

## CHAPTER I

*Continuity and change from Latin to Romance**Nigel Vincent***I. The periods of Latin**

Anyone whose concern is with patterns of continuity and change, in other words with history, whether of states and societies or of literature and language, is faced with a paradox: it is hard, if not impossible, to study the topic without narrowing the focus to a given timespan or period, but at the same time defining a period and assigning boundaries inevitably involves a good measure of arbitrariness. Time does not come pre-divided into periods or units, and hence, as Hunter (2008: 14) observes, ‘periodisation and the rise of scholarship can ... hardly be separated’. Perhaps inevitably, the point of departure in such divisions tends to be chronological, but again in the words of Hunter (2008: 15), ‘the vocabulary of periodisation turns out (unsurprisingly) to have as much to do with description as with chronology’. At least, however, political, social and literary developments and change can be linked to specific and datable occurrences, individuals and works, and these have served as natural breakpoints in the unravelling of chronology. Thus, in the field of history scholars have long operated with period labels conveniently tailored to major events, so that historians of Britain may study the ‘long eighteenth century’, beginning with the Glorious Revolution in 1688 and ending with the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Or again world history may be narrated within the confines of the ‘short twentieth century’ running from the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Literary and cultural historians may also make use of chronological divisions but in addition have recourse to labels such as the Enlightenment or Romanticism which connect periods of time with particular artistic practices or currents of thought. In Italy the names of the centuries come with capital letters – Duecento, Trecento, Quattrocento and so on – and are indicative as much, if not more, of cultural trends as they are of the passage of time. This division has been carried over into the study of the history

of the Italian language. Thus, Migliorini's classic *Storia della lingua italiana* (1962) uses these same period divisions as chapter headings, but only once the Italian language has, so to speak, got going. Before that, his narrative opens with three chapters titled respectively 'La latinità italiana in età imperiale', 'Tra il latino e l'italiano (476–960)' and 'I primordi (960–1225)' before moving on to the Duecento. Strikingly, he then steps aside from purely chronological labels to devote a whole chapter to Dante before resuming with the Trecento and subsequent centuries. The Italian case is germane to the issues addressed by the contributors to the present volume in a number of respects. First, the blend of chronological and cultural labels for periods is to be found in distinctions such as early and late Latin when contrasted with classical and vulgar Latin. Second, we encounter pseudo-precise datings linked either to a specific event – AD 476 as the culmination of the Visigothic conquest of Italy and the fall of the Roman Empire in the West – or to the first texts agreed to be in the language, namely the so-called *Placiti cassinesi* datable to the years AD 960–3. This last raises in turn a third problem, that of beginnings and transitions in the history of a language.

For many languages, for example French and English, the traditional periodisations imply a linear diachronic sequence from Old through Middle to Modern, albeit with some argument about where to draw the boundaries and whether sub-categories such as Early Modern and the like need to be recognised. Typically, these periods are linked both to changes within the internal systems of the language in question and to external socio-historical developments. Indeed, these sub-divisions have often become so well established that the languages are treated as separate entities with their own grammars and dictionaries, university courses and even academic chairs and learned societies.

Of necessity, the start of the first of any such chronological stages is determined by the date of the earliest attestations, but also by an *a priori* decision that a change of name is warranted. This in itself is a decision taken sometimes by scholars and sometimes by the communities themselves. There is no intrinsic reason why, rather than speak of Italian, we should not speak of Modern Latin just as we speak of Modern Greek. Thus, Pulgram (2001: 353), in describing his own breakdown of the history of Latin and Romance writes: 'My S(poken)L(atIn) ... encompasses collectively all non-W(ritten)L speeches, beginning with the earliest Latin records and concluding with the modern Romance dialects (if one regards, as surely one may, Romance as Modern Latin)'.<sup>1</sup> In the case of French, for

<sup>1</sup> On the question of names and history, see Wright (2013) and references there.

instance, the first document to bear that name is conventionally taken to be the *Serments de Strasbourg* (Strasbourg Oaths), which were publicly proclaimed in the presence of the opposing armies on 14 February 842 *in teudisca lingua* by the French king Charles the Bald and *in romana lingua* by Louis II of Bavaria. However, as Buridant (2000: 23) observes, this text was scarcely representative of the everyday language at that time since both versions bear ‘une empreinte latine incontestable’. Buridant goes on to distinguish the oldest French, from this text until approximately 1130, and what he calls ‘classical’ Old French extending from the latter date until the beginning of the fourteenth century.

The difficulty of establishing the boundary between Latin and early Romance is even clearer in the late eighth-/early ninth-century text known as the *Indovinello veronese* ‘Veronese riddle’ and reproduced here in (1):

- (1) Se pareba boves, alba pratalia araba,  
 et albo versorio teneba, et negro semen seminaba.  
 ‘It (the hand) seemed like oxen, it ploughed white fields  
 and held a white plough and sowed black seed.’

This riddle is included in the volume edited by Dionisotti and Grayson (1965) under the title *Early Italian Texts*. However, as they acknowledge, it is dubious whether it is really to be accounted a genuinely Italian text, being better seen, in their words, as one written in ‘a Latin strongly influenced by and permeated with the vernacular’.

Things look rather different in the case of the aforementioned *Placiti*, one of which is reproduced in (2):

- (2) Ille autem, tenens in manum predicta abbreviatura, et cum alia manu tangens eam, et testificando dixit: *Sao ko kelle terre, per kelle fini que ki contene, trenta anni le possette parte sancti Benedicti.*  
 ‘He then, holding in his hand the aforementioned document, and with the other hand touching it, and bearing witness said: ‘I know that these lands, within the bounds that are herein contained, the party of St Benedict has owned them for thirty years.’

In this text, there is an apparently sharp juxtaposition between the Latin of the court record and the transcription of the vernacular inserted as the verbatim statement of the witness and designed to be heard and understood by all those in attendance whatever their level of education. However, closer inspection reveals not only Latinisms in the vernacular such as *parte sancti Benedicti* but, so to speak, vernacularisms in the Latin. Thus, beside the regular use of the present participle in *tenens* and *tangens*,

we have *testificando dixit* where the function of the gerund is more similar to the so-called *gerundio* in modern Italian. Contrast, for example, the frequent biblical usage in which two verbs of saying or replying are combined as *responderunt illi dicentes* (Mark 8.28) and *loquebatur per tres menses disputans et suadens* (Acts 19.8) and where, as expected, the verb accompanying the finite form is in the present participle and not the gerund.<sup>2</sup> The contributions to the present volume investigate numerous examples of this kind in which either a Latin usage seems to depart from classical norms and prefigure an attested Romance pattern or conversely a Romance usage appears to hark back to a much earlier stage of Latin.

What we have called the periodisation paradox is particularly in evidence when the subject matter is language since by common consent the processes and mechanisms of linguistic change are gradual and ever-present. This is one of the arguments given against over-reliance on labels such as ‘late Latin’ in Adams (2011: 257). There may be specific events such as the birth of a major literary figure or the discovery of newer and earlier texts, but the datings remain to some degree arbitrary and subject to change as reputations rise or fall and new discoveries are made: one only has to think of the toing and froing over the admissibility of the Praenestine fibula as the earliest attestation of Latin or the waxing and waning of Dante’s reputation over the centuries. By contrast, at the everyday level language change is ongoing and inexorable. This interaction – and possibly conflict – between the passing of time and the norms of society and culture is to be seen in the labels traditionally used to identify different varieties of Latin. These fall, as we have said, into two broad categories, which we may call chronological (early, archaic, late and the like) and socio-cultural (classical, silver, vulgar). Although the proliferation of and interactions between such labels is characteristic of modern scholarship, distinctions of this kind are already to be found in the ancient world in, for example, the contrast between *sermo urbanus* and *sermo rusticus*, the reflections on archaism by writers like Aulus Gellius and the concept of *latinitas* (Chahoud 2007, Burton 2009). Since different scholars and scholarly traditions draw on different terms or, and even more confusingly, use the same term but mean different things by it, we will begin by reviewing some of the common usages and distinctions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For more discussion of this kind of interaction between the vernacular and Latin in a medieval text, see Vincent (2007).

<sup>3</sup> In what follows we will stick in the main to the English terms but the same issues arise in most other languages: *latino tardo* and *latin tardif* beside ‘late Latin’ or *Früblatein* and *prisca latinitas*

Rather than begin at the beginning, let us start with the one that all those who have studied Latin at any stage in their lives will have encountered, namely classical Latin (CL).<sup>4</sup> As the name suggests, this is in essence a concept based on register and style as much as on linguistic structure or, in another terminology, it is a diastratic (based on social class and education) and diaphasic (based on register and context) concept rather than a diachronic or diatopic one. The idea of a fixed and standardised language with a codified grammar began to ‘crystallise’, to use Rosén’s (1999) felicitous term, even in Cicero’s lifetime. Probably already by the time of Quintilian (Neumann 1977, Untermann 1977), Cicero, and subsequently Caesar, had come to be enshrined as the leading models of classical usage. These norms have also had their influence on modern editors, who have on occasion chosen to emend the transmitted text in order to ensure conformity with the prescriptive rule. Pinkster (1969), for example, considers the effect of this over-obedience to inherited norms in respect of the grammar of co-ordination while Adams (2013: 752–61) assesses its consequences in the domain of indirect questions.

As a point of reference for the later scholarly and grammar writing tradition, CL is therefore as much to do with the rhetorical organisation of the sentence and period and the choice of vocabulary as it is with grammar or (morpho-)syntax narrowly defined. It has also been susceptible to quite wide differences in the chronological bounds that scholars have put on it. For the purposes of their historical overview, Baldi and Cuzzolin (2009: 11) restrict CL to the time from 90 BC to the death of Augustus in AD 14, a lead which is followed by Pinkster (2015). By contrast, Weiss (2009: 23–4), while retaining approximately the same starting point, allows the term to encompass texts down to the third and fourth centuries AD, a usage which is adopted, with acknowledgement to Weiss, by de Vaan (2008: 14). Baldi and Cuzzolin then use the label silver Latin for the period from AD 14 to 200, the latter date for them constituting the start of the late Latin era which runs until approx 600. In fact the end of the sixth/beginning of the seventh century represents for most authorities the close of the late Latin period. Contributors to the present volume when they use the term late Latin follow the same chronological sequence as Weiss, which is also that represented in classic works such as Löfstedt (1959).

beside ‘early Latin’ and so forth. Fuller discussions are to be found in the relevant chapters in part III of Clackson (2011b).

<sup>4</sup> Here and throughout we will eschew initial capitals for labels like ‘classical’ and ‘late’ except when quoting directly from a particular scholar. We will however from time to time use capitalised abbreviations such as CL and LL.

When it comes to the period labelled as ‘late’, within its broad timespan Weiss proposes a breakdown into three distinct phases, namely:

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- i) third–fourth centuries
  - ii) fifth–sixth centuries
  - iii) sixth–seventh centuries (which he labels ‘Merovingian’)
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This chronological sub-classification also encapsulates three issues which have a socio-cultural dimension, and which are relevant to the themes addressed in the following chapters.

The first, and perhaps the largest in terms of the literature that has been devoted to it, concerns the status, if any, to be attributed to the concept of vulgar Latin (VL). In origin, as the expression itself suggests, it designated a variety defined in social or educational terms, but in modern usage it is often written about as if it were a distinct language from CL, with its own handbooks and textbooks, perhaps most notably Herman (1967) and Väänänen (1981). The scholarly link to late Latin is to be seen in the existence of the Comité International pour l’Étude du Latin Vulgaire et Tardif, which organises a regular conference series and proceedings (see most recently Molinelli *et al.* 2014). From there it is but a short step to seeing VL as the successor to CL as in the most recent proposal for a periodisation of Latin, that of Adamik (2015), who distinguishes and names the following stages:

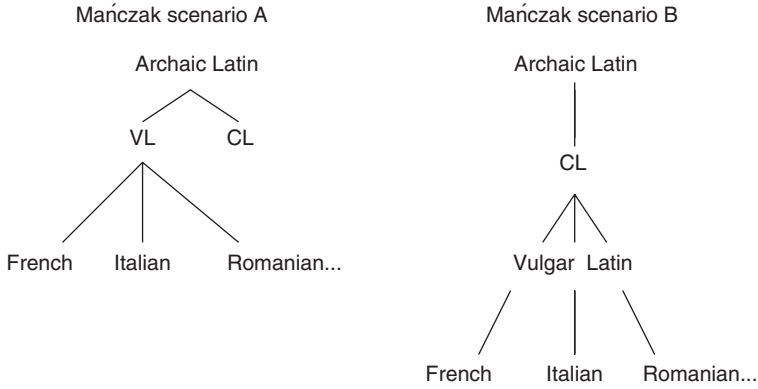
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Archaic Latin	ca 700–ca 325
Old Latin	ca 325–ca 120 BC
Classical Latin	ca 120 BC–ca AD 250
Vulgar Latin	ca 250–ca 600
Transitional Latin	ca 600–ca 850

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This account is consistent with the view expressed in a pair of papers, as trenchant as they are brief, by the Polish romanist Witold Mańczak (2003, 2006), which in turn restate the position argued in more detail in Mańczak (1977). It reproduces the sequence of stages set out in Mańczak’s diagram B below and sees VL as, so to speak, a way-station on the route from CL to Romance.

An alternative and more widely attested view conceives of VL as existing parallel to CL and representing that (often hidden) colloquial usage out of which the daughter languages are generally taken to develop, as in Mańczak’s diagram A, which he describes as the orthodoxy amongst Romance historical linguists, and in which VL is treated as a sister



language to CL and as the true ancestor of Romance. The fallacy in both these models, and which such diagrams risk perpetuating, lies in the reification of the labels CL and VL as separate languages, whether in a sister or a mother–daughter relation. Given this danger the wiser course of action seems to be to avoid the concept of VL and to argue instead for a more complex and internally structured vision of the single language Latin.

A second issue, which we can locate within the first of Weiss's late phases, concerns the status of the Bible, the problem of Christian Latin more generally and the issue of what has been called 'translationese'. As Burton (2011) notes, most of the published discussions of Christian Latin have focused, perhaps not surprisingly, on lexical matters, but there are also syntactic structures which have been suggested to be particularly influenced by their use in the context of the translation of biblical texts, and thus raise the question of whether they are in fact ever used more widely than that. One such is discussed by Galdi in this volume.

The third area of potential contention comes at the end of this period and concerns the transition to the next stage, an issue which is dealt with in the literature in two guises: on the one hand the beginning of the Romance languages and the other the place and nature of medieval Latin. Thus, Herman (1998: 22) sets out 'une chronologie sans discontinuité, mais néanmoins articulée en deux phases distinctes', the first of which covers the period from the first to the sixth centuries AD, and which represents a reconfiguring of the norms of spoken Latin due to the cumulative effect of changes at all levels of linguistic structure. Crucially, these changes – loss of vowel length, dropping of final consonants, reduction of the case system and the like – are evidenced in all the Romance languages and testify to developments within what is still demonstrably Latin. By



contrast, in Herman's second phase, from the sixth to the end of the eighth century, changes which begin to distinguish the Romance languages from each other – diphthongisations, complete as opposed to partial loss of the case system, development of a variety of verbal periphrases – begin to take effect, and lead him to conclude that it is at the end of this second period that we are entitled to speak of Romance rather than of Latin, and hence the epithet 'transitional' in the final phase of Adamik's sub-division mentioned above.

In chronological terms this is very close to the conclusion reached by Banniard (2013) who, building on his own work as reported in Banniard (1992) and elsewhere and on a very similar line of thought which originates with Wright (1982), proposes a four-stage model as follows:

STAGE 0	Classical spoken Latin	second century BC–second century AD
STAGE 1	Late spoken Latin 1	third–fifth centuries
STAGE 2	Late spoken Latin 2	sixth–seventh centuries
STAGE 3	Proto-Romance	eighth–ninth centuries

As the table indicates, Banniard insists in particular on the concept of spoken language and hence on the differences of register that must have existed then as now in any language which is spread over a broad social, educational and geographical range. The importation of the term 'Proto-Romance' here is, however, not helpful since the label 'proto-' is standardly associated with linguistic systems that have been hypothesised on the basis of the techniques of comparative reconstruction. These methods have, it is true, recently been espoused anew in the context of work on the *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman*, on the merits of which see the exchange between Varvaro (2011) and Buchi and Schweickard (2011). However, Banniard's work, with its solid basis in textual analysis and interpretation, is not in that vein, and it would have been better to avoid a term that might suggest it does.

If, as we have seen, the apparently social label 'vulgar' is often defined chronologically, by contrast the term 'medieval', which would seem to be self-evidently chronological, is usually also defined in social-educational terms, labelling a language that was taught in monasteries and universities rather than one transmitted within the family (cf. the discussion in Löfstedt 1959: ch. 4, and Norberg 1943). That said, it does also have temporal bounds, though fairly extensive ones. As Dinkova-Bruun (2011) reminds us, the term medieval has been construed to run from as early as the fifth to as late as the fifteenth century. What concerns us here is



the early part of that period as the Romance languages are beginning to emerge and when there is evidence to be found in the surviving texts of developments that prefigure the structures of the modern languages. At the same time, the material in these texts is not always easy to interpret because they represent a three-way confluence of inherited classical rules, new norms introduced in formularies and kindred medieval text types and the occasional intrusion of patterns from the spoken language (see Adams, 2016, for discussion and exemplification).

Let us now turn our attention back to the pre-classical period. Of necessity this period begins with the earliest attestations in the seventh century BC. The debates concern therefore the endpoint, variously put at 120 BC (Adamik), 90 BC (Baldi and Cuzzolin, and Pinkster) and 50 BC (Weiss), and the existence of possible internal sub-divisions within the period. There are also a number of different terms deployed: Early, Archaic and Old.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes they seem to be deployed as quasi-synonyms, so that for example De Melo (2007) titles his book *The Early Latin Verb System*, adding the sub-title *Archaic Forms in Plautus, Terence and Beyond*. The period distinction he recognises throughout that volume is one between Classical Latin and Archaic (with an initial capital) Latin, the latter being defined as continuing ‘roughly until 100 BC’ (pp. 1–2). In this he seems to be following the lead of Charles Bennett in his seminal *Syntax of Early Latin* (1910), who uses the label ‘Early’ in the title but comments in his preface: “‘Early Latin’ is necessarily a somewhat vague term ... A definite date is really impossible, since archaic Latin does not terminate abruptly, but continues even down to imperial times. For practical purposes I have chosen 100 BC as the later limit of the archaic period.’ He locates his own contribution in a tradition of research written in Latin where the most commonly recurring term is *priscus*, as in Holtze’s *Syntaxis priscorum scriptorum latinorum usque ad Terentium* (1861) with its self-defined endpoint, or Bell’s *De locativi in prisca latinitate vi et usu* (1889) which however extends the terminus by nearly a century to 75 BC, as does Rosén (1981) in her study of the verbal noun. Anthologies of texts show a similar oscillation around the transition from the second to the first century BC. Warmington (1935–40) calls his collection *Remains of Old Latin* and sets an end date of 79 BC, while Ernout (1947) uses the term ‘archaic’ and includes material down

<sup>5</sup> The term Old Latin is of course also used in English as a translation of *Vetus Latina*, but this is not relevant to the present discussion since no claims of periodisation are intended in this usage. In the present volume we have eschewed this usage and have retained *Vetus Latina* throughout (and have also avoided abbreviating the latter to VL for obvious reasons!).

to the early years of the first century BC. More recent scholarship has tended instead to make a distinction between the pre-literary phase (ending in 240 BC), which is dubbed by Weiss Very Old Latin, and the earliest literary texts, which Weiss calls Old Latin and others call Early Latin. Within the former period, German scholarship in particular distinguishes *Altfrühlatein* (700–500 BC) from *Neufrühlatein* (450–240 BC) – for a brief survey and references see Hartmann (2005).

## 2. Continuity or change?

Once we have fixed the bounds of early and late Latin, the central question, and the one around which the workshop from which this volume derives was organised and which our speakers were invited to address, is: what degree of continuity is there between these two periods and to what extent does such continuity fail to appear in the classical language? To even pose the question in these terms is, of course, to take the term ‘classical’ in its diastatic meaning. On a chronological interpretation, the question would make no more sense than to ask if we can connect Old English and Modern English without going through Middle English. However, from a socio-cultural perspective it is entirely possible that everyday usage of the pre-classical period might have been prescriptively excluded from classical writings only to resurface at a later period when such constraints were relaxed. In other words, the colloquial spoken language, which is the primary vehicle of language change, might have gone underground or, in the term used by many of our authors, become ‘submerged’ in the period roughly from the first century BC to the second or third centuries AD. Note in particular that ‘submerged’ on this interpretation does not mean simply hidden from historical view, as for example in Adams (2013: 856–62). We can expect in general that changes at whatever level of linguistic structure will only surface in the inevitably conservative written language some decades or more after they have become common in the spoken language. However, in this narrower sense, ‘submerged’ involves a significant diachronic discontinuity in the historical record. The focus of research then becomes to seek to spot in pre-classical usage instances of structures that are more widely attested again in the post-classical era and/or constitute the foundations of structures that are continued in one or more Romance languages.

This line of argument is due originally to Marx (1909), who adduces a range of examples from lexis, morphology, phonology and syntax in which there are, or appear to be, precursors of late Latin and modern Romance in