

Introduction

L. B. T. Houghton, Gesine Manuwald and Lucy R. Nicholas

Neo-Latin as a literary medium

The composition of works in Latin prose and verse formed a major part of literary production in Britain between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries; the number of works written in Latin during this period should not be underestimated, though it is difficult to provide precise figures as these works are now spread across the world and are not always easily accessible. The authors of this vast body of material include some of the most celebrated names in English literature, for instance Sir Thomas More, Francis Bacon, John Milton and George Herbert, as well as a host of lesser-known figures. No serious study of literary culture in Britain during this period can afford to neglect the Latin output of poets, prose-writers and playwrights, much of which is accomplished and enjoyable literature in its own right. This volume aims to give an impression of the range and quality of British Neo-Latin writing over the course of these centuries, by presenting a selection of examples that, between them, encompass a variety of literary genres, many different subjects and an assortment of local and historical circumstances.

Why did British authors choose to express themselves and to address their readers in a language and in literary forms inherited from ancient Rome, rather than (or as well as) in other forms of expression available to them? There are several reasons, any number of which may have been applicable in any particular instance. One is a desire for durability: for much of this period, the triumph of the vernacular, which with hindsight may seem so inevitable, must have appeared far from a foregone conclusion. Literary ventures in English, French and Italian, for example, however distinguished, had yet to stand the test of time, whereas the creative achievements of classical antiquity had already endured for a millennium and a half, seemingly offering a ringing endorsement of Horace's claim to have produced 'a monument more lasting than bronze' (*monumentum aere perennius*, *Odes* 3.30.1), of Virgil's promise to confer poetic immortality on the subjects of his epic (*Aeneid* 9.446–9) and of Ovid's defiant prediction of his continuing survival despite the ravages of

time, violent destruction and the wrath of Jupiter (*Metamorphoses* 15.871–9). Not only had these ancient masterpieces proved their perennial staying power; they continued to form the principal element in the education of the literate élite in Britain and elsewhere, shaping their notions of literary value and decorum. To what higher goal could authors aspire than to fashion works that might stand alongside the classics which had provided the bulk of their schooling and which, in consequence, had probably given them the initial inspiration to try their hand at literary composition? Moreover, Latin remained the language of learning throughout Europe and beyond, and the literary forms practised by Roman authors commanded universal recognition within the republic of letters irrespective of political and confessional allegiances, meaning that those who sought to reach an audience beyond the shores of their native land had a strong incentive to adopt this international medium. This helps to explain the production of works in both Latin and vernacular editions and the appearance of translations of English works into Latin, as writers endeavoured to gain for their works and ideas the widest possible diffusion.

At a distance of several centuries, the corpus of classical Latin literature may have been felt to possess a certain monumental timelessness, attractive to Neo-Latin authors hoping to win for themselves a comparable literary immortality. The practice of *imitatio* was a fundamental precondition of much of the Neo-Latin literature of the time, and manuals offering guidance on the best authors to emulate proliferated during the period. Even so, early modern readers of the Classics knew that these ancient works had been produced in response to specific contemporary circumstances, and they saw that the techniques and forms employed by writers such as Cicero, Virgil, Horace and Tacitus to address the pressing concerns of their time could likewise be drafted into service to comment on their own societies and situations. The adoption of Latin forms of expression conferred cultural prestige on the undertakings (and, not least importantly, the patrons) of the present day, inviting comparison with the past glories of the ancients and asserting an equivalent historical significance. This could have led – and in some cases did lead – to artistic sterility and stagnation, a frigid, backward-looking replication of inert and obsolete cultural forms. Yet the would-be successors of the canonical authors of antiquity were keenly aware of the challenge posed by their recycling of the terminology and literary templates of their predecessors: for both early modern writers and their audiences, part of the appeal of producing works in the language and generic forms of ancient Rome lay precisely in the opportunity it extended to reshape these venerable models into something new and specifically relevant to their own time. It was through recognition of the changes wrought on patterns inherited

from an earlier age and directed towards a different civilization that the originality and ingenuity of the Neo-Latin writers could best be appreciated. For the most talented authors, the evocation of classical literature not only appropriated for their own era something of the grandeur that was Rome, but was also a jumping-off point, a springboard for innovative forays in directions never imagined by their ancient forerunners.

The historical and literary importance of some Neo-Latin works (Thomas More's *Utopia*, for instance [Text 1]) has never been in doubt. In other cases, illuminating and attractive items have suffered serious neglect, surviving only in manuscript form or lurking unnoticed in early printed editions or rarely perused anthologies. The study of Neo-Latin literature and culture therefore presents exciting opportunities for pioneering work on overlooked but potentially rewarding material. It also embraces a range of different academic disciplines, comprising classical and later Latin and vernacular languages; ancient, medieval and early modern literatures; social, political, cultural and intellectual history; history of art and of science; religious and philosophical studies; and manuscript studies and book history (this list is by no means exhaustive). Neo-Latin writing spread to every corner of Europe, and through conquest, colonialism and evangelization to the East and the New World, making it – by the standards of the time – a truly global phenomenon. It was practised by Catholics, Protestants and sceptics; by men, women and children; and by religious mystics, calculating diplomats and experimental scientists. It was used to celebrate births, marriages, accessions, coronations, military victories, peace treaties and revolutions, and to mourn deaths, defeats, natural disasters, original sin and broken hearts. Its subjects could be taken from the past, the present or the future; from the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms; from the principles of mathematics or the discoveries of medicine (Girolamo Fracastoro's poem *Syphilis* gave its name to the disease). Literature in Latin could be harnessed to convey the full spectrum of human emotions; it could be deployed on almost any occasion, for intimate communications and personal exchanges as well as for public pronouncements; and it could be wielded to attack vested interests and subvert political and religious authority, as well as to entrench distinctions of class and status. This versatility, combined with the unprecedented proliferation granted to early modern books by the printing press, only served to amplify the enormous quantity of Neo-Latin material now awaiting attention from students in the many branches of learning on which it touches.

In recent years scholarship in this field has been put on a much firmer footing by the publication of three fundamental reference works: *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World* (Ford, Bloemendal and Fantazzi 2014),

The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin (Knight and Tilg 2015) and *A Guide to Neo-Latin Literature* (Moul 2017). There is also a new single-volume history of Neo-Latin literature (Korenjak 2016), as well as a number of series dedicated to various aspects of Neo-Latin studies (the *I Tatti Renaissance Library*, for example, makes available texts and translations of Latin works by authors of the Italian Renaissance, while *Noctes Neolatinae* and *Officina Neolatina* publish texts by writers from a wider range of backgrounds; the *NeoLatina* series features collections of essays on the Latin productions of particular authors). Two journals, *Humanistica Lovaniensia* and *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch*, are exclusively devoted to presenting research on Neo-Latin topics, and the many volumes of *Acta* from the conferences of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies (IANLS) contain a wealth of relevant material. Among older works, Jozef IJsewijn's *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies* (originally published in 1977; revised edition, IJsewijn and Sacré 1990–8) and W. Leonard Grant's *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral* (Grant 1965) remain valuable, as do the anthologies edited by Laurens and Balavoine (1975), Perosa and Sparrow (1979), Nichols (1979) and McFarlane (1980). Newer anthologies, differing from the present volume in scope, approach and emphasis, include Riley (2016) and Minkova (2017).

British Neo-Latin literature

The very notion of a British Neo-Latin literature immediately prompts several questions. The first is a most basic one: what counts as 'Britain'? Then, too, what exactly did British Neo-Latin involve? Given the international coordinates of Latin as a language and a form of expression, is it even possible to treat British Neo-Latin as a discrete phenomenon? How did individuals in Britain access Latin? What was its relationship with the vernaculars of the British Isles? Was the production of Neo-Latin across the regions of Britain the same or different? Such issues are in part addressed here, and they can productively be considered afresh by readers when going through the individual sections of this anthology.

The nomenclature of the areas comprising the British Isles is surprisingly complicated. In this book 'Britain' is used as a geographical term devoid of any political baggage. However, since some of the entries in this volume relate expressly to the history of the British Isles or parts of it, some description of the relationships between the various regions through the early modern period may be helpful. At the start of the sixteenth century the number of states in the largest part, 'Great Britain', stood at two: the Kingdom of England (including Wales) and the Kingdom of Scotland. The once independent

Principality of Wales had come under the control of English monarchs during the thirteenth century. The accession of James VI of Scotland to the English Crown (as James I) in 1603 brought about a personal union between the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, but a full political union was only achieved a century later through an Act of Parliament in 1707. The Kingdom of Ireland was gradually brought under English control between 1541 and 1691, with a formal union between the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland being effected in 1801. There were then many cultural and political points of intersection between 'Britain' and Ireland throughout the period covered by this volume, the modern Republic of Ireland being declared independent and separate only in the twentieth century. This notwithstanding, this anthology does not include examples of Irish Neo-Latin; a helpful series of studies is already available in *Making Ireland Roman: Irish Neo-Latin Writers and the Republic of Letters*, edited by J. Harris and K. Sidwell (2009).

There exists a long tradition of Latin writing in the British Isles. A fair-sized corpus of Latin texts from the Anglo-Saxon era survives, and considerably more from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Much of this material can be accounted for by the fact that Latin was the medium in which universal, transnational Christendom operated. By the time of the early modern period Latin composition in Britain was not something new, but in style it was quite different from the late medieval Latin that immediately preceded it. The important change of approach came in Britain around 1530–40, when the Latin language increasingly ceased to exemplify its medieval configuration and interests and instead adopted a more classical linguistic register. While scholars are careful to avoid suggesting an overly linear development from medieval or scholastic Latin to Renaissance Latin, there was an appreciable surge in British Neo-Latin that embraced a stylistically more ambitious and self-consciously classical form.

The practice of Neo-Latin writing was established in Britain by many of the same stimuli that had powered a cultural transformation across Europe, most crucially Renaissance humanism, and ideas about linguistic methodology and the perfection of Latin were often informed by contact with the Continent. Neo-Latin writers from the British Isles frequently travelled to mainland Europe as part of their education or career: for example, George Buchanan (Text 3) and John Leland (Text 2) spent time in France, and John Milton (Text 13) and Thomas Gray (Text 18) in Italy. There was further cross-pollination when celebrated European scholars were invited to the British Isles, where they could disseminate their ideas more effectively, the most important example being Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. Many of the Latin texts of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales were produced by

the same forces as in mainland Europe: hopes for patronage, geographical discoveries, the Protestant and Counter-Reformations and the scientific revolution. In many ways it is legitimate to understand the Neo-Latin showcased in this anthology as a microcosm of European Neo-Latin: this is surely how the authors featured in this volume would have viewed their use of the language. Yet, with the benefit of hindsight, it is also valid to regard British Neo-Latin texts as a distinct category, one that fused European and national, ancient and modern thought, that interacted with the English language and that was rooted in an inter-cultural exchange between the four areas of the British Isles. A good proportion of the Neo-Latin works were, moreover, shaped by historical, political and social circumstances and events that were peculiar to the British Isles or to specific parts of them.

When reading the extracts in this book, one should be mindful of the fact that Latin composition was not an arcane activity involving a niche language for the very few. It is true that the British Isles were late participants in the Renaissance, but in the early sixteenth century pioneering figures like the enormously influential Thomas More (Text 1) paved the way for the reception and assimilation of new learning on the shores of Britain. This was followed by an expansion of schools organized around a rigorously schematized Latin pedagogy and the concurrent development of Latin textbooks written by English schoolmasters and educationalists like John Colet and William Lily, both of St Paul's School in London. Latin, the *lingua franca* of Europe, came to be deeply embedded in many parts of the British educational system. Most students would have their first encounter with the language around the age of six or seven, though some theorists believed that the learning of Latin should start in the cradle. Instruction in the language was certainly the single most significant component of secondary education, with several hours a day tending to be devoted to Latin and lessons often delivered in the ancient tongue. School turned young boys into readers and translators of Latin, but students were also exposed throughout their schooling to a constant diet of ancient literature. Not all students followed the Latin cursus within the formal system of secondary education, and a limited number (male and less commonly female) were educated via, for example, private tutors. Whatever the educational route pursued, the substance of these classical texts was formative and helped shaped the contours of young imaginations.

The universities of England, Scotland and Ireland were the main hubs for continued education in Latin, and they provided a venue where the language enjoyed a particular prominence. Latin had been a long-standing feature of higher education, but curriculum changes during the sixteenth century, ushered in by the demands of the Renaissance and Reformation and supported by successive regimes, placed even greater emphasis on classical

Latin and its literature. New posts in Latin and Greek were established. An Arts curriculum termed the *studia humanitatis*, which focused on grammar, rhetoric, poetry, ancient history and moral philosophy, became a compulsory part of a university degree course. The thinking behind these innovations was that an education centred on Latin would not only help nurture reason and eloquence, but also prepare students for a profession in education, the Church, law, politics or medicine. Although the primary function of universities was not the production of Neo-Latin literature, universities were nonetheless important venues for facilitating it. University libraries held many of the classical works that gave shape to British Neo-Latin composition; they also fostered and reinforced an affinity for the Latin tongue and sponsored occasional productions in the ancient language. At universities in the British Isles, Latin was the language of instruction, examination and even conversation. A significant portion of the Neo-Latin corpus was composed by authors when they were still students.

As a result of all this, Latin, based on classical models, came to be used across the British Isles as a matter of course, in a range of fields and by a broad spectrum of people. There are even examples of merchants (in Scotland) in the seventeenth century writing quantities of competent Latin. Women are less conspicuous in the production of Latin, mainly because of their exclusion from the education system, and the fact that female spheres were often associated with the vernacular rather than the Latin language. However, there are a number of important exceptions. Female royals were given the same education as their male counterparts. Princess Elizabeth, for example (later Queen Elizabeth I: Text 5), was instructed in advanced Latin and Greek composition. Other women, including the noblewoman Elizabeth Hoby (Text 6), attained a proficiency at least comparable to some of the more talented males of the period.

Latin was so integral to British literature that one might reasonably ask, not why people of the British Isles wrote in Latin, but why people would choose to write in English, Welsh, Gaelic or Scots. Indeed, certain writers featured here (for example, Walter Haddon: Text 4) only wrote in Latin and were openly adamant that serious works ought to be put into Latin. On the other hand, authors such as Thomas More (Text 1), John Milton (Text 13) and George Herbert wrote sometimes in Latin and sometimes in English. Some texts, such as George Ruggle's *Ignoramus* (Text 10), even combined more than one language. Early modern Britain, like mainland Europe, enjoyed a bilingualism whereby individuals would use Latin in addition to their own native tongue (e.g. Text 11). Modern scholarship is only just beginning to appreciate the complex interaction between Latin and the vernacular. It is increasingly demonstrating that Latin culture co-existed with the vernacular

in vibrant ways and could even enhance the vernacular tongues. It seems probable that most periods and remits of early modern thought had to continuously reformulate their position relative to the cultural matrix of Neo-Latin and the vernacular.

The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in Britain can boast some of the finest works of Neo-Latin literature in Europe. The production of Neo-Latin, however, was not necessarily uniform across the British Isles. English authors produced much of the Neo-Latin that survives. This was to a large degree owing to the pre-eminence of England's leading schools, such as Eton, Westminster, St Paul's and Winchester, and its twin bastions of classical learning, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. But Scotland too stands out for its Latinity. In 1500 Scotland could boast three universities – St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen – as compared with two in England and none in Ireland or Wales. A highly cultivated Scottish Court also had an impact. It is generally misleading to suggest that, following the Reformation, Latin was the preserve of either Protestants or Catholics, but it does appear that the vast majority of the accomplished Neo-Latinists from Scotland (George Buchanan [Text 3] and Andrew Melville, for example) belong to the Protestant camp; the Catholic Adam King (Text 8) is an exception. Welsh Neo-Latin is less well represented: Wales lacked the great power-houses of education, and it is noteworthy that John Owen, the Welsh epigrammatist, was educated at Winchester and Oxford in England (Text 9). Conversely, Neo-Latin writing in Ireland was more common, Latin being one of its principal languages. This was despite the fact that it was competing with a deep-rooted Irish literary culture, where law and medicine were based more heavily on Irish Gaelic than Latin or Greek. The Neo-Latin of early modern Ireland was outward-looking and made fundamental contributions, for instance, to the European Counter-Reformation.

Overview of Neo-Latin literary genres

The Neo-Latin writers of the early modern period selected and blended elements from earlier works, and from their own contemporaries, to create innovative and sophisticated forms. Consequently, a wide range of literary genres is on display in this anthology. The process of identifying a literary category to which a work belongs may to modern eyes seem a rather artificial or pedantic exercise. Yet, for the early moderns, generic distinctions and categories, each of which implied and necessitated certain techniques, aesthetics and etiquette, were of primary concern. In verse the choice of metre was of vital importance, and in prose an author's particular style,

lexicon and formal arrangement could signal to the reader a set of expectations about the type of text on offer. This generic preoccupation and the full nature and range of genres cannot be properly comprehended if we only take account of early modern works in the vernacular. Neo-Latin works offer a much more diverse picture, often also augmenting and compounding the generic classifications that were established in the ancient canon. The full range of Neo-Latin production of this period defies exhaustive summary, for there was a profusion of writings in every field of Latin, experimentation with every known literary genre and the development of new ones. This anthology can offer only a small fraction of the broader picture and outline some of the genres readers will encounter within Neo-Latin literature.

Under the broad headings of verse and prose, there was a myriad of sometimes overlapping sub-divisions. In the area of verse, some of the sections of this anthology exhibit what is often called 'occasional' poetry. This term is used to designate verse produced for a specific occasion. Such pieces were often rooted in a special set of social experiences, such as royal births, anniversaries, bereavement and so on. While such 'occasional' poetry does not constitute a genre *per se*, several established genres originated as occasional works, including *epithalamia* (wedding songs) and victory odes. Walter Haddon's verse marking the coronation of Elizabeth I in 1559 (Text 4) represents a type of occasional poetry, one that also drew on the classical model of panegyric. Likewise, Elizabeth Hoby's epitaphic poetry, which she composed upon the death of close friends and family, fell within the popular and extensive genre of funerary verse or elegy (Text 6). Certain historical events also generated such strong emotions that a whole raft of poems might be composed on a single theme. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605, for instance, motivated John Milton's *In Quintum Novembris* (Text 13). While this is an extraordinary composition and deserves special attention, it nevertheless counts as just one poem of many (including several others by Milton himself) that commemorated deliverance from Catholic conspiracy. Other events might equally stimulate Latin verse, including the delightful hexameter composition by William Baker about a frost fair on the river Thames during England's Little Ice Age (Text 14).

A more classically anchored genre was lyric. Indebted to the lyric poets of ancient Greece, and developed in Latin most notably by Horace, the genre is marked by its range of complex metres. On display in Text 11 are two Latin versions of the same poem on the precariousness of human power, in different metres: Alcaics and Sapphics. Complicating the issue of genre further here is the fact that the Neo-Latin poems constitute a *translation* of a work in the vernacular, namely an English lyric poem 'Dazel'd thus with height of place' by Sir Henry Wotton.

Another important poetic genre was the epigram. Epigrams are short, pithy poems characterized primarily by their witty turn of thought. This genre found precedent in the classical world, but experienced a spectacular development and growth in the early modern period (see de Beer et al. 2009). A huge range of epigrams, tightly related to the world of things, people, places and events, was produced; they might be used to satirize, praise, commemorate and describe. John Leland's Anglo-Latin epigrams offer a good example of the staggering diversity possible within this genre. Many of his epigrams stem from his profound antiquarian interests, as does a longer poem on the hot springs at Bath (Text 2). Epigrams are ubiquitous in the early modern period, and many of the big names in Renaissance poetry engaged with the form. Thomas More's *Epigrammata* initially brought him more attention than his *Utopia* (Text 1). The genre of epigram is exemplified by the Welsh poet John Owen (Text 9), who mastered the form and whose books of epigrams became some of the most famous and widely imitated Latin verse produced in the period.

If the epigram championed the small-scale, epic represented the large-scale. Epic was the most prestigious and most serious genre of the classical hierarchy, traditionally associated with themes of war and national prowess. Some of the best examples of British Neo-Latin epic were not produced until the seventeenth century and emerged from Scotland. One of them, James Philp's *Grameid* (Text 17), harnessed the epic form as the appropriate mode to chart the 1689 uprising against the Dutch Protestant William of Orange.

Other longer verse forms included verse drama, one of the finest examples of which is Ruggle's aforementioned *Ignoramus*. There was a very lively culture of Neo-Latin verse drama in early modern Britain, supported, in particular, by the public schools and universities. Ruggle's play (Text 10) falls within the genre of comedy, a form that began to dominate dramatic production at the start of the seventeenth century. The satiric focus of this play is an ignorant lawyer, and it is therefore even possible to situate the *Ignoramus* within a yet more specific genre of legal satire, which became fashionable in this period. The satiric spark is likewise in evidence in another of the entries: a biting satire in free verse on the Bishop of Salisbury (Text 16). Although evidence points to the authorship of one seventeenth-century Thomas Brown, it is perhaps no surprise that this anticlerical broadside originally circulated anonymously.

It is sometimes not sufficiently stressed that much of the scientific, philosophical and mathematical scholarship of the early modern period found expression in Latin and even in verse. Didactic poetry seems to have functioned as a generic continuum through the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Authors had recourse to this genre as a means to

expound or refute contemporary scientific viewpoints, which they would package in such a way that it combined both profit and pleasure. This anthology contains several examples of didactic verse. George Buchanan's *De sphaera* (Text 3) was a poetic defence of the geocentric view of the universe against the new heliocentric view, in addition to being a means to encourage students to engage with cosmology. Adam King's *Genethliacon Iesu Christi* (Text 8) provides a good illustration of the interrelated pursuits of science and religion. This poem, whose primary focus is the life of Christ, was also the vehicle for astronomical instruction. The penchant for Neo-Latin astronomical didacticism is arguably reflected in Thomas Gray's poem *Luna habitabilis* (Text 18), which advanced an imaginative (and playful or even satirical) vision of life on the moon and its future relations with Earth. His verse also effectively epitomizes how scientific invention could be mirrored by generic inventiveness on the part of the Latin poet.

Scientific theories were often explored in prose as well as verse, a prime example being Thomas Burnet's *Telluris theoria sacra* (Text 15), one of the best-known geological works of the seventeenth century, which was probably influenced by the philosophy of René Descartes. There was a vast amount of writing in Latin in fields such as science, philosophy, historiography, biography, law and theology, including, for instance, works by Isaac Newton and William Harvey.

Another prose work, chronologically the earliest in this volume and arguably one of the best-known works of Neo-Latin, Thomas More's *Utopia* (Text 1), is an interesting case generically. Although structured, at least in part, as a philosophical dialogue, it is nowadays sometimes loosely referred to as 'fiction', but when More first composed this work, it did not fall into an immediately recognizable 'genre'. Rather, this work was so influential that it inaugurated a whole new genre of utopian writing that would continue to flourish through the following centuries and includes Francis Bacon's *Nova Atlantis*, published more than a century later, in 1624. The early modern period also witnessed the development of Neo-Latin novels, the most accomplished author of such prose fiction being John Barclay. His *Argenis* (Text 12) was one of the best-selling novels of the seventeenth century in any language.

A genre of considerable significance since classical times was oratory. The discovery of many of its key texts injected a new impetus into the art of rhetoric in the early modern period. Three modes of rhetoric that had been delineated in ancient handbooks were often on display, namely deliberative (persuasive/advisory), judicial (legal/forensic) and epideictic (praise/blame), the last of these being by far the most important in early modern times. Rhetoric was in many ways the beating heart of the Renaissance. It was

harnessed in a range of media, most obviously in sermons and orations, though all the literary forms included in this volume draw much of their theoretical basis from rhetoric, and rhetorical skill might be as much on display in poetry as in prose. Oratory as a discipline became associated with morality and notions of citizenship, inspired to a great degree by the classical ideal of the orator as *vir bonus dicendi peritus* ('a good man skilled in speaking'; see Quintilian, *Inst.* 12.1.1), which might explain the high number of epideictic speeches. Text 5 provides a good example of rhetorical proficiency in action: it exhibits two rousing and highly polished speeches by Queen Elizabeth I, which she delivered at the University of Oxford. These orations breathe the classical spirit, and Elizabeth self-consciously roots her words in an established rhetorical framework of motifs and techniques.

Another important channel for the transmission of rhetoric was the epistle or letter. Writing letters had been an art form since antiquity, but as with the epigram, the letter form became a booming business in early modern literary production and was absolutely central to an international community of learned men and women, often termed the 'Republic of Letters,' while also being used as a merely literary vehicle. The letter selected here serves as the preface to William Camden's work on British history and chorography, *Britannia*, and is therefore addressed to the reader (Text 7).

Although the entries in this volume present individual authors producing specific forms and genres of Neo-Latin literature, the vast majority of these figures were responsible for works in a multiplicity of different genres. The strictly delineated academic disciplines and subject divisions of today's schools and universities were then largely absent. Neo-Latinists of the early modern period were people of considerable breadth, Renaissance polymaths, who often composed numerous Latin works on a whole variety of scholarly subjects. Neo-Latin writers usually had more in common with each other than with writers in the vernacular, even when operating in the same genre. For example, those who wrote Neo-Latin drama were primarily not dramatists who happened to write in Latin, but intellectuals who happened to write plays. George Buchanan (Text 3), who articulated his theories of the universe in Latin, also wrote Neo-Latin tragedies, political treatises and history, and men of science were often perfectly at home in the realm of classical literature, the conventions of poetry and religious thought. It was only in the late eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century that a more rigid academic specialization began to emerge, and this development was accompanied by the beginnings of a decline of Latin in British education and public life.

Aims and coverage of this volume

Out of the wealth of material produced in Latin throughout the British Isles between about 1500 and 1800, this volume can only offer a small selection. This selection has not been made at random. Rather, it has been designed in such a way as to offer a rich and diverse medley of texts and to represent the immense variety of literature available, in terms of chronological and geographical distribution as well as literary genres and themes, although, of course, not every possible variety of British Neo-Latin literature can be represented in a volume of this size. This anthology is intended to act as a spur to further exploration of these works of literature and the questions raised by them. Consequently, where possible and appropriate, sections provide references to complete editions and translations of the excerpted texts as well as to secondary literature.

The selected texts are arranged in chronological order, so as to sketch out the development of Neo-Latin literature over time and also to illustrate the way in which this literature engages with contemporary developments. The sequence starts with one of the earliest texts (from the early sixteenth century) that can be regarded as British Neo-Latin literature, on account of its literary ambitions and its reliance on classical literature as a basis (as opposed to, for instance, medieval chronicles). The final entry is a product of the mid-eighteenth century and marks the end of the period in which writing in Latin was an unquestionably important literary medium. While Latin would continue to be used after 1800, it no longer had the same currency or dominance.

The selection includes writers from England, Scotland and Wales, men and women, as well as texts in poetry and prose, both well-known and forgotten. It features literary genres such as epic, epyllion, drama, elegy, epigram, oratory, letters and technical writing. Some of these authors composed pieces in Latin and in English (some also including references to ancient Greek, Scots, Welsh or French), and some had their Latin works published in contemporary English translations. In these cases, comparisons are drawn with their writings in English, or well-known contemporary English translations are printed or referenced.

The accomplished classicism achieved on a stylistic level by many of the authors can run the risk of obscuring how contemporary Neo-Latin literature is. The authors included in this volume were writing about, influenced by and indeed influencing the political and religious controversies, major events and scientific developments of their time. A number of the pieces refer to the most significant and pressing matters of the day, such as the opposition between Protestants and Catholics, the succession of kings and queens in

Britain, the political union between different parts of Britain and the plot to blow up Parliament at Westminster on 5 November 1605. Writing in Latin was a prominent feature of public discourse during this period and, as far as these authors were concerned, the most obvious, appropriate and potent medium to present their accounts.

The entries for the various authors can be read in their chronological sequence; at the same time, they are all self-contained and may be studied selectively and individually, depending on the interests of readers. Each entry opens with an introduction offering the necessary background on the biography of the writer, the context of the work in question and important features of the selected passage. This is followed by the original Latin text accompanied by a modern English translation and attached commentary notes (keyed to line numbers for verse passages and to numerical references within the text in the case of prose texts). Where relevant, a contemporary English translation or other comparative material is also given. Beyond this standard structure, details vary between entries according to what is most appropriate for each author and text, and also what contributors, approaching these texts from different angles, have chosen to highlight as important. These differences of approach are integral to one of the overriding aims of this book, which is to introduce readers not simply to a broad range of texts, but also to the broad spread of possible ways to engage with the study of Neo-Latin. Further considerations such as genre, period and level of difficulty in the Latin add to these permutations.

In order to offer passages that are of intrinsic interest and make sense in themselves, the excerpts provided are of differing lengths, while they are all just tasters and sufficiently short to be read through in one go.

Latin texts: sources and conventions

The beauty of working with early modern texts is that it is possible to consult 'original editions'. Thus, some of the Latin texts in this book have been taken directly from early modern manuscripts or early printed books; some of the popular ones were printed so frequently in the early modern period that a decision had to be made as to which edition should be used for reference. In the case of some entries new modern editions could be adduced, and their versions of the texts have then been compared with the original editions or with manuscripts. The basis for the text given is identified in each instance.

Despite the standardization generally adopted here, the early modern layout of these texts is not unimportant to the study of Neo-Latin. Since the original authors often liaised closely with the printers, the arrangement of the words on

the page, the use of illustrated initials, the choice of typeface or the decision to employ particular abbreviations have to be regarded as potentially meaningful details of a composition.

Early modern practices regarding the presentation of Latin texts can initially seem quite confusing. For the convenience of readers, the majority of texts included in this book have been slightly adjusted and standardized according to modern conventions (often following modern editions of these texts where they exist). For instance, the medial ‘s’, *f*, has been replaced by *s*, and *ij* by *ii*; ligatures such as *æ* and *œ* have been written as two letters *ae* and *oe*, and abbreviations have been resolved. The accentuation of words (diacritics), which was another common feature of the early modern presentation of Latin, has for the most part similarly not been reproduced. Capitalization has also been standardized. On the other hand, some early modern peculiarities of spelling have been retained, since changing these would have meant too much interference with the original text. In all cases where these conventions might affect understanding, explanations are provided in the commentary notes. Moreover, readers of Neo-Latin cannot escape some byzantine (to modern eyes) uses of punctuation. For example, commas were often used (sometimes in order to assist with oral delivery) where they would not be in a modern text, and authors/printers would use an exclamation mark where we would use a question mark. The editors made a conscious decision to let individual contributors determine their own policy on this front to some extent. An idea of the original presentation of a Neo-Latin text can be gained from Text 5, the speeches of Elizabeth I, which presents a basically faithful transcription of the manuscript. The notes on this text aim to help readers to navigate their way around this transcription.

Neo-Latin texts often comprised more than the main text itself. Editions might include elaborate prefaces and dedicatory letters or poems (so-called ‘paratexts’), which can offer intriguing information about the contemporary cultural and intellectual background. A good example is William Camden’s letter that prefaced his monumental history, *Britannia* (Text 7).

As for the Latin texts, the contributors to this volume have sought to produce felicitous renderings into English, but ones that remain very faithful to the Latin. The translations are meant to be helpful, but not definitive. This volume does not provide a word list or a glossed vocabulary; so, for the purposes of independent interpretations, other lexicographical resources might be necessary (for an overview of Neo-Latin reference works and tools see Knight and Tilg 2015: 575–9). Lewis and Short’s *Latin Dictionary* should, for the most part, be sufficient, not least because of the classical configuration of so much of the Latin in the passages provided. ‘Lewis and Short’, given the

broader scope of its coverage of Latin usage, can yield more helpful results than the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* with regard to post-classical Latin texts and their sources. For later Latin coinages and for early modern linguistic nuances, additional sources of information are available, such as Johann Ramminger's *Neulateinische Wortliste* (<http://ramminger.userweb.mwn.de>). A number of Latin dictionaries useful for reading Neo-Latin texts, including 'Lewis and Short', are available via the Loignon website (<http://logeion.uchicago.edu>).

Now, in the words of William Camden (Text 7): *Vale, fave, et fruere.*

Further reading

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