

NORMAN ENGLAND: A HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH

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Following Visling,¹ many students of Anglo-Norman² have held that during the second half of the twelfth and most of the thirteenth centuries the linguistic behaviour of the inhabitants of England was completely dominated by Anglo-Norman, which would have “penetrated” into the habits of the lower classes. This notion has in recent years been vigorously opposed by the members of the “historical school”, for whom Anglo-Norman had become an “artificial” language of culture in the 13th century, and can certainly never have made any impact on lower class speech³. Both these positions have been supported by textual evidence directly or indirectly pertaining to language usage among the various social strata of the time, but the contending scholars have often shown little awareness of the need to assess such testimony within the context of a general understanding of the linguistic consequences of biculturalism. In this article, a sociolinguistic approach will be employed to reconcile the conflicting interpretations of the textual evidence. As Romaine says, “... if linguistics has any application to written texts, it must follow that sociolinguistics does also”.⁴

Though the Norman invasion may rightly be considered an aristocratic conquest rather than a national migration,⁵ it is nevertheless thought that some 200,000 Normans and Frenchmen of all classes came over to England during the Conqueror’s reign.⁶ Since a quarter of the native English population had perished during the invasion or in subsequent insurrections, its numbers were reduced to no more than 1,400,000⁷. French was thus the language of one in eight of the inhabitants of England during the second half of the 11th century. An immigrant population, even of this size, generally has little effect on a native language if the social status of the immigrants is inferior to that of the natives, but the status of the invading Normans was quite the contrary. With the legal pretext of the Conqueror’s supposedly legitimate claim to the throne (William was second cousin to Edward the Confessor), they rapidly occupied the places of opponents from among all levels of the native nobility, gentry and clergy, and the higher the social stratum, the more thorough was the purge. It is difficult to calculate exactly how many Norman feudal lords were thus rewarded with lands during the Conqueror’s reign, and the figure of sixty thousand given by the chronicler Ordericus Vitalis is no doubt greatly exaggerated⁸, but *Domesday* suggests that some 5,000 Norman or French knights had been installed all over England by 1086⁹. It is true that many English landholders, mainly among the lower gentry, managed to retain their

possessions, albeit as *de facto* second-class citizens, by recognizing William I's claim to the throne; but among the higher nobility it is known that "of the twelve earls of England in 1072, only one was English, Walthe of Northumberland, and he... was executed in 1076 on a charge of rebellion"¹⁰; while the St. Albans chronicler Roger of Wendover wrote that scarcely a single noble of English extraction remained in the kingdom¹¹. The reins of power thus passed into the hands of French-speaking overlords who had no interest whatsoever in the language of the vanquished; many had lands and political interests in France, all regarded France as their home, and they had come to England "to enrich themselves, not to identify themselves with a people and a national culture which they regarded... as less sophisticated than their own"¹².

The situation of the Church was much the same. In 1075, Lanfranc, Bishop of Canterbury, accused Wulfstan of Worcester, the only English bishop left, of being unfit to attend the King's councils because of his ignorance of French¹³. The English abbots were likewise successively eliminated: "In the list of abbots who signed the Canterbury Privilegium in 1072, seven of the twelve are Englishmen"¹⁴; "In 1075, thirteen of the twenty-one abbots who signed the decrees of the Council of London were English; twelve years later their number had been reduced to three"¹⁵; "After 1095, there was none to answer the King's summons"¹⁶. Norman bishops and abbots were also often accompanied by a flock of Norman monks and priests; between the beginning of William I's reign and the end of Henry I's, seventeen Cluniac and fifty Augustinian monasteries were founded, while the Cistercians established another fifty during the course of the twelfth century. The opposition of English monks when Norman abbots were imposed on them is illustrated by two incidents recorded in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, one in which Turolde took possession as Abbot of Peterborough in 1070 at the head of 160 armed Frenchmen¹⁷, and another in which Thurston occupied Glastonbury Abbey in 1082 only with the aid of Norman soldiers who killed three monks and wounded eighteen¹⁸. There is little doubt that even in religious communities to which Englishmen were admitted, the use of English was frowned upon and must have disappeared before the middle of the twelfth century; while in their dealings with the neighbouring peasantry the French clergy will have acted in much the same way as their secular compatriots.

It has often been misleadingly suggested that the decline of French and recovery of English was triggered by the loss of Normandy in 1204. This cannot be quite true. Even when dispossessed of their lands and family ties, the ruling classes of England continued to speak French, and it is unlikely that the loss of Normandy would by itself have resulted in their abandoning their mother tongue and adopting that of their social inferiors. In the absence of further interaction with the Continent, the rise of a middle class quick to emulate its 'betters' might well have led to the language eventually spoken in England being a strongly Anglicized form of French, rather than the other way round. The importance of the loss of Normandy is that it gave the descendents

of the Norman invaders —some of them at least— a new collective awareness of their insular identity. Though this loyalty to England did not as yet feature any preference for the English language, it nevertheless established a community of interests with the English-speaking lower classes, a bond whose linguistic consequences were later to ensue in reaction to further aggression by Continental Francophones.

The first form taken by such aggression was the influx of successive waves of non-Norman French immigrants who came over to England during the 13th century under the protection of the Angevins. The first, which had actually preceded 1204, brought a flood of Poitevins in the wake of Isabel of Angouleme on the occasion of her marriage to King John, an event which had irritated the French nobility and accelerated the loss of Normandy. Among the imported favourites was Peter des Roches, who was to become Bishop of Winchester and the central figure in 13th-century English politics, and who himself, on coming to power in 1232, “called in two thousand Poitevins and Bretons and provided them with remunerative offices or with marriages”¹⁹ (the chronicler Roger of Wendover wrote in 1233 that “Peter Bishop of Winchester and his colleagues had so perverted the King’s heart with hatred and contempt for his English subjects, that he endeavoured by all the means in his power to exterminate them, and invited such legions of people from Poitou that they entirely filled England, and wherever the King went he was surrounded by crowds of these *foreigners*; and nothing was done in England except what the Bishop of Winchester and this host of foreigners determined on”²⁰). The second influx of Frenchmen took place in 1236 when Henry III, who was French on his mother’s side, married Eleanor of Provence. Among others who came with her were eight of her uncles, and in 1238 the chronicler Mathew Paris wrote that “our English King ... has fattened all the kindred and relatives of his wife with lands, possessions and money ... he allows the revenues and ecclesiastical benefices bestowed by our pious ancestors ... to be seized on a spoil, and to be distributed amongst *foreigners*”²¹. For Paris, as for Roger of Wendover before him, the native Englishmen to be placed in contraposition to the foreigners were not, of course, the English-speaking lower classes, nor any remnants of Anglo-Saxon stock among the lower gentry, but the Frenchspeaking descendants of the Norman invaders, whose insular roots by now went back nearly two hundred years. This is in fact explicit in his account of the events of St. Hilary’s day in 1237, when a multitude of nobles came to Westminster and “replied with indignation that they were oppressed on all sides ... paying now the twentieth, now the thirtieth ... part of their property, and they declared that it would be unworthy of them ... to allow a King so easily led away ... to extort so much money ... from his natural subjects as if they were slaves of the lowest condition, to their injury and for the benefit of *foreigners*”²². Finally, the third wave of fortune-seeking foreigners arrived in 1246, when Henry III’s half-brothers brought a further swarm of ambitious Poitevins with them at the death of their and Henry’s mother.

Paradoxically, resistance to the excesses of the French newcomers, and at the same time the even more revolutionary vindication of the respectability of the English language, both received essential support from two religious orders which themselves were introduced into England from abroad in the first quarter of the 13th century: the Dominicans and the Franciscans. Dominican friars arrived in England in 1221, and the first colonies of Franciscans settled in Canterbury, Oxford and London from 1224 onwards. Unlike the Benedictines and Augustinians, these were fundamentally preaching orders inspired by ideals of simplicity and communication with common folk, whose language they accordingly used and defended. Their houses were moreover soon peopled by English-speaking inmates of humble birth²³, and although Latin and French were necessarily taught in their schools, as being the recognized media of intellectual discourse, the use of English was by no means discouraged as in other orders. On the contrary, Oxford Franciscans such as Alexander of Hales and Adam Marsh made efforts to revive the English language and culture. In this they were supported by Robert Grosseteste, a man whose extraordinary ability had enabled him to rise from villein's son to Bishop of Lincoln, in spite of the admission of villein's sons to church office having been expressly forbidden by the *Constitutions of Clarendon* in 1164. In 1252 Grosseteste, who was snubbed by his own canons on account of his lowly origin and rebuked for preaching in English²⁴, complained in a letter to the Lords and Commons of the Realm and the Citizens of London that "the Church is being worn out by constant oppressions; the pious purposes of its early benefactors are being brought to nought by the confiscation of its ample patrimony to the uses of aliens, while native people suffer. These aliens are not merely foreigners; they are the worst enemies of England. They strive to tear the fleece and do not even know the faces of the sheep; they do not understand the English tongue..."²⁵.

In their efforts to dissuade Henry III from persisting in the Frenchifying policies of Peter des Roches, Grosseteste and the Oxford academics were joined by a curious bedfellow, Simon de Montfort, who had himself settled in England only at the age of twenty-one, twenty-nine years later than des Roches. It is doubtful to what extent de Montfort can have identified himself with either the autochthonous English or the nobility of Norman stock; his aim seems rather to have been to use any available source of pressure to force the King to abandon his ruinous foreign adventures. Be that as it may, it was undoubtedly de Montfort's leadership which was decisive in obliging the King to sign the *Provisions of Oxford* in 1258²⁶ —as it was equally undoubtedly de Montfort's headstrong clumsiness which rapidly led to the failure of this attempt to control the King's actions.

After the suppression of the *Provisions of Oxford*, the reinforced French influence in the kingdom meant that for a further hundred years English was relegated to the status of *patois*. There is abundant evidence that English was generally considered unacceptable for formal discourse (in Parliament, in the law courts, in preaching and in schools) until well into the second half of the

fourteenth century. Indeed, written Parliamentary records were set down in French until 1489. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, oral pleading in royal courts must be assumed to have been carried out totally in French, and the *Statute of Pleading* in 1362 reveals that the same language was used in local courts, for it states that "... it is often demonstrated to the king by prelates, dukes, counts and barons, what a great damage takes place in the kingdom from the fact that the laws, customs and statutes of this kingdom are not generally kept, for the reason that judgements are passed in the French language, which language is little known in the said kingdom"²⁷. This passage has been cited as evidence of the almost complete eradication of French in England long before the middle of the fourteenth century, but it seems much more reasonable to suppose that those by whom French was "little known" were the lower and lower middle classes, rather than the gentry from among whom the French-speaking judges were recruited. The almost exclusive use of French in courtly literary works²⁸ cannot really be explained if French had already ceased to be the mother tongue of the ruling class to become an "artificial language of culture", and nor can Giraldus Cambrensis' shocked observation that Cluniac monks joked in English²⁹, or Archbishop Peckham's disapproval of the fellows of Merton College, who in 1284 "talked English at table and wore dishonest shoes"³⁰. Monastic regulations forbidding English at school, cloister or table³¹ did not simply attempt to impose the use of a cultured speech more fitting for monastic life (in which case it might be true that a majority of monks tended to use uncultured English); their chief albeit occult objective was to force monks of lower-class English extraction to talk the everyday language of their superiors, thus making life easy for the latter and ensuring that their facility in the official language gave them advantage over and imposed respect on their inferiors. Outside monasteries, church benefices were awarded by the French-speaking nobles whose right it was to grant them, and therefore went almost exclusively to the younger sons of allied families, few of whom deigned to speak English in the pulpit³²; while John Trevisa informs us that in schools "the custom of teaching Latin through the medium of the French, before the Pestilence of 1349, was still very much in vogue, that since that time a change, however, took place ... so that now, in the year of the salvation 1385 ... the children in all the Latin schools read French and Latin construed in English"³³.

It was thus not until the last quarter of the 14th century that English really began to gain ground in cultured contexts, and indeed, this resurgence might never have taken place were it not for two decisive circumstances: the Hundred Years' war and the Black Death. The former, which began as a typical feudal quarrel and ended as a war between nations, cemented anti-French sentiments in all ranks of English society and consequently raised the social acceptability of English. The latter, which struck particularly hard among the poor, made labour scarce and so increased the importance granted to the working classes—and with them their language—by the upper classes. These two events,

together with the rise of a new, English-speaking middle class of craftsmen and merchants in the expanding towns of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, led the upper classes to abandon French and adopt as their speech a new, modern English in which the smattering of old English which they had acquired was used as the syntactic vehicle of the rich, up-to-date lexicon of mediaeval French.

Having established that the ruling classes —the nobility and the Church— retained French as their mother tongue until well into the fourteenth century, we can now turn to the question of how far down the social scale French was used, and how extensively in comparison with English. Our first step in this direction is to review the social structure of England during the Middle Ages. The possibility of doing so —that is, of treating England as a fairly uniform social unit— is largely due to the ambition of the Conqueror. In the highly decentralized social system of Anglo-Saxon England, the King had but nominal power over virtually independent earls whose lands were theirs by right, and who themselves controlled their local shire and hundred courts. At the same time, the power of many of these earls was itself limited from below by the fact that large parts of their territories were held in freehold by thegns to whom they had been granted in return for military service, and it was often the local thegnhood which effectively controlled the affairs of a village. Such a system —at least as regards the independence of the earls— may well have been to the liking of most of the invading Norman nobility, who —initially at least— regarded their new English estates simply as overseas sources of wealth with which to bolster the economies of their French lands, William I, however, making full use of his undisputed leadership (he was the only Norman with a legal claim to the English throne), soon established a highly centralized regime by transplanting the administrative methods of the Duchy of Normandy to England as a whole (and in doing so laid the foundations for the future unity of England as a single nation). Basic to this modern feudal system was the principle that all land was held contingently in return for service, rent or tribute paid to an overlord, the chief exception to this rule being that at the apex of the hierarchy the King owed nothing to any other person. In the last resort, all land was thus held by the king. This pattern of social organization has been described as “a state of society in which all or a great part of public rights and duties are inextricably interwoven with the tenure of land, in which the whole governmental system —financial, military, judicial— is part of the law of private property”³⁴. Within this system, the basic unit of land, if not the smallest, was the manor, for except in those manors directly held by members of the higher nobility it was the lord of the manor who constituted the lowest stratum of the (French-speaking) ruling class, the lowest major social stratum that was free in the sense of not being directly involved in working the land. All those beneath him in the hierarchy, whatever their mutual differences and relationships, were in principle occupied in agricultural tasks and paid service or rent directly to the lord of the manor. It is therefore the social relationships

within the manor that we shall examine in order to assess the penetration of French into the speech of the lower classes.

A large part of the land belonging to a manor constituted the lord's demesne, whose produce was disposed of directly by the lord. This land was worked by the villeins who made up most of the population and paid this and other services in return for the benefits they enjoyed, which ranged from the possession of a cottage and plots of their own (for which they also paid rent) to the mere receipt of bed and board in the manor house or its outhouses. Between the villeins and the lord there was nevertheless a small "middle class" of freeholders, who paid rent for their land but were not obliged to work the demesne, and who themselves maintained hewes (servants living and sleeping in the freeholder's house) and undersettles (a family living in a separate cottage on the freeholder's messuage). A large proportion of these freeholders were of French extraction, the descendants of French soldiers and servants who had come to England with the Conqueror or later and been rewarded with their freedom and the gift of their freeholding.

Apart from the well defined social groups mentioned above, a typical manor featured three individuals of great importance: the priest, the steward and the bailiff. The priest (who not only received tithes paid by the villagers, but also the produce of the glebeland worked by his hewes and undersettles) was almost certainly of French origin, either a younger son of a poor knight or a freeholder's son who had taken holy orders. The steward and his assistant the bailiff were the officers who effectively ran the manor in the absence (often permanent) of its legal lord, by whom they were appointed. It may be assumed that after the Conquest, or upon occupation of the manor by immigrant French knights at some later time, both these posts were given to French dependants of the lord's; and since in practice they were usually hereditary, they continued, like the church benefice, to be held by men of French origin. The main duties performed by the steward and the bailiff were to preside over hallmote (the manor court held every three weeks) and to collect and administer the revenues paid to the lord by the peasants of the manor. However, the actual management of the demesne was carried out by a number of subordinate officers elected by the villagers themselves—often yearly—subject to the lord's approval (or the steward's). The chief of these was the reeve, who organized the service done by the villeins in the demesne. The duties and denominations of the others varied considerably from one part of the country to another: a typical manor might have a hayward to watch over the lord's corn, and over other crops at harvest time; a woodward to guard the lord's woodland; a beadle to deliver summonses and collect fines and rents; and if the manor was large enough to have its own market, an aletaster to inspect weights and measures.

In inferring the linguistic behaviour of the various groups and individuals making up the population of the manor, it must be borne in mind that the use of French was not simply a question of racial origin, but a matter of social

status. It has been said, indeed, that during this period (the 12th and 13th centuries) "even the peasants became sick of their language and endeavoured to speak a little French, which was then no small sign of distinction, and no wonder, for every French charlatan who came to England was regarded as a fine gentleman simply because he was arrogant and could speak his own language"³⁵. It may nevertheless be confidently assumed that these endeavours were largely fruitless; if the English peasantry as a whole had at any time come to use French as their normal means of expression, it is inconceivable that English should ever have been recovered. It is true that French may have been thoroughly learnt and adopted by enterprising individuals who, for example, escaped from the manor to be taken into service by French-speaking families in towns; but the bulk of the villeinage must indubitably have continued to use English as their chief language. Contrariwise, the social benefits of French — indeed, its social *correctness*— must have meant that all those social classes in which the Conquest established a French-speaking majority continued to prefer this language until the events of the 14th century changed the social structure of England. This category includes the priest, the families of the chief manorial officers (the steward and the bailiff), and those of the great majority of freeholders. Of interest in this respect are the records of the census carried out in 1279 in the small manor of Spelsbury in Oxfordshire³⁶: of the six freeholders (as against 49 villeins), four are shown by their surnames to have been of French extraction (Henry of Richel, Thomas Le Venur, Robert Le Duc and Thomas Francklein) and two (Thomas Smith and William of Colthorn, the miller) to have been men of English stock who were granted freedom — or whose ancestors were granted freedom— because of their important functions; and the two latter were exempted from sitting at hundred and shire courts and from forensic service (accommodating and serving on itinerant royal justices during their visits of inspection), the reason for these exemptions being in all probability that these two men of English descent were incapable of contributing to the proceedings of the court or to the entertainment of the justice because of their inadequacy in French, the language employed by the justice and in the court (which was presided over by the sheriff of the county). The division between the French-speaking upper classes, which extended some way beneath the level of the lord of the manor, and the English-speaking lower classes is reflected in the following passage from the *Vie de Saint Clement*, written about 1200:

Al mien avis mult mieuz serreit
 E a plus grant prū turnereit
 Si li livre de antiquite...
 En tel language [French] tresturne fussent
 Que plusurs gent prū en eussent ...
 De si escrire en purpos ai
 Que clerc e lai qui l'orrunt
 Bien entendre le porrunt,

Si si vilains del tut ne seient
 Que puint de rumanz apris n'aient³⁷.

We have now established with reasonable certainty the dividing line between those who spoke French as their mother tongue (that in which they would joke, swear and talk to their families and peers) and those whose "natural" or only language was English. There remains the question of how these two strata interacted linguistically, for the contact between the two was continual and fundamental to the life of the manor. In such a closed society, virtually everybody must have been "bilingual" in some sense and to some extent; the problem is to ascertain in what sense and to what extent. In reaching conclusions on this point we have to consider two rather different kinds of language usage: on the one hand, the interactions between superiors and underlings in the course of their daily tasks; and on the other, speech in situations such as mass or hallmote, in which the variety of speech employed was as important a part of the event as the factual information conveyed. In their everyday contacts at work in the house or the fields it seems likely that intercourse between freeholders and villeins must have taken place mainly in different styles of a single language, for as Mackey says, "a closed community in which everyone is fluent in two languages could get along just as well with one language"³⁸; and in view of the fact that almost all the vocabulary of Modern English relating to husbandry is of Anglo-Saxon origin, we may conclude that this common working language was English. The English used by many of the freeholders of French origin may indeed have been very defective, with strong interference from French; and the speech of the villeins themselves no doubt acquired an increasing number of French loans as the concepts and artefacts of French culture gradually became familiar to the lower classes; but the matrix in which such variation occurred seems to have been English. At hallmote or mass, on the other hand, French will have prevailed; at mass because the priest, even when —exceptionally— of English descent, will usually have preached in the language of the local upper class; and at hallmote because it was the prescribed language and was in any case the language of the steward who presided over the proceedings, whom few will have wished to antagonize by speaking English. That the lower classes were capable of using some kind of French on these occasions is attested by the fact that the minor manor officers —the reeve, the hayward, etc.— were generally either villeins or freemen of English origin, yet had to present suit against offenders in French; while it is unquestionable that in their daily life they had abundant opportunity to learn sufficient French for these limited purposes.

To sum up, the speech behaviour exhibited on an average English manor during the 12th and 13th centuries was probably of a kind that may be denominated "social subordinate bilingualism of a diglossic character": "social" because some degree of bilingual ability will have been possessed by a large part of the population rather than a few gifted or privileged individuals;

“subordinate” because the abilities of all but a few individuals in French and English will have been quite unequal, some speaking better French than English and others better English than French; and “diglossic” because the switch from English to French or *vice versa* will have depended on the social context in which the speaker found himself, the lower classes adopting the upper-class language in formal situations in which its use was obligatory or politic, and the upper classes adopting the lower-class language when to do so facilitated their practical ends.

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Notas

1. Johan Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970; 1st ed. 1923).
2. As is usual in studies in this field, the terms 'Anglo-Norman' and 'French' are used synonymously in this article.
3. Cfr. Ian Short, "On Bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England", *Romance Philology* 33 (May 1980) 467-479. See also Michel Richter, "Towards a Methodology of Historical Sociolinguistics", *Folia Linguistica Historica* 6 (1985), pp. 41-61.
4. Suzanne Romaine, *Socio-Historical Linguistics: Its Status and Methodology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 16.
5. Mary Doris Stenton, *English Society in the Early Middle Ages* in *The Pelican History of England* (London: Penguin Books, 4th ed., 1965), Vol. III, p. 13.
6. Rev. Geoffrey Hill, *Some Consequences of the Norman Conquest* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1904), p. 24.
7. R. Henry Ellis, *A General Introduction to Domesday Book*, quoted by John C. Russell in "Late Ancient and Medieval Population", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 48 (June 1958), p. 11.
8. Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. A. Le Prevost, Paris 1838-1855, Vol. IV, p. 7.
9. John Morris (gen. ed.), *Domesday Book* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1982).
10. P.V.D. Shelly, *English and French in England 1066-1100* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Univ. Press, 1921), p. 32.
11. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, ed. Henry O. Coxe (London: English Historical Society, 1841) Vol. II, p. 23.
12. Kemp Malone and Albert C. Baugh, *Literary History of England: The Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) Vol. I, p. 111.
13. Roger of Wendover, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 52.
14. P.V.D. Shelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.
15. Albert C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd ed., 1959) p. 133.
16. P.V.D. Shelly, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
17. E. A. Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1867-79) Vol. IV, pp. 457-459.
18. Albert C. Baugh, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
19. Johan Vising, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
20. Roger of Wendover, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 557-568.
21. Mathew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, trans. Rev. J. A. Giles, ed. Henry G. Bohn (Rolls Series), London 1852, Vol. I, p. 122.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
23. Doris Mary Stenton, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
24. Mathew Paris, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 528.
25. Oliver H. Richardson, *The National Movement in the Reign of Henry III and its Culmination in the Baron's War* (New York: Corning & Co., 1897) pp. 32-33.
26. The *Provisions of Oxford*, by which Henry III undertook to carry out a number of reforms, including the establishment of a permanent fifteen-member State Council, were drawn up and signed in Latin, French and English. Though documents written in the vernacular were common in William I's time, between the beginning of the 12th century and the beginning of the 14th English was used for state documents on just two occasions: in 1155, when Henry II issued a charter granting the Archbishop of Canterbury and the monks of Christ Church

lands and jurisdictional privileges; and in the *Provisions of Oxford*. B. Dickins and R. M. Wilson consider that the writing of the English copy of the *Provisions* was forced by the pressure of the nationalist movement led by Simon de Montfort, as "one of the items on the rebels' programme is said to have been the extirpation of all who could not speak English" [*cfr.* their edition of *The Early Middle English Texts* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1965), p. 7]. It is far from certain, however, that the rebels really adopted such a radical position, and none of the other documents signed by Henry III while the *Provisions* were in force had an English copy attached. It seems more reasonable to suppose that the English copy of the *Provisions* was indeed a concession to de Montfort, but that the barons' intention was not to establish English immediately as the official language (for which it was not prepared), but simply to make the *Provisions* themselves known to as wide an audience as possible. The signing of a copy in English is in keeping with the *Provisions* being addressed to all the King's subjects, both learned and illiterate ("to alle hise holde ilaerde and ileawede"), and with the instructions for their being read out by the Sheriffs in the Country Courts.

27. Quoted from Bertrand Clover, *The Mastery of the French Language in England from the 11th Century to the 14th Century* (New York: Corning & Co., 1888), pp. 223-4.
28. With the spread of English among the upper classes, the writing of romances in French died out in England at the close of the 13th century or early in the next.
29. Gerald of Wales, *Opera Giraldi Cambrensis*, eds. J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock and G. F. Warner (Rolls Series), London 1861-91, Vol. IV, p. 209.
30. C. E. Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1924-27) Vol. I, p. 118.
31. *Customary of the Benedictine Monasteries of Saint Augustine, Canterbury and Saint Peter, Westminster*, ed. E. H. Thompson (London: Henry Bradshaw Society XXIII 210; XXVIII 154). Quoted from Albert C. Baugh, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
32. The language customarily spoken in English pulpits is not known for certain, but must surely have been French in most manors. It should be remembered that the *Constitutions of Clarendon* of 1164 excluded villeins' sons from holy orders.
33. Ranulph Higden, *Polychronicon* (Rolls Series), London 1864, Vol. II, p. 159. John Trevisa's version (1385-87), quoted by Bertrand Clover, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.
34. S. B. Chrimes, *An Introduction to the Administrative History of Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), p. 27.
35. Bertrand Clover, *op. cit.*, p. 71 (quoting William Harrison).
36. *Rotuli Hundredorum*, Vol. II, p. 332. Quoted by George C. Homans in *English Villagers in the 13th Century* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975), pp. 223-4.
37. Quoted from Johan Vising, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16. "In my opinion it would be better / and much more profitable / if ancient books ... / were translated into this language [French] / so that many people might get great profit of it ... / I attempt to write it in such a way / that clergymen and laymen who heard it / might understand it perfectly / unless they were such illiterate folk / as not to have learnt any Romance [French]".
38. William F. Mackey, "The Description of Bilingualism", *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* 7 (1962), p. 51.