Presidential Panel:
Vox Humana, non solum Romana: Neo-Latin Literature and our Heritage
Robert W. Ulery, Jr. (Wake Forest University), organizer

Despite the pioneering work of several generations of scholars, most particularly the late Jozef IJsewijn with his *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies* (2nd ed. 1990), and his followers on this side of the Atlantic, for most classicists the principal motivation for teaching and learning the Latin language remains access to the language of the ancient Romans and the great works of literature written under the Roman Republic and Empire, with a substantial body of scholars interested in the subsequent development of the language as seen in the literature of the medieval period. Many are inclined to take on faith such notions as those expressed by C. S. Lewis in his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (1954), that the humanists in their revival of the study of antiquity imposed purist standards upon the living language of the medieval period and condemned the use of Latin to an arid artificiality. But we should not train our binoculars solely upon the distant prospect of the use of Latin as a means of human expression in classical antiquity, for the language, almost to the same extent as Greek, has a history that comes very near to our own era, and indeed has distinguished practitioners in our very midst. As Terence Tunberg has written, we must include in our purview "... the rich, exciting world of Neo-Latin, the vast international Latin literature that flourished from the fifteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, that includes masterpieces of world literature such as Praise of Folly and Utopia."

It is in this spirit that this panel is offered for CAMWS this year, and with a view to two particular interests of the president: the use of spoken Latin in the teaching of the language, and the use of Latin by German Lutheran writers, including Luther himself. That the meetings this year are in a strongly Lutheran city and state makes the topic even more appropriate. The panel will be introduced by the president.

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The Use of Latin as a Spoken Language in the Humanist Age

Terence D. Tunberg (University of Kentucky)

This paper will present a brief overview of a widely neglected but an important phenomenon that forms part of the background of Neo-Latin literature – namely the spoken use of Latin in the early modern era. The existence of a spoken (and not merely written) sphere of discourse for Latin as a non-vernacular language for Europe's intelligentsia was in part a heritage of the Middle Ages. In the medieval period, Latin was not merely the language of university lectures and disputations, but in many grammar schools (for example in England) the acquisition of a spoken, or colloquial use of Latin was forced on boys at an early age. Although the existence of statutes enforcing schoolboys who had passed their second or third year of instruction to use only Latin in school may have been neglected in some schools as often as it was enforced, nevertheless, the ability to speak, and not merely write, in Latin was seen not only as a necessary prerequisite to university life, but as an essential part of mastery of Latin as a language. Latin was also the official language of churchmen, and sometimes the language of secular administration and diplomacy. Although this general state of affairs did not change much with the dawn of the Renaissance, nevertheless advent of humanism and its emphasis on the restoration of the standards of ancient Latinity seems at first to have acted as a stimulus for this 'spoken' use. In this paper we will catch a glimpse of several areas in which this impact can still be detected: (1) a pervasive and European-wide effort on the part of humanist teachers to reform the spoken Latin of schoolboys to accord more closely with 'classical' norms of usage, (2) the rise of an entire genre of humanist Latin literature connected with this reform, the *colloquia familiaria*, (3) the relationship between Ciceronianism and spoken Latin, (4) a new emphasis on oral eloquence as a badge of humanism (especially in the Germanic regions), (5) the rise of a 'hierarchy of eloquence' in the oral Latin of university professors in accord with different expectations for professors of *bonae litterae*, and professors of medicine, law, mathematics and physics, (5) a new attention on the part of humanist scholars to finding norms for Latin pronunciation.

The *Heroides* of Eobanus Hessus (1488-1540): Toward an Evangelical Paideia

Diane L. Johnson. (Western Washington University)

From the time of Petrarch, humanist poets cultivated the genre of the metrical letter. The heroic letter, in which the poetic lines were assigned to a mythological or historical figure – a highly rhetoricized dramatic genre honed by Ovid – also attracted humanistic attention. At first poets favored figures from Greek myth for their heroic epistles. However, toward the end of the fifteenth century they began to compose such works for figures sanctioned by Christian texts and traditions.

Outstanding among the poets in the genre of heroic epistles is Helius Eobanus Hessus. Born of poor parents in the village of Beckendorf in Hesse, Eobanus received a humanistic education at Erfurt. Courtier, tutor, medical advisor, professor of Greek and rhetoric at Erfurt and Marburg, Eobanus knew Camerarius, Micyllus, Spalatin, and Reuchlin. He maintained a correspondence with Melanchthon and Erasmus. He was an enthusiastic and supportive follower of Martin Luther.

Eobanus' *Heroidum Christianarum Epistolae*, published in 1514 and reedited in 1535, is a collection of elegiac letters ostensibly written by twenty-two female figures drawn from the New Testament and other Christian documents. Each character is given the opportunity not only to express her own emotional responses to her circumstances but also to demonstrate the significance of her story within the Christian tradition itself. By dramatizing doctrine, Eobanus maximizes the effectiveness of his heroines' stories. By developing the historical and traditional background circumstances related to each of his heroines, Eobanus provides a very moving means to educate readers in background data to each narrative. The poet undertakes a codification of Christian lore, collecting and poeticizing it into a canonic Christian paideia.

Eobanus' goal of canonizing Christian doctrine through the use of classical poetic genres is not original with him, for other humanist poets used the classics – particularly Ovid – for similar purposes. However, that Eobanus is intent upon developing the pedagogical potential of the *Heroides* in a particularly Lutheran direction becomes apparent in his restructuring of the work for the second edition of 1535. Lutheran educators, intent upon harnessing the pedagogical potential of the classical authors, develop characteristic means of institutionalizing them; Eobanus' second edition of the *Heroides* is consonant with these trends.

Scatology and Eschatology: Reading Luther's Latin Verse

Carl P. E. Springer (Southern Illinois University)

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was almost perfectly bilingual (Latin and German). In his famous "Table Talks" he switches back and forth effortlessly from one language to the other. While Luther is better known for his contributions to the German language, including his popular translation of the Bible and his chorales, many of his treatises and lectures were written in Latin. He even wrote a number of Latin verse compositions, some 30 in all, which have been only infrequently studied.

It has been suggested that Luther was better able to hurl invectives *("schimpfen")* in the German language than in Latin,[1] but, in fact, he seems very comfortable using Latin poems to launch witty attacks against adversaries of his such as Erasmus and the Pope. One of these is something of a scatological tour de force directed against Simon Lemnius, whom Luther dismisses as *"omnium turpissimum et foedissimum poetam"* and, more bluntly, as a *"scheiss poet."*[2] In just 10 lines, Luther manages to use variations of the Latin word *merda* 12 times:

Quam bene conveniunt tibi res et carmina, Lemchen!
Merda tibi res est, carmina merda tibi.
. . .
At meritis si digna tuis te poena sequatur,
Tu miserum corvis merda cadaver eris.[3]

While it is important to recognize Luther's interest in agonistic elegance and the playful element in his Latin poetics (his scatology should be viewed within the context of the rhetorical conventions of his own time),[4] we should take into consideration other, equally important, aspects of his verse. Luther was also comfortable using Latin poetry to joke with his friends, paraphrase Scripture, and express his deepest feelings about love, faith, and death, as evidenced by this moving epitaph for his daughter who died at the age of 13:

Dormio cum sanctis hic Magdalena, Lutheri
Filia, et hoc strato tecta quiesco meo;
Filia mortis eram, peccati semine nata.
Sanguine sed vivo, Christe, redempta tuo.

I will argue in this paper that the man who is often described as "the father of the German language" was fully capable of expressing a wide range of emotions in Latin verse and that these compositions, some vulgar, some mundane, and some sublime, deserve to be more fully considered when weighing the contributions of this influential bilingual author to the long history of Latin language and literature.

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[1] Birgit Stolt: *Martin Luthers Rhetorik des Herzens* (Tübingen, 2000), p. 12.

[2] *Weimarer Ausgabe, Tischreden* 5, 326, #5709.

[3] I use the text as it is found in *WA TR* 4, 89-90, #4032.

[4] Erasmus, Thomas More, and other contemporaries frequently referred to their theological opponents as "devil's apes, pimps, babblers, more stupid than any pig, brainless and illiterate beasts," and much worse. See C. Furey, "Invective and Discernment in Martin Luther, D. Erasmus, and Thomas More," *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005), 469-88.