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Romanística sin complejos

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Acquiring the vowel system
of a cognate language: The role of substrate
and spelling in the development of the French
spoken in Marseilles during the sixteenth century

When Rambaud, a Marseilles schoolteacher, who left us an invaluable testimony of the French spoken in this area during the second half of the sixteenth century, wrote his essay on a universal phonetic spelling system (Rambaud 1578), French had definitely replaced Latin as the *written* language in most spheres of public and private life in Provence, Latin still being the dominant language in higher education and in the Church. Provençal, never ceased to be the language *spoken* most of the time in most places – with the exception of centers dominated by Northerners, such as Henri d'Angoulême's Court in Aix, and literary salons that had developed by the end of that century. More than three centuries had to pass, however, before French became the mother language of the majority of the inhabitants of Provence, first in larger cities and eventually everywhere, where it developed regional characteristics subsumed under the terms *l'accent du Midi* or *l'accent de Marseille* (both often used indiscriminately for all varieties of Southern French).

It has rightly been argued that the different varieties of French spoken in Southern France owe their characteristics to both the Occitan substrate and the influence of conventional spelling (cf. Séguy 1950 [1978]: 22-39 for Toulouse French), although some specific developments are somewhat difficult to understand in such terms, in particular the celebrated *loi de position*, accounting for the distribution of the mid vowels in Southern French – mid-high [e, ø, o] in open feet

and mid-low [ɛ, œ, ə] in closed feet¹ – that neither Occitan substrates nor Northern sources can explain (cf. Ségué 1950 [1978]: 39-41; Moreux 1985b).

The specific characteristics of Southern French have now become true markers of regional identity, all the more so as the declining Occitan languages can no longer serve that function. In the sixteenth century, they were probably felt to reflect unsuccessful attempts at reproducing an exogenous norm, although it is difficult to establish precisely to what extent they were not already part of a regional habitus, unhindered by grammarians' blame. Early observers were quite prompt at finding fault with regional ways of pronouncing French, but generally felt themselves to be immune, no matter their performance (cf. Morin 2000b). Gratien du Pont, for instance, had no doubts not only about the legitimacy, but also the universality of his Toulouse French. He blamed the Norman Fabri (1521) for failing to give the proper definition of feminine *e*, and did not hesitate to offer one based on his own regional pronunciation, as we shall see.

Scholarly work on Rambaud has usually assumed that the French portrayed in his essay shows interferences with Provençal, often to dismiss its value: «sa prononciation n'était évidemment pas la prononciation normale [...] Aussi ne peut-on faire aucun usage de son témoignage» (Thurot 1881: 40 n.2). According to Clérico (1999: 126) «Rambaud propose [...] *de la langue française* pour sa morpho-syntaxe, mais *du provençal* pour sa forme orale. C'est un hybride, résultat de toutes les interférences entre les sons en usage dans un vernaculaire, et leur projection sur une autre langue qui conserve par ailleurs ses autres structures» (emphasis in the original). The only documented studies, however, are that of Hermans (1985) and Hermans & Van Hoecke (1989), who examined in detail the lexical distribution of the mid front vowels [e] and [ɛ].

1 Early formulations of the *loi de position* appealed to such concepts as *devant consonne articulée* (for closed feet) or open/closed syllables; cf. Morin (1983: 38-39; 1986: 203-205) and Moreux (1985a) for the necessity of feet, defined as higher prosodic units, for the proper description of the distribution of these vowels.

These authors tried to determine not only which features of Rambaud's transcriptions resulted from interferences with Provençal, but also «quelles étaient les caractéristiques du *françois* qu[e] [Rambaud] a appris comme langue "standard"» (Hermans & Van Hoecke 1989: 152). They concluded, for instance, that mid-high [e] in the words *lettre*, *mesme*, *mette* is likely to reflect a Provençal usage, whereas mid-low [ɛ] in the endings *-é*, *-ée*, *-er* < -ĀTŪM, -ĀTĀM, -ĀRE «est une prononciation qui est caractéristique des dialectes d'oïl de l'Ouest et des parlers méridionaux du Centre».² They appear to assume, either that the regional French of Marseilles inherited some of its features from peripheral Northern French dialects, or, more likely, that they were specific to Rambaud's own usage.

I would like to examine a different hypothesis, namely that the outlandish features in the regional variety of Southern French described by Rambaud reflect an endogenous development, i.e. that they were neither borrowed from peripheral Northern French dialects nor idiosyncrasies of the author resulting from his specific learning experience, but that they are representative of the speech of other Southerners that lived in and around Marseilles. I argue that the pronunciation of Southern varieties of French was largely determined by the primary function of French in these regions as a *written* and *read* language on par with Latin. Southerners' first contacts with French are more likely to have been through written documents and other Southerners than native teachers from Paris. They had to resort to reading strategies to assign a pronunciation to unknown French words, which in the long run were responsible for both substrate and non-substrate effects. Given a word for which the written code was ambiguous and had not been previously described by grammarians,

2 The authors refer to Pope (?1952: § 1325, vii; § 1326, i, ix) for supporting evidence. In sections § 1325 and § 1326, Pope discusses the specific medieval development of Northern French dialects spoken in the South-Center (§ 1325; mostly the Orléanais region) and the Western Region (§ 1326 Anjou, Maine, Touraine, Brittany, Normandy), but does not appear to give any evidence of the sort. It is nonetheless likely that there were then regions of France where at least some of those endings contained a mid-low [ɛ].

they either modeled its pronunciation on that of a Provençal cognate, if one was available, or else relied on default reading rules. The rule-governed nature of this process ensures a form of relative uniformity in the choice made by individuals and fosters the development of a common usage, within the range of normal variability found in all linguistic communities.³

In this paper I specifically examine the treatment of the front mid vowels [e, ε] and of the back vowels [ʊ, ɔ] for which the spelling *e* and *o* ~ *ou* offered no easy clues. We shall see, in particular, that their distribution was neither amenable to the *loi de position*, nor conformed to the phonological constraints governing the Provençal language at that time.

1 Rambaud and the linguistic context

1.1 A short biography of Rambaud

Rambaud was born at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Esparron de Palier, probably the town now known as Esparron-des-Pallières, some 50 km south-east of Marseille (cf. Hermans 1985: 1-5), somewhere between pts 137 and 138 of the *Atlas linguistique et ethnographique de la Provence* (Bouvier & Martel 1975-1986). One knows

3 The degree of variability in regional varieties of French depends on numerous historical factors. If I read Blanchet (1992: 82) correctly, «de français de Provence [moderne] se présente sous une forme relativement unifiée sur l'ensemble de la Provence, exception faite de certains items lexicaux» and constitues «un idiome spécifique dont les caractéristiques propres sont stables et structurelles». On the other hand, Dauzat (1906: 204) observed that «le français régional d'une même localité – je ne parle pas d'une région – est essentiellement variable, suivant le milieu social, la famille, l'individu», a conclusion he apparently reached from his observations at the end of the nineteenth century of linguistic communities in Basse-Auvergne, with an Occitan substrate distinct from that of Provence.

nothing about his life, except for what can be inferred from the dedication and publishing privileges appearing in his book. One has little reason to doubt that his mother tongue was Provençal and one can only speculate on when, where and how he learned French. He began teaching elementary school in 1540 in some unspecified place and then in Marseilles in 1546, where he was still active in 1578 when his work was published (at his own expense).

1.2 The use of French in Provence

Towns along the coastline of Southern Provence (Marseilles, Allauch, Cassis, La Ciotat, la Cadière, Toulon), were among the last ones to adopt French in their legal documents. Yet, French was adopted almost overnight for the redaction of these documents in 1540, after the Act of Villers-Cotterêts had been signified to these towns and their judicial bodies (cf. Brun 1923: 345-355; and for similar developments in smaller towns, Audisio & Bonnot-Rambaud 1991: 119). This is how Brun concludes his analysis on the implantation of French in Marseilles:

En résumé, l'apparition du français à Marseille n'est pas antérieure à 1540: il était sans doute connu des gens de robe et dans l'administration communale, puisque l'ordre de François 1^{er} y fut rapidement obéi. Mais la population l'ignorait, et ne se mit à l'apprendre que lorsqu'il devint la langue des affaires publiques, des procès, des contrats. Les notaires furent donc les éducateurs forcés d'un public, sinon réfractaire, du moins pris de court, et cette éducation fut lente puisqu'au passage de Charles IX en 1563, on dut recourir à un Lyonnais pour complimenter le souverain en vers français. C'est vers 1570 que le français a dû cesser d'être l'apanage des robins, et qu'il se répand davantage dans la vie courante de la cité. Alors le provençal disparaît comme langue écrite. Un Marseillais, François Maissang, traduit alors en français les statuts de la mer (1577). À la fin du siècle, Robert Ruffi prit par devers lui le principal manuscrit des archives appelé le Livre Noir, avec obligation «de traduire la substance d'iceux en langage français». Et tandis que les autres villes du Midi, francisées dès 1500-1520, participèrent de toutes leurs forces vives au développement de la Renaissance française, Marseille est à l'écart de ce mouve-

ment: à peine peut-on citer comme un homme de culture française, cet instituteur marseillais, Honorat Rambaud ... (Brun 1923: 349-350)

Brun's analysis, however, may have been overly conservative.⁴ Rostaing (1990: 20) estimates that a form of regional French may have already developed in Marseilles by the beginning of the sixteenth century among the educated bourgeoisie: «La diglossie existait donc déjà au début du XVI^e siècle et, tout au moins dans les couches intellectuelles de la population provençale, le français régional faisait ses débuts». ⁵ Audisio (1993: 44) finds evidence that French was also relatively known by artisans and craftsmen in the small town of Apt in 1532 and that even a large proportion of peasants – the demographically dominant group – may have been able to express themselves in French at that early period. The activity of Marseilles as a commercial and military harbor would definitely have had an even stronger impact on the development of communication in French (cf. Constans 1907), not to mention the numerous wars that required the lodging of a French-speaking soldiery right in the middle of homes (cf. Valbelle 1498-1539 [1985]).

Some of the Occitan features in the French described by Rambaud are specific to Provençal. This suggests that French is likely to have developed in Southern Provence on its own and was not simply an outgrowth of the regional French used in some other influential Southern town such as Toulouse, where this language had not only been used for administrative and legal documents for a much longer time, but enjoyed an enviable status as a literary language.

- 4 One can mention at least one other Marseilles figure, Dauron, a supporter of a reformed orthography who probably died between the years 1550 and 1555. He appears as one of the protagonists of Peletier's *Dialogue de l'orthographe et prononciation françaises* where he defended the author's point of view (cf. Monferran 1988).
- 5 Blanchet's (1992: 81-82) decision to dismiss such early manifestations as specific forms of French in Provence appears to be related to his personal restrictive conception of regional standard (cf. Dauzat 1906: 204, for an early discussion on the nature of regional French).

1.3 The Provençal language

Direct information on the pronunciation of sixteenth-century Provençal is scarce. Most of the administrative documents written in that language used a conventional conservative orthography, which does not reveal much about the pronunciation at that time.

The texts written by the poets of the short-lived first Provençal Renaissance are a notable exception. They used various forms of simplified spelling probably influenced by the Pleiade's ideas on orthography, in particular as set by Ronsard's printed work (cf. Catach 1968: 108-127). This literary movement was centered in Aix (Bellaud de la Bellaudière, Jean, Charles and César Nostredame), Salon (Pierre Paul, Michel Tronc), and Marseilles (Robert Ruffi). Michel Tronc, in particular, devised a relatively innovative spelling system for his poetry (edited by Catharina C. Jasperse in 1978), allowing one to gain a reasonably accurate idea of his pronunciation (cf. Blanchet 1989).

Although there is a strong unity between the different varieties of Provençal spoken in Salon, Lançon, Marseilles and Esparron-des-Pallières, for instance, several important isoglosses now divide this area, and certainly already did in the sixteenth century (cf. Bouvier & Martel 1975-1986; Blanchet 1992: 128-134; Barthélemy-Vigouroux & Martin 2000: 26-30). These differences, however, would not have had any impact on the outcome of the oralization strategies for most words, except for *me*, *te*, *se*, for which one must assume, as we will see, that the pronunciation [me, te, se] noted by Rambaud in Southern French corresponds to the Provençal substrate now observed in Salon, Aix or Esparron-des-Pallières, not to *mi*, *ti*, *si* as is now used in Marseilles. One must remember, however, that the regional French spoken in Marseilles was not necessarily created *in loco* as a whole and, above all, that the Modern Provençal isoglosses may not have yet been settled. One would expect, on the contrary, the variable use of both *me*, *te*, *se* and *mi*, *ti*, *si* in Provençal to be still common in all of these places.

Another important factor to be considered in trying to determine the source of the early oralization of written French is the presence

of numerous French borrowings in Provençal that speakers would normally transfer back into their regional French with the pronunciation they acquired in Provençal. The phonetic adaptation of recent borrowings was certainly determined by the same strategies as were used for the oralization of written French, so that in most cases, the results were not different whether a word was first borrowed into Provençal or directly oralized. Differences, however, may be more appreciable for older borrowings.

An example: the loan word *mariage* is attested in Occitan from the end of the fourteenth century onwards (Wartburg 1922-, vol. VI: 351b). Syneresis was frequent in most Occitan languages and applied early to vocalic sequences beginning with [i] such as *ia* in *mariage*, as evidenced by the syllabic count in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Occitan poetry. Unsurprisingly, Rambaud's transcription for *mariage* notes the syneresis and, on contrary, the dieresis of *ie* in the verb *marier* – a verb that, unlike *mariage*, was not borrowed in Provençal⁶ (cf. Morin *to appear*).

In the absence of detailed descriptions of sixteenth-century Provençal, I have relied for the pronunciation of specific words on the work of the Provençal poets mentioned above or reconstructed it on the basis of Mistral's survey (1878-1886).⁷ The dates for the introduction of specific French words are based on Wartburg (1922-), Valbelle's diary (written in Marseilles between the years 1498 and 1539, edited and published in 1985 by Rostaing) and transcriptions of official documents given as exercises in Audisio & Bonnot-Rambaud (1991).

6 Native *maridar* is still the usual form in Occitan.

7 I have standardized all Provençal spellings after the principles set forth in Barthélemy-Vigouroux & Martin (2000) that are better suited to sixteenth-century Provençal orthography when many of the final consonants were still pronounced, albeit variably. Stressed mid-vowels are always distinguished in the spelling: *é* and *o* for close [e] and [o], *è* and *ô* for mid-low [ɛ] and [ɔ] (my transcriptions are not reliable, however, for pretonic *ou*).

1.4 Languages in school

The fundamental skills that elementary schools were intended to develop were first and foremost reading – first reading isolated words and, in the long run, whole sentences. Writing, if attempted, would only begin afterwards. Rambaud was a staunch defender of progressive methods, which lead him to conceive his new universal writing system about which I will have more to say later. He also insisted that beginners should first apply their skills to vernacular languages:⁸ «Si lon enseigne vn François, choisir de mots François: à vn Prouençal de mots Prouençaux: Et à vn Italien de mots Italiens» (Rambaud 1578: 140).

Not all teachers were as sensitive to such rational methods, however, and young children were not uncommonly taught how to read sequences of letters that would only make sense in Latin, a language they did not yet know (hence, a radical form of language immersion). The principle underlying this practice seems to have been that the basic techniques for reading were the same for all languages, *viz.* learning which specific sequences of letters could combine to make up a syllable and divide words into syllables accordingly. A few additional rules would suffice for specific languages.

Rambaud complained about the confusion that was thus engendered, as one would tend to mix up languages in the process of writing and reading:

bien souuent escriuons vne chose pour autre, & vn langage pour autre, comme dit est. Aucunesfois pensons escrire de mots Prouençaux, & escriuons de mots Latins, & ainli des autres langages: & nonobstant que foyent bien differents en la signification & prononciation. (Rambaud 1578: 338)

Auons auffi vn nombre infini de mots Latins, lesquels pouuons lire en deux ou en trois façons, comme ceux icy, *salua, salue, salua, salue*, deux desquels sont Latins, & deux François: & les enfans prennent vn pour l'autre ... (Rambaud 1578: 340)

8 As did other progressive teachers such as Le Gaygnard, cf. Morin (2008a).

Thus, although elementary schools' explicit objective was not the teaching of languages, they certainly were the locus where pupils would receive an exposure to some of them and learn about their specific orthography together with some instruction for reading them aloud. The three languages most often mentioned by Rambaud – French, Provençal and Latin – were no doubt the languages at which his pupils had to exert their skills. Elementary schools were probably responsible for the continued use of Provençal for private writing (Audisio 1993: 45), with specific Provençal orthographic features such as *lh* and *nh* for palatalized [ʎ] and [ɲ]. The teaching of French together with its conventional spelling,⁹ however, must have been an utmost concern of primary education. Most of the examples used to illustrate his new writing system were French (62%) and Latin (29%), with only little more than 5% for Provençal.¹⁰

1.5 Rambaud's writing system

Formally, Rambaud's writing system is not an alphabet, but an *abugida*, belonging to the family of scripts that includes Indic *nagari* and Ethiopic *abugidas* (cf. Daniels 1996: 4). Unlike its Eastern counterparts, however, Rambaud's abugida does not use ligatures for coda

consonants, which appear in his system as simple signs appended to the right of the main syllabic unit and isolated from the next one by a «separating» dot.¹¹

To overcome the strangeness of Rambaud's notation, which has discouraged so many observers, I have prosaically transformed it into a quasi-phonetic representation preserving most of Rambaud's ideas (and all of its ambiguities). I use the IPA phonetic symbol corresponding to the regular phonetic values of Rambaud's symbols, with the following exceptions: (1) *œ* notes IPA high front rounded [y] (as it does in the conventional French and Provençal orthographies), (2) *ɯ* notes IPA high back rounded [u] (the symbol used by Rambaud to note this vowel), (3) *ɔ* notes the IPA mid-low back [ɔ] and (4) *ɥ* notes the IPA glide [j]. Superscripting of consonants (mostly *r*, *l*) is used in lieu of Rambaud's onset ligatures. The letter *ə* with an under-dot represents the inherent vowel (a characteristic feature of abugidas) and is phonetically identical to *e*, the latter being found only in word-initial position. The letter *ɱ* notes a nasal «archi-phoneme» used in coda position and representing a (probably reduced) nasal consonant [m], [n], [ɲ] or [ŋ], depending on context (cf. Morin *to appear*). The letter *ɸ* (in syllable onset) and *ɱ* (in coda) are distributional variants – the latter also likely to represent a reduced sound. The two symbols *ɱ* and *ɱ* distinguish trilled from flapped rhotics. The symbol *ɖʒ* notes the affricate [dʒ] (only used for Provençal, Latin and Italian).

9 Although French orthography was quite variable, its variation was contained within strict bounds (cf. Citton & Wyss 1989: 58-59) and required, as it still does, a long training.

10 These statistics are only valid for the essay proper. Rambaud's booklet also contains a list of a few thousand words written in his reformed spelling, given without their equivalent in conventional orthography. This list probably contains exercises that he used in his classroom («ce que j'ay bien expérimenté», p. 312). Most words appear to be Provençal, including a relatively large number of verbal forms, such as *ɖɛːr*, *ɖɛːr-re*, *ɖɛːr-reo*, *ɖɛːr-réo*, *ɖɛːveo*, *ɖɛːr-rén* belonging to the paradigm of *°béure* 'to drink' (p. 318, with Italian *ɖɛːve-ré-te* interspersed among them). Clérico's (1999: 128) attempts at interpreting these as French word-forms are certainly misconceived. (A similar pedagogical aid is found in Vaudelin 1715: 18-22, for example – which contains a list of slightly less than a thousand words for classroom practice).

11 The separating dot also appears between the vocalic elements of diphthongs and triphthongs. The distinction between diphthongs and series of two vowels in hiatus is indicated through specific accentual marks, when one of the vocalic elements is stressed. The accentuated separating dot *˙*, as in *œ˙*, joins the two elements of a stressed diphthong. Stressed monophthongs receive an acute accent, thus *á-ə* notes a stressed vowel followed by an unstressed vowel, and *u-é* notes an unstressed vowel followed by a stressed vowel. The reformer, however, did not devise any means to distinguish diphthongs from series of two vowels in hiatus in unstressed position.

Rimbaud's essay is essentially a «bi-graphic edition»¹² with two versions of the same text – one in conventional orthography and the other in Rimbaud's spelling – printed side-by-side on two consecutive pages, as in the example below (excerpts from pages 232-233).¹³ When I cite a form, I first reproduce the conventional orthography found in the first page, followed by Rimbaud's (modified) orthography between the delimiters <...>, e.g. *scay* <œ>. The Latin and Provençal forms will be respectively preceded by the upper indexes (*l*) and (*p*), e.g. ^(p)*sagesse* <sa^dʒɛsœ>. The index (*p*) is replaced by ° when the Provençal conventional orthography is not provided, as happens in Rimbaud's reading exercises, e.g. °*aucelet* <o.ʀ.sɛ.lɛb>.

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Ce que ie scay fort bien, & non pas
par ouïr dire, ains pour les auoir ia
feffés trente huit ans à cause d'icel-
les. Parquoy ne deuez treuer mau-
uais si ie prens la querelle pour eux,
& si ie desire que les tormentés
soient soulagés: car le torment du-
rera ou lon y remediera [...]

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se kɛ ʒɛ se fort bīɛn, ɛ nɔn
paɔ par ʀ-īr dī-rɛ, aīnɔ pɔr lɛɔ a-vô-
ɛr ʒa fɛsɛs tʀán-tɛ húit anɔ a kaʀ-ze
di-sɛ-lɛɔ! pa-koʔ-ɛnɛ dɛ-vɛɔ tʀ-ʀ-vér ma-ʀ-
vɛɔ si ʒɛ pʀanɔ la kɛ-ré-lɛ pɔr uɔ,
ɛ si ʒɛ dɛ-ʒɛ-rɛ kɛ lɛɔ tɔr-man-tɛɔ
so-ɛnt sɔ-la-ʒɛɔ: ka-ɛ lɛ tɔr-mánt du-
rɛ-rá, ʀ lon i rɛ-mɛ-di-ɛ-rá! [...]

The phonetic interpretation of Rimbaud's graphic system for French is relatively uncontroversial, except perhaps for the vowels that are represented here as mid-high *œ*/*ø* and mid-low *œ*, for which I have adopted Hermans' (1985) well-argued analysis. Earlier works had assumed, without discussion, the opposite distribution (in particular, Bousquet 1981).¹⁴

12 Other grammarians using similar bi-graphic editions are Ramus (1572) and Vaudelin (1713).

13 The lines are justified in both texts, which accounts for the differences in the disposition of words in corresponding lines. In rare occasions, the two spellings suggest different pronunciations, e.g. *treuer* and *tʀ-ʀ-vér* in this example.

14 In a non-committal paper, Señalada García (1998) reviews both points of view and refuses to take position.

Clérico (1999: 137) reduces Hermans' analysis to a simple «hypothesis» which she finds «excessivement rigide», arguing that «Il paraît en effet imprudent de parier sur une distribution [sic]¹⁵ de type phonologique entre les deux sons». Whether or not the two sounds were then in complementary distribution, however, has no bearing on the problem at hand. Rimbaud heard two different sounds for which he devised two different signs, and it is certainly legitimate to investigate on the nature of these sounds. Besides, there is no ground to believe that these two sounds were then in complementary distribution, as we shall later have ample occasion to observe; in particular, the pronoun *elle* (both clitic and non-clitic forms) is normally transcribed as <é-lɛ>, while all other words ending in *-ele*, *-elle* (almost 300 occurrences) are transcribed as <é-lɛ> – only the limited scope of the vocabulary found in Rimbaud's essay prevented there to be the minimal pair *elle* <é-lɛ> ~ *aile* °<é-lɛ> that can easily be reconstructed.

15 Probably to be read as «distinction»: Clérico (1999: 137 n.55) alludes to a putative merger in Modern Provençal of the reflexes of earlier [e] and [ɛ], which would already have been completed by the sixteenth century. Although this merger is indeed frequent among modern bilingual Provençal speakers whose dominant language is Southern French, the distinction is still alive in the phonological system of older speakers (Alain Barthélemy-Vigouroux, personal communication 2002, cf. also Barthélemy-Vigouroux & Martin 2000). Romance [e] often merged with [ɛ] in Old Occitan (Anglade 1921: 55) and Old French (Suchier 1893 [1906: 34-35]; Van den Bussche 1984: 44 nn.10-11), in particular before [l]. Mid-high [e] was nonetheless quite stable in *éla* 'she' <ILLĀ(M)> and always distinct from mid-low [ɛ] in *bèla* 'beautiful' <BĒLLĀ(M)>. Michel Tronc distinguished the two following non-rhyming sets: (1) the words *éla* 'she', *d'esperéla* 'spontaneously' and *améla* 'almond' (spelt *ello*, *esperello*, *amello* in Tronc's orthography) and (2) all of the other words endings in *-elo(s)*/*-ello(s)* in his spelling, a distinction that could still be observed in *Mirèio* (Mistral 1859). The phonetic identity of the rhymes belonging to the second set appear to result from a merger that affected proto-Rom. [-ella] <-ILLĀ(M)> as in *mamèla* 'teat', proto-Rom. [-ela] <-ĒLLĀ(M)> as in *candèla* 'candle', and later borrowings from either Latin or French, such as *crudèla* 'cruel (fem.)' <CRŪDEL-(+A)> and *naturèla* 'natural (fem.)' <Fr. *naturelle*, a merger that was never complete, however.

2 The pronunciation of Latin in Provence

The transmission of the regional pronunciation of Latin is certainly the least controversial example of a social habitus associated to reading practice, from which parallels may be drawn to understand how the pronunciation of French developed in Southern France. In the absence of true native speakers, the pronunciation of Latin had to be learned in school, together with its written form, with which it was always closely related in the minds of learners.

There apparently developed different regional norms for the pronunciation of Latin in sixteenth-century France.¹⁶ Bovelles (1533: 21 [1972: 95-96]), for instance, observed significant differences in the pronunciation of Latin *e* in towns of Northern France less than fifteen miles apart. Thurot's (1881: 76-77) survey shows that sixteenth-century grammarians also disagreed on the pronunciation of that letter. Sylvius (1531: 3 [1998: 207]), a Picard grammarian, noted that Latin *e* was almost always mid-high [e], except before *r*, *s*, *t*, *x* where a distinction was possible, e.g. [e] in *es* 'you are' ≠ [ɛ] in *ex* 'outside of'. According to Bovelles (1533: 21 [1973: 95-96]), also from Picardy, *e* was read according to a graphic version of the *loi de position*, i.e. as mid-high [e] in open graphic syllables and mid-low [ɛ] in closed graphic syllables. The examples given by Guillaume des Autels (1551), a native of Burgundy, obey the same rule, so do those of Théodore de Bèze (1584: 13), also from Burgundy, and those of Henri Estienne (1582: 14-16 [1999: 284-287]), from Paris. The latter, however, acknowledged other usages in which *e* was pronounced [e] in all contexts; he may have been referring to the usage described by Peletier (1550: 190; ²1555: 120), a native of Western France, whose observation, however, was limited to the *e* of *terra*.

The pronunciation of Latin in Southern France, as evidenced by Rambaud's transcriptions, was significantly different. The stress pat-

16 Major differences in the pronunciation of Latin among the main nations of Europe are also well documented (cf. Erasmus 1528 [1991]: 920-921).

tern conformed generally to that of Classical Latin, e.g. ^①*aspirationis* ʔa-spi-ra-si-ó-ni-ʔ, ^①*habemus* ʔa-bé-mu-ʔ, ^①*hominem* ʔhó-mi-nen-ʔ,¹⁷ a significant departure from Northern usage, where stress normally fell on the last syllable (cf. Erasmus 1528: 50, 69, 73, who noted the lengthening – ultimately associated to stress – of most word-final syllables in the French pronunciation of Latin). The *i* consonant, as in *iustum*, was pronounced [dʒ] in Southern France, as against [ʒ] in most parts of Northern France ([dʒ] may have been used in Lorraine and Wallonia, which at that time were part of the Holy Germanic Empire).

Latin *e* and *æ* are transcribed as ʔe in all of his examples, both in closed and open syllables: ^①*argue* ʔár-gu-ʔe, ^①*benè* ʔbe-nè, ^①*capta* ʔép-ta, ^①*debent* ʔdé-ben-ʔ, ^①*est* ʔe-ʔ, ^①*et* ʔe-ʔ, ^①*feri* ʔfí-ʔe-rí, ^①*habemus* ʔa-bé-mu-ʔ, ^①*hominem* ʔhó-mi-nen-ʔ, ^①*male* ʔmá-lè, ^①*malè* ʔma-lè, ^①*melius* ʔmé-li-u-ʔ, ^①*per* ʔpe-ʔ, ^①*que* ʔke, ^①*regredi* ʔré-gí-ʔe-dí, ^①*salve* ʔsál-ve, ^①*sequi* ʔsé-ki. The sequence *i+e*, in the only relevant Latin example, was read as a diphthong, probably [iɛ], although its status as a disyllable in Classical Latin was not an issue at that time.¹⁸ His transcriptions also show that Latin *o* was read in Provence as mid-low [ɔ], at least in tonic and posttonic positions: ^①*aspirationis* ʔa-spi-ra-si-ó-ni-ʔ, ^①*hominem* ʔhó-mi-nen-ʔ, ^①*non* ʔnon, ^①*Nota* ʔnó-ta, ^①*pauciora* ʔpa-ʔ-si-ó-ra, ^①*possunt* ʔpó-syn-ʔ, ^①*raro* ʔrá-ro.

The adoption of Latin *e* and *o* as respectively [ɛ] and [ɔ] in tonic position presented no specific problem from a phonological point of view. Table 1 represents the vowel system of Provençal as one can reconstruct it for the sixteenth century, which includes both [ɛ] and [ɔ] in its inventory of stressed vowels. The treatment of the same vowels – as well as that of Latin *a* as [a] – in posttonic position, however, was not as simple. It required a specific phonological training for Provençal speakers to inhibit their phonological filters that would

17 Rambaud's spelling occasionally notes the conventional grave accent on the last vowel of Latin adverbs, e.g. ^①*male* ʔmá-lè ~ ^①*malè* ʔma-lè, without explanation, however.

18 Hermans (1985: 116) finds evidence that word-final Latin *e* was still read in Southern France as a mid-low [ɛ] as late as the end of the nineteenth century; one cannot exclude, however, that it was stressed in such cases.

normally bring about these sounds to adjust to the reduced set of posttonic vowels shown in Table 1, or possibly to the diphthong [ej] that could also occur in posttonic position.

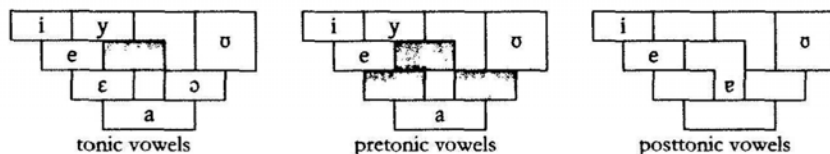


Table 1: Provençal vowel system.

The traditional teaching techniques provided the necessary training: learners were taught to divide words into syllables which were read as individuals words and to subsequently assemble them back into a single prosodic unit. This technique would apply equally to posttonic and pretonic Latin *e* and *o* that would thus be rendered as [e] and [ɔ]; the examples given by Rambaud in his text are, however, limited to posttonic vowels. One may surmise that in casual speech – if such a register was available for Latin – speakers might lapse into a more Provençal sounding of *e* and *o* with mid-high [e] and [ɔ] in unstressed syllables.

What little evidence we have indicates that while stressed Latin *e* and *o* in learned words have been regularly rendered as mid-low [e] and [ɔ] from the Old Occitan period (cf. Anglade 1921: 56, 82) down to the eighteenth century (Ronjat 1930: 134, § 76; 143, § 84), they indeed have been borrowed as [e] and [ɔ] in unstressed position,¹⁹

19 In Northern Gallo-Romance, stressed Latin *e* and *o* in learned words were also rendered as mid-low [e] and [ɔ] during the Old French period (cf. Suchier 1893 [1906: 30, 34]). Later on, however, [e] was used for *e* in learned borrowings, at least in closed syllables, eventually replacing [ɛ] in earlier forms, a process that extended to most of the learned vocabulary by the sixteenth century. Latin *o* in learned words kept its mid-low rendering in stressed position during the same period. The quality of pretonic mid vowels, on the other hand, is more difficult to determine. It is likely that during the sixteenth century Latin *e* was rendered as mid-high [e] in pretonic position as in *election*, except before *r* in closed syllables as in *liberté*, where it was pronounced as mid-

except for pretonic word-initial Latin *o* in open syllables. This vowel was not infrequently adopted as a diphthong [ɔy], a treatment Ronjat (1930: 297) finds difficult to understand. It could reflect a regular adaptation of a learned pronunciation [ɔ] of Latin *o*, heard as a fast-speech variant of the native diphthong [ɔy]. This treatment of Latin *o* is amply recorded by Rambaud in his reading exercises, which include such words as °*òdor* <o-r-dŏr> 'odor', °*òufenfèn* <o-r-fen-sèn> '(we) would offend', °*òuperén* <o-r-pè-rén> '(we would) operate'. This diphthong has the same representation as the reflex of unstressed Romance [au] and several other hereditary diphthongs in which [u] reflects a preconsonantal [ʌ], also recorded in his exercises, e.g. °*aurelhéjes* <o-r-ré-ké-dʒɛ> '(you) pull (s.o.) ears' (from *aurelha* 'ear' < AURICŪLĀM) and °*auberguén* <o-r-bèr-gén> '(we would) lodge' (from *auberga* 'inn' < °ALBERGA).

3 A contrastive analysis of the vocalic systems of Northern French, Provençal and Southern French

3.1 Provençal and Southern French

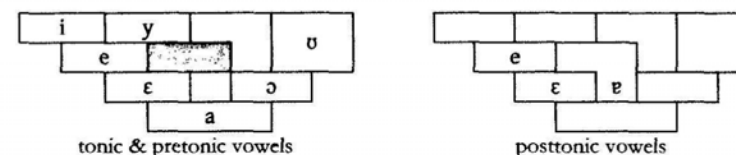


Table 2: Southern French vowel system.

A comparison of Tables 1 and 2 shows that Southern French (as appears in Rambaud's essay) had generalized the tonic vocalic system

low [e]. Latin *o* in learned borrowings was pronounced as mid-low [ɔ] in pretonic position in the sixteenth century and probably much sooner.

of Provençal to the pretonic position and lost the high vowels [i] and [u] from the inventory of posttonic vowels.

A distributional constraint barred low-mid [ɛ] and [ɔ] in Provençal that can still be observed in Modern Provençal,²⁰ where it is responsible for alternations such as *servir* [ser'vi] 'to serve' ~ *sèr* [sɛr] ([sɛr] in some areas) '(he) serves' and *portar* [pur'ta] 'to carry' ~ *pòrta* [pɔrte] ([pɔrte] in some areas) '(he) carries'. The same distributional constraint probably held in Proto-French, but disappeared after the monophthongization of Rom. [au] > [ɔ], as in AURICŪLA > [aʁ'relə] > EOfr. *oreille* [ɔ'relə], followed by that of [ai] > [ɛ], as in LACTŪCA > EOfr. *laitue* [laɪ'tyɐ] > OFr. [lɛ'tyɐ]. Alternations [ɛ] ~ [e] and [ɔ] ~ [u] similar to those of Provençal no doubt also existed in Old French, but had been completely leveled by the sixteenth century in Northern French.

One would be tempted to think that Southern French relaxed the Provençal constraints to accommodate pretonic mid-low [ɛ] and [ɔ] found in Northern French, as appears in *maison* [mɛ:zɔ̃] and *oreille* [ɔ-rɛ:l] in Rambaud's text. There are reasons to doubt, though, that the development of pretonic mid-low [ɛ] and [ɔ] in Southern French simply resulted from a (successful) attempt at reproducing these sounds as they were actually heard in the source language. In many other instances, pretonic mid-low [ɛ] and [ɔ] were modified to [e] and [u], re-creating in some cases alternations that might have existed in Old French, but had been levelled probably long before the sixteenth-century in Northern French, such as (*ils*) *servent* [sɛr-vɛ̃] ~ *servir* [sɛr-vi] or (*il*) *porte* [pɔr-tɛ̃] ~ *porter* [pɔr-tɛ̃] found in Rambaud's text.

20 Some varieties of Modern Provençal show a tendency to use [ɛ] and [ɔ] in syllables closed by [r] and [s], as in *perqué* [per'ke] or [pɛr'ke], *portar* [pur'ta] or [pɔr'ta] (cf. Barthélemy-Vigouroux & Martin 2000: 173, 198).

3.2 Northern French and Southern French

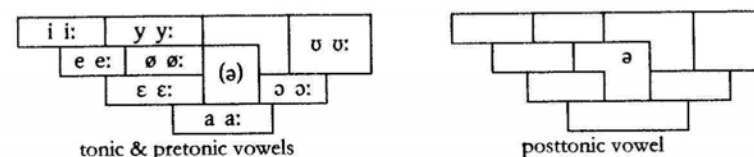


Table 3: Northern French vowel system.

Table 3 presents a relatively frequent vocalic system for the French spoken in and around Paris in the sixteenth century, limited here to the non-nasal vowels (cf. Morin 2000a; 2002; 2008b). Schwa did not appear in stressed position and was the only vowel without length distinction. On the other hand, it was the only vowel that could appear in posttonic position.

A major difference between the Northern and Southern varieties of French was the complete lack of length distinctions in the latter. The absence of any discussion about vocalic length in Rambaud's essay is surprising, as it was one important property of Latin vowels carefully examined in grammar schools,²¹ and often discussed by sixteenth-century grammarians for French as well (cf. Morin & Dagenais 1988).

The differences between the posttonic vocalic systems are also remarkable. Southern French retained two of the posttonic Provençal vowels: [e] and [ɛ] (or perhaps [ə])²² and added [ɛ].²³ Northern French unique posttonic vowel [ə] was almost always rendered as [ɐ]. Exceptionally, it became [ɛ] in all posttonic third-person plural verb endings.

21 Rambaud's writing system did not include any symbol for vowel length, which the reformer did not think important to specify in his Latin examples.

22 For convenience, I use the symbol [ɛ] to represent the probably variable quality of this non-high back vowel.

23 The other sixteenth-century Provençal posttonic vowels were [i] and [u], the latter is mostly found in verb endings. In Michel Tronc's poetical work, its presence is apparently restricted to the masculine demonstrative *aquésto* and a few words such as *nivo* 'cloud', including the Italian borrowing *penácho* 'plume'. The diphthong [ɛi] could also appear in posttonic position.

ings, as in *(ils) disent* <di-zent>, and <ə> in the verb form *(nous) sommes* <sr-mə> (possibly also in all other posttonic first-person plural endings -mes, not attested in Rambaud's essay, however).

In tonic and pretonic positions, the vowel qualities were almost identical for the Northern and Southern varieties of French, the latter missing only schwa and mid-front rounded [ø]. Pretonic schwa was rendered as either [e] or [ɛ], e.g. [e] in *elever* <e-le-vér>, *(il) fera* <se-rá>, *se* (pretonic clitic) <se>, but [ɛ] in *mollement* <mo-le-mán>, *(ils) allumeront* <al-u-mé-rínt>, *ce* (pretonic clitic) <se>. The northern vowels [ø] and [ø:] were systematically adapted as [y] in Southern French, e.g., *il peut* [pøt] > <pub>, *il veut* [vø:t] > <vub>. The same adjustment is found with French loans in Provençal, e.g. *Monsieur* > Prov. *Moussur* (Michel Tronc's spelling). Although this adjustment was phonologically motivated, one cannot ignore the potential influence of French conventional spelling in which the digraph <eu> could stand for either [y] or [ø] at that period, e.g. *peu* for both modern *pu* (past part. of *POUVOIR*) and *peu* 'little'.

There were no phonological constraints in Provençal that would require the quality of stressed Southern French mid vowels [e, ɛ, ɔ, ə] to differ from that of the Parisian norm (assuming that Southerners actually heard the sounds found in that norm). The match is less than perfect for the back vowels [ʊ] and [ɔ], which could in some cases be understood as a sign of an on-going variability in the Parisian norm. It is quite puzzling for the front vowels [e] and [ɛ], which appear to have been randomly adapted as appears in the examples below.

- Paris Fr. [e] > [e], in *(vous) direz* [di'res] > <di-ré>,
 Paris Fr. [e] > [ɛ], in *mere* ['merə] > <mé-rə>, *blé* [ble] > <b'lé>
 Paris Fr. [ɛ] > [e], in *mettre* ['metrə] > <mé-t'rə>, *elle* ['ɛlə] > <e-lə>
 Paris Fr. [ɛ] > [ɛ], in *sept* [sɛt] > <seb>, *voyelle* [vɔ'jɛlə] > <vr-yé-lə>

As we shall see, these correspondences are all but random.

4 Interpreting the French vowels *e* and *o*

The few case studies presented below are designed to show that the lexical distributions between <e/ə> and <ɛ> and between <o> and <ɔ> in Rambaud's transcriptions are related to the phonetic characteristics of close Provençal cognates and to reading strategies in the absence of such cognates. Specific reading strategies that account for these distributions will be proposed and progressively restricted. The complete data will not be examined in detail here, but all problematic cases will be discussed.

4.1 Adaptation of graphic *e*

4.1.1 Monosyllabic proclitics in [ə]

Northern French [ə] in monosyllabic proclitics was rendered as either [e] (in *de* <de>, *que* <ke>, *me* <mə> and *se* <sə>), or [ɛ] (in *ce* <se>, *je* <ʒe>, *le* <de>, and *ne* <nə>). Clérico (1999: 142) takes this as evidence that Rambaud's transcriptions are incoherent «et que la seule hypothèse qui paraisse possible, est qu'en l'absence du son [ə] ou [ø] en provençal, Rambaud perçoit dans la prononciation de ces clitics quelque chose qui ne peut être qu'étiré, non arrondi, mais dont le degré d'aperture est incertain». There are no reasons to believe, however, that Rambaud ever tried to transcribe the pronunciation of some Northern French «informants» and was misled in his efforts at transcribing the [ə] sound they pronounced – whichever way they articulated it – by his own personal phonological filters. Rambaud, like most grammarians of this period (cf. Morin 2000b: 95-113), certainly relied on his own use of the high language, be it a second language, which he largely shared with other bilingual members of his linguistic community.

A plausible origin of the distribution [e] ~ [ɛ] in these monosyllabic proclitics becomes apparent as soon as one examines their closest equivalents in Provençal. The pronunciation of the clitics *de*, *que*,

me, *se* with mid-high [e] in Southern French was also that of their Provençal counterparts, also written *de*, *que*, *me*, *se* in the regular Provençal orthography. The closest counterparts of *ce*, *je*, *le* and *ne*, on the other hand, are *aqueu/aquest*, *iou* [i u], *lou/va* and *non*.

This suggests an initial stage during which the oralization of written French was based on a reading strategy in which the letter *e* in French words (in specific contexts to be made precise later) was pronounced as in the corresponding Provençal cognate if there was a sufficiently similar one, and [ɛ] otherwise – [ɛ] being the default sound for that letter in the oralization of Latin as well.

The specific evolution of *me*, *te*, *se* in the Provençal spoken along the Mediterranean coastline, however, requires further discussion. In Modern Provençal, the clitic objects *me*, *te*, *se* are pronounced [me, te, se] almost everywhere, including Aix, Salon, Lançon and Esparron-des-Pallières. In Marseilles and in towns on the coastline east of Marseilles, including Toulon, Draguignan and Nice, however, they are now pronounced [mi, ti, si] (cf. Barthélemy-Vigouroux & Martin 2000: 29). As mentioned earlier, the modern isoglosses were certainly not as settled as they appear on modern linguistic atlases. Pierre Paul (1595), though born in Lançon and later residing in Salon, wrote *my*, *ty*, *sy* and only exceptionally *me*, *te*, *se*. This change may have taken place AFTER Southern French acquired its essential characteristics, in which case nothing else need be said. It may well have been in progress, however, and relatively variable in and around the areas where it is now localized. The distribution of the variants in *-e* and *-i* used by Michel Tronc, also from Salon, in his 1595 autograph manuscript, shows that both variants were still in use at that time, the first series (*me*, *te*, *se*) being systematically used before the enclitic pronoun *nen*,²⁴ after *si* 'if', and after *qui* (subject relative pronoun).

The simple reading strategy sketched above will actually account for most of the distribution of ⟨e/ɛ⟩ ~ ⟨ɛ⟩ found in Rambaud's transcriptions, as in the next case studies.

4.1.2 Second person plural endings *-ez*

Rambaud transcribed the second person plural endings as ⟨-és⟩ in future forms and ⟨-ēs⟩ in both present indicative and imperative forms (the 2pl forms for the other tenses are not found in Rambaud's essay). This distinction could not have been derived from the conventional French orthography, usually *-ez*, which did not mark that difference. It precisely reflects phonetic differences found in Provençal, however. In that language, 2pl endings were pronounced [-e(s)] in the future tense of all verbs, [-a(s)] in the present indicative and imperative tenses of verbs of the first conjugation, i.e. with infinitive ending in *-ar* < ĀRĒ, and [-ɛ(s)] in the present indicative and the imperative tenses of all other verbs. The reading strategy would assign a mid-high [e] to the vowel of the French future ending *-ez* as it was in Provençal, and the default value [-ɛ] when its Provençal cognate was [-a(s)], a pronunciation too distant to offer a valid model, and [-ɛ] as well when its Provençal cognate was [-ɛ(s)].²⁵

These distinctions found in Southern French had no counterpart in Northern French. In the high language spoken in Paris, 2pl *-ez* endings were pronounced [-e(s)] in all cases. An archaic pronunciation [-ɛ(s)] for the future could also be heard, but was stigmatized as popular (in this low register, the distribution was thus the opposite of that found in Marseilles).

4.1.3 Evolution of Romance [e] in ILLĀM and ĒCCĒ+ILLĀM

The second case study examines the reflexes of the stressed vowels of ILLĀM and ĒCCĒ+ILLĀM, which survive in Northern French as *elle* and *celle* / *icelle* respectively. These vowels had already become mid-low [ɛ] in the sixteenth-century Parisian norm. In Southern French,

24 The modern edition of Michel Tronc's work writes *n'en*, although *nen* is here a single lexical form as in Modern Provençal.

25 The posttonic endings [-es] and [-ēs] are usually written *-es* and *-ēs* in Modern Provençal; no graphic distinction, however, was made in sixteenth-century documents.

as appears in Rambaud's text,²⁶ *elle* was rendered as ⟨é·lè⟩ with mid-high [e] and *celle* / *icelle* as ⟨sɛ·lè⟩ / ⟨i·sɛ·lè⟩ with mid-low [ɛ].

This difference is related to the specific development of the pronoun/determiner system of Provençal, which lost (or lacked) the hereditary descendant of ĒCCĒ+ĪLLĀM,²⁷ although it retained an etymologically related *aquéla* [a'kele] < ĒCCŪ+ĪLLĀM. The latter, however, was too different to serve as a model for the pronunciation of *celle* / *icelle*.

Here again, the distribution of [e] and [ɛ] in Southern French falls out naturally from the reading strategy, with *elle* borrowing its mid-high [e] from the Provençal cognate *éla* ['ele] (< ĪLLĀM), whereas the stressed vowel of *celle* / *icelle* – in the absence of close cognates – was attributed the default value [ɛ].

4.1.4 Suffixal [ə]

The same pattern repeats for suffixal pretonic *e*, which had been reduced to [ə] in Northern French. Rambaud regularly wrote ⟨e⟩ when it corresponded to Provençal [e], and ⟨e⟩ otherwise, thus mid-high [e] is found in the ending *-eté* ⟨-etè⟩ (*fauffeté*, *lascheté*, *poureté*, *souffreté*)²⁸ corresponding to Prov. *-eta(t)*, and mid-low [ɛ] in the adverbial ending *-ement* (*affectueusement*, *aucunement*, *autrement*, *ciuilement*, *clairement*) corresponding to Prov. *-amént*, in the nominal ending *-ement* (*avancement*, *changement*, *commandement* ...) also corresponding to Prov. *-amént*, and

26 Three occurrences of *elle(s)* (out of a total of 18) are transcribed with ⟨e⟩. All of them are combined with the proclitic *qu'* into a single word written ⟨ké·lè⟩ – following Rambaud's general practice of combining mono-consonantal enclitics with their host. These forms are undoubtedly mistakes due to the interference of *quelle*, invariably written ⟨ké·lè⟩ (Prov. cognate *quála*).

27 The French fixed expression *à celle fin*, however, is sometimes borrowed in Provençal (written *a cello fin* in Tronc's poetry). As a determiner, *celle* was then obsolete in the Northern French norm. Rambaud used it almost exclusively also in that specific fixed expression (7 out of its 8 occurrences).

28 Mid-low ⟨e⟩ before ⟨-tè⟩ in *ancienneté* ⟨an·si·e·ne·tè⟩ is very likely a mistake.

in the ending *-erie* (*facherie*, *messagerie*, *tromperie*) corresponding to Prov. *-arie* (< Old Occ. *-aria*).²⁹

The thematic vowel [ə] of the future-conditional suffix *-er-* in the first conjugation (*accordera*, *allumeront*, *crieront*, *monstreroit* ...) also conforms to this rule. It corresponds to the Provençal thematic vowel *-a-* and is noted ⟨e⟩. The [ə] in the future-conditional forms of FAIRE, VOIR and ÊTRE, on the other hand, is not a thematic vowel and has a different source for each of these verbs. The vowel ⟨e⟩ of FAIRE (⟨fe·ra·i, *fe·rá* ...) corresponds to Prov. *a* (as in *farai*, *fara*), and the vowel ⟨e⟩ of ÊTRE (⟨se·rá, *se·ré·s*, *se·ro·ent* ...) to Old Occitan *e* (*sera*, *serés*, *seretz*, *serian* ...), which was retained in many Provençal dialects (cf. Barthélemy-Vigouroux & Martin 2000: 193) and became *a* in others. Both pronunciations were probably heard in Marseilles in the sixteenth century: Valbelle [ms. 1498-1539] wrote *sera*, *seres*, etc., and Michel Tronc (from Salon) *saray*, *sares*, etc. The future forms of VOIR also appear with ⟨e⟩ in Rambaud's text: (*vous*) *verrez* ⟨ve·ré·s⟩; the Provençal diphthong *ei* [eɪ], as in 2pl *veirés*, may have been close enough to account for his result.

4.1.5 Plural determiners and clitic pronouns

The plural determiners and clitic pronouns *les*, *des*, *mes*, *tes*, *ses* are transcribed with a mid-low ⟨e⟩ vowel, whereas their Modern Provençal equivalents end in [eɪ] (cf. Bouvier & Martel 1975-1986: map 549): *lei*, *dei*, *mei*, *tei*, *sei*, in seeming contradiction with the mechanism proposed here, if one assumes that the Provençal diphthong [eɪ] would favor the adoption of mid-high [e] in Southern French. Michel Tronc's texts, however, show that sixteenth-century *lei*, *dei*, *mei*, *tei* and *sei* were found only before consonants. They alternated with the variants *lous/las*, *das* (for both genders), *mous/mas*, *tous/tas*, *sous/sas*, predominantly before vowels, but sometimes also before consonants.

29 The data are insufficient to decide for *-eron*, which appears as ⟨-e·ré·n⟩, both in *forgeron* and *vigneron*. The former, with *faure/fabre* as the closest cognate, conforms to this generalization. Mistral lists two forms for the latter: *vigneiron* and *vigneron*.

The later, fuller variants must have been perceived as the closest cognates of French *les, des, mes, tes, ses*, all the more so as plural determiners were certainly pronounced in Southern French with a final [z] or [s] in all positions, as shown by the transcriptions $\text{d}\epsilon\sigma\text{-k}\acute{\epsilon}\text{l}\sigma$, $\text{a}\text{-}\text{r}\sigma\text{-k}\acute{\epsilon}\text{l}\sigma$, $\text{d}\epsilon\sigma\text{-k}\acute{\epsilon}\text{l}\sigma$ of *lesquels, ausquels, desquels* that Rambaud wrote as single words in keeping with conventional French orthography.³⁰

These cognates were not pronounced with an [e], which would account for the use of default [ɛ] in plural determiners and clitic pronouns.

4.1.6 Interpreting *ie* sequences

The *e* of *ie* sequences was always rendered as [ɛ] or [ʊ]. The only option left to the reader was whether *i* should be interpreted as a vowel [i] or as a glide [j]. The conventional spelling made it relatively simple to decide whether *e* in *ie* sequences was posttonic or not (see below). If *e* was posttonic, then *ie* was interpreted as the sequence [iɛ]. Otherwise, *ie* was interpreted as [jɛ], unless *i* was analyzable as the last vowel of a verb stem, as in *manier, maniement*,³¹ where it was read as a

30 Rambaud's writing system, as most reformed orthographies of this time (cf. Morin 1999: 88-89), does not indicate the effects of external sandhis. The determiner spelt $\text{d}\epsilon\sigma$ in $\text{d}\epsilon\sigma\text{ pe-da-g}\acute{o}\text{-g}\epsilon\sigma$ for *les pédagogues* could represent either [le] without final [s] as in Northern French, or [les] with final [s]; there is no way to determine. Similarly $\text{d}\epsilon\sigma$ in $\text{d}\epsilon\sigma\text{ a}\text{-}\text{r}\sigma\text{-t}\epsilon\sigma$ for *les autres* could represent either [lez] with a liaison [z] or [les]. The relative pronouns *lesquels, ausquels*, etc., however, are written as simple graphic words without space after the determiner, both in conventional spelling and in Rambaud's own spelling. Had the plural endings not been pronounced, Rambaud would probably have omitted them, as he did for word-internal silent *s* elsewhere: cf. *château, chaque, baston, bestes, étincelle, empêchement* written as $\text{ʃa-te-a}\text{-}\text{r}$, ʃa-ke , $\text{ba-t}\text{-}\text{r}\text{-}\text{n}$, $\text{b}\acute{\epsilon}\text{-t}\epsilon\sigma$, $\text{e-tin-s}\acute{\epsilon}\text{-l}\epsilon$, $\text{an-pe-ʃe-m}\acute{\text{a}}\text{-n}\text{-b}$ vs. $\text{pe-ʃi-f}\acute{\epsilon}\text{-r}\acute{\epsilon}\text{-s}$ $\text{p}\epsilon\sigma\text{-ti-fe-r}\acute{\epsilon}\sigma$.

31 This was not a general reading rule and it did not apply to Latin, cf. Fr. *aspiration* $\text{a}\sigma\text{-pi-ra-si}\text{-}\text{r}\text{-}\text{n}$ vs. Lat. $\text{a}\sigma\text{-pi-ra-si}\text{-}\text{o-ni}\text{-}\text{o}$. The transcription $\text{a}\text{-}\text{f}\acute{\text{i}}\text{-}\text{e-r}\text{-}\text{i}$ of Lat. *fieri* is unexpected. The rule was probably valid for Provençal. It was generalized to the reading of French, except when *i* was the last vowel of a verb stem in a verbal form, or before *-ment*, hence distinctions such as *marié* $\text{ma-ri-}\acute{\epsilon}$ vs. *mariage* $\text{ma-ri-a-}\text{ʒ}\epsilon$ mentioned earlier.

sequence of two vowels [iɛ] (but see below for specific restrictions before the letters *m* and *n*).

The vowel *e* in syneresis with a preceding *i* was thus always rendered in Southern French as mid-low [ɛ]: *pied* $\text{p}\acute{\text{i}}\text{-}\epsilon$, *piece* $\text{p}\acute{\text{i}}\text{-}\epsilon\text{-}\text{s}\epsilon$, *dernier* $\text{d}\epsilon\text{-r}\text{-n}\acute{\text{i}}\text{-}\epsilon\text{-r}$, *première* $\text{p}\text{-r}\acute{\text{e}}\text{-m}\acute{\text{i}}\text{-}\epsilon\text{-r}\epsilon$, in dire contrast with sixteenth-century Northern usage where this diphthong was predominantly pronounced [iɛ], with a mid-high vocalic nucleus.

This is the regular result of the reading strategies postulated here for words such as *pied* and *piece* that have Provençal cognates *pèd* and *pèça* distant enough to trigger the default reading – not to mention the identity of the vocalic nuclei.

The diphthongs written *ie* in the reflexes of $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ / $\text{-}\acute{\text{A}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ and $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÄM}$ / $\text{-}\acute{\text{A}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÄM}$, as in *darnier(e)* and *premier(e)*, on the other hand, are pronounced [iɛ] with a mid-high vocalic nucleus in Modern Provençal. If this were already their pronunciation in sixteenth-century Provençal, the reading strategies would predict [iɛ] to be used without modification in their Southern French cognates. There is no evidence, however, they had already reached this stage in sixteenth-century Provençal. The reflexes of $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ / $\text{-}\acute{\text{A}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ and $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÄM}$ / $\text{-}\acute{\text{A}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÄM}$ survive as [iɛ] in Languedoc according to Mistral's survey. The same result is not rare in Provence either (cf. *fumier*, map 261 in Bouvier & Martel 1975-1986) and in particular in South-Eastern Provence, where it is well documented (cf. Dalbera 1994: 104, 358, 527). This may well have been how they were pronounced in sixteenth-century Provençal.

In Michel Tronc's poetry, the reflexes of $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ / $\text{-}\acute{\text{A}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ and $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÄM}$ / $\text{-}\acute{\text{A}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÄM}$ freely rhymed with those of the nominal suffix $\text{-}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÄM}$, as in *folie* 'madness' and of the imperfect endings $\text{-}\acute{\text{i}}\text{a}$, $\text{-}\acute{\text{i}}\text{as}$... < $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}(\text{B})\text{ÄM}$, $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}(\text{B})\text{ÄS}$..., as well as with the endings $\text{-}\acute{\text{i}}\text{e}$ of learned words such as *effigie* and of French loans such as *amitié*. The evolution $\text{-}\acute{\text{i}}\text{a}$ > $\text{-}\acute{\text{i}}\text{e}$ in the two suffixes presupposes an intermediate stage [ɛ] for the final vowel. The stress also had to move forward, a process that may thus have involved the development of a «flat» diphthong [iɛ], i.e. neither phonologically rising nor falling, as one still finds in South-Eastern Provence for the reflexes of $\text{-}\acute{\text{E}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ / $\text{-}\acute{\text{A}}\text{R}\acute{\text{I}}\text{ÜM}$ as in *carretier*

[karetjɛ] (Blinkenberg 1939: 22, as discussed in Dalbera 1994: 116) and most other diphthongs. A flat diphthong [jɛ] in sixteenth-century Marseilles Provençal would explain the two variant spellings of *pitié* in Rambaud's text as *pi-ti-è* (three occurrences), probably for [pi'tiɛ], and as *pi-ti-ê* [pi'tiɛ] (one occurrence).³²

4.1.7 Overriding rules

The examples examined until now strongly support the hypothesis of a general reading strategy attributing the value [ɛ] to the letter *e* in French words that matched a vowel having the same value in a close corresponding Provençal cognate – if there was one – and [ɛ] otherwise. This was not the only means used to teach one how to read French texts aloud. Teachers certainly made good profit of the discussions by grammarians and spelling reformers and their own experience on how French was or should be pronounced, to give learners rules specifically adapted to the reading of French. These certainly included rules for the reading of the trigraph/digraphs *eau*, *au*, *oi*, *ai*.³³

32 Fr. *pitié* is likely to have been borrowed in Provençal, perhaps with a flat diphthong, as a substitute for hereditary *pietà*. Although Michel Tronc only used *pieta* in his poetry, he frequently used *amitié* (also a French loanword < Fr. *amitié*), which rhymes with *darrie* (= *darrier* < DÈ RÊTRO) and *proumettie* (= *promettie* 3sg imperfect of PROMÊTRE 'to promise') and always counts as a three-syllable oxyton. It is impossible to decide whether these diphthongs were falling, rising, or flat.

33 The digraph *ai* usually noted the sound [ɛ] in Northern French when it was followed by a consonant-letter except *m* and *n*, but there were exceptions such as *aide* and *païs* (or *pays*). The Southern usage described by Rambaud conforms to this usage, including the exceptions that had to be learned individually. Before *m* and *n*, the value of *ai* changed considerably during the sixteenth century. It first noted a diphthong [eɪ] or [ɛɪ] that eventually gave way to [ɛ] (more or less nasalized), first in the paroxytonic endings *-me*, *-ne*, as in (*il*) *aime*, *fontaine*, then in the oxytonic endings *-m*, *-n*, as in *sain*, and last when *n* was followed by *t*, as in *saint*, *sainte*. Long diphthongs, as in *haine*, were also retained longer. How these various conflicting and changing usages were integrated in Southern French is hard to determine, all the more so as earlier French loans in Provençal, such as Marseilles Provençal *aimar* < Fr. *aimer*, added another

eu, *oe*, etc. (possibly distinguishing the way they should be sounded before a consonant-letter, before a vowel-letter and in word-final position), for silent letters, etc. These could override the general strategies presented here for the reading of *e*.

The pronunciation of French *e* before *m* and *n* was definitely the object of specific rules. Most (but not by all means all) grammarians had long observed that the vowel *e* before a nasal coda³⁴ and not preceded by the letter *i* (or *y*) was usually read as [a], a rule that appears to have been adopted early in Provence, and fully observed in Rambaud's text, as in *souvent* sɔ-vánb. The further distinctions described in grammatical treatises between two kinds of *ien* were also observed in Southern French: (*il*) *tient* ti-énb, *sien* si-énb vs. *patient* pa-si-ánb. These distinctions had to be learned, in the absence of independent phonetic cues used by Northern French speakers to read [iɛ̃] when they knew that *ien* was monosyllabic and [iã] in most other cases.

The reading of French posttonic *e* also required specific rules, which were quite unlike the default reading rules for Latin. Each vowel-letter was attributed a uniform phonetic value in Latin whether it was tonic or not: in particular the letters *a*, *e* and *o* where read [a], [ɛ] and [ɔ] in posttonic position, as in ^①*plura* p'ú-ra, ^①*male* má-le, ^①*debent* dé-bénb, ^①*raro* rá-ro – which required a specific training for Provençal speakers, whose posttonic vowel system was limited to the vowels [i, e, a, u] (as reconstructed in Table 1) and the diphthong [eɪ]. They probably achieved this result by slightly stressing or lengthening the posttonic syllable, a prosodic pattern that may have extended to all non-tonic syllables, as suggested earlier.

layer of conservative pronunciation that influenced the regional French. Rambaud's transcriptions betray some likely influence of orthography, with a diphthong [eɪ] in the first syllable of *maintenant* me-in-tɛ-nánb, on the model of *saint* sa-ínb. The conservative diphthong [aɪ] of Prov. *aimar* was transferred to South. Fr. *aimer* ai-mér, (*ils*) *aiment* ai-ménb, etc. Rambaud noted a monophthong in all other cases: *main* mén, *fontaine* fɔn-té-nɛ, *trainer* tré-nér.

34 The identification of *syllables* in written words was a competence acquired early in school, including the identification of silent letters (cf. Morin 2008a). In particular double consonant-letters were usually read as single consonants, including *mm* and *nn* in many regional varieties of French (cf. Morin 2002).

With the exception of *e* in the verb endings *-es* and *-ent*, Southerners gave French posttonic *e* a specific pronunciation, probably [ɐ] or [ə], for which Rambaud devised a specific symbol (noted here *œ*). The conventional spelling system that developed slightly before the middle of the sixteenth century made it relatively easy to identify the posttonic vowel of most words of two or more syllables, as being that vowel represented as a letter *e* (without graphic accent) that was either word final, as in *homme*, or followed by a final *s* as in *hommes*. Provençaux unequivocally identified this vowel with the low posttonic vowel of Provençal, which corresponded to the posttonic reflex of Romance *a*, as in ^(p)*fagesse*³⁵ «sa-^aʒɛ-sœ». Similarly, Gratien du Pont (1539: f° xi, v°), one illustrious Toulouse literary figure, felt that Northern French speakers used the same rounded vowel, probably [ə], as he did – which prompted him to propose a rule for the identification of posttonic schwa as being that vowel: «escript par, E, en la fin dicelluy [mot], & la refonāce dudict terme termine en, O» (i.e. written *e* at the end of a word and pronounced as *o*). The factors that favored the identification of Northern schwa with the Occitan reflex of Romance *a*, rather than *e*, are probably as much etymological as phonetic. In most cases, the posttonic Northern schwas of nouns and adjectives correspond to the Occitan reflexes of Romance *a* in cognate words. It is also possible that to a trained ear schwa sounded more like a central vowel [ɐ] or [ə] than a front [e].³⁶

One would be hard pressed, however, to find a phonetic justification for the treatment of the verb endings *-es* and *-ent* noted by Rambaud. Southerners had definitely learned that the *e* was silent in 3pl imperfect *-oient* endings, as recorded earlier by Northern grammarians, e.g. in *(ils) auoyent* «a-vo^e-ent» '(they) had', and that the same

rule applied to some 3pl subjunctive forms such as *(ils) foyent* «so^e-ent» '(they) be'.³⁷ The pronunciation of the 3pl ending *-ent* as «-ent» with non-mute *e* in all other cases, e.g. *(ils) trouuent* «tr^e-vent», however, could only result from general reading strategies which equally applied to Latin ⁽ⁱ⁾*debent* «dé-bent». They also account for the *œ* of 2pl ending *-es* in *faites* (imperative) «fé-teœ» and *(vous) estes* «é-teœ».

All 28 occurrences of *(nous) sommes*, on the other hand, are written «s^e-meœ», with *œ* for mid-high posttonic [ɛ]. The sources for this pronunciation are not as transparent. The pronunciation of final *-es* in *(nous) sommes* may perhaps have been modeled on that of 2sg *-es* (of which Rambaud included several hundreds of occurrences in his reading exercises).

4.1.8 The lexical distribution between *œ*/*œ* and *œ* in Rambaud's work

The formation and transmission of the pronunciation of Southern French, as proposed here, would result in [ɛ] being relatively less frequent than [e] and found mostly when it is spelt *e* and corresponds to the same vowel in a Provençal cognate. The vowel [ɛ], being the default case, would be most commonly found when it is: (1) spelt *e* and matching [ɛ] in a close cognate, as in *sept* «sɛt», *belle* «bé-lœ», (2) spelt *e* and matching [a], as in *autrement*, *changement* (corresponding to [ə] in Northern usages), *abuser*, *gasté*, *amere*, *telle* (often corresponding to mid-high tonic [e] in Northern usages), (3) spelt *e* without any close cognate, as in *je* «ʒœ», *le* «lœ», and (4) spelt *ai*, as in *air*, *aïse*, *jamais*.

The value given to the letter *e* in learned words was equally governed by these strategies. Its value, however, depended on the degree of integration of the corresponding learned words in Provençal. Tonic *e* in learned words was always read as [ɛ] in Provençal and hence, also in Southern French, as in *règle*, *remède*, *grec*, *caractère*, *colère*,

35 Note the final *-e* used for the reflex of Romance *a* in Provençal on the pages printed in conventional orthography. Michel Tronc, on the other hand, writes *-o* for the same vowel, as in *finesso*.

36 One must remember, however, that Meigret, a native of Lyons, who spent many years in Paris and carefully described the sounds of French as he thought were spoken there, could never be convinced that Northern posttonic schwa was not simply front [e], in spite of Peletier's objections.

37 In Rambaud's text, posttonic *e* is not mute in 3pl indicative *(ils) voyent* «vó-yent» '(they) see' and 3pl subjunctive *(ils) ayent* «á-yent» '(they) have', which is consistent with the usage described by Meigret. Monosyllabic *(ils) aient* [ɛ:t], as in Peletier's work, however, appears to have then been the normal pronunciation in Northern French.

misère (whereas mid-high [e] was used in Northern French in most such cases). In unstressed position, *e* would normally be adjusted to mid-high [e] in loans that were fully integrated into the phonological system of Provençal and hence, would be pronounced in Southern French with the same mid-high vowel, as in *éviter* «vi-tér», *excellents* «ek-sè-lánθ», *expérience* «ek-s-pè-ri-àn-sə», *intéressé* «in-tè-rè-sé», *interprété* «in-tè-r-p'è-té», *liberté* «li-bèr-té», *perpetuels* «pèr-pè-tu-élθ», *temeraire* «tè-mè-ré-rə».

This also explains why most of the Provençal alternations between stressed [ɛ] and unstressed [e] had been transferred to the learned vocabulary of Southern French, e.g. *(il) allègue* «a-lé-gə» ~ *alleguee* «a-lé-gé-ə», *remède* «rè-mé-də» ~ *remédier* «rè-mè-di-ér», *respect* «rè-s-pèkt» ~ *correcteur* «kò-rèk-túr», just as they had been to the non-learned vocabulary, e.g. *(ils) servent* «sèr-venθ» ~ *servir* «sèr-vín» or *terre* «tè-rə» ~ *terroir* «tè-rò-ér». These alternations were phonologically motivated in Provençal. Their transfer to Southern French, on the other hand, was a phonologically arbitrary effect of the substrate, because the phonological constraint against [ɛ] in unstressed position had not been likewise transferred, allowing both [e] and [ɛ] to be found in that position, cf. *fèssès* «fè-sèθ» ~ *laissès* «lè-sèθ» or *desir* «dè-zín» ~ *plaisir* «p'è-zín» – mostly because the digraph *ai* was rendered as [ɛ] in unstressed position.

One also observes mid-low [ɛ] in unstressed position for a small set of learned words, such as *hebraïques* «hè-b'ra-i-kəθ», *Jemerie* «ʒè-rè-mi-ə», *misérable* «mi-zè-rá-b'ə» (cf. regular stressed *e* in *misère* «mi-zé-rə»), *misericorde* «mi-zè-ri-kór-də», *pedagogues* «pè-da-gó-gəθ», *procedants* «p'r-sè-dánθ» (cf. regular stressed *e* in *(ils) procèdent* «p'r-sè-dent»), *superflus* «su-pèr-fúθ», *superstitions* «su-pèr-ti-si-r'nθ» and *theologie* «tè-o-lo-ʒi-ə». One may safely assume that the same loans were also found in Provençal with unstressed [ɛ]. This supposes that there developed a probably more recent habit of adapting learned words in Provençal in which the letter *e* was pronounced as [ɛ] in all positions, just as it was read in Latin in all positions. This fashion would have only affected recent or less integrated loans, perhaps only among the lettered class.

Finally, instances of unstressed mid-low [ɛ] are also found before the suffix *-ement*, in the words *discrettement* «diò-k'è-tè-mánθ», *fidelement*

fi-de-le-mánθ and *nouvellement* «n-vè-lè-mánθ», that owe their origin to distributional generalizations. The availability of Provençal cognates – *discretament*, *fidèlement*, *novèlement* – should have made a mid-high « more likely. The divergence is motivated here by the large number of regular pairs, such as *telle* «té-lə» – *tellement* «tè-lè-mánθ» (Prov. *talamént*), that can be interpreted as a morphological productive process, according to which the adverbial suffix *-ement* attaches directly to the adjectival base. On this model, the adverb *discrettement* could have been reconstructed from its base *discrete* «diò-k'è-tə». This kind of morphological leveling is only observed before the suffix *-ement*, and did not extend, for example, to *discretion* «diò-k'è-si-r'nθ».

4.1.9 Some unresolved issues

As far as I can determine, the reflexes of *-ILĪŪM* / *-ICŪLŪM*, *MĪTT-* / *-ITTŪM*, and *-ISSĀM* are the only cases for which one cannot yet find a satisfying explanation for the presence of [ɛ] within the model presented here. There does not appear any motivation for the lowering of Romance [e] in the oxytonic reflexes of *-ILĪŪM* / *-ICŪLŪM*, *MĪTT-* / *-ITTŪM* recorded in Rambaud's essay, as in *conseil* «kən-sé-lə», *(il) met* «mèθ», *livret* «li-v'èθ», a change which did not occur, on the other hand, in the corresponding paroxytonic reflexes of *-ILĪĀ* / *-ICŪLĀM*, *MĪTT-* / *-ITTĀM*, as in *merveille* «mèr-vé-lə» (< *MĪRĀBĪLĪĀ*), *oreille* «o-ré-lə» (< *AURĪCŪLĀM*), *(ils) mettent* «mè-tent», *noisette* «no-è-zé-tə». Similarly, it is difficult to explain why Romance [e] lowered in the reflexes of *-ISSĀM*, as in *princesse* «p'ín-sé-sə», a change not generally found in the reflexes of *-ITĪĀM*, as in *lourdesse* «lur-dé-sə».

Romance [e] has usually retained its mid-high quality in Occitan. It became [ɛ] in most reflexes of Old Occ. [-ela] (< *-ILĀM* and *-ILLĀM*, cf. note 15) and [-el] (< *-ILŪM* and *-ILLŪM*). These changes occurred relatively early (their effects are observable in Michel Tronc's rimes) and are all directly reflected in Southern French, as recorded by Rambaud, who noted a mid-low « in *chandelle* «ʃan-dé-lə» (< *CANDĒLĀM*) and *estincelle* «è-tin-sé-lə» (< *SCĪNTĪLLĀM*).

No such explanation is possible for South. Fr. [ɛ] found in *conseil*, *(il) met*, *livret*, which was not observed before patatal [ʎ], [t] and [s] in

sixteenth-century Provençal, both in oxytons and in paroxytons, if one can generalize from the Provençal examples given by Rambaud: °*aparélh* «pa-réʎ», °*evélhes* «v-é-ʎeθ» '(you) wake up', °*auquet* «o-r-kéθ» 'small goose', °*aussét* «o-r-séθ» 'small increase', °*aubrét* «o-r-b'éθ» 'small tree', °*autét* «o-r-téθ» 'a little high', ^(p)*dolhete* «dr-ʎé-tə», ^(p)*filhete* «fi-ʎé-tə»,³⁸ °*anglés* «an-g'leθ» 'English', °*blésset* «b'é-səθ» '(you-sg) wound'.

4.2 Adaptation of graphic o and ou

4.2.1 General characteristics

The lexical distribution of the sounds [ɔ] and [ʊ] in sixteenth-century Southern French, as it appears in Rambaud's text, resulted from the same overall processes that fashioned that of [ɛ] and [e]. The divergence between Southern and Northern French, in this case, is less marked because the evolution of the non-low back vowels has to a large extent been similar in the Provençal substrate and the Northern French dialects on which the spelling has been modeled.

Sixteenth-century conventional orthography normally used the digraph *ou* for [ʊ] and freestanding *o* (i.e. not part of a digraph) for either [ɔ] or [ʊ], but preferably [ɔ] in stressed syllables. The vowels written *ou* in sixteenth-century French were systematically rendered as [ʊ], written *o* in Rambaud's text, with the exception of *soudé*, written «sa-r-dé», an obvious interference from Provençal *soudar* [sɔda(r)].³⁹

The basic strategy for the reading of freestanding *o* is similar to that for *e*. This letter was read as [ʊ] when the same sound was heard in a close Provençal cognate, and mid-low [ɔ] (the default value used for Latin) otherwise.

38 These two words would have had the same pronunciation in Southern French. The digraph *lh* indicates they were meant to illustrate a pronunciation found in Provençal.

39 His text also shows signs of a variation between the verb stems *trouv-* «t'u-v-» ~ *trouv-* «t'r-v-» of TROUVER, not specific of Southern French however.

The use of *o* and *ou* in conventional orthography – although fluctuating – offered, by itself, a relatively reliable guide to the pronunciation of [ɔ] and [ʊ] in stressed position, which made the preceding strategy nearly redundant.⁴⁰ It is therefore all the more remarkable that when Provençal usage diverged from that of Northern French, the former usually prevailed in Southern French, as one finds for *forme*, *ordre* (*desordre*)⁴¹ and *mot*.⁴² These words are transcribed as «f'r-mə», «r'r-d'e» and «m'v», with a *o* for [ʊ], on the right-hand pages in Rambaud's orthography, and spelt *forme*, *ordre* and *mot* with a free-standing *o* on the opposite page in conventional orthography (a usage which might have been that of the printer, not necessarily that of the author).

The Provençal counterpart of pretonic French *o* could be either [ʊ] or [ɔ]. The latter originates (1) from Romance [au], (2) the adjustment of word-initial *o* in learned loans, as mentioned earlier in section § 2, and (3) several vowel+[u] sequences, in which [u] was the reflex of preconsonantal [I]. The reading exercises appended to Rambaud's text contain many examples of the pretonic Provençal diphthong [ɔu]: (1) °*aurélhèjes* «o-r-r-é-ʎé-ʎeθ» '(you) pull (s.o.) ears' (cf. Prov. *aurélha* 'ear'), °*ancelet* «o-r-s-é-l-əθ» 'small bird', °*aurós* «o-r-r'ós» 'windy', (2)

40 It would not have mattered very much to Southerners, though, if freestanding *o* instead of *ou* had been used to represent [ʊ] everywhere in French. The parallel evolution of Central French and Provençal for these vowels would have allowed the reading strategy to achieve almost the same results. Minor differences would have come out only for the reflexes of Romance [au] in words such as *ouïr* (< AUDĪRĒ) and *louer* (< LAUDĀRĒ).

41 *Fourme* and *ourdre* with close [ʊ] appear to be hereditary regular phonetic developments both for Central Northern French and Provençal. The hereditary pronunciation became obsolete in Northern French at the beginning of the sixteenth century (cf. Thurot 1881: 244). According to Mistral (1878-1886), the hereditary pronunciation *fourme* was still in use in Marseilles Provençal during the nineteenth century. That of *ourdre* (also spelt *bourdre*) and *desourde* is recorded in the work written by Michel Tronc, Claude Brueys and Belaud de la Belauidière during the sixteenth century and has been retained in Modern Provençal in one of the acceptations of *ourdre* as a concrete technical term.

42 *Mout* is the only form used by Michel Tronc in the sixteenth century. The same form was still recorded by Mistral (1878-1886) in Alpine Provençal.

°*oudor* «o-r-dĩr» ‘smell’, °*oufensén* «o-r-fen-sén» ‘(we) offend (subj.)’, °*ouperén* «o-r-pe-rén» ‘(we) operate (subj.)’, and (3) °*aussét* «o-r-sét» ‘small increase’, °*aubré* «o-r-b’éb» ‘small tree’.

Unstressed *o* was rendered in Southern French as mid-low [ɔ] when it corresponded to [ɔy] in a Provençal cognate reflecting Romance [au] or word-initial *o* in learned loans, as in (1) *oreille* «o-ré-lè» ‘ear’, *trésorier* «tʃe-zo-rĩ-er» ‘treasurer’ (also written «tʃe-zr-rĩ-er», however), (nous) *osons* «o-zĩn» ‘(we) dare’, *composé* «krn-po-zé», *imposé* «in-po-zé», *oyant* «o-yánt» ‘hearing’, *poure* «po-v’è»⁴³ ‘poor’ and (2) *obfuscons*, *occasion*, *occupés*, *odeurs*, *offert*, *offices*, *omnipotent*, *operations*, *opiniastre*, *original*.⁴⁴ The same result obtained in *dommage* «do-má-ʒə», corresponding to Prov. *daumage* [dau’madʒe] < Old Occ. *dampnatge* (a change that took place during or before the sixteenth century under the influence of French according to Ronjat 1932: 214 n.2).

On the other hand, the French digraph *au* was rendered as [au] in all positions, e.g. in *haut* «ha-rt», *mauvais* «ma-r-vé», even when it corresponded to [ɔy] in a Provençal cognate. This represents the specific pronunciation attributed to the digraph *au*, also observed in Latin °*pauciora* «pa-r-si-ó-ra». A diphthongized pronunciation of *au* could still be heard in some Northern French dialects, sometimes [ɔʷ] with a vanishing off-glide and in free variation with [ɔ]. Similarly the French digraph *ou* was normally rendered as [u], even when it corresponded to [ɔy] in a Provençal cognate, as in *moutons* «mr-tĩn», *autre* «á-t’è».⁴⁵

43 But *poureté* «pr-v’è-té» ‘poverty’.

44 Mistral (1878-1886) records a diphthong in all Provençal cognates of these words listed in his dictionary: *oufuscar*, *oucasione*, *oucupar*, *oudor*, *oufice*, *oufirir*, *ouperacion* (in a quotation), *oupignastre*, *ouoriginau*, with the exception of *omnipotent* (where the initial syllable is closed; cf. the listed form *ounibus* for Latin *omnibus*, with an initial open syllable). As a rule, Mistral does not record *ou* in closed syllables; I have thus assumed that the initial mid-low «o» in *orthographe* «or-to-g’á-fè» had a different source.

45 Some medieval Provençal diphthongs [ɔy] and [ou] might have been monophthongized before the sixteenth century, as they had been in Northern French. This makes it difficult to assess the influence of the substrate in words such as *comp*, *couper*, *douce*, *pouce*, *souci*, *soucier*. In all such cases, the con-

Unstressed «o» is also found elsewhere in a small set of learned words: *devorer*, *hieroglyphiques*, *nonobstant*, *orthographe*, *protecteur*, *sollicitude*, *theologie*, *totalement*, which admits of the same explanation as mid-low «o» in learned words such as *hebraïques* «he-b’a’i-kè» discussed earlier (§ 4.1.8); they may be relatively recent loans, which participated in the new trend to preserve the reading pronunciation [ɛ] and [ɔ] of Latin *e* and *o* in learned words.

Elsewhere, pretonic *o* was regularly pronounced [u], as in *clochier* «k’r-ʃĩ-er», *correcteur* «kr-rèk-túr», *fossoyer* «fr-sr-yén», *office* «r-fi-sè», *provençal* «p’r-van-sáb». This led to a large number of alternations between stressed [ɔ] and unstressed [u], which had by then disappeared from the Northern French norm: (il) *efforce* «e-fór-sè» ~ *efforcer* «e-fr-r-sén», *mort* «mòrt» ~ *mortel* «mr-r-tél», (il) *ignore* «i-nó-rè» ~ (il) *ignorait* «i-nr-r-ò-èb», *note* «nó-tè» ~ *noter* «nr-tén». In this case also, mid-low [ɔ] was generalized to pretonic *o* before the suffix *-ement*: *longuement* «don-ge-mánt», *mollement* «mo-le-mánt», *grosses* «g’ó-sè» ~ *grosselement* «g’o-se-mánt», but not elsewhere, cf. *grossières* «g’r-sĩ-è-rè» with close [u].

4.2.2 Restoring the lost distinction [ɔ] ≠ [u] before nasal consonants

One of the most spectacular effects of this reading strategy was the transfer into Provençal Southern French of a distinction between the reflexes of Romance mid-low [ɔ] and mid-high [o], which had disappeared very early in most varieties of Gallo-Romance before nasal consonants. Thus, Northern French no longer distinguished between the reflexes of stressed Romance [ɔ] (< Lat. Ō) and those of stressed Romance [o] (< Lat. Ō and Ū). Examples of the former are *bonne* [bɔn(ə)] < BŌNĀM, *homme* [ɔm(ə)] < HŌMĪNĒM, *bon* [bɔ] < BŌNŪM, *pont* [pɔ̃(t)] < PŌNTĒM. The latter are found in (il) *donne* [dɔn(ə)] < DŌNĀT, *somme* [sɔm(ə)] < SŪMMĀ, *nom* [nɔ] < NŌNĒM, and *rond* [rɔ̃(t)] < RĒTŪNDŪM. The distinction was retained however in Provençal and in some North-Occitan dialects (Anglade 1921: 77; Ronjat 1930: 185ff, § 106).

ventional *ou* spelling would have imposed the pronunciation [u]. The diphthong noted in *fondé* «sa-r-dé» is remarkable in that respect.

The distinction is regularly noted in Rambaud's transcriptions of Southern French, with mid-low ω for Romance [ɔ] in *bonne* $\langle b\acute{o}n\epsilon \rangle$, *homme* $\langle \acute{o}m\epsilon \rangle$, *bon* $\langle b\acute{o}n \rangle$, *pont* $\langle p\acute{o}nt \rangle$, and high α for Romance [o] in *(il) donne* $\langle d\acute{o}n\epsilon \rangle$, *somme* $\langle s\acute{o}m\epsilon \rangle$, *nom* $\langle n\acute{o}m \rangle$, *rond* $\langle r\acute{o}nd \rangle$, just as it was – and still is – in the Provençal substrate.

In addition to the preceding examples, Rambaud recorded a pre-nasal tonic ω in *comme* $\langle k\acute{o}m\epsilon \rangle$, *contre* $\langle k\acute{o}n\text{-}t\acute{e} \rangle$, *diphthongue* $\langle dif\text{-}t\acute{o}n\text{-}g\epsilon \rangle$, *compte* $\langle k\acute{o}n\text{-}t\acute{e} \rangle$, *long* $\langle l\acute{o}ng \rangle$, *on* $\langle \acute{o}n \rangle$ (stressed in *peut-on?*), *(ils) ont* $\langle \acute{o}nt \rangle$, *response* $\langle r\acute{e}p\acute{o}n\text{-}s\epsilon \rangle$, *son* $\langle s\acute{o}n \rangle$ 'sound'. They all have Provençal cognates with mid-low [ɔ], either learned as in *diftònga* or inherited from Romance, with two exceptions: *(ils) ont* and *comme*. The Provençal cognate of the former is *an*, not close enough to serve as a model – which would account for the default reading ω . There is no direct explanation for *comme*.

Conversely, most Southern French words with pre-nasal tonic ω in Rambaud's text, had a Provençal cognate with tonic [ɔ] (probably [õ] before a syllable-final nasal), e.g. *non* $\langle n\acute{o}n \rangle$, *correction* $\langle k\acute{r}\text{-}r\acute{e}k\text{-}s\acute{i}\text{-}r\acute{o}n \rangle$, *façon* $\langle fa\text{-}s\acute{o}n \rangle$, *honte* $\langle h\acute{o}n\text{-}t\epsilon \rangle$, *monde* $\langle m\acute{o}n\text{-}d\epsilon \rangle$, *consonne* $\langle k\acute{r}\text{-}n\text{-}s\acute{o}n\text{-}n\epsilon \rangle$, *(il) moissonne* $\langle m\acute{o}\text{-}s\acute{o}n\text{-}n\epsilon \rangle$, or *personne* $\langle p\acute{e}r\text{-}s\acute{o}n\text{-}n\epsilon \rangle$. One can certainly add to this large class of regular correspondences the following pairs: South. Fr. *nourrison* $\langle n\acute{u}\text{-}ri\text{-}s\acute{o}n \rangle$ / Prov. [nuri'dõŋ] ~ [nuri'gõŋ] and South. Fr. *selon* $\langle s\acute{e}\text{-}l\acute{o}n \rangle$ / Prov. [sɛ'gõŋ].

There remain, however, two relatively small sets of forms that cannot be so explained. The first consists of the stressed stems of the verbs MONTRER, RÉPONDRE and RÉSONNER, e.g. *(ils) monstrent* $\langle m\acute{o}n\text{-}t\acute{r}\text{-}t\acute{e}nt \rangle$ '(they) show',⁴⁶ *répondre* $\langle r\acute{e}\text{-}p\acute{o}n\text{-}d\acute{r}\epsilon \rangle$ 'to answer' and *(il) résonne* $\langle r\acute{e}\text{-}z\acute{o}n\text{-}n\epsilon \rangle$ '(it) sounds', that all had a high vowel [ɔ], unlike their Provençal cognates: *mòstra* '(he) shows', *respònd* '(he) responds', *re(s)sona* '(it) sounds'. In pretonic position, however both Southern French and Provençal had [ɔ]. One may certainly assume that the Southern French pretonic stems, as in *monstrer* $\langle m\acute{o}n\text{-}t\acute{r}\epsilon \rangle$, *respondra*

$\langle r\acute{e}\text{-}p\acute{o}n\text{-}d\acute{r}\epsilon \rangle$, and *résonner* $\langle r\acute{e}\text{-}z\acute{o}n\text{-}n\acute{e}n \rangle$, had been generalized to the rest of the paradigm. The leveling did not extend outside of the verb paradigm, however, and did not affect the related nouns *response* $\langle r\acute{e}\text{-}p\acute{o}n\text{-}s\epsilon \rangle$ and *son* $\langle s\acute{o}n \rangle$ 'sound'.

The second involves a series of verb endings. The reading strategies suffice to account for high [õ] of 3pl *font* $\langle f\acute{o}nt \rangle$ '(they) are', which is identical to that of its Provençal cognate *són* [sõŋ] '(they) are', as discussed above for the mid-low vowel [ɔ] of 3pl *ont* $\langle \acute{o}nt \rangle$ '(they) have' in Southern French.

The problematic forms are: 1pl verb ending *-ons* $\langle \acute{o}n\text{-}s \rangle$, 3pl verb ending *-ont* $\langle \acute{o}nt \rangle$, 1pl *sommes* $\langle s\acute{o}m\text{-}m\acute{e}\acute{o} \rangle$ '(we) are', irregular 3pl forms: *'(ils) font'* $\langle f\acute{o}nt \rangle$, *'(ils) vont'* $\langle v\acute{o}nt \rangle$, and the $\langle \acute{o}nt \rangle$ variant of $\langle \acute{o}nt \rangle$ 'they have' found in 11% (13/121) of cases. As none of the corresponding Provençal forms could have been used as a model, the reading strategy proposed here would favor mid-low [ɔ] for all these endings in Southern French. The opposite choice could perhaps be attributed to the influence of *font* $\langle f\acute{o}nt \rangle$, the most frequent of all verbal forms. The analogical influence of *font* $\langle f\acute{o}nt \rangle$ is not surprising for *sommes* $\langle s\acute{o}m\text{-}m\acute{e}\acute{o} \rangle$ which has the same general shape, nor for *'(ils) font'* $\langle f\acute{o}nt \rangle$, *'(ils) vont'* $\langle v\acute{o}nt \rangle$ and *'(ils) ont'* $\langle \acute{o}nt \rangle$ that share with $\langle \acute{o}nt \rangle$ its atypical monosyllabic form. It must also be noted that Provençal has a very large number of 3pl verb forms ending with posttonic [-õŋ], making [õ] the favored vowel before a nasal consonant in verb endings. Tonic [-õŋ] could also be used at least for literary purpose in 3pl imperfect endings, a usage now rare in Modern Provençal, but observed in Michel Tronc's poetry, where *dizion* '(they) said' rhymed with *discreSSION*.⁴⁷

The existence of specific treatments for verb forms is not unexpected and does not minimize the remarkable fact that the regional French spoken in Provence acquired a phonological distinction between [ɔ] and [õ] before nasal consonants in stressed position, which

46 Note that in 60% of cases the unstressed vowel of this verb is also written α without a following nasal consonant, e.g. *monstrer* $\langle m\acute{o}n\text{-}t\acute{r}\epsilon \rangle$ 'to show', after the Provençal cognate [mɔ'stra(r)] (inf.) ~ [mɔstre] (1sg), cf. also Thurot (1883: 511) on Southerners' tendency to spell this verb *moutrer*.

47 Michel Tronc also used *dizion* a few lines below, where it is not required for the rhyme: *Proumettes-nous, dizion ley damos*. Dalbera (1994: 280) reports a similar usage in some Southeastern varieties of Provençal, as in [par'tiũŋ] '(they) left', where the ending could be either analogical or inherited from Old. Occ. [-iũŋ] (cf. Anglade 1921: 286).

did not exist in the model language. The lexical distribution of these vowels reproduces that of Provençal and would be unexpected in most other varieties of Southern French, the Occitan substrate of which does not know any such distinction.

5 Conclusion

The lexical distribution between [e] and [ɛ] and between [ɔ] and [u] in the variety of Southern French revealed by Rambaud's spelling is clearly modeled on that found in the substrate language. One can certainly dismiss Hermans & Van Hoecke's (1989) hypothesis that the non-standard distribution of stressed [e] and [ɛ] in Rambaud's work reflected some hypothetical peripheral dialect of Northern French in which the reflex of stressed Romance [a] in open syllable would have been mid-low [ɛ] in all contexts. It is quite improbable that there should have been any Northern French dialect with a lexical distribution of both stressed and unstressed [e] and [ɛ] vowels in any way similar to that observed in Rambaud's essay, not to mention one that would also distinguish stressed [ɔ] and [u] before nasal consonants. The Provençal substrate is the only reasonable source of the distinctions found in Rambaud's transcriptions.

There are no reasons either to believe that the Provençal features in Rambaud's transcriptions are of his own making – that they are, as suggested by Clérico (1999), imperfect renditions of some Northern French model the author tried to write down but was unable to recognize properly, hindered as he was by his own phonological filters. The split that allowed the development of a distinction between [ɔ] or [u] before nasal consonants that was totally absent from the source language, presupposes on the contrary the existence of active processes inducing the adoption of Provençal patterns.

These processes, I argue, are the specific regional strategies used for the reading of Provençal, Latin, and French. Learners relied on

their native knowledge to read aloud Provençal words, and would extend this knowledge to French cognate words when the orthography was ambiguous, in particular for the reading of the freestanding letters *e* and *o*. The transfers, on the other hand, were relatively isolated when the orthography clearly indicated a pronunciation different from that of Provençal, thus the digraph *oi* was not rendered as mid-high [e] in words such as *françois* ʔʁɑ̃-sõ-œw, although it corresponded to this vowel in the Provençal cognate *francés*.

The individual decisions taken by many learners would develop into a social habitus strengthened in turn by the formal instruction given in schools. By the time Rambaud wrote his essay, one may surmise that the regional form of French had become relatively uniform and lost the more conspicuous Provençalisms it might have had earlier. The pronunciation of word-internal graphic *s* in Rambaud's essay, for instance, conformed to the grammarian norm: it was silent in words such as *maître* ɑ̃mé-tʁə, *teste* ɑ̃té-tə, and sounded in *refister* ʁɛ-zio-tér, *manifeste* ɑ̃ma-ni-fɛs-tə, although [s] was pronounced in all of the Provençal cognates: *mèstre*, *tèsta*, *resistar*, *manifeste*. This distinction could not be derived from the spelling and had to be learned for each individual word. Apparently, compliance with the Northern distribution for [ɛ]/[e] and [ɔ]/[u] was not felt to be essential, perhaps because it was less perceptible than having [s]'s in the wrong place.

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DANIEL RECASENS

Articulatory and acoustic factors involved in the vocalization of dark /l/ and in /l/ elision in Romance

1 Introduction

Languages and dialects are known to differ as to whether they have a dark variety of /l/ involving predorsum lowering and postdorsum retraction and a low F2 at about 1000 Hz (as in some English dialects), or a clear variety of /l/ with a more anterior and higher tongue body position and a relatively high F2 at about 1500-2000 Hz (as in Spanish dialects).¹ The goal of this paper is to search for the articulatory and acoustic factors contributing to the implementation of two sound changes affecting preconsonantal /l/ in Romance, namely, the vocalization of dark /l/ into a back rounded glide (mostly [w]) and the elision of clear and dark varieties of the alveolar lateral. Both changes are especially prone to apply syllable-finally where /l/ is generally darker than syllable-initially and consonants undergo segmental reduction. In order to look for the most appropriate phonetic candidates of the two sound changes in question, phonetic data for preconsonantal /l/ will be analyzed in three Catalan dialects where the consonant differs in darkness degree, i.e., Majorcan (most dark), Valencian (least dark) and Eastern (moderately dark) (Recasens 2004; Recasens & Espinosa 2005).

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