

STEFAN TILG, 'Medieval Latin' and 'Neo-Latin': Epochal Polarity or Stereotypical Terms?, in: Christine Walde (ed.), *Stereotyped Thinking in Classics. Literary Ages and Genres Re-Considered* = *thersites* 2 (2015) 133–146.

KEYWORDS

Classics, Classicism, Mediaeval Latin, Neo-Latin, Middle Ages, Early Modern Period, epoch, literary history

ABSTRACT (German)

Das nachantike Latein findet zunehmend Beachtung auch bei Klassischen Philologen, entweder als Sonderfall der Rezeptionsgeschichte oder als Teil einer durchgängigen Tradition der lateinische Sprache und Literatur bis ins 18. Jahrhundert. Während diese Zuwendung zu späteren Epochen einen Ausweg aus ‚klassischem‘ Schubladendenken bieten mag, ist es seinerseits wieder anfällig für wenig reflektierte Pauschalisierungen. In diesem Beitrag werde ich zwei elementare Pauschalisierungen, die Begriffe „Mittellatein“ und „Neulatein“, hinterfragen, die zur Beschreibung von zwei scheinbar klar getrennten Epochen der nachantiken Latinität in aller Munde sind. Ich werde diese Begriffe auf eine große Erzählung des Renaissancehumanismus zurückführen und diskutieren, ob wir heute dieser Erzählung immer noch folgen sollten. Eine Reihe von Beispielen wird zeigen, dass der einfache und umfassende Begriff „Latein“ den Begriffen „Mittellatein“ und „Neulatein“ eigentlich vorzuziehen wäre.

ABSTRACT (English)

Classicists are paying more and more attention to the postclassical stages of Latin after the fall of the Roman empire, either as a special case of reception of antiquity or as a continuing tradition of Latin language and literature until the 18th century. While this consideration of later periods is one way to escape ‘classical’ stereotyped thinking, it is in itself liable to rely on poorly reflected upon categories. In this paper I deal with the most fundamental of these categories, the terms ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ used to describe

the succession of what seem to be two distinct major periods of post-classical Latinity. I discuss the soundness of this distinction, which can be traced back to a grand narrative of the humanists of the 15th and 16th centuries, and ask if we today should follow this narrative. A number of representative examples suggest that the simple and inclusive term 'Latin' would be preferable to 'Medieval Latin' and 'Neo-Latin'.

‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’: Epochal Polarity or Stereotypical Terms?

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Introduction

As a ‘Neo-Latin’ researcher I am often asked about the nature of ‘Neo-Latin’, about the novelty apparently implied in that term, and about the differences of ‘Neo-Latin’ from the ‘old’ Latin familiar to many from their education received at school. Some have also heard about ‘Medieval Latin’ and are interested in its relationship with ‘Neo-Latin’. The easy answer which many Neo-Latinists tend to give would be that there is an epochal polarity between Medieval Latin and Neo-Latin (hence ‘Neo’, as opposed to ‘medieval’), with the former being a somewhat chaotic and idiosyncratic intermezzo, and the latter picking up on the more regular and exemplary form of Latin as known from antiquity. If pressed for a quick answer, however, I would prefer a different one: that neither medieval nor Neo-Latin are something radically different or new; that both in essence continue the Latin tradition of antiquity and that the attributes ‘medieval’ and ‘Neo’ should be seen as mere temporal markers without much significance for the character of the Latin in question. With that, I am happy to admit that the terms ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ are somewhat misleading in that they suggest relatively coherent and substantial differences (as, for instance, in Old English, Middle English, and Modern English) which do not, in fact, exist. I know that both answers are simplistic, but I think the second is closer to the truth. The issue is that the terms ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ pretend to imply a well-defined and distinct sub-corpus of Latinity, but on closer inspection are far too broad to mean anything useful. These terms are excellent examples for inappropriate and even potentially damaging stereotyping in the study of Latin literature.

To make this argument, the main part of this paper will explore how the terms ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ can be misleading if we follow the humanist master narrative of a renaissance of Latin language and literature uncritically. I consider why the humanist view of Medieval Latin is biased and then discuss the paradoxes of ‘Medieval Latin’ elements in ‘Neo-Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ elements in ‘Medieval Latin’ in the major fields of non-

literary prose, poetry and literary prose. Finally, I conclude with further ideas about the unhelpfulness of the terms in question and suggest a more appropriate nomenclature.

The Humanist Master Narrative

This is not the place to write a detailed history of the origin and early modern development of the terms and concepts of ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’. Such a history would be difficult and messy, because the early use of these or similar terms does not always coincide with the distinction of a medieval period spanning *c.* 500–1500 from a modern period beginning thereupon (let alone that this historical distinction, partly inspired by philology itself, took until *c.* 1700 to gain wide recognition).¹ Charles Du Cange’s famous *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Latinitatis* of 1678, for instance, refers *media Latinitas* to the period between the fall of the Roman empire and the Carolingian Renaissance, while *infima Latinitas* stands for the following centuries of our medieval period. At the same time, Du Cange often uses *scriptores medii aevi* and *scriptores medii et infimi aevi* without any difference for what is roughly our medieval period.² More such inconsistencies and fanciful periodizations could be adduced.³ What matters here is that the modern history of the terms ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ is inspired by a well-known master narrative established by leading humanists of the 15th and 16th centuries.⁴ According to this narrative, Latin language and literature was ‘reborn’ in their generation after a long intermediate period of decline since late antiquity. In a kindred spirit, the humanists called themselves *recentes* or *recentiores*, a term used, for instance, in Julius Caesar Scaliger’s *Poetics* for the Latin poets since Petrarch. It can be translated as ‘recent’ and more ‘recent’,

1 Generally on the early concepts of a medieval period, slowly emerging from Petrarch onwards, cf. e.g. Lehmann (1914); Gordon (1925); Schaeffer (1976).

2 Cf. e.g. Gordon (1925) 16; Considine (2008) 275.

3 Cf. e.g. the entry ‘Sprache (Lateinische)’ in Johann Heinrich Zedler’s *Universal-Lexicon* (vol. 39 [1744] esp. 429–437), the largest German encyclopedia of the 18th century. Zedler distinguishes a period of decline in postclassical Latin, interrupted by the Carolingian and Ottonian renaissances, on the one hand, and three different renaissances from the 15th century onwards (from *c.* 1400–1450, from *c.* 1450–1600, and from *c.* 1600) on the other hand.

4 On master narratives as blueprints of writing literary history cf. e.g. Rexroth (2007) for the history of medieval literature.

'young' and 'younger', but 'new' and 'newer' is also possible – it is from here that the term 'Neo-Latin' ultimately derives, although its coinage dates only from the second half of the 18th century.⁵ The humanists of the early modern period, then, spread the idea of an epochal polarity between a 'medieval' kind of Latin (although it was not always perfectly clear what 'medieval' meant) and a 'new' form of Latin (although 'new' was referred to the writers rather than to the language itself). This is perfectly understandable from the point of view of an ambitious generation trying to set itself apart from the past and flag up its own achievement. The question is whether we today should follow this master narrative and, in particular, whether we should keep extending it to periods and fields which the humanists did not even have in mind. For when they were referring to decline and obscurity, they first and foremost meant the late Middle Ages and the scholastic movement, characterized by its focus on logic and science and immediately preceding the humanist reforms.⁶ This object of hatred apart, humanists were either simply not very interested in the medieval period or pursued their medieval studies more quietly than their interests in the fashionable classics.⁷ In the absence of anything like a discipline of Medieval Latin, their picture of the Latin language and literature during the Middle Ages was also very incomplete and it was easier to lump different periods and styles together.

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- 5 Cf. e.g. IJsewijn I (1990) 27–28; Ludwig (1997) 325. According to IJsewijn's and Ludwig's accounts the first example of the term 'Neo-Latin' in any language can be found in Ernst G. Klose's *Neulateinische Chrestomathie* (Leipzig 1795), a textbook collecting passages from Latin authors since Giovanni Boccaccio and meant to make learning Latin more palatable to pupils. But there are earlier examples in a number of works of the poet and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder: *Begründung einer Ästhetik in der Auseinandersetzung mit Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten* (c. 1767, Bollacher [1985–2000] I 689–670); *Kritische Wälder* II (1769; Suphan [1877–1913] III 237); *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774; Bollacher [1985–2000] IV 68); *Über die Wirkung der Dichtkunst auf die Sitten der Völker in alten und neuen Zeiten* (1781; Bollacher [1985–2000] IV 197).
- 6 Cf. e.g. Petrarch's anti-scholastic manifesto *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* (1370) or the numerous humanist satires on scholastic ideas and language, e.g. the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* (1515–1517).
- 7 Especially north of the Alps medieval studies in fact did not fare badly during the Renaissance; cf. e.g. the German arch-humanist Conrad Celtis, the editor of *Hrotsvitha* (10th c.) and of the *Ligurinus* (1186/87) by Gunther of Pairis. For amusing cases of stealthy appropriation of medieval poetry by humanists as famous as Helius Eobanus Hesse cf. Haye (2007) 179.

Diversity and Classicism in Medieval Latin

Today we know that ‘Medieval Latin’ is anything but a unity, both from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. This is the reason why Ludwig Traube, though universally acknowledged as the ‘father’ of Medieval Latin philology, went as far as to flatly deny the existence of ‘Medieval Latin’.⁸ Peter Stotz, the author of the massive and authoritative *Handbuch zur lateinischen Sprache des Mittelalters*, argues extensively against the widespread German term ‘Mittellatein’, which even more than the English ‘Medieval Latin’ suggests a certain coherent state of language, and demonstrates that it is impossible to define a stable ‘medieval’ appearance of Latin.⁹ This holds true for the bewildering multitude of so-called ‘unclassical’ phenomena in and of themselves, but also for their various relations to their ‘classical’ counterparts. The latter point is of greater interest here because it is these relations upon which the humanist master narrative predicates the ideas of Medieval Latin and Neo-Latin. Contrary to what humanists make us believe, however, the relations between the classical and the unclassical in Medieval Latin are variegated and unstable. It is often believed, for instance, that the ‘medieval’ equivalent of the classical accusative and infinitive after *verba sentiendi* and *declarandi* is a subordinate clause with *quod* or *quia* (e.g. *video quod venit* [‘I see that he/she/it comes’] instead of *video eum venire* [‘I see him come’]); but in fact the ‘medieval’ use is very different depending on time, genre and individual authors.¹⁰ There are also classicizing authors and currents in the Middle Ages whose usage tends to conform to the humanist’s own preference for the models of so-called ‘Golden’ and ‘Silver’ Latin.

It is generally important to note that the medieval period did not lack classicist currents. Not because this would be the only or even most interesting part of the story of Medieval Latin, but because it brings to mind that the humanists, if they had had a fuller picture of the medieval development of Latin and if they had chosen to do so, could easily have constructed a

8 Cf. Traube (1911) 78: „Es gibt kein mittelalterliches Latein, es wird auch kein Wörterbuch und keine Grammatik desselben geben.“

9 Cf. Stotz (1996–2004) I 3–5. The gist of Stotz’ argument would also apply to a ‘Neo-Latin’ state of language, although here we are far from a survey of the relevant material and a tool as provided by Stotz for the medieval period. Cf., however, preliminary studies like Helander (2001) 27–39, discussing the variety of orthography, morphology, and semantics in early modern Latin texts.

10 Cf. Stotz (1996–2004) IV 392–396.

different master narrative tracing back their own ambitions to a series of renaissances of the Latin language from the Carolingian reform to the Renaissance of the 12th century.¹¹ The enthusiasm for Cicero and Ciceronian style of Lupus Servatus in the 9th century is not radically different from Petrarch's; the epic poetry of Walther of Châtillon is not a far cry from the *Africa*. The early scholasticism of the 12th and 13th centuries had enemies arguing for the significance of literary *auctores* not unlike Petrarch and later humanists battling against the late scholasticism of the 14th and 15th centuries.¹² The greater success of Petrarch and his followers had much to do with broader historical circumstances, especially the national and political movement in which a revival of classical Latin language and literature seemed to vouch for the revival of Roman political power. The invention of printing then compounded the effect of the humanist reforms and boosted humanist learning across Europe. But all this was a continuation and multiplication of preceding medieval classicist tendencies rather than their negation, a fact easily glossed over by the convenient antithesis of 'Medieval Latin' and 'Neo-Latin'. My following considerations of the paradoxes of 'medieval' elements in 'Neo-Latin' (and sometimes also vice versa) will further illustrate the idea of continuity.

Non-literary Prose

We should distinguish between poetry and literary prose on the one hand and more matter-of-factly forms of prose on the other hand. After all, the humanist claim of novelty was referring mainly to *belles lettres* and not to the language of scholarship, science, administration and similar non-literary fields. Nor were jurists or doctors writing in their discipline usually much interested in language reforms, since all they aimed at was transparency in their account, which could be perfectly achieved by traditional, 'medieval'

11 For the Renaissance of the 12th century cf. esp. the influential account of Haskins (1927); furthermore Benson/Constable (1982), the proceedings of a conference held in 1977 to mark the 50th anniversary of Haskins's book. For medieval classicist currents in general, Norden (1915) II 693–731 (chapter: 'Die klassizistischen Strömungen des Mittelalters') still provides an excellent introduction.

12 Here Norden and others often point to the 'schools' of Chartres and Orléans, which opposed the scholasticism of Paris. Critically on the concept of a 'school' of Chartres cf. e.g. Southern (1982).

means. As for philosophy, it is well known that both its ideas and language remained essentially scholastic in universities across Europe until the 18th century.¹³

Ironically, it is precisely that pragmatic and unambitious form of Latin prose which turned out to be the biggest ‘Neo-Latin’ success story of all – witness the long series of epoch-making scientific discoveries communicated in Latin, from Nicolaus Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* of 1543 to Isaac Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* of 1687 to Luigi Galvani’s *De viribus electricitatis artificialis in motu musculari* of 1791. The quantity of all this non-literary writing is difficult to gauge, but by any estimate it would clearly outnumber the literary production.¹⁴ Although not in the humanists’ focus, all these fields are usually subsumed under ‘Neo-Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ studies today.¹⁵ This is clearly inconsistent, if these terms are at the same time supposed to imply a marked difference from ‘Medieval Latin’. In fact, then, the vast majority of Latin writing from the early modern period is not particularly ‘Neo-Latin’ in language at all.

Poetry

But the idea of an epochal polarity between Medieval Latin and Neo-Latin is also questionable in poetry and literary prose. Especially in poetry, to which grammatical norms never applied in the same way as to prose, it is difficult to see a significant break in the way of literary composition.¹⁶ It is true that medieval poetry developed rhythmic, qualitative metre as a new option of versification, but this always remained just that, an option, and never *replaced* classical, quantitative metre. In terms of language and prosody (leaving more

13 Cf. e.g. Blum (1998).

14 We lack comprehensive accounts or databases for the Latin production of the early modern period. The fullest account for any given region is Korenjak et al. (2012). Based on the material presented in this collection and the database behind it (with which I am familiar) I would say that non-literary writing of the kind described above outnumbers literature in a narrower sense by the factor five to ten (still excluding inscriptions, deeds, protocols and similar administrative material).

15 Cf. the standard survey of the research field in Ijsewijn/Sacré (1990–1998).

16 On the different aspect of continuity in literary genres cf. e.g. Haye (2007) esp. 176–179 (section: ‘Drawing the Line between the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance or Early Modern Period’), discussing, among other things, the unbroken tradition of epic, verse satire, and didactic poetry.

or less arbitrary spelling conventions aside for a moment), there is no way to distinguish a quantitative run-off-the-mill composition of the medieval period from a similarly average piece of the 16th–18th centuries, or even accomplished classical and Neo-Latin poets like Ovid or John Milton from the masterful medieval verse of authors like Hildebert of Lavardin or Baudri de Bourgueil. Nor was rhythmic verse handled in a coherent 'medieval' way over the centuries, but shows significant differences in distribution depending on time (it was comparatively unpopular in the early medieval period), geography (it was most widespread north of the Alps) and individual authors. It should also be taken into account that rhythmic verse does occur in early modern Latin poetry, especially in its later stages and north of the Alps, where there was either a continuous tradition of rhythmical forms or that tradition could be easily revived. While it clearly never regained the standing it had in the high Middle Ages, where leading poets like the Archipoeta or Walther of Châtillon freely switched between quantitative and rhythmic composition, it remained an option for 'popular' Latin poetry, especially pieces composed for performance. In the Latin drama of the German speaking countries, for instance, we can find rhythmic songs ever since Johannes Reuchlin's seminal *Henno* (1497), often dubbed the first 'German' Neo-Latin play.¹⁷ Another example would be narrative lays, largely overlooked by scholarship so far, like the one on the military exploit of prince Eugene of Savoy against the French in the War of the Spanish succession. This anonymous piece, recently edited by Martin Korenjak,¹⁸ was probably written in the immediate aftermath of the events, Eugene's surprise raid on Cremona on the night of 31 January / 1 February 1702. The first of a total of fifteen stanzas will suffice to give an idea of rhythm, rhyme and stanzaic composition, all un-Neo-Latin features in a traditional understanding of Neo-Latin as opposed to Medieval Latin:

17 Cf. Rädle (1988) who also provides extensive discussions of Jesuit drama and English university drama.

18 Cf. Korenjak (2008).

<i>Nova laeta perfaceta cursor attulit, qui Cremona sorte bona recens appulit: Gallos noctis medio indulgentes genio esse pressos et oppressos ab Eugenio.</i>	Happy and very pleasing news a messenger brought, who recently came from Cremona with Fortune smiling. He said that the French were enjoying themselves in the middle of the night when they were attacked and overwhelmed by Eugene.
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Should we not acknowledge that ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ cannot be pinned down to certain forms rather than construct paradoxes like ‘medieval forms in Neo-Latin poetry’? True, in a more general sense, the forms, motifs, and themes of 16th century poetry are different from, say 12th century poetry, but the reason for that is not a polarity of ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’ expression but that every period has its own concerns, traditions and perspectives, and of course there are similarly characteristic differences also between, say, 9th and 12th century poetry, or 16th and 18th century poetry.

Literary Prose

Last but not least some remarks on literary prose. This is the area where the classicizing and normative efforts of the humanists were most successful, and I will not deny that the texture and ambitions of literary prose are generally changing between c. 1400 and 1600. New and powerful tendencies include the focus on ‘Golden’ and ‘Silver’ Latin (to the exclusion of late antiquity) as well as the imitation of styles of certain individual authors, with Cicero emerging as the leading figure. But again, the break is everything but clear-cut. There are similar tendencies in the medieval period, from Einhart’s Suetonian *Vita Karoli* to the Ciceronian letters of Lupus Servatus to the anonymous Sallustian biography of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV.¹⁹ And there are unabashedly unclassical tendencies in the Renaissance, such as the Apuleian ‘school’ in Bologna around the first commentator of Apuleius’

19 Cf. the case study of 12th century literary prose in Martin (1982) esp. 541–551.

Metamorphoses, Filippo Beroaldo (1453–1505).²⁰ Most importantly, however, the shift towards more ambitious and more normative literary prose is so gradual that it is hard to tell where this process starts and where it ends, where we should begin and where we should stop speaking of 'Medieval Latin' and of 'Neo-Latin' literary prose respectively. Studies of the historiographical prose of Lorenzo Valla in the 15th century and Olaus Magnus in the 16th century, for instance, have pointed out numerous 'medieval' phenomena in the language and style of these authors.²¹ Constructions like *nec* for *ne ... quidem*, *quod* for *ut* introducing a consecutive clause, or *quod*-clause for accusative and infinitive can be found in the most distinguished Renaissance prose writers. The difference between the reflexive pronouns *sui* and *suus* on the one hand and their demonstrative counterparts on the other hand, on which Valla wrote the short treatise *De reciprocatione 'sui' et 'suus'* (1450), escapes many authors until the 18th century (in fact, Valla himself only standardizes the use in simple clauses after a single verb). Similarly, the particulars of the *Concordantia Temporum* were rarely known before the specialized philological investigations of the 19th century. As far as vocabulary is concerned, Jozef IJsewijn pointed out that about three quarters of the post-antique words used by the humanists can be found also in medieval texts.²² All this suggests a gradual development rather than a sudden break. The only place where the break can be discerned clearly and distinctly is in the master narrative of the humanists.

Conclusion and an Alternative Suggestion

The upshot of my discussion is that the terms 'Medieval Latin' and 'Neo-Latin' are simply too big to be helpful. They pretend to define a relatively coherent subset of Latin, but for periods spanning *c.* 1000 years for 'Medieval Latin' and almost 500 years for 'Neo-Latin' any such subset is illusory. Too different are the ambitions and styles within each of the apparent subsets, too similar the language and forms in certain areas between them. Add to this the inevitable confusion that the terms 'Medieval Latin' and 'Neo-Latin' will create for any non-initiate. To most non-Latinists (and even to some classicists who never dealt with postclassical Latin) they suggest forms

20 On Beroaldo and his environment see Krautter (1971).

21 Tunberg (1988) and (1990); Isacson (1989).

22 For this and the preceding points see IJsewijn (1981).

of language substantially different from the Latin of antiquity, such as Middle English and Modern English as different from Old English, or Middle High German and New High German as different from Old High German. But this is obviously not true for Medieval Latin and Neo-Latin, which – with comparatively minor variations – just continue the Latin tradition inherited from antiquity.²³ ‘Neo-Latin’ in particular is also an obscure and ugly word. While ‘Medieval Latin’ is at least plain language and can be understood as Latin of the medieval period, no layman has the slightest chance of grasping the meaning of ‘Neo-Latin’. It is all good and well when specialists know what they are talking about and what ‘Neo-Latin’ *actually* means, but a coinage like this could also be seen as bad publicity and potentially harmful for an emerging research field.²⁴

My alternative suggestion is simple: ‘Latin’. After all, what we read in medieval and early modern Latin texts is essentially the same Latin familiar to anyone with some Latin education and known as a language to the whole world. ‘Latin’ does not pretend to define a particular subset of language (which turns out to be problematic in so many regards) and is capacious and flexible enough for any specific phenomena of language and literature we may want to identify within the long Latin tradition from antiquity to the present day. Once this larger continuity is granted, it will sometimes be convenient to talk about ‘Mediaeval Latin’ or ‘early modern Latin’ (in a purely chronological sense), but ‘Latin’ liberated from the fixed labels of ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ could and should also be used for a variety of shorter periods, particular currents of language and literature, or specific institutions, for instance ‘12th century Latin’, ‘humanist Latin’, or ‘academic Latin’. The more such terms include, the more problematic they will be, but few will be as grossly misleading as ‘Medieval Latin’ and ‘Neo-Latin’ used as if they are different languages.²⁵ In other words, I think we should convey a

23 Cf. Traube (1911) 44.

24 Cf. Stotz (1996–2004) I 4 with similar considerations for the German term ‘Mittel-latein’, comparable in obscurity to ‘Neo-Latin’ and strictly avoided by Stotz; the same term is described by Brunhölzl (1975–1992) I 8 as a ‘vielgebrauchte, wenn auch wenig glückliche Bezeichnung’. Other medieval Latinists have defended ‘Mittelatein’ because of its brevity and its suggestion of an autonomous research field with its own subjects and approaches (e.g. Langosch [1963] 11; [1975] 14). In my view, a research field does not need an obscure name to gain recognition.

25 Cf. e.g. Berschin (2009) esp. 199, who distinguishes 10 epochal Latin styles: Archaic, Classical, Silver, Late Classical, Merovingian, Carolingian, Scholastic, Humanist, Man-

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sense of the continuity of the Latin tradition from antiquity to modern times²⁶ and stake out our particular research fields within that larger continuity. Perhaps one day we can study Latin literature of the 14th to 18th centuries just as naturally as classical Latin and can stop being 'neo'.

nerist, and Baroque. Every periodization has its shortcomings and the distinctions made here could be discussed and criticized extensively. But the mere fact that it prefers shorter periods within a larger continuity of Latin makes it an interesting alternative to the simplistic succession of classical, medieval, and Neo-Latin.

26 The significance of this continuity has recently been stressed esp. by Verbaal/Maes/Papy (2007); (2009); (2012).

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ISSN 2364-7612

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