

¶ Inger Ekrem, Minna Skafte Jensen and Egil Kraggerud (eds.). *Reformation and Latin Literature in Northern Europe*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996. Pp. xiv + 254. ISBN 82-00-22636-0.

Latin lives in Scandinavia! Or, at least, Latin studies seem to be bent upon revival. One thinks first, perhaps, of those enterprising souls in Finland, at the University of Jyväskylä, who broadcast the news in Latin weekly on Finnish Radio short-wave (reasoning, as I understand it, that more people in the world understand Latin than Finnish). I have also just seen for sale a computer program for learning Latin, complete with conversation drills and a pronunciation track using a “native speaker.” To say nothing of experiencing the special delights of Finnish tango in Latin. Clearly, something is happening here that we ought to know about.

What we ought to know about is the new interest in Scandinavia directed toward understanding the Latin contribution to Northern culture and, especially, the influence of Neo-Latin from the sixteenth century onwards. There have been a number of PhD dissertations in this area over the years, of course, but there has been of late a spurt of attention aimed at the Reformation/Renaissance period, when the mostly German-derived educational reforms reinvigorated

Scandinavian Latin and brought it into a European form it maintained through the time of Linné. (That this Neo-Latin infusion occurred simultaneously with a serious concern for the development and extension of the vernacular languages makes it all the more interesting.) The appearance a few years ago of an introductory survey of the territory edited by Minna Skafte Jensen, *A History of Nordic Neo-Latin Literature* (1995), suggested the direction these studies would take.

The term *Neo-Latin* refers to the kind of Latin that gained currency in Europe from the fifteenth century onwards. The Renaissance classicising project that resulted among other things in new, reasonably critical, editions of ancient writers, brought about thereby a new look at the use of language, especially of Latin. As a result of this study, writers such as Cicero and Quintillian became normative, and there grew an apparently conscious effort to rescue Latin from its later vernacular influences, usually thought of as deleterious. This new, international, standard of Latin usage encouraged the production and exchange of a large body of literary and academic writing across Europe, from Hungary to Iceland, say. The formal and linguistic demands of this literature laid hands upon vernacular literatures, as well, especially in the seventeenth century, as can be seen in the implicit discussion of, say, appropriate sonnet form in Sweden (for which see Lars Burman's *Den svenska stormaktstidens sonett* [1990]). Hence, our attention to its movement into Scandinavia. The present volume draws from a conference on the title subject held in Oslo in 1993 and directs itself largely to the sixteenth century.

The articles come from scholars at thirteen Scandinavian, Baltic, and German universities, with an introductory bibliographic article by Jozef IJzewijn from Leuven, in Belgium, whose article is in English, though his abstract is, tantalisingly, in Latin. Twelve of the eighteen articles are, in fact, in the current *lingua franca*, English, and six are in German. There seems little point in discussing the individual contributions to this symposium, but it is useful to see that there are two common threads running through many of them. These threads are Philip Melancthon and the Lutheran educational program as it was adopted in Scandinavia, and Daniel Chytræus and, thereby, the

University of Rostock. Indeed, these papers make clear the central position the University of Rostock and its impressive rector, Chytræus, had in leading the educational strategy of Reformation Scandinavia through the great number of Scandinavian students it attracted. After Wittenberg, Rostock was the university that most completely and rapidly adopted the Lutheran reform and its educational ideals, as presented by Melancthon. It is also clear that, after Wittenberg, Rostock appears, from these articles, to have become the principal university to which wealthy and important Scandinavians sent their sons for further education in the sixteenth century. For most Scandinavians, it was simply closer to home than other foreign universities. This was especially true for Swedes, whose own university limped along in the sixteenth century, and for Baltic students, for whom there was no local university until the seventeenth century foundations of Åbo and Dorpat (Tartu), under Christina.

The use of the term “literature” in the title of this collection must be taken in its broadest possible sense. There is very little here about literature in its modern meaning of “fictive and discursive writing”: for that, one must see Skaftø Jensen’s 1995 anthology. Most of the discussion in this book is concerned with the state of university education in Northern Europe in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. There is, in fact, very little even about Latin, *per se*, though there is an article about the position of Greek studies in Rostock in the late sixteenth century.

This book suggests possibilities, then, and encourages future study, not least by provoking enquiry into the educational ideas of early modern Scandinavia.

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