CHAPTER 1

Introduction

James Clackson

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Latin was the first "World Language" of human history. As the language of the Roman Empire and then the Roman Catholic Church it has spread around the globe, and today well over a billion people speak a language derived from Latin as their first or second language (Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian, Romanian, etc.). Although there are no native speakers of Latin still alive, Latin has a cultural prestige matched by no other language in the West. In religion, in law, in medicine and in science, Latin terms and phrases are still employed on a daily basis. Latin's position in the modern world reflects its importance as the language of many of the most influential texts written between antiquity and the Early Modern period, from Virgil's *Aeneid* and Tacitus' *Annales* through the works of Augustine and the church fathers, to the use of Latin by Newton, Milton and Spinoza. Despite Latin's enormous cultural significance, this is the first single volume companion to the Latin language, both enabling the reader to access reliable summaries of what is known about the structure and vocabulary of the language, and setting the language in its cultural milieu from its first appearance, in short inscriptions in the first half of the first millennium BCE, to its use as a language of scholarship, of law and of the church in the modern period.

Latin comes after Greek. The initial impetus for this volume was as a companion to Bakker's *Companion to the Greek Language* (2010), and in structure and scope the *Companion to the Latin Language* mirrors its older sister. Indeed, in some areas, the two volumes overlap and complement each other. Just as the *Companion to the Greek Language* combines "traditional" and "modern" approaches to the linguistic study of the language, so does the *Companion to the Latin Language*. This volume attempts to give a comprehensive overview of the Latin language, including aspects of social variation and language change, speakers' attitudes to language and the use of Latin in literary texts.

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However, in much the same way that the Latin language has a very different history to Greek, so the structure of this *Companion* also reflects the differences between the two languages. The longer history of Greek (and the continual use of the label "Greek" to describe the language spoken in Greece in modern times) has meant that the written forms of the language have been recast many times. Moreover, the existence of Greek city states in the Classical period, and the emergence of different literary forms through oral and local traditions, have led to the adoption of a range of varieties of the language as written forms (the so-called Greek dialects). In contrast, there is usually reckoned to be only one standard form of Latin, Classical Latin. No dialects of Latin ever reached the status of a literary form, and no later stage of the language ever rivalled the prestige of the Classical standard. The formation of Classical Latin, and the repeated moves to purify or correct the language will be repeated themes of this volume, as will the demonstration that within the apparently monolithic structure of Classical Latin there is room for considerable variation and choice.

The *Companion* is divided into five parts, each of which is built around a different broad theme. Part I deals with the sources of our knowledge of the Latin language. Latin is a corpus language, known only through written documents, and no one who could genuinely be described as a native speaker of Latin has been alive for the last millennium. It is appropriate therefore that the first chapter of this section is devoted to the alphabet that encodes the language. Rex Wallace addresses the question of the adoption and adaptation of the alphabet from the Greeks through Etruscan intermediaries, and his richly illustrated chapter contains the most up-to-date survey of the very earliest Latin inscriptions that survive. He then traces the development of the Latin letterforms, the differing orthographic practices of the Romans down to the imperial period, and the possible connections between and influences from letterforms and orthographic practices among the other literate peoples of Italy. The next two chapters examine the ways Latin texts function as sources for the language. Latin texts have reached us through two principal routes. Either the original written form has survived on a medium such as stone, wood, metal or papyrus, or a text has been copied and recopied in an unbroken chain of manuscript transmission. In general, texts in the second category comprise literary works, and those in the first all other forms of documentation (although there are instances where literary works are recorded in inscriptional texts, such as Augustus' *Res Gestae*, or where manuscripts preserve sub-literary material). James Clackson presents a discussion of some of the pitfalls for the linguist who uses inscriptional and documentary material to research the Latin language, including the vexed problem of attributing "authorship" to an ancient inscription. This chapter also includes a description of the range of such material available for the ancient world and explanations of some of the editorial conventions used. Bruce Gibson addresses the question of how literary texts have been handed down through the centuries. He shows how a modern editor of a text reconstructs a manuscript tradition, and how scholars have addressed the problems of variant readings, non-standard orthographies and different sources for a single text, presenting (among other examples) a test case of a manuscript page of Catullus and the modern reading. Roger Wright concludes Part I by looking at the use of a very different sort of source for the Latin language, the medieval and modern languages which have descended from spoken forms of Latin. As he shows, in order to understand this topic it is important to distinguish first between what counts as Latin and what counts as

Romance, and the chapter includes a discussion of this topic, before a systematic review of the evidence of Romance for our knowledge of spoken Latin.

Wright's chapter is also the first point in this volume where the term *Vulgar Latin* is used, and it is worth pausing to consider this term, which been the most discussed in the study of Latin, and is widely used in modern published work. Many readers will expect to find a chapter, if not a section, on Vulgar Latin in a *Companion to the Latin Language*, and will want to know why this volume does not include one. Part of the reason is the ambiguity inherent in the term. Wright (p. 63) reports József Herman's definition of Vulgar Latin as a collective label for features of the language which we know existed but which were not recommended by grammarians, a usage which is observed by Adams in his chapter (pp. 263–265). Adams notes that the term would then have to include the linguistic behaviour of individuals such as the Emperor Augustus, and as such is at odds with a prevalent understanding of Vulgar Latin as the variety or varieties spoken by the uneducated and illiterate populace. For the sake of avoiding confusion, the writers in this volume generally restrict their use of the term Vulgar Latin to Herman's definition, where they use it at all, and the other senses in which the label is used are defined in their own terms.

Part II aims to provide an overview of the linguistic structure of Latin, concentrating largely on the synchronic grammar of the Classical form of the language. Matthew McCullagh shows how we are able to reconstruct the phonology of the language accurately, to isolate the meaningful sounds of Latin (the phonemes), and, in most cases, specify their phonetic value. Benjamin W. Fortson IV expands the discussion of the sound of Latin by looking at what we can learn about the language from the metres the Romans used, and what we can learn about the metres from comparative and linguistic investigation. Fortson concentrates on three particular problems: the Saturnian metre and its background in inherited verse types of the Indo-European family; the adaptation of Greek metres by the Latin comic playwrights and their nativisation; and the interaction between verse beat (ictus) and the native Latin word and phrasal stress. Inflectional morphology and the selection of the Classical Latin exponents from a range of varieties are then covered by James Clackson. For many people who learnt Latin at school, the memory of lessons on syntactic constructions such as the ablative absolute or the gerundive is enough to provoke winces of pain; experienced teachers are frequently able to answer the question "How?" but rarely the question "Why?" Geoffrey Horrocks, in his chapter on Latin syntax, goes beyond the traditional listing and cataloguing of different constructions and uses modern syntactic theory to give an answer to the "Why?" question, introducing theoretical notions such as "control" into the study of Latin grammar for the first time. The Latin lexicon is the subject of the next two chapters by Michèle Fruyt. In any language, the vocabulary is formed from a combination of inherited, borrowed and derived lexemes. In the first of her two chapters, Fruyt considers the basic vocabulary of Latin, the organisation of the semantic structure of the lexicon, and the means by which the language incorporates words borrowed from other languages, with particular focus on the reaction to, and the reception of, Greek words. In the next chapter, she looks in more detail at the processes of lexical morphology, including the formation of compounds and the derivation of new words from existing lexical items, with detailed consideration of individual affixes and affixation processes, as well as agglutination and recategorisation (the process whereby words are transferred from one

lexical class to another with the addition of no overt affix). To round off this section, Caroline Kroon's chapter tackles a linguistic topic that is generally absent from traditional works on Latin, the grammar of discourse. Recent work on pragmatics, the study of language in use, has shown how speakers and writers of different languages employ particles and other text-marking devices in various ways in order to give order and structure to units of communication longer than a sentence. Kroon shows how familiar Latin particles have a more nuanced, and more precise, use in context than is apparent from bare English translations.

Part III is devoted to presentations of Latin through history, from its Indo-European origins to its use in the modern world, detailing the distinctive changes and features for each period, as well as recording the spread of the language. Benjamin W. Fortson IV looks at Latin in the context of the Indo-European language family, and details the major changes which Latin has undergone, and also gives details on its relationship to Oscan and Umbrian and the other Indo-European languages of Italy. John Penney examines in detail the language of the earliest Latin texts up to the end of the second century BCE, including commentary on selected early inscriptional texts, noting changes in language and orthographic practices. The next chapter, by James Clackson, covers Classical Latin, principally the language of the late Republic and the first two centuries of the Roman Empire. This chapter includes extensive discussion of the debates about what constituted *Latinitas*, probably best translated as "correct Latin", the processes of standardisation, including changes in orthography, morphology, syntax and vocabulary, and the treatment of Greek words in Latin. The next three chapters treat the Latin of later chronological periods. First, J.N. Adams examines the notion of *Late Latin*, and asks whether there are distinctive linguistic features to Latin of this date, and how linguistic change, pressure from the standard language and other factors intertwine in texts written in Late Antiquity and beyond. The last two chapters describe the survival of Latin as a written and scholarly idiom, used alongside various vernaculars, from the Middle Ages to the present day. Greti Dinkova-Bruun discusses Medieval Latin, offering sample texts to illustrate the changes in orthography, grammar, vocabulary and style of Latin texts in the period between the end of antiquity and the Renaissance. David Butterfield looks at the language from the Renaissance to the present, showing the repeated attempts by writers to get closer to Classical models, and detailing the link between teaching Classics and writing Latin prose and verse in the last two centuries.

Part IV of the companion is devoted to presentations of the idioms and styles characteristic of a range of specific Latin literary registers. It is well known to any classicist that Latin poetry employs features such as extreme displacements of word order, or calques of Greek syntax, which are not found in Latin prose, and that a letter by Cicero will differ in style and vocabulary from one of his speeches or his philosophical works. The chapters in Part IV examine both the language of specific literary or para-literary genres and the language which is associated with certain contexts, such as the law court or the Christian church. In all these areas it is of course impossible to give a checklist of features which are obligatory for a certain genre or context, and the chapters here indicate, in different ways, some of the limitations of seeing a simple correspondence between genre and language. Even so, there are many broad generalisations to be made, as well as illuminating discussions of individual features, and the chapters together present a completely new picture of the language of literary Latin. Wolfgang de Melo

gives an overview of the language of Roman comedy and mime, showing distinctive features of the Latin of Plautus and later dramatists. Rolando Ferri looks at poetic language, particularly as revealed in epic and lyric works (encompassing also the language of Senecan drama). Ferri sets out ancient theories of poetic language, and demonstrates the ways in which the sound and metre of poetry affected the orthographic and lexical choices authors made. Poetic techniques such as metaphor, hyperbaton and Greek syntactic constructions are placed in context and illustrated by citations from authors ranging from Lucretius to Cyprianus Gallus. Quintilian famously stated that *satura quidem tota nostra est* ("satire is all ours"; *Inst.* 10.1.93). Satire is noteworthy as the only genre of Latin literature which does not have Greek models to follow, and Anna Chahoud's chapter on Roman satire shows how lexical and syntactic choices set this genre apart from other Latin poetry, and how the authorial presentations of the genre in opposition to the themes and language of "high" poetry are brought about in style and diction. This chapter also gives an insight into what constituted "coarse" and colloquial language for a Roman audience.

The literary genres of prose are covered in the next chapters in this section. Jonathan Powell reminds us how limited our knowledge of actual Roman oratory is, and traces the development of rhetoric as a topic of study and debate in the Roman world, while also analysing some of the features of Ciceronian periodic style in his speeches. Christina Shuttleworth Kraus writes on the language of Roman historiography and draws out the similarities and differences between history writing and other genres, including poetry and oratory; she documents the ways in which historians from Cato to Ammianus vary their style according to the subject matter, and make use of annalistic and military language in their works. Hilla Halla-aho dissects the construction of different styles apparent in the Latin epistolary corpus (comprising both the correspondence of Cicero, Pliny and Fronto and documentary material such as the wooden tablets from Vindolanda). She separates out colloquial from rhetorical and formal styles in letters, and her presentation of what constitutes a colloquialism has ramifications beyond the Latin of letters alone. Technical writing is not normally reckoned to be a unified genre per se within literary studies of ancient literature, but, as Thorsten Fögen shows, the modern concept of a specific idiom of *Fachsprache* can lead to interesting conclusions when looking at Roman writing on subjects as diverse as grammar, architecture, medicine, farming and the encyclopaedic *Naturalis Historia* composed by Pliny the Elder. All of these disciplines share similarities in their approaches to the formation of new technical terms, their employment of non-personal styles and constructions, and their reactions to Greek models. Finally, the last two chapters examine the two cultural contexts in which Latin has survived the longest into the modern world: law and Christianity. Jonathan Powell considers the tradition of Roman law from the earliest tables, through contracts surviving on wax tablets from the bay of Naples to the Latin tags employed by professional lawyers and jurists even today. Philip Burton offers a condensation of research on the language employed by Christian writers and Bible translators, and revisits the debates about the special nature of Christian Latin. He shows that Christian authors can encompass a wide range of styles, and how special uses of vocabulary items can reveal their indebtedness to biblical language.

What can broadly be termed sociolinguistic approaches to Latin are the subject of Part V. The four chapters here explore different aspects of language variation in the ancient world. We know that some linguistic variation in Ancient Rome correlated with the social status,

age and gender of the speaker, and James Clackson assesses to what extent these social dialects of Latin are accessible to us. By considering whether it is possible to associate the social position of a speaker or writer with variation in Latin, this chapter necessarily overlaps with previous research carried out under the heading of Vulgar Latin as discussed above. It goes beyond the discussion of variation correlated with social class, however, by also surveying the evidence for specific features that can be associated with the gender and age of the speaker. This chapter also discusses the significance of the use of Greek by Latin speakers, and this topic is further expanded and analysed in the contribution of Alex Mullen who examines Latin in contact with other languages (including not only Greek but also a range of idioms now no longer spoken, including Oscan and Gaulish). Mullen considers the topic of bilingualism both at the macro-level of institutionalised bilingualism, and at the micro-level of individual speakers, such as Cicero, and the significance of the choices made between two or more languages. The role of the state and of Roman magistrates and emperors in enforcing or promoting Latin, its complex sociocultural relationship to Greek, and the use of Latin in the Greek world through the Byzantine period are clearly of particular importance in the consideration of the social functions of Latin. This is the subject of Bruno Rochette's chapter. Finally, Giovanbattista Galdi summarises the range of evidence for geographical variations in Latin across the Roman world, in both the republic and the empire. Using the mass of evidence gathered by Adams in his recent book on the diversification of Latin across the Roman world (Adams 2007), Galdi brings out salient features of regional Latin, including an examination of the Latin of the north-eastern provinces of the empire.

Galdi's chapter reminds us of the extraordinary geographical spread of Latin. In the first century of the Roman Empire, Latin began to be recognised as a universal language, as shown by the comments of the Greek author Plutarch (*Moralia* 1010D). In consideration of the question of why Plato said that the only parts of speech were nouns and verbs, Plutarch notes that in Latin there is no definite article as there is in Greek, nor as many prepositions. Parenthetically, Plutarch adds that almost all men use Latin. These comments mark a significant stage in the history of Latin, since it is now that Greeks take an interest in the language, and start to relinquish their own claim to linguistic predominance. Although no longer a spoken universal language, Latin has increased its reach and range since the time of Plutarch. The association of Latin with the Roman Catholic Church, and its use in countless legal constitutions, statutes and codes have resulted in the spread of the language to parts of the world unknown to the Romans. Latin supplies models of correct grammar for language purists, it provides syntactical and morphological meat for professional linguists and it is mined for mottos by states, companies and celebrities. In showing something of the complexities of its structure, history and use, this volume will, it is hoped, enhance the understanding and appreciation of the Latin language.