Variation and Convergence
Studies in Social Dialectology

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On the Interpretive Analysis of Historical Records: Linguistic Relations in Seventeenth Century Osnabrück

For Herbert Penzl

I. My paper is made somewhat marginal by its subject matter, for most readers are probably not familiar with problems of Middle Low German and/or Early New High German. Thus I have provided some introductory remarks for those unfamiliar with German philology. The argumentation, however, deals chiefly with questions of methodology and will hopefully prove to be relevant to Interpretive Sociolinguistics; in the following I present a number of the methodological difficulties with the documents in our research project on linguistic relations in Osnabrück in early modern times; for the convenience of the argumentation, I will restrict the examples to the first half of the seventeenth century.

The term linguistic relations is a calque on German Sprachliche Verhältnisse, used as a cover term in philology since the nineteenth century for the complex historical situation under examination; the translation follows a familiar pattern, as e.g. German Produktionsverhältnisse is rendered by relations of productions.

The research project has been funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Reports are published as Materialien zur Erforschung der sprachlichen Verhältnisse in Osnabrück in der frühen Neuzeit (Osnabrück: Universität, Fachbereich Sprache, Literatur, Medien). Two volumes have thus far been published, and a third is in preparation. The actual research has essentially been done by Judith McAlister-Hermann, from whose work most of the examples presented here are taken. I am responsible for the flaws in the argumentation. Cf. the case studies (McAlister-Hermann 1983a, 1983b, to appear) for further development of the line of argument presented here.
medieval period. There was a northern region centering around the North Sea, where even today the vernaculars show strong common traits (English, Frisian, Dutch, Low German and the Scandinavian languages as well), which stood in opposition to the southern midlands and highlands, where upper German dialects were (and are) spoken, and whose cultural development was deeply influenced by close contact to bordering Romance cultures. Yet even at the onset of the written tradition in the ninth century the beginnings of a linguistic restructuring are evident in the texts, which appear as the first signs of a German language area. The integration of this area is the work of early modern political and economical developments; an important step in this process was the creation of a corresponding linguistic ideal, i.e., the *Hochsprache* (‘High German’) of the Baroque linguistic societies; and still this process of integration is not entirely concluded.

It is quite natural that the geographically intermediate regions (with their Middle German dialects) would have played a key role in this restructuring, for these varieties shared peculiarities of both Low and Upper German — this is the background of the still inconclusive debate on the regional origins of Early New High German. Most handbooks favor East Middle German from the region of Thuringia, and so-called *Meißnisch* in particular, as the primary source. I cannot go into these questions here; I only want to point out that this argument lacks plausibility at least for the Western Low German area under investigation here, whose economical, political, religious and cultural orientation in general was directed towards the West Middle German (Rhenish) area which (like Western North Germany in general) maintains close relations to the Netherlands.³

2. Compared with the other research projects presented in this volume, projects on the history of language show a general deficit in the theoretical framing of the central research questions, both in relation to sociolinguistics or the sociology of language and to their methodology, i.e., how these questions are to be implemented in concrete research. If one undertakes to do historical sociology of language, one must, as a first step, reinterpret the

³ Any handbook of the history of the German language will provide a more detailed picture, although developments in the north are gradually presented only very briefly. Northern Germany is often portrayed as an area that passively received High German from the south. It is this over-simplified picture that our research project attempts to redefine. For information on Low German see for example Sanders (1982) (with ample bibliographical references). A more detailed picture of the process of linguistic integration in the north is given in Maas 1983a.
current theorems of the sociology of language in terms of historical research. One factor determining this deficit is surely the decline of historical research in favour of ethnographic work in recent years; the decay of the philological departments (Alte Abteilungen) has certainly been a decisive factor, for the prerequisite for historical research, the practical knowledge necessary to use historical records (including the analysis of paleographic aspects and of linguistic forms), is no longer necessarily concomitant with language studies.

This corresponds to the current emphasis on spoken language, which is part of the self-image of modern linguistics. There is an obvious advantage to investigating speech; certain sophisticated procedures such as different kinds of interviewing and testing simply cannot be applied to historical records. Even exact quantifying as practiced in survey research is impossible with historical sources, because (written) tradition is to a very high degree determined by chance, and no question of representativeness can even be defined. For example, the archives of the Osnabrück chancellery burned several times, so that we cannot even make a guess as to the original extent of formal chancellary records, not to mention our uncertainty as to the amount of written tradition in domains not subject to bureaucratic formalisation.

But these difficulties should not overshadow the fact that it is possible to do qualitative ("interpretive") work with historical records. In principle at least, the task of investigation is not different for written and for spoken language. In both cases the texts under investigation are linguistically heterogeneous—and the resolution of this heterogeneity, the extrapolation of varieties, is, as long as it is done textimmanently (using distributional procedures), of comparable hypothetical validity. Subjective data will be used in both instances to confirm the analytical hypotheses. In the case of historical records this cannot be done by questioning informants, but evidence from self-correcting interventions in the texts are available. In speech we observe self-corrections in the form of prosodic breaks and interruptions and alterations of syntactical constructions; we can trace the corresponding phenomena in writing in more or less obvious graphic interventions.

In order to do so, we must read (written) texts as inscriptions of several levels of writing praxis; we must distinguish at least between the immediate act of writing and successive editorial 'campaigns'. In this editorial process of working through the text we can again distinguish several layers; there are some interventions that continue the linear ductus of writing and are the consequence of continuous self-monitoring of the writer who, e.g.,
crosses something out and goes on writing in the same line with a new start. This is to be distinguished from subsequent editorial interventions, where the writer has gone back in the text making corrections; between the lines or in the margin or inserting proofreader’s signs with corresponding corrections somewhere else on the page, etc. Here again, there are different levels to be distinguished, e.g. between editorial interventions by the same ‘hand’ (with possible differences of ink, in the ductus of the script, etc.) and those made by different hands. The first example should illustrate more clearly what is meant by this.⁴

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Fig. 1

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⁴A technical note on the mode of transliteration: in accordance with this model of writing praxis, we try to capture the first version immediately written down as our primary text, and record editorial interventions in the notes. This directly contradicts current editorial praxis, which strives to present the final version (the Text letzter Hand). This has been
In rough translation the text reads: 'In the name of the widow (Weimers) (the lawyer) Polman appears and presents the citation. Furthermore Lüdeke Dönies appears in person and reports on the case. He demands this case be taken up at court. Lüdeke Dönies reports that he personally presented the court citation to the accused last Sunday between one and two o'clock in front of his house at the bridge at Uphausen.'

The passage of interest is in line 12 in the word zwischen, 'between': The scribe first wrote verm, then corrected himself by making the initial t into a z, i.e., he substituted for the non-shifted Low German initial consonant t its High German counterpart z (as to the forms of the letters cf. the two t's in berichtet line 11 and the initial z in zu line 14).

Isolated examples cannot bear the burden of much proof, and editorial interventions that are relatively unambiguous in their interpretation are unfortunately rather seldom in our material. Yet even so they give valuable clues as to the conflicted linguistic praxis that has been inscribed in the texts. On the one hand they show what the writer wished to avoid, in this case not quite successfully: the revealing un-shifted consonant is evidence of the negative self-stereotype of Low German. On the other hand we see what the writer tried to attain: the ideal of a High German mode of writing.

3. This first example should show that questions of the sociology of language can very well be raised with historical records; in work with autographical material the analytical procedures are even rather analogous to those of ethnography. But taking my argumentation further, I want to show that an apparent inconvenience of historical work, i.e., being bound to written texts, can actually be an advantage that helps raise new questions and overcome current short-cuts in linguistic reasoning. This is especially true of the aforementioned emphasis on spoken language with the myth of immediacy and authenticity of oral communication which leads directly to the devaluation of writing as merely a more or less deficient picture of spoken utterances.

Not only does this myth stabilize ethnographic practice, it also evokes a kind of self-stigmatisation in those who do analyse written texts. It is a commonplace of works in the history of language, even those which very painstakingly scrutinize the relations of written language, to regard the results of research only as a link in a complex chain of evidence which criticized by many Germanist colleagues; in fact the text thus produced sometimes does not make sense, for editorial interventions are generally meant to restore the sense. Since our editorial praxis corresponds to our technical aims and does not intend to produce readable texts for a larger public, we want to abide by it.
ultimately should lead to understanding of contemporaneous spoken language. The obviousness of this reasoning is in inverse proportion to its plausibility. It is of course correct that writing constitutes a kind of filter through which much of what conveys oral communication will not pass (elaborate systems of linguistic transcription make this evident ex negativo): intonation and all prosodic features; facial expression, gestures and all the other non-verbal modalities that control communication. But it is also quite evident that the communicative stress of face-to-face communication allows the participants only limited room to deploy their linguistic competence. No matter whether it is a question of wanting or being forced to maintain a turn, or wanting or struggling to obtain one, the mechanism of turn-taking requires constant vigilance, observation of the other, interpretation of the symptoms in the behaviour of the other to determine whether s/he finds the utterances prefereed interesting enough to go on listening to, or whether s/he is about to interrupt, if s/he does not understand you, etc.\(^8\)

This communicative stress surely ties up huge amounts of psychic energy, not to mention all the kinds of resulting obstruction familiar to everyone who prefers to deal with any difficult situation in writing rather than face oral inquiry. In other words: The necessity of controlling the immediate social situation during oral communication extracts cognitive energy otherwise available for the production of the text, thus leading to the specific orate style of speech.\(^6\) The strict linearity of speech forces all structuring activity on the short-term memory. In contrast short-term memory is relieved during writing, where two-dimensional space can be used.

Despite these distinctions writing is not completely different from speech. Here too a relation to the addressee controls the writing praxis - but at greater distance and only in a rather indirect way; this becomes especially evident when we understand by writing not only the immediate writing down, including its monitoring, but the complete production process of a written record, including later editorial interventions.

These somewhat general and for some readers perhaps trivial remarks are intended only to point out the absurdity of the current opinion by which written texts are seen as derived from spoken texts and are scrut-

\(^8\) Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) have shown that there is no let up on this stress; despite the fact that there are places where breaks are supposed to occur in the sequence of utterances, at which points turn-taking would be preferable. The participants behave with anticipation, so that communicative stress is maintained even in the intervals where breaks should occur.

\(^6\) See e.g. Tannen (1982). For the distinction between oral/written and orate/literate see Maas (1984).
inized as it were with X-ray vision for the 'underlying' oral structure. Of course this position can historically be seen as a reaction against an older view that regarded oral texts as reduced writing, thus attributing no value in itself to an analysis of oral linguistic praxis. But this controversy has only museal interest today and to continue it would be a kind of ritualized commemoration of the emancipation of linguistics from its role as the handmaiden of philology.

Instead of developing the argument further here, I shall now axiomatically propose that the analysis of graphic as well as oral texts has to deal with their linguistic articulation (which means it has to be capable of being explicated in the framework of a theory of grammar); in the concrete analysis this linguistic articulation must be related to the particular conditions of oral or graphic realisation of the specific text. This is in turn to be distinguished from the difference between orate and literate style, which refers to an independent dimension of analysis, as the style categories can determine texts in the opposite modality (e.g., we can 'talk like a book', and oral speech can be noted with naturalistic fidelity; linguistic transcription is a borderline case).

These preliminary remarks determine the framework for the analysis of written texts. As I said before, these are to be read as inscriptions of a writing praxis, whose forms had to be learned, whose cultural determinants are to be deciphered. This excludes scrutinizing texts in X-ray fashion for the underlying patterns of oral speech which allegedly have been transcribed in them; the task of analysis is rather to discover the cultural patterns which are reproduced in the writing praxis and which the writer happened to have encountered before. The mediating instances of this process of cultural reproduction make this kind of analysis a highly complex process; it has to begin with the teaching, or better: the learning of writing/reading (as a formal institution to this task, the modern school cannot be presupposed); it has to include subsequent individual reading history, and finally, since the corpus of read materials is heterogeneous, it has to go on to the complex mechanisms of evaluation that factorise the reading material. Following Hjelmslev, I make use of the notion of connotation to define this structuring of experienced forms of praxis (see Maas 1985a). Each cultural form (in this case: form of writing - but the same is true for oral forms as well) represents (or should I say: appresenrs?) the situation or the class of situations in which the subject who practices it (i.e. the writer/reader) has met it before.

Just one further comment on this model of linguistic praxis, which may be used here as a cover term to encompass writing praxis: Linguistic praxis
is, in this sense, accessible to conscious reflexion. This is, of course, the precondition for the specific mechanisms of social control: the stigmatisation of certain forms, the establishment of certain forms as compulsory models in school, not to forget the informally institutionalized stereotypes below the threshold of the state apparatuses. The official discourse about linguistic problems institutionalises, for its part, the threshold of awareness for these regulations, which determine the subjects' reactions to them in different ways. Putting it simply, the official discourse of linguistic cultivation (Sprachpflege), as for example in teaching in school, creates areas of linguistic saliency easily accessible to conscious control that filter oral as well as written language via continuous self-monitoring. At the level of the lexicon, grammar and even phonemics, this orientation towards the standard language is easier to obtain than at levels below the threshold of this discourse; thus a speaker with correct standard grammar, even as far as phonemic distinctions are concerned, can be identified on a sub-phonemic level by the individual local or regional 'accent'.

*Mutatis mutandis* the same is true for writing, where choices involving the lexicon, syntax, orthography and the global ductus of writing are salient and consciously controlled - corresponding to the official discourse about writing involved in the process of teaching and learning to write/read. But there is no such discourse for sub-graphemic structures; thus, these sub-graphemic patterns should prove to be a very fruitful area to explore in cultural analysis. But here paleographic problems begin to accumulate. Paleographers are familiar with the break in tradition that occurred in medieval times; during the early epoch the book-writings of the artisans was characterised by the meticulously identical reproduction of individual script types, to the extent that it is generally impossible to identify individual scribes of a particular codex, although stylistic individuality of the various schools of writing (the *scriptoria*) remains identifiable. In later times, as the practice of writing became more and more widespread, idiosyncratic traits of individual hands began to appear even in book-writing, forcing the *scriptoria* to make regulations forbidding a shift

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7 In the individual linguistic biographies, the consequence of being confronted with the official discourse of linguistic cultivation and its sanctions is dramatically evidenced by a change in learning flexibility. Before starting school, children are more or less malleable in respect to the local accent, as their reaction to relocation by their parents normally shows; as they begin the climb up the steps of school career, they internalise the linguistic discourse of school and increasingly lose this flexibility, which culminates in adults' well known difficulty in learning a foreign language.
of hands within a quire or at least not on page so as to avoid a heterogeneous impression (in earlier times this problem was simply non-existent). This differentiation increases rapidly with the growing demoticisation of writing in later medieval times.  

But even with the later, extreme individualisation of handwriting – which develops parallel to the new mode of standardising texts for reading by printing them with movable letters – every hand, no matter how idiosyncratic, is an adaptation of culturally defined models, ideal script types, that can be identified in a text in the same way as we identify its grammatical varieties – and these ideal script types can be interpreted in terms of their cultural connotations.  

Although there may be no special problems in theory, there are tremendous practical problems of analysis here, for we know almost nothing about the existence of these ideal script types, since late medieval and early modern paleography is still in its beginnings. In addition, individual texts and hands present a baffling amalgam of different script types; sometimes there are a dozen different forms for a single letter. Such technical problems have demanded a great deal of time and energy in our project. But I will not go into the details here, for they could be discussed fruitfully only within a paleographic framework and have no direct correspondence to the other projects presented in this volume. In the following I shall dwell instead on the graphematic and supragnaphematic (grammatical) level, where parallels to the other projects are more evident.

4. With the following example I hope to demonstrate the scope of connotation analysis.  

The reproduction shows two pages from an Osnabrück printing of 1618. It is evident that contemporary printings have to be investigated for the study of the relations of written language in town; but here additional

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8 See Maas (1985b) for a discussion of the term and historical illustrations.  
9 See Bischoff (1979). The research situation will be improved when the comprehensive project of a catalogue of dated manuscripts of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, begun in nine European countries in 1959 (see e.g. Scarpatelli 1983), has made further progress. For a case study of an individual chancery praxis see Heinemeyer (1962) and also the stimulating study by Frenz (1981), who tries to correlate paleographic and grammatical traits in their areal distribution. As an introduction and for self-study, Gilat (1976) is to be recommended. For the general problems of linguistic interpretation of historical records, see the excellent introduction by Herbert Penzl to whom we owe much for a better understanding of the inscriptions of writing. Therefore I dare to dedicate this paper to the Altemeister of historical linguistics.
The King of Poland Casimir
Against the Prussians wages war,
Marienburg the fortress wins
With mighty hand he takes it in.
From Brandenburg a margrave good
Named Albrecht does start a war
Against the duke named Ludowig
In Bavaria, and fights doughtily.
Capistran writes that a comet gleams
Upon France's seventh king
And Rudolf Duke of Holstein -
Both die at nearly the same time.
Emperor Friedrich is besieged at his brother's behest
For the second time in Vienna
By his own subjects in his own castle
And is rescued by the King of Bohemia.
Mahomet the Second captured
All of Paphlagonia
And Trapezund the Emperor's residence
And stole the treasures there.
He had the emperor David Commenius
With his two sons killed.
A pestilence in the land of Thuringia
Reigns in the Harz Mountains and Saxony.
A comet flared up in Libra
In the heavens one saw it clearly
As it ran swiftly to the heavenly constellation
Known as Arcturus.
Every day it moved through four signs
Until in the fourteenth degree
Of Aries it by the glory
Of the sun completely was consumed.
On the last day of February,
So it says in the Book of Pontanus,
Funccius and Arctius
And Spangenberg report a following
Three years' drought and a summer so hot
That the trees caught fire from the heat.
In Hungary one could ride
Across the Danube. And in Erfurt town
Six thousand houses burned to the ground.
Fire consumed half of Naumburg, too.
The King of Capadocia
Of Persia and Armenia
Usus Cassan brought mighty destruction
Upon the Turkish Emperor Mahomet,
With whom he fought in time of war
Two mighty battles and was victor.
Gregorius Podebrad, Bohemia's
King, Jacobus, of Cyprus
The King, and the King of Spain
Henry all died at once.
Henry, King of England
Was executed in prison.
A comet appeared in Libra
As Haggecius describes it.
There was a war between Matthias,
The king in the country of Hungary,
King Ladislaus of Bohemia,
And the lands of Moravia and Silesia.
Cracow in the land of the Poles
Is destroyed by fires and flame.
The Swiss defeated in that hour
Charles, Duke of Burgundy.

Figure 2: Rudolf Bellinghausen, Speculum Cometarum 1618

variables complicate the situation in comparison with the investigation of handwritten texts of known authorship. As a first step (which we have not yet made in our project) the printed text should be compared with the original manuscript (if it is still available), in order to control the variable "impact of the printer". Next, different printings (possibly of different authors) by the same printer from the same time should be compared as well as different printings by different presses (in different cities) of the same text. This last task has been completed in preliminary form for this example. My presentation is restricted to the more "immanent" problems of the text.

As far as the linguistic "variety" of the text is concerned, we can immediately see that its linguistic form corresponds neither to what we expect to find in (handwritten or printed) Low German texts at the beginning of the sixteenth century, nor to what we would find in later texts of the eighteenth/nineteenth century. Instead the text presents traits characteristic of the "Language of the South German Reich" (Süddeutsche Reichssprache) that we encounter e.g. in the texts of Hans Sachs from Nürnberg. The implication is apparently not fortuitous, for the author of these texts, Rudolf Bellinghausen, was fond of calling himself the 'Hans Sachs of Osmabrück'.

But I hasten to note that this is not an idiosyncrasy of this text. Printers in North Germany at the time had no particular problems in reproducing this and similar texts by Bellinghausen in Bremen, Braunschweig and other printing localities, although this might seem rather surprising in the case of the cheap and therefore not very carefully printed works of Bellinghausen. Nevertheless the same is true of other authors as well. A similar picture emerges for seventeenth-century Cologne as is shown by Hoffmann/Mattheier (1985).

10 For more details on this text as well as the text of the following section 5 see Maas (1985c).
If we analyse a text in this way, we presuppose the autonomy of the written form. Of course it is only a relative autonomy, serving as a methodological principle of treating texts as if the written form was autonomous. Learning something so complex as written language cannot be accomplished by a tour de force of memory, whereby lists of forms are stored (nobody can learn a telephone book by heart!), but presupposes instead that the task of memorisation is made easier by structuring the material. Now the structures or the categories for structuring are formed in oral praxis; they are only adapted and modified during the process of the acquisition of written language. This makes it possible (as I do here) to use orate categories to describe or analyse graphic relations (here in particular categories of phonetic analysis such as *vocalic* and *consonantal*). Fundamental to this view is the postulate of the unity of the cognitive retrieval of linguistic praxis. From the postulate for the acquisition of written language follows the possibility of a non-congruent adaption of cognitive structures for the acquisition of new linguistic forms. Thus we must be prepared for the case that a scribe who formed his grammatical categories (i.e., the above-mentioned categories of linguistic articulation) on the basis of his Northern German oral vernacular, has no other way of structuring that particular written variety (called here for simplicity’s sake *Süddeutsch*, ‘Southern German’) than non-congruently. In the reserve chain of analysis, the inconsistencies in this ‘Southern German’ writing praxis should permit conclusions as to the writer’s oral praxis. In fact, such inconsistencies are indeed characteristic of Bellinghausen’s texts.

The reproduction shows pages 46-47 of the (non-paginated) edition of Rudolf Bellinghausen’s *Speculum cometenum*, printed in Osnabrück by Martin Mann in 1618. Unfortunately, the quality of the reproduction is rather poor, but it may serve the purpose. Forms that connote a ‘Southern German’ text dominate the overall impression. This is especially true of syncope and apocope in forms such as *gewint*, *gewaltiger*, *gestorben*, *blagert*, *geschwind*, *bhvlt*, etc. (for *gewinnt*, ‘wins’, *gewaltiger*, ‘mighty’, *gestorben*, ‘dead’, *belagert*, ‘siegled’, *geschwind*, ‘fast’, *belielt*, ‘kept’); this produces in turn morphological contractions typical of ‘Southern German’ texts: *auff ein zeit* (‘at a time’), *von sein Bürgern* (‘of his citizens’), *auff sein eigen Schloß* (‘in his own castle’), etc. This is congruent with unrounded forms such as *Bemten* (for *Böhmen* ‘Bohemia’), the suffix *-nus* (for *-nis*, as in
Gefängnis 'prison'\textsuperscript{12}), dominant in all texts, the frequent use of sein as the finite plural form in the present indicative (not only for the sixth person as shown, but also for the fourth person), etc. Bellinghausen (like Hans Sachs, who is, however, a master of his craft) makes use of apocope and syncopé in a merely mechanical way to obtain the meter on the surface of the paper: Each verse must contain only eight vowels (i.e. syllables), very exceptionally nine in the case of feminine (klingende) rhymes. Other 'Southern German' traits connoting the Meistersinger jargon are present on every page of Bellinghausen, such as the verbal contractions \textit{hau} (‘have’), \textit{stan} (‘stand’), occasional diphthongs as in \textit{guet} (‘gut’), and word-initial shifted consonants, e.g. \textit{tichet} (dichtet, ‘makes poetry’), \textit{pleibt} (bleibt, ‘remains’), \textit{gepieten} (gebieten, ‘to command’).

The mechanical fabrication of verses demonstrates the purely graphic treatment of written forms, in which astonishing consonantal clusters are possible, e.g. in \textit{Harppffisspiel} (‘harp play’). It is clear that the author does not fully control the language of the Nürnberg Meistersinger (in the sense of having a corresponding monitor competence based on a grammatical analysis of oral speech), as is evident from forms in the text that connote a Low German context.\textsuperscript{12} This is not only the case for proper names, which occasionally occur in their Low German forms: \textit{Diepholt} besides \textit{Diepholz}, \textit{St. Janskirch} (St. Johann), but lexical items that have been more or less successfully converted into High German as well: \textit{Braudlacht} (cf. Low German \textit{brudlacht} – but the High German \textit{Hochzeit} ‘wedding’, appears once on the same page), \textit{verbeiden} instead of \textit{erweiten} ‘enlarge’ (cf. Low German \textit{beuden}). Uncertainly in the writing of syllable-final \textit{g} is revealing: not only does \textit{gelegt} (past participle \textit{gelegt}, ‘laid’) rhyme with the name of the river \textit{Vecht}, we also find \textit{die Bösen Töfer freg} (\textsuperscript{= NHG frech}, ‘impudent’) \textit{und kühn}, etc.

5. These findings are confirmed by the texts of another contemporaneous Osnabrück author, Gerhard Neteler, who is interesting because, at first glance, he appears to be trying to put himself in opposition to Bellinghausen by aspiring to continue the Low German literary tradition.

The text reproduced here is excerpted from a Brunswigian printing: \textit{De Christliche Paradis Gärldin vor eintfeldige Kinder und Christen} (Braunschweig: Andreas Duncker 1691). The author, Gerhard Neteler, calls

\textsuperscript{12} But it should be said that such forms are surprisingly seldom and have to be looked for despite the tremendous output of the prolific writer Bellinghausen.
Wir danken dir Herr Jesu Christ.
Daß du unser Erlöser bist
Und behütest uns vor aller Gefahr
Durch deiner lieben Engel Schar.
Wir gehn nun Herr zu unserer Ruh,
Ach rechne's unser Seele nicht zu,
Was wir leider gesündiget haben.
Vergib uns allen, oh Gottes Sohn.
Laß Deine Engel stets bei uns sein,
Daß der Teufel habe keine Macht
an uns weder Tag noch Nacht.
Vor Feuer, vor Seelen und Leibesnot.

Translation into NHG
Wir danken dir Herr Jesu Christ
Daß du unser Erlöser bist
Und behütest uns vor aller Gefahr
Durch deiner lieben Engel Schar.
Wir gehn nun Herr zu unserer Ruh,
Ach rechne's unser Seele nicht zu,
Was wir leider gesündiget haben.
Vergib uns allen, oh Gottes Sohn.
Laß Deine Engel stets bei uns sein,
Daß der Teufel habe keine Macht
an uns weder Tag noch Nacht.
Vor Feuer, vor Seelen und Leibesnot.
Behüt uns lieber Herr Gott,
In Deinem Namen schlafen wir ein,
Hilf uns Deinen armen Kindlein.
Es geschehe was will, wir sind ja dein,
Erlöst durch deine fünf Wunden rot,
Dir leben wir, dir sterben wir,
Deine Kinder sind wir für und für.
Amen Amen zu guter Nacht,
Der Engel Gottes uns bewacht,
Gott Lob und Dank in Ewigkeit.
Wir gehen zur Ruh ohne alles Leid, Amen.

Translation into English, attempted rhymed/metered version

We thank you, Jesus Christ our Lord
That you indeed our Saviour are
And keep us from all harm and care
With all your heavenly angels dear.
And now we lay us down to sleep
And pray, oh Lord, our souls to keep
Despite our sadly sinful deeds.
Forgive us all, oh Son of God.
We pray your angels stay with us
And guard us at all times
That Satan’s hand be far from us
By day and by night.
From Satan’s fire and from all harm
Please keep us safe, dear Lord our God.
We go to sleep now in your name
Please help your little children poor,
And come what may, we will be yours,
All saved by your five wounds so red.
We live in you, we die in you,
We are your children through and through.
Amen, amen, and now good night;
God’s angel will watch over us.
Praise God and thank him ever more;
Untouched by care, to bed we go. Amen.

Figure 3: Gerhard Neteler
himself on the frontispiece of a parallel printing the “Schulemeister der kleinen Kinder in Oßnabrück” (‘schoolmaster of the small children of Osnabrück’). Since we have only Latin and High German printings from the press of Martin Mann in Osnabrück, we may assume that it was impossible for Neteler to have a Low German text printed in Osnabrück.

With this author, too, we find graphic forms that connote the same Southern German writing tradition, e.g. gefar (Gefahr, ‘danger’); High German elements punctuate the text, cf. der Dievel ‘the devil’ (the Low German form of the article should be de), wyry (‘we’) besides Low German wry, leider (‘unfortunately’) with diphthongisation, the trigraph sch consistently before l, m, n, r, sometimes we even find completely High German lines, as e.g. sch Rechens sei aber Seel nicht zu (‘oh do not impute it to our soul’); in the light of rhymes such as wyry (‘we’); fur (‘for’), this points to a High German model (and not, or at least not only, to the printer’s influence). The text extract shown is typical of the whole volume, as well as that of the parallel printing mentioned.

The conclusions drawn from Neteler’s cultural praxis point to the opposite direction as in the case of Bellinghausen: readymades taken from the High German models not all of which can be ascribed to the printer, show that Neteler apparently tried to connote a Low German writing (literary) tradition with insufficient means. We can only conclude that there must have been a public for this, even if it was restricted to a niche in the market for pious, didactic texts.

Reformulation in terms of a connotative analysis shows that an explanation in terms of an analysis of the putative oral language would be beside the point. We can ignore here the fact that we do not know how people spoke in Nürnberg at the time (nor, of course, in Osnabrück!), for we definitely do know that Bellinghausen did not know either – he practically never left Osnabrück during his entire life. His orientation towards a

13 Thus he had to go to a rather distant printer, Andreas Duncker in Brunswick, who apparently had some problems with these late Low German printings as well (Brunswick is about 250 km from Osnabrück!). Of course business dealings with Duncker in Brunswick should not have presented any difficulty, since Bellinghausen’s works were printed there, too. We still know too little about cultural and economic relations of the time to present conclusive arguments. Religious options may have been a factor, too, as Martin Mann’s printings follow a strict protestant line corresponding to Bellinghausen’s declaration of faith. Unfortunately, we know as yet practically nothing about the “teacher of small children”, G. Neteler.

14 This writing convention is, however, already present in Low German texts of the sixteenth century.
southern literary norm is based exclusively on writing. The whimsical emulation of Hans Sachs is only of minor importance for his southern orientation, as it is congruent with the prevailing cultural trends of his time that have left their imprints on various domains of living. Thus we read in conservative family chronicles of the sixteenth century that the older generation repudiated the younger’s predilection for Nürnberg clothing fashion; we learn that the urban merchants of the time no longer sent their sons to apprentice as clerks in the former Hansa cities, but to the flowering cities in the south instead. Ultimately a stay in a southern town for linguistic purposes was to become an educational ‘must’, for only in this way could the distinguished language be mastered in practice (and this was a frequently-mentioned argument in the choice of the university for the progeny of urban aristocracy).

6. What we are directly investigating in our research project are the changes in the written documents between 1500 and 1650. Until the Reformation, which took place in Osnabrück in several phases between 1525 (the year of an urban revolt) and 1543 (the year when the sovereign issued an edict establishing the protestant Kirchenordnung – a set of rules governing all aspects of religious life and church administration), the written language was generally Low German: in private writing as well as in official documents of the town and of the chancellary of the sovereign (the bishop of Osnabrück). Only very marginally, out of a personal whim, do we find some texts that aspire (rather unsuccessfully) to a High German form in some literary attitude. In the middle of the seventeenth century Low German disappears from official documents entirely; in juridical affairs the use of High German is then compulsory.

Complementary to this, Low German acquires a decorative function. It is used, for example, in inscriptions on handicrafts and quite customarily in nuptial poems to mark risqué allusions (and in this function it is still in vigourous use today). This scheme of evolution is known in its global form from several case studies of towns in Northern Germany (see note 3). High German is first established in external correspondence with other chancel-

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13 Unfortunately, we have not yet found this kind of material in Osnabrück. But we are well-informed on the situation in Cologne, which was certainly chronologically in advance of Osnabrück, but structurally comparable; see e.g. the sixteenth-century diary of Weinsberg, ed. by Hohlbaum et al. (1896 ff.), or the ridiculed dandy from Nürnberg in the amusing satire, printed at the end of the fifteenth century, Stänchen von der Krone (ed. by Frantzen/Hülshof 1920), which is full of local pride.
laries, generally in connection with a senior clerk of High German back-
ground, so that a later shift to a more locally grounded person can occasion-
ally bring about an intermittent return to the older Low German praxis.
Phase by phase High German writing praxis is established in internal
domains, last in areas where direct contact with clients was usual. Here we
find a characteristic social gradient: fire ordinances are put into High
German later than regulations concerning the merchant guild. There is an
exception confirming the rule: certain antiquated practices are maintained
in ceremonial Low German, allowing the imaginary continuation of the
tradition of municipal autonomy, e.g. in real estate property records. But I
do not intend to go into further details of such chancellary developments
here.

Notwithstanding the valuable information conveyed in the case-studies,
there is a fundamental problem with this picture, which can be found in all
handbook descriptions: What can be inferred from chancellary relations
about the linguistic relations in the towns of the time? (Which would be the
question corresponding to what the other projects presented in this vol-
ume are looking for). Traditional research in the history of language has
simplified the problem by modelling it on a trickle-down theory of cultural
evolution that permitted extrapolations from chancellary relations to the
urban situation in general. The trickle-down model of cultural evolution
became established at the beginning of the century in the humanities:
cultural innovation here is bound to a privileged mode of life, and conse-
quently has its origins in the higher strata of society. From there these
innovations 'trickle down', thereby undergoing a certain vulgarisation (in
both senses of the word). The establishment of early modern state appar-
atuses is seen as a kind of continuous-flow water heater for this trickling
down, where client-oriented apparatuses are seen as particularly central
(lower administration, church, school, etc.). Following this model the
degree of cultural innovativeness is proportional to the proximity to the
center of political power, whence innovations trickle down in waves to the
social periphery, the lower classes' everyday practices being the outermost
margin of this movement.

The corresponding chapters in the handbooks of the history of the
German language present the switch from Low to High German in this
evolutionary pattern: correspondingly, the High German practice became
first established at the courts of the sovereigns (in the prince's or bishop's
chancellary); it spread thence to the chancellaries of the town governments —
i.e. beginning at the inner center of urban power, then extending to the
more outward domains of urban government — and finally the camp
followers and hangers-on follow the movement. In this organic view of society the individual cells faithfully reflect these power relations: thus High German should be first established in the practices of the guilds before trickling down to the private practice of their members; the citizens should first be forced to a High German writing practice in school before endorsing this practice spontaneously, etc. Of course this model, viewed as a global picture of evolution, has a certain plausibility – as long as it is not mistaken for an explanation (or even a description) of the concrete cases of changing linguistic practice. If we analyse the inscriptions of concrete cultural practice, we find traces of further factors that show this model to be at least highly underdetermined – if not plainly wrong. The next example should make this clear. I will only present the main line of the argument; the details can be found in McAlister-Herrmann (1983a).

Until the beginning of the 30-years’ war, Osnabrück’s administrative practice stayed in the main with Low German; this was especially true in lower domains with direct contact to clients, for instance, in the lower courts (Niedergersicht). As documentation in the local archives here is abundant, in the first phase of the project we focussed on records of the Osnabrück lower courts – with the handicap of having to edit these documents for the first time (this consumed a major part of our research time). The following extract from court proceedings, specifically a Bruch-tenprotokoll from the year 1623, is illustrative of this kind of material.

1623 Mai 29 Osnabrück: Brüchtenprotokoll der Gerichtsherren der Altstadt. (StAO Dep 3b IV Nr. 220 Bl 97r.)

1 Jacop Mestmaker klaget Auer Johan Haüerkamp dat he erstlich we
2 he von sinem hümse vorauer gegaen do hebbe he eme Nha gropen

16 The lower instances of the municipal courts were not yet separated from the city administration; this separation is the result of professionalisation of the judiciary, which at that time only embraced the higher instances.

17 Brüchten are minor infractions punished generally by a fine.
Linguistic Relations in Seventeenth Century Osnabrück

3. daer gae de gallich fogele heer Volgens sy' he In
4. meyers huess e me gefolget Aldaer Mit einem Meste eme
5. Willen Entliuen, hauerkamp Zeget an dat he vor 8 dagen

Z. 3-4 propername (Luhr[a] spekmeyer?) crossed out
Z. 4, left margin: sin?
Z. 5 be crossed out; Mestmaker on top

In free translation: 'Jacob Mestmaker makes the accusation that Johan Haverkamp, when he recently passed by his house, shouted after him 'There goes the bilious bird'. Later he followed him into his house and tried to take his life with a knife. Haverkamp declares that Mestmaker 8 days ago...

The writing of the document consistently indicates (as in this extract) Low German phonology: non-shifted consonants dat (High German das, 'that'), gropen (gerufen, 'called'), cf. also meste (Messer, 'knife'); High German diphthongization is not present: sinem (seinem 'his'), huse (Hause, 'house'), sy (sei, 'be'), entliuen (entleiben, 'kill'), and other traits that point to Low German: hebbe (haben, 'have'), he (er, 'he'). Graphic conventions mark the common cultural area for Dutch and Low German in opposition to High German, especially the rendering of long vowels in closed syllable by postponed e: gegen, daer, beer, huess.

But this text is no longer within a monolithic cultural tradition, as the revealing transcription of the juridical term anzeigener/anzeige bringen ('to declare') shows: zeget an. The consonantism is adapted to High German, but not the vocalism (cf. Low German anzeigten). This of course illustrates that the integration of the different varieties takes place according to structuring principles ('rules') and not by mixing different stored lists: what is produced are often neologisms, which cannot have been stored at all.

The text can be called Low German without any reservations, but is does manifest traces of a coexistent non-Low German writing practice. Following the logic of the trickle-down model, we could infer from this case that the individual practice of the clients of the court should be even 'more' Low German. (Of course the argument demands more than one such example; in fact the writer of this juridical record can be identified as the scribe of the town council whose records are Low German at that time, too).
7. Now this assumption simply does not correspond to the facts, as shown by another case, where the same *dramatis personae* appear in the records of the lower courts.

Several months before the aforementioned trial we find one between Jakob Mestmacher, in jail on bread and water, and his wife who has had him placed there in an attempt to get rid of him once and for all. She comes from a better-off family, and apparently her marriage to Jakob has been a mistake that has to be straightened out. From the ensuing divorce case we have the submission to the court by the wife (written by her lawyer), as well as a letter from the husband in the local *Bünger* (‘lockup’). Both parties try to make points as to their moral position in the case – the wife underlining the necessity of divorce, the husband defending himself against the dishonour of the accusations. Both letters aim at defining the position of their authors as respectable – and both do so by using High German means in their written scenario; neither is entirely successful, but the wife’s professional, paid scribe does a better job than Jakob Mestmacher.18

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18 It may be noted in passing that working with this kind of historical material shows how little foundation there is to the current romanticised view of life in late medieval and early modern towns. Quarrelling was endemic – and obviously a vent for the pressures of a life situation difficult to bear.
Ich armer vorstrickter Oder geüangene
Moidt Euw: Ehrnueste höichgelarte Günst[en]
Cleglich hirmitt doinn vormelden; dat
Ich armer vorstrickter Jo nicht weidt
wor mitt ich diese geuencknisse vorwercket
oder vordenett hebbe, dan ich nemalß
vmme Jennigerlei Bin tom Redden gestellt
worden, so Gelangett Nün Mein vnder-
denigeß vnd. Fliteges Bitte vnd. begerentt
Armer vorstrickter doch Moclne wedderumb,
Erledigett vnde to Fryen voiten gestallt
werden, Dar ich Nün vber de achte dage
Inne gewesen vnde gelegen bin wente.
Gott Im hogoesten Throne deß hemmels
weidt idt datt ich hoichlich vor meine

Z. 14, margin: deiser geuenk
nisse

Figure 5: Petition by Jacob Mestmakers to the City Council of the ‘Old Town’ (StAO Dep 3b VI Nr. 276), 1623 Aug 12

Free translation: “Your Honors, most gracious and learned gentlemen! I, unhappy prisoner, laid in chains, am forced to lodge this formal complaint before you, for I have no idea what I could have done to deserve such imprisonment, for I have never had to answer to anyone for anything. May my humble and earnest plea and request reach Your Honors, most gracious and learned gentlemen, so that I may be set free again, for I have lain in chains here for over a week, because God on his throne in heaven on high knows that I (have been) grossly (libelled) …”

The self-presentation of this text is rather complex: although it appears at first glance to be Low German (making use of a common source of Low German/Ripuarian (Cologne) writing tradition), the text proves to be interspersed with forms that connote High German, particularly in phraseology, demonstrating the intended ‘higher’ style of letter writing. Low German dominates the representation of consonants, as the non-shifted forms show: dōn (High German tue, ‘do’), moidt (muß, ‘must’), Weidt (wetst, ‘knows’), tom, to (zum, zu, ‘to’), vnderdenigeß (untertäniges, ‘hum-
ble"), voiten (Füße, 'feet'). The same is true of the vowel system: generally vor- appears (for the High German prefix ver-), one finds vorwercket (verwirkt 'forfeited'), vordenett (verdient 'deserved'), also hebbe (habe, 'have'), nemals (niemals, 'never' \textsuperscript{19}), flieges (fleißiges, 'earnest'), wedderumb (wiederum, 'again'), freyen (freie, 'free'), himmels (Himmel, 'heaven's'); cf. also unde (und, 'and'). The graphic tradition points to the economic and cultural area of Cologne/South-East Netherlands/Westfalia, as is shown in particular by the postposed i as a sign of vowel length in closed syllable: hoich (NHG hoch 'high'), doin (tie, 'do'), weidtt (weiß, 'know'),\textsuperscript{20} nun (nu, 'now'). The personal ending -n of ich doin (ich tie 'I do') points in the direction of Ripuarian (Cologne) as well.

On the other hand, there are elements that connote High German, e.g. in the consonantal system: ich ('I'), Gott ('God'); and in the vocalic system: mein ('my'), perhaps weidtt (weiß, 'knows'), see comment above, as well as unde besides the Low German form unde. Once, there is a noteworthy uncertainty in the writing of the demonstrative disse: the High German form disser is written in an addendum at the margin as disser (diphthong or indication of a long vowel? – the expected Low German form would be either disse or duss). High German is connoted with the writing of Ebre in its different derivations: here, use is made of the High German postvocalic h as a sign of vowel length.

\textsuperscript{19} This is, by the way, a lexical adaptation of a High German word.

\textsuperscript{20} This could, however, also be an indication of High German diphthongisation.
Ernüeste, Hochgelerte, Erbar, weise Vnnd Vorsichtige
2 großgünstig gebitende Herren; Ew[er] Ehrnueste[n] hoch gelerte
3 Erbar Weise[n] vnnd gunst[en], wissen sich Allernassen
4 großgünstig Zu entsinnen, Waßgestalt Jch
5 betrübt frawe, nach Tottlichen abfall meines
6 sehlichen Ehemans Beredt tho Becke, mich in die Andere
7 ehe, mitt Jacob Mesmaker begeben, dero gentzlichen
8 Züüorsicht, ge[dachte]r Jacob solte sich, wie domals ich ver-
9 sprach[en]
10 meines sehligen Manß kauffhandel widerumb an sich
genommen, vnnd gefüertt haben, Zü welchem endt Jhm

Figure 6(a):

1622 Jan. 27 Osnabrück: Petition by Hempe Mestmakers to the City
Council of the ‘Old Town’
(StAO Dep 3b VI Nr. 276)

Jacob Mesmaker mein Man, mitt Allerhandt Vnnütten
22 gesinde, sich bemengert zum fressen vnnd saüffen sich
23 begeben, den morgen zeitlich froe auß gehett, vnnd den
24 Abendt Vmb mitter nachtt, tag vor tagk, thauvn und voll
25 ein kümpft, mich vnnd meine Armen Kinder derrmassen
26 tractirett, das Jch auf hochdrengenden rötten, meiner
27 gebietenden Oberkeit darüber zu clagen hoch verürsachet,
Figure 6(b):

1622 Jan. 27 Osnabrück: Petition by Hempe Mestmakers to the City Council of the 'Old Town' of Osnabrück
(StAO Dep 3b VI Nr. 276)

Translations from the Early New German:

6(a) Page 1 recto, lines 1-10
Most Honorable, Distinguished, worthy, wise Circumspect and most graciously governing Gentlemen; Your most Distinguished, worthy, Honorable Graces will surely recall in All respects the circumstances under which I, most unfortunate of women, having entered into my Second marriage with Jacob Mestmaker after the Fatal decline of my now sainted Husband, Berendt tho Becke, placed complete Trust in the aforementioned Jacob to assume responsibility for and to conduct my sainted Husband's business, according to the agreement made at the time, For which purpose [I gave] Him...

6(b) Lines 21-27
Jacob Mestmaker, my Husband, has been associating with All kinds of Useless common laborers, indulging in gluttony and hard drinking;
day after day he leaves the house early and returns in the Evening at midnight, coming in boozed and drunk; he has so sorely mistreated me and my Poor Children that I am forced by dire necessity to complain to our governing Magistrates...

6(c) Page 1 verso, lines 1–4

... and When Jacob mesmerizer had taken a Club and beaten me black and blue, as I revealed to the Gentlemen at the time, they were unable to deny any of my complaints; on the contrary, they had to admit that The afore...

The general impression made by the other party’s text is obviously different by virtue of its more professional ductus of writing. The first text shows a practiced hand, too (probably written by Jakob Mesmaker himself while in jail), but the second hand is from a professional scribe, probably the lawyer of the wife. At first glance you read a High German text. The first ten lines (excerpt A) present no form (aside from the proper name of the family tho Becke) that points to Northern Germany. High German graphs determine the text both in the consonantal and in the vocalic systems, including the generalized use of ɪ indicating vowel length, the regular use of the prefix vor-, etc. Several High German graphs point to South Germany, such as the preference for ɪ in case of ɪ/b-variation: pracht (gebracht) occurs several times, nachbare (Nachbarn) besides nachbaurschaft (Nachbarschaft), cf. also teupfire (deputiert).

On the other hand the long-winded narrative of the wife’s complaints against her husband contains forms that do no fit in the High German picture. Low German lexical elements appear with graphs in the Low German writing tradition, which indicate Low German phonology: see e.g. in excerpt B: zbaarn (a hybrid High German form from zde ‘drunk’), Vmnütte (unmütz, ‘idle’), vull (voll, ‘full’), froe (früh, ‘early’), hochdriegen- (dringend, ‘urgent’); in excerpt C: mi (mich, ‘me’), blodig (blutig, ‘bloody’), getonént (Low German tonen, ‘to show’). The High German connotation is aimed at, and successfully achieved, in the formal, stereotyped parts of the letter; but the control of High German forms is incomplete and is not sufficient for the more spontaneous parts. At the same time, these excerpts show that the High German elements are not simply

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21 This form shows a remarkable chiasm in the distribution of the Low and High/Upper German traits wher and bef, respectively.
inserted into the text as readymades (e.g. with the aid of a letter writer's
guide), but that the writer had an extended grammatical system at his
disposal that permitted him to produce High German counterparts to Low
German forms, including not only hybrid neologisms, such as *thoam*, but
also translations of proper names into High German; thus we find, besides
the aforementioned *becke*, the at least partially shifted form *zur
becke*, and for the parties known form other records (see the court record
cited above) we find *haverkampf* and also *Mestmaker*.

The differences between these texts permit a more sophisticated picture
of the integration of the different (and connotatively evaluated) varieties in
a comprehensive grammatical system. We need not postulate homogenisa-
tion of all cognitively retrieved data on the part of the speaker/writer or
hearer/reader. Instead we find different degrees of gradual, step-by-step
adaptation to the intended varieties, starting with the use of isolated shibbol-
eths with the intended connotation. Thus we find in texts of the sixteenth
century - in addition to loan-words from High German in a frame of
reference more or less determined by professional jargon - short High
German words: pronouns such as *ich, wir*, conjunctions, prepositions, etc.
such as *mit, als, oder*. Their early assimilation was enhanced by their high
frequency and least but not least by the relatively low demands they put on
memory because of their shortness. With the isolated jargon loan word
*anzegen*, the court record demarcates an early phase of this adaptation
process, manifesting at the same time the integrative rule pattern of con-
sonantal shift. The other texts point even more to an integration of Low
German and High German varieties into a single rule system. The inten-
tion in this example is obvious: these letters were meant to impress an
addressee (an institution?) by their High German form, in spite of the fact
that the addressee articulated itself in Low German and thus evidently did
not exert any pressure on the authors to make use of High German forms.
From the unmonitored Low German records and sentences of the Court
we can quite safely infer that administrative and juridical oral negotia-
tions were conducted in Low German. In consequence, the choice of a High
German written form results neither from language policy enforced by
these institutions, nor from a pragmatic-strategic adaptation to the practice at

Abrach would be a complete transposition, but that is obviously no longer transparent as
the same proper name - even if we ignore questions of linguistic competence.

This seems to be a better explanation than the current opinion in Low German philology
that these short words would have been 'unimportant' in the eyes of the writers; see e.g.
Peters (1980) for this view with documentation of the phenomenon.
higher levels (see the trickle-down model). On the contrary, the choice is controlled by the connotations of the Low and High German forms that confer them positive or negative values, which are defined beyond the formalized forms of social intercourse.

8. Unfortunately the complexity of the research parameters is not exhausted by these problems encountered in our project. We have had the frustrating experience of not being able to pursue our research to conclusive results in the way demonstrated here, for want of a solid base in the framework of the history of the German language upon which we could draw for the extrapolation of varieties as ideal types. The rough picture of linguistic restructuration in a national horizon, as sketched in section 1 above, does not even begin to define the complexity of the written linguistic relations for the period in question. We would rather say that it allows only negative inferences as to the spoken linguistic relations of the time. In fact, what the handbooks offer as positive characterizations of the historical linguistic relations is primarily based on reverse extrapolations from contemporary dialect geography, which are in turn only indirectly checked by findings in written documents. Obviously such a procedure would introduce further assumptions into the study whose status is anything but clear.

In conclusion I would like to comment briefly on three aspects of the model of linguistic evolution as sketched in section 1. It is a well-known fact that the scribal tradition of the High and Later Middle Ages did not carry on the Early Medieval 'vernacular' scribal traditions, but once again underwent a break with the exclusive Latin scribal tradition of the eleventh century. To call this a break in tradition is only justified as far as the appearance of non-Latin texts is concerned, as Latin texts coexisted with non-Latin ones until late in early modern times, even taking on new significance in the sixteenth century. Some of the texts analysed in our project are almost a mixture of German and Latin (cf. the example in section 2). This mixture is also manifest on the graphic level: the writers switched between German and Latin ideal scripts, as can be seen in the reproduction of the first example. It is one of the non-problematic cases, where Latin writing is rather consistently restricted to Latin words (or, more precisely, to words felt to be Latin loans); other texts mix the letter-types within words — and not only German and Latin types, but a confusing variety of German and Latin ideal script types as well. A few indications of the differences shown in the text excerpt may suffice for illustration: see e.g. the letter-types for a, u (v), r, e, d: in Latin writing more or less as æ æ æ æ, in German writing a a a a.
It need not be said that what is called Latin here is itself not a homogeneous variety. The humanistic reform of the schools left its traces here as well, particularly due to the fact that the reformation emphasised a broader (and more sophisticated) knowledge of Latin. Within the various administrative bodies there is a growing proportion of clerks with a Latin education, even in municipal chancellaries, whose Latin is not identical with that of the scholars of the time but connotes a special administrative training and praxis (this is in fact one of the factors most resistant to our interpretative work!). Finally there is a renaissance of Latin in ceremonial functions at the end of the sixteenth century which makes Latin into a means of cultural demarcation with respect to the less educated classes—as we can see by the Latinization of family names, the fashion of Latin inscriptions on the decorated façades of bourgeois houses, etc. We have had to admit defeat in recognising that our linguistic competence is not up to the analytic task presented by these varieties of New Latin (and we have come to understand somewhat better why other projects do not go into such questions), but it should be evident that no generalising claims about linguistic relations in early modern times that ignore these facts are justified.

On the other hand it is not without reason that I prefer to speak in a general sense of a non-Latin writing practice in opposition to Latin. One could think of (and this is often done in handbooks) the transcription of the local dialects as a somehow natural opposite pole to Latin. Unfortunately, this is not what we find. If we understand by 'locally identifiable' a mode of writing restricted to a particular area, this is only to be found in traces. We would need the deductive powers of a Sherlock Holmes to discover in the records what we would expect to find as the graphs corresponding to what is extrapolated from a hypothetical development from early medieval writings to modern spoken dialects. (Such indicators of local or regional varieties are, by the way, more frequent in earlier texts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than in texts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.) For the later epoch handbooks often postulate a 'Hanseatic Written Language', often called the 'Lübeck Written Language' (Lübsche Schriftsprache) in allusion to the economic and political center of the Hansa. In fact this seems to have been a writing practice defined only negatively by demarcation against local varieties stigmatised as rural (peasant's language).24

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24 This is especially true for the texts from Lübeck that do not reflect a Lübeck dialect as we might expect it; such traces are most likely to be found in the earliest texts of the thirteenth century.
The question of ‘High German’ is no less complicated. Until the eighteenth century, there is no common denominator that could justify this term. In the area and epoch under investigation here, the East Middle German variety might prove to be the one of least importance; at least the Osnabrück region was oriented to the West Middle German area, with Cologne as its center. But there, the linguistic relations were also in flux—and understandably writers in Osnabrück share with those in Cologne an orientation towards the language of the south German Reich. It is remarkable that this seems to hold irrespective of religious orientation: for while this is true of Cologne, the center of the Counter-Reformation, it applies to a militant Osnabrück protestant, such as Rudolf Bellinghausen, as well.  

Limitations of space do not allow the presentation of further details here. These remarks should suffice to show that at the current state of the art it is impossible to make more than global guesses as to the linguistic relations in the seventeenth century—and this is by no means a peculiarity of the situation in Osnabrück. In our research project we are attempting to establish firm points of orientation for analysis by investigating the concrete writing practice of more or less clearly identified persons. Confusion that results from the confrontation with heterogeneous records can be used as an analytic tool. In fact quite a similar confusion must have been the problem of a writer in the seventeenth century: anyone who tried to write at that time was forced to try and make rhyme and reason out of confused relations (and not only the linguistic relations were confused). This would have had to primarily consist of imposing some kind of orientation onto the overwhelming multitude of available cultural patterns in order to integrate them for cognitive retrieval. It is our research premise that the coexisting cultural patterns connoted for the writer—and, mutatis mutandis, the same applies to spoken forms—differently evaluated cultural practices; and it is this valuation that determines individual (linguistic) practice. The effort demanded of the writer to achieve such an integration of the multitude of forms must have left traces in the products of writing; and these traces can be used as indices in reconstructing the contemporaneous writing practices, as I have tried to exemplify.

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23 Handbooks infer the East Middle German influence in the sixteenth century from the dominant role of Wittenberg during the Reformation. But even in its early phase, when the Lutheran printings were in fact produced to a great extent in Wittenberg, we find product diversification strategy for the national market in Low German parallel printings for the northern, and especially the northwestern region—and this applies to all of Luther’s writing, the pamphlets as well as the new Bible translation.
In the long run, case studies of this kind should enable us to make preliminary, but nonetheless plausible statements on the linguistic relations in a town such as Osnabrück in early modern times.26

References


26 I am grateful to Judy McAlister-Hermann who tried to make a very German text (hopefully) palatable to English readers. She translated the texts in the figures too.