Vulgarisation

In several cases we have reasons to assume that a text written in antiquity (often but not always in Late Antiquity) was written in a more orthodox form of language than the one met with in the manuscripts and that it has thus been "vulgarised" in the transmission during the early middle ages (see: analysis of forms). For both Greek and Latin there were orthographic and grammatical standards, which those writing in those languages tried to follow as well as they could. In the early middle ages, literacy decreased considerably and the copyists were often less familiar with the established norms than during previous centuries.

The changes then introduced regard both orthography (due to phonetic changes) and morphology (certain endings were no more in use in the spoken language and thus confused in writing) and in certain cases even syntax.

The texts thus affected are often anonymous technical texts, but in some cases texts written by authors known to us, who probably had received a reasonably good literary training, have been vulgarised in the later transmission. The *Regula Benedicti* written by Benedict of Nursia around 540 and the *De cem libri historiarum* (sometimes called *Historia Francorum*) written by Gregory of Tours in the late 6th century are examples of texts which seem to have been affected by this.

Even texts written in elegant classical Latin were sometimes affected by vulgarisation – there are, for instance, traces of such a tradition in some manuscripts to Caesar's *De bello Gallico*.

The introduction of unorthodox orthography and morphology is explained more easily if the texts in question were copied by dictation.

The texts which had been vulgarised in the early middle ages were often also affected by "normalisation" in the high middle ages when the scribes were more familiar with the classical standards.

See also normalisation.

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In other languages

DE: Vulgarisierung
FR: vulgarisation
IT: volgarizzazione

GH