

From vices, vicata to old French foiz, foie, foiée and old Italian via, fia, fiata : a reconsideration

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From VICES, *VICATA to Old French *foiz*, *foie*, *foiée* and Old Italian *via*, *fia*, *fiata*: A Reconsideration

The anomalous transition of initial *v* > *f* in the development *VICES* > *fois* has long attracted the attention of researchers. Among the hypotheses advanced to explain this phenomenon, the following are deserving of re-examination.

1. H. Holthausen suggested that, through syntactic phonetics, the voiceless *s* unvoiced the following consonant in such frequent expressions as **deus veiz*, **treis veiz*¹. This conjecture appears improbable because: a) no analogous example of unvoicing is found in French; b) the principle advanced by Holthausen did not affect Spanish *dos veces*, *tres veces*, Portuguese *duas vezes*, *três vezes*, Old Provençal *doas velz*, *tres velz*, etc.; c) assimilation in French, as in Romance generally, is predominantly regressive; one would sooner expect *s* to become *z* under the influence of a following voiced consonant, and even then only in close syntactic link. Holthausen was possibly thinking of *Notkers Anlautgesetz*, which affirms that Old High German initial *b*, *d*, and *g* became voiceless when initial in sentence or clause, and medial in clause, if the preceding word ended in a voiceless consonant, also when initial in the second element of a compound word, the prior part of which ended in a voiceless consonant. There would not appear, however, to be any cogent reason for supposing that this Germanic tendency had a permanent influence on French initial consonants.

2. F. Settegast alleged the influence of Germanic **fart* 'time(s)'². Not only is this word phonetically unrelated to the Romance form, but Settegast fails to prove linguistic interference.

3. H.F. Müller attributes *v* > *f* to a shifting pronunciation of the labials in Vulgar Latin and Gallo-Romance³. Much of his argument rests on Alcuin's statement about the letter *f*: "F littera in speciem figurata est cujusdam litterae, quae digamma nominatur, quia duos apices ex gamma littera habere videatur. Ad hujus soni similitudinem *v* consonantem loco ejus nostri posuerunt, ut *votum*, *virgo*; pro *fotum*, *firgo*."⁴ Müller's interpretation of this statement is confusing because of his failure to make a clear distinction between orthography and phonetics: "As for the

¹ H. HOLTHAUSEN, *Französisch «fois» und «fresaie»*, ZRPh. 10 (1886), 292–293.

² F. SETTEGAST, *It. «fia», «fiata»; fr. «fois», afr. «foie», «foiee» 'Mal'*, ZRPh. 37 (1913), 197–199.

³ H.F. MÜLLER, *A Chronology of Vulgar Latin*, ZRPh. Beih. 78 (1929), 106–110.

⁴ ALCUIN, *De Orthographia*, in: *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1863, vol. CI, cols 908–909.

fact that this same phenomenon [i.e. the orthographical confusion of *v* and *f*] occurred in Anglo-Saxon ... and that consequently Alcuin, by the word *nostri*, refers to his people, this deduction does not seem to be well founded. For Alcuin says that *votum, virgo* are written instead of *fotum, firgo*, not vice versa, because the sound *v* is nearer (c. 800) to *f* than to *w*. This refers evidently to the use of one sign for both sounds *u* and *v* (almost *f*).⁵ It must be affirmed, however, that Alcuin's statement does not appear to have anything to do with the articulatory habits of eighth-century Gallo-Romance. Some two centuries earlier, both Priscian and Cassiodorus had made similar statements. While Cassiodorus used the same examples, *votum* and *virgo*, Priscian made a complete explanatory statement. The problem, purely historical and orthographical in nature, concerns the Aeolian digamma *F*, used in Greek and early Latin to represent the sound [w], orthographically *u* in Classical Latin⁶.

4. In recent studies, the theory has been advanced that initial voiceless consonants were lenited in intervocalic position but remained unchanged elsewhere⁷. The apparent preservation of initial consonants in an unlenited state would be due to their analogized restoration⁸. The theory, in accord with the general tendencies of Romance phonology, has the additional merit of accounting for the discrepant treatment of certain initial consonants. On the one hand, Spanish *bravo* rather than **pravo* would illustrate a failure to restore the etymologically correct consonant because of frequent use in the expression *toro bravo*⁹. On the other hand, false analogical restoration might occur – thus, the Italian dialect form *i tiendi* 'i denti'¹⁰. H. Lausberg uses this theory to explain *VICES > fois* as an instance of false analogical recomposition¹¹. Intriguing as it is, Lausberg's interpretation fails to account for the special treatment accorded to *VICES*. As the *v > f* move is exceptional, it must be supposed that it did not occur without special provocation.

⁵ MÜLLER, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁶ H. KEIL, ed. *Grammatici Latini*, Leipzig 1857–1880, vol. II, p. 35, and vol. VII, p. 148. The digamma *F*, which resembles the *f* in appearance, was originally pronounced [w], like Latin *u*. Priscian explains: "... apud Aeolis habuit olim *F* digamma, id est 'vau' ... qui id ei nomen esse ostendunt. pro quo Caesar hanc *ϝ* figuram scribi voluit, quod quamvis illi recte visum est, tamen consuetudo antiqua superavit. adeo autem hoc verum est, quod pro Aeolico digamma *F* u ponitur" (KEIL II, p. 15), and "... habebat autem haec *f* litera hunc sonum, quem nunc habet *u* loco consonantis posita ..." (KEIL II, p. 35).

⁷ R. A. HALL JR., *Initial Consonants and Syntactic Doubling in West Romance*, *Language* 40 (1964), 551–556, and H. WEINRICH, *Phonologische Studien zur Romanischen Sprachgeschichte*, Münster 1958, § 64–106. See especially p. 73.

⁸ HALL, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

⁹ HALL, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

¹⁰ WEINRICH, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹¹ H. LAUSBERG, *Romanische Sprachwissenschaft*, vol. II: *Konsonantismus*, Berlin 1956, § 581.

5. G. Rohlfs considers French *fais* (< FASCIS) 'burden, load, blow' as a probable source of contamination¹². Particularly frequent in the expression (*tot*) *a un fais*, (*tot*) *a un fes* 'tout d'un coup', 'tout d'une fois' (cf. T-L, AW III, 1592), the word is sometimes found as a synonym of *fois*: "afr. *fais* 'fois'" (FEW 3, 429b), *a cel premier fais* (FEW 14, 413a). Not only are the graphs *fois*, *feis* attested with the meaning 'burden'¹³, but *faiz* 'time(s)' is documented in texts of western and Anglo-Norman provenance¹⁴. The blending of *fais* and **veiz*, giving *feiz* does indeed appear conceivable. But still another point of contact can be suggested.

Via, with the meaning 'time(s)' is attested in Italian, Old Provençal¹⁵, Sardinian¹⁶, and mediaeval Latin¹⁷. In Old French too, *veie*, *voie* (< VIA) could have temporal value, especially in reference to the 'time' or 'occasion' of a trip or excursion. Tobler cites several examples of this usage: "*voie*: *Lors a geté de maintenant Douze poins a icele voie* (coup au jeu de dés) (Barb et M. III 288, 191); *onques a chele voie ne se peurent acorder quex il i mesis[sen]t ne eslisissent, ains prisent un autre jour d'eslirre ches dis* (RClary 94); *Bien m'est avvenu ceste foiz; Or avrai ge, diex merci, proie Sanz nule faille ceste voie* (Ren. 15404, M IX 94); *Entre ses denz jure et affiche que chier li vendra cele voie* (ib. 16577, M IX 1231); *Se li desfent qu'ele ne doigne A nul povre qui a li viengne C'un seul denier a une voie* (Ruteb. II¹ 215). De là viennent les locutions *tote voie*, *totes voies*, qui ont signifié d'abord 'dans tous les chemins', 'en tout cas', puis 'néanmoins' et 'cependant'; cf. *always*."¹⁸ This temporal sense is further apparent from the expressions *une voie de bois*, *de charbon* 'a cart-load of wood, of coal' (REW 9177), where the reference is to a load carried from one place to another in one trip, i.e. at one time. Littré (IV, 2522a) mentions *douze voies d'eau*, proof that the word *voie* could be used for counting in French, and further

¹² G. ROHLFS, *Vom Vulgärlatein zum Altfranzösischen*, Tübingen 1963, p. 35 N 44. Cf. also p. 128 N 323.

¹³ Cf. R. LEVY, *Contribution à la lexicographie selon d'anciens textes d'origine juive*, Syracuse 1960, § 468.

¹⁴ *Fez* appears twice in the *Evangile de Nicodème*, ed. G. PARIS et A. BOS, Paris 1885; cf. C: *Traduction Anonyme*, lines 205, 1701, composed in 1217. The alternating orthography *feiz* / *faiz* is found in the *Roman de Rou*, ed. H. ANDRESEN, Heilbronn 1877-1879, vol. III, lines 343, 3824, written in 1169, and in the *Vie de saint Auban*, ed. R. ATKINSON, London 1876, lines 152, 169, composed in 1245.

¹⁵ Cf. M. RAYNOUARD, *Lexique roman*, Paris 1843, vol. V, 540, and E. LEVY, *Provenzalisches Supplement-Wörterbuch*, Leipzig 1924, vol. VIII, 746.

¹⁶ M.-L. WAGNER, *Dizionario etimologico sardo*, Heidelberg 1960-1964, vol. II, 574.

¹⁷ DUCANGE, *Glossarium VIII*, 304b.

¹⁸ Cf. A. TOBLER, *Mélanges de grammaire française*, trans. M. KUTTNER and L. SUDRE, Paris 1905, p. 233-234. Other examples may be found in G. TILANDER, *Lexique du Roman de Renart*, Göteborg 1924, p. 158. Glossing 'autrefois', the Gdf., *Dict.* 8, 28a, quotes a curious example of *voie* used adverbially: "[Moi] c'on a pris pour larron prouvé Pour ce que j'ai *voie* escouvé Luxure hors de sainte eglise."

cites H. Estienne's explanation: *A Paris, une voye de bois, c'est autant que si l'on disoit une chartée [charretée] de bois*. According to R. Cotgrave (*Dictionarie*, London 1611), *tout d'une voye* meant 'all at once'¹⁹.

In the sense of 'load carried in one trip, at one time', *veie*, *voie* was fully synonymous with *fais*, *fes*, in expressions such as *cent fez de fomerioit* 'one hundred loads of manure' (Gdf., *Dict.* 9, 595a). Cf. also *·C· fez de foumeroit*; *·V^c· fes de fomerioit*; *·C· fais de foumeroit*; *dous cenx faiz de fomerioi*; *·VIII· fez de foumeroit*; *·CCCC· faix de fomerioit*; *demi ·C· de foumeroit* (Gdf., *Dict.* 4, 54). The possibility of confusion is evident. When counting, for instance, the number of loads of manure delivered, was one to speak of *cent fais* or of *cent veies*? And, admitting the possibility of a development *cent veies* > **cent feies*, one can hardly exclude the likelihood of analogical extension to **cent veiées* (< *VICATAS) > *cent feiées*, **cent veiz* (< VICES) > *cent feiz*²⁰. Not only does this conjecture account for the series *feie*, *foie*, *fie*, in Old French (cf. T-L, AW III, 1974)²¹, but it also proves consistent with the replacement of Old Provençal *velz* 'time(s)' by *fe(s)* (frequently masculine) and its synonym *coup* over a wide area of southern France (cf. FEW 2, 867, and ALF 590).

Further clarification of the Old French and Old Italian words for 'time(s)' is possible. In French, the oldest attested forms are *feiz*, *foiz*, *fois* (< VICES), *feie*, *foie*, *fie* (< VIA), and *fiede*, *feiede*, *fiée*, *foiée* (< *VICATA). In Italian, they are *fiata* (dialectal *vīa*), and *vicata* – REW 9304), e.g. *tre fiata*²², and *fiata*, *via*, used in multiplication:

¹⁹ Similar to *une voie de bois* is the locution *une fouée de bois* 'a load of wood carried' or 'the road tax levied for same' (Gdf., *Dict.* 4, 109c). The word *fouée* became confused with *foiée* as the following hapax would indicate: Afr. *foiee* 'corvée exigée de chaque ménage' (hap. leg.) (FEW 3, 651b). There is no legitimate confusion, however, in *Vicinitudinarius, qui fait foieez d'autrui* 'one who carries out someone else's functions', incorrectly listed by Gdf., *Dict.* 4, 109b with *fouée*. Likewise, *Vicissitudinarius, Qui fait Foïées d'autrui* (DUCANGE, *Glossarium* III, 532b) presents a scribal or typographical error.

²⁰ The possibilities of confusion would have been even greater in western French and Anglo-Norman, where the diphthongs *ai*, *ei* were early reduced to *e*, *fais* giving *fes* and *veies* > *ves*. One such instance of *ves* is incorrectly interpreted by Gdf., *Dict.* 9, 633b, as *fois*: *Si lui mandèrent il ke pès / Oveke lui just tute vès* (*Evangile de Nicodème*, ed. PARIS and BOS, *Trad. Anonyme*, 1190). The levelling of [ei] > [e] also accounts for the form *verre* (< VITRUM) rather than the usual Old French *voirre* as early as 1169 in the *Roman de Rou*, ed. ANDRESEN I, 2223.

²¹ Other explanations of this series have been advanced. Thus, T-L., AW III, 1974: "wahrscheinlich Kreuzung von *foiz* und *voie*"; P. SKOK, *Zum Vulgärlatein: 2. f anstatt v*, in: *Miscellanea linguistica dedicata a Hugo Schuchardt per il suo 80° anniversario*, Genève 1922, p. 128 N 5: "... *veie*, *voie* durch *foiee* in *feie*, *foie* umgebildet wurde"; E. PHILIPON, *Les Destinées du phonème ɛ + i dans les langues romanes*, R 45 (1918-1919), 447: "le latin populaire *vīca* venu de *vice* 'fois' a donné en français la série *feie*, *foie* et *fie*."

²² DEI 3, 1630, notes the existence of *fiata* only in the thirteenth century. None the

e.g. *quattro fie sei ventiquattro, due via quattro*. The initial *f-* of *fia*, *fiata* seems best explained as a borrowing from French²³. *Vece* (< VICES), apparently displaced from its earlier function in the sense 'time(s)'²⁴, is restricted to the meaning 'place, stead, succession, change', while *volta* is a still more recent development. As N. Caix early maintained, *fia* and *fiata* presuppose the etyma *via* and *viata*²⁵.

The evidence of mediaeval Latin casts additional light on the evolution of Old French and Old Italian words for 'time(s)'. In mediaeval glosses, the adverb VICATIM 'from street to street, through streets' is equated with VICISSIM 'by turns, alternately'. These words in turn are glossed by PER VICES (cf. Old French *par deus fois*, *par quatre fois*, beside the simple *deus fois*, *quatre fois*) and PER VICOS. For instance: VICATIM VICISSIM AUT PER VICES AUT PER SINGULOS [VICOS]²⁶ (MSS of the eighth or ninth century); VICATIM PER VICOS (Goetz V, 649;6); VICATIM PER SINGULAS VICES (Goetz IV, 192;26; MSS of the ninth and eleventh centuries); VICATIM PER VICES AUT PER SINGULOS VICOS (Goetz IV, 401;23; MSS of the ninth century). A French glossator gives the translation: VICATIM *de rue en rue. entrechangeement*²⁷. While VICUS leaves no traces in northern Gaul, it was, in Italy, a partial synonym of VIA and, in mediaeval Latin, PER VIAS is equated with a newly formed VIATIM in precisely the same way as PER VICOS PER VICES is linked to VICATIM (cf.

less, this word is attested in one of the earliest Italian verse texts, the *Ritmo di Santo Alessio* of the early twelfth century. See *tre fiata*, in C. DIONISOTTI and C. GRAYSON, *Early Italian Texts*, Oxford 1965, p. 72:220.

²³ As suggested by G. ROHLFS, *Vom Vulgärlatein* ..., p. 128 N 323, and *FEW* 14, 409b-410a.

²⁴ *FEW* 14, 412-413 N 9, suggests this possibility: "In den Compositiones Lucenses steht ebenfalls *in tertia vice* 'zum dritten mal' und *quinque vices*. Wir kennen aber weder das genaue alter dieses textes (etwa im 8. jh.), noch den ort seiner entstehung. Würde die sehr vorsichtig geäußerte vermutung von Svennung Compos Luc 18 zutreffen, daß der text in Oberitalien entstanden ist, so hätte man einen hinweis darauf, daß *vices* auch in Italien die gleiche bed. entw. durchgemacht hat, wie in gallorom., und daß die neuschöpfung *volta* in späterer zeit stattgefunden hat." The *FEW* 14, 412a) further asserts that the oldest proof of the new meaning of VICES (that is to say, 'time' rather than 'turn' or 'change') appears in a Merovingian document of 710 AD. Strictly speaking, this is not correct. VICES 'time' appears in the Vulgate and other early works. Numerous examples are to be found in A. BLAISE, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, Strasbourg 1954, p. 847a: "*altera uice*, Gen[esis] 27, 36, une seconde fois; *per uicem hanc*, Ier[emias] 16, 21, cette fois; *una uice*, ... [Saint Jérôme, *Commentatorium in Isaiam Libri XVIII*, m. 24] 10, 33, 13, une seule fois; *hac uice*, [Adamanus, *Vita Columbae*, m. 88, 7^e s.] ... 1, 6, cette fois; *uice quadam*, ... [Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, 5^e s.] 7, 1, une fois, un jour ..."

²⁵ N. CAIX, *Studi di etimologia italiana e romanza*, Firenze 1878, § 28.

²⁶ G. GOETZ, *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, Leipzig 1888-1923, vol. V, p. 102:28.

²⁷ *Recueil général des lexiques de l'ancien français*, ed. MARIO ROQUES, Paris 1936 and 1938, vol. II, p. 439:1317.

DuCange, *Glossarium VIII*, 308). Furthermore, a glossary of Italian provenance shows the -c- disappearing from VICATIM: VIATIM [*sic*] PER VICEM INTENTIONE (Goetz V, 518;40, *Excerpta ex codice Vaticano 1468*). Since the fall of intervocalic -c- is not a regular phonetic development in Italian territory, the analogical influence of VIA may be suspected.

But adverbs in -IM disappeared in the course of Vulgar Latin. Some were remade as nouns (cf. the *Reichenau Glosses*: 181 FURTIM PER FURTUM; 163 VICISSIM PER VICES). In view of the evident similarity of form obtaining between the adverb VICATIM and the feminine noun *VICATA, an etymon which must be postulated for Old Italian, Old French, Old Provençal, Catalan, Spanish, and Portuguese, it is only logical to suppose a remodelling of the type VICATIM > PER VICES > PER *VICATAS.

In his study *It. "via" 'Mal', kat. "viatje", "cami" 'id.'*, Spitzer observed that the Catalan *viatje* (to which may be added Provençal *viatge*, Italian *viaggio*) came to denote 'time(s)'²⁸. This meaning, he deduced, arose from the notion of a load or weight which could be moved from one place to another in one trip, at one time²⁹. Thus, one '*voie de bois, de charbon*', etc., could be transported at one *viatje* 'time' (< VIATICUM). The close formal and semantic relationship existing between VIA and VIATICUM (neuter pl. VIATICA) on the one hand, and between VIATICUM, *VICATA (both meaning 'time') on the other, could have produced *VIATA, VIA 'time(s)' on Italian territory.

Nor is this hypothesis unrealistic. In addition to accounting for the French and Italian etyma, the fall of -c- in Italy, and the adverb > noun transfer, it also suggests an answer to another problem of Romance philology, namely, the emergence and spread of popular substantives of the -ATA type. This kind of noun, examined in detail by L. H. Alexander, in his *Participial Substantives of the -ATA Type in the Romance Languages* (New York 1912)³⁰, raises four main questions, none of which has yet received a satisfactory answer: 1. Why is Latin data attesting this type of noun so scanty? 2. Why does adverbial value attach to this type of noun? 3. Why was the feminine gender chosen over the masculine? 4. Why is a suffix apparently related to verbs commonly appended to nouns?

Observing that the -ATA substantives are a distinctly Romance formation whose Latin beginnings are obscure, Alexander declares: "If we cannot definitely and easily trace the origin, we are at least sure that in the Vulgar Latin speech there lay hidden the possibilities of this later development."³¹ Remarking on the rarity of such substantives before the twelfth century, he notes that *fée (foiée)* (< *VICATA)

²⁸ *ZRPh.* 40 (1919-1920), 221-225.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 222.

³⁰ Cf. especially p. 1-27.

³¹ ALEXANDER, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

is the only example he could find in Koschwitz's *Les plus anciens monuments de la langue française*³². If *VICATA, *VIATA were accepted as instrumental in popularizing -ATA nouns, especially those dealing with time (cf. French *journée, année, soirée, vesprée, nuitée, matinée*, the four questions posed above would find their solution³³.

In addition to refuting Müller's "shifting labials" conjecture, and advancing a hypothesis to account for the development of -ATA nouns, this study presents the following new ideas on the origin of the forms *fois, foie, foïée*, etc.

1. Contamination of VICES by FASCIS may not have occurred directly, but rather through the semantic convergence of *veies* (Western *ves*) in the sense of 'load(s) carried from one place to another' and *fais* (Western *fes*) in precisely the same sense.

2. Thus it is possible to account logically for the blended form *feie* > *foie*, which was quite frequent in Old French (comp. Engl. *smoke* + *fog* > *smog*).

3. Contamination subsequently spread to *veïée(s)* (< *VICATA[s]) which was at once both formally and semantically related to *veie(s)* (< VIAS) and **veiz* (< VICE[s]). Words of two different semantic fields, the temporal and the spatial, were thus more effectively differentiated by form.

4. Irregular phonological development is always caused by some kind of interference. In the lexical system, interference normally arises from the semantic or phonetic convergence of words. In Vulgar Latin and Romance, the terms VICEM-VICES, VICATA(S), VIA(S), VIATICUM-VIATICA (*VIATICOS) converged semantically to such a degree that every one of them is represented in mediaeval or modern Romance with the meaning 'time(s)'. Doubtless too, the confusion was facilitated by their broad similarity of form.

Now although the semantic linkage of VIA and VICES is generally recognized and accepted, it could possibly be objected that words of the VIA family never join the VICES group. Such an objection would be unfounded, however, since VICATIM, which in Classical Latin regularly meant DE VIA IN VIA 'from street to street', or PER VIAS 'through streets' came to mean PER VICES 'by times, by turns' in mediaeval Latin (see Goetz VII, 413a), thus switching etymological allegiance, so to speak. The FEW (14, 409-410, s. *VICATA) fails to recognize this fact, suggesting instead that *VICATA is a direct outgrowth of VICES. This conjecture seems feeble in view of the

³² ALEXANDER, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³³ The earliest example I find of the change *tote voies* > *toutefois* 'nevertheless' occurs in BRUNETTO LATINI's *Livre du Trésor* (c.1268): *ja soit lions de si haut corage et de si fiere nature ..., toutefois aime il home merueilleusement* (T-L, AW III, 1996). This would appear to be a modification by analogy with other expressions such as *tantes, quantes, maintes, plusor, soventes, fois*, and *toutes fois que* 'every time that'. The transfer may have been facilitated, however, by the semantic identity of the locutions *tout a une voix, tout a une fois*: *Et firent si grand bruit de sonner de leurs grands cors tout à une fois, et de huer après tout à une voix, que ...* (Littré IV, 2531c). Cf. the Old French spellings *toutevois, toutevoiz* 'nevertheless'.

evident similarity of form obtaining between VICATIM and *VICATA, and considering VICATIM's proven transfer of allegiance from PER VIAS to PER VICES, at least outside the Italic peninsula.

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