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Language history from below: Standardization and Koineization in Renaissance Italy

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Abstract: The paper returns to the complex question of the sociolinguistic history of Italy during the Renaissance. The traditional historiography of the Italian language adopts a teleological perspective, often defining the codification of Italian in 1525 with the publication of Pietro Bembo's Prose della volgar lingua. This approach means that less attention has been devoted to other processes of language change, as well as less focus on areas outside Tuscany. Using the major historical grammars of Italian, I highlight cases of variation which emphasize the non-uniformitarian nature of the standard. One major process while the standard was evolving was the formation of a koine or 'common language'. This was the main feature of language change throughout much of north Italy. Recent research into the histories of non-Italo Romance varieties have suggested that standardization and koineization are not mutually exclusive processes. Rather, they are best characterised by a 'top-down' vs. 'bottom-up' approach respectively, with many points of intersection. The paper transposes these notions onto the sociolinguistic landscape of Renaissance Italy, allowing for further insight into how Italian was codified in particular, and the relationship between standards and koines more generally.

Keywords: standardization, koineization, language history, variation, Italian

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1 Introduction¹

consuetudo loquendi est in motu [the vernacular is always in motion] Varro, ca. 24 BC

Standardization and koineization are two related linguistic concepts which normally occupy separate domains of linguistics. Standardization brings with it the imposition from above of a reference (or exemplary) language and normally associated with political power, prestigious literature, nobility. Koineization reflects the emergence from below of a supra-regional variety incorporating forms taken from different dialects in contact and other varieties in play, and levelling out the most cumbersome variables. Lodge has written that it would be more fruitful to look for the origins of the koine at the base of standard French and that "the base of standard French had to be a mixed variety" (Lodge 2010: 12).² This paper suggests that a similar variety is characteristic of the origin of Italian. The aim is to show, generally speaking, how standardization and koineization are not mutually exclusive phenomena. The analogous linguistic processes occurring in central Italy (leading to a standard) and in the north (leading to a koine), both confirm the current understanding of the differences between standards and koines, but also further our perception of how these two processes interact with each other in historical timeframes.³ I argue that previous approaches to the history of Italian have ignored the relationship between the standard and the koine, and that it is *only* by looking at language history through a prism of variation that a realistic portrayal of events can be provided.

One concept that runs as a sort of 'red thread' in this paper is the idea of the standard as an equivocal concept. Ammon (2003: 8) references "the multiple fuzziness of the standard", highlighting how one variant may be considered as standard in one variety, but not in another variety. Much work has been done ever since Haugen (1966) proposed his four criteria for standardization: *selection*,

¹ An early draft of this paper was presented at a conference of the Historical Sociolinguistics Network at New York University and CUNY Graduate Center in 2017. The author is grateful to the conference organizers and to the participants of the session on *Early Modern Italy* for feedback. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

² La base du français standard devait être une variété mixte.

³ Koineization here is understood in the same sense in which Kerswill (2013: 519) describes it to mean "a contact-induced process that leads to quite rapid, and occasionally dramatic, change. Through koineization, new varieties of a language are brought about as a result of contact between speakers of mutually intelligible varieties of that language".

elaboration, codification, acceptance.⁴ Although these processes can be identified throughout the linguistic history of Italy, (and some reference is made to them below), the objective here is *not* to focus on the watertight limits of these stages, but on their leaky contours – or 'fuzziness'. On the notion of authority in English, Milroy and Milroy (1991: 19) speak about standardization as an ideology in more abstract terms, defined as "a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent". They see the whole notion of standardization bound up with the aim of functional efficiency, where the ultimate goal is for everyone to use and understand the language in the same way. They note that Haugen's use of the term has been adopted by scholars in a somewhat looser sense, particularly in language histories, where 'standard language' is "one which has minimal variation of form and maximal variation of function" (1966: 22). Considering standardization from the point of view of ideology has had serious repercussions for scholars of language history. Milroy (1996: 169–170), for example, observes that language ideologies "played a strong part in determining what counts as legitimate objects of study and legitimate methods of studying them".⁵ In this sense, the need for uniformity is felt by influential portions of society at a given time.6

Study of koines and koineization have seen a resurgence of interest lately as well. Historical sociolinguistics can be a particularly fertile testing ground for hypotheses about the formation of koines, and language contact more generally. Britain (2012), for example, applies the analogy of cake baking to the problems faced by researchers. One such problem involves several ad hoc approaches, or to put it plainly, "we know what the cake tastes like, but what were the ingredients and what was the recipe?" (2012: 224). According to him, the main processes involved in koineization are: (i) levelling; (ii) simplification; (iii) interdialect formation, and; (iv) reallocation. While it is outside the scope of this paper to identify these four processes in the evolution of the northern koine here, it will be enough

⁴ I am grateful to a reviewer for pointing out that Haugen's (1966) conceptualisation of these processes is in broader terms - social (selection and acceptance), and linguistic (functional elaboration and codification). This paper is concerned primarily with the social processes of selection (one dialect / koineised variety vs. other varieties).

⁵ Cf. Hendriks (2012: 1662) on English in contact with German and Dutch, who notes that such varieties (and the variation which constitutes them) "has traditionally been accorded a minor role in histories of the standard language".

⁶ Armstrong and Mackenzie (2013: 5-27) also see standardization tied to ideology, and list seven features which characterise standard languages. They see the processes identified by Haugen (1966) in the "more or less Darwinian sense of natural selection, adapted to social conditions" (p.12). For a study of linguistic ideology and the Anglo-Saxon lineage of English, see Milroy (1996).

to note how previous scholars have described that the vernacular of northern Italy was very locally characterised at the end of the thirteenth century. By the late fifteenth century, vernacular in northern Italy had become a well developed koine, finding its most elaborate expression in the chanceries and the courts (Bongrani and Morgana 1992; Brown 2013).

Recent research suggests that the concept of standardization itself has more in common with variation, including with concepts related to koineization, than what has previously been understood.⁷ As Kabatek (2013: 148) has said, "there are obviously no instances of conscious, institutional language planning, such as are found in modern times, in the Middle Ages". But he also recognizes that Haugen's criteria for standardization referenced above are, at least to some degree, implicitly present in Renaissance convergence processes as well.

The article begins by providing a brief delineation of the traditional language histories of Italian, focusing on the few studies which do acknowledge the inherent variation at the base of the standard. The next section looks at variation in the northern koine, before considering how these two perspectives can be considered different sides of the same coin. A brief conclusion discusses the implications such a perspective might bring to the history of the Italian language, and to the points of intersection between standards and koines more generally.

2 The 'birth' of Italian in the Renaissance: A traditional view

Similar to other language histories, the traditional historiography of Italian has taken a teleological approach in accounting for its vicissitudes. This approach, which has left an entire period of language history unexplored, is best captured by Mattheier (2010: 353–354):

the concept of a 'national language history' has dominated the view of what historical linguistics should be concerned with in relation to virtually all European languages, and continues to do so today. The theoretical starting point of this view – which at the very least needs to be seriously questioned – is that the 'standard' language is the genuine teleological goal of any historical language development.⁸

⁷ For some examples from Romance, see Dessi Schmid et al. (2011), Grübl (2014), Cerruti et al. (2016), Regis (2017), and Lebsanft and Tacke (2019). See also vol. 30 of *Sociolinguistica* (2016) entitled *Language standardisation: theory and practice*.

⁸ For enlightening comments on this subject, and on 'the myth of the homogeneous language', see Watts (2015). In a recent article, Dardi (2008) has attempted to combat the myth in the

Ever since the publication of Bruno Migliorini's Storia della lingua italiana in 1960, language histories have taken modern Italian as their starting point, and then retraced its steps, so to speak, to arrive at the formation of the standard (for example, Durante 1981; Gensini 1982; Coletti 1993; Tesi 2001; Morgana 2003; Kinder 2008; Cella 2015; Miesse and Valenti 2018). These histories 'from above' lend weight to the forms of literary language produced throughout Italy's history, beginning with fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers, notably the Three Crowns of Florence (Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio). The success and influence of Dante's Commedia, written c.1308-1320 in Florentine vernacular (but which also incorporated many regional elements, as well as elements from French, Provençal and Latin), was widely copied and read throughout Renaissance Italy. 10 By the early sixteenth century, a general recognition had emerged among writers that some form of vernacular (volgare) should supplant Latin as the medium of written cultural discourse. These debates became known (later) as the Questione della lingua – a series of deliberations about "which form of the 'lingua volgare' should be employed". These debates continued, in various forms, well into the nineteenth century (Maiden 1995: 7). Without entering into the various merits of each proposal that were advanced at the time, it will be sufficient to note that the major contenders proposed by writers included old Tuscan (i. e. based on the language of the Three Crowns), contemporary Tuscan, or an eclectic, northern variety based on language used in Renaissance courts.

These debates were brought to a head in 1525 by the publication of Pietro Bembo's Prose della volgar lingua, a four-volume grammar of Florentine based on the writings of the Three Crowns. 11 Bembo was a Venetian patrician, a noted scholar, and a Cardinal of the Catholic Church – his authority and the grammatical detail of his work were enough to settle the debate once and for all. Indeed, Antonio Césari, writing in 1809, still saw fourteenth-century writers as belonging

historiography of Italian, according to which Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) decided to rewrite his epic I Promessi Sposi in a variety termed 'Florentine of educated people' [il fiorentino delle persone colte].

⁹ I use the term "Italian" in this section to refer to the modern standard as used in contemporary Italy, and the histories which trace this particular variety.

¹⁰ Linguistic variation of previous writers, including Dante, was recognised but ultimately deemed inappropriate to be adopted for a standard during the series of debates on language during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, known later as the Questione della lingua. As Baldissone (2006: 1058) has noted: "Petrarch and Boccaccio were chosen as archetypes of stylistic perfection in poetry and prose, with the significant omission of Dante, considered illsuited owing to the multilingual choices he adopted in the Comedia".

¹¹ In a recent volume on Bembo, Patota (2017) has designated him the Fourth Crown.

to a 'golden age' of language and literature. ¹² The most important aspect of Bembo's choice of old Tuscan was the fact that it provided a "homogeneous linguistic model, but also one that was well defined and politically *neutral*" (Sanson 2007: 147, her emphasis). Authors soon began rewriting their works to conform to Bembo's model, as Ludovico Ariosto did in his final edition of the *Orlando furioso* published in 1532. This edition was rewritten in Florentine, and purged the most conspicuously northern traits (as well as Latinisms) of the first edition. ¹³ The publication of the *Prose* in 1525, then, is one possible 'birth' of the Italian language, and a crucial date for events during the codification of the standard. ¹⁴

2.1 The linguistic history of Italy: The case for variation¹⁵

Before casting our eye at linguistic details, it is important to recognise briefly the social and political events of late medieval Tuscany which led to increased

¹² See Césari's 1809 treatise *Dissertazione sopra lo stato presente della lingua italiana* [Dissertation on the present state of the Italian language], where he writes that "everyone in that blessed time of 1300 spoke and wrote well. The account books of merchants, customs officials, tax returns and every shop produced the same gold" [tutti in quel benedetto tempo del 1300 parlavano e scrivevano bene. I libri delle ragioni de' mercatanti, i maestri della dogana, gli stratti delle gabelle e d'ogni bottega menavano il medesimo oro].

¹³ For a fuller analysis of writers who adopted Bembo's norms, see the section *Gli scrittori di fronte alla grammatica di Bembo* [Writers faced with Bembo's grammar] in Marazzini (1994: 273), where he notes that Bembo's model "had the great advantage of liberating Italian writers from uncertainty" [aveva il grande vantaggio di liberare gli scriventi italiani dall'incertezza].

¹⁴ Bembo's *Prose* had been preceded in fact by Giovan Francesco Fortunio's grammar of 1516, *Regole grammaticali della volgar lingua* [Grammar rules of the vernacular language]. Fortunio had also sought models of linguistic prescriptivism in the writing of the Three Crowns. While Bembo's work provided a full account of the variety to be imitated, Fortunio had only included sections on nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adverbs, with short comments dedicated to adjectives, participles, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections (see Richardson 2016; Marazzini 1994; Patota 1994: 102). For a study on the development of Italian grammars from their earliest manifestations to the present, see Arcangeli (2016).

¹⁵ While this section aims to outline the variety inherent in Italian after the mid-sixteenth century, it is worth recalling Maiden's (2002: 34) observation that "the extent and depth of historical 'multilingualism' within Italy is a matter of perspective. If we were prepared to limit our view to relatively elevated domains (for example, the language of the law, chronicles, science, medicine, religion and much literature), and to the small minority of the population that could read and write, then Italy could be said to have enjoyed centuries of virtually unbroken linguistic unity".

contact between city-states. From the mid thirteenth century, the city-states of Tuscany began to expand and came into increasing contact with each other. This contact was driven not only by demographic changes, but patterns of trade, war with neighbouring towns (comuni), as well as both internal migration throughout Tuscany. Balestracci (1989: 87) notes how, at the end of the eleventh century, Pisa began to triple its urban area. From the end of the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fourteenth, Florence managed to quintuple in size (1989: 88).16 Throughout the late middle ages, Florence began a series of military conquests during which it captured many other Tuscan city-states, such as Pistoia in 1351 and Pisa in 1406. In these cases, the direct presence of Florentines in other parts of Tuscany would have also increased language contact, particularly as Florence preferred "to use local persons who were loyal to Florence but occasionally [sent] Florentines to the dependent community" (Nicholas 1997: 90). Increased trade was an important motivator in contact between city-states as well, driven particularly by the silk industry, wool, and trade in luxury products. Goldthwaite (2009) has noted that, by the end of the thirteenth century, Florence had surpassed all other towns in the region to become an international capital in commerce, banking, and industry, and was "one of the four or five largest cities in all of Europe" (2009: 14-15). While population statistics can vary, estimates place the population growth in Florence during the late 1200s to have grown somewhere between 90,000 and 130,000 -"a five- to sixfold increase in the course of a century" (2009: 28). ¹⁷ The economic expansion of Tuscany, the invasion of foreign powers, the invention of the printing press, and a growing sense of "Italianess", were but a few of the factors which led to renewed interest in linguistic matters.

As Tomasin (2013: 33) has noted, language variation was a matter with which early debaters in the Questione della lingua were directly concerned, particularly when discussing Dante's Commedia and his linguistic treatise, De vulgari eloquentia [On Eloquence in the Vernacular], composed c.1304–05:

Da un lato, Bembo e i classicisti escludevano il poema dantesco dal canone dei testi veramente esemplari a motivo di quella ch'essi giudicavano appunto l'eccessiva escursione pluristilistica (se non propriamente: plurilinguistica) della sua tastiera. Da un altro, i

¹⁶ Cf. Goldthwaite (2009: 28) who writes with regard to Florence: "the best evidence for the success of [the Florentine] economy, however, is its physical manifestations at the time, and these are as dramatic as such things can be". He lists such factors as the creation of a new currency, the Florin in 1252, the creation of a third set of walls, as well as population growth. 17 For further details on the expansion of Florence and evidence for contact between Tuscan city-states, see the sections in Goldthwaite (2009) on The Tuscan Towns (pp. 12-23) and Florence: Rise to Predominance (pp. 23-30) respectively.

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sostenitori dell'eccellenza passata e presente delle varietà toscane e del fiorentino in particolare, tentavano di limitare la portata del *De vulgari eloquentia* nel dibattito contemporaneo [...]

[On the one hand, Bembo and the Classicists excluded Dante's poem from the canon of truly exemplary texts, due to what they judged to be an excessive pluri-stylistic (*if not indeed plurilinguistic*) excursion in his repertoire. On the other hand, the supporters of the 'excellence' of Tuscan varieties, past and present, and of Florentine in particular, attempted to limit the importance of the *De vulgari eloquentia* in the contemporary debate [...]] (Tomasin 2013: 33, emphasis mine).

Much ink has been spilt over comments such as these, and particularly by those who would seek to identify irreconcilable contradictions between authors' metalinguistic comments and their own linguistic practice. Renaissance scholars were aware of the inherent variation of writers and models in the past. The question then became how best to characterise this variation during the ongoing and lengthy process when a standard was becoming established. While this example highlights Bembo's comments from the early 1500s, and harkens back to Dante's language of almost two centuries earlier, it is clear that Bembo himself was positively inclined towards variation during his own time, as he writes in the *Prose*: "[...] maravigliosa cosa è a sentire quanta variazione è oggi nella volgar lingua pur solamente, con la qual noi e gli altri Italiani parliamo [...]" [it is a marvellous thing to hear how much variation there is today just in the vernacular language, which we and the other Italians speak] (Bembo, *Prose*, Book I).

A limited number of studies have sought to trace the variation at the base of the standard. Maiden (1995: 7–8), for example, notes that "already in the fifteenth century a literary language was gaining ground throughout Italy whose basis was undoubtedly Florentine, but which had acquired general characteristics which could be said to be 'Italian', but were *not* typical of Florence, and which on occasion were capable of opposing and ousting features exclusive to Florence". Among such features, the following are recorded as likely contendents: the change from the type $lo\ mi\ da$ [he gives it to me], to $me\ lo\ da$; the triumph of the structure $non\ facendolo\ [not\ doing\ it]$ over $non\ lo\ facendo\ ;$ the establishment of the type $presero\ [they\ took]$ over $presono\ ,$ and other phenomena. ¹⁸ As further evidence, Maiden points to

¹⁸ See Aski and Russi (2015: 168–171) on the question of whether borrowing from Tuscan vernaculars can be seen to motivate the change from the accusative-dative order of double object clitic clusters to dative-accusative in Florentine. While there is insufficient room to enter into this argument here, the authors note that "borrowing due to contact cannot be excluded as

Weinapple's (1983) research, which investigates variation in clitic pronouns during the Renaissance. The persistence of variation in these cases is but one example of the 'fuzziness' of the standard. Consistency is identified as an "important advantage" of standard varieties by Pountain (2016: 634). The lack of consistency referenced here would seem to point, instead, to the necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for koineization, which brings several varieties into contact.

As noted above, Lodge's approach (2010) highlighted the variety at the base of standard French, leading him to conclude that what had actually taken place was a type of koine formation. ¹⁹ For Italian, Castellani's historical grammar (2000) furthers our understanding of the variation at the base of what is commonly thought of as a single entity, whether it be the 'standard', 'Florentine', or 'Italian'. ²⁰ In a magisterial chapter outlining the major dialectal divisions within Tuscany during the Renaissance, he provides us with a detailed picture of competing varieties.²¹ This study allows us to see how Florentine was just a 'face in the crowd' in the panorama of several Tuscan varieties, and was far from being homogeneous itself. In particular, western Tuscan dialects exercised a strong influence over Florentine. This influence could already be discerned in the first half of the fourteenth century. The penetration of non-Florentine elements created a new variety following Boccaccio's death (1375), the so-called fiorentino 'argenteo'.²² In a similar way, Manni (1979: 119) notes that it was towards the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth century that new elements, formed during the 1300s, began to enter into Florentine and to 'disrupt' its traditional structure. She provides a comprehensive analysis of the major changes which took place, pointing especially to verb morphology. To cite one example,

possible source of the DAT-ACC order in Florentine" (2015: 171), and that current scholarship does not provide enough detail for this hypothesis to be proven either way.

¹⁹ For the linguistic history of English, Wright (2005) develops similar arguments, showing how mixed language texts can be seen as a precursor to the rise of standard English.

²⁰ Trifone (2012: 105) has noted that the syntagm *lingua italiana* is a 'Renaissance neologism', which became popular following Gian Giorgio Trissino's use of it in the title of his Epistola de le lettere nuovamente aggiunte ne la lingua italiana. Benedetto Varchi's Ercolano also posed the question whether la lingua volgare should be called "italiana o toscana o fiorentina". See Trifone (2012) for further details.

²¹ Castellani (2000: 253–365) identifies the following seven varieties in his chapter: (1) Tuscan dialects; (2) western Tuscan dialects; (3) transitional dialects; (4) senese; (5) Montieri; (6) Grosseto, and; (7) eastern Tuscan dialects.

²² Baldelli's (1991: 57) chapter on Koinè nell'Italia centrale highlights the 'very remarkable closeness' [notevolissima vicinanaza] of financial documents in the late 1300s, but that there is "the opposite of any intention of koine". He sees the linguistic convergence of these texts as being the result of geolinguistic proximity, over any overt intention of creating koine forms.

the entrance of the verbs *arò*, *arei* for *avrò*, *avrei* [I will have, I would have] from western dialects, "penetrated Florentine between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which were originally foreign to it". At its most basic level, then, "Italian" during the Renaissance can be seen to embody the classic definition of koineization as defined by Siegel (1985: 365), involving the "mixing of features of [...] different dialects" and leading "to a new, compromise dialect". Further, koineization results "from the integration or unification of the speakers of the varieties in contact" (1985: 369). This is precisely the process which Castellani and Manni are referring to in the history of Italian.

Other studies have also sought to highlight the variation during the formation of Italian, further blurring the line between standard and koine. Indeed, the incorporation of geographically aligned elements into a speech community is an unmarked situation. Kabatek (2013: 145) has noted how, in everyday life, it is completely normal in many speech communities for "the spoken language of individuals to be characterized by elements of varying geographical origin or by a blend of dialectal elements", mixed to a greater or lesser degree with the standard language. Despite this observation, when one is concerned with written language, "we rather assume uniformity" which obscures "the true heterogeneity of language" (2013: 145). If such heterogeneity is recognized at all, it is often considered "to be an exception to the rule of a uniform, standardized language". It is in this spirit that Lepschy's (1996) collection of essays aims to amend the historical record, and shed light on the plurilingualism of Renaissance Italy. She notes that Bembo's model refuted (at least in theory, and to a certain degree also in practice) both the innovations introduced in fifteenth-century Tuscan, as well as the tempered eclecticism of the northern "courtly" language, or lingua cortegiana. As mentioned above, one reason for the success of Bembo's model was that it represented a politically 'neutral' decision, and was based on writers whose works had found favour. Language historians have often been too quick to align value judgements with other linguistic varieties circulating throughout Renaissance Italy. As a case in point, Lepschy (1996: 35) points to the celebrated canto XLVI, in Ariosto's

^{23 [}il tipo *arò*, *arei* per *avrò*, *avrei* penetra fra Trecento e Quattrocento nel fiorentino al quale era originariamente estraneo]. The first attestations of these forms are found in family letters written by Bartolomei di Filippo dell'Antella from 1377. Documenting language in non-literary texts 'from below' reveals forms which entered Florentine usage from outside, and opens up the question of how dialects in contact levelled out competing variants in later literary writing. As Trifone (2012: 107) has observed, it is significant that, precisely around a century later, in 1500, one finds the term *lingua italiana* (actually spelled *taliana*) on the cover of an instruction booklet designed to learn foreign languages: *Questo si è uno libro utilissimo a chi se dileta de intendere todescho dechiarando in lingua taliana (Venice*, Giovanni Battista Sessa, 1500).

Orlando furioso, which equates Bembo's model to linguistic 'purity', and the northern koine to a less prestigious variety:

Là Bernardo Capel, là veggo Pietro Bembo, che 'l puro e dolce idioma nostro, levato fuor del volgare uso tetro. qual esser dee, ci ha col suo esempio mostro.

[Capel I see, and Pietro Bembo who Restored to us our pure, sweet native speech Purged of the dross of common use and to Perfection brought, as his own verses teach (Reynolds 1975-1977: 639).

In another instance which brings out the 'fuzziness' of the standard, Trifone (2016) includes a brief section on 'linguistic varieties in the past', highlighting certain texts which show the existent diatopic, diastratic, and diaphasic variation while standardization is typically deemed to have occurred.²⁴ In an earlier work, Trifone (2012: 112) made the point that the model defined by Bembo bestowed the prestige on Florentine which then allowed it to "impose itself" across the peninsula.

The studies referred to above are among the few works which point out in an explicit way that, at the base of Italian, one finds a picture of variation with competing elements. As Lodge (2010: 5) has said of French, "standardisation brings with it the imposition from above of a reference (or example) language and normally associated with political power". 25 In the case of Renaissance Italy, the power associated with Florentine was not political, but rather, literary and cultural. The linguistic variation characteristic of Florence can best be seen by tracing the use of certain non-Florentine forms, such as the use of two different variants in verb morphology.

2.2 On the alternation between -ro vs. -no

The -ro ending (< Latin -RUNT) in the passato remoto of the verb prendere [to take] for the 3pl. in modern Italian is presero. Maiden (1995: 130) notes that the -no inflection characterizes most Italian 3pl. forms in the present (e. g. vengono

²⁴ Trifone (2016: 149) maintains that one is still able to observe an "embryonic Italian", or "a non-homogenised form of approximate and often mixed Italian, in texts produced by writers of a low-medium cultural level" [una forma non omologata di italiano approssimativo e spesso interferito in testi prodotti da scriventi di livello culturale medio-basso].

²⁵ La standardisation comporte l'imposition par le haut d'une langue de référence (ou exemplaire) et associée normalement au pouvoir politique.

[they come]). The prevailing variant in old Florentine and the contemporary standard is -ero (e.g. chiesero [they asked], decisero [they decided]). In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, one sees "a tussle between -no and -ro in Tuscany" (Maiden 1995: 132). ²⁶ In certain cases, -no is sometimes suffixed to ro, "even in proparoxytonic passato remoto forms (preserono [they took]; sepperono [they knew] etc.)". Baldelli's brief analysis (1994) remarks the non-Florentine nature of -no verbs in the 3pl. in Dante's writing, showing how enno 'sono' [they are] was in use throughout Tuscany more generally but also in northern Italy. The other forms he mentions, ponno 'possono' [they can], vonno 'vanno' [they go], and terminonno 'terminano' [they finish] are 'western Tuscan forms' (Baldelli 1994: 159). One sees, therefore, the broader circulation of linguistic variants already present in the early fourteenth century and the incorporation of a non-Florentine element in Dante's language -a writer who is the very incarnation of Florence and Florentine writing.²⁷ By the mid-fourteenth century, there was a firmly established practice to replace -ro by -no (Maiden 1995: 132). A century later, in Matteo Maria Boiardo's Orlando innamorato of 1483, one finds evidence of early Tuscan forms, including the alternation between preson, "which has a more Tuscan flavour, rather than dialectal", and presen(o) (Mengaldo 1963: 126).²⁸

These data are confirmed by searching for the variants *presono* and *presero* in the online corpus of the historical linguistic database for Italian, the *Opera del Vocabolario italiano*. The database shows there to be 675 occurrences for *presero*, but 1,186 of *presono*.²⁹ This can already be considered a somewhat surprising result, given the later domination of *presero* over *presono*. Of the 1,186 cases of *presono*, there are none dated before 1500. Indeed, the last date recorded for this form is 1399 (apart from 24 occurrences in critical editions of Bibles, dated to either the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries). The use of both variants, and the eventual acceptance in the standard of *presero*, reminds us of Milroy and Milroy's (1985) comments,

²⁶ For further details see Nencioni (1953).

²⁷ In Dante's linguistic treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*, Pisa is selected as a standard-bearer for western Tuscan. Dante writes that Pisans say things like *Bene andonno li fatti de Fiorensa per Pisa* 'The business at Florence went well for Pisa' (Book I, XIII, 2). For the judgements and examples Dante makes on other language varieties, see Botterill (2005), from which I have taken this citation.

²⁸ ha un sapore più toscano che dialettale.

²⁹ Conversely, there are only 19 occurrences of *preserono*, all from the thirteenth-century text *Tristano Riccardiano*. The *Opera del Vocabolario italiano* database is available online and is updated quarterly. As at July 2018, it contained 2,335 texts and it is available at: http://gattoweb.ovi.cnr.it/(S(orpaxn45iwy5khajr1abosny))/CatForm01.aspx.

that innovations - rather than changes - must have been introduced hesitantly at first, and then gradually spread. As Wright (2013b: 111) notes, such states of variation "can last for centuries, and the variation can last for centuries" and "need not even simplify out in the same way everywhere". In short, the two variants of these forms which remained over a long period of time behooves us to question, if not reconceptualise, the process of standardization through a prism of variation. A history which adopts as its goal the telling of linguistic variation in a sense reverses the 'top down' approach that is, tracing the literary tradition of modern standards – from which many traditional histories and philological work was born.

The so-called 'top down' approach to language history is indicative of a teleological methodology common throughout much of nineteenth and early twentieth-century philology. In the linguistic history of Italian, we see a narrative develop that describes a variety similar to what Pountain calls a 'literary standard' (2016: 637), where "the existence of a literature in a language may lend it prestige". 30 If we cast our gaze to geographical areas outside of Tuscany and to other types of writing, we find that a similar process of, if not standardization, then certainly of linguistic norm, was developing.³¹ The question has often been raised whether supraregional koinai have existed in Italy, and is a contemporary topic of scholarly discussion (Vincent 2006; Regis 2012, 2014). As Pountain (2016: 636) has written, "what is perhaps of more immediate comparative interest from the point of view of standardization is the longer existence in Italy than elsewhere of a number of written languages (scriptae) which served as languages of administration or as vehicles for literary expression" - both of which feature in his typology of standardization. He highlights Ferguson's (2003) account, which traces "an unbroken tradition of written Venetian from the thirteenth century" with evidence of a "stable koiné" in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, although serious written registers were abandoned from the sixteenth century (Pountain 2016: 636).³² What interests us here is

³⁰ Pountain also notes that "while literary language has often served as a reference for instruments of standardization, perhaps most famously the first dictionary of the Real Academia Española, the Diccionario de autoridades, so called because it took as authoritative the works of the 'best' writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there is sometimes an uneasy relation between the model which literature appears to offer and the development of a standard".

³¹ The term 'norm' is understood here in the same sense defined by Pountain (2016: 635): "a set of linguistic variants which are emulated usually because of the prestige of their users" (...) "without necessarily any explicit codification or legislative imposition".

³² Further details on the formation of the dialect of Venice can be found in Ferguson (2005, 2007).

precisely how the northern koine varieties can be seen to have become an "incipient standard", or a standard used in educated writing by virtue of its literary nature. Having considered studies on the formation of standard Italian which render its variation explicit from a 'top down' perspective, it will be useful to see whether one can ascertain the opposite phenomenon in the koine of north Italy, using a 'bottom up' approach.

3 Koineization in North Italy

Koineization is the main tendency characterising the vernacular in north Italy during the Renaissance. For the political region of Lombardy, whose capital was (and is still) Milan, the beginning of the fourteenth century shows a picture of fragmentation. Stella (1994: 153) sees the formation of a koine from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries as the most salient feature of language change: "la storia linguistica della Lombardia, dalla metà del secolo XIII alla signoria sforzesca, è tra le più esemplari, se non la più esemplare, nel comune processo, prima di formazione di coinè municipali, e poi di convergenza, dalle aree laterali, verso un modello cortigiano da una parte, fiorentino dall'altra." [the linguistic history of Lombardy, from the middle of the thirteenth century to the Sforza *signoria*, is among the best examples, if not *the* best example, of the common process which involved the formation of municipal koines first, and then convergence, from outer areas, towards a chancery model on the one hand, and a Florentine model on the other].³³

In the thirteenth century, every city-state had its own local, municipal vernacular. In northern writing, individual texts still presented "a clearly defined physiognomy according to the city or at least their area of provenance" (Migliorini 1960: 141). During the 1300s and 1400s, increased mobility and contact between people of the northern city-states and the rapid expansion of certain centres of power with new political structures, such as courts and chanceries, led to the formation of a pan-northern, supra-regional koine. By c.1350, Milan became "the capital of a supra-regional state that ruled over a good part of the Po Valley" and "sought further expansion" (Zaggia 2014: 166). Increased contact between vernaculars induced a process in which the most local linguistic features were

³³ Cf. Marcato (2006). Also Grassi et al. (1997) who see the Veneto as representing the most advanced attestations of koine formation. See also the comments in Regis (2012: 10) on the related term *koinè dialettale*: "Gli esempi che vengono portati di 'koinè dialettale' sono, in genere, quelli del veneto/veneziano e del piemontese/torinese" [the examples which are reported of 'koinè dialettale' are, in general, from Veneto/Venetian and from Piedmontese/Turiense"].

abandoned in favour of a process of demunicipalization. If we compare the writing of the Milanese author Bonvesin dra Riva (c.1240-1315) to writing from a century later, we see how the most local elements have been levelled.

Bongrani and Morgana (1994: 117-118), for example, list nine phenomena common to the Gallo-Italic family of languages, to which Lombard belongs, and which are taken from Bonvesin's language. These are: (1) voicing of intervocalic unvoiced consonants, which may lead to their disappearance, e.g. CATENA > cadena, SPUTARE > $sp\ddot{u}a$; (2) lenition of double consonants: CATTA > gata; (3) assibilation of palatal consonants coming from Latin velar /g/ and /g/ followed by 'e' and 'i': CYMA > sima (in the past these were affricates represented by 'z', 'ç' and 'c'); (4) palatalization of the Latin consonant combinations CL and GL in initial position (CLAMARE > camar), and intervocalic-CL-: AURIC(U)LA > orega; (5) wide fall of unstressed vowels: PILU > pel, SEPTIMANA > stmana; (6) the presence of 'mixed vowels' /ö/ and /ü/: ROTA > röda, LUMEN > lüm; (7) metaphony, or vowel harmonization of a stressed vowel preceding word final Ī; (8) palatalization of the Latin combination—CT- to f(x), e.g. lac ['lat]; (9) velarization of 'a' before 'L + consonant', e.g. CAL(I)DU > cold. One of the most famous manuscripts containing Bonvesin's writing represents a "grammar which is phonetically and morphologically compact and rigid, where oscillations are minimal" (Stella 1994: 165).

Some of the earliest features of the koine can be seen in writing from the Gonzaga court of Mantua, written during the signoria of Ludovico I Gonzaga (1369–1382) and then, in a greater number, during the rule of his successor, Francesco I. Typical traits of the evolving koine language include the restoration of word-final vowels, the use of the masculine definite article *li*, the use of *li* for the femining definite article, and the use of -i as a desinence for feminine plural nouns (alternating with -e). The most obvious dialect features are, in general, not present in Gonzaga court documents, such as the drastic reduction of word final vowels subject to apocope (Bongrani and Morgana 1994: 117–118).

This language would become the northern, courtly variety proposed as one option for a standard during the Questione della lingua (discussed above). It was championed most vehemently by Baldassar Castiglione in his Libro del Cortegiano (1528). Indeed, by the period 1518-20, Castiglione was already using the term 'italiana' to refer to 'lingua' in the second redaction of the Cortegiano, describing his proposed variety as "Italian, common to everyone, educated, florid, and abundant in terms and attractive expressions" (Ghinassi 1968: 44).³⁴ Rather than occupying separate domains of linguistic activity, both

^{34 [}italiana, comune a tutti, culta, florida e abondante di termini e belle figure]. For a useful overview on the various forms of 'Italian' being proposed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as distinctions between writing vs. speech, see Richardson (2002).

varieties – Tuscan (standard) and koine (non-standard) – represent cases of language contact which can be seen to undergo similar processes, albeit with different donor varieties. In the case of the standard, Florentine was incorporating non-Florentine elements from around Tuscany, levelling out the most conspicuous features as writers combined different elements in their language. This variety was constituted, then, of various linguistic systems which were mutually intelligible, and chimes well with Hinskens et al.'s (2005: 46) definition of koine, which "results from prolonged contact between related linguistic systems, usually more or less contiguous dialects of the same language, sometimes closely related languages".³⁵

Whether the northern koine was only a written variety is difficult to ascertain. The problem of identifying whether historical phenomena also occurred in speech is a familiar one to historical linguists. Nevertheless, Richardson (2002: 9-12) provides convincing examples from sixteenth-century treatises on language which point to evidence of koine forms also being used in speech. The northern koine was, he says, "the type of Italian to be used in the social interaction of elites, in polite conversation and day-to-day writing: here sociolinguistic convention made it desirable to steer a middle course between 'low' (dialectal) and 'high' (literary Tuscan) usage" (2002: 10). Most writers appear to have been principally concerned with lexical choices and pronunciation. In his Rimario of 1535, for example, Benedetto Di Falco prefers "plurals such as notari to Tuscan notai [notaries] because it is thus that 'que' nomi comunalmente pronunziansi' [those nouns are commonly pronounced]" [emphasis mine] (2002: 9). There is evidence that the koine was used in a non-literary context too, such as in the Libro mercantile in which Domenico Manzoni, from Oderzo near Venice, declared: "io ho procurato d'usar modo di parlare non ristrettamente et affettatamente toscano, ma italiano puro et commune et qual si conviene et usa in maneggi di mercantie et di faccende" [I have ensured that I use a manner of speech not narrowly and affectedly Tuscan, but pure and common Italian, as is fitting and normal in trading and business matters [emphasis mine].³⁶

³⁵ In his discussion of converging genetically related varieties, Braunmüller (2009: 58) similarly notes how "language standardisation follows the same principles in terms of converging divergent dialects into one unified roofing language: The aim of all these processes is (a) to reduce variation and (b) to create a new linguistic system with a new societal norm in its own right". In their investigation of modern convergence patterns when looking at Piedmontese and Italian, Cerruti and Regis (2014: 106) found that a roofing relationship "does not exist between a given dialect and its planned standard variety". On the question of whether a 'standard dialect' exists in contemporary Piedmontese, see Regis (2014).

³⁶ For further examples, see the pages in Richardson (2002). For evidence of diastatic variation within the northern koine, see Brown (2013).

3.1 On the points of intersection between 'standard' and 'koine'

Although standardization and koineization traditionally occupy separate domains of linguistic enquiry, some scholars have begun to suggest they are not mutually exclusive processes and have, in fact, several 'points of intersection' (see, for example Hidalgo 2001; Lodge 2010). These points are discernible in various linguistic phenomena during Renaissance Italy.

Firstly, given the similar linguistic processes occurring in central and north Italy (resulting in a standard and koine, respectively), it is no surprise to see that both concepts emerge almost contemporaneously throughout the linguistic historiography of the peninsula. Nor should it surprise us that Lepschy's (2002) contribution, (which poses the simple question What is the standard?), provides a historical foray and enters into a discussion of the use of the term koine. The concept of a standard, he says, can be traced as far back at least to Dante, but that "another relevant term, which goes back to Greek and became widely used among linguists in the same years in which standard acquired popularity, is koine" (2002: 76). It was precisely during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that the main European standard languages were consolidated (Lepschy 2002: 76; see also Scaglione 1984). A few centuries later, one finds the earliest appearance in vernacular of the Greek term κοιυή in the *Elegantiae* of Lorenzo Valla (c.1440), and then later in 1473 in a letter from Francesco Fidelfo to Lorenzo de' Medici (Regis 2012: 5). A transliterated variant of the form, appearing as koine (s.v. Grecia Lingua), only appears in Italian as late as 1933 – and only twelve years before the term 'standard' appears in an Italian dictionary, in 1942, in reference to language.³⁷ It is not a coincidence, then, that Machiavelli's Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua (1524 or 1525) pits the northern language, (what he calls lingua lombarda), against other languages like Spanish, French, and German:

A volere vedere adunque, con che lingua hanno scritto gli scrittori in questa moderna lingua celebrati, delli quali tengono senza discrepanza d'alcuno il primo luogo Dante, il Petrarca, ed il Boccaccio, è necessario mettergli da una parte, e dall'altra tutta Italia, alla qual provincia per amore (circa la lingua) di questi tre pare che qualunque altro luogo ceda; perchè la Spagnuola, e la Francese, e la Tedesca è meno in questo caso presontuosa, che *la Lombarda*.³⁸ [emphasis mine]

^{37 &}quot;In French the first attestation with reference to language is found in 1905" (Lepschy 2002: 75). For the appearance of the term "dialect" in the history of Italian, see Alinei (1984); also, Trovato (1984); Consani (1991).

³⁸ While the term *lombardo* is used to refer to 'northern' Italian phenomena in a general sense, it is clear from Machiavelli's meaning and context that he is talking about the northern koine.

[Wanting to see, therefore, in which language the famous writers have written, and in which Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio undoubtedly hold first place, it is necessary to put them to one side, and the whole of Italy to the other side; to whose province, out of love (for its language), it seems that any other place surrenders; because *Spanish*, *French* and *German* are less presumptuous in this case than *Lombard*.]

Secondly, there is some evidence to suggest that the koine was felt to be a standard by convention. Richardson (2002: 8-9) discusses how the northern koine was sometimes referred to as a lingua comune. This particular term fell into disuse early in the sixteenth century as the Italian courts themselves became weakened. In a striking sentence, Richardson notes that the adjective (comune) "also referred to a type of language that was felt to be (and could be termed) Italian because it was interregional rather than specifically and narrowly Tuscan" (2002: 9). It was used in this fashion, for example, by Niccolò Cosmico, in a letter from Ferrara to Isabella d'Este in 1498, when the former had been asked to translate a play not using the 'parlare exquisito' but 'il comune dire di queste parte' (2002: 9). This notion of 'common' is one aspect to which Pountain (2016: 635) refers when considering whether the northern koine may be deemed to have standardized. Ultimately, it is rejected as a potential 'codified standard'. Nevertheless, Cosmico is referring to a variety which seems to satisfy the necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for standard selection. In other words, the koine *could have* been selected as a standard, if not for the diverse political and social vicissitudes which the northern koine subsequently took.

Thirdly, other definitions of standards invoke very similar conditions (if not the same) as those prescribed for the formation of a koine. Regis (2012: 9) observes that the concept of *koinè* has been appropriated by two different subfields of linguistics in Italy. The first field is in the history of the Italian language, and the second is dialectology. In the latter field, the term has been expanded to become *koinè dialettale*. Even in definitions of this term, however, one finds references to processes of standardization, such as in Grassi et al. (1997: 176): "A fianco, e insieme, all'italianizzazione, all'interno delle varietà dialettali avviene – e soprattutto è avvenuto – un altro processo di standardizzazione delle forme locali, ma di raggio più ristretto. Si verifica quando le varietà locali si orientano sul dialetto del capoluogo (o del centro più importante dell'area, mutuando da quello forme e costrutti, e persino fonemi e varianti

Indeed, this treatise was written against what Machiavelli specifically calls the northern *lingua comune*, being in favour as he was for the old Tuscan position. This information is confirmed also in Trovato (2014: 466), who notes that Machiavelli uses the term *Lombardia* in the sense of "l'Italia settentrionale" [Northern Italy].

fonetiche)." [Alongside, and together with Italianization, there occurs – as it has indeed occurred - another process of standardization of local forms within dialectal varieties, but of a more restricted range. This occurs when the local varieties become oriented on the dialect of the regional capital (or of the most important centre in the area, changing its forms and constructions, and even phonemes and phonetic variants).]

Regis (2012) has previously considered the question of whether the northern koine developed into a standard, following Mesthrie's (1994) criteria. Out of the three features characteristic of koines identified by Mesthrie (1994: 1865), the third relates to the use of a standard or official language in a politically unified region. Typical of koines of this nature is the degree of artificiality as a 'common language'. Regis (2012: 12) cedes that the koine was formed as a written variety and does present a marked degree of artificiality (particularly due to its eclectic nature of Latin, Tuscan, and elements from the local vernaculars).³⁹ But application of the term 'standard' is rejected in his analysis, too. At the same time, he subscribes to Sanga's definition, for whom the koine is not a language per se, but a language in fieri, characterized by "low codification and high polymorphism" (1995: 92).40 This is precisely where the distinctions around standard languages and standard varieties presented by Ammon (2003), and discussed at the start of this paper, are particularly helpful.

One difference Ammon introduces in his description of 'fuzziness', or the distinction between a standard language and standard variety, is that the latter's "social control is relatively informal because it is neither codified nor does it have specialised, professional norm authorities" (2003: 3). A crucial element which did not eventuate in the linguistic history of the northern koine is a language codex - the resultant publications in which the codification is published. In the case of the koine, most writers instead produced linguistic descriptions. One of the most convincing elements of Bembo's proposal was the detail with which he described what the new variety should look like. Not only did this provide a clear model for writers to follow, Tuscan had a long literary prestige, advocated by language experts (Ammon 2003: 6). The 'multiple fuzziness' of the standard that Ammon refers to in his article, however, is still observable throughout at least the sixteenth century. As Tuscan acquired greater linguistic domains of usage in the north, it spread progressively to courts, chanceries,

³⁹ Cf. Malkiel (1984: 62) in discussing the relationship between Medieval Latin and Romance dialects in general during the late Middle Ages: "one would nevertheless hesitate to raise even the most vigorously thriving and 'pushing' dialect to the level of a standard language, although such a rank may have facilitated its eventual elevation to that pedestal".

^{40 [}bassa codificazione e alto polimorfismo].

literature etc., which had been the previous reserve of the koine. This situation thus produced a series of "fuzzy" borders, in which certain realms valued "a language variant as standard which another does not". In turn, one finds that "the delimitation of the standard variety" remained ambiguous, precisely because it remained unclear "how stylistic or regional levels should be projected onto norm levels", as with Ariosto's rewriting of the *Orlando furioso* (discussed in Section 2).

A similar case can be seen in the letters of the fifteenth-century nun Margherita Lambertenghi (? - 1454). She was originally from Como but moved to Milan in her youth. Her private correspondence, written to other women of her religious order, evinces a notable resistance to both tuscanized and to broader koine forms of language, revealing linguistic elements much more localized to one geographical area. Considering the letters written around 1445, one finds particularly localized variants, including features such as weak perfects ending in -è, the prevalence of metaphony and anaphonesis, as well as lenition of intervocalic consonants (e.g. adade 'età'), and particularly for lexemes which continue Latin -ATEM, such as caritade, castitade, comunitade, honestade etc. Comparing Lambertenghi's language to the language of chancery documents from Ludovico Sforza's rule, that is when the koine is said to have reached its most elaborate expression, Vitale (1983: 371, n.134) comments that there is "a more widespread and lively adherence to contemporary local elements". At the same time, Margherita's language provides an interesting case study of the competing varieties in play throughout this period: northern koine, Tuscan and Latin. Although the Latin elements in her letters are restricted to certain formulae which are often repeated (caritate Dei et proximi, humili e paupertate), and in certain lexemes such as require, her language does include Tuscan, elements. These include palatalization in meglio (over northern melio), as well as a notable lack of front-vowel raising before a lateral in altro (over northern oltro). In other words, 'standard' elements, or elements which were to become 'standard', are freely combined with local, 'dialectal' variants. The eclectic nature of Lambertenghi's writing, and the liberal mixing of standard and nonstandard items, further blurs the lines between what constitutes a koine and a standard. While this variation was to play out in different ways and at different times throughout Italy, it represents a similar situation to Haugen's earlier work which aimed to "settle problems related to 'the presence of conflicting norms whose relative status needs to be assigned" (Haugen 1983: 270 in Daoust 1997).

What might these two distinct but related processes have in common, and what might they tell us about standards and koines more generally? It is possible that "the entire standard variety consists of standard by mere usage" (Ammon 2003: 2) and that "this is typical of an incipient standard variety as we

find it towards the end of the Middle Ages". 41 Ammon speaks of "vernacular languages at the first stage of becoming standard languages". In the case of northern Italy, the koine was being used progressively more in writing, developing its use and advocating specific features for other writers to use as a model. In terms of Haugen's typology, the first two stages (selection, elaboration) were being carried out. But this variety never underwent a process of codification to the same extent that Tuscan did. The advantage of Bembo's model was to provide a detailed guide that other writers could imitate, which the northern koine lacked.

The rapprochement between models of koineization and standardization is one aspect which Tuten has also examined. He writes that koines may undergo an "informal standardization" - in other words, a variety may develop which sees the koine as a literary or standard language. The inclusion of standardization within the model of koine formation is not entirely unwarranted, he says, for it reflects a frequent reality: "koines tend to be selected as standards, since standards also require the decrease in variation that characterizes koines" (Tuten 2001: 327). The northern koine represents, in one sense, a case of 'failed standardization'. Following the new model proposed by Bembo in 1525, a new linguistic dynamic emerges where "standardization may enter into competition with koineization".42

Finally, the cases described here may provide useful points of comparison with other linguistic traditions. In his discussion of "royal French" for example, Grübl (2013) makes very useful comments, noting that this variety was itself composed of a "pluricentric base". He argues for further weight to be given to traditions of scripturality for language histories. Grübl points to the main forces involved in the formation of the supra-regional French koine, which came from regions outside the Île-de-France (2013: 344-45). In this sense, the cases of koineization described here are similar to the situation Grübl describes. In both the northern koine and Tuscan, we see a supra regional written norm developed through the scriptural traditions of literary and administrative domains. These traditions were carried out both in writing and in oral traditions,

⁴¹ In examining the languages of non-Venetians in historical perspective, Tomasin (2016: 71) arrives at a similar conclusion: "these models are based mostly on the examination of spoken languages and standardized languages, that is to say linguistic situations that differ from written evidence provided by languages that are not yet standardized, such as romance [sic.] languages of the Middle Ages".

⁴² Tuten (2001: 327). As evidence, Tuten points to Fontanella de Weinberg (1992: 42-54), who "argues that in the history of American varieties of Spanish, standardization has sometimes impeded koineization, as in the interior of Mexico, and sometimes reversed its effects, as in Buenos Aires".

and Grübl notes that koineization – as a form of contact between several diatopic varieties – is not restricted to orality. He points to high German, which represents "a privileged encounter for the confluence, for mixing and the levelling of regional *scriptae*" (2013: 376).⁴³

On the one hand, it is clear that, at least in Haugen's typology (and to a certain extent also in the work carried out by the Milroys and others discussed above), the process of standardization does contain elements of deliberate interventions - the publication of Bembo's grammar, for example, was an act designed to prescribe one particular variety of language, and Ariosto's rewriting of the Orlando furioso in this variety was also a conscious choice. The northern variety, on the other hand, converged but not through any top-down, authoritative attempt to restrict the language of writers - this convergence was indeed the result of the plurisecular, pluricentral and involuntary supra-regional written norm. The processes through which both standardization and koineization occur, can play out in different ways according to the varying nature of the sociohistorical and sociolinguistic contexts, "resulting from the competition of different centres of scripturality where the relative weight can change according to the time period and according to textual genres" (Grübl 2013: 376).44 In short, both standardization and koineization can occur via the convergence of several varieties.

4 Conclusion

This article has highlighted the variation pre-existing the traditional starting point of histories of Italian during the Renaissance, typically fixed at 1525. At the same time as a standard was developing, spreading, and being accepted, forms of language in the north continued to evolve. The current histories of the northern koine characterise its development as a literary, refined variety, which was mainly used in courts and chanceries. The letters of Margherita Lambertenghi, however, reveal that the koine contains more variety than previously thought, exhibiting linguistic processes than can also be traced in the formation of the standard.

⁴³ [un contexte privilégié pour la rencontre, le mélange et le nivellement des *scriptae* régionales].

⁴⁴ [résultant de la concurrence de différents centres de la scripturalité dont le poids relatif peut changer selon les époques et selon les genres textuels].

Looking at forms of language outside the traditional histories of Italian, one finds a much more varied representation. One reason for the continuing development of the koine might be the lack of centralised power in Renaissance Italy. Although Italian was being codified, its imposition throughout the rest of the peninsula ('acceptance') occurred at different times and places with varying degrees of consolidation. As Lodge (2010: 294) has noted for French, "standardisation and koineisation are not exclusive to each other, they complete each other: they both head towards the same goal by different paths". Modern sociolinguistic theory can help us to refine the stages in the respective processes for standards and koines. If one takes the four stages of standardization referred to above by Haugen (selection, elaboration, codification, acceptance), then only the first two are identifiable within the linguistic tradition of north Italy. That is, writers select northern variants (when they had sufficient knowledge of both to be able to choose), and elaborate forms of language in the (mainly) written functions during the Renaissance.

In her analysis of the rise of standard English, Wright (2005) highlights the various language and dialect backgrounds which all came to focus on London. 45 In the case of Italian, no such parallel can be drawn. Although Florence came to be seen as the centre for a national linguistic variety much later in the nineteenth century, its base remained an economic and literary hub. In the north, Milan maintained its power as a cultural and financial centre of activity, but did not develop as a literary magnet in the same way that Florence did. At the same time, one does find evidence of a 'norm according to expected, written usage', while local varieties were converging in the formation of the koine. In this sense, the processes leading to the koine can be seen as a 'mirror' to the ones acting in Florence. These led to a similar linguistic result, but one which was ultimately not selected as a national standard. Tuscan had further advantages over the northern koine as a contender for the standard, too. Such factors include the geographical centrality of Tuscany, the linguistic centrality of Tuscan along the dialect continuum, its continued literary prestige, and its perceived wealth and status. 46 In the cases of France and England, the primary city status of Paris and London meant that the question of competition never arose. In Germany, a central role was played by Luther's Bible. In Italy, no one central political power dominated the peninsula. As such, there existed no corresponding

⁴⁵ See also Wright (2013a, 2015) for arguments along this line in the history of English.

⁴⁶ The weight of any one of these factors in determining the selection of Tuscan varied across times and places through the linguistic history of Italy. For an overview of these arguments and reasons for the "success" of Tuscan, see the section Spazio del latino e spazio del volgare. La "Questione della lingua" e il trionfo del fiorentino letterario in Gensini (1982: 213-222).

vernacular which was an obvious choice for a standard. In none of the factors just listed was political power influential in guiding the selection towards Tuscan. In a similar way, Grignani (1991: 38) writes that for the north, the degree of integration between convergent varieties "varies from centre to centre" and "from one writing level to another". As Sanson (2007: 147) has noted, the sixteenth century in Italy was witness to a search "for a supra-regional written language that aims at being national, but that in fact does not correspond to any single unifying political power". Various European vernaculars in the Renaissance can be considered incipient standard varieties. These are precisely the varieties that writers were developing during Renaissance Italy.

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