal a significant adherence to the thinking of Cicero and Quintilian.

While Latin thus underscored the dominance of emerging early modern nations by bestowing upon them the lustre of enduring prestige, it also showed itself as an effective vehicle for political debate, polemic and propaganda on contemporary issues. The examples offered here are illuminating: Antonio de Nebrija's historiographical theory and his development of allusion as a rhetorical and political weapon (Felipe GONZÁLEZ VEGA);

¹ The paper by Carlo CARUSO on humanist discussions of canonicity in relation to the "Three Florentine Crowns" (Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio), could not be presented for publication.

the use of Latin in political tracts written during the Catalan Revolt of 1640–1652 (Alejandro COROLEU); the ideological manipulation perpetrated by Alonso de Santa Cruz in his Castilian translation of Francesc Tarafa's *De origine* of 1553 (Eulàlia MIRALLES); and the debate on Irish and English identities to be discerned in the Latin works of John Lynch and Richard O'Ferrall (Nienke TJOELKER). In such instances, the adoption of Latin does not appear to have been conditioned by a misplaced sense of decorum or untimely nostalgia—rather it is the consequence of a considered and purposeful sense of literary convenience and political opportunity.

The themes of many of the essays just mentioned bear on a central aspect of this collaborative enquiry: the part Latin played in the process of legitimising the identities of ethnic and linguistic minorities. The relationship of Latin to languages as diverse as Catalan, Gaelic and Welsh in Europe, and Nahuatl in America, has implications for linguistic and cultural expression, recognition of ethnic difference, attempts at assimilation, or resistance to it. Andrew LAIRD examines the construction of an antiquarian legacy for Mexico through a tradition of Latin historiography and poetry cultivated by Jesuit authors, who extended and adapted to the New World the principles of antiquarian research previously tested in the search for early modern Spain's classical past. Latin epic poetry inspired early modern quasi-didactic epics like Dermot O'Meara's *Ormonius* (1615). Keith SIDWELL demonstrates that this narrative of the heroic deeds of Thomas Butler, 10th Earl of Ormond offers a profound reflection on cultural and political identity in seventeenth-century Ireland against the background of English dominion.

A final comment may be reserved for those uses of Latin outside the literary and scholarly sphere. The ancient language retained a communicative power that equalled, and at times surpassed, that of well-established national languages until relatively recent times. Sílvia CANALDA I LLOBET and Cristina FONTCUBERTA I FAMADAS investigate the use of Latin in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catalan art in relation to the function and status of art works and the debate about sacred images instigated by the Council of Trent. In a paper read in Barcelona but not included in the present publication, Elisabeth KLECKER illustrated the role of Latin in the verbal and visual propaganda of Emperor Charles VI (1711–1740).

It is hoped that the vitality of the different traditions surveyed in these papers will prompt further reflections on the wide range of roles Latin had in the articulation of cultural and national identity. The enduring perception of Latin as offering access to diverse forms of expression, mainly (but not only) of the literary and scholarly kind, shows that in the period covered by the present volume there were wide cohorts of readers eager to absorb the lengthy and substantial works in Latin which so many authors were inclined

to compose. Beside the powerfully evocative but also unsettling presentation of Latin's power as a universally recognized "empire of a sign" in Françoise Waquet's deservedly acclaimed book, a different and complementary picture should emerge from the essays collected here – a picture of Latin partaking of the nature and aspirations of a variety of vernacular cultures under a variety of conditions. The versatile and adaptable medium of Latin, refined over two thousand years of history, provided those cultures with a unique and potent means of self-definition and self-promotion.

Thus the relation between Latin and the modern vernaculars in literature and in history does not always have to be configured in terms of their mutual opposition. It was this consideration which first prompted the organisation of the conference on *The role of Latin in the early modern world: Latin, linguistic identity and nationalism (1350–1800)*, at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Casa Convalescència, 5 and 6 May 2010, which in turn led to the present collection. That event was very generously supported by the Warwick Santander Fund, as well the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at Durham University, the Department of Classics and Ancient History and the Centre for Study of the Renaissance at Warwick University. We would like to thank the staff at Casa Convalescència, and particularly Anna Pardo Lloveras, for all their practical help during the conference. The editors and authors are also deeply grateful to the Editorial Board of *Renæssanceforum* not only for the opportunity to publish these papers, but above all for their extremely valuable suggestions and acumen in editing this collection of essays.

Carlo Caruso, Alejandro Coroleu & Andrew Laird

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