

A preliminary examination of gender confusions in the charters of St Gall

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide a preliminary exploration of the state of the gender confusions in the legal charter material of the *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* from the vicinity of St Gall and to describe the primary areas that should be investigated more thoroughly in the future. To achieve this the question of the *genus alternans* is investigated and comparative evidence is used to support the preliminary observations regarding this gender. Furthermore, a selection of sociolinguistic features of the charters is also used to better understand the gender system of these charters.

KEYWORDS

vulgar Latin, *genus alternans*, ChLA, neuter, charters

1. INTRODUCTION: PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH HISTORY AND METHODOLOGY

The transformation of the grammatical gender system from Latin to Romance can be analysed using various source materials. Early medieval private legal charters provide a useful opportunity to examine the birth of Romance languages and to inspect the state of the grammatical gender

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system of these new languages. Many of these charters can be found in the edition of *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* (hereafter: ChLA). Out of these charters, I will focus on the original ones from the vicinity of St Gall written before 801, i.e. the charters contained within the first two volumes of ChLA.

Since the Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of the Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age (hereafter: LLDB) has already started to process the charters of the ChLA, I have used the data that was already entered into the database. Since the data has not been fully processed in the LLDB database, I also examined and collected data from the ChLA charters that were not in the LLDB at the time of writing. The error codes used in this paper are the same as the ones used in the LLDB. I follow Herman's method in the analysis of Vulgar Latin phenomena and only consider the deviations from the Classical Latin norm as data. Adamik (2012) and Papini (2022) have already argued extensively for the use of this methodology and discussed its usefulness for the examination of inscriptional evidence. Data entry is currently in progress from the St Gall material contained in the first two volumes of the ChLA, and so far, 54 charters have been processed in the LLDB, the rest of the charters were checked independently for this paper. From the original charters written before 801, 100 charters were found which contained at least one error related to the gender system of this period. On these charters 296 errors were found and these are the errors that will be discussed and analysed in this paper.

When discussing the grammatical gender system, the most prominent issue is the question of the neuter. This is the gender that is not present in modern, standard Romance languages. When examining the grammatical gender system and the question of the neuter in Vulgar Latin and Romance, Michele Loporcaro's monograph (Loporcaro 2018) is indispensable. In this he summarised most of the previous results in this field, and by examining a considerable number of Romance dialects, he was able to draw several meaningful conclusions. The most important of these is that, while some of the summarising works, such as Herman's (2000, 65) and to a lesser degree Väänänen's (1981), suggest that the neuter had largely disappeared by the time Romance languages appeared, in many cases, this gender was able to persist for a very long time, either unchanged or in a new form (Loporcaro 2018, 225). The altered form in which neuter could still survive is well known in many Italian dialects and Romanian. This is the so-called *genus alternans*,¹ a grammatical gender that does not trigger a dedicated morphological distinction in agreement but rather triggers masculine agreement in singular and feminine agreement in plural. This gender is of particular importance since in the case of Italian it is documented that the final disappearance of the neuter took place through this gender (Loporcaro, Faraoni, and Gardani 2014). Although for other languages the evidence related to the importance of the *genus alternans* is not so clear, there are some sources and indirect evidence that led both Loporcaro (2018, 203–212) and Wang (2023, 187–193) to conclude that this transitional phase has existed for other languages, such as Old French and Romansh. Wang (2023) has also found that previously neuter nouns which denote individuals were more likely to be assimilated into the masculine, while nouns denoting aggregates formed the core of the *genus alternans*. Given its importance, I will examine the possible occurrences of the *genus alternans*, and the semantics of the nouns associated with this gender in the St Gall data.

¹This is not the only alternating gender that can be found in Romance (cf. Loporcaro 2018, 269–277), but this is the type that is connected to the decline of the neuter. Regarding Romance languages *genus alternans* has been the term to describe this agreement class (Maiden 2016).

2. CHANGES IN THE GENDER SYSTEM REFLECTED BY ERRORS

While the charters of the ChLA were not discussed by Loporcaro (2018) or Wang (2023), some tendencies that were observed by them are detectable here too, while others are less clear. Therefore, in this paper, I will explore positive evidence for the potential emergence of some features in the Romance varieties spoken around St Gall. To observe these features all LLDB datasheets containing gender confusion from the first two volumes of the ChLA were exported, charters not yet recorded in the LLDB were also checked and then they were manually tagged for the agreement controllers (Corbett 1991), i.e. for the nouns in our case.

The linguistic background of these charters and the scribes is quite varied. The area where the charters of St Gall were written encompasses both Germanic and Romance-speaking regions (Haubrichs 2021, 88–95). Therefore, in the case of many scribes, it is harder to distinguish errors highlighting later Romance developments from multilingual errors. To take account of this difference special note will be made of errors present in the more genuine group of Raetian charters, written by Vulgar Latin/Romance speakers (Zeller 2021).

One feature whose emergence one could hope to observe during the period under study is the *genus alternans*. As discussed by Loporcaro and his colleagues (Loporcaro 2018, 197–203; Loporcaro, Faraoni & Gardani 2014; Loporcaro & Paciaroni 2011, 416–424) this gender was already present in Vulgar Latin texts written in Tuscany during the 8th century. Therefore, one might expect to also find evidence for the emergence of this gender in the vicinity of St Gall during the same period. It should be noted that in the case of Old Romansh the reanalysis of neuter *-a* plurals as feminine singulars was attested, while for the *genus alternans* only strong indirect evidence is known without a clear documentation of a noun in this gender (Loporcaro 2018, 210–212). To check whether this gender was emerging when these charters were written, one can analyse the erroneous nouns found on them to see the type of agreement patterns they display. Table 1 contains all neuter nouns currently found in the LLDB with their associated errors.² In the case of an emerging *genus alternans* one would expect to see both *fem. pro neutr.* and *masc. pro neutr.* errors for some nouns. To confirm the emergence of the *genus alternans* one would also expect these errors to show a correlation with number, that is to observe masculine agreement in the singular and a feminine agreement in the plural. However, we rarely find both errors for the same noun.

Most neuter nouns had a clear reinterpretation, either as only feminine (e.g. the loanword *maldrum* ‘a solid measure’) or as only masculine (e.g. the most frequently erroneous noun *monasterium* ‘monastery’). Only three nouns show a variation between these genders. These nouns are *pratun* ‘meadow’, *mancipium* ‘peasant’ and *pondus* ‘pound’. In the case of *pondus* ‘pound’ we find two competing plural variants, which are reflected both in inflection and agreement.³ The first, more frequent variant, is the reinterpretation as masculine: *pondera duus* (= *pondera dua* ‘two

²Errors found in other agreement contexts, i.e. the case of “neutral agreement” (Corbett 1991, 203–218) and cases where agreement is informed by the social gender of the referent were not considered in this analysis.

³It should be noted that, while gender is reflected in agreement (Corbett 1991, 1), we also regard errors in inflection as gender confusions in the LLDB. This is informed by the close association of inflectional class and gender in Classical Latin (Loporcaro 2018).

Table 1. Gender confusions of neuter nouns in the charters

Noun	fem. pro neutr.	masc. pro neutr.
<i>monasterium</i> 'monastery'	0	32
<i>maldrum</i> 'a solid measure'	27	0
<i>pondus</i> 'a pound'	4	18
<i>mancipium</i> 'peasant'	12	6
<i>corpus</i> 'corpse'	0	15
<i>pratium</i> 'meadow'	4	2
<i>consilium</i> 'decision'	0	5
<i>damnum</i> 'penalty'	0	3
<i>servitium</i> 'service'	0	1
<i>feudum</i> 'movable property'	0	1
<i>factum</i> 'bestowal'	0	1
<i>aedificium</i> 'building'	0	1
<i>patrocinium</i> 'protective power'	1	0
<i>pervium</i> 'road'	1	0
<i>testamentum</i> 'written deed'	1	0
<i>latus</i> 'side'	0	1
<i>iudicatum</i> 'record of a sentence'	1	0
Σ =	51	86

pounds', LLDB-149520; ChLA II, 110, 7) or an innovative formation: *ponduos* (= *pondera* 'pounds', LLDB-173396; ChLA I, 76, 15).⁴ There are also occurrences of reinterpretation as feminine which are associated with both errors in inflection and in agreement: *inferat () pondoras duas* (= *inferat () pondera dua* 'pay two pounds (of silver)', ChLA II, 124, 8).⁵ Based on this, it seems that this noun was only ambiguously reassigned to a new gender. Comparatively we might expect a *genus alternans* outcome since measure words were an important subsection of some *genus alternans* developments (Loporcaro 2018, 232). However, in this case all masculine uses occurred in the plural, so they point to the potential assignment of *pondus* 'pound' to the masculine, which is in line with the fact that most neuter nouns were reassigned to the masculine (Loporcaro 2018, 14; Szlovicsák 2023). By contrast, the feminine uses were less numerous, but they occurred not just

⁴All other errors of this type can be found in the following ChLA charters from volume I: 46, 59, 61, 68, 71, 75, 78, 86, 88, 94, 98, 106. From volume II: 111, 129, 145, 160. (Some of this data can also be accessed in the LLDB as: LLDB-175642, LLDB-159777, LLDB-148388, LLDB-168527, LLDB-175715, LLDB-163889, LLDB-170575, LLDB-175092).

⁵One other error is quite similar: *punduras duas* (= *pondera dua* 'two pounds', ChLA II, 166, 10–11). The last one of this type occurs in the singular: *pondura una* (= *pondus unum* 'one pound', ChLA II, 127, 10).

in inflection but in agreement as well. The only gender confusion of this noun in the singular also showed a potential reassignment into the feminine: *pondura una* (= *pondus unum* ‘one pound’, ChLA II, 127, 10). Therefore, it seems that *genus alternans* is not quite a strong case for this noun, and it might have had two competing reassignments. The feminine outcome is more probable as it was shown by agreement. Because the plural was probably the unmarked⁶ number for this noun in the charters, the results of Wang (2023, 162–174) suggest that this noun could have been reanalysed as feminine based on its plural. This reanalysis might have come into being without a transitory *genus alternans* phase, however, we do not find a corresponding descendant, which could corroborate these results.

The second neuter noun showing ambiguity in reassignment was *pratum* ‘meadow’. While this Latin noun had descendants in *genus alternans*, e.g. Old Tuscan singular: *lo prato* ‘lawn’, plural: *le pratora* ‘lawns’ (Loporcaro, Faraoni & Gardani 2014, 6), in the case of the area under study this development seems less probable. There are three types of confusions regarding this noun. The first one shows reassignment to the masculine via inflection: *cum pradus* (= *cum pratos* for *cum pratis* ‘with (the) meadows’, LLDB-156234; ChLA II, 156, 9).⁷ This use points more toward a complete reassignment to the masculine and not to a *genus alternans* variant. The feminine assignment here also deviates from the form we would expect from a *genus alternans* use. As we have: *excepta | una prada* (= *excepto uno prato* ‘except one meadow’ LLDB-157465, LLDB-157466, LLDB-157467; ChLA II, 114, 4–5), which shows a reassignment to the feminine and the use of the numeral here clearly points to the lack of a semantic shift. This is contrary to most Romance developments, where – as Loporcaro (2018, 67–70) points out – the reanalysis of the neuter plural into feminine singular also implied a new meaning influenced by the plural origin. For example, the Italian words *la foglia* ‘leaf’ and *il foglio* ‘sheet’ demonstrate this semantic difference. The last case of feminine inflection could show a transitory stage: *de prada* (= *de pratis* for *pratorum* ‘of meadows’, LLDB-162743; ChLA II, 113, 4). Here we find a potential feminine assignment, where the feminine singular preserves the plural meaning of the original neuter inflection. However, this example is less clear because a different inflectional error could also explain it, that is the use of the accusative instead of the ablative with the preposition *de*. Finally, it is noteworthy that among all erroneous uses of *pratum* ‘meadow’ the complete reanalysis to feminine singular is the only one which is shown by agreement. This points to the putative conclusion that by this time, *pratum* ‘meadow’ might have been reanalysed as a feminine singular noun without a change in meaning and instead of a *genus alternans* this assignment only competed with a complete reassignment to the masculine. However, given the relatively few erroneous occurrences of this noun, no strong conclusion can be drawn regarding its gender assignment.

The confusion of *mancipium* ‘peasant’ could point towards the development of the *genus alternans* in this area as we can observe masculine agreement in the singular and feminine agreement in the plural. In the feminine case, numerous errors occur in the inflection of the noun in a direct object position, e.g.: *dono () mancipias* (= *dono mancipia* ‘I donate peasants’,

⁶Besides the discussed error in the singular, all other uses of this noun are in the plural in the charters.

⁷In this exact case there are a couple of other errors to consider, such as a vowel confusion: *pradus* instead of *prados*. The plurality of the noun can be inferred from the context. These other errors, however, do not make the reassignment to masculine less evident. There is one other occurrence of this error: *cum pradus* (= *cum pratis* ‘with (the) meadows’, ChLA II, 161, 6).

LLDB-159602; ChLA II, 111, 4).⁸ First, it should be noted that the context of these errors makes it clear that the serfs in question are men, so the feminine inflection cannot be explained by semantics only. In some of these cases the potential feminine assignment in the plural is further confirmed by agreement as in the case of the following example: *aliquas mancipias* (= *aliqua mancipia* ‘some peasants’, ChLA I, 88, 1–2). This phenomenon is complemented by one masculine agreement found in the singular: *det alium mancipium* (= *det aliud mancipium* ‘he shall give another peasant’, ChLA I, 67, 7). This fits the hypothesis that *mancipium* ‘peasant’ was potentially reassigned to the *genus alternans* coming into being in this area. However, compared to most of the Romance evidence collected by Loporcaro (2018, 231), the *genus alternans* development here would differ from many other nouns of this type, as the semantic core (Corbett 1991, 34) of this gender was made up of “nouns with weakly individuated plurals” (Loporcaro 2018, 233). Of course, this semantic feature is not necessary for a noun to be assigned to the *genus alternans* (Loporcaro & Paciaroni 2011, 418). Additionally, Wang (2023, 162–174) pointed out that neuter nouns with unmarked plurals are quite likely to either be assigned to the *genus alternans* or the feminine. The only time *mancipium* ‘peasant’ is used in the singular is the one datum discussed above. All other occurrences⁹ are in the plural. These facts together could point to the reassignment of this noun to the *genus alternans*. Nevertheless, by also considering that *mancipium* ‘peasant’ is an animate noun with masculine referents, one should be more cautious about expecting this noun to be assigned to the *genus alternans*. This caution is mirrored by the rest of the data as we can find masculine agreement in the plural as well as in the singular. Take the following example from a charter already mentioned in another example: *ipsos mancipias* (= *ipsa mancipia* ‘the peasants themselves’, ChLA I, 88, 5 and repeated in line 6).¹⁰ These errors are similar to the already discussed case of *pondus* ‘pound’ where we found masculine agreement competing with feminine in the plural. In this case masculine agreement might be competing with the *genus alternans* agreement scheme, where the masculine agreement is motivated by the semantics of this noun.

The rest of the nouns shown in Table 1 show a quite clear reassignment to the masculine and by this way they follow the most probable reassignment path of neuter nouns. The only noun with mostly feminine confusions is *maldrum* ‘a solid measure’ a Germanic loanword used for measuring grains in the different donations. However, in this case the noun itself might have been loaned as a feminine noun. As all occurrences of this noun in the charters are either clearly feminine: *una maltra* (= *unum maldrum* ‘one maldrum’, LLDB-170057; ChLA I, 73, 7)¹¹ or in some cases the feminine interpretation is less clear but it is still the more convincing one: *censum () solvat, | hoc est () maldra de chernone* ‘Pay a tribute, that is maldrums of rye’ (ChLA II, 169, 4–5), where one would either expect a singular (*maldrum* ‘a solid measure’) or a numeral, if *maldrum* ‘a solid measure’ was used as a neuter noun. The heavy use of this noun in the

⁸The rest of these errors are found in the following charters from volume I: 43, 88. From volume II: 114, 166. Where the form *mancipias* ‘peasants’ can be found more than once in some charters.

⁹By counting non-erroneous uses *mancipium* ‘peasant’ occurs 61 times in the plural in the St Gall material under study.

¹⁰Similar errors with masculine agreement are found in the following charters from volume II: 128, 139, 149.

¹¹Similarly, one can find: *hoc est census () duas maldras* (= *hic est census () duo maldra* ‘this is the tribute: ... two maldrums (of bread)’, ChLA I, 71, 25–26). Almost identical errors can be found in the following charters, from volume I: 68, 83, 85, 96, 97, 100, 104. In volume II: 129, 132, 138, 148, 168.

feminine instead of the neuter is quite different than all other tendencies observed so far. Therefore, the more probable interpretation for this noun is that it was not used in the neuter in this area during the period under investigation.

As Table 2 shows, some masculine nouns had a strong tendency to be reassigned to the neuter. However, it is quite clear that these confusions are less frequent than the ones where neuter nouns are mistaken as masculine. This fact is well-documented in Vulgar Latin (Szlovicsák 2023), but it still points towards a possible stability of the neuter as it could incorporate new nouns (Loporcaro 2018, 19–20). It is notable that both in the case of masculine and neuter nouns, most of the errors are concentrated on a few words, so it might seem that only a few words were affected by these changes. This however should also be connected to the formulaicity of legal charters, as it was pointed out in the case of Tuscan charters by Korkiagangas (2018, 2024) that formulaic language both affects the number of different nouns used in a text and can affect the prevalence of some linguistic changes. This is very evident in the case of *census*, for which all errors occur in the same formulaic context: *hoc est census quod solvere debeo* (= *hic est census quem solvere debeo* ‘this is the tribute which I must pay’ LLDB-147698,

Table 2. Gender confusions of masculine nouns in the charters

Noun	neutr. pro masc.	fem. pro masc.
<i>locus</i> ‘place’	28	8
<i>census</i> ‘annual tribute’	9	0
<i>ager</i> ‘field’	3	0
<i>heres</i> ‘heir’	3	0
<i>tremissis</i> ‘a gold coin’	0	2
<i>drappus</i> ‘carpet’	0	2
<i>modius</i> ‘a land measure’	0	2
<i>locellus</i> ‘small place’	0	2
<i>monachus</i> ‘monk’	2	0
<i>diurnalis</i> ‘a land measure’	1	0
<i>hortus</i> ‘garden’	1	0
<i>fiscus</i> ‘treasury’	0	1
<i>servus</i> ‘slave’	1	0
<i>rufus</i> ‘lynx’	0	1
<i>accessus</i> ‘right to approach’	1	0
<i>frater</i> ‘brother’	0	1
<i>werigeldus</i> ‘a man’s legal value, wergeld’	0	1
Σ =	49	20

LLDB-147697; ChLA I, 63, 9).¹² Nonetheless, this reassignment is still of interest and points toward the stability of the neuter.

However, there are other masculine nouns whose errors could indicate the development of a *genus alternans* gender value in this area. In the case of these nouns, if their singulars remain unchanged, while in the plural they gain feminine agreement, they might easily be assigned to the *genus alternans*. Besides feminine agreement in plural, neuter agreement in the plural would also result in a new type of controller gender, which could be connected to the *genus alternans* given the presence of an *-a* plural. This was the case with *locus*, which had a *genus alternans* descendant in Old Neapolitan, with an innovative *-ora* plural: *locora* ‘places’ (Loporcaro & Paciaroni 2011, 423; Loporcaro 2018, 19). Similarly, in the area under study we can examine the errors of *locus*, whether they display any agreement (or inflection) patterns that might be connected to a potential *genus alternans*. In the plural the following error can be found in our corpus: *ad aliqua venerabilia loca () condonare deberemus* (= *aliquibus venerabilibus locis () condonare deberemus* ‘we have to donate to some venerable places’ LLDB-169975, LLDB-169976, LLDB-169977; ChLA I, 73, 2).¹³ This could indicate a neuter assignment, which here appears in a broader sense than in Classical Latin (*TLL* s.v. *locus*). Besides these there are errors where feminine is used for this noun. In the case of the following example: *in locas* (= *in locis* ‘in the areas’, LLDB-181544; ChLA II, 139, 4), the feminine inflection could also point towards the development of the *genus alternans*, however this is the only feminine error in the plural. The rest of the confusions with the feminine are in the singular: *in alia loco* (= *in alio loco* ‘in another place’, LLDB-178467, ChLA II, 139, 4).¹⁴ Given that the two feminine errors mentioned are in the same charter, we could expect that – at least for the writer of that charter – *locus* could have been reassigned to the feminine regardless of number. The diminutive of this noun also appears once in the charters where it is used with a feminine plural: *in locellas pretestinatas* (= *in locellis praedestinatis*, ChLA II, 159, 4), which could point to a reassignment either to the *genus alternans* or to the feminine. Therefore, a *genus alternans* assignment for this noun cannot be completely ruled out, but the evidence is certainly less convincing than the Old Neapolitan developments mentioned above.

Another masculine noun displaying a quite interesting interplay with the neuter is *ager* ‘field’. In this case, we only find errors in the plural, i.e. already pointing toward a potential *genus alternans*, because the singular seems to be unchanged. All three errors occurred in the same direct object position, in a so-called free part of the charter, as the objects of transfer (Korkiakangas 2018; Korkiakangas 2024; Pálfi 2023, 527–530). Therefore, one example will suffice: *agra () trado* (= *agros () trado* ‘I donate () fields’, LLDB-147302, ChLA I, 46, 4).¹⁵ These errors can easily document the appearance of a *genus alternans* as it is expanded to previously masculine nouns which could fit into this gender based on semantics and innovative inflection. This case is supported by the fact that the charters containing these errors were all written by

¹²Given the discussed formulaicity, the other errors connected to this noun are almost identical and they can be found in the following charters, from volume I: 60, 68, 71. In volume II: 169.

¹³The other errors of this noun are in the singular: LLDB-170329, LLDB-147526. In ChLA volume I: 41, 50, 74, 91, 108. In volume II: 145, 159, 160, 161, 168.

¹⁴The other confusions with the feminine can be found in ChLA II: 133, 150, 168.

¹⁵The other errors are found at LLDB-156506 and LLDB-156372. In ChLA I: 44 and 90.

Raetian scribes. As analysed by Zeller (2021, 164) the Raetian charters show the influence of the emerging Romance varieties with the highest clarity. Comparatively, this development can also be supported by the fact that Romanian also contained a *genus alternans* descendant of this noun: singular: *agru* ‘field’, plural: *agre* ‘fields’. Depending on further evidence one might be able to observe the reassignment process of this noun into the *genus alternans*.

The case of feminine nouns, seen in Table 3 is quite noteworthy for multiple reasons. First, the nouns in this gender were assigned erroneously more frequently than masculine nouns, but less frequently than neuter nouns ($n = 90$, $n = 69$, $n = 137$). Second, there is a great variability among the affected nouns compared to the other two genders, here 27 different nouns displayed gender confusions, while in the case of the other two genders there were only 17 nouns each. Finally, the most frequently erroneous feminine nouns do not show a clear reassignment, they are reassigned variably either to the masculine or to the neuter. This is not surprising, as most nouns here belong to the first declension, whose forms are rather different from most masculine or neuter nouns. Most of these errors probably never lead to a complete reassignment of these nouns to a new gender, rather they show a general uncertainty in agreement.

However, one feminine noun shows noteworthy developments and might also point toward a *genus alternans* existing or appearing in the Romance varieties spoken around St Gall. Consider the following example: *ipsas res () ad nulum umquam hominem veniant | comutata vel vindita aut data* (= *ipsae res () ad nullum umquam hominem veniant commutatae vel venditae aut datae* ‘these properties () shall not be exchanged, sold or given to anyone else’, LLDB-168504, LLDB-168505, LLDB-168506; ChLA I, 68, 16). Here we find the forms *comutata* ‘exchanged’, *vindita* ‘sold’ and *data* ‘given’ in agreement with (*ipsas*) *res* ‘these properties’. Of course, this is contrary to what a *par excellence* *genus alternans* example would look like, where feminine agreement is used for a previously neuter noun in the plural. Loporcaro (2018, 227–228) shows many examples belonging to this expected type. However, our example could still be connected to the *genus alternans*, as the agreement discussed is also the result of the close association of *-a* in the plural with the feminine. This condition is especially important for the formation of the *genus alternans* as discussed by Loporcaro (2018, 226). However, the fact that in the singular we find both masculine and neuter confusions makes this association weaker. As in the case of the following two examples the neuter is used: *res admeliorata () | revocare debetur () perpetualiter possidendum* (= *res meliorata () | revocare debetur () perpetualiter possidenda* ‘the property shall be recalled in improved state () to be possessed in eternity’, LLDB-173389; ChLA I, 76, 11–12) and *rem nostram, quod* (= *rem nostram, quae* ‘our property, which’ ChLA II, 143, 3). In the first case we find the non-standard agreement quite far from the agreement controller, while in the second case the agreement target is closer, but it is a relative pronoun, so grammatically farther away (Corbett 1991, 225–241). In both cases we can also find agreement targets displaying standard, feminine agreement with the noun. Which was also true for the plural datum, where the neuter was used in predicate position, but not in the attributive position. Conversely, the masculine was used in the attributive position in the following datum: *omnia () meio re () trado* (= *omnia () meae rei () trado* ‘I donate everything from my possession’, LLDB-173850; ChLA II, 134, 5). Given these facts and the collective sense of this noun, it cannot be ruled out that this noun was reassigned to the *genus alternans*. The rest of the feminine nouns, however, do not offer further evidence of the evolution of the *genus alternans*.

Collectively there was no strong evidence observable for the *genus alternans*. In most cases either the interpretation was ambiguous, or other errors showed different developments.

Table 3. Gender confusions of feminine nouns in the charters

Noun	neutr. pro fem.	masc. pro fem.
<i>persona</i> 'individual'	2	21
<i>ecclesia</i> 'church'	4	8
<i>res</i> 'property'	5	1
<i>traditio</i> 'written deed concerning a gift'	1	4
<i>repetitio</i> 'claim'	1	4
<i>terra</i> 'land'	1	3
<i>chartula</i> 'charter'	2	2
<i>multa</i> 'fine'	1	2
<i>silva</i> 'forest'	2	1
<i>substantia</i> 'catering'	2	0
<i>donatio</i> 'deed purporting a bestowal'	0	2
<i>casa</i> 'house'	2	0
<i>anima</i> 'soul'	0	2
<i>villa</i> 'rural dwelling'	1	1
<i>dominatio</i> 'a lord's power over his vassal'	0	2
<i>hoba</i> 'rural homestead'	1	1
<i>contradictio</i> 'refusal'	0	1
<i>Kalendae</i> 'the first day of the month'	0	1
<i>manus</i> 'possession'	0	1
<i>voluntas</i> 'will'	0	1
<i>uxor</i> 'wife'	0	1
<i>facultas</i> 'patrimony'	1	0
<i>appendix</i> 'appendage'	1	0
<i>friscinga</i> 'sucking-pig, sucking-lamb'	0	1
<i>libra</i> 'a standard weight'	0	1
<i>reditio</i> 'return'	1	0
<i>uncia</i> 'a monetary unit'	1	0
Σ =	29	61

The closest example was the neuter noun *mancipium* 'peasant', which was mainly confused with the feminine in the plural and was only confused with the masculine in the singular. Besides this the masculine noun *ager* 'field' was also an interesting example, as it was only confused with the

neuter in the plural and we also have comparative evidence to make its interpretation as evidence for the emerging *genus alternans* stronger.

3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The quantitative analysis of Vulgar Latin based on the examination of linguistic errors goes back to [Herman \(2000\)](#), but it has been refined by other researchers such as [Adamik \(2012\)](#) and [Papini \(2022\)](#). Based on their results one can confidently use the proportion of different grammatical errors to categorise and describe linguistic similarities between different areas and one can also use these measures to describe linguistic change. Gender confusions were also analysed in this manner by [Szlovicsák \(2022, 2023\)](#). Among these results, a similarity was observable between some areas, such as between Rome and Italia or between Hispania and Gallia ([Szlovicsák 2022](#), 432). In this paper, I aim to examine whether the distribution of gender confusions of the charters of St Gall show any similarity to the distribution of errors on inscriptions written before 700.

[Figure 1](#) shows the proportion of the different gender confusions from the vicinity of St Gall. From this it is quite evident that the neuter was in an uncertain state and that the scribes had the most trouble with assigning nouns to this gender. The grouping of the LLDB codes here follows a non-hypercorrect reading ([Szlovicsák 2023](#)). This reflects the fact that one should regard errors where a non-neuter noun is used as if it were neuter ($F/M > Neutr$), as tangible evidence for the stability of the neuter and not as mere hypercorrections that point toward the demise of this gender. Even when taking this into account, the neuter was still rather unstable and errors pointing to its stability are rather sparse. Keeping the distribution seen here in mind we can

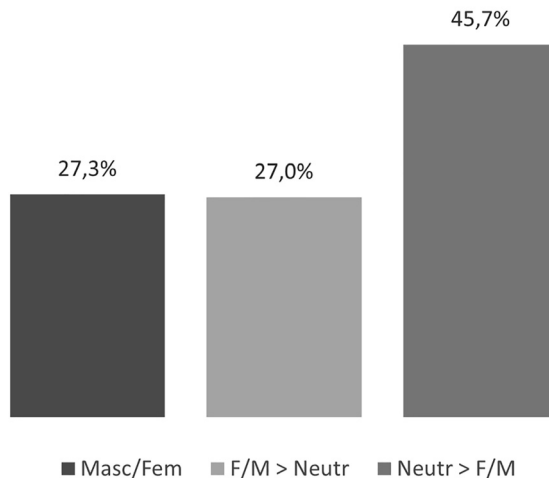


Figure 1. Gender confusions in the vicinity of St Gall

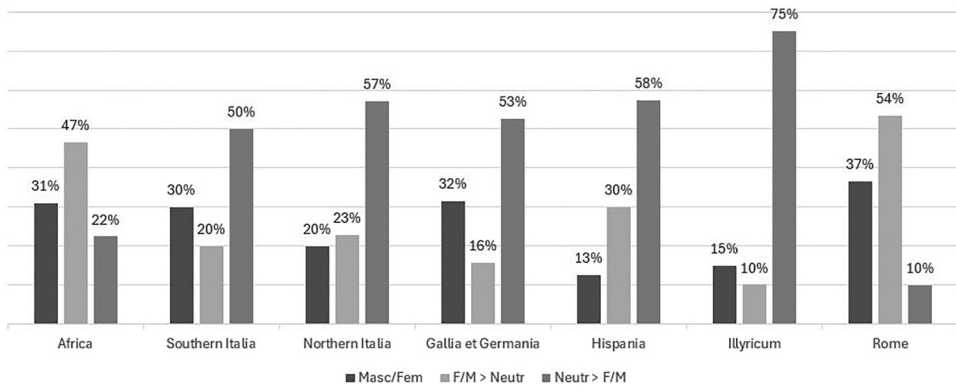


Figure 2. Areal differences of gender confusions based on inscriptional data written between AD 301 and AD 700

compare it to the distribution of errors observed on the inscriptional data written between AD 301 and 700.¹⁶

Observing the distribution of errors in Figure 2, one can see that the distribution of gender confusions in St Gall is most like the Northern provinces of Italia. Gallia and Germania also show some similarity with the charter data, but the association in that case is less clear-cut. The first similarity is not too surprising as there was close contact between Raetia and the Northern Italian provinces. Gallia and Germania might also have been similar, but because of the sparsity of epigraphical evidence,¹⁷ this cannot be observed with clarity. Using statistics Szlovicsák (2023, 587) was able to confirm the similarity between the two discussed regions. Building on those results the similarity between the distribution of errors in the charters of St Gall and the two other areas is not dismissible. This can help illustrate the continuity between the various sources. However, analysing and comparing the erroneous nouns from the different sources might not be as fruitful given that inscriptions and charters do not apply the same recurring expressions. Therefore, the similarity between the distribution of errors is a good measure of continuity between these different areas, which helped us connect the different sources covered by the LLDB database. Checking similarities between erroneous nouns themselves could still be performed by future research as it might lead to some unexpected results.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The charters of the ChLA are a rather productive source for linguistic research. In the case of gender confusions, I was able to observe many relevant developments which are mirrored by

¹⁶The data used for making this table was exported from the LLDB database and it was based on the data of Szlovicsák (2023).

¹⁷Figure 2 is based on 19 errors from Gallia and Germania and 35 errors from Northern Italia.

later Romance languages. Many of these are in line with the observations of other linguists, but there are also differing developments.

The main question regarding the grammatical gender system of early medieval Latin charters is whether a *genus alternans* is detectable in them. Building on the results of Loporcaro (2018), I checked the data currently accessible in the LLDB for errors pointing towards the emergence of a *genus alternans*. This way it became evident that in the case of this area, charters do not currently provide definitive evidence of this gender. Many examples are questionable or explainable by other factors. However, there were nouns which might have been reassigned to this gender, for example *mancipium* ‘peasant’ did display an agreement pattern that is in line with the *genus alternans*, but it also displayed conflicting behaviour, which points to the difficulty of analysing the beginnings of this new gender in Romance. In addition to this, some relevant nouns were not neuter in Classical Latin, such as *ager* ‘field’ and *locus* ‘place’. These facts might indicate that the *genus alternans* did not develop quite soon in this area as it still cannot be meaningfully detected in the 8th century. This is different from the evidence seen in Tuscany at the same time (Loporcaro 2018, 228). Further investigation into this issue is one of the main tasks for future research.

The gender system of the charters of St Gall seems to be an interesting case, which might provide even more evidence towards the transformation of the neuter when more data are processed in the LLDB. The aim of this paper was to provide a preliminary exploration of this data and describe the primary areas that should be investigated more thoroughly in the future. This was achieved and I was able to pose many relevant questions that should be answered in the future.

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