

Book review:

James Adams *Regional Diversification of the Latin language 200 BC to 600 AD*

James Adams' 'Regional Diversification of the Latin language 200 BC to 600 AD' is a groundbreaking piece of scholarship. Traditionally Latin is regarded as being a highly uniform, almost monolithic, language, despite being the *lingua franca* of the vast Roman Empire and the ancestor of quite a few rather diverse languages (namely the modern Romance languages). Adams is not the first to recognise the paradox in all this, not only because it goes against common linguistic sense but also because there is plenty of metalinguistic evidence (ancient testimonia in particular) which suggests that there were regional differences in Latin, but is the first to address this problem and attempts to discover the regionalisms of the Latin language between the Republican era (c. 200 BC) and the late Imperial period (up to 600 BC). One of the main reasons why traditional analyses of Latin regionalisms suggest that Latin was a completely uniform language is that inscriptions were used as the main source of data, and Adams argues in the first and penultimate chapter that inscriptions are inadequate for discovering regionalisms since there were rigid generic spelling conventions which must have concealed all the evidence for regionalisms. Adams hence incorporates a vast amount of subliterate evidence that has been discovered in recent years and provides an up-to-date and innovative analysis of the Latin language. Adams also makes an original contribution to the historical relationship between Latin and the Romance languages by applying modern analyses of dialectology (especially that of Hinkens, Auer and Kerswill (2005)) to the Latin data. Recent analyses have shown that colonial varieties of a particular language often evolve in very interesting ways, which contradicts many traditional assumptions that once a language is being transported to a colony, it becomes fossilised and is hence a good hunting ground for archaisms. Adams is right to regard this traditional assumption as a 'myth', and his application of recent models of sociolinguistics is indeed an innovative and powerful approach. Adams' 'Regional Diversification', therefore, is a must-read for all students and researchers of Latin.

However, the results of Adams' analysis are somewhat underwhelming, since the vast majority of his 'regionalisms' are lexical with relatively little phonological and morphological examples and almost no syntactic ones. Furthermore, the sheer size of Adams' book (800+ pages) is deceptive with regards to substance since the actual number of regionalisms discovered is not massive as Adams analyses each and every example to its finest detail and hence ends up occupying a lot of space for individual examples. Although Adams can certainly assert that there were linguistic features which were used in certain regions of the empire only, which entails that Latin in the Roman period was definitely not a completely uniform language, he cannot conclude that the regional differences were particularly marked. The results of Adams' groundbreaking analysis, therefore, are not as exciting as his analysis itself.

Furthermore, as Adams confines himself to the Roman period (the later limit being 600 BC), his book is much more relevant to Latinists than it is for Romanists. Indeed, Adams states that he is not primarily concerned with proto-Romance formation in Latin (although he does highlight all potential Latin anticipations of Romance whenever possible e.g. *pullus*, which Adams discusses in chapter 4 section 1.3.1 and links with the modern Southern Italian *puddu*), which renders his analysis of limited importance to Romance philologists if not to the rest of the philological world, since

regionalisms of Latin *per se* are not nearly as big and important a field of research as Romance dialectalisation.

Adams' output also has important consequences for the study of modern dialectology, since his novel application of recent models of dialectology to Latin provides an interesting test to some new hypotheses in sociolinguistics. There are some exciting results, namely Adams' analysis of colonial Latin which shows that linguistic innovations are more numerous and prominent than retention of archaisms (see the final chapter sections 4.1 and 4.2), which indeed conforms to the modern consensus that dialects go on evolving even when separated from the mainland and contradicts the traditional view (very popular among classicists) that colonial dialects become fossilised archaic varieties of the language. However, as mentioned above, most of Adams' findings are mainly lexical and so there is not a complete account of how these colonial varieties of Latin evolved after settlement. Furthermore, there is a phenomenon which is very prominent in modern studies of dialectology (see Hinkens, Auer and Kerswill 2005) and one which Adams' highlights in the introduction section 6, namely the phenomenon of 'koineisation' by which the diverse mix of the linguistic backgrounds of the original immigrants disappears in one generation or two and a much more uniform linguistic variety is formed, as seen in modern America, Australia and New Zealand. The Latin data, however, does not yield compelling results for this phenomenon, apart from the phonological evidence from Roman Africa (see the concluding chapter section 3.8) which Adams suggests may point towards 'koineisation' in the African colony. The colonial Latin data remains hard to interpret and does not confirm 'koineisation' in the Roman provinces in any way at all.

My review of Adams' book has thus far been somewhat pessimistic and negative as I have downplayed its contribution by arguing that its originality and importance are limited to the field of Latin/Romance philology. However, this is not to deny the main strength of this book, which is its potential for future research. First of all, Adams has very kindly included and translated all the primary texts and testimonia in his book, which makes it a very convenient read since the reader does not need to locate the primary evidence him/herself. Secondly, as mentioned above, Adams, unlike his predecessors, does not confine himself to Latin inscriptions and incorporates many recently discovered evidence of subliterate Latin, which makes his book a very up-to-date and invaluable collection of pretty much all the relevant Latin texts, literary and subliterate, from Roman Italy and the main provinces of the Roman Empire dating from the earliest period right down to the end of the Imperial period. Thirdly, I mentioned above that the size of Adams' book does not yield a corresponding amount of results, and this is because Adams spends much of his time explaining his philological analysis and methodology with utmost detail, and his empirical analysis is indeed extremely impressive, since he carefully criticises some of his predecessors' analysis and provides a very powerful way of how to deal with the complex Latin evidence. To illustrate this point: in his discussion of the distribution of the genitive *-us* in chapter 2 section 3, Adams argues that Blümel (1972) and Coleman (1990) are mistaken to assume that that the Roman ending was the standard ending *-is* and shows that of the twelve examples of *-is* in CIL 1 only two are from Rome. *-us*, therefore, is hence argued to be a religious archaism rather than a regional Roman feature. Adams' methodology in discovering regionalisms is most impressive in its insistence on synchronic comparisons between forms from different regions, rather than assuming hastily and simplistically that other places necessarily have the regular Latin form and hence concluding, as his predecessors have done, that the non-standard form in one region automatically constitutes regionalism. Adams has therefore 'shown us the way' by collecting and presenting all the Latin evidence and proposing

an excellent methodology for analysing regionalisms. It now remains for future scholars (or perhaps for Adams himself) to bring his analysis forward by showing how there might have been Latin regionalisms not only of a lexical kind but also of a phonological/morphological/syntactic nature, how these Latin regionalisms bear on the prehistory of the Romance languages, and how these Latin regionalisms correlate with modern studies of dialectology.