


GENUS ALTERNANS IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF IBERO-ROMANCE: TEXTUAL EVIDENCE FROM EARLY MEDIEVAL IBERIAN PENINSULA

By ZIWEN WANG 
University of Oxford

(Submitted: 21 June, 2024; Accepted: 9 December, 2024)

ABSTRACT

This study revisits the diachrony of the Latin neuter gender in early Ibero-Romance. The fate of the Latin neuter is counted among the most long-standing and yet the most controversial questions in Romance historical morphosyntax. While there has been a long-held belief that neuter nouns merged into the masculine gender in late Latin after adopting masculine plural endings, recent typological surveys on gender across Romance have shown that neuter inflexion persisted into the older stages of eastern Romance and ultimately gave rise to the so-called *genus alternans* (e.g. Rom. m.sg. *creion-ul/f.pl. creioane-le* ‘the pencil/pencils’). Although the scope of inquiry devoted to the *genus alternans* has broadened significantly in the past decade for Daco-Romance and Italo-Romance, Ibero-Romance has mostly remained off-stage for want of supporting evidence. The aim of this study is to provide diachronic evidence for the survival of neuter inflexion and the subsequent rise of the *genus alternans* in early Ibero-Romance. Via a meticulous analysis of early medieval Iberian texts, I will argue that the *genus alternans* remained part of the early Ibero-Romance nominal inflexion until well into the eleventh century, as occurred as well in early Gallo-Romance and Italo-Romance.

1. GENUS ALTERNANS IN ROMANCE: A CONSPECTUS

1.1. Classification and synchronic characteristics

The term *genus alternans* (‘alternating gender’) refers to a nominal inflexional pattern which consists in the alternation between two established gender values—the masculine and the feminine—in number inflexion (cf. Bonfante 1991; Igartua 2006). This term has long been in use among Indo-Europeanists in reference to the Tocharian neuter gender, which ‘combines agreement traits of the other two, the masculine and the feminine’ (e.g. Tocharian A: m.sg. *sāṣ oko/f.pl. tōṣ okontu* ‘the fruit/fruits’) (Igartua 2006: 58). In recent times, it has been widely promoted in the scholarly context of Romance linguistics to refer to a class of nouns which consistently show masculine agreement in the singular but feminine agreement in the plural. Despite being typologically very rare in Indo-European, this phenomenon is robustly attested across Romance languages. See, for instance, the nominal inflexional system of modern standard Italian, in which a sizable group of nouns select only masculine adjectival and pronominal agreement in the singular and only feminine adjectival and pronominal agreement in the plural. This is illustrated in Table 1 with the noun *braccio* (‘arm’), which displays unequivocal masculine agreement in the singular but appears to select exclusively feminine agreement in the plural. Note that, unlike purely masculine and feminine nouns,

Table 1. *Genus alternans* in modern Italian

	Singular			Plural		
m.	<i>il</i>	<i>ragazz-o</i>	<i>buon-o</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ragazz-i</i>	<i>buon-i</i>
	'the good boy'			'the good boys'		
a.	<i>il</i>	<i>bracci-o</i>	<i>lung-o</i>	<i>l-e</i>	<i>bracci-a</i>	<i>lungh-e</i>
	'the long arm'			'the long arms'		
f.	<i>l-a</i>	<i>ragazz-a</i>	<i>buon-a</i>	<i>l-e</i>	<i>ragazz-e</i>	<i>buon-e</i>
	'the good girl'			'the good girls'		

genus alternans nouns of the *braccio* type typically lack autonomous agreement markers: in order for them to be morphosyntactically distinguished from their masculine and feminine counterparts, the m.sg./f.pl. alternation provides the only reliable clue.

Another textbook example repeatedly cited to account for the behaviour of the Romance *genus alternans* comes from Daco-Romanian, an eastern Romance language famously having a substantial set of 'ambigene' or 'heterogene' nouns characterised by showing masculine agreement in the singular but feminine agreement in the plural (Hall 1968: 426). The high degree of consistency and productiveness of this paradigm alternation in Romanian can be readily noticed, as it constitutes the sole criterion for formally telling *genus alternans* nouns from the rest of the lexicon. 'It is impossible', observes Maiden (2016: 115), 'to tell from the form of the singular alone whether a noun is *genus alternans*. But this can be immediately determined by also considering the plural'. The Romanian *genus alternans* is illustrated in Table 2.

Both Italian and Romanian have long been regarded as the 'poster children' for illustration of the morphological idiosyncrasy of the Romance *genus alternans*. Nevertheless, they are by no means the only varieties hosting this pattern nowadays. Recent typological surveys on gender in Romance have provided compelling evidence that the *genus alternans* also exists in several central-southern Italo-Romance varieties. For instance, in the dialects of Canepina (province of Viterbo) and Altamura (province of Bari), a three-way contrast identical to the one attested in standard Italian can be clearly discerned. This contrast includes an alternating agreement class which occurs alongside the well-established masculine/feminine opposition, as exemplified in Table 3 (based on Loporcaro 2018: 110–112).

Compared with standard Italian, gender marking in Canepinese and Altamurano may appear at first to be less transparent. Note that both varieties seem to display a more convergent gender system than the Italian one: in Canepinese, the masculine/feminine contrast seems largely neutralised in the plural, and in Altamurano the plural article *l* alone fails to signal a noun's gender value. Nevertheless, it is clear in both cases that binary gender distinction remains fully expressed in adjectival plural agreement either through gender agreement markers, as occurs in Canepinese (m.pl. *-i*/f.pl. *-e*), or through metaphonic alternations, as is the case in Altamurano (e.g. m.pl. *k^wort*/f.pl. *kort* 'short'). Moreover, in Canepinese the definite article *e* is also reported to mark masculine agreement both in the singular and in the plural through the occurrence of the *raddoppiamento fonosintattico* (henceforth RF) (e.g. m.sg. *e bbotts-o*/m.pl. *e bbotts-i* 'pit/pits').¹ In contrast, when applied in agreement with feminine plural controllers, *e* never triggers RF (e.g. f.pl. *e ca.v-i* 'keys').

¹ The term *raddoppiamento fonosintattico* (RF) refers to the germination of the initial consonant of a word when it is preceded in a phrase by another word triggering this phenomenon (e.g. /tre kani/ → [tre k:ani] 'three dogs') (cf. Loporcaro 1997). In standard Italian, words triggering RF include final stressed polysyllables (e.g. *farò* 'I will do'), strong stressed monosyllables (e.g. *sto* 'I am'), some weak unstressed monosyllables (e.g. *a* 'to', *da* 'from') and some polysyllables with penultimate stress (e.g. *come* 'as, like', *dove* 'where'). The types of words triggering RF can vary in different varieties of Italo-Romance. For details on the origin of the RF, see Loporcaro (1997).

Table 2. *Genus alternans* in modern Romanian

	Singular			Plural		
m.	<i>acest</i> 'this tall boy'	<i>băiat</i>	<i>înalț</i>	<i>acești-i</i> 'these tall boys'	<i>băieți-i</i>	<i>înalți-i</i>
a.	<i>acest</i> 'this tall chair'	<i>scaun</i>	<i>înalț</i>	<i>acest-e</i> 'these tall chairs'	<i>scaun-e</i>	<i>înalț-e</i>
f.	<i>această-ă</i> 'this tall girl'	<i>fat-ă</i>	<i>înalț-ă</i>	<i>acest-e</i> 'these tall girls'	<i>fet-e</i>	<i>înalț-e</i>

 Table 3. *Genus alternans* in three-gender systems

	Canepinese		Altamurano	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
m.	<i>e bbotts-o ffonn-o</i> 'the deep pit(s)'	<i>e bbotts-i ffonn-i</i>	<i>o skwarpe:rə k^wort</i> 'the short shoemaker(s)'	<i>ɪ skarpe:rə k^wort</i>
a.	<i>e bboddz-o stjort-o</i> 'the twisted wrist(s)'	<i>e poddz-a stjort-e</i>	<i>o wɔrattsə k^wort</i> 'the short arm(s)'	<i>ɪ vrattsə kɔrt</i>
f.	<i>a ca:v-e stjort-a</i> 'the twisted key(s)'	<i>e ca:v-i stjort-e</i>	<i>la jamma kɔrt</i> 'the short leg(s)'	<i>ɪ jammə kɔrt</i>

Given all this, it can be confirmed that the *genus alternans* indeed forms part of the nominal morphology in the aforementioned Italo-Romance varieties. In Canepinese, nouns showing alternating agreement can be considered to behave identically to the masculines in the singular and to the feminines in the plural: not only do they always select the masculine marker *-o* in singular adjectival agreement and the feminine marker *-e* in plural adjectival agreement, but they also categorically lose RF when combined with the article *e* in the plural. Likewise, in Altamurano gender-alternating nouns select the masculine definite article *o* in the singular but display feminine agreement in the plural via metaphonic root vowel alternation on class one adjectives. This behaviour fits perfectly with the signature property of the *genus alternans* described earlier, that is, the consistent alternation between masculine singular and feminine plural in agreement.

Apart from the two cases just mentioned, the *genus alternans* is also attested in several southern Italo-Romance varieties of Calabria. For instance, Cappellaro (2015) reports that in the dialect of Bocchigliero (province of Cosenza) there exists a 'typical' *genus alternans* of the Romanian type (e.g. m.sg. *chill-u peccat-u/f.pl. chill-e peccat-e* 'that sin/sins', m.sg. *chill-u tiemp-u/f.pl. chill-e tiempur-e* 'that time/times').² Another such case worth mentioning is Verbicarese, a northern Calabrian dialect spoken in Verbicaro (province of Cosenza). The special interest of Verbicarese lies in the fact that, while the *genus alternans* normally lacks autonomous agreement marking, in Verbicarese it possesses an autonomous plural marker *-a*. As occurs in Altamurano, in Verbicarese gender contrast in the plural is marked solely by metaphonic adjectives showing diphthongization of the stressed vowel in agreement with

² Interestingly, this alternating gender also co-occurs with a 'novel' *genus alternans* that selects feminine agreement in the singular but masculine agreement in the plural (e.g. f.sg. *chill-a cruc-e/m.pl. chill-i cruc-i* 'that cross/crosses', f.sg. *a muglier-a/m.sg. i muglier-i* 'the wife/wifes'). This is in line with another such case in old Romanesco reported in an earlier work by Formentin & Loporcaro (2012) (e.g. f.sg. *l'ost-e/m.pl. l-i vost-i* 'army/armies', f.sg. *l-a torr-e/m.pl. l-i torr-i* 'tower/towers'). For details on the development of this 'novel' *genus alternans* in southern Italy and its significance for theories of nominal morphology, see Cappellaro (2015: 16–21) and Loporcaro (2018: 269–277).

Table 4. Alternating gender agreement in Verbicarese

	Singular		Plural			
m.	<i>σ</i>	<i>piʒð-ə</i> 'the big foot'	<i>γruəss-ə</i>	<i>ɪ</i>	<i>piʒð-ə</i> 'the big feet'	<i>γruəss-ə</i>
a.	<i>σ</i>	<i>lwabbr-ə</i> 'the big lip'	<i>γruəss-ə</i>	<i>ɪ</i>	<i>labbr-a</i> 'the big lips'	<i>γrəss-a/ γrəss-ə</i>
f.	<i>a</i>	<i>ma:n-a</i> 'the big hand'	<i>γrəss-a</i>	<i>ɪ</i>	<i>ma:n-ə</i> 'the big hands'	<i>γrəss-ə</i>

masculine controllers (e.g. m.pl. *γruəss-ə*/f.pl. *γrəss-ə* 'big'). This is exemplified in Table 4 (based on Loporcaro 2018: 114), where one can also see that, while *genus alternans* nouns exclusively select masculine adjectival forms in the singular as occurs in all the aforementioned Romance languages, in the plural they can select either the feminine plural marker *-ə* (e.g. *labbr-a γrəss-ə* 'big lip/lips') or an autonomous plural marker *-a* (e.g. *labbr-a γrəss-a* 'big lip/lips').

Note that in Table 4, the plural value of the form *γrəss-a* is made explicit by the fact that it can be in free variation with the feminine plural *γrəss-ə* when modifying *labbra*, despite the strong resemblance it bears to the feminine singular. In some nouns such as *uəvə* ('egg'), the *a*-plural form is preserved as the only option for plural agreement (e.g. sg. *q̄q̄ uəvə kuətt-ə*/pl. *q̄q̄ ə:va kətt-a* 'the boiled egg/eggs'), whereas in other such nouns it is currently being ousted by feminine *ə*-plurals and even by innovative masculine plurals (e.g. sg. *σ mərə stuərtə*/pl. *ɪ mərə stuərtə* or *ɪ mərə stərtə* 'the crooked wall/walls') (Loporcaro 2018: 114).

Another cohort of Romance languages where the *genus alternans* is widely attested is a considerable number of central-southern Italo-Romance dialects which, distinctively, display a four-gender contrast (Loporcaro & Paciaroni 2011: 410). In these systems, not only does the *genus alternans* occur alongside the masculine and the feminine, but it also contrasts with an additional gender value termed 'mass neuter'. Consider, for instance, the gender systems of Neapolitan and Molfettese (province of Bari), given in Table 5 (based on Loporcaro 2018: 118–122).

It can be readily seen that, besides the masculine/feminine binary gender distinction, Neapolitan and Molfettese also explicitly distinguish between an alternating neuter and a 'mass neuter', the latter being assigned only to uncountable nouns.³ As for the alternating neuter, it is clear that the alternating agreement pattern fits into the overall Romance picture described so far: while showing masculine agreement in the singular, it systematically switches to the feminine as soon as the noun's number changes to plural. Also worthy of observation is the fact that it is in such Italo-Romance four-gender systems where one finds the richest repertoire of mechanisms for the formal realisation of the *genus alternans*. Note that, while the canonical strategy (i.e. agreement marking on articles and adjectives) is available to a greater or lesser extent in all of these varieties, two additional means are generally used to aid the expression of the alternating agreement, namely, RF and metaphony. For instance, Neapolitan and Molfettese make use of RF to distinguish the alternating neuter from the rest of gender values (see Table 5), whereby plural *genus alternans* nouns inflect identically to

³ The so-called mass neuter is widely attested across Italo-Romance varieties and can be related to the similar phenomenon of *neuro de materia* found in certain Ibero-Romance varieties such as Asturian and Leonese. The diachronic development of the mass neuter will not be discussed here given that it is beyond the scope of this paper. For a more detailed description of the Italo-Romance mass neuter, see Loporcaro & Paciaroni (2011) and Loporcaro (2018: 116–159).

Table 5. *Genus alternans* in four-gender systems

	Neapolitan		Molfettese			
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural		
n.	<i>o</i> <i>ffjerrə</i> 'iron (mass)'	Ø	<i>rə</i> <i>ttu'skə</i> 'poison'	Ø		
m.	<i>o</i> <i>ffjerrə</i> 'the iron/the irons'	<i>e</i> <i>ffjerrə</i>	<i>u</i> <i>nəpə'tə</i> 'the nephew/the nephews'	<i>lə</i>	<i>nəpə'tə</i>	
a.	<i>o</i> <i>vraččə</i> 'the arm/the arms'	<i>e</i> <i>bbraččə</i>	<i>u</i> <i>ne'tə</i> 'the knot/the knots'	<i>rə</i>	<i>nnə'dərə</i>	
f.	<i>a</i> <i>faččə</i> 'the face/the faces'	<i>e</i> <i>ffaččə</i>	<i>la</i> <i>sseddə</i> 'the straddle/the straddles'	<i>rə</i>	<i>ss'eddə</i>	

feminine plurals by consistently displaying RF. The same situation is also observed in Salese (province of Salerno) (e.g. Salese: m. sg. *lə pɪ:ro*/f. pl. *li ppi:ra* 'the pear/pears') (cf. Loporcaro 2018: 125). On the other hand, the occurrence of metaphony seems to be pervasively attested throughout central-southern Italy, as is the case in Agnonese (province of Isernia), Miglionico (province of Matera), Subiaco (province of Rome), the dialect of Treia (province of Macerata), etc. In these varieties, metaphonic alternation is usually detectable on nouns (e.g. Subiaco: m.sg. *ju jó:weto*/f.pl. *le jó:weta* 'the elbow/elbows'), adjectives (e.g. dialect of Treia: m.sg. *u vračč-u* *ɣross-u*/f.pl. *e vračč-a* *ɣross-e* 'the big arm/arms') or both (e.g. Agnonese: m.sg. *ru ləndzuqrə vuqnə*/f.pl. *lə ləndzeurə veunə* 'the good bed sheet/bed sheets') (cf. Loporcaro 2018: 132–140). It is even possible to see both metaphony and RF at play within a single system, as is the case in, for instance, Aviglianese (province of Potenza) (e.g. m.sg. *lu pwi:rə* *ɣruəssə*/f.pl. *rə ppe:rə* *ɣrossə* 'the big pear/pears') (cf. Loporcaro 2018: 220).

1.2. *Origin and diachronic evolution*

That the *genus alternans* descended from the inflexional morphology of Latin second declension neuter nouns is generally agreed (cf. Bazell 1952, Spitzer 1941, Loporcaro 2018, Maiden et al. 2021, et al.). Consider then the following paradigm in Table 6, which shows the three-way gender distinction in classical Latin.

In the original system, the three controller genders of classical Latin were sufficiently differentiated from one another by means of autonomous agreement classes. Thus, in the singular, neuter nouns were distinguished from non-neuters by the marker *-um*, whereas in the plural they were characterised by always selecting the marker *-a*. In late imperial Latin, however, this clear-cut tripartite gender distinction started showing signs of coalescence: on the one hand, many neuters in the singular were often confused with masculines since archaic Latin (e.g. n.sg. *case-um*/m.sg. *case-us* 'cheese'). This trend was later intensified by the increasing loss of final consonants in late Latin. See, for instance, the late Latin Pompeian

Table 6. Nominal inflexion in classical Latin

	Singular			Plural		
m.	<i>ill-e</i> 'the good slave'	<i>serv-us</i>	<i>bon-us</i>	<i>ill-i</i> 'the good slaves'	<i>serv-i</i>	<i>bon-i</i>
n.	<i>ill-ud</i> 'the good gift'	<i>don-um</i>	<i>bon-um</i>	<i>ill-a</i> 'the good gifts'	<i>don-a</i>	<i>bon-a</i>
f.	<i>ill-a</i> 'the good woman'	<i>femin-a</i>	<i>bon-a</i>	<i>ill-ae</i> 'the good women'	<i>femin-ae</i>	<i>bon-ae</i>

inscriptions given in (1a–b) (Väänänen 1966: 74), where both masculine and neuter nouns show the same desinence *-u* in the singular due to the loss of final /m/ and /s/, thus rendering the original masculine/neuter distinction formally imperceptible:

- (1) a. [...] VIICIGAL (n.sg.) PVBLICV (n.sg.) PASQVORUM [...] SATRIV (m.sg.) [...] ‘Satrius...the public revenue of the pastures...’
 b. [...] LOLLIV (m.sg.) OVF LVCRETIV (m. sg.) LVCRV (n.sg.) · ACIPE X [...] ‘I urge Lollius and Lucretius to receive the profit...’

On the other hand, late Latin neuter nouns were also undergoing another interesting readjustment in the plural, whereby they frequently appeared to be assimilated to the feminine gender by substituting the feminine plural marker *-ae/-e* for the canonical neuter plural marker *-a* in gender agreement, as evidenced by inscriptions from Dalmatia (2a), Rome (2b), etc. (Alkire & Rosen 2010: 195, Loporcaro 2018: 222). While the causes of this shift from neuter to feminine in the plural have not yet been thoroughly investigated, it is believed that it was triggered by the alternation between the neuter plural demonstrative *illa* and its archaic variant *illaec* (e.g. n.pl. *illaec/ill-a membr-a* ‘the limbs’), which, at the same time, had also been a competitor with the feminine plural *illae* ever since archaic Latin (e.g. f.pl. *illaec/ill-ae catapult-ae* ‘catapults’) (cf. Mohl 1899:199, Bazell 1952: 274, Spizer 1941: 341, Bourciez 1946: 234, Loporcaro 2018: 237). It is assumed that the allegedly frequent interchange of *illaec* with both *illa* and *illae* naturally brought about confusion between feminine plural and neuter plural in pronominal agreement (e.g. *membra_i...ill-a_i/ill-ae_i* ‘limbs...they’), which later spread further to adjectival agreement targets, to the extent that ‘finalement la flexion *-ae/-e* a été étendue au neutre tout entier’ (‘the inflexional ending *-ae/-e* was extended in the end to the entire neuter inflexion’) (e.g. *pauc-ae braccia* ‘few arms’, *mult-ae poma* ‘many fruits’) (Mohl 1899: 199).⁴

- (2) a. [...] OSSA (n.pl.) EXTERAE (f.pl.) [...] (Loporcaro 2018: 222) ‘Bones that do not belong here...’
 b. **Ipse** (f.pl.) **predicte** (f.pl.) **monasteria** (n.pl.) [...] (Loporcaro 2018: 228) ‘The aforementioned monasteries...’

The aforementioned innovations in the inflexional morphology of neuter nouns resulted in the rise of the *genus alternans* in late Latin, which later continued into Italo-Romance and Daco-Romance. The early history of the *genus alternans* in Romance was characterised by the centuries-long competition between the conservative neuter target *-a* and the innovative feminine target *-e* in plural agreement. In Italy, for instance, *a*-agreement coexisted alongside *e*-agreement until the early fifteenth century, as evidenced by the following instances from Tuscany (3a–b) and central-southern Italy (3c) (Loporcaro, Faraoni and Gardani 2014: 8–13)⁵:

⁴ This is in accordance with the observation that ‘gender change regularly starts from the rightmost position on the Agreement Hierarchy’ (Corbett 1991: 248). That is to say, gender change usually first appears in personal pronouns and later gradually extends to other agreement targets (e.g. relative pronouns, attributive adjectives). However, the specific development of this gender change needs to be further investigated, since it is not yet clear how frequent this supposed exchange between *illaec* and *illa/illae* was throughout the history of Latin, and further evidence needs to be provided to substantiate this reconstruction.

⁵ For details on the competition between *a*-plurals and *e*-plurals in old southern Italo-Romance (e.g. old Neapolitan), see Delfino (2023).

- (3) a. [...] a guardare **l-e** (f.pl.) **dett-a** (n.pl.) **castella** (n.pl.) et cassari [...] ‘...to guard the said castles and turrets...’
 b. [...] acciò vadino **nell-a** (n.pl.) **castella** (n.pl.) e nelle ville che son dintorno [...] ‘...so that they go to the castles and the lands around...’
 c. Ché **l-e** (f.pl.) **nostr-a** (n.pl.) **molina** (n.pl.) se non poteano guardare [...] ‘Because our mills could not be protected...’

The productiveness of the neuter plural marker *-a* in old Italian can be clearly noticed in such cases, since it could still be applied in all domains of gender agreement (e.g. *l-a su-a castella* ‘their castles’). At the same time, the presence of the feminine plural ending *-e* was also pervasively detected on the same agreement targets (e.g. *l-e su-e castella* ‘their castles’) (Spitzer 1941: 345–346), which implies that both markers were treated as exponents of one and the same morphosyntactic value in gender agreement (Loporcaro, Faraoni and Gardani 2014: 16).⁶ According to Loporcaro (2018: 229), the gradual decline of neuter plural *a*-agreement in Italy started before the twelfth century. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, it had already been replaced by feminine plural *e*-agreement in the majority of Italo-Romance varieties. The only apparent exception to this depletion was Verbicarese, where *a*-plurals persisted and remained in free variation with feminine plurals in gender agreement up to the present day (see Table 4). The evolution of the *genus alternans* from Latin to Italo-Romance is represented in (4a–c) and is equally applicable to Daco-Romance (based on Loporcaro, Faraoni and Gardani 2014: 16 and Loporcaro 2018: 223):

(4) a. Classical Latin	b. Transition	c. Old Italian																																			
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N.	-UM	-A																																			
F.	-A	-AE																																			
	Sg.	Pl.																																			
M.	-U	-I																																			
N.		-A/E																																			
F.	-A	-E																																			
	Sg.	Pl.																																			
M.	-o	-i																																			
N.	-o	-e																																			
F.	-a	-e																																			

In what regards the current morphosyntactic status of the *genus alternans* in Romance, there is an ongoing debate over whether it should be considered an autonomous gender value.⁷ Although this is not the place to enter upon this *vexata quaestio*, it is nonetheless necessary to point out that nowadays the *genus alternans* shows varying degrees of productivity across Romance languages, a factor which could well affect its eligibility as a potential controller gender in one variety or another. The first area where this situation is observed is gender assignment. On the one hand, in some varieties such as Romanian and Altamurano, an increase in productivity of the *genus alternans* has been reported in gender assignment: in Romanian, for instance, the alternating inflexion is often allotted to neologistic compound nouns and loanwords which usually ‘bear no recognizable Romanian inflexional number or gender desinence’ (Maiden 2016: 134) (e.g. m.sg. *un portchei*/f.pl. *două porchei*

⁶ Similar to what occurred in late Latin, in old Italian feminine *e*-plurals were most frequently detected on definite articles, while on adjectival agreement targets they often seemed to face certain resistance from conservative *a*-plurals (cf. *l-e dett-a castella* ‘the said castles’, *l-e nostr-a molin-a* ‘our mills’). In noun inflexion, the innovative plural formative *-e* has generally failed to replace the conservative plural formative *-a* in both old and modern Italian (e.g. *l-e castella* ‘the castles’, *l-e molin-a* ‘the mills’), although plurals in *-e* are the general outcome throughout Northern Italo-Romance varieties (e.g. *l-e membr-e* ‘the limbs’, *l-e carr-e* ‘the carts’, *l-e castella* ‘the castles’) (Mercier 1879: 32, Bourciez 1946: 235, Wilkinson 1985–1991: 209).

⁷ For details on this debate, see Maiden (2016).

‘keyring/ keyrings’, m.sg. *un mango*/f.pl. *două mango* ‘mango/mangos’); in Altamurano, the *genus alternans* no longer exclusively belongs to not only nouns that diachronically descended from Latin neuters (e.g. m.sg. *worattsə kʷort*/f.pl. *vrattsə kərt* ‘short arm/arms’) but also virtually ‘all nouns stemming from Proto-Italo-Romance masculine or neuter (diachronically) and not denoting male humans (synchronically)’ (Loporcaro 2018: 112) (e.g. m.sg. *kwavaddə kʷort*/f.pl. *kavarrə kərt* ‘short horse/horses’). This latter development seems to be observed as well in the Bocchigliere data reported by Cappellaro (2015: 218), where several etymologically masculine nouns are assigned the ‘typical’ *genus alternans* (e.g. Lat. m. FOCUS ‘hearth’ > Boc. m.sg. *fuoc-u*/f.pl. *fuocur-e* ‘fire/fires’, Lat. m. FURNUS ‘oven’ > Boc. m.sg. *furnu*/f.pl. *furnur-e* ‘oven/ovens’). Nevertheless, in standard Italian the alternating inflexion seems to be rapidly losing productivity and yielding to the masculine inflexion, as a considerable number of *genus alternans* nouns have now developed masculine plurals which are either competing with the original feminine plurals (e.g. m.sg. *il corno*/f.pl. *le corna* or m.pl. *i corni* ‘the horn/horns’) or have already replaced them completely (e.g. m.sg. *il grano*/f.pl. *le grana* > m.sg. *il grano*/m.pl. *i grani* ‘the grain/grains’) (cf. Mercier 1879: 31, Loporcaro 2018: 83).⁸

The other area in which the *genus alternans* varies in productivity is gender agreement. It has been hitherto established that the *genus alternans* shows equal productivity across Romance in canonical gender agreement (e.g. It. m.sg. *il braccio lung-o*/f.pl. *l-e braccia lungh-e* ‘the long arm/arms’); therefore, *genus alternans* nouns would naturally be expected to manifest gender alternation in all the rest of agreement scenarios. Nevertheless, closer scrutiny reveals a largely divergent situation: for instance, in plural agreement with coordinated singular *genus alternans* nouns, gender alternation is maintained in certain varieties such as Romanian (e.g. *scaun-ul*_{m.sg.} *și tablo-ul*_{m.sg.} *sunt pictat-e*_{f.pl.}/**pictat-i*_{m.pl.} ‘the chair and the picture are painted’) (Maiden 2016: 131), whereas in Italian it seems to be no longer grammatical and is, therefore, consistently replaced by masculine plural agreement (e.g. *il*_{m.sg.} *dito e il*_{m.sg.} *braccio sono stat-i*_{m.pl.} *amputat-i*_{m.pl.}/**stat-e*_{f.pl.} *amputat-e*_{f.pl.} ‘the finger and the arm have been amputated’) (Loporcaro 2018: 85). A comparable contrast is also observable in the agreement of distributive and reciprocal pronouns with plural *genus alternans* nouns: while in some varieties (e.g. Verbicarese) singular distributive pronouns select masculine agreement when referring to a plural *genus alternans* NP (e.g. *dđ*_{def.pl.} *ɔ:va*_{f.pl.} *kóstə̀nə dɛ:čə čəndɛ:səmə dđ* *ɔ:n-ə*_{m.sg.}/**dđ* *ɔ:n-a*_{f.sg.} ‘eggs cost ten cents each’) (Loporcaro 2018: 115), in modern standard Italian only feminine singular agreement is acceptable in such cases (e.g. *l-*_{f.pl.} *uova*_{f.pl.} *costano dieci centesimi l’un-a*_{f.sg.}/**l’un-o*_{m.sg.} ‘eggs cost ten cents each’) (Loporcaro 2018: 85). These contrasts in productivity seem to suggest that, while in certain varieties such as Romanian and Verbicarese the *genus alternans* behaves as a consistent agreement class and could be reasonably considered as a controller gender *in statu nascendi*, in Italian it is becoming an instance of inqorate gender which never ‘exceeds the limits of a marginal noun class’ (Igartua 2006: 60); therefore, it can no longer constitute a third gender value.

2. LOSS OF THE LATIN NEUTER IN IBERO-ROMANCE: A CRITICAL REVIEW

As should be apparent by now, Ibero-Romance languages (e.g. Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Galician, etc.) seem to be systematically excluded from diachronic studies on the Romance *genus alternans*. This is not without reason, as there has long been a widespread, yet unarticulated, belief that alternating gender agreement never arose in the history of western

⁸ For further details on the competition between *a*-plurals and *i*-plurals in modern Italian *genus alternans* nouns, see Thornton (2013).

Romance (Bourciez 1946: 234). The majority of authors working on the subject seem to be convinced that the neuter gender had already disappeared from the gender system in these varieties by the time Romance vernaculars were coming into being, owing to the massive reanalysis of neuter nouns as masculines (e.g. Lat. n.sg. PRATUM > Sp. m.sg. *prado* ‘meadow’) or, to a much lesser extent, as feminine mass singulars (e.g. Lat. n.pl. LIGNA > Sp. f.sg. *leña* ‘firewood’) (cf. Mercier 1879, Kahane & Kahane 1949, Williams 1962, Rohlfs 1966, Schön 1971, Alkire & Rosen 2010, et al.). As mentioned earlier, such a gender reanalysis is thought to be triggered by the loss of the final consonants /s, m/ in late vulgar Latin, whereby neuter nouns ultimately became identical to masculines in the singular (e.g. m.sg. /múro/ ‘wall’ vs n.sg. /práto/ ‘meadow’) and to feminine singulars in the plural (e.g. f.sg. /káp̄ra/ ‘goat’ vs n.pl. /práta/ ‘meadows’) (cf. Penny 1980; Maiden 2013). It is believed that this straightforwardly resulted in the later depletion of the neuter gender inflexion during the last stages of vulgar Latin, which can be represented as follows:

(5) Latin	Western Romance				Gloss
a. N. SG.	> M. SG.		M. PL.		
Lat. PRATUM, –I	Sp.	Cat. <i>prat</i>	Sp. <i>prado-s</i>	Cat. <i>prat-s</i>	‘meadow’
	<i>prado</i>				
DONUM, –I	<i>don do</i>		<i>don-es don-s</i>		‘gift’
CORNU, –US	<i>cuerno corn</i>		<i>cuerno-s corn-s</i>		‘horn’
PIGNUS, –ORIS	<i>peño --</i>		<i>peño-s --</i>		‘pledge’
b. N. PL.	> F. SG.		F. PL.		
Lat. ARMA, –ORUM	Sp.	Cat. <i>arma</i>	Sp. <i>arma-s</i>	Cat. <i>arme-s</i>	‘weapon’
	<i>arma</i>				
FOLIA, –ORUM	<i>hoja fulla</i>		<i>hoja-s fulle-s</i>		‘leaf’
OPERA, –RUM	<i>obra obra</i>		<i>obra-s obre-s</i>		‘work’
LIGNA, –ORUM	<i>leña llenya</i>		<i>-- --</i>		‘firewood’

The pervasiveness of this viewpoint in the literature can be readily seen in reference historical grammars of individual western Romance languages, such as Spanish (6a), Portuguese (6b), French (6c), Catalan (6d), etc. Also very significantly, it has been predominant since the late nineteenth century and thus far has rarely been called into question (cf. Mercier 1879; Meyer-Lübke 1883), for which reason it is widely considered ‘a time-honoured commonplace in Romance historical linguistics’ (Loporcaro 2018:14).

- (6) a. ‘El romance incluyó las formas del neutro que acababan en *-o* entre los masculinos, las en *-a* entre los femeninos [...]. El plural romance de los neutros citados se formó de nuevo según el singular y no siguiendo la terminación *-a* del latín [...]. Si el romance conservó muchos plurales latinos en *-a* no fue con valor de tales plurales, sino como singulares femeninos’ (‘The Romance vernacular included neuter forms ending in *-o* among the masculine, and those ending in *-a* among the feminine [...]. The Romance plural of the mentioned neuters was newly formed based on the singular and not following the *-a* ending of Latin [...]. If the Romance vernacular preserved many Latin plurals ending in *-a*, it was not with the value of such plurals but as feminine singulars’) (Menéndez Pidal 1985: 213–217).
- b. ‘É sabido que os nomes neutros [...] enquanto no singular tomaram no romance o género masculino aqueles cujo tema acabava em *-o*, variando os de vogal diferente ou consoante, no plural foram englobados, em vista da sua desinência, aos nomes em *-a*, e portanto feitos femininos [...]’ (‘It is

known that the neuter nouns [...] in the singular adopted the masculine gender in Romance for those whose stem ended in *-o*, with variation for those with a different vowel or consonant. In the plural, they were grouped, due to their ending, with the nouns ending in *-a*, and thus became feminine') (Nunes 1945: 221).

- c. 'Au singulier, les noms neutres du latin sont pour la plus grande majorité réanalysés comme masculins. Cela est dû au fait que la forme du singulier neutre latin ressemble au masculin accusatif singulier latin [...]. Par analogie, un certain nombre de noms neutres pluriels en *-a* ont été réanalysés comme des féminins singuliers' ('In the singular, Latin neuter nouns were mostly reanalyzed as masculine. This is due to the fact that the form of the Latin neuter singular resembles the Latin masculine accusative singular [...]. By analogy, a certain number of neuter plural nouns ending in *-a* were reanalysed as feminine singulars') (Marchello-Nizia et al. 2020: 640).
- d. 'Els neutres en *-um* o *-u* i els de la tercera declinació llatina han passat a ser masculins: CAELU > *cel*, COLLU > *coll*, GELU > *gel*, CORNU > *corn*, GAUDIUM > *goig*, CORPUS > *cos* [...] els plurals neutres, que acabaven sense excepció en *-a*, van ser assimilats a la primera declinació llatina, que tenia la mateixa terminació, i passaren a ser femenins i de nombre singular: ARMA > *arma*, BRACHIA > *braça* [...] ('Neuters ending in *-um* or *-u* and those of the Latin third declension became masculine: CAELU > *cel* 'sky', COLLU > *coll* 'neck', GELU > *gel* 'ice', CORNU > *corn* 'horn', GAUDIUM > *goig* 'joy', CORPUS > *cos* 'body' [...] The neuter plurals, which always ended in *-a*, were assimilated into the first declension, which had the same ending, and became feminine and singular in number: ARMA > *arma* 'weapon', BRACHIA > *braça* 'fathom') (Moll 2006: 170).

Despite the long-standing prevalence of this viewpoint in the literature, questions regarding its plausibility can be raised upon closer examination. On the one hand, it is perplexing to assume that a single sound change in late Latin could have led to the innovation of the neuter inflexion in the eastern regions of the Roman Empire while simultaneously resulting in its elimination in the western provinces. If this indeed occurred, the reasons for such an unusual bidirectional development must be accounted for separately. On the other hand, the mainstream perspective seems to have disregarded altogether the possible influence of semantic factors in the gender recategorization of neuter nouns. There is substantial cross-linguistic evidence showing that nouns denoting naturally collective entities (e.g. paired body parts, fruits and vegetables, etc.) are semantically unmarked in the plural, which allows them to better preserve morphophonemic irregularity in the plural due to high token frequency (cf. Tiersma 1982; Bybee 2006; Haspelmath & Karjus 2017; Grimm 2018). Therefore, neuter nouns denoting inherently plural entities in Latin should have resisted gender reanalysis in favour of the singular; hence, they would have preserved the original *a-/ae-* plurals instead of replacing them with analogical masculine plurals. Moreover, even though the merger of Latin neuters with masculines did take place in the history of western Romance, it seems unlikely that this process culminated immediately after regular sound change occurred, without going through an earlier transitional stage in which the original paradigm alternation, in all probability, 'a persisté jusqu'à la veille de la phase romane et même au-delà ("persisted until the eve of the Romance phase and even beyond")' (Väänänen 1981: 109).

All the reasons given above suggest that the conventional viewpoint on the loss of the neuter gender in western Romance may be oversimplified: it describes the *termini a quo* and *ad*

quem of the process, but overlooks what might have happened in between. This impression becomes all the stronger in light of scattered evidence suggesting that the *genus alternans* indeed existed in the early history of western Romance. According to Spitzer (1941: 347–348) and Väänänen (1981: 104), the occurrence of neuter plurals as feminine plurals is attested in the late Latin of Gaul/France (7a). Similarly, both Mercier (1879: 39) and Loporcaro (2018: 203) reported several irregular plural forms in old French (7b) and old Occitan (7c) which can be traced back to Latin *a*-plurals. This indicates that, during the transition from late Latin to early Gallo-Romance, the neuter gender underwent paradigm innovation as occurred in the eastern provinces, giving rise to the *genus alternans* inflexion which survived into the early stages of the Gallo-Romance vernaculars:

- (7) a. [...] **diversas** (f.pl.) **volatilia** (n.pl.) [...] (Väänänen 1981: 104)
 ‘...different poultry...’
 b. Meis qu’il i oust cent (pl.) **almaille** (f.pl.) [...] (1069, Mercier 1879: 39)
 ‘...one hundred head of horned cattle...’
 c. [...] **ses** (f.pl.) **vestimenta** (f.pl.) [...] (Loporcaro 2018: 203)
 ‘...their clothes...’

The late Latin and early Romance of the Iberian Peninsula also seem to provide similar data. According to Tantimonaco (2017: 209), in the Roman province of Lusitania, which encompassed most of modern-day Portugal, Extremadura and Salamanca, the so-called feminization of neuter plurals can be observed in numerous late Latin inscriptions (8a–b). Note that most of the neuter nouns observed in such inscriptions were also frequently assimilated to the masculine gender in the singular (e.g. *FATUS* instead of *fatum* ‘fate’, *MONIMETVS* instead of *monumentum* ‘monument’, etc.) (Tantimonaco 2017: 209). This strongly suggests that the ‘feminization’ of neuter plurals happened in parallel with their reanalysis as masculines in the singular in the late Latin of Lusitania, which clearly echoes the rise of the *genus alternans* in Italia and Dacia:

- (8) a. [...] **DIARIAS** (f.pl.) **ROGATAS** (f.pl.) [...] (Lusitania, 51–100, pro *diaria rogata*)
 ‘the requested daily wages’
 b. QVAI FATE (f.pl.) CONCESSERVNT VIVERE ANNIS XLV (Lusitania, 201–300, pro *fata*)
 ‘whom fate allowed to live for 45 years’

Further north, in the neighbouring province of Gallaecia including present-day Galicia, northern Portugal, Asturias and León, one occurrence is reported by Anglade (1905: 35) from the fourth-century *Itinerarium Egeriae*, in which the neuter plural *fundamenta* (‘foundations’), although modified by the neuter plural determiner *ista*, is co-referential with the feminine plural demonstrative *hae* (‘these’) (9a). In the southernmost region of ninth-century Spain, several such occurrences are observed by Muñoz (1996: 127) in the writings of the Mozarab Andalusí scholar Paul Albar (d. 861), where neuter plurals often appear to be modified by both neuter plural and feminine plural adjectives, as exemplified in (9b). In all these cases, the competition between the conservative neuter agreement and the innovative feminine plural agreement is observed alongside their assimilation into the masculine gender in the singular (e.g. *qual-em*_{m.sg.} *testimonium* ‘such testimony’, *grand-is*_{m.sg.} *solacius*_{m.sg.} ‘great solace’) (Muñoz 1996: 126), which agrees with the situation observed earlier in the northern regions of the peninsula:

- (9) a. Ait nobis ipse sanctus presbyter: ecce **ista** (n.pl.) **fundamenta** (n.pl.) in giro colliculo isto [...] **hae** (f.pl.) sunt de palatio regis Melchisedech (Gallaecia, ca 381–386, *Itinerarium Egeriae*, 57,8)

‘The holy priest himself tells us: “Behold these foundations around this small hill... these are from the palace of King Melchizedek”’.

- b. [...] cur non **ipsa** (n.pl.) **testimonia** (n.pl.) limatori intentione rimasti [...] indagatione strenua alio modo **digestas** (f.pl.) probasti (Corduba, ca 849–851, *Epistulae Albari* IV, 2.38r).

‘Why have you not examined those testimonies with a more refined intention... and proven them arranged in a diligent inquiry in another manner?’

The data discussed so far sufficiently support the hypothesis that the shift from the neuter gender to the alternating gender indeed occurred in late Hispanic Latin. Moreover, (9b) suggests that this transitional pattern may have survived into the Romance vernacular spoken among the Christian population in the ninth-century Al-Andalus. In the subsequent centuries, there are also indications hinting at the possible survival of the alternating gender in early Ibero-Romance. Wang (2022: 801) reports that, in the late eleventh-century *Glosas Silenses*, the neuter plural *animalia* (‘animals’) exhibits a highly unusual behaviour: instead of being interpreted as a masculine plural in the marginal early Romance glosses, it is solely and consistently referred to via feminine plural forms, as can be observed in the following fragment:

- (10) *Animalia* (n.pl.) que a lupis et canibus stranguilantur non sunt comenda ab hominibus, nisi adhuc *viba* occiduntur [**viba** (n.pl.) **las** (f.pl.) decolaren] [...]. Aves et animalia *cetera* (n.pl.) [**altras** (f.pl.)] si a retibus stranguilantur non sunt comenda ab hominibus (*Glosas Silenses*, fol.322r, 15–23).

‘Animals that are strangled by wolves and dogs are not to be eaten by humans, unless they are still alive when they are killed...Birds and other animals strangled by nets are not to be eaten by humans’.

The interpretation of the Latin neuter plural *animalia* by the glossator as a feminine plural in the early Ibero-Romance vernacular suggests that, at the time of these annotations, the plural form of *animal* showed neuter (–a) or feminine (–as) agreement instead of masculine (–os) agreement. If at that moment Latin neuters had already completely merged into the masculine gender in Hispano-Romance as the standard reconstruction argues, the original plural targets –a/–ae should have long yielded to masculine plurals in the vernacular; therefore, the corresponding adjectives and pronouns used to interpret *animalia* in the marginal glosses should have shown exclusively masculine plural agreement (**vibos* ‘alive’, **los* ‘them’, **altros* ‘other’, etc.). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the adjective *viba* (‘alive’) in the initial gloss still retains the conservative neuter plural marker –a, occurring together with the innovative feminine plural forms *las* (‘them’) and *altras* (‘other’). This may be indicative that, in the early Romance vernacular spoken in the eleventh-century Castile, the noun *animal*, albeit already masculine in the singular, could probably still select either neuter plural agreement in –a or feminine plural agreement in –as. The former amounts to the preservation of the autonomous neuter inflexion, whereas the latter indicates the rise of the non-autonomous alternating inflexion.

All the findings presented above lead to the conclusion that the mainstream perspective on the loss of the neuter gender in western Romance is clearly in need for reassessment. Furthermore, they offer promising indications of the survival of the late Latin *genus alternans* in the early history of Ibero-Romance. However, the paucity of these data still requires a word of caution, as it is not yet clear how accurately they can reflect the actual inflexional behaviour of proto-Romance nouns.⁹ To confirm that early Ibero-Romance was not an exception to the pan-Romance preservation of the *genus alternans*, a larger body of evidence is required in order to evaluate the extent of this phenomenon more thoroughly. This is the aim of the remainder of this article.

3. ALTERNATING AGREEMENT IN PROTO-IBERO-ROMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM EARLY MEDIEVAL IBERIAN DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTATION

Once it has been demonstrated that the late Latin alternating gender agreement was established not only in Italia and Dacia but also in the western regions of the Roman Empire such as Gallia and Hispania, it is possible to pursue further the hypothesis that the *genus alternans* also survived into the early stages of all branches of western Romance. Thus far, this has been confirmed in Gallo-Romance by evidence from old French and old Occitan (cf. 7b–c). As for Ibero-Romance, evidence available to date suggests that the *genus alternans* was probably extant in the so-called *Präromanische Sprachperiode* ('pre-Romance period') (Sandmann 1956: 59), roughly spanning from the last stages of late Hispanic Latin to the eleventh century (cf. 9–10). Indeed, this claim is substantiated by recent findings obtained in early medieval cartularies from all over the Iberian Peninsula, which, albeit still written in Latin, characteristically contain numerous elements of 'un'oralità già orientata in senso romanzo' ('an orality already oriented in a Romance sense') (Giuliani 2004: 463).¹⁰ The reliability of such documents for reconstructing the prehistory of Romance languages has been eloquently demonstrated by Sabatini (1965), Larson (2000), Faraoni (2014), et al. In the 'parti libere' ('free parts') of these documents, usually untainted by ready-made Latin phrases, one can observe a language of undeniable spontaneity which, although disguised under a Latinized façade, reflects all the morphophonological and morphosyntactic innovations occurring in the spoken language at that time, thus making these historical documents 'un ricco serbatoio di informazioni linguistiche per l'epoca di transizione' ('a rich reservoir of linguistic information for the transitional period') (Faraoni 2014: 100). In our Iberian sources, a significant number of Latin neuter nouns are found to select consistently feminine agreement in the plural, as evidenced by the following examples:

- (11) a. [...] omne genus **animalium** (n.pl.) vel **volatilium** (n.pl.) **cunctarum** (f.pl.)
(CODOLGA, 982)
'all kinds of animals or poultry'

⁹ Regarding (9a), Anglade (1905: 35) believes that the presence of *hæ* ('these') in this passage is due only to a simple formal confusion between the feminine plural *hæ* and the neuter plural *hæc* ('illud admittendum eum ex quadam confusione cum forma hæc pro hæ in feminino plurali in errorem cecidisse'; 'it must be admitted that he fell into error due to a certain confusion of the form *hæc* for *hæ* in the feminine plural'). The representative capacity of (9b) may also be questioned by the fact that it was produced by a celebrated scholar of that time who had been entirely educated in the Latin literary tradition; therefore, it is not clear to what extent his individual production is able to reflect the actual usage of proto-Romance of his era. On the other hand, the isolated nature of this occurrence makes it difficult to dismiss the possibility that it is simply a typographical error committed by the scribe.

¹⁰ The data presented here are sourced from four early medieval Ibero-Romance corpora, corresponding to all major linguistic areas of present-day Iberian Peninsula: (1) *Corpus Documentale Latinum Galleciæ* (CODOLGA), (2) *Corpus Documentale Latinum Cataloniae* (CODOLCAT), (3) *Corpus Documentale Latinum Legionis* (CODOL-LEG) and (4) *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* (CORDE). Furthermore, I have examined four early medieval diplomatic collections from Castile/León: (1) *Colección documental del cartulario de Valpuesta* (Ruiz Asencio, Ruiz Albi & Herrero Jimenez 2010), (2) *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Sahagún* (Minguez Fernandez 1976), (3) *El becerro gótico de Cardeña* (Flórez et al. 2017) and (4) *Colección documental del Archivo de la Catedral de León* (Sáez 1987).

- b. [...] vel **arbusta** (n.pl.), **fructuosa** (n.pl.) uel **infructuosas** (f.pl.) (CODOLGA, 856)
‘plants or trees, either fruitful or unfruitful’
- c. [...] uillas cum **beneficias** (f.pl.) et adprestancias suas [...] (CODOLCAT, 891)
‘villages with their benefits and offerings’
- d. [...] irakes pretiosos, **cornuas** (f.pl.) **bubalinas** (f.pl.) VI [...] (CODOLGA, 998)
‘precious glass vessels, six buffalo horns’
- e. [...] et **omnes** (f.pl.) **edificias** (f.pl.) que ibidem sunt. (CODOLCAT, 1001)
‘all the buildings that are there’
- f. [...] illorum **superpositas** (f.pl.) et **exias** (f.pl.) et **regressias** (f.pl.). (CODOLCAT, 895)
‘with everything planted on those lands, their revenues and returns’
- g. [...] et arsinas et **homicidias** (f.pl.) et cucutias et placitos [...] (CODOLCAT, 957)
‘arsons, homicides, adulteries and lawsuits’
- h. [...] **loca** (n.pl.) baratri **erudiendas** (f.pl.) obtineat [...] (CODOLGA, 895)
‘may he obtain places to be ploughed in hell’
- i. [...] cultas terras et incultas, **molinas** (f.pl.) cum suis aqueductis [...] (León, 967)
‘cultivated and uncultivated lands, mills with their aqueducts’
- j. [...] in convenienciis et **pignoribus** (n.pl.) **quas** (f.pl.) abet **factas** (f.pl.) sive **missas** (f.pl.) ad prescriptum [...] (CODOLCAT, 1054)
‘in agreements and pledges which he has made or sent to be made public’
- k. [...] et ad partem regis IIIes **aurias** (f.pl.) **talentas** (f.pl.) [...] (Sahagún, 1057)
‘and to the king’s share three golden talents’
- l. [...] qui **suas** (f.pl.) **signas** (f.pl.) facerent. (CODOLCAT, 863)
‘who left their signatures’
- m. [...] ipsas forsarturas vel **malefactas** (f.pl.) **quas** (f.pl.) **factas** (f.pl.) abent vel fecerint homines [...] (CODOLCAT, 1054)
‘the mischiefs and wrongdoings that people have committed or will commit’

The widespread presence of such attestations in these sources, contrary to what had been initially expected, is surprising. The reanalysis of neuter plurals as feminine plurals has been

Table 7. Temporal distribution of first attestations of the 70 lexemes

Centuries	8th–9th	9th–10th	10th–11th	11th–12th	12th–13th	13th–14th
Nº of lexemes	1	11	29	20	7	2

attested thus far in 70 lexemes (including eight pluralia tantum), which correspond to a total of 618 occurrences.¹¹ Among these occurrences, 298 are documented in Galicia, 227 in Catalonia and 93 in Castile/León. Despite the overall abundance of occurrences in these sources, a notable disparity is observed in the geographical distribution of such attestations. Specifically, only 3 out of the 70 attested lexemes (i.e. *pascuum* ‘pasture’, *edificium* ‘building’, *adiacentia* ‘vicinity, surroundings’) exhibit feminine plural agreement in all three regions considered. In contrast, 14 of these lexemes are present in only two of the three regions (e.g. *testimonium* ‘testimony, witness’: 102 occurrences in Galicia, 29 in Castile/León), while 53 are exclusive to only one region (e.g. *olivarium* ‘olive grove’: seven occurrences in Catalonia). Regarding the temporal distribution of these data, Table 7 indicates that the majority of the 70 lexemes are first attested between the ninth and the twelfth centuries. A notable decline in first attestations of such lexemes can be observed from the twelfth century onwards. Both the spatio-temporal distribution and the quantitative significance of these findings suggest that the ‘feminization’ of plural neuter nouns in such cases is not a result of the occasional oversights or individual idiosyncrasies of early medieval scribes. Instead, it represents a linguistically significant transformation that deserves thorough examination.

While the examples provided in (11a-m) may strongly suggest the preservation of the *genus alternans* in proto-Ibero-Romance, several additional questions must be duly answered before one can confidently make this claim. At the present juncture, the feminine *as*-plurals presented above could still potentially correspond to feminine *a*-singulars derived from Latin neuter plurals, as proponents of the conventional reconstruction would undoubtedly contend (e.g. Lat. n.pl. FOLIA ‘leaves’ > f.sg. *hoja* → f.pl. *hojas* ‘leaf/leaves’) (cf. Menéndez Pidal 1985, Penny 2002, Moll 2006). Hence, it is essential to determine whether the ending *-a* in the inflexional morphology of these lexemes indicates feminine singular or neuter plural value. Furthermore, it is also crucial to delineate the specific morphosyntactic environments in

¹¹ These 70 lexemes are as follows: *animal* (‘animal’), *anuntium* (‘announcement’), *arbustum* (‘plant, tree, bush’), *argumentum* (‘building’), *beneficium* (‘benefit, profit’), *caput* (‘head of cattle’), *coclear* (‘spoon’), *concilium* (‘assembly’), *cornu* (‘horn’), *cimiterium* (‘graveyard’), *debitum* (‘debt’), *donum* (‘present, donation’), *edificium* (‘building’), *exium* (‘revenue, income’), *ferramentum* (‘iron tool’), *homicidium* (‘homicide, manslaughter’), *lectum* (‘bed’), *legumen* (‘legume, vegetable’), *lignum* (‘firewood, tree’), *lintheamen* (‘linen cloth’), *locus* (‘place’), *lumen* (‘light, eye’), *luminare* (‘light, lamp’), *malefactum* (‘misdeed’), *malefactorium* (‘misdeed’), *maleficium* (‘misdeed’), *malum* (‘misdeed’), *matutinum* (‘matin’), *ministerium* (‘tool, utensil’), *modium* (‘modius’), *molinum* (‘mill’), *molendinum* (‘mill’), *monimentum* (‘deed, legal document’), *negotium* (‘business, matter’), *obsequium* (‘present, donation’), *olivatum* (‘olive grove’), *olivarium* (‘olive grove’), *ornamentum* (‘ornament, decoration’), *pallium* (‘cloak’), *pascuum* (‘pasture’), *pascarium* (‘pasture’), *pignus* (‘pledge’), *piscatorium* (‘fishing ground’), *pomerium* (‘apple orchard’), *premium* (‘benefit, profit’), *redditum* (‘rent, income’), *regressium* (‘returns, profits’), *sabanum* (‘linen cloth’), *saxum* (‘rock, crag’), *sandalium* (‘sandal’), *scrinium* (‘chest, trunk’), *signum* (‘mark, indication’), *solidum* (‘sueldo’), *stacamentum* (‘pledge’), *strumentum* (‘tool, utensil’), *superpositum* (‘everything found on the surface of a land’), *talentum* (‘talent’), *tempus* (‘time’), *testimonium* (‘testimony, witness’), *vestimentum* (‘clothing’), *vocabulum* (‘farm, estate’), *volatile* (‘bird, flying creature’), *adiacentia* (‘vicinity, surroundings’), *bona* (‘assets, goods’), *cibaria* (‘victual’), *mirabilia* (‘miracles’), *pertinentia* (‘belongings’), *stabilia* (‘property, real estate’), *utensilia* (‘tools, utensils’) and *presentalia* (‘presents, gifts’). To determine the meaning of the terms, most of which belong exclusively to early medieval notarial Latin, I have referred to lexicographical works of renowned authority, such as the *Glossarium Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis* by Du Cange et al. (1883–1887), the *Mediæ Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* by Niermeyer (1976), as well as dictionaries of classical Latin such as *A Latin Dictionary* by Lewis and Short (1879), the *Thesaurus lingue Latine* (ThLL), etc. Unfortunately, space limitations prevent the inclusion of all occurrences in this article. Interested readers are encouraged to consult my Ph.D. dissertation (accessible via <http://hdl.handle.net/10803/691297>) for access to the complete dataset.

which the new feminine plural agreement is observed in our sources, in order to determine the degree of productivity of the innovative *as*-plurals at this stage of the evolution. It is also imperative to investigate whether these neuter nouns in the singular were also undergoing gender reanalysis as masculine singulars at the same time, thus completing the other half of the gender-alternating paradigm.

3.1. 'Feminised' neuter plurals in early medieval Iberian sources: The fuller picture

Bearing all these questions in mind, let us reconsider the examples in (11a-m). First, while it is a priori feasible to associate the plural forms in *-as* with potential feminine *a*-singulars in examples such as (11c-d), it is challenging to apply this reasoning in other cases. Note that in (11b), for instance, the co-occurrence of *-a* with *-as* in gender agreement leaves no doubt that *-a* must still be expressing plurality both in the noun *arbusta* ('plants, trees') and in the adjective *fructuosa* ('fruitful'); therefore, it can by no means be considered singular. The same can be said for (11 h), where the plurality of *-a* is made explicit by the feminine plural gerundive *erudiendas* ('to be ploughed') agreeing with the controller *loca* ('places'). Furthermore, the fact that feminine plural targets are constantly found in agreement with third-declension neuter plurals in cases such as (11a) and (11j) (e.g. *animalium vel volatiliium cunctarum* 'of all the animals and poultry', *pignora factas* 'pledges made') indicates that *-as* and *-a* ought to be treated as functionally equivalent; therefore, the occurrence of feminine plural forms in such instances does not presuppose the reanalysis of Latin neuter *a*-plurals as feminine singulars. This is further supported by the frequent alternation between *-as* and *-a* in both adjectival and pronominal agreement attested throughout the peninsula, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (12) a. [...] **pascua** (n.pl.) **quas** (f.pl.) uulgus dicit Seles [...] (CODOLGA, 853)
'pastures which the common people call Seles'
- b. [...] uel **cimiteria** (n.pl.), sibe intus seu et foris, tam **constructas** (f.pl.) quam [...] (CODOLGA, 914)
'or cemeteries, whether inside or outside, both built and...'
- c. [...] et **ministeria** (n.pl.) **quas** (f.pl.) ganauimus [...] (CODOLGA, 922)
'and the liturgical utensils which we gained'
- d. [...] et **totas** (f.pl.) **arbusta** (n.pl.) **fructuarias** (f.pl.) et **infructuarias** (f.pl.) [...] (CODOLGA, 1070)
'all the fruitful and unfruitful trees'
- e. [...] vel **pignora** (n.pl.) **quas** (f.pl.) predictus Guillelmus [...] (CODOLCAT, 1057)
'or the pledges which the aforementioned Guillelmus'
- f. [...] de **mirabilibus** (n.pl.) quoque **quas** (f.pl.) penes vos **gesta** (n.pl.) sunt [...] (CODOLGA, 906)
'also about the miracles that happened to you all'
- g. [...] omnibus **edificiis** (n.pl.) **que** (n.pl.) ibi habueritis vel habuerint **factas** (f.pl.) [...] (CODOLCAT, 1075)
'all the building which you or they will have built there'
- h. [...] cum **suas** (f.pl.) **superposita** (n.pl.) et illorum exio [...] (CODOLCAT, 1003)
'with everything planted on those lands, their income'

Regarding the remaining occurrences in which *-as* appears to be the sole plural marker applied in agreement, it is equally implausible to postulate a pre-existing connexion between such feminine *as*-plurals and feminine *a*-singulars previously derived from Latin neuter plurals. The reasons for this claim are both quantitative and qualitative. On the one hand, out of the total 70 neuter lexemes displaying feminine agreement in the plural, only 28 exhibit

feminine *a*-singulars.¹² Among these, only six show first attestations between the ninth and the tenth centuries, whereas the remaining 22 begin to do so only from the eleventh century onwards. This implies that 91 per cent of the neuter lexemes considered do not display incontrovertibly attested *a*-singulars before the eleventh century, making it highly difficult to attribute occurrences of *as*-plurals dated prior to the eleventh century to the existence of *a*-singulars. On the other hand, very noteworthy is the fact that the first six neuter lexemes displaying feminine *a*-singulars between the ninth and the tenth century were either pluralia tantum (i.e. *adiacentia* ‘vicinity, surroundings’, *cibaria* ‘victual’, *pertinentia* ‘belongings’, *utensilia* ‘tools, utensils’) or usually behaved as such (i.e. *arbustum* ‘plant, tree, bush’, *lignum* ‘firewood, tree’). This situation, consistent with the traditional argument that only Latin neuter plurals which ‘could be understood (sometimes loosely) as “collective”’ became feminine singulars (Penny 2002: 122), indicates that the reanalysis of neuter *a*-plurals as feminine singulars was indeed in progress. However, it does not mean that such a reanalysis can be extrapolated to the remaining neuter lexemes because they did not fulfil the prerequisite of being ‘collective’ (e.g. *cornu* ‘horn’, *edificium* ‘building’, *talentum* ‘talent’). In fact, if analysed following the conventional reconstruction, these neuters should have undergone analogical restructuring of their plurals and thus developed fully masculine inflexion (e.g. Lat. n.sg. CORNU ‘horn’ > Sp. m.sg. *cuerno*/m.pl. *cuernos* ‘horn/horns’). Furthermore, the absence of attestations for *a*-singulars prior to the eleventh century also strongly suggests that *as*-plurals emerged much earlier in the inflexional morphology of these neuter nouns. Therefore, there are no grounds for assuming that the occurrence of *as*-plurals was preceded by the reanalysis of *a*-plurals as feminine singulars.

One additional issue concerning the reliability of *-as* in gender marking is the morphological status of *-s* in these proto-Romance sources. It has been suggested that the desinence *-s* attested in these cases cannot be treated as a genuine plural marker productive in the proto-Romance nominal inflexional system. Instead, it should be considered a mere hypercorrective marker ‘strappata dall’inventario morfologico del latino per conferire una patina formulare a lemmi e sequenze estranee o meno all’ordito documentario’ (‘taken from the morphological inventory of Latin to give a formulaic veneer to lemmas and sequences, whether foreign or not, to the documentary structure’) (Giuliani 2004: 467). The primary argument is that in many Neapolitan sources dated between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries, the desinence *-s* often appear attached to the vocalic feminine plural marker *-e* (e.g. *hec autem memorat-e-sf.pl. terr-e-sf.pl.* ‘these mentioned lands’). Note that in the tenth-century proto-Romance varieties of central-southern Italy, sigmatic plurals had already been replaced by vocalic plurals owing to the vocalisation of /s/ (e.g. Lat.f.pl. TERRAS ‘lands’ > */térraj/ > /térre/ > It.f.pl. *terre* ‘lands’) (cf. Penny 1980: 506, Maiden 2013, Faraoni 2014: 113); thus, the presence of *-s* in such instances fails to accurately mirror the real vernacular usage of the period. However, although this assertion holds true for Italo-Romance, it is irrelevant to the majority of western Romance languages, given that the vocalisation of final /s/ never became established in these varieties, and sigmatic plurals remained prevalent until the present day. It is therefore plausible to consider the marker *-as* found in our Iberian sources as a genuine feminine plural marker, which was present and productive within the morphological structure

¹² These are as follows: *arbustum* (951, Galicia; 964, Castile/León), *lignum* (971, Catalonia), *adiacentia* (942, Catalonia; 854, Galicia; 927, Castile/León), *cibaria* (934, Galicia), *pertinentia* (951, Catalonia; 883, Galicia), *utensilia* (995, Catalonia; 983, Galicia), *animal* (1329, Galicia), *beneficium* (1417, Galicia), *concilium* (1071, Catalonia), *debitum* (1113, Catalonia; 1177, Galicia), *ferramentum* (1125, Catalonia), *linteamen* (1175, Catalonia), *luminare* (1112, Catalonia), *malefactum* (1057, Catalonia), *malefactorium* (1253, Catalonia), *ministerium* (1003, Galicia), *molendinum* (1185, Galicia), *olivarium* (1066, Catalonia), *pascuum* (1184, Catalonia), *pignus* (1061, Catalonia; 1218, Galicia), *premium* (1148, Catalonia), *sabanum* (1083, Catalonia; 1180, Galicia), *signum* (1171, Catalonia; 1222, Galicia), *talentum* (1012, Galicia), *testimonium* (1000, Catalonia; 1025, Galicia), *bona* (1257, Galicia), *mirabilia* (1145, Catalonia) and *stabilia* (1199, Catalonia).

of proto-Ibero-Romance nouns and did not need to be retrieved from the ‘inventario morfológico del latino’.¹³

That *-as* is properly associated with the feminine plural value is further supported by the fact that feminine plural agreement with neuter plural controllers is also found in a wider range of morphosyntactic environments. As mentioned earlier, in (11a) the feminine plural value of *animalia* (‘animals’) and *volatilia* (‘poultry’) is explicitly confirmed by the adjective *cunctarum* (‘all’) agreeing in genitive plural. Many other similar occurrences can be observed throughout Galicia (e.g. *edificiarum*_{gen.f.pl.} ‘of the buildings’), Catalonia (e.g. *locis quarum*_{gen.f.pl.} ‘in places whose’) and Castile/León (e.g. *molinarum*_{gen.f.pl.} ‘of the mills’). Feminine plural agreement can also occur when both controllers and targets are in the ablative, as can be clearly seen in several tenth-century Galician charters (e.g. *ambabus*_{abl.f.pl.} *careat luminibus*_{n.pl.} ‘may he lack both eyes’, *duabus*_{abl.f.pl.} *linteaminibus*_{n.pl.} ‘with two linens’). Moreover, despite the predominant occurrence of the sigmatic plural ending *-as*, it is noteworthy that feminine plural agreement could still be realised, albeit very sporadically, by the nominative feminine plural ending *-ae/-e*, as has been attested in one tenth-century Galician document (*omnes arbuste*_{f.pl.} ‘all the plants’) and two Castilian documents dated between the ninth and the tenth century (*pertinentje*_{f.pl.} *mee*_{f.pl.} ‘my belongings’, *pro luminarie*_{f.pl.} *ecclesie* ‘for the light of the church’). These instances provide compelling evidence that, in our Iberian sources, *-as* unequivocally corresponds to feminine plural agreement, and should therefore be legitimately treated as a regular variant of canonical *a*- plurals in the inflexional morphology of these nouns.

As for the inflexional behaviour of these neuter lexemes in the singular, an initial inspection reveals a constant fluctuation between neuter singular and masculine singular agreement. Setting aside the eight pluralia tantum that never occur in the singular, it can be clearly discerned that the remaining 62 lexemes consistently adhere to neuter agreement in the singular across the Iberian Peninsula in compliance with classical Latin norms (e.g. *hoc*_{n.pl.} *signum indidi* ‘I left this mark’). At the same time, 19 of them exhibit first attestations of masculine singular agreement between the eighth and the tenth centuries, which constitutes 31 per cent of the total lexemes considered.¹⁴ This evidence substantiates the traditionally assumed gender reanalysis of Latin neuter nouns as masculines in the singular, a fact which already appears to be established within all domains of gender agreement in our Iberian sources by the first half of the tenth century, as exemplified in the following instances:

- (13) a. [...] **beneficius** (m.sg.) [non] debeat esse de Suniario [...] (CODOLCAT, 843)
‘such a benefit should [not] stem from Count Suniario’
b. [...] **omnem** (m.sg.) **edificium** cum arboribus pomiferis [...] (CODOLCAT, 912)
‘every building with fruit-bearing trees’
c. [...] **ipsu** (m./n.sg.) **molinu** (m./n.sg.) et ipsas teras [...] (CODOLGA, 940)
‘the windmill and the lands’
d. [...] auri **talentus** (m.sg.) post regia pars et [...] (CODOLGA, 995)
‘a talent of gold after the king’s share’

¹³ I thank Prof. Loporcaro for providing me with the works of Giuliani (2004) and Faraoni (2014), and for informing me about the possible use of sigmatic plurals as a consequence of hypercorrection.

¹⁴ These nouns showing masculine singular agreement are as follows (first-attestation dates included): *beneficium* (843, Catalonia), *concilium* (941, Galicia), *debitum* (965, Castile/León), *donum* (912, Galicia), *edificium* (895, Castile/León), *lectum* (883, Galicia), *locus* (877, Galicia), *ministerium* (915, Galicia), *molinum* (Galicia, 868), *molendinum* (934, Catalonia), *obsequium* (886, Catalonia), *ornamentum* (772, Galicia), *premium* (998, Catalonia), *redditum* (839, Catalonia), *signum* (950, Galicia), *solidum* (993, Catalonia), *talentum* (995, Galicia), *tempus* (982, Catalonia) and *testimonium* (959, Galicia). These nouns show unequivocal masculine singular agreement alongside canonical neuter singular agreement. Regarding the rest of the lexemes, in some cases it is difficult to determine the gender of these singular forms due to the complete syncretism between the neuter and the masculine gender in accusative (*-um*), genitive (*-i*), dative (*-o*) and ablative (*-o*), for which reason they are not taken into account here.

Table 8. Nouns showing gender-alternating inflexion attested in our Iberian sources

Lexeme	Singular	Plural	Gloss
BENEFICIUM	<i>beneficius</i> (843)	<i>beneficias</i> (891)	‘benefit’
CONCILIIUM	<i>concilius</i> (941)	<i>concilias</i> (998)	‘assembly’
DEBITUM	<i>debitus</i> (965)	<i>debitas</i> (1147)	‘debt’
DONUM	<i>donus</i> (912)	<i>donas</i> (1025)	‘gift’
EDIFICIUM	<i>edificius</i> (912)	<i>edificias</i> (1001)	‘building’
LECTUM	<i>lectus</i> (883)	<i>lectas</i> (992)	‘bed’
LOCUS	<i>locus</i> (877)	<i>locas</i> (895)	‘place’
MINISTERIUM	<i>ministerius</i> (915)	<i>ministerias</i> (922)	‘tool’
MOLINUM	<i>molinus</i> (940)	<i>molinas</i> (967)	‘mill’
MOLENDINUM	<i>molendinus</i> (934)	<i>molendinas</i> (1013)	‘mill’
OBSEQUIUM	<i>obsequius</i> (886)	<i>obsequias</i> (966)	‘present, donation’
ORNAMENTUM	<i>ornamentus</i> (772)	<i>ornamentas</i> (959)	‘ornament’
PREMIUM	<i>premius</i> (998)	<i>premias</i> (1009)	‘benefit’
REDDITUM	<i>redditus</i> (839)	<i>redditas</i> (1038)	‘rent’
SIGNUM	<i>signus</i> (863)	<i>signas</i> (950)	‘mark’
SOLIDUM	<i>solidus</i> (993)	<i>solidas</i> (918)	‘sueldo (old coin)’
TALENTUM	<i>talentus</i> (995)	<i>talentas</i> (1057)	‘talent (old coin)’
TEMPUS	<i>tempus</i> (982)	<i>temporas</i> (1048)	‘time’
TESTIMONIUM	<i>testimonius</i> (959)	<i>testimonias</i> (915)	‘testimony, witness’

- e. [...] manu mea propria **hunc** (m.sg.) **signum** (m.sg.) feci [...] (CODOLGA, 950)
‘with my own hand I left this sign’

If we compare the occurrences in (13) with those in (11), we can observe that between the ninth and the eleventh centuries the 70 neuter lexemes under discussion displayed two possible agreement patterns: (a) canonical neuter agreement in both singular and plural forms (e.g. n.sg. *illud molinum*/n.pl. *illa molina* ‘the mill/mills’) and (b) masculine agreement in the singular and feminine agreement in the plural (e.g. m.sg. *ille molinus*/f.pl. *illas molinas* ‘the mill/mills’). Pattern (b) is exemplified in Table 8, which showcases neuter lexemes exhibiting full gender-alternating inflexion as documented in our sources. Table 8 also provides the first-attestation dates alongside the corresponding singular and plural forms.

While the former pattern portrays compliance with classical Latin norms, the latter aligns with the alternating gender agreement discussed in 1.1. The co-occurrence of innovative masculine singular agreement and innovative feminine plural agreement in these neuter lexemes within the same time frame strongly suggests the presence of a consistent alternating agreement pattern which remained productive during the initial stages of Ibero-Romance. In the following subsection, we will examine the morphological behaviour of these neuter nouns in sources from other Romance-speaking territories, in order to determine whether this phenomenon is specific to the proto-Romance spoken in the Iberian Peninsula or a pan-Romance development.

3.2. The comparative romance picture

A corollary that follows directly from what has been demonstrated thus far is that the data found in our Iberian sources show a uniformity and consistency that forcefully suggest that the alternating agreement displayed by them must be part of the emergent nominal inflexion of proto-Ibero-Romance. The non-isolated nature of our Iberian data is suggested by the fact that a large number of them exhibit parallel cases in similar sources from other Romance-speaking areas, such as Gaul/France and Italy. Before proceeding to the analysis of these

Table 9. Geographical distribution of ‘feminised’ neuter plurals (seventh-thirteenth century)

Feminine plurals	Geographical areas	Feminine plurals	Geographical areas
<i>Aedificias</i>	It., Fr., Cat., Gal.	<i>adiacentias</i>	It., Fr., Cat., Cast., Gal.
<i>Animalias</i>	It., Fr., Cast., Cat.	<i>bonas</i>	Cat.
<i>Capitas</i>	It., Cat.	<i>debitas</i>	It., Fr., Port., Gal., Cast.
<i>Homicidias</i>	It., Cat.	<i>locas</i>	It., Cat., Gal.
<i>Lignas</i>	It., Cast., Cat., Gal.	<i>malefactas</i>	Fr., Cat.
<i>Malefacturias</i>	Port., Gal.	<i>maleficias</i>	It., Cat.
<i>Modias</i>	It., Cat., Gal.	<i>molinas</i>	It., Fr., Gal., Cast.
<i>Olivetias</i>	It., Fr., Cat.	<i>pascuas</i>	It., Fr., Gal., Cast., Cat.
<i>Pallias</i>	It., Fr., Cast., Gal.	<i>pertinentias</i>	It., Fr., Cat., Gal., Cast.
<i>Pignorias</i>	It., Cat., Gal.	<i>premas</i>	It., Gal.
<i>Sandalias</i>	It., Fr., Cat.	<i>sabanas</i>	It., Fr., Cat., Gal.
<i>Saxas</i>	It., Cat.,	<i>signas</i>	It., Fr., Port., Gal., Cat.
<i>Scrinias</i>	It., Cat.	<i>testimonias</i>	Port., Gal., Cast.
<i>Vestimentas</i>	It., Fr., Port., Gal.	<i>volatilis</i>	It., Fr., Cat., Gal.
<i>Vocabulas</i>	It., Gal.		

data, note that the 70 neuter lexemes found in our Iberian sources can be grouped descriptively into eight semantic classes, as specified below:

- 1 Buildings and constructions: *adiacentia* (‘vicinity, surroundings’), *argumentum* (‘building’), *cimiterium* (‘graveyard’), *edificium* (‘building’);
- 2 Assets and financial obligations: *beneficium* (‘benefit, profit’), *debitum* (‘debt’), *donum* (‘present, donation’), *exium* (‘revenue, income’), *stacamentum* (‘pledge’), *obsequium* (‘present, donation’), *pignus* (‘pledge’), *bona* (‘assets, goods’), *pertinentia* (‘belongings’), *redditum* (‘rent, income’), *regressium* (‘returns, profits’), *stabilia* (‘property, real estate’), *superpositum* (‘everything found on the surface of a land’), *presentalia* (‘presents, gifts’);
- 3 Units of measurement: *caput* (‘head of cattle’), *modium* (‘modius’), *solidum* (‘sueldo’), *talentum* (‘talent’);
- 4 Tools and instruments: *cocleare* (‘spoon’), *ferramentum* (‘iron tool’), *ministerium* (‘tool, utensil’), *ornamentum* (‘ornament, decoration’), *strumentum* (‘tool, utensil’), *utensilia* (‘tools, utensils’), *molinum* (‘mill’), *molendinum* (‘mill’), *lectum* (‘bed’), *scrinium* (‘chest, trunk’);
- 5 Clothing and bedding items: *sandalium* (‘sandal’), *linreamen* (‘linen cloth’), *pallium* (‘cloak’), *sabanum* (‘linen cloth’), *vestmentum* (‘clothing’);
- 6 Enclosed natural spaces: *locus* (‘place’), *olivatum* (‘olive grove’), *olivarium* (‘olive grove’), *pascuum* (‘pasture’), *pascarium* (‘pasture’), *piscatorium* (‘fishing ground’), *pomerium* (‘apple orchard’), *vocabulum* (‘farm, estate’);
- 7 Natural concrete entities: *animal* (‘animal’), *cornu* (‘horn’), *arbustum* (‘plant, tree, bush’), *legumen* (‘legume, vegetable’), *lignum* (‘firewood, tree’), *saxum* (‘rock, crag’), *volatile* (‘bird, flying creature’), *cibaria* (‘victual’);
- 8 Abstract or symbolic entities: *annuntium* (‘announcement’), *concilium* (‘assembly’), *homicidium* (‘homicide, manslaughter’), *lumen* (‘light, eye’), *luminare* (‘light, lamp’), *malefactum* (‘misdeed’), *maleficium* (‘misdeed’), *malefacturium* (‘misdeed’), *malum* (‘misdeed’), *matutinum* (‘matin’), *mirabilia* (‘miracles’), *monimentum* (‘deed, legal document’), *negotium* (‘business, matter’), *premium* (‘benefit, profit’), *signum* (‘mark, indication’), *tempus* (‘time’), *testimonium* (‘testimony, witness’).

A contrastive analysis of our data with those coming from other Romance-speaking territories reported by Appel (1883), Du Cange et al. (1883–1887) and Wilkinson (1985) suggests that what has been observed in the early medieval Iberian Peninsula cannot be an

isolated development: within each of the aforementioned groups, there are neuter lexemes which systematically select feminine agreement in the plural, especially in sources from Italy and Gaul/France dated between the seventh and the thirteenth century, as shown in the following table (Table 9):

As can be clearly seen, among the neuter nouns in the first group denoting buildings and constructions, *edificium* ('building') and *adiacentia* ('vicinity, surroundings') exhibit feminine plural agreement in most of the western territories of early medieval Europe. Thus, Appel (1883: 57) describes that in Italo-Romance and Gallo-Romance sources between the eighth and the ninth centuries, it is common to find the feminine plural forms *aedificias* (14a) and *adjacentias* (14b) coexisting with the classical Latin *a*-plurals. This observation seems to align with what has been observed in our Catalan and Galician documentation:

- (14) a. [...] cum **aedificias** (f.pl.) [...] (Italy, 852)
 'with buildings'
 b. [...] **omnis** (f.pl.) **adjacentias** (f.pl.) vel appendicias [...] (Gaul/France, 722)
 'all adjacent areas or attachments'

The same occurs with nouns denoting assets and financial obligations, among which *debitum* ('debt'), *pignus* ('pledge') and *pertinentia* ('belongings') often appear as feminine nouns in the plural throughout western Europe: Appel (1883: 72) reports instances of the feminine plural *pigneras* in two Italian documents dated to the end of the ninth century. Similarly, Du Cange et al. (1883–1887: s.v. *debitum*) provide an instance of *debita* treated as feminine plural in a thirteenth-century French diploma. Regarding *pertinentia*, Appel (1883: 71) confirms its generalised occurrence as a feminine plurale tantum across Italian, Frankish-Gallic and Iberian sources prior to the twelfth century (15b), similar to what has been observed in our Ibero-Romance documentation:

- (15) a. toutes ses rentes et **toutes** (f.pl.) **ses** (f.pl.) **debites** (f.pl.) [...] (Gaul/France, 1259)
 'all his revenues and all his debts'
 b. [...] **omnis** (f.pl.) **pertinentias** (f.pl.) [...] (Italy, 1002)
 'all the belongings'

Regarding measurement terms, Appel (1883: 70) notes that *caput* ('head of cattle') and *modium* ('modius') often display the feminine plural forms *capitas* and *modias* in Italian sources dated between mid-tenth and early eleventh centuries (e.g. *capitas*_{f.pl.} *ambas*_{f.pl.} 'both heads of cattle', *de ambabus*_{f.pl.} *capitibus* 'of both heads of cattle', *modias*_{f.pl.} 'modii'). Terms denoting items of clothing and bedding such as *pallium* ('cloak'), *sabanum* ('linen cloth'), *sandalium* ('sandal') and *vestmentum* ('clothing') also frequently show the same behaviour in Italy (e.g. *pallias*_{f.pl.} 'cloaks', *diversa*_{n.pl.} *pallias*_{f.pl.} 'various cloaks', *sandalias*_{f.pl.} *quas*_{f.pl.} 'sandals which'), Gaul/France (e.g. *palliarum*_{gen.f.pl.} 'of the cloaks') and Spain (e.g. *novem sabanas*_{f.pl.} 'nine linens') between the ninth and the eleventh centuries (Appel 1883: 64, Wilkinson 1985: 252). Regarding terms denoting tools and instruments, *molina* ('mills') already often appeared as a feminine plural in the fourth-century Italy (16a), a usage which is also widely attested in Frankish-Gallic and Lombardic sources between the sixth and the eighth centuries (16b) (Du Cange et al. 1883–1887: s.v. *molinum*, Wilkinson 1985: 277):

- (16) a. [...] **molinae** (f.pl.) ad calles arctandas **aedificatae** (f.pl.) (Italy, fourth century)
 'mills built to restrict the paths'
 b. [...] **molinas** (f.pl.) [...] Officina **molinarum** (f.pl.) [...] (Gaul/France, sixth century)
 'mills...factory of mills'

Among nouns denoting enclosed natural spaces, *pascua* ('pastures') is frequently treated as feminine plural in Italy (e.g. *pascuas*_{f.pl.} 'pastures') and Gaul/France (e.g. *cum pascuas*_{f.pl.} 'with

pastures', *prata et pascuas*_{f.pl.} 'meadows and pastures') between the eighth and the ninth centuries. Similarly, the reanalysis of *oliveta* ('olive groves') as feminine plural is well attested in Italy (e.g. *cum olivetas*_{f.pl.} 'with olive groves') and Gaul/France (e.g. *tres olivetae*_{f.pl.} 'three olive groves') from the ninth century onwards (Appel 1883: 54, Du Cange et al. 1883–1887: s.v. *olivetum*). The neuter plural *loca* ('places') is also commonly interpreted as feminine plural in twelfth-century Italian sources (e.g. *per locas*_{f.pl.} 'through places'), where the canonical neuter *a*-plural can be modified, occasionally, by a feminine plural adjective (e.g. *quas*_{f.pl.} *cunq̄ue loca aperta*_{f.pl.} 'any open places') (Appel 1883: 80). *Vocabulum* ('farm, estate') is also frequently treated as feminine in the plural, as is the case in many north-western Italian sources (e.g. *per vocabulas*_{f.pl.} 'through farms', *per locas*_{f.pl.} *et vocabulas*_{f.pl.} 'through places and estates') (Appel 1883: 63–66). Regarding terms denoting natural concrete entities, Appel (1883: 61) observes that the treatment of *ligna* ('firewood, trees') as feminine plural is highly frequent in codices from Ravenna between the seventh and the tenth centuries (e.g. *lignas*_{f.pl.} 'trees'), and *volatilia* ('poultry') is also frequently modified by a feminine plural adjective in several Italian and Frankish-Gallic charters from the same period (e.g. *diversas*_{f.pl.} *volatilia*_{n.pl.} 'different poultry') (Appel 1883: 73, Wilkinson 1985–1991: 259). The treatment of the neuter plural *animalia* ('animals') as feminine plural is documented across extensive areas of the Italian Peninsula and Gaul/France between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries (Du Cange et al. 1883–1887: s.v. *animal*, Wilkinson 1985–1991: 163). The reanalysis of *saxa* ('rocks') as feminine plural is confirmed not only by earlier inscriptional evidence from Hispania (e.g. *sasas*_{f.pl.} 'rocks') but also by many medieval charters from Italy and adjacent Alpine regions (Wilkinson 1985–1991: 279).

In what regards nouns denoting abstract or symbolic entities, *homicidium* ('homicide') already showed feminine plural agreement in the *Epistle to the Galatians* of the fourth-century *Vulgate* (e.g. *invidiae, homicidiae*_{f.pl.} 'envies, homicides'). This can also be observed in many eleventh-century Italian charters (e.g. *homicidias*_{f.pl.} *multas*_{f.pl.} 'many homicides') (Appel 1883: 60). The occurrence of *testimonia* ('testimonies, witnesses') as a feminine plural seems to be well documented in the western territories of Hispania (Wilkinson 1985–1991: 290). In many Lombardic codices from the same period, *maleficium* ('misdeed') also displays an alternative feminine plural in *-as* (e.g. *ad maleficias*_{f.pl.} 'to the misdeeds'), echoing the behaviour of *malefactorium* ('misdeed') and *malefactum* ('misdeed') in several thirteenth-century Portuguese charters (e.g. *omnes*_{f.pl.} *meae*_{f.pl.} *malefactoriae*_{f.pl.} 'all my misdeeds') and in many eleventh-century Frankish-Gallic sources (e.g. *totas*_{f.pl.} *malefactas*_{f.pl.} *quas*_{f.pl.} *Imbertus habet factas*_{f.pl.} 'all the misdeeds that Imbertus has committed') (cf. Appel 1883, Du Cange et al. 1883–1887). In Italy, *premium* ('benefit, profit') appears to have undergone the same change in the plural by the eleventh century (e.g. *praemias*_{f.pl.} 'profits'). Similarly, *signum* ('mark'), frequently used in medieval legal documents, also appears very often as a feminine noun in the plural from the seventh century onwards, particularly in northern Italy (e.g. *signas*_{f.pl.} *quas*_{f.pl.} 'the marks which') (Appel 1883: 63–66).

This brief excursion into the neighbouring territories of the Iberian Peninsula significantly highlights the close connexion between our Ibero-Romance data and the Italo-Romance/Gallo-Romance datasets. As said earlier, these findings cogently confirm the presence of the alternating agreement in the corresponding Proto-Romance varieties. It is justified, therefore, to interpret our findings as part of a broader pan-Romance phenomenon, which naturally places Ibero-Romance languages in a cohesive evolutionary process alongside other Romance varieties in what regards the development of the Latin neuter gender.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study addresses the problematic and controversial phenomenon of the *genus alternans*, a nominal inflexional pattern such that nouns select masculine agreement in the singular but feminine agreement in the plural (e.g. It. m.sg. *il braccio*/f.pl. *le braccia* ‘the arm/arms’). Synchronically, this phenomenon is robustly attested across eastern Romance languages (e.g. Italian, Romanian, etc.). The rise and fall of the *genus alternans* has been discussed in Romance historical linguistics almost exclusively from a comparative perspective or with reference to the history of individual languages. Although it is traditionally claimed that the *genus alternans* is only preserved in eastern Romance, this study has presented newly discovered evidence showing that it also survived into the early stages of Ibero-Romance, thus suggesting that the preservation of the *genus alternans* is an early development common to all Romance varieties instead of a language-specific phenomenon.

The focus of this study is primarily descriptive and empirical. The data discussed here, both old and recent, have enabled us to establish several fundamental premises. First, through a comprehensive examination of the Romance *genus alternans* in synchrony and diachrony, it has been established that this phenomenon is characterised by the following features across modern-day eastern Romance: (1) consistent alternation between the masculine singular and the feminine plural pattern in adjectival and pronominal agreement (e.g. It. m.sg. *il membro*/f.pl. *le membra* ‘the limb/limbs’) and (2) continuous competition between the conservative marker *-a* and the innovative feminine marker *-e* in plural agreement (e.g. OIt. n.pl. *l-a nostr-a membr-a*/f.pl. *l-e nostr-e membr-e* ‘our limbs’). Second, a thorough review of the traditional viewpoint on the loss of the Latin neuter gender in western Romance in light of newly discovered evidence has confirmed that traces of the *genus alternans* are extant in the late Latin and early Romance of Gaul/France and the Iberian Peninsula; hence, the conventional reconstruction is in urgent need for reassessment. Lastly, via a meticulous analysis of early medieval legal texts from the Iberian Peninsula, we have highlighted the existence of 70 Latin neuter lexemes which systematically display reanalysis as feminine plurals in our Iberian sources (e.g. *animalium cunctarum* ‘of all the animals’). It is plausible to consider these occurrences as evidence for the survival of the *genus alternans* prior to the eleventh century in the underlying Ibero-Romance vernaculars for the following reasons: (1) feminine plural forms cannot be associated to pre-existing feminine singular forms and existed only as alternants to the canonical neuter *a*-plurals (e.g. n.pl. *su-a sign-a*/f.pl. *su-as sign-as* ‘their marks’); (2) masculine singular agreement is simultaneously observed and coexisted with neuter singular agreement (e.g. n.sg. *su-um sign-um*/m.sg. *su-us sign-us* ‘their mark’); and (3) the same development is attested in other Romance-speaking areas such as Gaul/France and Italy, where the historical survival of the *genus alternans* is well-established.

Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of this study is to facilitate a future theoretical explanation for the pan-Romance preservation of the *genus alternans* in the early history of Romance languages. It has been pointed out that the inadequacy of the traditional viewpoint on the loss of the Latin neuter gender lies in its rarely questioned assumption that the neuter gender was lost due to the massive reanalysis of neuter nouns as masculine on the basis of their masculine forms in the singular, which is generally assumed to be the unmarked number in languages. The highly problematic nature of this premise is made apparent by extensive cross-linguistic evidence showing that nouns can be semantically unmarked in the plural when denoting inherently plural entities (e.g. *teeth, beans, horns*, etc.), which allows them to better preserve morphophonemic irregularity in the plural due to high token frequency. Grimm (2018) proposes the following scale of individuation to account for the semantic markedness of number values: liquids/substances < granular aggregates < collective aggregates < individuals, whereby nouns denoting individuals are unmarked in the singular and nouns denoting

granular/collective aggregates are unmarked in the plural. Therefore, it seems sensible to suppose that, during the early history of western Romance, *genus alternans* nouns denoting highly individuated entities would have massively adopted masculine plurals after levelling in favour of the unmarked singular, whereas others denoting lesser-individuated entities would have remained resistant to levelling and retained feminine plurals due to their unmarked status. This remains a crucial question for further investigation, the answer to which will not only enrich the research on *genus alternans* in a strictly philological way but also help understanding the interaction between individuation and nominal morphology in diachrony.

Another question which still remains unanswered today is why the *genus alternans*, albeit commonly preserved in Proto-Romance, was later lost in western Romance but survived in eastern Romance. The hypothesis suggested by the studies available to date is that both the preservation and the depletion of the *genus alternans* were straightforwardly determined by languages' inflectional morphology. *Genus alternans* nouns are problematic for theories of nominal inflexion inasmuch as they display opposite gender values in the singular and plural, contrary to the general expectation that a noun should have the same gender 'irrespective of the number it stands in' (Corbett 1991: 154). Maiden (2016) claims that this is because the singular and plural forms of *genus alternans* nouns are in fact two non-interdependent items cooperating in a single inflectional mechanism; therefore, 'plural as well as singular forms must be part of Romanians' mental representation of all inanimate nouns' (Maiden 2016b: 115). This claim is in disagreement with Corbett (1991) and has been argued against by Loporcaro (2018). Nonetheless, Maiden's demonstrations of strict dependence of the *genus alternans* on inflectional clues in the history of Romanian are too detailed and too many to be simply dismissed. It would be possible to intervene in this ongoing debate by proposing a psycholinguistically based hypothesis relating the diachrony of the *genus alternans* in Romance and the processing of number morphology: in a system A where plural forms are stored and processed *independently* of singulars in speakers' mental lexicon, the *genus alternans* tends to be preserved, as occurs in the vocalic systems of eastern Romance (e.g. It. m.sg. *il labbr-o*/f.pl. *le labbr-a* 'lip/lips'); in a system B where plurals are stored and processed *codependently* with singulars, the *genus alternans* tends to be dismissed, as occurs in the sigmatic systems of most western Romance varieties (e.g. Sp. m.sg. *labi-o*/m.pl. *labi-o-s* 'lip/lips'). This hypothesis could be tested by conducting psycholinguistic experimentation using a variety of procedures (e.g. nonce nouns, priming experiments, etc.), which, ideally, should involve both major standard national languages (e.g. Spanish, Catalan, Romanian) and endangered lesser-known varieties (e.g. Italo-Romance dialects, Occitan, Aragonese, Asturleonese, Galician). The potential outcomes of such experiments would contribute to a better understanding of the psycholinguistics of Romance number morphology as well as its interaction with gender in diachrony.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study has been made possible by the British Academy-founded project *How number shapes gender over time: number morphology and individuation in the diachrony of genus alternans across Romance* at the University of Oxford, 2024–2027. The support of the British Academy International Fellowship is gratefully acknowledged, as is that of Prof. Martin Maiden, who has provided this study with invaluable guidance and essential expertise in Romance linguistics. I am also grateful to Prof. Cristina Buenafuentes de la Mata and to Prof. Carlos Sánchez Lancis for their supervision throughout my Ph.D. thesis, from which the data discussed in this study are derived.

Correspondence

Ziwen Wang

British Academy International Fellow

Faculty of Linguistics

Philology and Phonetics

University of Oxford

Oxford

Great Britain.

Email: ziwen.wang@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk

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