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**From *The Book of Proverbs* to Erasmus' *Adagia*:
an inquiry into the history of terms *proverbium* and *adagium* based on lexicographical evidence
from the XVIth century**

Firmly rooted in the medieval tradition, 16th century infatuation for paremiology, which reflects itself in the scores of collections left from this period, is a well-known cultural phenomenon that has recently enjoyed great attention in literary and cultural studies. Current research in this area focuses mainly on the sources and filiation of paremiological collections and related types of texts, within as well as between different European linguistic traditions.

So far, little attention has however been paid to the terminology used by 16th century authors when dealing with proverbs. Most of the time, the term *proverb* itself is taken for granted and the complexity of the underlying metalinguistic concepts has been largely overlooked.

The present contribution offers an attempt at reconstructing the metalinguistic concept which underlies the closely linked terms *proverbium* and *adagium* and their vernacular equivalents featuring on the title pages of the so-called “proverb” collections from the 16th century. Evidence from 16th century lexicographical works produced in the Low Countries and in France (Latin, Greek and vernacular) reveals that the terms cover a vast variety of linguistic phenomena, most of which lie far beyond the scope of the modern term *proverb*.

Selected references

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