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Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe. By Peter Burke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2004. Pp. xiv + 210. Cloth $70.00. ISBN 0-521-82896-1. Paper $24.95. ISBN 0-521-53586-7.

In a distinguished career, Peter Burke has illuminated the history of early modern Europe by applying the insights of sociologists, folklorists, anthropologists, and other social scientists to the study of the past. In this lapidary volume, Burke turns to social linguistics as a resource for deepening and refining our understanding of early modern Europe.

Historians have long noted the hubbub of languages that characterized Europe from the late Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, as Latin began its long decline as the preeminent language of culture, administration, and religion and its place was increasingly filled by newly prestigious vernaculars. But Burke enriches previous anecdotal overviews by careful attention to language as a social phenomenon. Moreover, he adopts a broad view of Europe, stretching from the Iberian peninsula to Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The Germanic and Slavic lands of central and eastern Europe receive ample attention.

Burke begins with the "discovery of language" in the Renaissance. By this, he means a new attention to three aspects of languages: their histories, their diversity and relationships, and their association with specific communities. As Thomas Greene has demonstrated for Dante and Petrarch, one can find fourteenth-century exponents of this view. But it is above all in the fifteenth century, with the expansion of humanist education and the flood of books from the printing press, that language became a self-conscious concern, and in some cases obsession, of scholars, writers, critics—and states.

Of course, Latin was the exception. It was the language of learning in the Middle Ages, though vernacular texts and translations from Latin were scarcely unknown (as in Chaucer's work on the astrolabe). For medieval clerks, "grammar" meant, self-evidently, the grammar of Latin. In Burke's eyes, what characterized Latin in the early modern period was the disintegration of its medieval speech community and its consequent search for new communities. As Latin fragmented, its place was increasingly taken by vernaculars. At the same time, it enriched those vernaculars with a flood of neologisms, especially for abstract concepts.

This is an old story, but Burke gives it a refreshing twist. In place of the old, whiggish "rise of the vernacular" narrative, informed by nineteenth-century linguistic nationalism, Burke explores the transformation of early modern vernaculars in terms of four processes: competition, standardization, mixing, and purification. Throughout, he adopts the principle that languages do not exist in the abstract: for the historian (and the historical linguist), what matters are the speech communities of a language and the distinct forms (sociolects) spoken within those communities.

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Competition between vernaculars did lead to the extinction of some, such as Gothic, that had survived to the fifteenth century. In other cases, though, it led to "a kind of linguistic retirement into private life" (p. 71), as other vernaculars won out in law, administration, and commerce. The spread of literature, states, and commerce also encouraged attempts to standardize language, often following the dialect of the capital or the ruler. Political fragmentation, as in Italy or the Holy Roman Empire, slowed this process, though it continued to be encouraged by printing, especially of religious texts.

As the newly prestigious vernaculars met, they mingled. European languages borrowed from New World tongues (chocolate, avocado) and from one another. Italian left its mark on commerce and art, and later on music, across Europe. Russian drew heavily on Dutch for its seafaring vocabulary. And mercenary armies, veritable melting pots, developed a cosmopolitan vocabulary for ranks (lieutenant, colonel), units (tercio, armada), and material (bastion, musket). Languages mixed in other ways, too, from polyglot cities such as Amsterdam and Venice, to polyglot individuals who might speak Latin in the lecture hall, French at court, and German in the street. Such mixing evoked laments about a (mythical) lost linguistic purity in some places, and in others, attempts to restore it, such as the Académie Française or the Tuscan Accademia della Crusca.

Throughout, Burke is at pains to distinguish his interpretation from the facile identification between language and nation that characterized nineteenth- and much of twentieth-century Europe. He returns explicitly to this point in the book's epilogue. It is anachronistic to discuss "national" language policy before the late eighteenth century. Certainly, centralizing territorial states issued more or less successful edicts favoring certain vernaculars or enjoining their use in particular circumstances: for example, Francis I's 1539 ordonnance requiring royal courts to use French, not Latin. The authors of such "statist" policies, however, never dreamed that their states might be identified with a single, unified nation speaking a single, unified national language. A cardinal difference between early modern and modern language politics can be seen in changing attitudes toward "the folk." Early modern writers on language were generally concerned with the speech of the political, economic, and cultural elites. When they discussed common folk, they were dismissive if not contemptuous. Nineteenth-century linguistic nationalists, on the other hand, saw common people as the unwitting trustees of a linguistic purity that had been lost among educated, cosmopolitan elites—even as they led campaigns to weaken or destroy regional languages, like Breton, in order to integrate their speakers into the nation.

As with any short, ambitious book, Burke leaves some lacunae. His chapter on language mixing emphasizes loan words (or "foreign words," as they are still called in German). Except for a brief passage on creoles, he gives little

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attention to grammatical mixing or interference. Burke presumes that the reader is familiar with the broad linguistic geography of Europe. A helpful appendix lists seventy-one languages or dialects spoken in early modern Europe, but it would have been more helpful had it been organized by language group and family, not alphabetically, and accompanied by a map.

In sum, this brilliant book successfully joins thoroughgoing empiricism to a clear theoretical framework. It admirably synthesizes the state of the field, with ample bibliographic references, and it points the way to further research on early modern European sociolects and speech communities. It will be read with profit and pleasure by any scholar or student of early modern European history.

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Liaisons dangereuses: Sex, Law, and Diplomacy in the Age of Frederick the Great. By Mary Lindemann. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2006. Pp. xiii + 353. $35.00. ISBN 0-8018-8317-2.

Mary Lindemann's micro-history, following the practice of the genre, investigates a single event leaving significant documentary traces, usually of a legal nature, in this case a brawl over a woman leading to the death of one of the participants, and uses it as a window onto the broader political and socio-cultural environment in which the event in question took place. Pioneering works of micro-history, such as Natalie Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre*, have had a profound effect on historians, inspiring a considerable amount of emulation. Perhaps too much so, and in the flood of poisoned chalices, sacrificed cows, and apparitions of the Virgin Mary (to mention just a few examples of the use of this genre for central European history), readers might be inclined to overlook this book. That would be a serious mistake. Employing an extraordinary body of documentation ranging across Europe from Wroclaw to Dresden to Hamburg to Paris, using the evidence she has gathered to pose penetrating questions about the nature of the Old Regime, and presenting her findings in elegant and amusing fashion, Lindemann has produced an excellent work, one that scholars can ponder and undergraduates can enjoy.

The incident that serves as the focus of the book was a brawl in Hamburg on the night of October 18, 1775, pitting Antoine de Sanpelayo, the Spanish consul in the German city-state, and Joseph Freiherr von Kesslitz, an impoverished Silesian nobleman and a veteran of Frederick the Great's army in the Seven Years' War, against an Italian adventurer and confidence man, Joseph Visconti.

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