

ISXAN ISXANAC^c. See Archon ton Archonton.

ITALIAN LANGUAGE. The earliest texts that clearly document the existence of a distinctive vernacular in the Italian peninsula are the "Cassino depositions" (*placiti cassinesi*), four brief legal documents from the archives of Monte Cassino that are datable to 960-963. The relatively late appearance of written evidence of a language distinct from medieval Latin (late in contrast to comparable documents in other parts of Romania: for example, the *cassinesi* are well over a century later than the better-known *Strasbourg Oaths*, which constitute the first evidence for the existence of a separate French linguistic entity) may be seen as emblematic of the general issues of the relative lateness and ancillary conservatism of the Italian vernacular(s). These issues are often dominant in discussions of the earliest periods of the existence of Italian or the Italian dialects as new linguistic entities in the Middle Ages.

SPOKEN LATIN

There is little question that the linguistic divergences from Latin and the differentiations among the languages or dialects spoken in various parts of the fragmented Roman Empire must be traced to a period much earlier than that of any extant written evidence of what might be considered separate languages. While linguists continue to disagree over the chronology of the linguistic fragmentation and over the exact causes for the earliest differences among separate areas (Gaul, Iberia, the Italian peninsula), there is little disagreement on the quite early existence of a spoken (often referred to as *Vulgar*) Latin with features that distinguished it from the Classical or literary Latin, for which there is extensive written documentation. A spoken Latin, clearly different from the rigidly codified Classical Latin, undoubtedly coexisted with the literary language, and many of its features were characteristic of the kinds of features that were to separate the nascent Romance languages from the Latin parent language. There are no cutoff or starting points for the ends or beginnings of different linguistic periods because the nature of linguistic change is such that there are never precise breaks. Thus, it is more accurate to understand that there is a linguistic continuum in the spoken language, with the major identifiable ruptures or breaks being limited to the written language. Moreover,

given the fact that modern scholars perforce rely on written evidence for phenomena that evolve and crystallize initially in the spoken language, it is probably accurate to assume that linguistic changes that appear in written documents at a certain moment may reflect considerably earlier changes in the spoken language. In addition, under given sociohistorical circumstances there may be lesser or greater constraints for writing in a language clearly differentiated from the traditional literary and/or "official" written medium, Latin in this case.

Thus, it is safest to say that in the Italian peninsula, as elsewhere in the Roman domains, the spoken language that was eventually codified as the vernaculars differed significantly from the literary language. The sources for information on the features of the spoken language are indirect, and thus their interpretation must take into account their problematic nature. There are five major categories of sources for such indirect evidence:

(1) The intentional reproductions of speech found in the writings of classical authors.

(2) The errors of writers attempting to write correctly who reflect, because of imperfect training in the classical language and the interference of the spoken language, features of their speech.

(3) The *Appendix probi*, a list of 227 corrections prepared by a schoolmaster for his students, which lists both the correct and incorrect forms of words. This particularly valuable document is dated to approximately the end of the third century and is now assumed to be of Roman provenance.

(4) Inscriptions from a variety of sources, among which the most valuable, because of their precise dating to A.D. 79, are the graffiti from Pompeii.

(5) Glosses of medieval texts.

The evidence culled from these diverse sources indicates the major linguistic changes that distinguish spoken from written Latin and that form the common bases for further developments in Romance. Schematically, four features are the most salient.

First, instead of the quantitative vocalic system (ten vowels, five short and five long) of written Latin, the spoken language had a qualitative seven-vowel system. To the long *i* and long *u* corresponded a high *i* and *u*, front and back vowels, respectively. Long and short *a* were indistinguishable as the low-center vowel *a*. In the middle series a closed *e* resulted from the merger of short *i* and long *e*, and an open *e* developed from short *e*. In parallel fashion, short *u* and long *o* merged as closed *o*, and an open

o stood in place of the short o. This system for tonic vowels, which developed still further in the other incipient Romance vernaculars, remained without further alteration in Italian. (The question of whether the distinction between the open and closed mid-vowels has been eliminated or remains a phonemic feature in modern Italian is a matter of some disagreement among linguists.)

Second, although Classical Latin had no palatal consonants, the spoken language developed a palatal element (yod) under certain circumstances. From relatively early on, this resulted in the palatalization of the velar consonants *k* and *g*, and beyond this it had many far-reaching effects in the phonetic systems of the Romance languages.

Third, the most significant developments in the morphology and syntax of spoken Latin are indicated by the phonetic erosion of Classical Latin (loss of most consonants in word-final position) and the elimination of other phonetic distinctions that were central to the systems of declension and conjugation of the literary language. It is not clear to what extent it was the phonetic blurring that caused the restructuring of the nominal system from a largely synthetic one to an analytic one dependent on word order and prepositions for indications of relationships among words or, rather, it was the move away from the case system that allowed the phonetic blurring to take place. In either case, the result was a drastic reduction in the case system and eventually its complete elimination. At the same time there was a reduction in the number of declensions and the three-gender system was reduced to a two-gender one through the elimination of the neuter. This rather dramatic simplification of the synthetic nominal (and also pronominal) system was characteristic of spoken Latin throughout the empire, although some of the specific results required by the restructuring varied from region to region.

Fourth, the conjugation system was likewise transformed in the spoken Latin language, although less dramatically so. One of the earliest striking developments was the elimination of deponent verbs and, concomitantly, the elimination of the inflected forms of the passive voice. The simple synthetic future was also eventually lost and replaced by a new future, originally analytical. This innovation has been the subject of much controversy in Romance linguistics, and it is usually considered in conjunction with the development of the new system of analytical perfects that developed in early Romance.

EARLY ITALO-ROMANCE

Although the spoken language of Italy shared all of these general early features with those of the rest of the Latin-speaking world, its further developments are characterized by a marked conservatism as regards most features and the relative lateness in the codification of the vernacular as signaled by its appearance in surviving written texts. There are two clusters of external sociohistorical factors normally adduced to account for both of these logically correlative phenomena. First, there was no supreme political and cultural center to impose an early acceptance of its vernacular speech form. In fact, the persistent political disunity of the Italian peninsula, a principal feature through the modern period, is likewise a salient factor in its linguistic history, resulting in an enduring dialectal fragmentation that is much more marked in Italy than in the other major Romance-speaking areas. Second, Italy was the homeland of Latin—Classical Latin—and the perceived close affinity or overlap with the parent language was undoubtedly a strong deterrent to the establishment of a different written norm. Moreover, because of a shared linguistic substratum with Latin and because of the absence of great distances provoking severe discontinuity with speakers and writers of medieval Latin, dramatic changes were fewer and the further development of changes already existing in the common spoken Latin of Romania less marked and rapid. These factors combined to retard the development of a flagrant state of *diglossia* (mutual unintelligibility between spoken and written languages) for a much longer period in Italy, the geographical center of the former empire, than in any of the relative outposts where Latin was both further from its original homeland and more strongly challenged by the speech of other peoples.

Thus, until the end of the twelfth century there is only scattered and fragmentary evidence of a separate linguistic entity: because there was no literary codification of the vernacular until well into the thirteenth century, there must be reliance on much more sporadic written attestation. The *placiti cassinesi*, from the tenth century, are not the only, but perhaps are the most revealing, of such testaments. These legal documents appear to be the written attestations of oaths, much like the Strassburg Oaths, and they show some of the linguistic features of Italo-Romance:

1. *Sao ko kelle terre, per kelle fini que ki contene, trenta anni le possette parte sancti Benedicti.*

2. *Sao cco kelle terre, per kelle fini que tebe mostrai, Pergoaldi foro, que ki contene, et trenta anni le possette.*

3. *Kella terra, per kelle fini que bobbe mostrai, sancte Maria e, et trenta anni la posset parte sancte Marie.*

4. *Sao cco kelle terre, per kelle fini que tebe mostrai, trenta anni le possette parte sancte Marie.*

1. I know that those lands, with those boundaries which are contained herein, were possessed for thirty years by the monastery of St. Benedict.

2. I know that those lands, with those boundaries which I showed you, were possessed by Perogaldo for thirty years.

3. That land, with those boundaries which I showed you, belongs to St. Mary's, and the monastery of St. Mary possessed them for thirty years.

4. I know that those lands, with those boundaries which I showed you, were possessed for thirty years by the monastery of St. Mary.

Although the texts, following notarial tradition, use Latin genitives to show possession and reveal a more complex syntax than is likely to have existed in speech, distinctive vernacular features can be identified. Among them are the following:

(1) The fall of final consonants, typical of common spoken Latin, but also including the fall of final *-s*, which is peculiar to Eastern Romance. This phenomenon results in the adoption of the nominative plurals, thus *kelle terre, trenta anni, kelle fini*.

(2) The maintenance of original geminate consonants and the development of new ones, which came to be a salient characteristic of Italo-Romance: *anni, possette*.

(3) Several features of the texts are dialectal—that is, southern—especially the lack of diphthongization in *contene*, the reduction of *kw* to *k*, and the relic datives *tebe* and *bobbe*.

There are other general linguistic features that can be traced to the period preceding the *placiti cassinesi*:

(1) The nominal system had clearly been reduced to a three-declension system, maintaining only the three first from Classical Latin; but in Italo-Romance, despite the loss of the neuter that accompanied this reduction, plurals ending in *-a* persisted alongside the plurals ending in *-i* and *-e*, which were being established for the first two declensions.

(2) There is evidence of the development of the definite and indefinite articles. The demonstrative was serving increasingly as a definite article: *illa* > *la* and *illu* > *lo*. From the numeral, *uno* was serving as indefinite article.

(3) The pronouns *lui, lei, and loro* had appeared. The massive confusion concerning different forms of the relative pronoun in written documents has led some to believe that in speech they had all been reduced to *che*.

(4) The use of the new analytic future and conditional is already apparent, as is the new use of *avere* (to have) plus a past participle.

There are four strata of Germanic linguistic admixture that are attributable to this earliest period of Italian for which the *cassinesi* provide a convenient (though clearly artificial and arbitrary) cutoff point, and there are serious problems in the attribution of borrowings to one stratum versus another. In many cases it is pure guesswork.

The first period of linguistic interaction is that of Germanic-Roman contact before the fall of the empire, and assigning any lexical items to this stratum is particularly difficult. Few items are indisputably attributed to this period; among them is *sapone* (< *sapo* [soap]), which came through Gaul. The word for "war" *werra* > *guerra* (showing what would be the characteristic adaptation in Italian of the initial Germanic *w-*) may have been adopted in the imperial times, but it is also often attributed to a later period.

The second stratum, that of Gothic influence, is hardly less difficult to verify, and there are correspondingly few borrowings definitively attributed to it. Among these some are pan-Romance items, and it has been difficult to ascertain whether they were adopted early in spoken Latin and diffused through it or whether they were words common to the different Goths (Visigoths and Ostrogoths) and transmitted separately to the different regions of Romania. Words such as *albergo* (< *haribergo* [shelter]) fit into this category. There are also those found only in Italy, thus presumably borrowed from the Ostrogoths; among these few is *fiasco* (< *flasco* [flash]).

The third, Langobard, stratum is much richer and more easily documentable than either of the two preceding it. Not only are the borrowings more numerous, but they also represent a much more varied range of semantic classes, from the military (*briccola* [catapult]) to the domestic (*spranga* [bolt]) to parts of the body (*guancia* [cheek], *schiiena* [back]). They also include some verbs (*guernire* [trim], *graffiare* [scratch]).

The Frankish stratum, although chronologically the latest of the four, presents problems of attribution as well: it is not clear, for example, if the above mentioned *guerra* is in fact attributable to this pe-

riod or to the earliest one of Germanic contacts. Especially important as a class of lexical borrowings from the Frankish stratum are items (of all different classes) related to the feudal system: from *feudo* itself to *gonfalone* (standard) and verbs such as *guardare* (< *wardon* [guard]) and *guadagnare* (< *waidanjan* [gain]).

FIRST LITERARY TEXTS

The first literary texts in an Italian vernacular, the appearance of which would presumably demarcate a definitive rupture from acceptance of Latin as the exclusive written language (and thus betray an intolerable state of *diglossia* as far as Latin was concerned) are also quite problematic. One is a late-twelfth- or early-thirteenth-century fragment known as the *Ritmo giullaresco toscano*, also known as *Ritmo Laurenziano*, the reading and interpretation of which are so problematic that its value as linguistic evidence is severely limited. The other, from approximately the same period, is found in a multilingual poem written by the Provençal poet Raimbaut de Vaqueyras, which includes a strophe in Genovese, and in a dialogue poem (*contrasto*) written by the same poet, in which one of the interlocutors is a Genovese lady of less than refined speech. Thus, the linguistic evidence presented by these texts is attenuated by the poetry having been written not only by a non-native speaker but also by a poet writing within the parameters of what was at that point a well-codified vernacular literary tradition, that of Provence. Nevertheless, the evidence presented is noteworthy, not only in its attestation of specific dialectal features (pl > *ch*, as in *chu* < *plus*), and the reduction of second-person plural flexions to *-i*, as in *semellai*, *avei* (Tuscan: *somigliate*, *avete*, both features of Genovese) but, perhaps even more important, in the absence of any dependence on Latin and, concomitantly, in the independent vernacular literary standardization—at least as a distinct possibility—it reflects, as can be seen in the following excerpt from Raimbaut's *Contrasto*:

*Jujar, voi semellai mato,
qe cotal razon tegnei.
Mal vignai e mal andei!
Non avei sen per un gato,
per qe trop me deschasei,
qe mala cosa parei;
nè no faria tal cosa,
si fossi fillo de rei.
Credi voi q'e'sia mosa?
Mia fe, no m'averei!*

Jongleur, you must be drunk to make such proposals. A plague on your comings and goings! You have not the sense of a cat, for you displease me greatly, and you seem nasty; I would not do such a thing even if you were a king's son. Do you think that I am mad? By my faith, you shall not have me.

Not until 1225 and afterward do a substantial and consistent enough body of literary texts in the vernacular provide sufficient evidence to document the linguistic characteristics of medieval Italian. From the outset the dominant problem and question was that of the conflicting pressures of persistent dialectalization in a politically fragmented Italy versus the claims of the Tuscan dialect, based on the preeminence of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, as the would-be standard. It is certainly emblematic of the problem that the great majority of the poetry of the earliest school of Italian poets, writing under the patronage of Frederick II at his court in Sicily and known as the *scuola siciliana*, is preserved only in what is a clearly tuscanized form. Scholars once debated whether the poetry was written in a Sicilian dialect that was later tuscanized by scribes in the north during the period of the ascendancy of Tuscan as the literary language, or whether the Sicilians wrote in a koine that adopted many of the linguistic features of the northern dialects. The latter theory has been almost universally discarded, particularly in light of the appearance of three texts from the *scuola siciliana* that appear not to have undergone tuscanization at the hands of later scribes. One of these is a song by Stefano Protonotaro da Messina; the two others are fragments of poetry written by Re Enzo, the son of Frederick II, the monarch whose cultural patronage and personal interest in poetry (as well as in many other aspects of learning and culture) was indisputably the major impetus behind the rise and development of the *scuola siciliana*. A portion of the poem by Stefano Protonotaro indicates some of the linguistic features of the Sicilian language:

*Pir meu cori alligrari,
Chi multu longiamenti
Senza alligranza e' joi d'amuri è statu
Mi ritornu in cantari
Ca forsi levimenti
Da dimuranza turniria in usatu
Di lu troppo taciri.*

In order to lighten my heart, which for a very long time has been without pleasure and joy of love, I return to song, for delay would perhaps turn easily into a habit of being too silent.

This poem and the fragments by Re Enzo indicate the existence of a literary language for that school of poetry that was clearly based on the Sicilian language, although its codification for the poetry undoubtedly was strongly influenced by the models of Latin and, especially, Provençal poetry. The treatment of the vocalic system, as can be seen in the above excerpt, is distinctively Sicilian: open *e* and *o* do not diphthongize and the Latin short *i* and long *e* are both raised to *i*, while short *u* and long *o* are raised to *u*. This reduction to a five-vowel system continues to be characteristic of the Sicilian dialect and results in such characteristic forms as *amuri*, in striking contrast with the *amore* of the northern dialects. Some of the morphological features of the Sicilian poetic language influenced the poetic language of the Tuscans in the next generation, from 1250 on. Among these the most significant are the *-ia* endings for the imperfect indicative (*avia, putia*), which long alternated with the indigenous Tuscan forms that were eventually standardized, and the *-ria* endings for the conditional (*turniria, siria*), as well as an occasional *-ora* (*finera, fora*). This alternative conditional paradigm, which also appears in later northern texts, is undoubtedly due to the literary prestige of the Sicilian school, although it was eventually replaced by the indigenous Florentine conditional flexions based on the preterite forms of *avere* (*-ei, -ebbe*, and so on).

The locus of literary activity was transferred to northern Italy after the midpoint in the century, and modern knowledge of the language of the thirteenth century, the duecento, is largely based on the language being codified in those texts produced then, a language that was in some measure influenced by the prestige of the Sicilians in the realm of vernacular poetry, although it is unclear whether the northern poets had untuscanized texts at their disposal, such as that of Stefano, or whether they were acquainted only with texts already to some extent modified to their own dialectal traits. Some of the salient features of the emerging literary standard of the duecento are the following:

In orthography there was particular hesitation and difficulty with the representation of the sounds in the vernacular that were new (vis-à-vis Latin), the palatals and the affricates in particular. There was still much oscillation in the use of *c*, *ch*, and *k*, although the latter was rapidly losing ground. (In the Sicilian texts the *ch* represents the palatal, a usage that was not continued in the north.) There was also variation between the etymological spelling of

words of identifiable Latin origins and a more "phonic" spelling.

Of special interest in the phonology is the sporadic appearance of features that eventually were largely eliminated in the standard language: the voicing of intervocalic stops (*imperadore, savere*) and the prosthetic *i*.

In the morphology, as has been noted, the alternative imperfect and conditional paradigms were often used, as well as the present forms *aggio, deggio, saccio*, also because of the Sicilian influence. Variant forms of the future ending also flourished: *-aggio, -abbo, -abo*.

The lexical stock of thirteenth-century Italian had been enriched from various sources:

Latinisms. This was the beginning of several centuries of very intense borrowing of Latin forms. Perhaps paradoxically, the nascent interest in a vernacular literature was accompanied by a strong revival of interest in Latin and Latin letters, and Latinisms were adopted into the vernacular at this point from virtually every semantic field: religion, philosophy, law, medicine, mathematics, and others. They are so numerous and so widely scattered that no short inventory can adequately represent them.

Galicisms. Borrowings from both the northern French dialect (in ascendancy) and Provençal (in its declining years at home but still highly prestigious as a literary culture elsewhere, particularly in Sicily and, later, in Tuscany) were frequent, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish a borrowing as being one or the other, once it has been Italianized. Galicisms were not limited to the literary realm of the lexicon (although many of them clearly are: musicopoetic terminology such as *liuto* [lute] and *ribea* [rebec], both from the Arabic ultimately but more immediately through Provençal, as well as the enigmatic *trovatore* [troubadour], perhaps of similar origin), but were found in many other areas in which contact with the French was noteworthy: chivalresque terms such as *siniscalco* (seneschal), *cavaliere* (knight), *destriere* (steed); the verb *mangiare* (eat), which for a period fluctuated with the indigenous *manducare* before it was finally ensconced in the standard; and productive derivational suffixes such as *-aggio, -ardo*, and *-iere*, which remained productive in Italian.

Arabisms. Borrowings from Arabic came through both direct and indirect cultural contact. The Arab domination of Sicily for several centuries and the cultivation there of many aspects of Arabic learning after their political overthrow, up through

and especially during the reign of Frederick II, and the Arab domination of much of the Mediterranean resulted in many borrowings directly into Italian. Borrowings also came indirectly from Spain, through the translations into Latin of Arabic texts (or Arabic translations of Greek texts) that were circulating throughout Europe, and through Provençal (examples cited above). The borrowings coming indirectly, particularly those from Spain, usually are clearly marked as such because of the Spanish peculiarity of absorbing the word with its agglutinated article (thus *algebra*, *algoritmo*, and many other mathematical, astronomical, and scientific terms). Although why there was such a difference has never been satisfactorily explained, in Italy direct borrowings rarely absorbed the article (thus *zucchero* [sugar], in opposition to the Spanish *azúcar*; *sciroppo* [syrup], *zafferano* [saffron], *māgazzino* [warehouse], *scacco* [check], and others).

FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

The continuing state of linguistic fragmentation of the peninsula, with no dominant standard, still existed at the close of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth. The best description of this phenomenon is provided by Dante Alighieri, whose *Divine Comedy*, written in a slightly modified (primarily lexically) Tuscan, was critical in the establishment of that dialect as the literary norm. He had also written, however, a linguistic treatise, *De vulgari eloquentia*, in which he rejected the notion of Tuscan as the standard dialect for Italy and argued in favor of a literary-based koine. This exposition of the issue is the first in what came to be, in the Renaissance and through the nineteenth century, the very widely discussed *questione della lingua*, the theoretical debate over the relative merits of Tuscan, other dialects, or a koine as the standard language of Italy, and whether the standard should be that of the golden age of Italian literature, the fourteenth century, or that of the contemporary age, recognizing the inevitability of linguistic mutation through time. Although the *questione della lingua* is not of direct concern here (all of its documents except the *De vulgari eloquentia* coming from the postmedieval period), it is important to note that the central issue that motivated it has its roots in the lack of fundamental linguistic standardization of the medieval period and that Dante's treatise reflects contemporary medieval recognition of this as a real and/or potential problem for the Italians.

Although the *De vulgari eloquentia* is primarily theoretical and normative, it gives so accurate a picture of the medieval linguistic situation that modern scholarship can add little to the overall appraisal. In arriving at the conclusion that no dialect is "worthy" of being the standard language (because of, in Dante's opinion, various defects of one and the other), he is saying, if his text is read in a descriptive light, that no dialect has acquired the ascendancy that comes from the combination of sustained literary codification combined with some degree of political power. Ironically, but altogether naturally, Dante's literary writings in the vernacular are executed in his native vernacular, Tuscan; and the prestige of his *Commedia*, especially when followed by that of the works of his fellow Tuscans Boccaccio and Petrarch, was of utmost importance in establishing an enduring linguistic prestige for that dialect and its eventual adaptation and adoption as the Italian standard.

Thus, since literary texts before Dante and fellow Tuscans are few and largely tuscanized as a result of later developments, and since during and after the golden age of the trecento the literary prestige of Tuscan is undisputed, most modern knowledge of Italian in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries is more accurately described as a knowledge of Tuscan in its codified written form. Such a limitation, stemming as it does from the limited data available only from written, mostly literary, sources, is of course not peculiar to the study of medieval Italian. It is, however, particularly distorting, in terms of providing an adequate appraisal of the linguistic situation of the time (especially in comparison with the situation at the same time in France and Spain), since the degree and depth of dialectal variation within the Italian diasystem that resulted from the standardization occurring only at the level of literary language, and there quite uniformly, is known.

As a result of these essentially antagonistic (in linguistic terms) currents, a secondary state of *diglossia* existed for Italian in the Middle Ages and persisted thereafter for some time: a vernacular literary language was established in the thirteenth century and brought to maturity in the fourteenth, thus eliminating the *diglossia* of Latin/vernaculars that had existed for so many centuries, but the new written standard remained not just stylistically but also linguistically a language apart from that spoken by the majority of Italians. Moreover, the abandonment of classical Latin as an appropriate and widely used me-

dium for writing came much later in Italy than elsewhere in the Romance world and, in fact, enjoyed a marked revival in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The close, conscious association of speakers of Italian with the classical world, and Latin in particular, a phenomenon that was critical in the relatively late emergence of a written vernacular standard, continued to be a factor in the linguistic conditions of Italy. Crucial elements were undoubtedly the fact that classical Latin was never fully discarded by many writers as a prestige written vehicle, and that much suspicion and even disdain for the vernacular standard were exhibited by many writers even after its codification and widely respected use by the great writers of the trecento, primarily because it was perceived as being a corruption, no matter how elegant, of the "true" literary language of the Italians.

The features of this new written standard not only were remarkably conservative (in contrast with the other major Romance standards and in comparison with Latin, particularly spoken Latin as it can be reconstructed) but were to remain remarkably stable in the postmedieval period. Thus, standard Italian of the fourteenth century varies relatively little from the modern standard—so little, in fact, that there is no comprehensive description of the medieval language currently available. In histories of the language and other diachronic studies, an exploration of the areas in which the medieval differed from the modern standard, which are few and principally characterizable as the surfacing of variant forms that were eventually rejected in the standard, is sufficient. For the individual with a knowledge of the modern standard who wishes to read medieval texts, such information is sufficient and the transition from the language of the twentieth century to that of the fourteenth is, comparatively speaking, a minor one.

Dante's language (and that of Boccaccio and Petrarch) reflects many of these characteristics of a language displaying a range of possibilities that were eventually to be narrowed, with the selected forms varying little, if at all, from their medieval ones. Thus, the variant paradigms for several verb tenses (imperfect, conditional, perfect) are found throughout the *Commedia*. Variation in lexical forms also is amply represented within the same text: *re/rege*, *imagine/imago*, *manicare/manducare/mangiare*, *spegliol/specchio/speculo*. Thus, the most important generalization that can be made about trecento Italian is that it already contained most, if not

all, of the features of the modern language in their definitive (or nearly so) form, but also accepted many other features, variations on those that eventually would be exclusive, before they were eliminated.

Some of the most distinctive features of the language of the trecento (and thus, unless they are noted as variants that were displaced, of the modern language) are the following:

In orthography the representation of the new sounds was still sometimes problematic but was rapidly stabilizing. Thus, although there was still an occasional *k* or *ch* for the unvoiced velar stop (*kane* for *cane*), the *c* was rapidly adopted before *a* or a back vowel. Conversely, the same *c* before a front vowel represented the unvoiced palatal, while *ch* before a front vowel stood for the unvoiced velar. The representation of the palatal nasal and liquid were likewise in fluctuation: along with the eventually standardized *degno* (worthy) there is *dengno* and, in parallel fashion, *figlio* is often found as *figlo* or *filglio*. There was also some hesitation as to the treatment of Latinisms adopted into the language, over the extent to which they should be spelled as in Latin, thus *onore/honore*, *ratto/rapto*, *teatro/theatro*. In most of these cases the eventually standardized spelling rejected the latinizing form. Another problematic area was that of geminates, which not only had become quite frequent in Italian but also were continuing to expand, since the gemination process was a highly productive one in Italian (and, in some measure, continues to be).

As has already been noted, the pure vowel system of both medieval and modern Italian is the same seven-vowel system reconstructed for spoken Latin, reduced to five in atonic position, again with no break from the previous spoken language. Although the *au* diphthong was preserved in some southern dialects, in the standard it was simplified to the open *o* (*causa* > *cosa*). Closed *e* and *o* tended to close further to *i* and *u*, respectively, when followed by a nasal plus velar cluster, thus giving *lingua* from *lingua* and *pugno* (*hist*) from *pugnum*. Since this development appears to have been limited to the immediate vicinity of Florence, many words in standard Italian show the more customary (and conservative) retention of the closed *e* or *o*. Open *e* and *o* in tonic position and open syllable diphthongize to *ie* (*melem* > *miele*) and *uo* (*focum* > *fuoco*), respectively, although in proparoxytones the change does not occur consistently. In addition, the standard had many diphthongs created by the combination of a

pure vowel with a semivowel, *j* or *w*. Although some of these diphthongs are the continuants of their Latin equivalents, others derive from Latin *-s* (whether this is a phonetic change or an analogical change conditioned by the morphology of noun plurals is still argued), and still others from the creation of a yod in spoken Latin under certain phonetic circumstances. The latter phenomenon, which in Spanish and French evolved much further in many cases, in Italian often produces no further palatalization and remains as the palatal *j* in diphthong with a vowel: thus the peculiarly Italian *più* from *plus*. Also conservative in Italian is the retention of the *u* semivowel from Latin *qu* and *gu*. The marked persistence of vowels at the end of the word is also characteristic.

The consonantal system of both the medieval and the modern Italian language can be characterized along several different parameters. In the case of intervocalic stops, standard Italian was and is characterized by the lack of voicing, which is further characteristic of Eastern Romance. As has already been noted, however, medieval Italian shows fluctuation in this area, and many words appear with both the voiced and the unvoiced stop. Since the isogloss bundle that demarcates the voicing/no voicing line in Romance runs between La Spezia and Rimini, on the northern edge of Tuscany, words in the standard language that were taken from dialects to the north of this line have the voiced stop (*lago*, not *laco*, for example). Many of these words that show the fluctuation in the medieval language (*ripa/riva*) were eventually accepted with a voiced consonant. The voicing of *s* in intervocalic position, a feature of the Tuscan dialect, was adopted as part of the standard language; but orthography never consistently allowed for a distinction, and only a few scattered non-Florentine Tuscan texts show *z* for *s* when voiced.

The retention of Latin geminates in Italo-Romance was accompanied, from a fairly early date, by an expansion of the phonetic circumstances producing a geminate, thus setting standard (medieval and modern) Italian apart from all other Romance languages. In many cases gemination occurred sporadically after the word accent: *acqua*, *femmina*. In others it was the result of a prefix: *allora* (then). It occurred systematically as a result of consonantal assimilation and/or of the reduction of the *ct* cluster in Latin, which produced a yod in other Romance-speaking areas. Thus: *notte* from *noctem*, which

yielded forms shaped by the yod in Spanish (*noche*) and French (*nuit*).

A consonant with a yod also produced geminated affricates; thus *palazzo*, which is also representative of the third major area of consonantal characterization of Italian, the palatals and affricates. The new palatal and affricate phonemes of modern Italian were clearly formed and relatively stable in the medieval language, most of the uncertainty appearing to lie in their representation, since they were phonemes unknown in the language from which the alphabet was borrowed. The earliest of these arose from the palatalization of the velar stops *k* and *g* before *i* and *e*, and eventually by initial *j*; the voiced *ǰ*, written *sc* before a front vowel, evolved similarly. The stock of affricates was considerably augmented, moreover, as a result of the development of the yod with certain other consonants, resulting in the new dental affricates, voiced and unvoiced, both spelled with a *z*: *mezzo* (medium) and *pozzo* (well), respectively.

The major transformations of the morphology of the language had taken place long before the thirteenth century and have been noted above. Few present radical breaks from what is known about the morphology of spoken Latin (the replacement of the *-s* plural with a nominative vowel plural being the one striking exception). The new plural system is one of the areas where fluctuation persists: there are many variants for the plurals of nouns ending in *-co*, and forms like *grammatici*, the regular form of which is *grammatici* in the modern language, abound. There are still many nouns with the singular ending in *-a* and the plural ending in *-i* (*le porti*) and examples of an invariable plural for nouns ending in *-a* (*le letta*, *le delitta*).

The use of *lei* and *lui* as subject pronouns first surfaces in written texts of the fourteenth century; and the possessive pronouns *mie*, *tuo*, *suo*, often without the definite article that became mandatory (but in practice unstable) in the modern standard, are used for both plural and singular functions and without modification for the gender of the object possessed. The definite articles are still in something of a state of flux: there is strong alternation between *il/el* for the masculine singular, and *lo* tends to be used after a consonant (such as in *per lo pane*). The plural masculine shows alternation among *i*, *li*, and *gli*.

As has been noted, the system of verbal flexions provided equally viable competing paradigms in this period. Aside from the variations for conditional and

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imperfect, there is alternation in the weak and strong forms of the preterite, with many alternative forms that eventually disappeared in the modern language (*vivette* for *visse*). The ultimately Sicilian *aggio* for *avere* is still very popular, particularly in poetry.

There were few foreign borrowings in the trecento, but the continuation and expansion of borrowings from Latin was remarkable. Latinisms introduced into the Italian lexicon were increasingly numerous as the century progressed and the latinizing tendencies of Italian humanism became more marked. It is noteworthy in this regard that the three great writers in the vernacular—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, whose cumulative prestige rendered Tuscan the undisputed literary standard—all wrote in Latin as well (Petrarch in particular), setting a trend that dominated the subsequent several centuries: openly professed disdain for the vernacular and a belief that Latin was the real and worthy written medium for Italians. Most Latin words were taken from their accusative forms, but a considerable number of them, not just proper and place names, were adopted from their nominative forms, such as *aspe* (*asp*).

A closely related phenomenon conditioned by the increasing respect for the classical language and disrespect for the vernacular was the relatinization of many etymological forms, giving such contrasting pairs in the fourteenth century as *dificio/edificio*, *diecimo/decimo*, *orrevole/onorevole*, *sinestro/sinistro*. In most of these cases, as can be seen, the relatinized form was the one eventually incorporated into the standard language.

The linguistic developments of the fifteenth century are few and far between. The only significant innovations that survived in the standard are the use of an *-o* flexion for the first person singular in the imperfect, undoubtedly analogical, which replaced the *-a* ending of the earlier medieval period, and the use of the third-person pronouns *ella*, *essa*, *questa*, *quella*, and finally *lei* as the polite form of address. The highly latinizing tendencies of the previous century were expanded and heightened, and in some ways the use of the vernacular lost much ground; among other things, no truly outstanding literary texts were composed in the vernacular in this period, and in writing it was used more for translations from the Latin (which would, not unnaturally, show a strong Latin influence) than for anything else.

This linguistically conservative atmosphere in let-

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ters was not accompanied, as far as can be ascertained from the evidence of either texts of the period or subsequent developments in the language, by any dramatic changes in the spoken language. Thus, modern standard Italian, which was finally codified in subsequent centuries, differs little from the medieval language. The process of standardization, in both the written and the spoken language, consisted primarily of the reduction of choices among competing forms or paradigms from the stock available to both speakers and writers of the medieval period. The examples of the revered writers of the trecento were highly influential when the latinizing tendency ran its course—at least linguistically—and it was fully accepted that the codified vernacular of Tuscany would serve as a written standard. Because the acceptance of a written standard was not accompanied by political unification that would have imposed that standard on the speakers of other regions, and made it their native tongue, the medieval state of vernacular *diglossia* persisted in Italy until relatively recent times.

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[See also Latin Language; Vulgar Latin.]

ITALIAN LITERATURE. The major genres of Italian literature are treated below in eight sections: Allegorical and Didactic; Drama; Epic and Chivalric; Lyric Poetry; Popular Poetry; Prose; Sermons; Versification and Prosody. Related articles are cited in cross-references at the end of each section.