Essays in Medieval Studies 3
[*Page numbers of the printed text appear at the right in bold.*]

page 1

European Chancelleries and the Rise of Standard Written Languages

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The decline of dialects and the emergence of standard languages in Europe at the close of the Middle Ages is a familiar chapter in the histories of the individual languages, but I do not know of a discussion that points out how similar the process was in the various countries and the implications of this similarity for our understanding the nature of standard languages in general.1 A comparative study reveals that standard languages all emerged as written forms, not oral; that these written standards were created by government secretariats, not by literary figures; and that when spoken standards began to emerge in the 17th and 18th centuries, their grammar and pronunciation were based on the written standard and not vice versa.

One of the reasons that these historical patterns have not been recognized more clearly is the continuing ambiguity about the relation between speech and writing. During the last century, linguists have made a fetish of speech as the primary form of language and have treated writing as merely a subsidiary representation of speech.2 Psychologically and philosophically, there is much to be said for this point of view, although even here it has its limitations. Some forms of language, such as mathematics, are impossible without the written notation. Such a simple concept as 777 is impossible to grasp without the figure 7.3 The logical processes of thought advanced by Plato and Aristotle, such as definition of terms, classification, and formal logic, are at least very heavily dependent upon writing. But leaving aside the psychological

page 2

relation between writing and thinking, it is historical nonsense to equate standard languages with speech. In 950 A.D. there were in Europe six "languages": Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Anglo-Saxon, and Old Church Slavonic.4 In 1937, the *Atlas Linguisticus* identified 53 languages in Europe, 23 of which had emerged since 1900. This would appear to indicate that the languages in Europe are multiplying and growing more diverse. But of course that is not true. All studies show that dialects have been losing and standard languages gaining ground throughout Europe, especially during this century, when the *Atlas Linguisticus* would appear to indicate that the greatest number of new languages have come into existence.

The historical fact is that both in 950 and today, spoken dialects in Europe represent a continuum in which, from north to south and east to west, each village can understand its neighbor, although at the extremes the speech is mutually unintelligible. W. J. Entwistle has observed that wherever there are clear linguistic frontiers, they are always the result of war and politics.5 Areas with uninterrupted cultural development have blurred linguistic frontiers. The fixing of sharp linguistic boundaries in Europe began with the centralization of government, the growth of nationalism, and the self-conscious creation of official written languages. As these written standards emerged, the dialects continued to be spoken and, indeed, in many cases are still spoken. When literacy and education grew more widespread after the 17th century, steps were taken to establish and teach uniform pronunciation, but in large measure, the languages of Europe are still the written standards established at the end of the Middle

page 3

Ages. It is therefore of some importance to understand the historical process through which these standards came into being.

The historical situation is further blurred by the fact that some of the earliest writing in each of the European vernaculars is in local dialects and is devoted to poems, stories, sermons, and other nonofficial, nonutilitarian literature. This tends to reinforce the impression that writing is a private medium like speech and that its primary aspect is subjective and expressive. But this impression overlooks the fact that in the Middle Ages the official language was Latin, and vernacular writing was in local dialects. Standard Latin was essentially a written language. Philippe Wolff observes that the characteristic linguistic feature of the Roman world was bilingualism: bilingualism between Latin in

the west and Greek in the east; bilingualism between Latin and the native dialects; bilingualism between Imperial Latin and the vulgar Latin dialects that became the romance languages.6 These bilingualisms have different histories in different areas, but in all of them written Imperial Latin (which we today call Classical Latin) lived on as the language of administration, of liturgy, of jurisprudence, of historiography, of learning, of commerce. The extent to which government and business slipped back into oral tradition following the overthrow of the Empire is a moot point. It appears that the Germanic tribesmen were slow to learn to write. Not until the reign of Charlemagne in the 8th century do we have evidence of writing used for secular government. Auerbach in *Literary Language and its Public* argues that from the 6th century, to the 12th writing was purely ceremonial.7 M. T. Clanchey in *From Memory to Written Record* feels that the Anglo-Saxon charters and Alfred's interest in writing were magical and ceremonial.

page 4

Even the compilation of the Domesday Book he views as largely symbolic since there are virtually no references to it in legal proceedings until after 1250.8

The principal bilingualism of the European Middle Ages was between speech and writing. This Latin writing was inextricably linked with the spiritual and secular ambitions of the Roman Church, which had inherited the mantle of the Empire. For the Church, Latin was an instrument of vital political importance. As Elliott Goodman has observed, a national language is the nerve center of national memory, the most important medium through which national traditions are nurtured and transmitted.9 As long as administration, worship, jurisprudence, education, learning, and literature were carried on in the language of Rome, the Empire lived. As the vernacular languages of the European countries displaced Latin, the authority of Rome declined.

King Alfred in the 10th century was the first European ruler to try deliberately to replace Latin with writing in the vernacular, and his secretariat went some distance towards creating a national standard. Helmut Gneuss in the fullest study yet made discounts Alfred's personal involvement and attributes the standardization to Aethelwold's school in the Old Minster in Winchester.10 However, Gneuss discusses only literary and ecclesiastical manuscripts. He mentions in passing that Aethelwold may have introduced a new kind of charter in Anglo-Saxon, but he offers no comment on the language of the Anglo-Saxon laws and charters. The evidence of later developments is that it is in connection with such official documents as these that standardization begins. Winchester would have been the location of an Anglo-Saxon chancellery. Until the official documents have been studied, we will not know to

page 5

what extent the activities of the Anglo-Saxon chancellery foreshadowed those of Toledo, Paris, and Westminster.

Gneuss attributes the creation of standard Anglo-Saxon to the Benedictine reform, and it is true that some of the earliest writings in the other European vernaculars are associated with religious movements which reflected implicit resistance to the domination of Rome. In his *Admonitio Generalis* in 789 Charlemagne had urged the clergy to make more use of the vernaculars for meeting the needs of the laity, and at the Council of Frankfurt in 794 he stated that "no one believes that God should only be worshipped in the three languages [i.e., Latin, Greek, and Hebrew]. God is worshipped and man s prayers are heard, when his demands are just, in any language." Despite being recorded in Latin from the lips of an emperor who aspired to the Imperial diadem, these words are the birth certificate of European nationalism and of national languages.11 Nineteen years later the Council of Tours confirmed this birth certificate by ordering priests to translate their sermons into vulgar Roman or German ("rusticam romanum aut theotiscan" þeod = tribe) for the benefit of the lay people. These are the sentiments that lie behind Alfred's preface to the Anglo-Saxon translation of Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care* and his program for translating other Latin works into English. This sort of religio/linguistic resistance to Rome is found in the vernacular poetry of the Franciscans in 13th-century Umbria;12 in the development of the Wycliffite written tradition in England;13 in Luther' s translation of the Bible into German;14 and in Calvin' s insistence on composing his theological treatises in French.15 No doubt ecclesiastical writing was more utilitarian and official in the Middle Ages than we regard it today. Nevertheless, in no

page 6

case does this early ecclesiastical writing represent the tradition from which modern vernacular standards emerged. The monastic scriptoria, devoted to producing masterpieces of calligraphy and painting, reveal the magical and ceremonial aspect of writing, not the official.16 This aspect is not unimportant since magic and ceremony are

attributes of power. But standard languages emerge from government and business, not from magic and ceremony.

In contrast to the statements recorded in Latin at Frankfurt and Tours advocating the use of the vernacular, the two earliest examples of European vernacular writing that have come down to us are both official. The earliest examples of French are the Strassburg Oaths sworn in 842 by Charles and Louis against their brother, Emperor Lothair I; the earliest examples of Italian are the *Placiti Cassinesi* of 960. Neither the Strassburg Oaths nor the *Placiti* represent the reduction to writing of extempore phrases from the vernacular. They are, instead, the first examples of chancellery usage. In each case, the judge prescribed the Latin formulas by which the witnesses swore in French or Italian. The witnesses knew the formulas in Latin and used the vernacular only for the sake of their audience.17 Free, extempore composition in the vernacular by writers who had not been educated first in Latin was still several centuries in the future.

It is impossible to know how much of this sort of translation of official Latin into the vernacular has been lost from what Clanchey calls "the age of memory," but it is of no great moment, for it represents the age of writing in dialect, not the beginning of standard language. So likewise does the first flowering of court poetry in Provence, Sicily, Galicia, and Germany between 1150 and 1250. For their tiny,

page 7

homogeneous but sophisticated and widely traveled audiences, the trobars, troubadours, and minnesingers fashioned somewhat normalized written dialects of Provenˆal, Sicilian, Galician, and German, which could be used to argue that the beginnings of the vernacular standards are not official but literary. However, the evidence of these writings points in the opposite direction. The fact is that none of these 12th-century court literary dialects is the dialect from which the written standard eventually emerged. French court poetry began in langue d'oc whereas the standard emerged from langue d'oil. The best 12th-century German poetry, written under the patronage of the Hohenstaufens, was in the Alemanic and Franconian dialects whereas the standard emerged eventually from Saxon and Thuringian. The poetry of the court of Frederick II was in Sicilian; standard Italian emerged from Tuscan. Until the end of the 13th century, Galician was the language favored for the court lyric in Spain whereas the standard emerged from Castilian. The truth is that these courtly compositions were not really regarded as writing at all but as librettos, mnemonic devices to remind performers of their songs and stories.

Until after the renaissance of the 12th century, writing was in Latin and Latin was writing.18 The 6th through the 12th centuries was the period of the *ars dictaminis*, when neither the creator nor receiver of a missive needed to be master of the techniques of writing. They were the "dictator" and the "auditor." The link between them was provided by the anonymous invisible clerk who alone maintained the integrity of the graphic code.19 The regularization of government and resurgence of trade beginning in the 12th century led to the development of official writing in the

page 8

vernaculars.20 In France, Spain, and England the resurgence of civic life was concomitant with the centralization of administration in a pivotal city. In Germany it was supported by the authority of the chancelleries of the Holy Roman Empire. In spite of its lack of centralized political authority, Italy witnessed the earliest resurgence of civic life and the earliest turn to the use of the vernacular for business in the Tuscan communes of the north in the 12th century. Castilian Spanish began to be standardized in the 13th century; Parisian French in the 14th; London English in the 15th; and Saxon German in the 16th. These dates are approximate, but it is accurate to say that before 1100 virtually all official and commercial business in Europe was carried on either orally or in written Latin, and by 1600 virtually all of it was being carried on in the vernaculars. In each country the use of vernacular writing for government and business preceded the awakening of what Auerbach calls "vernacular humanism," that is the development of the vernacular into a vehicle for literature and culture.21 In some instances, important literary works appear concomitant with the emergence of the vernacular standard, for example Dante in Italy, *Poema del Cid* in Spain, *Roman de la Rose* in France, and the poems of Chaucer in England, but it can be shown that these poems were not themselves creators of the literary languages but are early examples of the emerging official standard.

Although it appeared earliest, I shall discuss Italian last because it is the least characteristic. The archetypical evolutions of medieval written standards are in France and Spain, where they are aspects of the centralization of government and the development of nationalism. The emergence of the Ile de France and Paris as the heart of the

French

page 9

nation is a familiar story. From the time the Capetians came to the throne in the 11th century, the court was fixed in Paris. Whatever official writing the court did at this time was in Latin, and some of the earliest examples of the emerging standard, like the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Vie de Saint Alexis*, are in a mixture of Parisian and Norman dialect.22 The royal chancellery in Paris was actually slower to begin using French than the provincial cities. The earliest French document in the archives of Tournai dates from 1197, and other provincial cities began to use French by the turn of the century whereas the first French document in the chancellerie royale is dated 1218.23 The earliest documents in the provincial archives are in local dialects, but by 1250 the *franˆais* of the Parisian chancellery began to appear in the local archives, and by 1300 local dialects disappear from official documents. From this time onward, Parisian French means the written standard of the royal chancellery. Like the Latin it replaced, this writing represented unity and authority in the face of diversity. The beginning of the growth of national spirit may be associated with the consolidation of administration under Louis IX, St. Louis (1214-1270). His suppression of the great feudatories and arbitration of borders with England and Aragon greatly enhanced the royal authority. His introduction of Roman law and the appellate jurisdiction of the crown throughout his territories and regularization of the collection of taxes and of administration increased the authority of the chancellerie royale in Paris. A 1257 annotation attributed to the king indicates that correspondence with the chancellery was in French, even though the notation is, as usual, in Latin: "quod nos litteras maioris et juratorum Sancti Quintini in vir omandia in gallico scriptas vidimus.24

page 10

Brunot details the manner in which regional secular and ecclesiastical chartularies began to follow the example of the Parisian chancellery. He concludes that by 1320 the French of the chancellerie royale had prevailed throughout the langue d'oil except in the north (modern Belgium), where dialect was written until the 15th century. Literature followed the same chronology with only one important author after 1320 writing the dialect Froissart, who wrote his *Chronicles* in the dialect of his native Valence, perhaps conscious of his English audience and the growing overtones of nationalism associated with the French of Paris.

The situation in the south of France is more complex. The Albigensian wars, concluded by St. Louis in 1229, destroyed nearly all evidence of the unity of Provenˆal culture which must have underlain the unity in language. Like Italy, and perhaps as a result of the same continuity of the notarial tradition, Provence had begun to use the vernacular for administration a century before the north. Deeds and charters in langue d'oc date from 1034.25 In 1178 when a mission was sent to Toulouse to combat heresy, two Cathari presented it with a statement in occitan. Invited to speak Latin, they professed to know none, and the conference had to be carried on in Provenˆal. After the treaty of 1229, the assimilation of Provence into the administration of Paris brought to an end the official use of occitan. The royal seneschals who were appointed to govern the south used Parisian French for their administration, but the municipalities and local gentry insisted on using Latin. In order to reach the local populace, Paris was forced to address them in Latin. Under Philip the Fair in 1317 it was decreed that the chancellery should write to "bonis villis gallicanis in gallico et occitanis

page 11

in latino."26 French began to replace Latin in the course of the reconquest of the south during the 100-years war with England, especially after Jean, duc de Berry, was invested with Aquitaine and established his court in Riom in 1360. By 1450 Parisian French had become the official written language throughout Provence, although the spoken dialect persisted, and indeed persists to this day.

By the middle of the 14th century in the north of France, by the middle of the 15th in the south, the writing of the Parisian chancellery had been accepted as standard for government and business, with a reasonably uniform lexicon, morphology, and syntax. The 16th century witnessed the adoption of this official standard by literature and learning, and the 17th century witnessed the movement towards establishing a uniform pronunciation. These are processes which take us beyond the period of our concern, but it is worth observing that the 1539 Ordinance of Villers-Cotterets which established French legally as the language of administration and the law was still directed principally towards the written language. In spite of a succession of attempts at reform, the traditional chancery spellings persisted.27 In 1560 Mathieu explained, "Le gens qui proposent vne nouuelle manière d'écrire, ne iugent pas qu'ils entreprennent combat alencontre de la necessité. Telle necessité c'est la Chancellerie de France; sont cours du Parlement; sont les

iustices souueraines et ordinaires."28 As education grew more general, competition between the writing masters of the corporation of law clerks and teachers in the chantry schools over the privilege of teaching writing. As late as 1714, chantry school teachers were forbidden to put more than three lines of writing before their students as examples. The corporation masters still

page 12

controlled a monopoly on teaching writing and orthography.29

The movement towards fixing pronunciation is attributed to the court and salon society of the 17th century. Brunot says that printing combined with the speech of the salons to fix pronunciation.30 What spelling reform occurred was influenced by the speech of the salons, but by the 18th century "bon usage" came to mean speech imitating the decorum of written usage.31 Because of the influence of the salons (themselves a kind of drama), French theater played a smaller part than the English and German theater in disseminating the standard pronunciation, but it was caught up in the 18th century movement to refine the language. Plays were censored to eradicate any sign of vulgar expression.

Like Parisian French, Castilian Spanish was standardized in the process of national unification and the centralization of administration. The linguistic competition in Spain was less between the vernacular dialects and Latin than between the dialects and Arabic. The Spaniards in the parts of Spain under Arab domination never gave up their Romance dialects. Like English under the Normans, Spanish continued as the domestic language (called mozarabic because it was written in the arabic alphabet), while Arabic was limited to administration and to the literature and learning of the small circle of rulers of Arab descent. The use of Arabic as an official language led to the decline of Latin to the point that in 1049 the canons of the Catholic Church had to be translated into Arabic to guarantee their preservation.32 Spanish began to emerge as an official language as the central plains were gradually recovered from the Arab rulers. The northwest seacoast and mountains were the only region in Spain subdued by neither

page 13

the Visigoths or the Arabs. About 750, taking advantage of plague, drought, and revolt preoccupying the Caliphate, Alphonso I, Duke of Cantabria, created the Christian Kingdom of Galicia in the far northwestern corner of the peninsula. Other dukedoms asserted their independence, and by 900 these had formed a loose federation designated as the Kingdom of Leon. The frontier between Leon and Moorish Spain comprised the dukedoms of Cantabria and Bardulia. The "castilla," or castles, scattered through the hills around Burgos, the major city of Cantabria, became the base from which the reconquest of the plains was achieved over the next hundred years. The dialect of the Castilians, as they came to be called, spread with their power, invading eastern Leon and pressing southward into the conquered portions of the Emirate of Toledo. Already in the 10th century legal documents, deeds, and church records in the Christian kingdoms were written in the vernacular dialects.33 Galician was the preferred dialect for lyric poetry, but the military prowess of the Castilians led to the use of Castilian for the epic poems of the 11th and 12th centuries.

Castile completed the conquest of the Emirate of Toledo in 1085 under Alphonso VI, and Toledo remained the seat of the Castilian court until Philip II established the capital at Madrid in 1561. Alphonso VI moved his chancellery in Toledo into the mainstream of European scribal practice by replacing the Visigothic minuscule by the Caroline minuscule.34 As Castilian influence spread, the hand and language of the chancellery of Toledo was adopted by the other chancelleries in Spain. Like King Alfred in England, Alphonso X (1252-84) is credited with taking a personal interest in establishing the Castilian standard.35 In 1253 he decreed the usage of

page 14

Toledo to be the standard for all official documents. In 1276, tradition has it, he personally went through the *Book of the Eighth Sphere* which had been written by his scholars, eliminating irregularities in spelling and grammar and improving clumsy expression, thus establishing "castellano drecho" (correct Castilian). This standard corresponded to the usage of Burgos, the administrative center of ancient Castile, but with concessions to the dialects of Leon and Toledo. Alphonso himself continued to write poetry in Galician, but his chancellery employed Castilian for all official writing, and he had science, history, and other prose translated into Castilian.

There is no need to trace the gradual domination of Castilian over Aragonese and Catalan and the establishment in

the 18th century of a separate Portuguese standard.36 The spread of Castilian reaffirms the connection between political power and the establishment of standard language. It reaffirms also that the concept of standard applies largely to the written form of the language. Only a minority of the people in Spain even today speak Castilian Spanish and evidently no one in Spanish America.37 Educated people write espanol correcto and can speak it following the usage of the written language, but nearly always as a divergent from their normal colloquials. Antonio de Nebrija, himself an Andalusian, in the earliest vernacular grammar in Europe (1492) asserted that he was establishing a written standard for use throughout the Spanish Empire because the Spanish people were so colloquial in their usage.38 There is debate as to the part played by the court in establishing a uniform pronunciation for Castilian Spanish in the 16th century and the extent to which this pronunciation has influenced the populace. Education in both Spain and Spanish America

page 15

continues to be focused upon mastery of the written language.

Historians of the English language have been tardy in acknowledging the influence of government in establishing conventions of the standard language, but the history of English parallels that of French and Spanish. The difference in England was the Norman Conquest, which brought to an end the Alfredian movement toward establishing an Anglo-Saxon standard. William himself issued documents both in Latin and in the Anglo-Saxon standard, but by the beginning of the 12th century Anglo-Saxon had disappeared. With the exception of the 1258 Proclamation of Henry III, there is no official document in English until the Petition of the Mercers to Parliament in 1386 and the coronation pledges of Henry IV in 1399. These are atypical. It was not until the reign of Henry V that Chancery English began to develop.39 All of Henry V's correspondence was in French until he invaded France for the second time in 1417. From that time on all of the correspondence written by his signet clerks is in English. We have collected 105 such letters, written between 1417 and 1422 by six different clerks.40 They are remarkably uniform in their grammar and orthography and clearly provide the model for the English written by Privy Seal, Parliament, and Chancery in the decades that follow. Like the standard of the Castilian chancellery that made concessions to the dialects of Toledo and Leon and the standard of the Saxon chancellery that made concessions to the usage of Prague and Vienna, the English Chancery Standard is an amalgam of the midland Wycliffite standard and the southern London standard. From southern usage, it takes 3rd person *th* (*sayeth*, *hath*), *yive* and *ayenst* with the semivowel, *be*/*ben* instead of *are*. From northern it takes *they*, *them*, *their*, *ly* for the adverb, loss of the *y*

page 16

prefix on the past participle, loss of the *en* inflection on the infinitive. By 1450 Chancery Standard was being used throughout England. It is easy in the Paston and Stonor papers to distinguish writers who have been trained in Chancery usage from those who still spell by ear.41 Chancery Standard served as the model for Caxton and the early printers and became the basis for the English prose styles that developed in the 16th century. These styles made few changes in Chancery morphology and orthography, and their techniques of subordination and parallelism are sophisticated developments of structures borrowed by Chancery Standard from its Latin and French antecedents.

Like Parisian and Castilian, English Chancery Standard developed as a written convention. English pronunciation was not fixed until the end of the 18th century.42 The English court did not have the sort of influence on establishing English pronunciation that the Spanish court did on Castilian and the French court upon French. In England, the preferred pronunciations were legislated by actors and politicians (who were sometimes the same). Thomas Sheridan, father of the playwright, who began his career as an actor, published the first pronouncing dictionary in 1780 and urged that elocution in English become part of the school curriculum. His son, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Edmund Burke, Charles Fox, and the Pitts exemplified his theories and made the last quarter of the 18th century the golden age of English oratory. Their pronunciation was disseminated by the actors at the end of the century and set the style for public school pronunciation in the 19th century, which grew into the British Received Standard. But this was 400 years after the Chancery clerks had begun to standardize the written language.43

page 17

In neither Germany nor Italy was the standardization of the written language associated with the establishment of a strong central administration. In both it was largely commercial, although it did mark the emergence of a sense of nationhood. In Germany the centralized power of the Emperor began to disintegrate in the 13th century, and some of

the earliest documents in German are the 2500 Urkunden from before 1299 (2200 of them from the High German area) arbitrating differences between the newly independent dukes and counts.44 These are all in regional dialects. In the meantime, the cities of the Hanseatic League created a Low German commercial language from which a large body of contracts and commercial correspondence survives.45 But as power moved to central Germany, the influence of the Hanseatic *koine* died. Standard written High German evolved from three successive Imperial chancelleries.46 When the Luxembourg kings became emperors after 1308, their chancellery in Prague attempted to promulgate a written standard. After 1438 when the Hapsburgs became emperors, their chancellery in Vienna promoted a written standard adapted from Prague usage. Meanwhile the Electorate of Saxony (which had provided the first emperor for the Holy Roman empire)47 was advancing to the leadership of Germany because of its central location and the wealth of its industrial cities, such as Meissen, Dresden, Wittenberg, and Leipzig. After the accession of Ernest and Albert as electors in 1464 Saxony became the most influential state in Germany and the cradle of the Reformation. Its chancellery, with branches in Meissen, Dresden, and Wittenberg, developed a standard language based on those of Prague and Vienna. The Saxon chancery language was adopted by the episcopal chancery in Mainz and used for recording church diets and promulgating

page 18

episcopal edicts, thereby adding religious to secular prestige. By the end of the 15th century the Geschaftsprach of the Hansa had given way to the Gemeinsdeutsch of the Viennese chancery and the Ostmitteldeutsch of the Saxon chancery. Historians of the German language give Martin Luther credit for tipping the scales in favor of Saxon. Himself a Thuringian under the protection of Elector Frederick III of Saxony, in whose castle he began his translation of the Bible, Luther wrote in his *Tischreden*: "I have no certain, special language of my own in Germany, but make use of the common German language so that both those in the south and those in the north may understand me. I speak according to the Saxon chancery, which is followed by all princes and kings in Germany... Hence it is also the commonest German language. Emperor Maximilian and Elector Frederick, Duke of Saxony, have in the Holy Roman Empire, therefore, drawn together .the German languages into a certain language."48 Luther was wrong about the uniformity of German in his day, but his assertion indicates that his enormously influential Bibeldeutsch was based on the official language of the Saxon chancery.

The spread of the Ostmitteldeutsch standard was gradual over the next three centuries. Waterman indicates that it prevailed in Protestant Swabia by 1650, in Switzerland by 1700, in Vienna by 1750, but not until after 1800 in Catholic Bavaria and the Rhineland.49 We are speaking, of course, of a written standard. Little progress was made towards establishing a spoken standard until the 19th century. In 1612 Wolfgang Ratichius mounted a campaign to have German taught in the elementary schools in order to enhance the national spirit. This led to the production of handbooks, of which that of Justus George Schottel was one of the most influential. Schottel ' s prescriptive

page 19

grammar, based on the literary norm, asserted that the spoken language was nothing but unregulated dialect unless it imitated the written language of learned men. This was the doctrine of the handbooks throughout the 18th century. All, like Berthold Brocks in 1721, advised "Man muss sprechen, wie man schreibt."50 Wilfred Voge has devoted a book to the controversy over the pronunciation of German in the 18th century, and Werner Leopold could in 1959 still write an article discussing the decline of regional dialects as a result of World War II.51 As in England, in the 19th century the stage was called on to disseminate correct pronunciation. Goethe and others stressed that this "Bühnensprache" was an ideal too mannered for general use.

Finally to Italian, whose movement to the vernacular began earlier than that of any other European country (if we except the abortive attempt with Anglo-Saxon) but whose historical and sociolinguistic developments are the most complex. There is no great problem in understanding the priority of Italian. Probably it should be regarded more as continuity than as priority. Civic life persisted more tenaciously through the Dark Ages in Italy than in other parts of Europe, with guilds and trading companies that continued to use administrative practices and 1anguage carried over from Roman civilization.53 In 825 guilds were formally revived in the cities of Bologna, Cremona, Ivrea, Milan, Padua, Turin, Venice, and Florence by the Emperor Lothair I.54 At this time there was no conscious distance between Latin and the vernacular. Latin was still regarded simply as the correct way of writing both Italian and French.55 But as the edicts of Frankfurt and Tours, the Strassburg Oaths, and the *Placiti Cassinesi* all indicate, during the 9th and 10th centuries it was finally beginning to be

page 20

conceded that lay people could not understand Latin. Throughout much of Europe this was of no immediate concern, since government by the Germanic tribesmen was so largely oral. However, business in the Italian communes had been carried on in writing with no appreciable break. The writing was, of course, Latin until the 10th century when the first translations of the Latin formulae into Italian began to appear.

Business and civic life in Italy was based on the notarial contract.56 In England this would be called an indenture. But the important difference is that whereas in England, France, Spain, and Germany such indentures began as contracts drawn by chancery clerks and enrolled in the royal or ducal chancellery, in the Italian cities notaries were private practitioners (although nominally appointed by the Emperor) who were legally charged with drawing up contracts and preserving them in their private chartularies. Until after the 13th century, most of the notarial documents are in Latin, but it is evident that business was conducted in the vernacular and that Latin was merely the language of record. There are glossaries of vernacular legal terms and vernacular formularies used in connection with legal education at Bologna dating from 1055, and the 1246 Statutes of Bologna specify that notaries must be able to read their documents in both Latin and the vernacular. In their matriculation examinations, notaries were asked first to explain the terms of the contract the vernacular, then in the technical Latin57. One of the earliest examples of the use of the vernacular is two sheets of parchment dated 1211 from the account book of a Florentine bank. The language is so precise and expressive that Migliorini believes it indicates that a tradition of business writing the vernacular was already well established.58

page 21

The reason this development began in Tuscany is not far to seek. While middle and southern Italy were still being administered in the Latin of the Papal Curia or the Arabic, Catalan, or French of a succession of foreign rulers, the Tuscan communes by the end of the 11th century had entered upon their period of independence and increasing prosperity. The reason for the linguistic preeminence of Florence is less clear. Historians of the Italian language cite the cultural importance of Florence, and particularly the influence of the "three crowns" of Florence: Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. I suspect, however, that this is a matter of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Like Luther, these three wrote in the official language of their city. Dante was a city official between 1295 and 1300; Petrarch was the son of a Florentine notary; Boccaccio, wherever he was born, was evidently the son of a Florentine merchant, and he was educated and for six years apprenticed to a merchant in Florence. These three poets undoubtedly helped to establish the prestige of the Florentine dialect, but they were exponents of a written language already preeminent in northern Italy. In *De vulgare eloquentia*, Dante expressed his irritation at his fellow citizens' sense of linguistic superiority, and Boccaccio declared that his aim was to write the *Decameron* "in fiorentin vulgare."59

The linguistic preeminence of Florentine Italian rested upon the influence of the great banking and trading companies and their priority in turning to the use of vernacular writing while Venice, Bologna, Milan, and others were still keeping their records in Latin. By 1115 Florence had thrown off the rule of the German Emperor and established its merchant oligarchy. By 1200 merchants from Rome and other cities were turning to Florence for capital.60 The

page 22

Florentine trading and banking houses established offices throughout Italy and eventually throughout Europe. By 1233 they had been authorized to collect the papal revenues. Its central location and economic prestige gave Florence the advantages of a capital city. What the royal chancelleries of Toledo, Paris, Westminster, and Saxony did for their languages, the chancelleries of the great Florentine houses of Bardi, Strozzi, Medici, and others did for Italian. By the 17th century, Florentine Tuscan had become the written standard accepted throughout Italy, although speech continued to be in dialect. Migliorini observes that writers outside of Tuscany objected when Florentine writers used colloquial Florentine and that formal Italian today still follows the conventions of the written language.61

Let me stop now and try to sum up. First, it is apparent that the European languages were standardized first in writing and only later, if ever, in speech. Second, the standard written forms appeared first in official government and business documents. These served as the basis for the usage of scribes and printers and eventually of handbooks and dictionaries created for teaching the standard written language. In *Literary Language and its Public*, Erich Auerbach remarks that he is concerned with the "style" that makes a language literary, not "merely with phonetics and

morphology."62 But without a uniform morphology and orthography there can be no style. The relationship between oral style (what we today refer to as the individual "voice" of the author) and written style (the conventions of the language) is one of the more interesting areas of literary criticism. I shall go no further at this time than to observe that unless there is a norm, there can be no variation. The question as to whether this norm is an internal force present in a group of

page 23

socially related speakers the "Sprachgefühl" of August Sleicher and Jacob Grimm or the conventions of the written language is moot. Since Grimm and other 19th century philologists deduced principles of linguistic variation, Sprachgefühl has been in the ascendant and writing has been regarded merely as a subsidiary representation of speech. My study of the history of writing indicates that this is simply not true. Change lies in the nature of speech; continuity lies in the nature of writing. Every enduring civilization has had a writing system and archives. The writing systems of all of the ancient civilizations, Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and South America, like those of the Roman Empire and medieval Europe, were the products of official secretariats striving for uniformity and continuity. And lest you conclude that things are different now, let me conclude with an anecdote. You can find the full accost in Volume III of Mark Sullivan's *Our Times*.63

In the early 1900s, when the simplified Spelling Board, supported by $250,000 of Andrew Carnegie's money, undertook to revise English spelling (which it so badly needs), it appealed to President Theodore Roosevelt. As an enlightened man, Roosevelt saw the need and by executive order instructed the White House staff and the Government Printing office to use the simplified forms. The outcry in both England and the United States was instantaneous. The London *Times* huffed that the President ought to have consulted the British government on a matter so important to the country of the mother tongue. But the British need not have been concerned. Congress would have none of it. without dissenting vote it resolved that "Executive departments, their bureaus and branches, and independent offices of the government [and] the Government Printing Office

page 24

should observe and adhere to the standard orthography prescribed in generally accepted dictionaries of the English language."

So there is no ambiguity as to what standard language is today. It is the official language of government, the judiciary, and business. And so it always has been. Since the advent of printing, popular education, and the mass media, the standard language appears to have moved out from under the aegis of government bureaucracy. Indeed, there is much criticism today of bureaucratese and legalese. But make no mistake, standard language is still anchored as firmly in the seats of power as it has been since the dawn of writing. When there have been efforts at spelling or lexical reform, as by the academies of Italy, Spain, and France, they have been government sponsored and government supported and, one might add, not notably successful. Scholars and writers have had less influence on the shape of the standard language than the nameless bureaucrats and clerks in government offices. Except for the moments in history during which they were in the process of codification, written languages have always differed markedly from their spoken counterparts. Under the influence of handbooks and education, the written languages have become more standard as time has gone by. Other than in the growth of the lexicon, this standardization has reflected relatively little influence from the spoken stratum. After they have been codified, written languages have more influence upon the structure and pronunciation of the spoken than the spoken on the structure and orthography of the written. The progressive drift towards the uniformity of spoken languages in America, Eurupe, and Asia is occurring under the aegis of expanding literacy that is, under the influence of the written languages. The emergence of the written standards from the

page 25

chancery languages of Europe between the 12th and 16th centuries is no exception to this rule but rather an important chapter in the history of the relations between speech and writing, with continuing implications for the way we look upon language today.

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Notes

1. The essays in Sections IV and VI in Joshua A. Fishman' s *Readings in the Sociology of Language*, The Hague: Mounton, 1972, are the most useful that I have found, but they, too, are focused largely on single languages.
2. Berry, "The Making of Alphabets," pp. 737-83 in Fishman *Readings*, summarizes this point of view. On p. 738 note 6, Berry gives a list of articles advancing the notion that writing is a visual system independent of the vocal-auditory process. My interest is less in the theoretical than in the historical relation between writing and speech.
3. V. V. Nalimov's recent *In the Labyrinths of Language: A Mathematician's Journey*, Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1981, is an interesting case in point. Mr. Nalimov appears to equate "language" with writing, as when he discusses the "structure" of ds2=dx2+dy2+dz2-c2dt2, p. 43.
4. Karl W. Deutsch, "The Trend of European Nationalism The Language Aspect, ', pp. 598-606 in Fishman, *Readings*. Philippe Wolff, *Western Languages, A.D. 100-1500*, trans. F. Partridge, London: Weidenfeld, 1971, p. 139, etc., deals far too generally with the convergence of dialects in Europe. How much they have actually converged on the colloquial level depends on one' s point of view.
5. William J. Entwistle, *The Spanish Language*, 2nd ed., London: Dickens and Conner, 1962, p. 118.
6. Wolff, *Western Languages*, p. 38.

7. Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public in Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, (1958) trans. R. Manheim, New York: Pantheon, 1965, pp. 261-62.
8. M. T. Clanchey, *From Memory to Written Record, 1066-1307*, London: Arnold, 1978, pp. 18ff.
9. Elliot R. Goodman, "World State and World Language," pp. 717-36 in Fishman *Readings*.
10. Helmut Gneuss, "The Origin of Standard Old English and Aethelwold's School at Winchester," I. 63-83, p. Clemoes, ed., *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1972.
11. Wolff, *Western Languages*, pp. 88, 118, attributes this phrase to von Wartburg. On the linguistic activities of Charlemagne, see also John T. Waterman, *A History of the German Language*, Seattle: U. of Washington Press, 1976, p. 76, etc.
12. Giacomo Devoto, *The Languages of Italy* (1974), trans. V. Louise Katainen, Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 210. For discussion of how the Reformation broke the hold of Latin, see W. B. Lockwood, *Informal History of the German Language*, Cambridge: Heffer, 1965, p. 130, etc.
13. M. L. Samuels, "Some Applications of Middle English Dialectology," *English Studies*, 44 (1963), 81-94.
14. Waterman, *History of German*, pp. 146-47, shows how Luther' s Bibeldeutsch spread along with the Reformation in Germany.

15. Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la Langue Franˆaise* (12 vols., 1900-1910), Paris: Colin, 1966, II. 14.
16. Clanchey, *Memory to Written Record*, p. 226.
17. On the *Placiti Cassinesi* see Bruno Migliorini, *The Italian Language*, abridged and recast by T. G. Griffith, London: Faber, 1966, p. 61. The nature of the Strassburg Oaths is identical.
18. See Auerbach, *Literary Language*, pp. 119-21.
19. Clanchey, *Memory to Written Record*, pp. 23, 97, 219, has interesting things to say about the tension between warriors and clerks in the Germanic Middle Ages. See also Auerbach, *Literary Language*, pp. 281ff.
20. Goodman, "World State and World Language," p. 718, quotes Lenin to the effect that trade and not government is the basis for unification of language. In the Middle Ages in Europe, as in the Third World today, it was not easy to distinguish trade from government. The examples of Germany and Italy vs. France, Spain, and England could be discussed from this point of view.
21. Auerbach, *Literary Language*, p. 319.
22. Brunot, I. 326-29. The sketch that follows is heavily dependent on Brunot, vols. I-IV.
23. Btunot I. 361.
24. Btunot I. 362.

25. Wolff, *Western Languages*, pp. 146ff.; Brunot I. 367.
26. Brunot I. 370.
27. Brunet II. 21ff.; IV. 118.
28. Brunot II. 115. In this connection Brunot remarks (II. 32) that the influences of official writing upon the development of French and style are not sufficiently recognized.
29. Brunot IV. 127-28.
30. Brunot IV. 96ff.
31. Alfred Ewert, *The French Language*, London: Faber, 1943, p. 18.
32. William J. Entwistle, *Spanish Language*, pp. 106ff.
33. Robert K. Spaulding, *How Spanish Grew*, Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1948, pp. 72ff. Wolff, *Western Languages*, p. 175.
34. William J. Entwistle, *Spanish Language*, pp. 152.
35. Wolff, *Western Languages*, pp. 178ff. Spaulding, *How Spanish Grew*, p. 139; Entwistle, *Spanish Language*, pp. 107, 153, 170-73.
36. These topics are treated in detail by Entwistle, *Spanish Language*, passim; Spaulding, pp. 63-70; Wolff, p. 213.
37. Entwistle, *Spanish Language*, pp. 247-48.

38. Entwistle, pp. 197ff.; Spaulding, p. 137.
39. John H. Fisher, "Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English in the Fifteenth Century," *Speculum* 52 (1977), 870-99; "Chancery Standard and Modern Written English," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* (1979), 136-44.
40. The earliest official documents are collected in *An Anthology of Chancery English*, ed. J. H. Fisher, Malcolm Richardson, J.L. Fisher, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984.
41. See Norman Davis, "The Language of the Pastons," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 40 (1955 for 1954), 119-44, esp. 130-31; Mary Relihan, "The Language of the English Stonor Letters," unpublished dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1977.
42. See E. J. Dobson, "Early Modern Standard English," *Transactions of the Philological Society* (1955), 25-54; "The second feature in which the standard language of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries differed from ours was in the much greater variety of pronunciation which it permitted," p. 30; "The main period of orthographical influence on pronunciation is in the eighteenth century and after," p. 34.
43. This movement in England awaits further study. It must be followed up in connection with Thomas Sheridan, father of the playwright, and his school of elocution.
44. Waterman, *History of the German Language*, pp. 112-13; Wolff, *Western Languages*, p. 172.

page 31

45. W. B. Lockwood, *An Informal History of the German Language*, Cambridge: Heffer, 1965, p. 79.
46. Waterman, pp. ll2ff.; Lockwood, pp. 90ff.
47. Saxon leadership begins with Otto I, Duke of Saxony, who after 936 established centralized authority in Germany for the first time since Charlemagne. In 962 he was crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire; see Wolff, *Western Languages*, p. 128.
48. Translated from Adolf Bach, *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, 8th ed., Heidelberg: Quelle and Meyer, 1965, p. 252.
49. Waterman, pp. 146-47.
50. Waterman, pp. 141-42.
51. Wilfred M. Voge, *The Pronunciation of German in the Eighteenth Century*, Hamburg: Buske, 1978; Werner F. Leopold, "The Decline of German Dialects," Fishman, *Readings*, pp. 340-63.
52. Theodor Siebs, *Deutsche Bühenanssprache*, Bonn: Ahn, 1922. This handbook has gone through some 18 editions.
53. Wolff, *Western Languages*, p. 184-92.
54. Edgcumbe Staley, *The Guilds of Florence*, London: Methuen, 1906, Chap. II.
55. On Latin and Italian, Devoto, *Languages of Italy*, pp. 190-91; on Latin and French, F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, *The History of English Law*, 2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1898, I. 82.

page 32

56. There is a general discussion of the nature and importance of the notarial contract at the beginning of David Herlihy's *Pisa in the Early Renaissance*, New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1958, pp. 1-10ff. See also David Abulafia, *The Two Italies: Economic Relations between the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and the Northern Communes*, Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1977, pp. 8ff.
57. Lauro Martinez, *Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence*, Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1968, p. 35; Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Genoese Notaries of 1382," pp. 73-94 in *The Medieval City*, eds. H. A. Miskimin, David Herlihy, and A. L. Udovitch, New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1977. Devoto, *Languages of Italy*, pp. 48ff.; Migliorini, *Italian Language*, pp. 81-82.
58. Migliorini, p. 69.
59. Migliorini, pp. 136-139.
60. Glenn Olsen, "Italian Merchants and the Performance of Banking Functions in the Early Thirteenth Century," pp. 43-64 in David Herlihy, R. S. Lopez, and V. Slessarev, eds., *Economy, Society and Government in Medieval Italy: Studies in Honor of Robert L. Reynolds*, Kent: Kent State U. Press, 1969. Robert Lopez, "Stars and Spices: The Earliest Italian Manual of Commercial Practice," pp. 35-42 in the same collection, discusses eight manuals of merchant practice compiled in or near Florence between the late 13th and the 15th centuries. The documents printed by A. Sciaffini, *Testi Fiorentini del Dugento e dei premi del Trecento*, Florence: Sansoni, 1926, indicate the priority of Florence in the use of the vernacular in business. Christian Bec, *Les marchands*

page 33

érivains: affaires et humanisme à Florence, 1375-1434, Paris: Mouton, 1967, associates Florence's cultural influence with its economic superiority, see esp. pp. 24-25; see also Devoto, *Languages of Italy*, pp. 216ff.
61. Migliorini, pp. 286, 303.
62. Auerbach, *Literary Language*, p. 328.
63. Mark Sullivan, *Our Times: The United States 1900-1925*, New York: Scribner's, 1930, III. 163ff.