Romanística sin complejos
Homenaje a Carmen Pensado
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 be­
came 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 Oc­
citan 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, a, o] in open feet
and mid-low [e, œ, o] in closed feet\(^1\) — that neither Occitan substrates nor Northern sources can explain (cf. Séguy 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 morphosyntaxe, 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 \(e\).

\(^1\) 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 français que [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 \(e\) in the endings -é, -ès, -ér < -ÀTÀM, -ÀTAM, -ÀRE «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 \(e\).
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. In this paper I specifically examine the treatment of the front mid vowels [e, e] and of the back vowels [o, a] 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 Marseilles (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 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:

In 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 Ier 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 translater la substance d’iceux en langage francçois». 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-
Brun’s analysis, however, may have been overly conservative.⁴ Ros-ťaing (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 XVIᵉ 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’ortografe et prononciation françois 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).
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).

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

7 I have standardized all Provençal spellings after the principles set forth in Barthélémy-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: *ê* and *ô* for close [e] and [o], *ê* and *ô* for mid-low [ɛ] and [ɔ] (my transcriptions are not reliable, however, for pretonic *û*).

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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:*

> «Si lon enseigne vn François, choisir de mots François: à vn Provençal 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 fouuent efcriuons vne chose pour autre, & vn langage pour autre, comme dit eft. Aucunesfois pensons efcrire de mots Prouençaux, & efcriuons de mots Latins, & ainû des autres langages: & nonobstant que foient bien différents en la signification & prononciation. (Rambaud 1578: 338)

> Auons auflî vn nombre infini de mots Latins, lesquels pouuons lire en deux ou en trois façons, comme ceux icy, *falva, fâbe, falva, fâbe*, deux defquels font 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 [ʃ] and [ɲ]. The teaching of French together with its conventional spelling, 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.

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 nagarīs 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.\footnote{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 aœ, joins the two elements of a stressed diphthong. Stressed monophthongs receive an acute accent, thus aœ notes a stressed vowel followed by an un­stressed vowel, and aœ 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.}

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) œ notes IPA high back rounded [u] (the symbol used by Rambaud to note this vowel), (3) œ notes the IPA mid-low back [o] and (4) œ notes the IPA glide [j]. Superscripting of consonants (mostly r, l) is used in lieu of Rambaud’s onset ligatures. The letter œ 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 œ notes a nasal «archiphoneme» used in coda position and representing a (probably reduced) nasal consonant [m], [n], [ŋ] or [n], depending on context (cf. Morin to appear). The letter œ (in syllable onset) and œ (in coda) are distributional variants — the latter also likely to represent a reduced sound. The two symbols œ and œ distinguish trilled from flapped rhotics. The symbol œ notes the affricate [dʒ] (only used for Provençal, Latin and Italian).

\footnote{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.}

\footnote{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 i’ay bien expérimenté», p. 312). Most words appear to be Provençal, including a relatively large number of verbal forms, such as bére, bêre, bêré, bèvre, bèvre, bèvre, bèvre, bêvèr, bêvèr, bêvèr belonging to the paradigm of «biure ‘to drink’» (p. 318, with Italian bëvèrètè 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).}
Rambaud's essay is essentially a «bi-graphic edition» with two versions of the same text – one in conventional orthography and the other in Rambaud's spelling – printed side-by-side on two consecutive pages, as in the example below (excerpts from pages 232-233).

When I cite a form, I first reproduce the conventional orthography versions of the same text - one in conventional orthography and the other in Rambaud's spelling - printed side-by-side on two consecutive pages, as in the example below (excerpt from pages 232-233).

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., trimet and d'vèrò in this example.

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

15 Clérico (1999: 137) reduces Hermans' analysis to a simple «hypothesis» which she finds «excessivement rigide», arguing that «Il parait en effet imprudent de parler sur une distribution [sic] 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. Rambaud 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 e-lé, while all other words ending in -èle, -elle (almost 300 occurrences) are transcribed as e-lé, only the limited scope of the vocabulary found in Rambaud's essay prevented there to be the minimal pair e-lé ~ aile e-lé that can easily be reconstructed.
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 [1973: 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’ ≠ [e] 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 [e] 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; 1555: 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 pattern conformed generally to that of Classical Latin, e.g. *aspirationis aopirasi-ōnio, *habemus habē-muo, *hominem hō-mīnē,*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 istum, was pronounced [dʒ] in Southern France, as against [ʒ] in most parts of Northern France ([dʒ] may have been used in Lorraine and Wallony, which at that time were part of the Holy Germanic Empire).

Latin e and a are transcribed as œ in all of his examples, both in closed and open syllables: *argu ārque, *benī bēnē, *capta cēpto, *debent dē-bent, *ēst ēson, *ēt ēon, *fīeri fīerī, *habemus habē-muo, *hominem hō-mīnē, *male mālo, *māle mālē, *melius mē-li-uo, *per per, *qua qē, *regredi rē-gredī, *salve sālve, *sequi sekī. The sequence i+e, in the only relevant Latin example, was read as a diphthong, probably [e], 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 [o], at least in tonic and posttonic positions: *aspirationis aopirasi-ōnio, *hominem hō-mīnē, *non non, *Nota nōta, *pauciora pa-r-si-ō-ra, *possunt pō-sy-nt, raro rā-tō.

The adoption of Latin e and œ as respectively [e] and [o] 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 [e] and [o] 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

16 Major differences in the pronunciation of Latin among the main nations of Europe are also well documented (cf. Erasmus 1528 [1991]: 920-921).
17 Rambaud’s spelling occasionally notes the conventional grave accent on the last vowel of Latin adverbs, e.g. *male mā-lo ~ *mā-le mā-lē, without explanation, however.
18 Hermans (1985: 116) finds evidence that word-final Latin e was still read in Southern France as a mid-low [e] 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 [ei] 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 [o]; 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 [o] 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 [o] 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 [o] in unstressed position,19 except for pretonic word-initial Latin o in open syllables. This vowel was not infrequently adopted as a diphthong [au], a treatment Ronjat (1930: 297) finds difficult to understand. It could reflect a regular adaptation of a learned pronunciation [a] of Latin o, heard as a fast-speech variant of the native diphthong [au]. This treatment of Latin o is amply recorded by Rambaud in his reading exercises, which include such words as "œudor œudé ‘odor’, œenfèn œenfen-e ‘(we) would offend’, œenperèn œenperèn ‘(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 [l], also recorded in his exercises, e.g. œurelhèjes œure-xèlèje ‘(you) pull (s.o.) ears’ (from œureilha ‘ear’ < AURICÛLÂM) and œauberghèn œauberghèn ‘(we would) lodge’ (from œaubergha ‘inn’ < œALBERGA).

In Northern Gallo-Romance, stressed Latin e and o in learned words were also rendered as mid-low [e] and [o] 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 [e] 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 iberi, where it was pronounced as mid-low [e]. Latin o in learned borrowings was pronounced as mid-low [o] in pretonic position in the sixteenth century and probably much sooner.

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

3.1 Provençal and Southern French

A comparison of Tables 1 and 2 shows that Southern French (as appears in Rambaud’s essay) had generalized the tonic vocalic system
of Provençal to the pretonic position and lost the high vowels [i] and [e] from the inventory of posttonic vowels.

A distributional constraint barred low-mid [e] and [o] in Provençal that can still be observed in Modern Provençal, where it is responsible for alternations such as servir [ser'viv] ‘to serve’ ~ sêr [ser] ([s]e[r] in some areas) ‘(he) serves’ and portar [pur'ta] ‘to carry’ ~ pôrta ([pôrta] in some areas) ‘(he) carries’. The same distributional constraint probably held in Proto-French, but disappeared after the monophthongization of Rom. [ay] > [a], as in AURÏCÛLÀ > [ay'refə] > EOFr. oreille [o'rejə], followed by that of [ai] > [e], as in LACTÛCÀ > EOFr laitue [lai'tjə] > OFr. [le'tyjə]. Alternations [e] ~ [i] and [o] ~ [a] 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 [e] and [o] found in Northern French, as appears in maison anezvo and oreille o-réÀe in Rambaud’s text. There are reasons to doubt, though, that the development of pretonic mid-low [e] and [o] 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 [e] and [o] were modified to [e] and [o], 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 (il) servent saʃtɛn ~ servir serviv or (il) porte qɔr'tə ~ porter qɔr'tən found in Rambaud’s text.

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 postonic 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, 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 [a] (or perhaps [o]) and added [e]. Northern French unique posttonic vowel [a] was almost always rendered as [e]. Exceptionally, it became [e] in all posttonic third-person plural verb end-

20 Some varieties of Modern Provençal show a tendency to use [e] and [o] in syllables closed by [r] and [s], as in perque [per'ke] or [per'ke], portar [pur'ta] or [pɔr'ta] (cf. Barthélemy-Vigouroux & Martin 2000: 173, 198).
ings, as in *(ils) disent *disέvτo, and * in the verb form *(nous) sommes *cméνo (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 [a]. Pretonic schwa was rendered as either [e] or [e], e.g. [e] in *tlevt, *(il) *rε *tσ, * (pretonic clitic) *σ, but [e] in *molemant, *(ils) *allument *alume*nt, * (pretonic clitic) *σ. The northern vowels [a] and [e] were systematically adapted as [y] in Southern French, e.g., *pεnt *pot > *pub, *(il) *vent *vekt > *vub. The same adjustment is found with French loans in Provençal, e.g. *Monsier > *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 [a] at that period, e.g. *pou for both modern *pu (past part. of *POUVOIR) and *pou ‘little’.

There were no phonological constraints in Provençal that would require the quality of stressed Southern French mid vowels [e, e, o] 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 [u] and [o], 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 [e], which appear to have been randomly adapted as appears in the examples below.

Paris Fr. [e] > [e], in *(vo] *dire *di*res > *dirtvo,
Paris Fr. [e] > [e], in *mer *mera > *mε *ε *ble *ble > *b'le
Paris Fr. [e] > [e], in *mettre *mettra > *mε *ε *ε *ε *elle *clə > *ε *ε *ε
Paris Fr. [e] > [e], in *sept *set > *σε *σ *voyelle *vojela > *vryε *və

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/e and * and between *o and * 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 [a]

Northern French [a] in monosyllabic proclitics was rendered as either [e] (in *dε, *que *kε, *me *mε and *sε *σ), or [e] (in *ε *σ, *je *kε, *le *dε, and *ne *mε). Clérico (1999: 142) takes this as evidence that Rambaud’s transcriptions are incoherent set que la seule hypothèse qui paraît possible, est qu’en l’absence du son [a] ou [e] en provençal, Rambaud perçoit dans la prononciation de ces clitiques quelque chose qui ne peut être qu’arrêté, 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 [a] 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] ~ [e] 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 aqoué/aquest, iou [j 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 [e] otherwise — [e] 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 Esparrondes-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. Barthélémy-Vigouroux & Martin 2000: 29). As mentioned earlier, the modern isoglosses were certainly not as settled as they appear on modern linguistic adages. 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, 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/p ~ o found in Rambaud’s transcriptions, as in the next case studies.

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

4.1.2 Second person plural endings -ez

Rambaud transcribed the second person plural endings as -ë in future forms and -ë 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 [-ë(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 < ÆE, and [-ë(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 -ëz as it was in Provençal, and the default value [-e] when its Provençal cognate was [-a(s)], a pronunciation too distant to offer a valid model, and [-e] as well when its Provençal cognate was [-ë(s)].

These distinctions found in Southern French had no counterpart in Northern French. In the high language spoken in Paris, 2pl -ez endings were pronounced [-ë(s)] in all cases. An archaic pronunciation [-ë(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 ÙLÀM and ÑCÈ+ILLÀM

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

25 The posttonic endings [-ës] and [-ës] are usually written -ë and -ë in Modern Provençal; no graphic distinction, however, was made in sixteenth-century documents.
as appears in Rambaud's text, elle was rendered as éle with mid-high [e] and icelle / icelle as séle / dsé-le with mid-low [e].

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

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

4.1.4 Suffixal [a]

The same pattern repeats for suffixal pretonic e, which had been reduced to [a] in Northern French. Rambaud regularly wrote [a] when it corresponded to Provençal [e], and [a] otherwise, thus mid-high [e] is found in the ending -été <ete> (fauffeté, lafcheté, poureté, souffreté) corresponding to Prov. -eta(t), and mid-low [e] in the adverbial ending -ement (affectueusement, auncement, autrement, ciuikment, clairement) corresponding to Prov. -amént, in the nominal ending -ement {avancement, changement, commandement..} also corresponding to Prov. -amént, and in the ending -erie (facherie, messagerie, tromperie) corresponding to Prov. -arie (< Old Occ. -arîe).

The thematic vowel [a] of the future-conditional suffix -er in the first conjugation (accordera, allumeront, crienyent, monftreroit ...) also conforms to this rule. It corresponds to the Provençal thematic vowel -a and is noted φ. The [a] 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 φ of FAIRE (fera'i, ferâ ...) corresponds to Prov. a, whereas the vowel φ of ÉTRE (séra, severeo, se-ro'ent ...) to Old Occitan e (sera, serès, seretz, serian ...), which was retained in many Provençal dialects (cf. Barthélémy-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) surgo, surès, etc. The future forms of VOIR also appear with φ in Rambaud's text: (vous) verrez <ve-réo>; the Provençal diphthong ei [ei], as in 2pl verrés, 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 [ei] (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 ei [ei] 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), mons/mas, tons/tas, sons/sas, predominantly before vowels, but sometimes also before consonants.

26 Three occurrences of elle(s) (out of a total of 18) are transcribed with φ. All of them are combined with the proclitic qu' into a single word written kélé - following Rambaud's general practice of combining mono-consonantal enclitics with their host. These forms are undoubtedly mistakes due to the interference of quale, invariably written kélé (Prov. cognate quâld).

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 φ before -tê in ânciennêté ansi-ëntê is very likely a mistake.

29 The data are insufficient to decide for -tron, which appears as -crênt, 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: vignèron 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 *dequès, a-vokélo, a-eokélo* of *lesquès, ausquès, desquès* that Rambaud wrote as single words in keeping with conventional French orthography.  

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

### 4.1.6 Interpreting *ie* sequences

The *e* of *ie* sequences was always rendered as [e] or [i]. 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 [*ie*]. Otherwise, *ie* was interpreted as [*ie*], unless *i* was analyzable as the last vowel of a verb stem, as in *manier, maniement*, where it was read as a.

30 Rambaud's writing system, as most reformed orthographies of this time (cf. Morin 1999: 98-99), does not indicate the effects of external sandhis. The determiner spelt *des* in *des pedagòges* for *les pedagogues* could represent either [*ie*] without final [s], as in Northern French, or [*es*] with final [s]; there is no way to determine. Similarly *des* in *des a-vèrtès* for *les autres* could represent either [*ie*] or [*is*] with a liaison [z] or [s]. The relative pronouns *lesquaels, ausquaels*, 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. *shaftem, chafque, batton, besfe, eftinelle*, emfemement written as *dha-teo, jàke, bärin, bèteo, eteinelle*, anpejemanto vs. *pefheris peotefeko*.

31 This was not a general reading rule and it did not apply to Latin, cf. Fr. *aspiration* vs. Lat. *aspirationis*. The transcription *@* of *Lat. *s*eri* 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* vs. *marriage* mentioned earlier.
3i included rules for the reading of the trigraph/digraphs and most other diphthongs. A flat diphthong [iæ] in sixteenth-century Marseilles Provençal would explain the two variant spellings of pitie in Rambaud’s text as [pitie] (three occurrences), probably for [pitie], and as [pitie] [pitie] (one occurrence).

4.1.7 Overriding rules

The examples examined until now strongly support the hypothesis of a general reading strategy attributing the value [e] 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 [e] 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 ean, an, oi, ai.

32 Fr. pitie is likely to have been borrowed in Provençal, perhaps with a flat diphthong, as a substitute for hereditary pieta. Although Michel Tronc only used pieta in his poetry, he frequently used amite (also a French loanword < Fr. amitié), which rhymes with darrer (= darrer < DE RÉTRO) and prometic (= prome_3g imperfect of promettre ‘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 diphthong ai usually noted the sound [e] in Northern French when it was followed by a consonant-letter except m and n, but there were exceptions such as aide and pas (or paut). 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 [i] or [i] that eventually gave way to [e] (more or less nasalized), first in the paroxytonic endings -me, -ne, as in ai, fontaine, then in the oxytonic endings -m, -n, as in main, and last when n was followed by t, as in main, main. 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

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 [e] or [a], for which Rambaud devised a specific symbol (notated 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 faigees saœssœ. Similarly, Gratien du Pont (1539: f° xi, v°), one illustrious Toulouse literary figure, felt that Northern French speakers used the same rounded vowel, probably [a], 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 refonâce dudict terme termine en, ò» (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 [E] or [a] than a front [e].

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) auxoyent aœvœœnt '(they) had', and that the same

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 finances.

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 Peltier's objections.

37 In Rambaud's text, posttonic e is not mute in 3pl indicative (ils) voyent oœœnt 'they see' and 3pl subjunctive (ils) oyent dœœnt 'they have', which is consistent with the usage described by Meigret. Monosyllabic (ils) aient [eit], as in Peltier'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 esier e-viten, excellentis oksé-ún, experience eko-per-fán-so, interíst di-tré-sb, interpré té e-pé-té, liberté di-bé-ró, perpetuels ope-re-tú-ón, teméranie a-me-re-téw.

This also explains why most of the Provençal alternations between stressed [e] and unstressed [e] had been transferred to the learned vocabulary of Southern French, e.g. (ii) alleugé a-le-γw ~ alleugue a-le-gé-w, remiđe a-remédô ~ remédier a-remédi-ké, respect a-re-pékt ~ correcteur d-kévrek-tón, just as they had been to the non-learned vocabulary, e.g. ‘(ils) servent sè-x-ventô ~ servir sè-qviô or terre dè-rô ~ têrrô a-te-ro-té. 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 [e] in unstressed position had not been likewise transferred, allowing both [e] and [x] to be found in that position, cf. jeffes de-sè-xô ~ laïfes dè-sè-xô or dfiger de-xô ~ plaifir qv-xô — mostly because the digraph ai was rendered as [e] in unstressed position.

One also observes mid-low [e] in unstressed position for a small set of learned words, such as hebreaiques òbe-ðrâk,w, Jemerie òe-ré-mfò, mijerable òni-se-râbô (cf. regular stressed e in mifere òni-xé-w), miferiscorde òni-xé-rikôrà, pedagogues òp-da-gô-ô-ô, procedans òq-v-xé-dâno (cf. regular stressed e in (ils) procént qv-xé-dént), superflus òpe-rfâ-ô, superstions òq-xé-tisi-sô, and theologie òe-olo-zô. One may safely assume that the same loans were also found in Provençal with unstressed [e]. This supposes that there developed a probably more recent habit of adapting learned words in Provençal in which the letter e was pronounced as [e] 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 [e] are also found before the suffix -ement, in the words discretement diok’ê-te-mând, fidélement di-dë-le-mând and nouvellement axve-le-mând, that owe their origin to distributional generalizations. The availability of Provençal cognates — discretament, fidélamént, nouvellement — should have made a mid-high ə more likely. The divergence is motivated here by the large number of regular pairs, such as têle dê-lm — tellement a-le-mând (Prov. talâmént), 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 discretament could have been reconstructed from its base discrete diok’ê-te. This kind of morphological leveling is only observed before the suffix -ement, and did not extend, for example, to discretion diok’ês-i-wô.

4.1.9 Some unresolved issues

As far as I can determine, the reflexes of -ILÔM /-ICÔLÔM, MÎT- /-ITTÔM, and -ISSÔM are the only cases for which one cannot yet find a satisfying explanation for the presence of [e] within the model presented here. There does not appear any motivation for the lowering of Romance [e] in the oxytonic reflexes of -ILÔM /-ICÔLÔM, MÎT- /-ITTÔM recorded in Rambaud’s essay, as in conseil kon-sé-x, (ii) met òmèt, livret òi-wètô, a change which did not occur, on the other hand, in the corresponding paroxytonic reflexes of -ILÎA /-ICÔLÎM, MÎTT- /-ITTÔM, as in merveille òmèr-vsè-w (<> MÌRÀBÌLLÌ), oreille òrè-lè-té (<> AURÌCÔLÌM), (ils) mettent ònté-tô, noizette òno-zé-tô. Similarly, it is difficult to explain why Romance [e] lowered in the reflexes of -ISSÔM, as in princesse òrin-sè-wô, a change not generally found in the reflexes of -ITTÔM, as in lourdesse dvi-dès-ô.

Romance [e] has usually retained its mid-high quality in Occitan. It became [e] in most reflexes of Old Occ. [-ela] (< -ILÔM and -ILLÔM, cf. note 15) and [-el] (< -ILÔM and -ILLÔM). 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 ə in chantelle òan-dé-lô (< CANDÈLÌM) and estincelle òín-sè-lô (< SCÌNTÌLLÌM).

No such explanation is possible for South. Fr. [e] found in conseil, (ii) met, livret, which was not observed before patatal [a], [t] and [s] in
The lexical distribution of the sounds [o] and [ɔ] in sixteenth-century Southern French, as it appears in Rambaud's text, resulted from the same overall processes that fashioned that of [e] and [ɛ]. 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 [o] and freestanding o (i.e. not part of a digraph) for either [ɔ] or [o], but preferably [ɔ] in stressed syllables. The vowels written ou in sixteenth-century French were systematically rendered as [ɔ], written ɔ in Rambaud's text, with the exception of soude, written ɔav-ɔd, an obvious interference from Provençal soudar [souda(r)].

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

4.2 Adaptation of graphic o and ou

4.2.1 General characteristics

The lexical distribution of the sounds [o] and [ɔ] in sixteenth-century Southern French, as it appears in Rambaud's text, resulted from the same overall processes that fashioned that of [e] and [ɛ]. 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.

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The basic strategy for the reading of freestanding o is similar to that for e. This letter was read as [ɔ] 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 ib 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- d'ɔuv--> ~ trouv- d'ɔv--> 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 [o] in stressed position, which made the preceding strategy nearly redundant. 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) and mot. These words are transcribed as d'or-me, d'or-dre and o-mot, with a ɔ for [ɔ], on the right-hand pages in Rambaud's orthography, and spelt forme, ordre and mot with a freestanding 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 [ɔ] or [ou]. 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 [l]. The reading exercises appended to Rambaud's text contain many examples of the pretonic Provençal diphthong [ou]: (1) ɔau-relejes ɔ-ɔv-re-le-jon '(you) pull (s.o.) ears' (cf. Prov. aurêla 'ear'), ɔunelet ɔ-ɔv-sel ɔ 'small bird', ɔauris ɔ-ɔv-s 'windy', (2)
When it corresponded to [ou] in a Provençal cognate reflecting Rôtèt 'small tree', <oY-b°aubrét 'increase', <o-yânt 'hearing', obfufcons, occajion, occupied, 'poor' and (2) pourer B°<po-v° before the sixteenth century under the influence of French according <domâ-3B>, corresponding to Prov. dommage in closed syllables; I have thus assumed that the initial mid-low <o> in orthographe composite 'we dare', (also written d'œ+-rifte, however), <o-ré-ÀB>s's 'treasurer' (also written ^e-zY-ri'eo, however), 'ear', [ma-Yvéo], even when it corresponded to [ou] in a Provençal cognate of these words. This represents the specific pronunciation attributed to the digraph au, as in (1) oreille o-t°-° 'ear', préseur a-te-ro-t° 'treasurer' (also written d'œ+-rifte, however), (nous) ours o-z°-° 'we dare', composé d°-°po°-°, imposé d°-°po°-°, oyant o-z°-° 'hearing', pour o-v° 'poor' and (2) objufions, occasion, occupés, oudors, offert, offices, omnipotent, operations, opiniastre, original. The same result obtained in dominage <o-mâ-30, corresponding to Prov. du mage <o-by'mad≥ < Old Occ. daimnage (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 d°-°-°, mauvais ma-v°-°, even when it corresponded to [au] in a Provençal cognate. This represents the specific pronunciation attributed to the digraph au, also observed in Latin pau cita ar°-°-°-°-°. A diphthongized pronunciation of au could still be heard in some Northern French dialects, sometimes [o] with a vanishing off-glide and in free variation with [o]. Similarly the French digraph ou was normally rendered as [o], even when it corresponded to [au] in a Provençal cognate, as in moutons m°-°-°-°-°, outre o-t°-°.45

43 But pourest d°-°-°-°-° 'poverty'.
44 Mistral (1878-1886) records a diphthong in all Provençal cognates of these words listed in his dictionary: bufe, fru-°, bucep, buu°, buuf, bufr, interruption (in a quotation), irpignastre, inrignan, with the exception of omnipotent (where the initial syllable is closed; cf. the listed formслим для 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 o-r-t°-°-°-° had a different source.
45 Some medieval Provençal diphthongs [au] 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 coup, couper, douse, powe, souc, souster. In all such cases, the conventional au spelling would have imposed the pronunciation [o]. The diphthong noted in soudé sa-v°-° is remarkable in that respect.
The distinction is regularly noted in Rambaud’s transcriptions of Southern French, with mid-low \( \alpha \) for Romance \( [o] \) in bonne dôme, bonne dôme, bon dôme, pont όντο, and high \( \alpha \) for Romance \( [o] \) in (il) bonne dôme, comme όσιν, nom ανόν, rond όντο, just as it was – and still is – in the Provençal substrate.

In addition to the preceding examples, Rambaud recorded a pre-nasal tonic \( \alpha \) in comme dôme, contre dôme, diphthongue diphone, compte dôme, long dôme, on όντο (stressed in pont-ωντο), (ils) ont όντο, response όρεστ-ωντο, son όσον ‘sound’. They all have Provençal cognates with mid-low \( [\alpha] \), either learned as in diphone or inherited from Romance, with two exceptions: (ils) ont comme. The Provençal cognate of the former is an, not close enough to serve as a model – which would account for the default reading \( \omega \). There is no direct explanation for comme.

Conversely, most Southern French words with pre-nasal tonic \( \omega \) in Rambaud’s text, had a Provençal cognate with tonic \( [o] \) (probably \( [a] \) before a syllable-final nasal), e.g. non an, correction оρέστ-σον, façon оσον, bonne δινόν, monde δινόν, conjonction δινόν, (il) monjonne moσσον, or parjonne όσον. One can certainly add to this large class of regular correspondences the following pairs: South. Fr. nορίσον / Prov. [norı˙dön] ~ [norı˙göñ] and South. Fr. felon όσιν / Prov. [se˙göñ].

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) monfrent мοσσον ‘(they) show’, réjponde όρεστ-ωντο ‘to answer’ and (il) рέйjonе όσιν ‘(it) sounds’, that all had a high vowel \( [\alpha] \), unlike their Provençal cognates: мοσσа ‘(he) shows’, рéjpond ‘(he) responds’, re(с)и́н ‘(it) sounds’. In pretonic position, however both Southern French and Provençal had \( [\omega] \). One may certainly assume that the Southern French pretonic stems, as in monfπer мοσσον, рéjpondre

46 Note that in 60% of cases the unstressed vowel of this verb is also written \( \omega \) without a following nasal consonant, e.g. monfπερ мοσσον ‘to show’, after the Provençal cognate мοσσа(р) (inf.) ~ [mastre] (1sg), cf. also Thurot (1883: 511) on Southerners’ tendency to spell this verb montrer.

47 Michel Tronc also used дисъон a few lines below, where it is not required for the rhyme: PrononTer-nos, disjon by damos. Dalbera (1994: 280) reports a similar usage in some Southeastern varieties of Provençal, as in [par'tlûrj] ‘(they) left’, where the ending could be either analogical or inherited from Old. Occ. ['tûn] (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 [e] and between [o] and [a] 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 [e] 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 [e] 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 [e] vowels in any way similar to that observed in Rambaud’s essay, not to mention one that would also distinguish stressed [o] and [a] 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 [a] or [e] 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 français d’ansœœ, although it corresponded to this vowel in the Provençal cognate franœœ.

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 grammatical norm: it was silent in words such as maistre mê‘tw, teête atete, and sounded in refisf‘t reéstæt, manifœœ anâniœœ, although [s] was pronounced in all of the Provençal cognates: mîstre, està, reisestar, manifœœ. 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 [e]/[e] and [o]/[a] was not felt to be essential, perhaps because it was less perceptible than having [s]’s in the wrong place.

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penultimate correction of Rambaud’s computer database (2001) and her exploring with me an earlier hypothesis I made about the distribution of [e] ~ [e] (Daoust 2003), which, however, must be abandoned in view of the more extensive data examined here. This study is part of a long-term research on the history of French, subsidized in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Government of Québec-FCAR, which made possible the hiring of Anne Rochette, Richard Desrochers and Sophie Daoust. A large part of this research was conducted while the author was on Sabbatical leave from the Université de Montréal and benefited from a fellowship granted by the Camargo Foundation in 2002. The final stage was completed as part of the project Modeling Change: The Paths of French, directed by F. Martineau (SSHRC grant MCRI 412-2004-1002).

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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). 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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