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Language, law and loanwords in early medieval Gaul: language contact and studies in Gallo-Romance phonology

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2 Early Romance behind the Latin veil

2.1 The Latin ancestor

The Latin language has never died. There is a good reason why this maxim has been repeated by numerous generations of Romance historical linguists, from Meyer-Lübke (1888: 358) in the late nineteenth century to Krefeld (2004: 62) in the early twenty-first century. These scholars have rightly stressed that the Romance languages can be viewed as the evolved continuations of the Latin language of old. The birth of the Romance languages can therefore be seen as the outcome of the steady diversification of Latin, a process that had already started in the Roman period (cf. Lausberg 1969: 29; Adams 2007). But it is also true that from the Early Middle Ages onwards different varieties of Latin became centers of linguistic innovation in their own right. Therefore it could also be argued that the Romance languages belong to a 'new' stage in the evolution of Latin, a Romance stage.

To comparative linguists, the case of Latin as the attested ancestor of the Romance language family has been both a blessing and a curse, as it offered a veritable "laboratory for historical linguistics" (cf. Alkire & Rosen 2010: 40; see also Morin 2003: 164). Thus, the study of the Romance language family has provided irrefutable proof for the comparative method, but it has also laid bare many of the problems and limitations that come with it (cf. Hall 1950; De Dardel 1996: 44-49). Despite these methodological successes, a significant number of scholars remained unconvinced of the usefulness of comparative linguistics to Romance studies; after all, why reconstruct the Romance proto-language if we already have Latin? This led to the remarkable situation that whereas the terms Proto-Germanic and Proto-Celtic quickly found acceptance in philological circles, the term Proto-Romance never did.

This skeptical view fails to appreciate the fact that there is a gap between the literary variety of Latin that we know best (Classical Latin) and the reconstructions that are the outcome of the comparative enterprise (cf. Posner 1996: 98; Hall Jr. 1984: 5). The reconstructions generally show a younger linguistic stage than the one that is found in the Latin texts, even those texts from the Late Roman period and the Early Middle Ages. This gap can partly be bridged by studying the lower sociolects of Latin that are amply represented in the epigraphic record, surviving wood tablets, pot shards (*ostraca*) and papyri. The language of these text monuments has been called Vulgar Latin (*Vulgärlatein*) since the days of Hugo Schuchardt (1876) and provides valuable evidence for the linguistic developments that spoken Latin was undergoing. For this reason, many Romanists regard Vulgar Latin as the direct ancestor of the Romance languages. But also these Vulgar Latin texts tend to use the literary variety of Latin as the model for proper writing; in orthography, register and style most Vulgar Latin texts strive to adhere to the norms of Classical Latinity. This makes their testimony an unreliable instrument with which to gauge the evolution of the Latin language

and still leaves an uncomfortable distance to the linguistic reconstructions. How to deal with this gap has divided scholars for over a century.

Scholars from the nineteenth and early twentieth century interpreted the difference between Latin and reconstructed Proto-Romance as evidence that we are dealing with two norms (e.g. Meyer-Lübke), a perspective that has been called 'the two-norm theory' (see Wright 1982; Lodge 1993; Mazzola 2013). Somewhere in the Late Roman period, Classical Latin would have developed into Proto-Romance, its linguistic successor. Meanwhile, the classical language lived on in the administration of the Late Empire and the Christian Church and continued to do so in the Early Middle Ages. This engendered a situation of diglossia, where Classical Latin was the written language of the elites, whereas Romance was spoken by the majority of the population. Only in the High Middle Ages did the local varieties of Romance gain enough prestige to feature in written form as well. Nowadays, the 'two-norm theory' has become unfashionable. To quote the words of the romanist Herman: "This way of looking at the matter (...) is now out of date" (Herman 2000: 5).

In the last few decades, many historical romanists have focused on the testimony of the Vulgar Latin records instead, taking its linguistic conservatism as part of the bargain (cf. Wright 1982). In this paradigm, the evolution of Latin to the Romance languages is viewed as a gradual process involving different social variants which might have enforced or rejected the classical norm. In this view, Literary Latin and spoken Romance would have been part of one stylistic continuum which covered the educated speech of the elites and the uneducated speech of the masses. This theory is therefore known as the 'one-norm theory'.

The 'one-norm theory' takes better note of the dynamics of literacy in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages and introduces an important sociolinguistic perspective. However, its use of the term Vulgar Latin is not uncontroversial. Many scholars admit that the designation 'Vulgar Latin' is rather unwieldy (e.g. Herman 2000: 1-8), as it covers all colloquial expressions of Latinity stretching from the third-century BCE plays of Plautus to the ninth-century CE R*eichenau Glosses*. This raises the question whether the use of such an imprecise term is helpful in our discussions of the break-up of the Latin dialect continuum (cf. Lloyd 1987; see also Kiesler 2006: 7-14).

We might also wonder whether highlighting the different social variants that contributed to the evolution of the Romance languages really justifies rejecting any form of diglossia in the Early Middle Ages. As Lodge (1993: 93) rightly remarks, the one-norm theory merely pushes the period of diglossia to a later age than the two-norm theory did. Either way, there must have been a time when people became aware of the growing differences between written Latin and spoken Romance, whether we situate that moment in the third century CE or the eighth century CE. Suffice it to say that the issue remains a moot point in historical Romance linguistics.

Most scholars do, however, agree on the moment when the Romance successor of Latin was first formally recognized. This recognition is found in a Latin Carolingian capitulary issued in the year 813 CE at the city of Tours, a diploma which may be regarded as the birth certificate of the Romance variety of Gaul (Krefeld 2004: 58-59).

> "*et ut easdem omelias quisque aperte transferre studeat in rusticam Romanam linguam aut thiotiscam, quo facilius cuncti possint intellegere quae dicuntur*."
>
> (Council of Tours, c. 17, MGH Concil. II, I: 288)
>
> "And that everyone should endeavor to translate these sermons clearly in the rural Romance or Germanic vernacular, so that all can understand more easily that which is being said." (translation mine[61])

In this capitulary, king Charlemagne decreed the translation of sermons in the two vernaculars of the realm (Early Old French and Old High German) in order to facilitate the understanding of religious services by laymen. A slightly earlier reference to the need of translating Latin texts for a Romance speaking audience might be found in the late eighth or early ninth-century *Lex Romana Curiensis,* a compilation of Roman law issued for the region of Chur, Switzerland:

> "*Statuimus ut omnis presbiter habeat brevem istum semper haput se et in unoquoque mense duas vices legat eum coram omni populo et explanet eum illis, que illi bene possint intellegere.*"
>
> (Lex Romana Curiensis, Additamenta c. 12, MGH LL V: 444)
>
> "We have decreed that every priest should have this letter with him and that each month he should read it twice in the presence of the people and explain it to those so that they may understand it well."

Here it is stated that a letter proclaiming the rights of the poor should not only be read aloud but also explained in terms that were understandable to the parishioners. Since the Latin text is unambiguous and hardly in need of explanation, it stands to reason that what was being meant by '*explanet*' was a rendering in the vernacular (*contra* Richter 1994: 75).

A few decades later, once again in Carolingian France, we find the first text in an Old Romance language. This text is the Strasbourg Oaths of 842, which contain the vernacular vows sworn at a peace assembly in Strasbourg by two Frankish kings and their retinues. Each king and his followers swore in the language of the opposing side, that is, the East Frankish king swore in Romance and the West Frankish king in German. The Romance language of this document may, despite its orthographic peculiarity, be called Early Old French, representing

[61] All translations are mine, unless stated otherwise.

an end-stage in the evolution from Late Latin to its northern French successor (Rickard 2003: 20). For the stages preceding Early Old French, several linguistic terms are in use:

- Gallo-Romance is used to denote the linguistic ancestor of all the Romance dialects of Gaul, that is, French, Provençal and Franco-Provençal.
- Proto-French or Pre-French is used in reference to the direct ancestor of the northern French dialects.

These two stages, Gallo-Romance and Pre-French, are not directly represented in the historical record and the only way to gain access to them is via linguistic reconstruction, an enterprise that has suffered waning enthusiasm in recent decades. In this thesis, the reconstruction of the non-attested stages of Early Romance will play an important part. For this reason, I will shortly elaborate on how the comparativist approach became marginalized in Romance linguistics.

2.2 From Proto-Romance to Vulgar Latin

Romance historical linguistics has had a complex relationship with neogrammarian historical linguistics for as long as the paradigm has been around. The neogrammarian view on language change was first expounded by Osthoff and Brugmann in 1878 in the preface to their *Morphologische Unterschungen.* They stressed the regularity of sound change (*Ausnahmslosigkeit der Lautgesetze*) and focused on the physical nature of language evolution. We may note that the neogrammarian approach lies at the foundation of Romance philology and was championed by Gustav Gröber, the founder of the *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* (first issue 1880), and Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke, the author of the *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (1890-1902). In Romanist scholarship, this approach to Romance historical linguistics is also known as the 'regularist' or 'reconstructionist' approach (Posner 1996: 4).

The estrangement from this founding movement may have been provoked by the Franco-Prussian war of 1871-1873 (cf. Posner 1996: 5), which alienated French academia from German linguistic thought. As a reaction to the neogrammarian paradigm, early twentieth-century Romanists, inspired by the works of Hugo Schuchardt, shifted their orientation away from linguistic reconstruction and towards the study of pragmatic linguistics and sociolinguistics (cf. Posner 1996: 5). Since these disciplines emphasize the conscious and creative aspects of linguistic processes, this movement is also known as 'Idealist linguistics'. Another challenge to the 'regularist' view came from the field of dialectology and linguistic geography. Dialectologists like Gilliéron (1902-1910) and Gauchat (1903) showed that on the micro-level, the regularity of sound change was not self-evident with some sound changes being only reflected in part of the lexicon. The effects of this reorientation are already clear in Bourciez's 1910 work '*Élements de linguistique Romane*', where reconstructions are seldom featured and the focus lies on the individual Romance languages.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the American structuralist movement called for a rehabilitation of the comparative method. This is especially clear in the works of Bloomfield (1933) and Hall Jr. (1950), who proposed to combine the achievements of historical dialectology with the traditional focus on linguistic reconstruction. Hall's 1950 article '*The reconstruction of Proto-Romance*' is still a powerful exposition of the validity of the comparative method. Meanwhile in Europe, Heinrich Lausberg, in his *Romanische Sprachwissenschaft* (1st published in 1956; Lausberg 1967-1972), took a functionalist stance to the evolution of Latin, starting with Vulgar Latin and displaying great interest in the historical value of the Romance dialects. The functionalists Martinet (1952) and Weinrich (1958) represent the same line of inquiry and revisited several diachronic problems of Romance linguistics, pointing out their relevance to general linguistic theory. By this time, the legacy of the neogrammarians was faltering and the neogrammarian habit of quoting sound laws named after their discoverers had largely been abandoned by Romanist scholars.[62]

Fortunately, the 'regularist' view on Romance historical linguistics was not forgotten and still enough romanists adhered to the idea that regular sound changes provide a window on the non-attested stages in the evolution of the Romance languages. A groundbreaking work in this regard was Elise Richter's 1934 monograph on the relative chronology of sound changes from Latin to Old French. Issues of relative chronology continued to play a role in 'regularist' scholarship, with Georges Straka (1953) following in Richter's footsteps.

Typical of the regularist view on the evolution of the Romance languages, was the above-mentioned 'two-norm theory', implying an early split in the Romance dialect continuum with Latin – Romance diglossia starting in the third century CE already.[63] When we take this early split as our starting point, the following chronology of linguistic stages can be drawn (cf. Taddei 2000: 21):

1. Vulgar Latin (300 BCE – 100 CE)
2. Proto-West-Romance (ca. 100 – 400 CE)
3. Gallo-Romance (ca. 400 – 700 CE).
4. Pre-French (ca. 700- 842 CE)
5. Early Old French (842 – 1100 CE)

[62] Nowadays, few Romanists give the traditional designations like Ten Brink's Law, Darmesteter's Law, Neumann's Law and Ascoli's Laws for the historical sound changes of the Early Romance languages. A notable exception seems to be Bartsch's Law which is mentioned in most expositions of French historical phonology (cf. Zink 1986: 115-17).

[63] That this idea has not been totally abandoned is illustrated by its featuring in the 2011 introduction to historical Romance linguistics by Alkire and Rosen.

2.3 The new paradigm

The situation changed in the 1960s, when poststructuralist scholars like Malkiel and Herman advocated a new focus on attested Vulgar Latin. This sentiment can be found in Malkiel's statement that "reconstructed or starred forms deserve to be appealed to only at rare intervals" (cf. Malkiel 1988: 41). Malkiel and Herman's approach does not deny the usefulness of the comparative method, but regards it mainly as a hypothetical framework whose historicity still need to be confirmed by Vulgar Latin evidence (cf. Herman 2000: 26).

Their views cleared the way for the revisionist paradigm that was proposed by Roger Wright in his 1982 book '*Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France*'.[64] In this work, Wright renounced the regularist case for Early Medieval diglossia and introduced the 'one-norm theory', arguing that written Latin and Early Romance were varieties of the same Latin language. According to Wright (1982), literary Latin was pronounced as Early Romance in the regions where the Latin language survived into the Early Middle Ages. The other way around, the Early Romance vernaculars were written in Latin orthography and style.[65] This intimately connected literary Latin, which was considerably archaic in its grammar and style, to the spoken Romance vernacular of the masses, enabling the contemporaries to maintain a unitary view on the written and spoken variety of their language.

This situation changed when the reading tradition of Latin was innovated in the late eighth century, in the wake of the Carolingian Renaissance. The Carolingian renaissance entailed the reintroduction of classical spelling and pronunciation rules for literary Latin and caused the separation of the Romance vernacular from its Latin orthography. At that moment, Latin could no longer be pronounced as spoken Romance and only then was the existence of a Romance vernacular next to literary Latin recognized by the contemporaries. Vital to the theory is the supposed lack of metalinguistic distinctions between Latin and the Romance vernacular in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.

Wright's thesis was received with much enthusiasm by the scholarly community (e.g. Lloyd 1991; Van Uytfanghe 1991, 2013; Banniard 1991, 2013). Many Romance philologists were instantly convinced by the argument that Early Medieval Latin was pronounced as Early Romance, a possibility that had been considered since the early twentieth century (e.g. Rice 1902: 4). After all, this theory elegantly explains the myriad of misspellings found in Merovingian Latin which can only be understood as interference from a Romance pronunciation. Wright's thesis was also positively received by historians, who likewise regard

[64] Quilis-Merín (1999: 171-172) notes that elements of Wright's 'one-norm theory' are already present in the work by Lüdtke (1974).

[65] An evolved pronunciation of an archaic spelling is of course nothing strange with English-speakers being able to pronounce the spelling *knight* as [najt] and French-speakers the spelling *doigt* as [dwa].

the Carolingian Renaissance as an ideological watershed (cf. McKitterick 1977, 1989, 1991; Hen 1995: 29; Smith 2005).

The historical implications of the thesis were also welcome to historians. A prolonged unity of the Latin dialect continuum implies mutual intelligibility between the different Romance vernaculars of the Early Middle Ages. This was welcome news for historians, since Early Medieval texts rarely inform us about intelligibility problems between different varieties of Romance (cf. Berschin 2013). Another welcome implication of the idea that Latin texts represented spoken Romance was that it explains the protracted invisibility of the Early Medieval Romance vernaculars in the historical record. We may note that nowadays many scholars take this silence as evidence that Latin was understood by Romance-speaking laymen, because no written texts provide evidence to the contrary (Richter 1994: 74-76).

Overall, it cannot be denied that the revisionist perspective has greatly enriched the discussion about the Romance vernaculars and Early Medieval literacy. It has reduced the divide between Latin studies and Romance studies and laid new focus on the reading-aloud of Early Medieval documents. Wright's thesis also pointed out that modern taxonomic distinctions are motivated by the benefit of historical hindsight. As Lloyd (1991) rightly remarks, it seems prejudiced to assume that the Early Medieval contemporaries made the same distinction between linguistic varieties as we do.

Finally, Wright's thesis stressed an important point long known to historical linguists, namely that Vulgar Latin and Medieval Latin records do not directly reflect an Early Medieval spoken language but merely represent an awkward compromise between an archaizing writing tradition and an innovative pronunciation.

2.4 Critique on the 'one-norm theory'

That does not mean that Wright's thesis was unanimously accepted. Understandably, several philologists and linguists have criticized elements of Wright's 'one-norm theory'. The following objections have been raised in the literature, a good overview of which can be found in Mercedes Quilis-Merín's 1999 book '*Orígenes históricos de la lengua española*' (Quilis-Merín 1999:169-228).

1. Wright's thesis unjustly extends the label 'Latin' to include 'Early Romance'
2. Wright's thesis marginalizes the achievements of the neogrammarian approach
3. Wright's thesis does not provide a satisfying explanation for how the grammatical and lexical gap between literary Latin and the Romance vernacular was bridged

The first objection concerns the unjust extension of the label 'Latin' and was already voiced by Walsh in a 1986 article. In this article, he stated that "Wright draws the unwarranted inference that Latin and the vernacular were the same language" (Walsh 1986: 212). It is hard

to avoid the impression that such a widening of the term 'Latin' gives a wrong picture of the linguistic situation in the Early Medieval Romance-speaking regions. Historians, who are generally not initiated in the subtleties of historical linguistics, have interpreted Wright's use of the term 'Latin' as a sign that the Latin language of the Early Medieval texts is basically identical to the vernacular spoken by the rural masses, the only difference being a distinctive register (e.g. Richter 1994: 63; Hen 1995: 29; Smith 2005: 24). The use of the term Proto-Romance or Early Romance for the Early Medieval Romance vernacular has the benefit of avoiding such confusion.

The second objection concerns its lack of engagement with the regularist tradition. It should be noted though, that this criticism can be extended to many studies on Vulgar Latin and Early Romance of the past few decades. Although Wright, just like Malkiel and Herman before him, does not deny the usefulness of the comparative enterprise (cf. Wright 1991a: 7-8), his focus on attested Latin does entail a reduced engagement with regularist scholarship. In this regard, we may note the exceptional position of Mazzola (2008), who subscribes to the 'one-norm theory', but at the same time proposes a return to regularist methodology. In a 2013 article, Mazzola argued that documented Vulgar Latin only provides a window on the linguistic expressions of the literate strata of society. Reconstructed Romance, on the other hand, would reflect the language of a broader part of Early Medieval society and is therefore more likely to represent the variety which gave rise to the Old Romance vernaculars. I think Mazzola makes a valid point; it cannot be denied that neogrammarian reconstruction gives access to linguistic features of the vernacular, both in terms of grammar and in lexicon, that we cannot expect to find in the Late Latin record. A similar point is made by Mercedes Quilis-Merín (1999: 225) who argues that Wright "does not take into account the complementary nature of our two sources of knowledge on the linguistic past, textual evidence on the one hand, and reconstruction on the other."[66]

The third objection is tied to the inherent archaism of the Latin writing tradition. As stated above, Wright and the revisionists have argued that the phonological distance between the vernacular and the literary language is easily overcome by knowing the pronunciation rules of an archaic spelling. Be that as it may, the grammatical and lexical distance between Latin and spoken Romance is not so easily bridged. Several scholars have therefore raised the question how speakers of seventh-century Early Romance who had no training in Latin could understand a Latin synthetic passive (cf. Round 1987; Marcos 1984), a grammatical category amply represented in even the most simple Latin texts, but probably defunct before the breakup of the Latin dialect continuum (Pollitzer 1961; Green 1991). Wright's answer was that the scribe who read the text aloud substituted a Latin grammatical

[66] "Así, no tiene en cuenta los procesos de complementación entre los dos medios de conocimiento de la realidad lingüística -evidencias textuales y reconstrucción, prefiriendo otorgar un nuevo contenido al concepto "protorromance" y considerando que el material documental no ha de interpretarse como evidencia directa del habla." (Quilis Merín 1999: 225-26)

form like *cantatur* 'it is sung' with the corresponding analytic construction of the Romance vernacular, i.e. Rom. **kantatʊ est* > **kantado est* (Wright 1982: 256-257; see also Green 1991: 96). The same solution has been proposed for the treatment of Latin lexis that had become obsolete in the spoken vernacular. The scribe would have substituted a Latin word like *ager* 'cultivated field' with its corresponding Romance translation **kampo(s)* (cf. OFr. *champs,* OSp. *campo*) when reading a Latin text aloud. The acceptability of this solution continues to be debated and it seems fair to conclude that Wright's thesis has in this regard slightly trivialized the distance between literary Latin and the Romance vernacular (cf. Round 1987; Walsh 1991: 208).

According to Herman (1996) and Loporcaro (2009), it was exactly this distance between spoken Gallo-Romance and literary Latin that provoked the Carolingian innovation in the Latin reading tradition. Decisive in this regard would have been the operation of syncope and apocope in the Merovingian period; developments that Loporcaro (2009) characterized as the 'second prosodic revolution'. This led to a prosodic mismatch between the Latin words and their Gallo-Romance pronunciation, which made it exceedingly difficult to pronounce written Latin as spoken Romance (cf. Herman 1996). Therefore a new reading tradition for Latin was required and consequently new ways of writing the local vernaculars were attempted. The attractive part of this interpretation is that it reconciles the idea of a broken reading tradition with the traditional focus on linguistic innovation.

In addition to these objections, I want to point out that relying on Early Medieval metalinguistic comments is problematic in itself. Almost all sixth and seventh-century texts are written by the clergy and therefore belong to the framework of Christian Latin discourse. This discourse is the literary embodiment of the Christian ideology of continuity that connected the Medieval present to the Late Antique past. Even if Early Romance speakers conceptually distinguished written Latin and spoken Romance as two distinct languages, we cannot expect to find this distinction reflected in the very few texts of the literate elites that have survived.[67] For the western Christian church there was only one language that mattered and that was literary Latin. All Romance vernaculars, however different, were inevitably considered lesser versions of it. By sticking to the terminology of the Early Medieval contemporaries, we are caught in the same ideological framework that conditioned their writings. In my opinion, this is an undesirable situation to be in when we want to reconstruct the sociolinguistic parameters of a distant past.

[67] The same point was made by R. Penny (1984), who noted that contemporary medieval texts are predominantly engaged with the literary Latin language.

2.5 Evaluation of Wright's thesis

Overall, several elements of the 'one-norm theory' provide promising solutions to old queries and are definitely worth considering. The suggestion that an Early Romance vernacular hides behind the Latin texts of the period may be right in regards to the phonology of Early Romance. However, this does not mean that a Latin text when read aloud with a Romance pronunciation could be understood by uneducated laymen. The differences in morphology and syntax seem too great to allow direct comprehension. In the words of Rebecca Posner:

> "Even if speakers pronounced the Latin as if it were the local Romance variety, it is hard to believe that they were not conscious of the difference between the two" (Posner 1996: 153-154).

Likewise, the suggestion that the Carolingian renaissance provoked a new ideological framework for the Romance vernacular is very insightful and explains why only in the ninth century the first text monuments in Early Old French surface. However, this does not mean that before the ninth century speakers of Early Romance did not distinguish their language from the written Latin of the clergy; it only means that such a distinction has not come down to us in the elite Latin discourse of the Early Middle Ages.

An interesting commentary in this regard was given by Kees Versteegh, an arabist who is well acquainted with the problem of diglossia and differentiation in the Arabic speaking world. Versteegh wrote a review of the 1991 book 'Latin and the Romance languages in the Early Middle Ages' (Wright ed. 1991), which was a collection of papers that were presented at a 1989 historical linguistic conference workshop. In this collection, romanists, historians and latinists reply to Wright's 'one-norm thesis' and the book can therefore be considered as a representative overview of the reception of the new paradigm. Versteegh reminds the reader that "even if people do not conceptualize or explicitly formulate the differences between language varieties, these differences may still be in existence" (1992: 269). He draws the comparison with Arabic, whose speakers vehemently deny being diglottic, even though there is a clear diglottic relationship between the high variety standard of Classical Arabic and the low variety vernaculars. Versteegh also criticizes McKitterick's conception of lay literacy (Versteegh 1992: 272-73) and warns her that in a diglottic society where active literacy is limited to a small elite, as is the case in large parts of the Arab world, lay literacy should not be exaggerated. According to Versteegh, the Arabic parallel teaches us that the average layman is in constant need of the assistance of others to explain the exact content of Classical Arabic texts (Versteegh 1992: 273). It is very plausible that a similar situation existed in the Romance speaking world of the Early Middle Ages.

Furthermore, the 'one-norm theory' should not distract from the fact that in the Early Middle Ages the Romance dialect continuum had already greatly differentiated. We therefore may question Wright's assertion that the Early Medieval Romance dialect continuum allowed

direct mutual intelligibility between speakers of non-contiguous varieties of Early Romance, a so-called Early Medieval Romance monolingualism (cf. Wright 1991: 108). This claim largely rests on an *argumentum ex silentio,* namely the lack of historical comments about linguistic differences between the Romance varieties and more importantly the lack of comments on comprehension problems between Romance speakers (see also Clackson & Horrocks 2007: 275). The absence of this kind of metalinguistic evidence would, according to Wright, prove a prolonged mutual intelligibility in the Early Medieval Romania. Naturally, this claim has been eagerly repeated by historians, with some of them arguing that in the tenth century "a single language was spoken from the Guadalquivir to the Mosel, just as it had been in Roman times" (Smith 2005: 24). I think that few linguists would agree with that statement in this blunt form.

Let us suppose that Charlemagne travelled to Spain and wanted to buy a horse; he may have asked in the Lorraine dialect of Early Old French: [u pɔis ʤɔ atʃaçtær yn tʃəval]. = Old French *ou pois jo achapter un cheval.* Even with the greatest degree of goodwill and careful listening, an Ibero-Romance interlocutor will probably not have understood a single word of that question.[68] And even if the king would have written a note in Latin reading '*ubi equum emere possum*?', no degree of Ibero-Romance pronunciation (*óβe jékwo jémbre pwéso*?) would have rendered this sentence understandable to a Spaniard without a Latin education.

Of course, choosing a different sentence would give a different impression regarding the level of intelligibility between the two varieties. The choice of idiom, the choice of phrasing, the metalinguistic context and the conversational disposition of the interlocutors will all have influenced the dialogue. All these parameters cannot be studied diachronically and any claims regarding mutual intelligibility between diverging linguistic varieties are therefore bound to be controversial. On that account, the above sketched anecdote merely serves to illustrate this controversy and show that mutual intelligibility between non-contiguous Romance varieties in the Early Medieval period cannot be taken for granted, a lack of metalinguistic comments notwithstanding.

Another point that should be stressed is that the validity of linguistic reconstruction has never been disputed, neither within or outside of Romance linguistics (see Chambon 2014). Interestingly, the reconstruction of Proto-Romance seems to be making a comeback, eventhough it is faced with stiff resistence from more theoretical approaches to Romance historical linguistics that favor the variationist approach (see Weiss 2017). The resilience of the reconstructionist tradition in Romance linguistics is especially clear from the DÉRom project (Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman, Lorraine University and the University of the Saarland), which intends to produce a new Proto-Romance etymological dictionary that should replace the *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* by Meyer-Lübke from 1911. This

[68] An Ibero-Romance speaker might have said something like "dɔnde pwedo kɔmprar uno kaβaljo?".

monumental lexicographical enterprise, two volumes of which have already appeared, is edited by Éva Buchi and Wolfgang Schweickard and reverts to citing reconstructed etyma, thereby employing a revised phoneme inventory of Proto-Romance (see Buchi & Schweickard 2014, 2016). These same volumes also contain numerous articles, outlining the potential benefits and pitfals of the regularist approach (e.g. Swiggers 2014; Garnier 2016).

It may therefore be clear that although the regularist approach with asterisks and neogrammarian sound laws has gone out of fashion, the comparative method remains a valid way of approaching the unattested pre-stages of the Romance dialects. Furthermore, compelling evidence for the historicity of the linguistic reconstruction of Romance can be found in Romance–Germanic loanword studies; many scholars have noted that the Latin loanwords in the Germanic languages often reflect an Early Romance/Vulgar Latin stage, that is to say, the donor forms belong to a chronological stage that lies between Latin and the Old Romance languages (cf. Wollmann 1990; Van Durme 1996; Pronk-Tiethoff 2013: 233; Van Loon 2014). A case in point is the Old High German word *kubil* (also OE *cufel*) 'vessel', whose relation to Latin *cupella* 'a small barrel' (REW 2404: 190) cannot be explained from a Latin donor form [kupella]. The lexical transfer is better understood from the view that the contact language was Early Romance, which gives us a donor form [kʊβɛlla] (cf. Picardian/ Walloon *küvel,* REW 2402; Meyer-Lübke 1911: 190).

- Early Romance [kʊβɛlla] → West Germanic [kuβel]

Even fourth-century Gothic, the earliest attested Germanic language, possesses Romance loanwords that can hardly be called Latin; Gothic *kaupatjan* 'to hit someone' is best etymologized as a borrowing from Romance **koupiʤare* (cf. Lat. *colapidiare* 'to strike'), the donor form showing Romance syncope and vocalization of pre-consonantal /l/ (cf. Richter 1934: 114; see also Lehmann 1986: 215).

- Early Romance [koupiʤare] → East Germanic [kaupatjan]

The other way around, Germanic loanwords in the Romance languages also show that an Early Romance stage rather than a Latin stage was the contact language at the moment of borrowing. For example, the Old French word *tiedeis* 'German' shows that the Frankish donor form **þiodisk* 'of the people' entered Gallo-Romance at a stage when the language had acquired a new diphthong /iɛ/ from stressed Latin /é/, since it was this new diphthong /iɛ/ that was used to render the Frankish diphthong /io/ (see also chapter 9). In conclusion, the lexical transfers between Romance and Germanic show that we are dealing with an evolved Romance contact language which closely resembles the reconstructions that are the outcome of the comparative enterprise.

2.6 Medieval Latin

This leaves us with the question of Medieval Latin. In Germanicist studies on etymology, the terms Medieval Latin or Middle Latin are often featured. It is my contention that this terminology is confusing and unwarranted. In the preceding sections we have established that Medieval Latin is an unwieldy term that has no bearing on the spoken language of the Early Medieval period. Following Wright (1982), we may regard Latin texts from the pre-Carolingian period as distorted reflections of the spoken language, which employed an archaic orthography for vernacular Romance word forms. But what do we do with Latin words that post-date the Carolingian Renaissance?

We may start with the observation that the reinvented Latin language remained the preferred language for liturgy and administration throughout most of the European Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the practical requirements of the medieval contemporaries demanded a certain level of flexibility in regards to Latin style and lexicon. Because not all scribal centers kept to the same standards of Latinity, vernacular syntax shows up in the administrative texts of local scribes. These scribes also resorted to Latinizing vernacular words when a classical Latin equivalent was lacking. Therefore Medieval Latin texts often contain the oldest attestations of Romance lexis for which no Latin spelling convention exists (e.g. Blok 2003).

This means that if a non-Latin word turns up in a Medieval Latin text, we can safely assume that we are dealing with a Latinization of a colloquial term belonging to the Romance or Germanic vernacular. Since language contact, in a society where the levels of literacy were extremely low, mainly involves the vernaculars (cf. Thomason 2001: 3), it is inaccurate and misleading to cite a Medieval Latin attestation as a donor form in a borrowing process. As an example may serve the case of MidDu. *bunder,* an agricultural land measure which is commonly connected to Medieval Latin *bunnarium* (EWN s.v. *bunder*). This Medieval Latin form represents a Latinization of a Gallo-Romance word **bonarjo* (cf. OWall. *bonier,* FEW I: 465), which, in a likelihood, was a Romance extension of a Gaulish etymon **bodna* 'land measure' contaminated with a Gaulish word **bona* (cf. OIr. *bun* 'foundation, base').[69]

Since the word *bunder* is only found in Dutch, it seems reasonable to assume that the borrowing took place in the agricultural communities near the Romance language border, presumably somewhere in Early Medieval Belgium. In those regions, a Romance term was adopted by Germanic-speaking communities, i.e. a Gallo-Romance **bonnarjo* > Old Frankish **bunnari.* In my opinion, the Medieval Latin form *bunnarium* only represents a trace of the Romance etymon and was not involved in the lexical transfer. Thus, it may be clear that the Medieval Latin word was not the donor form of the Middle Dutch word.

[69] A direct continuation of a Gallo-Latin form **botinarium* must be rejected because the Latin word is already reflected in the early seventh century without the dental, i.e. Merovingian Latin *bunoarium,* whereas the Old French word *boḍne* proves that the dental survived the Early Middle Ages.

2.7 Gallo-Romance

This dissertation deals with loanwords that illustrate the language contact between speakers of Early Romance and Early Germanic. The Romance dialect continuum of Early Medieval Gaul will feature prominently in these discussions. The continental West Germanic dialect continuum represents the other side of the contact events. In order to correctly interpret the chronology of these events, a seriation of Gallo-Romance phonological rules is needed (cf. Andersen 2003). For this reason, I will provide an overview of the relevant linguistic prehistory of Gallo-Romance and an attempt at a relative chronology in the next chapter. First, however, we should establish how the Gallo-Romance variety arose.

In the following, we will discuss the break-up of the Latin dialect continuum and the historical separation of Gallo-Romance. Then we will take a closer look at the Merovingian Latin source material in order to assess the documentary evidence that provides a window on the spoken Romance vernacular of Early Medieval Gaul.

As has been discussed above, the present-day view on the diversification of Latin involves the development of local varieties that steadily grew dissimilar from each other. It seems plausible that a certain level of social and regional variation has been a characteristic of the Latin language ever since the Roman state expanded into the territory of other linguistic communities. Scholars like Meillet (1928) have even argued that a certain degree of 'creolization' might have contributed to the rise of the Romance regional varieties (see also Goyette 2000). We should however realize that linguistic variation has a dynamic nature and its sociolinguistic parameters will have changed as the empire changed. Not only regional varieties betraying substratum influence of superseded languages will have contributed to the rise of these local dialects, but also sociolectal variation will have played a role; just as modern linguistic communities have social variants indicating a certain status, occupation or education level, the Latin language community will have known the same social variation.

The state-of-the-art of this view is given by J. N. Adams (2007: 684-85, 723-24), who argued that a complex interplay of substratum influence, different sociolects and koineisation by dialect mixing gave rise to the regional dialects of Late Latin that later were to become the Romance languages. This led Adams to assert that "the Romance languages in the modern sense came into being not as the result of a sudden historical event, but when some regional varieties were codified in writing and particularly when certain of them acquired the status of standard languages" (2007: 684).

Although Adams is indubitably right in stressing the importance of regional and social variation to the evolution of the Latin language, his insistence on continuity and internal evolution trivializes the sociolinguistic consequences of the Migration Age. This is unfortunate since it seems likely that the disintegration of the Late Roman state and the political take-over of Germanic-speaking elites must have had some effect on the unity of the

Latin language (cf. Posner 1996: 245-46; Galdi 2011: 567; Kortlandt 1990: 132; Pereltsvaig & Lewis 2015: 108).

In certain areas, settlement of Germanic-speaking colonists would have driven wedges in the continuum, separating different varieties of Latin from each other (cf. Wüest 1979: 345; Sala 2009: 202). In other areas, the social prestige of the Germanic superstrate population may have led to new linguistic variants of Latin. In others again, Latin was traditionally used as a communication language and with the demise of the Empire the need for the language disappeared as well. The regions where the Latin language disappeared are traditionally summarized under the term *Romania submersa.* In the western Empire, the 'submersed Romania' comprises the following areas (Haubrichs 2014: 198).

- Britto-Romance
- African Romance
- Mosel-Romance
- Basel-Romance
- Salzburg-Romance

In my opinion, it is implausible that the fragmentation of the Romania as a borderless cultural space left the unity of the Latin language unaffected (cf. Elcock 1960: 212-16). In that regard, we should note that several structural changes in Latin phonology and grammar, which are characteristic of the Romance varieties, are generally dated to the same transition period between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (cf. Wüest 1979: 343).

- Restructuring of the Romance vowel system
- Restructuring of the Romance case system
- Restructuring of the Romance stop system

I find it hard to believe that this is a coincidence; that the disintegration of the Roman empire and the disintegration of the Latin dialect continuum, two events that are independently dated to roughly the same period, are unconnected. This contemporaneity is strongly reminiscent of Martinet (1955) and Labov's (1994) conception that 'catastrophic events' such as changes in social patterns caused by demographic shifts may stimulate linguistic change. It seems completely reasonable (and even a bit anticlimactic) to assume that the political upheaval of the fifth century brought along demographic shifts and changes in social patterns. We may therefore view the disintegration of the Roman empire as exactly the 'sudden historical event' which Adams denies had taken place (cf. Kortlandt 1990: 132).

In my opinion, the invasion of Germanic-speaking peoples contributed to the diversification of Latin by fragmenting the former dialect continuum, introducing new Germanic influenced varieties and magnifying linguistic tendencies that were already present in Late Latin (cf. Pope 1934: 10; Pierret 1994: 132). In this way, the Migration Age

should be considered a sociolinguistic contingency of considerable magnitude, which accelerated the regional evolution of the Romance dialects.

2.8 The separation of Gallo-Romance

Accepting the view that the Migration Age played a role in the break-up of the Latin dialect continuum, we will shortly discuss how this fragmentation of the dialect continuum will have taken place. In phylogenetic terms, Gallo-Romance belongs to the western Romance dialect group and is closely affiliated with the Romance dialects of the Iberian peninsula, the Rhaeto-Romance dialects of the Alps and the Italo-Romance dialects to the north of the La Spezia–Rimini line. In the following discussion however, our main point of interest will be the establishment of the Gallo-Romance area. We will trace the historical events that led to its separation from the areas where the Romance sister dialects were spoken (see also Pfister 1978).

When we consider the historical facts, it seems plausible that the first variety to have split off from the western Romance dialect continuum was the Latin variety of the British isles. When in 410 CE the Roman army and civil government left Britain, Britto-Romance became isolated from the Romance variety of Gaul with which it might have been closely affiliated (cf. Schrijver 2002: 106). The British lowland zone was infiltrated by Germanic-speaking peoples who settled there in significant numbers (Schrijver 2009). Whereas scholars used to assume a complete displacement of the Romano-British population under Anglo-Saxon pressure, nowadays it is argued that the Anglo-Saxons merely subjugated the Britons in the areas where they settled (Laker 2010: 11-25; Hickey 2012: 497-99).[70] In the course of the sixth and early seventh century, Britto-Romance will gradually have died out (Price 2000: 138).

The next Romance variety to be isolated from the dialect continuum would have been Rhaeto-Romance, the complex of Romance varieties that was spoken in the former Roman province of Rhaetia (Switzerland, northern Italy and Austria). The settlement of the Germanic-speaking Alamans in the Upper Rhone Valley and Central Switzerland effectively drove a wedge between the Romance variety of Gaul and the Romance of the Alps (Rohlfs 1975: 7; Zinsli 1982: 31). This Germanic settlement of Rhaetia will have begun in the late fifth century CE when the western Empire disintegrated (Haas 1982: 48-49). The infiltration of Germanic-speakers will have increased after 505 CE when Theoderic the Great officially allowed the Alamans to settle in the Swiss Alps (Beyerle 1962: 72).

[70] According to Schrijver, some Romano-Britons migrated to the British highland zone and took their Romance language with them. The language shift from Britto-Romance to Early Brittonic may have introduced a heavy Romance substratum in Welsh (cf. Schrijver 2002: 100-103).

At roughly the same time, in the early sixth century, the Ripuarian Franks advanced into the Upper Mosel valley, thereby disrupting communications of the lower Mosel valley with the rest of Gaul (Jungandreas 1979: 69). Still, the Romance of the Mosel valley remained part of the Gallo-Romance dialect continuum, as borne out by the innovations that it shared with the other Gallo-Romance dialects (Jungandreas 1979: 14-52). In the Carolingian and Post-Carolingian period, the last speech islands of Mosel Romance will slowly but steadily have vanished (Pfister 1992; Haubrichs 2014: 198).

The western Franks, following the demise of the kingdom of Soissons, advanced into northern Gaul and settled on the countryside as far south as the river Loire. It has been argued that this Frankish settlement established a cultural boundary at the river Loire which still divides France in a northern and a southern region (Jochnowitz 1973: 160-169). This cultural boundary is marked by an opposition of differing crop rotation systems and farm house architecture and largely coincides with the croissant-shaped isogloss bundle that divides the *langues d'oïl* from the *langues d'oc* (Lodge 1993: 81). Whether the Franks are really responsible for the establishment of this cultural and linguistic boundary is a moot point (see Chambers & Trudgill 1980: 101-02). We may, however, note that the river Loire also marks a historical legal division that separates the common law region of northern France from the written law region of southern France. It thereby agrees with the legal division established by the Franks in the early sixth-century *Pactus Legis Salicae*.[71] Because of this, it seems hard to deny that the Franks were at least responsible for the reinforcement and maintenance of the cultural boundary.

Northern Italo-Romance was the last Romance variety to split off from Gallo-Romance. The severing of the link between Gallo-Romance and Italo-Romance may have been occasioned by the establishment of the Langobard kingdom in Italy and the settlement of Germanic-speaking Langobards in the Piedmont region (Sala 2013: 202). Since the settlement of the Langobards followed the Langobard invasion of 540 CE, the rift in the dialect continuum may be dated to the second half of the sixth century. This means that a century after Roman rule ended in Gaul, the political borders for the division of the Gallo-Romance dialect area were already in place.

2.9 Merovingian Latin and Merovingian Gallo-Romance

Since our knowledge of the Romance vernacular of Early Medieval Gaul must come from the combined study of the Latin documents and the outcome of linguistic reconstruction, we shall first take a closer look at the Merovingian source material. The Gallo-Roman sources, that I will draw on for information about the Romance vernacular, mainly consists of

[71] Note that the fifth-century play Querolus (cited in chapter 1) suggests that the Loire already marked a cultural boundary in the early fifth century CE.

documents that have no or little claim to literary aspirations. This means that the fifth-century Gallo-Roman comedy *Querolus*, the sixth-century writings of Gregory of Tours, and the seventh-century correspondences of Merovingian courtiers like Desiderius of Cahors must be left out of consideration.[72] Consequently, we are mainly dealing with documents of a practical nature such as law texts, formularies and chronicles.

As has been discussed above, the relationship of the Latin of these Merovingian documents to the actual spoken Romance language of the period is disputed. Even if the written Latin word was understood by the masses who spoke Romance (cf. Banniard 1991; Van Uytfanghe 1991; Herman 2000), we may still wonder how relevant the (limited) literacy of the clergy was to the lay populace. Scholars like Ian Wood (1990, 2006) and Rosamund McKitterick (1990) hold that the survival of diplomas and formularies and references to city archives (*gesta municiparia*) show that Merovingian society demanded the production of written records. Especially the Merovingian formularies are taken as evidence for the proliferation of literacy in the Merovingian period. Scholars such as Michael Richter (1994) have dismissed these texts as not being representative for all but the narrow part of society that could read and write (see also Rio 2008: 17-22). It is striking in this regard that no written documents are mentioned in the early redactions of the Salic Law, our best source of information for Early Merovingian society. In my opinion, it seems sensible to exercise some reluctance in extrapolating the relevance of the texts beyond the clerical interests for which they were drawn up.

We should also realize that attitudes to literacy will not have stayed the same throughout the Merovingian period. We may find evidence for a change in attitudes when we compare the above-mentioned Salic Law to the Ripuarian Law that was drafted a hundred years later. Whereas in the sixth-century Salic Law, land disputes are completely settled on oral terms, the early seventh-century Ripuarian Law also accepts written charters as compelling proof for land ownership (see Halsall 1995: 47-48).

Naturally the evidence of the Ripuarian law does not tell us how wide-spread the use of written documents was at that time, nor what kind of mentality the contemporaries had towards the written word. Still, it seems safe to say that the prestige of the written word will have increased when the Church began to administrate rural estates in the course of the sixth and seventh century CE.

[72] It has been widely recognized that Gallo-Roman aristocrats, despite their excuses for their rural style, wrote literary Latin quite well. Mark Grant argued that with the end of the empire, Latin literacy became an expression of nobility which may have marked out the Gallo-Roman aristocracy from the new Frankish overlords (Grant 1996: 11).

2.10 Merovingian Mots Savants

Another problem concerns the relationship of the Merovingian vernacular to a group of Old French words, that show the effects of Merovingian sound change, but nonetheless deviate from the regular evolution of inherited Latin lexis (cf. Berger 1899; Paris 1900; Reiner 1980). These words often retain features of Classical Latin that should have been altered by Early Romance sound change in the Late Roman period. For this reason, these words are known in the scholarly literature as *mots savants, gelehrtes Wortgut* or *cultismo* formations (see Malkiel 1995: 62). The puzzling thing about these words is that they suggest that a vernacular Gallo-Romance pronunciation was not the only reading tradition that could be applied to the written Latin language in Early Medieval Gaul (Rice 1902: 7).[73]

Latin *populus*	**indigenous**	> Old French *pouble*	'people'
	learned	> Old French *peuple*	'people'
Latin *secundum*	**indigenous**	> Old French *seont*	'according'
	learned	> Old French *segond*	'second'
Latin *rēgula*	**indigenous**	> Old French *reille*	'bar'
	learned	> Old French *riule*	'rule'

It is possible that this pronunciation derived from a Gallo-Roman acrilect that had remained distinctively archaic and was cultivated by the higher ranks of the clergy. It is also possible and perhaps more likely that this pronunciation of Latin was introduced from outside of the Gallo-Romance dialect area and should be attributed to the influx of more archaic reading traditions from the Italian peninsula or sixth-century Ireland. Especially in the late sixth and early seventh century, a revival of clerical mobility seems to have taken place. Furthermore, the Columban monastic movement led to a profound influence of Irish Christianity on Merovingian monasticism (Wood 1994: 184-89). Either way, this archaic pronunciation constituted a secondary conduit through which Latin lexis could enter the Romance vernacular of Early Medieval Gaul.

2.11 The testimony of Merovingian texts

These problems notwithstanding, we may agree with Wright that the written Latin of the Merovingian period may have functioned as the orthography for the spoken Romance of

[73] Rice (1902: 7) remarks that "As to the general character of the artificially acquired clerical language and of the vernacular (...) it is in general clear that these two forms of the same language at least as early as the seventh century , exhibited considerable phonetic differences and at the same time both differed greatly from classic Latin, which cannot be said to have existed at all in the period."

Merovingian society (cf. Wright 1982). Most idiosyncrasies of Merovingian Latin can be explained as reflections of phonological and grammatical features that were present in the spoken Romance variety.

Several Latin texts that date back to the Merovingian period are especially informative in this regard, almost all of which depend on Carolingian manuscripts for their tradition into the historical record. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the following texts in a concise manner:

1. The *Pactus Legis Salicae*
2. Merovingian diplomas
3. The formularies of Angiers, Auvergne and Marculf
4. The chronicles of Pseudo-Fredegar
5. The verse correspondence between Frodebert and Importun

The fact that several of these texts rely on relatively recent manuscript traditions constitutes a significant obstacle for using the documentary approach in assessing the spoken language of Merovingian Gaul. It prompted some scholars (e.g. Gamillscheg 1934; Dietz 1993) to be very reserved in using linguistic features from Merovingian Latinity as evidence for specific Romance sound developments. Nevertheless, restricting our source material to the few surviving Merovingian diplomas, Merovingian epigraphy and coin legends would constitute a disproportionate reduction of our data pool. Moreover, it would disqualify some of the texts that have been considered as the most revealing in their relation to contemporary speech habits. Therefore my starting point will be that evidence from all Merovingian texts, also those from younger manuscript traditions, may be invoked as possible evidence for Merovingian sound changes. This does however not mean that the date of a sound change is decisively proven or disproven by their occurrence or non-occurrence in Merovingian Latinity (cf. Cravens 1991: 85). A vernacular feature in a Merovingian text only gives us an indication that this feature may have been part of the Romance vernacular of the scribe and may have been imposed on the text in the time of its composition already.

In the following sections, a fragment of each text will be analyzed for possible vernacular features in order to illustrate how Merovingian Latinity may provide a window on the spoken language of the period. In these analyses, no comments will be made on the date or relative chronology of these Late Latin/Romance features. This means that some of them may represent colloquial Latin sound changes of the first and second century CE and others Gallo-Romance sound changes of the sixth or seventh century CE. The specifics of the sound changes and their chronology will be covered in chapter 3.

2.12 Romance and the *Pactus Legis Salicae*

The first text that we will discuss is the aforementioned *Pactus Legis Salicae*, a text monument whose importance for the study of Early Romance has been recognized since the mid-nineteenth century. Pott (1851), Gröbler (1884: 54) and Meyer-Lübke (1890) all argued that a wide range of Early Romance data could be extracted from the Latin of the law code. Attempts at a survey of these Romance features have been made in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century by Gaul (1886) and Schramm (1911). A comprehensive study of the Romance features of the Salic Law has been a desideratum ever since.[74]

It still remains an intriguing question how far the Latin of the Salic Law is actually removed from the later Gallo-Romance dialects. In this regard we may note that even a sentence where all Latin words survive into Old French cannot be directly converted into its linguistic successor without changing the word order and substituting defunct grammatical forms. As an example may serve the following law article concerning the flaying of a horse. The phrasing is adopted from the early Merovingian A-redaction and is a combination of the initial conditional clause of manuscript A2 and the final clauses of manuscript A3, since these are missing from A2 (MGH LL rer.nat.germ. IV 1: 232).

> ***Pactus Legis Salicae*, capitulum 65**
>
> *Si quis caballo extra consilio domine sui excortigaveret* (A2), *si interrogatus fuerit confessus, caballum in simblum reddat* (A3).
>
> "If someone would have flayed a horse, without the consent of his lord, if he has been interrogated and has confessed, may he replace the horse fully."

This law article is clearly colloquial in register. The words *caballus* and *excorticare* are not found in Classical Latin and only became current in the Late Latin / Early Romance period. The Latin phrase also displays some clear characteristics of Romance sound development.

- Merger of dative, ablative and accusative in the forms <caballo> and <consilio> for expected <caballum> and <consilium>.
    - This simplification of the case system probably followed the reduction of vowel quality distinctions in final syllables.
- lenition of intervocalic /k/ to Gallo-Romance /g/ in <excortigaverit> instead of expected <excorticaverit>.
- Merovingian Latin *in simblum* (< *in similum*) with post-syncope epenthesis instead of Latin *insimul*.
    - This form already closely resembles Old French *ensemble* (cf. FEW IV: 716-17).

[74] In current approaches to Romance philology, scholars occasionally refer to the Salic Law when discussing Romance lexis or incipient Romance tendencies, but almost always in an anecdotal manner.

However, if we want to translate this entire law article into Old French, some serious linguistic interventions need to be made. This can be illustrated by putting a direct word-for-word translation of the Latin into Old French next to a 'correct' translation modeled on the style and syntax of the early twelfth-century law code of William the Conqueror, *li Leis Wilelme*[75] (cf. Liebermann 1903).

> **verbatim translation:** si ki cheval estre conseil don son eschorchast si enterveḍ fust confes, cheval ensemble rendeḍ.
>
> **adapted translation:** Cil ki eschorchast un cheval estre le conseil le son seignur se il fust enterveḍ et confes, ke il rendraḍ le cheval ensemble.

Noteworthy are the following emendations that had to be made to fit the law article in the model of the *Leis Willelme*:

- application of the Old French verb second constraint
- the addition of compulsory articles
- the inversion of the noun adjective word order
- the addition of compulsory relative pronouns
- the replacement of the Latin perfect conjunctive by an Old French past conjunctive

The need for emendations is of course not surprising since the language of the Salic Law is more than three centuries removed from the oldest Old French.[76] In that regard, the *Lex Salica* may be viewed as both a chronological and a linguistic intermediary between the language of Cicero and the language of Charles the Bald.

2.13 Romance and the Merovingian diplomas

The next text genre, that also shows a clear departure from classical spelling, is the Merovingian charter or diploma (see Vielliard 1927). Unfortunately, very few Merovingian diplomas have survived: the majority of the 38 genuine Merovingian diplomas is known from manuscript traditions from the Carolingian and post-Carolingian period (MGH DD Mer. I; Brühl 2001: XIII). Fortunately, thirteen diplomas have been preserved in their papyrus originals, giving us direct access to the Merovingian writing practices of the seventh century CE. The example text comes from one of these papyrus originals and consists of a few lines from an early seventh-century diploma from king Hlothar II (Latin *Chlotacharius*). The

[75] Compare article 4 from the *Leis Willelme* where we read *Cil ki prendra larrun senz siwte e senz cri* (...) *que il duinse* X *solz de hengwite.* The stipulation is introduced by *cil ki* corresponding to Latin *si quis* which is followed by the sequence verb + object + adjectival clause. Then often a conditional clause introduced by *si* follows. The stipulation is ended by a subjunctive clause consisting of *ke* + subject + verb + object (cf. Liebermann 1903: 497).

[76] It seems likely that several of these Old French grammatical features had not yet developed in the early sixth century and even if they did we cannot expect them to turn up in a text that may be influenced by models of Latin legislation.

diploma addresses several donations to the basilica of Saint-Denis, and is possibly the oldest papyrus original to survive (Paris, Archives Nationales K 1, n° 4). Since the date of issuing at the bottom of the papyrus is lost, the diploma can only be dated to the reign of king Hlothar II, i.e. from 584 to 629 CE (Bruckner & Marichal 1981: 5-6).

Diploma 22

*noster Dodo abba de basileca sancti domni Dioninsio martheris, peculiares patroni nostri, testamenti pagenam a Iohanne quondam neguciante filius (*petiit ut*) alequid de suis facultatebus ad basileca ipsius sancti Dioninsio vel relequa loca sancta infra oppedum Parisiorum civetatis, eciam et ad alecus de suis propinquis per ipso generaliter confirmari deberimus.* (Bruckner & Marichal 1981 5:)

"Our abbot Dodo of the basilica of the martyr saint Denis, our particular patron (has asked that) a charter of testament from John, a former merchant (...) sons (...) a certain amount of his goods to the basilica of the same saint Denis or the remaining holy places inside the town of the community of the Parisians as well and to certain of his dependencies, we would confirm through this charter in public."

The excerpt illustrates a couple of characteristics of Merovingian diplomatics. The first characteristic concerns the conditions in which the diploma survived. Just like all other surviving diplomas from the period, this diploma is connected to ecclesiastical interests. Only in monastic archives could property records survive long enough to allow copying and reuse in Carolingian and Post-Carolingian times[77] (Geary 1996: 107-111; Bouchard 2014: 16-17).

Another characteristic is that the text of the diploma is highly formulaic and follows an established diplomatic model (see Sharpe 1996): The charter starts with the protocol, containing a superscription and an address. Here the king who issues the diploma is identified (X *rex Francorum*) and the recipients are named (*viris inlustrebus* X *et* X). The central part of the text is formed by the disposition and the injunction. In the disposition, the petitioner who asked for the charter is identified followed by the request which is often a confirmation of property rights (*abba* X *petiit ut...*). In the injunction, the requested legal act is spelled out and confirmed. The charter ends with the eschatocol which comprises an identification of the scribe (X *obtulit*), a signature statement by the king (X *in Christi nomine rex hanc preceptionem subscribsit*) and the date and place where the charter was issued (*dato X rigni nostri, in X-iaco*).

The Merovingian diplomas are well-known for their deviation from classical spelling and it is this feature that is most relevant to our present investigation. From the excerpt above it is clear that the scribe employs a Latin spelling that is influenced by his Romance

[77] For the papyri of Saint Denis this reuse often involved turning them over to allow a falsification to be written on their back or gluing them together for repairing parchment (Geary 1996: 110).

pronunciation. The quoted texts offers the following linguistic traits that can be attributed to Late Latin / Early Romance phonology and syntax.

1. Merger of the high mid vowels /i/ and /ē/ and /u/ and /ō/ in stressed syllables
    - merger products often spelled as <i> and <u> (cf. *negu**u**ciante, deber**i**mus*)
2. Collapse of vowel quality in unstressed syllables
    - *basil**e**ca, pag**e**na, confirmar**i**, opp**e**dum*
3. Reduction of vowel quality distinctions in final syllables
    - *confirmar**i**, fili**u**s, alic**u**s*
4. lengthening of vowels after nasal loss in /Vns/ sequence
    - hypercorrect spelling of Dionysio as <dioninsio>
5. Merger of affrication products of etymological /kj/ and /tj/
    - Spelling as <ci> (cf. *negu**ci**ante, e**ci**am*)
6. Delabialization of /k^{w}/ before back vowels (see Väänänen 1981: 51-52)
    - Spelling <ali**c**us> for Latin *aliquos*
7. Use of Latin *debēre* 'must' as a future tense auxiliary (see also Bonnet 1890: 691)
    - *confirmari* ***deberimus*** < *confirmārēmus* 'we would confirm'

Despite these innovative spelling features, the text still very much echoes the administrative traditions of Late Roman Gaul. The Merovingian chancelleries employed a language that can immediately be recognized as the conservative high prestige variety of Latin. The language is marked by a full application of the Latin case system, a highly complex sentence structure, and a common use of the synthetic passive. It is likely that the archaizing style of the language was meant to evoke a solemn atmosphere that enhanced the ritual function of the charter during declamation. It is also likely that the use of this archaic legal language obscured some of its contents to an uneducated audience.

Still, in the Merovingian diplomas contemporary terminology for places (e.g. *marcado* 'market'), measures (e.g. *bunoarium* 'hectare') and goods (e.g. *caballi* 'horses') can often be found. The use of this innovative terminology may have functioned as a counterweight for the hefty phrasing, ensuring that at least some part of the content of the charter was understood when read aloud in court.

Of course we may assume that the educated clergymen who kept and utilized the charters were accustomed to the legal formulae and idiom of the Merovingian chancellery. But it is exactly this use of set formulae that generally precludes interference from Gallo-Romance morphology and syntax. In this regard, the window on the Romance vernacular that the diplomas offer is lamentably small.

2.14 Romance and the Merovingian formularies

Another text genre that is often featured in discussions about the spoken language of Merovingian Gaul consists of the formularies. The Merovingian formularies are sixth-century and seventh-century collections of scribal models for drafting legal documents (Wood 1992: 64; Rio 2008). The scope of these documents includes a wide variety of legal matters, from sale transactions to wills, from wedding gifts to divorces.[78] The main Merovingian formularies that have survived are the formulary of Angers (ca. 514-515 CE), the formulary of Auvergne (ca. 520 CE) and the formulary of Marculf (ca. 650 CE). These collections are preserved in ninth-century cartularies but can on internal evidence[79] be dated to the Merovingian period. The preservation of these formularies in later manuscripts does not disqualify them as witnesses to Merovingian writing practices. Although some corruption of the text in the seventh and eighth century has taken place, the majority of spelling idiosyncrasies may very well date back to the sixth- and seventh-century prototypes (see also Pirson 1913: III-IV).

The Latin of the formularies clearly deviates from the classical standard, not only in its spelling but also in its syntax and morphology. For this reason, the formularies may prove more informative in regards to the Merovingian vernacular than the diplomas. As an example are given the introducing sentences of model text number 4 from the Angers formulary which concerns the sale of a free-born man to his own lord. The reason for the enslavement was that his lord had paid compensation for his crimes in order to save him from the death penalty.

Hic est vindicio de homine in esceno posito

Domno mihi proprio illo ego illi. Et quia coniuncxerunt mihi culpas et meas magis necligencias pro furta quid feci, unde ego in turmentas fui et eologias feci et morte pericolum ex hoc incurrere debui; set abuit pietas vestra datis de ris vestras soledus tantus. (Zeumer 1886: 6; MGH formulae Merowingici et Karolingici)

"Here is the sale of a man that is placed on a torture rack.[80]
To my own lord (so and so), I (so and so). And because my misdeeds and my very great errors have combined with the thefts that I committed, for which I was tortured and

[78] I remind the reader here that it seems unwise to use these texts for conclusions about the proliferation of literacy in Merovingian Gaul. Their contents suggest that their scope is limited to the urban aristocracy of the southern half of the Merovingian realm.

[79] Their Merovingian origin is secured by the references to Merovingian kings (e.g. *in rigni Childeberti,* ca. 511 CE) and the use of early Merovingian legal terminology (e.g. *rachimburdi,* cf. *rachinburgi* in the Salic Law).

[80] The interpretation of <esceno> is moot. It is my contention that Rio's identification (2008: 51) as Latin *escambium* 'exchange, compensation' is the least likely possibility. The cluster /mbj/ is very unlikely to have been reduced to single /n/ (see section 3.38). Zeumer's identification of *esceno* as the word *scamnum* 'torture rack' from the Salic Law is more probable (cf. Zeumer 1886: 6) . Alternatively, also a connection to Medieval Latin *semnium* 'monastery, abode' might be considered, although it is unlikely that in the spoken language the etymological sequence /sk/ and /s/ were easily confused (cf. Vita Boniti Arverni, 7th c. CE, MGH SS rer.merov. VI: 124).

made confession and for which I could have undergone the death penalty. But your piety has given (a certain amount of) solidi from your goods." (see also Rio 2008: 51-52)

The language of this excerpt shows several linguistic features that we have already encountered in the Salic law and the Merovingian charter and several other linguistic features that may provide additional information about the Romance vernacular of Early Medieval Gaul.

1. Syncope between /m/ and /n/ in proparoxytone nouns
    - *domno* < *domino*
2. Merger between Romance /ksC/ and /sC/ leading to scribal confusion on how to write Latin /ks/
    - coniun**cx**erunt < coniun**x**erunt
3. Lenition of Latin /k/ to /g/ in voiced environments leading to inverted spellings
    - ne**cl**igencias < ne**gl**igentias
4. Merger of /i/ and /ē/ and stressed /u/ and /ō/ in stressed syllables
    - Merger products often spelled as /i/ and /u/ (cf. *ris* < *rēs*)
5. Collapse of vowel quality in unstressed syllables
    - *t**u**rmentas* < *tormentas*
6. Merger of affrication products of etymological /kj/ and /tj/
    - Spelling as <ci> (cf. *vindi**ci**o* < Lat. *venditio*)
7. Prothetic vowel before /sk/
    - *esceno* < *scamno* (cf. Lat. *scamnum* 'bench')
8. Loss of Latin /h/
    - *abuit* < *habuit*
9. Analytic perfect construction by use of auxiliary *habēre*
    - *abuit datis* < *habuit datos*
10. Analytic genitive by use of preposition *de* (Schramm 1911: 88-89)
    - *vindicio **de** homine* < *venditiō hominis*
11. Encroachment of the possessive dative on the possessive genitive (Schramm 1911: 97)
    - *domno mihi* < *domino meo* (cf. OFr. *de mei/moi*)
12. juxtaposition genitives with oblique marking (Schramm 1911: 97)
    - *morte pericolum* < *mortis perīculum*
    - cf. OFr. *le lit sun ami* 'the bed of his friend (Jensen 1990: 19)
13. Relative pronoun *quid* relating to neuter plural noun (cf. OFr. *qui*)
    - *furta quid* < *furta qua*

The style of the formularies has a colloquial appearance that contrasts sharply with the language of the charters. Whereas the charters are marked by a complex sentence structure

that is riddled with multiple embedded relative clauses, the style of the formularies is rather simple. In this regard, it is strikingly similar to the language of the Salic Law. Both text genres remain concise in their phrasing and structure, but occasionally use grammatical features that mark the high prestige variety of Latin. These may be found in the use of synthetic passives, gerunds, and Latin 'accusative and infinitive' constructions. The use of these 'learned' features alongside a 'vernacular style' suggests that that the lawyers who authored the formularies were aiming for a balance between solemnity and comprehensibility.

2.15 Romance and the chronicle of Pseudo-Fredegar

The chronicle of Pseudo-Fredegar is the main historiographical source for seventh-century Merovingian history (cf. Ganshof 1970; Devillers & Meyers 2001). The text is often referred to as 'Fredegar's chronicle', although the name Fredegar is not associated with it in any medieval manuscript. The chronicle was finished in the middle of the seventh century (ca. 660 CE) and survives in multiple manuscripts, the oldest of which predates 715 CE. We have to reckon with at least two anonymous authors (author A and B, cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1960: xxi), whose goal it was to compile a learned summary of world history. This summary was based on the works of Hyppolytus of Rome, the chronicles of Hydatius and Jerome, and the Frankish history of Gregory of Tours (Devillers & Meyers 2001: 7-8). The authors added political events from their own time to this historical framework; author A until 613 CE, and author B until 642 CE (Devillers & Meyers 2001: 12-13). The language of the chroniclers is notorious for its defective Latin (Wallace-Hadrill 1960: xxviii; Devillers & Meyers 2001: 37) which makes it of prime interest for the present investigation. Still, it is clear that we are not dealing with a text of a colloquial nature. Although the orthography is far removed from classical Latinity and may very well reflect linguistic features of seventh-century Romance pronunciation, the style and idiom is decidedly modelled on a more refined historiographical tradition, possibly the style of the Latin works, whose contents are recapitulated in the early parts of the chronicle (e.g. *Historia Francorum*, *Chronica Maiora*). The text example comes from book IV of the chronicle and relates to political events of 613 CE.[81]

> **Capitulum 42**
>
> *Cumque iusso Brunechildi et Sigyberto, filio Theuderici, exercitus de Brugundia et Auster contra Chlothario adgrederetur veniensque Sigybertus in campania territuriae Catalauninsis super fluvium Axsoma, ibique Chlotharius obviam cum exercito venit, multus iam de Austrasius secum habens factione Warnachariae mariorem domus sicut iam olim tractaverat consencientibus Aledeo patricio, Roccone, Sigoaldo et Eudilanae ducibus. Cumque in congresso certamine debuissent cum exercitum confligere, priusquam priliare cepissent, signa dantis,*

[81] The fourth book of the chronicle contains the latest historiographical additions and it is this part that is of most value to historians. Its prologue reads "*prologus cuiusdam sapientis*" 'the prologue of a certain wise man'.

exercitus Sigyberti terga vertens, redit ad propriis sedibus. (Krusch 1888, MGH SS Rer.Merov. II: 141)

"And by command of Brunehildi and Sigibert, the son of Theoderic, the army set out from Burgundia and the East realm and at that time Sigibert went to Champagne, the territory of Châlons-sur-Marne above the river Aisne, and there Hlothar came with an army against him, having already many from the Austrasians with him from the faction of Warnahari, the steward, as they had agreed upon before with consent of the patrician Eletheus and the war leaders Rokko, Sigowald and Eudila. And when the battlefield was set and they had to clash with the other army, before they began to fight, the army of Sigibert gave signals, turned their backs and went back home. " (see also Wallace-Hadrill 1960: 34; Devillers & Meyers 2001: 121)

Just like in the Merovingian texts that we have discussed above, this fragment also shows several orthographic peculiarities that reflect an evolved Romance pronunciation of the Latin. The following features may be noted (see also Devillers & Meyers 2001: 42-52):

1. Monophthongization of /oi/ to /ē/
    - *pr**i**liare* < *proeliare*
    - *c**e**pissent* < *coepissent*
2. Merger of /i/ and /ē/ and stressed /u/ and /ō/ in stressed syllables
    - Merger products often spelled as <i> and <u> (cf. *territ**u**riae*)
3. A fronted pronunciation of /a/ enabling it to be used for etymological /e/
    - ***A**ledeo* < *Eletheus*
4. Collapse of vowel quality in unstressed syllables
    - *mult**u**s* < *multos, dant**i**s* < *dantes*
5. Collapse of oblique cases in the nominal declensions
    - *cum exercit**um*** < *cum exercito*
6. Merger of affrication products of etymological /kj/ and /tj/
    - Spelling as <ci> (cf. *consen**ci**en**ci**bus* < Lat. *consentientibus*)
7. Simplification of /ksC/ to /sC/ so that the spelling <x> could be used for /s/
    - Hypercorrect spelling *A**xs**oma* < Gaulish *Axonna*
8. Intervocalic voicing of voiceless /t/ to /d/
    - *Ale**d**eo* < *Eletheus*

Despite this peculiar spelling, it is clear that the compilers of the chronicle aspired to a high standard of literary Latin. This aspiration is seen in the use of archaic idiom such as *certamen* 'battle' and *proeliare* 'to fight' . We recognize the same ambition in the ample use of Latin function words (e.g. Latin *cumque* 'and because', *ibique* 'there', *obviam* 'towards' and *olim* 'once'), function words which, in all likelihood, had been defunct in the colloquial register of Latin for a long time. The narrator also does not shun the use of synthetic passives such as *adgrederetur* 'had set out'. Still, in several places we might suspect that the chronicler chose a

sentence structure that was suggested by his native Romance variety. This may be the case for the phrase *multus de austrasius* 'many of Austrasians', instead of a more Latinate *multos Austrasiorum* and the use of a juxtaposition genitive such as *factione Warnachariae* 'of the faction of Warnahari'.

The most famous instance where the compilators of the chronicle show the phrasing and even grammar of their own Romance vernacular is found in a digression on the fifth-century war between Justinian and the Persians (book 2, c. 62, see Herman 2000: 74). The chronicler recounts that when the Persian king did not want to cede his territories to Rome, he supposedly said *non dabo* 'I will not give'. Upon this, Justinian would have said *daras* 'you will give', an answer that immediately explained the name of the town Daras where the dialogue took place. This form *daras* is the first recording of the contracted new Romance future tense. This Romance future tense consisted of the infinitive followed by an inflected form of the auxiliary *habēre,* i.e. *daras* < Latin *dare habes*. In this instance, the Romance future of *dare* 'to give' is playfully contrasted with the Latin future of *dare.* The fact that the seventh-century chronicler could chose to write *daras* instead of *dare habes* suggests that he considered the Romance form to be different enough to warrant a new contracted spelling distinct from the Latin analytic construction.

2.16 Romance and the verse correspondence of Frodebert and Importun

The most peculiar, but definitely also the most intriguing text of the Merovingian period is the verse correspondence of Frodebert and Importun, a text that was deemed by Bruno Krusch (in Winterfeld 1905) to be "*das wahrste Denkmal der ganzen Merowingerzeit*".[82] The text is passed down in a ninth-century manuscript (B.N. Lat. 4627) containing the Sens formularies (ca. 768-775 CE) and consists of what looks like an epistolary correspondence between the Merovingian bishops Frodebert (< OFrnk. **hrodaberht*) and Importun. When we assume that the correspondents are to be identified with the historical bishops Chrodebertus (bishop of Tours from ? – 682 CE) and Importunus (bishop of Paris from 664-666 CE) and that these historical figures were involved in the composition, the text can be dated to ca. 665 CE. The text is divided in five 'letters' or dictions that represent the different voices in the dialogue, two dictions by Frodebert and three by Importun. Noteworthy is that several of these dictions are introduced by the term *parabola.* Also interesting is that, in the later part of the text, an audience of nuns is mentioned. Although the format of the text has generally been interpreted as adhering to epistolary conventions, the content and the style revolve around a rather colloquial exchange of insults. Falsehood, clerical misconduct, murder, cowardice,

[82] This remark was made personally by Krusch to Winterfeld and recounted in Winterfeld's article (1905: 60) on 'Hrotsvith literarische Stellung' in the *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen.*

and sexual impotence all feature amongst the numerous accusations on either party (Shanzer 2010: 394).

The most salient feature of the text is the poetic form; a versification marked by end-rhyme and alliteration. Romanists have recognized as early as the 1930's (e.g. Richter 1934: 206) that this end-rhyme gives valuable clues to the seventh-century pronunciation of Latin, some of which are absent in all other expressions of Merovingian Latinity (see Haadsma & Nuchelmans 1963). Latinists like Walstra (1962) and Shanzer (2010) have failed to appreciate this vernacular character and gravitated towards a mainly prose interpretation, an interpretation more in line with their Latinate interests. Hen (2012) takes the entire intention of the document seriously and views it as a genuine correspondence reflecting Merovingian politics and culture in seventh-century Francia, a position which, as the following section will show, is untenable.

Shanzer (2010), who published the latest examination, interprets the text as an epistolary composition that at certain places employs playful end-rhyme. According to her, it should be viewed as a literary expression of an insult competition between two educated clergymen. This competitive abuse would, according to Shanzer, have been marked by biblical witticisms and intertextuality with the letters of Jerome (2010: 395). Her analysis ignores the remarkable feat that the rhyme is at some places obscured by the Latin orthography and only becomes apparent when read aloud with an evolved Romance pronunciation. It is my contention that this complicates a literary Latin milieu and places the text in a more vernacular setting. Because the text is a unique thing in Merovingian Latinity, it is unfortunate that it has enjoyed so little attention by historians and philologists. Below an excerpt is given from the first diction by Frodebert.

Indiculum

"*Domne dulcissime et frater carissime Importune*
Quod recipisti tam dura // Estimasti nos iam vicina
Morte de fame perire // Quando talem annona voluisti largire
Nec ad pretium nec ad donum // Non cupimus tale anone
Fecimus inde comestum // Si dominus imbolat formentum
Aforis turpis est crusta // Abintus miga nimis est fusca
Aspera est in palato // Amara et fetius odorato
Mixta vetus apud novella // Faciunt inde oblata non bella"
(MGH Form.Mer. I: 220-21)

"Sweetest lord and most beloved brother Importun,
concerning that hard stuff which you see, you honestly thought that we,
near to death by hunger would die, when you wanted to bestow such grain.
Not for a price nor as a present, do we want grain so unpleasant
From this we made something to eat, were it not that the lord stole the wheat

On the outside, the crust is tarty, on the inside, the crumb is swarthy
It is sharp to the palate and bitter and it smells horrible
The old grain is mixed with the recent, from that they make wafers indecent."

The above quoted lines illustrate two salient features of the text. First of all, the verse form is marked by end-rhyme and does not adhere to a metrical scheme. Also, the verse is embellished by occasional instances of alliteration (*aforis ~ abintus, aspera ~ amara*). As stated above, these poetical features become more apparent, when we take the Late Latin and Gallo-Romance pronunciation into account. In this way, we may realize that the word *novella* pronounced as [nɔ:βɛlla] is almost identical to the *non bella* [nɔn βɛlla] of the following line. Similarly, the words *donum* and *annone* rhyme when taking the reduction of final mid vowels to schwa into account, i.e. [donə] // [anonə]. Secondly, the idiom is markedly colloquial, which is clear from the fact that most lexical items survive in Old French. Also, a remarkable amount of Romance lexis of sub-Latin provenance is featured.

- MerLat. *butte* 'bottle?' < Pre-Rom. **butt- ~ *putt-* (cf. OFr. *boteille,* FEW I: 660-61)
- MerLat. *trapa* 'trap' < Gm. **trappō* (cf. OFr. *trappe,* FEW XVII: 353)
- MerLat. *bracco* 'dog' < WGm. **brakko* (cf. OFr. *brac,* FEW XV: 236)

When we take the end-rhyme into account, the following Romance features may be identified in the text.

1. Monophthongization of /oi/ to /ē/
    - ***fe**tius* < *foetidus* 'fetid'
2. Syncope between /m/ and /n/ in proparoxytone nouns
    - *do**mn**o* < *domino* 'lord'
3. reduction of final mid vowels into schwa
    - rhyming *donum* 'gift' [donə] with *annone* 'grain' [anonə]
4. Fortition of /v/ to /β/ in voiced environments
    - *in**b**olat* < *involat* 'he steals' (cf. OFr. *embler* 'to steal')
    - *novella* = [nɔβɛla] 'new ones' is identical in pronunciation to *non bella* [nɔn βɛla]
5. Replacement of the preposition *cum* 'with' by Gallo-Romance *apud* (cf. OFr. *ab, od*)
    - *Mixta vetus **apud** novella* < *mixta vetus cum novella* (cf. OFr. *ab* 'in company of, with')
6. Word play involving the similarity in pronunciation of the sequence /erm/ and /orm/
    - ***form**entum* < *fermentum / frumentum*[83] (cf. OFr. *fourment* 'wheat')
7. Intervocalic voicing of /k/ to /g/
    - *mi**g**a* < *mīca* 'crumb' (cf. OFr. *mie* 'id.')

[83] Latin *fermentum* (cf. OPort. *formento* 'yeast') and Latin *frumentum* (cf. OFr. *fourment* 'wheat')

8. Replacement of *-idus* by *–iu*
    - *fet**iu**s* < *foet**idu**s* 'fetid' (cf. Tarente *fiettse*, see REW 3409)
9. Analytic genitive by use of preposition *de* (Schramm 1911: 88-89)
    - *vicina morte de fame* 'close to death by starvation' (cf. OFr. *veizine mort de faim*)

Naturally, this excerpt only supplies us with some of the linguistic peculiarities that may be encountered in the full text. Two other features in the text that are of great importance for the history of the French language will be mentioned in passing: 1) the possible evidence for secondary diphthongization found in the spelling *fei* for *fide* (cf. Richter 1934: 206; see section 3.8). 2) the merger of /kt/ and /pt/ in Pre-French /χt/, which enabled the rhyming of *acta* with *apta* (see section 3.35). All these evolved Romance features indicate that considerable parts of the text represent a Latinate spelling of the seventh-century Romance dialect spoken in Merovingian Gaul.

It may be clear that I attribute a more vernacular character to the text than Shanzer does. However, I feel that this vernacular character actually lends strength to Shanzer's hypothesis that we might be dealing with a piece of literature that was meant to be performed (2010: 395). This is also supported by the word *parabola* that introduces several of the dictions, a term that explicitly refers to the spoken word (cf. Old French *paraula* 'speech', Old Spanish *palabra* 'word'). We might even speculate that the women who are sometimes addressed in the dictions were part of the performance. In this regard it is interesting to note that a similar genre of poetic abuse is known from Germanic oral literature, an exchange of insults often called *flyting* (see Clover 1980; Allan & Burridge 2006: 85). It is well conceivable that this genre of oral literature was also cultivated in Merovingian society, possibly as a Gallo-Roman adaptation of what was originally a northern European literary genre. In this context, the colloquial idiom and vernacular rhymes would make sense.

2.17 Some general remarks on Merovingian spelling

In the above discussed Merovingian text monuments, we have encountered several spelling features that are common to most Latin texts of the period. Here we will summarize them and make some observations about Merovingian spelling in general.

1. Peculiar spelling of the merger products of /i/ and /ē/ and /u/ and /ō/
    - often written as <i> and <u>[84]
2. Reduced vowel distinction in unstressed syllables
    - Limited to <i>, <u> and <a>
3. Spelling of Romance prosthetic vowel before initial /sk/, /st/ and /sp/

[84] The Merovingian <i>/<u> spelling for the merger products of the Romance high mid vowels will be discussed in chapter 3 (see section 3.10).

    - Written as <i> or <e>
4. The spelling <x> was also used for /s/
    - Latin /ksC/ had been simplified to /sC/
    - Latin /ks/ between vowels was continued as Gallo-Romance /χs/
        - Gallo-Romance /χs/ is often spelled as <xs> in Merovingian Latinity
5. Ambiguity in spelling etymological /kj/ and /tj/
    - <ci> spelling is preferred
6. Occasional spelling of lenition products in the stop system
    - Voiced spellings for Latin voiceless stops
    - Hypercorrect voiceless spellings for Latin voiced stops
7. The spelling <b> could render both Latin intervocalic /b/ and Latin intervocalic/w/
    - Reflects merger of Latin /b/ and /w/ in Romance /β/
    - Hypercorrect spelling of <b> for Latin initial /w/

It is clear that the orthography of Merovingian Latin was influenced by a reading tradition that stood in close relation to the spoken Gallo-Romance vernacular. This interference provides us with valuable clues on how the sixth and seventh-century Gallo-Romance vernacular was pronounced. These clues are found in spelling confusions that reflect Romance or Gallo-Romance sound changes, sound changes which separate the Merovingian vernacular from its archaizing writing tradition. Furthermore, Merovingian Latin also sparingly provides information on the syntax and grammar of the evolved Gallo-Romance language. In that domain, however, scribes were more reluctant to abandon the conventions of the writing tradition. We may conclude this chapter with the observation that the exact relation between the reading tradition and the pronunciation can be specified further, if we put it next to a historical phonology of Gallo-Romance. That will be the aim of the next chapter.