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J. N. Adams

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SOCIAL VARIATION AND THE LATIN LANGUAGE

Languages show variations according to the social class of speakers, and Latin was no exception, as readers of Petronius are aware. The Romance languages have traditionally been regarded as developing out of a 'language of the common people' (Vulgar Latin), but studies of modern languages demonstrate that linguistic change does not merely come, in the social sense, 'from below'. There is change from above, as prestige usages work their way down the social scale, and change may also occur across the social classes. This book is a history of many of the developments undergone by the Latin language as it changed into Romance, demonstrating the varying social levels at which change was initiated. About thirty topics are dealt with, many of them more systematically than ever before. Discussions often start in the early Republic with Plautus, and the book is as much about the literary language as about informal varieties.

J. N. ADAMS is an Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and a Fellow of the British Academy. He was previously a professor of Latin at the Universities of Manchester and Reading. He is the author of many books on the Latin language, including most recently *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC–AD 600* (Cambridge, 2007) and *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003).

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For Iveta and Elena

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Preface

William Labov, perhaps most notably in *The Social Stratification of English in New York City*, and others have shown how English varies in accordance with the socio-economic class and educational level of speakers, and how class interacts also with such factors as gender, age, ethnicity, and the style, casual versus careful, adopted by speakers to suit different contexts. Classicists are well aware of social variation within Latin. It is obvious in the novel of Petronius, and from any comparison that might be made between, say, the Latin of Cicero and that of humble writing tablets from Vindolanda, Egypt and elsewhere. But accounts of social variation in Latin have had to contend with the terminology imposed on Latinists by long tradition, and with a persistent narrative of historical change and its social background as Latin developed into the Romance languages. There is an old term ‘Vulgar Latin’ (usually capitalised), of which the adjective is inevitably connected by classicists with the term *uulgus* ‘common people’, and is often taken to suggest that there was a language of the common people discrete from the educated variety represented in literary texts. Since the educated variety (Classical Latin) is deemed to have been a standard language and therefore largely fossilised over many centuries, the source of the Romance languages, differing as they do from Classical Latin in fundamental ways, has conventionally been sought in this Latin of the common people.

Studies of modern languages, however, such as that referred to above, have shown that linguistic change does not merely come, in the social sense, ‘from below’. There is change from above, as prestige variables work their way down the social scale, and change may also take place across all social classes. Are we really to assume that the *uulgus* were solely responsible for the new vowel and case systems of the Romance languages, and for the development of a periphrastic future, a reflexive passive, a definite article, and so on?

In this book I will address the question whether in Latin change that was to affect the Romance languages came only from below. Should we

be talking of change in ‘Latin’ in general rather than in ‘Vulgar Latin’? Is there evidence for linguistic innovation at higher social/educational levels that was to leave its mark on Romance? I will not get bogged down in traditional terminology, nor will I attempt to define, or collect definitions of, ‘Vulgar Latin’ (see however 1.5), a term that will be little used. Instead I will deal with about thirty topics, phonological, syntactic, morphological and lexical. These have been chosen because they encapsulate many of the differences between Latin and Romance. The discussion of most will be comprehensive, with the aim, first, of elucidating the changes that took place, and, second, of allowing the evidence to speak for itself in bringing out the social level or levels at which change might have occurred. A good deal of new evidence, such as that from recently published writing tablets, will be taken into account, but more importantly literary evidence will be presented that has always been available but usually passed over in silence. For example, any description of the transition from an oblique-case system based on inflections to one based largely on prepositions ought to report that already in the Augustan period the high stylist Livy fifty-four times uses *ab Roma* with verbs of motion, but *Roma* (ablative) never, in violation of the school-book rule that prepositions are not used with the names of towns. Would it be plausible to attribute this development to the language of the *uulgus*? Or again, a middle/anticausative or even passive use of the reflexive construction, usually attributed to a ‘decadent’ late period of the language and ascribed to ‘vulgar’ texts, appears in exactly the same form in the classicising purist Celsus as, centuries later, in the substandard text the *Mulomedicina Chironis*. An entirely false account of the social origin of this usage might emerge if one dwelt on the latter text to the exclusion of the former, and it is that sort of blinkered vision that often obscures the reality of historical change in Latin.

Another factor that has played a part in generating baseless distinctions (particularly of a phonological kind) between ‘vulgar’ and educated Latin has been a failure by scholars to distinguish precisely between speech and writing. Bad spellers sometimes write phonetically whereas the educated hold on to old orthography even when it is not representative of the sounds of their speech. Often a misspelling in Latin will reveal a pronunciation that there is good reason to attribute to all social classes. In such a case the educated avoided the misspelling but not the pronunciation that lay behind it, and the term ‘vulgar’ could only be applicable to the written form. Handbooks of Vulgar Latin are full of phenomena that belonged to the speech of all social classes and are not relevant to social variation in the language. The fact that they show up in the writing only of the poorly

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educated has by a persistent slippage been taken to imply that they were a defining feature of the *speech* of the poorly educated as well.

The book is intended as a topic-based history of many of the most important developments of the Latin language as it changed into Romance, with particular reference to social variation and the social origin of innovations. It has at least as much to say about high literary varieties of the language as about informal and substandard non-literary writing. Though late Latin has a prominent place in it, it is not a book about late Latin. The story often starts in the early Republic with Plautus, and the question whether there is ever continuity between early Latin and proto-Romance is considered.

I am indebted to numerous people who have read parts or all of the work, answered queries, supplied me with their publications and given me access to work as yet unpublished. I must single out five of them. I owe a special debt to Adam Ledgeway, who read the work in its entirety, parts of it more than once, giving me a vast amount of information about Romance languages and saving me from numerous errors. I had access to his book *From Latin to Romance: Morphosyntactic Typology and Change* while it was still in preparation. Thanks to his expertise in the bibliography of the Romance languages and of their relationship to Latin I discovered many articles and books that I would never otherwise have known about. Wolfgang de Melo provided me with authoritative interpretations of various passages in Plautus and with information about aspects of early Latin. He also read and commented on several chapters. I consulted David Langslow often, always with profit. He gave me access to sections of his edition of Wackernagel's *Lectures on Syntax* before it was published, and also supplied me with the text of passages from the Latin translation of Alexander of Tralles, a work of which there is no critical edition. Giuseppe Pezzini spent untold hours at the end converting the Greek into Unicode font. He also answered questions about Italian, provided me with bibliography and checked things when I did not have access to libraries. Harm Pinkster answered many queries, read some sections and generously let me see parts of his monumental *Oxford Latin Syntax* (in preparation).

I have pestered so many other people, always to my advantage, that it is hard to remember them all, and the list below almost certainly has omissions. To all of the following I am grateful: Brigitte Bauer, Frédérique Biville, Viara Bourova, Alan Bowman, John Briscoe, Philip Burton, Michela Cennamo, Anna Chahoud, James Clackson, Tony Corbeill, Eleanor Dickey, Carla Falluomini, Rolando Ferri, Panagiotis Filos, Manfred Fliieger, Michèle Fruyt, Giovanbattista Galdi, Christa Gray, John Green, Hilla Halla-aho, Gerd Haverling, Nigel Holmes, Nigel Kay,

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I owe much to the exceptional copy-editing of Iveta Adams. She laboured hard over a long manuscript, spotting countless errors, inconsistencies and infelicities, and demanding explanations of many a dubious assertion.

Finally, I am greatly indebted again to All Souls College. The penultimate version of this book was finished before my retirement. I would never have been able to write the book or the two that preceded it without the years spent as a Senior Research Fellow of the college.

Abbreviations

CC	<i>Corpus Christianorum, series Latina</i> (Turnholt, 1954–).
CEL	See Cugusi (1992), (2002).
CGL	G. Goetz <i>et al.</i> , <i>Corpus glossariorum Latinorum</i> , 7 vols. (Leipzig and Berlin, 1888–1923).
CHG	E. Oder and C. Hoppe, <i>Corpus hippiatricorum Graecorum</i> , 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1924–7).
CIL	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (Berlin, 1862–).
CL	Classical Latin.
CLE	F. Bücheler, A. Riese and E. Lommatzsch, <i>Carmina Latina epigraphica</i> , 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1897–1926).
CPL	See Cavenaile (1958).
CSEL	<i>Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna, 1866–).
DML	<i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources</i> (Oxford, 1975–).
FEW	W. von Wartburg, <i>Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> (Bonn, 1928–).
GL	H. Keil, <i>Grammatici Latini</i> , 8 vols. (Leipzig, 1855–80).
ILCV	E. Diehl, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae ueteres</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin, 1925–31).
ILI (1963)	A. Šašel, V. Hoffiller and J. Šašel, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX repertae et editae sunt</i> (Ljubljana, 1963).
ILLRP	A. Degrassi, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae</i> , 2 vols. (I 2nd edn 1965, II 1963).
ILS	H. Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> , 3 vols. (Berlin, 1892–1916).

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List of abbreviations

<i>LEI</i>	M. Pfister, <i>LEI: Lessico etimologico italiano</i> (Wiesbaden, 1979–).
Lewis and Short	C. T. Lewis and C. Short, <i>A Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1879).
LSJ	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, <i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> (revised and augmented by H. S. Jones, with a revised supplement) (Oxford, 1996).
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> .
<i>O. Bu Njem</i>	See Marichal (1992).
OCat.	Old Catalan.
<i>O. Claud.</i>	See Bingen <i>et al.</i> (1992), (1997).
OE	Old English.
<i>O. Faw.</i>	See Guéraud (1942).
OFr.	Old French.
OIt.	Old Italian.
<i>OLD</i>	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1968–82).
OProv.	Old Provençal.
OSp.	Old Spanish.
OTuscan	Old Tuscan.
Pg.	Portuguese.
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina (Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne) (Paris, 1844–).
<i>REW</i>	W. Meyer-Lübke, <i>Romanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> , 3rd edn (Heidelberg, 1935).
<i>RIB</i>	<i>The Roman Inscriptions of Britain</i> (Oxford, 1975–).
<i>RLM</i>	K. Halm, <i>Rhetores Latini minores</i> (Leipzig, 1863).
<i>SB</i>	F. Preisigke, <i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i> (Strasbourg, 1915–).
<i>Tab. Luguval.</i>	See Tomlin (1998).
<i>Tab. Sulis</i>	See Tomlin (1988).
<i>Tab. Vindol.</i>	See Bowman and Thomas (1983), (1994), (2003); Bowman, Thomas and Tomlin (2010).
<i>Tab. Vindon.</i>	See Speidel (1996).
<i>TLL</i>	<i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i> (Leipzig, 1900–).
<i>TPSulp.</i>	See Camodeca (1999).
VL	Vulgar Latin.

‘Terentianus’ is used throughout to refer to the letters of Claudius Terentianus, for which see Youtie and Winter (1951), whose numeration is employed unless otherwise indicated. The *Tablettes Albertini* or Albertini

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tablets, sometimes abbreviated as *Tabl. Alb.*, are cited from Courtois *et al.* (1952).

Abbreviations of texts cited from beyond the period covered by the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* may be found in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1990). Periodicals cited by abbreviation will be found in *L'Année Philologique* or the *Linguistic Bibliography*.

Abbreviations of editions of papyri and ostraca not given in this list may be found in J. F. Oates *et al.*, *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, available online at: <http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/papyrus/texts/clist.html>.