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**"AB ERRORE LIBERATO"
THE NORTHERN EXPANSION OF FRANKISH POWER
IN THE MEROVINGIAN PERIOD AND THE GENESIS OF
THE DUTCH LANGUAGE**

by Anthony F. Buccini — Chicago

"De vraag waar ik mee blijf zitten, luidt: Hoe komt het dat de strook Vlaanderen-Zeeland-Holland als enig gebied van het hele Westgermaans het fundamentele taalkenmerk bezat dat als vertrekpunt van de specifiek Nederlandse ontwikkeling moet worden beschouwd?"

J. Goossens

1 The Distinctive Structural Characteristics of Dutch.¹

The development of Dutch as a separate branch of the Germanic language family has often been described, both in general handbooks on Germanic and in studies devoted specifically to the history of the language, as a relatively unproblematic process. According to this view, Dutch is a descendant of Old (West) Low Franconian and, though it is not always expressly stated, a particularly conservative branch of West Germanic, at least with respect to its early development. This conservatism is most obviously manifested in the Dutch failure to participate in the second or High German consonant shift but, no less importantly, can also be seen in its lack of *i*-umlaut of long vowels, at least according to received opinion.² Much of the discussion of the early history of Dutch concerns the issue of so-called "Ingvæonisms", that is, the various phonological, morphological and lexical features which are found in Dutch and which, for the most part, clearly do not have analogues in the other Franconian dialects but do have analogues in English and Frisian. Their presence in Dutch

¹ The Latin phrase of the title of this paper is taken from the heading of Chapter 13 of the *Vita Amandi Episcopi I.*: "De pago cui vocabulum est Gandao ab errore liberato" (Krusch 1910: 430). The epigram is from Goossens 1988: 88. — In writing this paper I have benefited greatly from discussions with and comments by Amy Dahlstrom; to her many thanks. I must add that my earlier work on this general topic was much improved by the guidance and criticism of my mentor, the late Frans van Coetsem; he is sorely missed.

² See, for example, Van Hamel's (1928) discussion of "ons conservatieve klankstelsel".

has been explained in various ways but in virtually all cases scholars have found in them no cause to question the basic Franconian pedigree of the language. Indeed, this traditional view can be said to emphasise the membership of Dutch in the greater dialect landscape of continental West Germanic and present the linguistic identity of the language as a combination of local conservative traits and a hotch-potch of local innovations of more or less secondary structural importance.³

This traditional view is, of course, by no means uninformed or poorly reasoned and it does capture an indisputable basic truth about Dutch, namely, that with regard to its lexicon and (albeit with qualifications) its morphology, it is most closely related to the Franconian dialects to the east and southeast in central Germany and Luxembourg. But since the publication in 1980 of Goossens' study "*Middel-nederlandse vocaalsystemen*", the traditional view is, in this writer's opinion, outdated and untenable. Goossens' work renders the traditional view untenable at two levels. First, he demonstrates clearly that the limited operation of *i*-umlaut in (standard and western) Dutch is not based on an opposition of short vowels, affected by umlaut, and long vowels, left unaffected, but rather involves the distinction made in German historical grammar between primary and secondary umlaut: In the eastern dialects of Dutch, both primary and secondary umlaut operated normally, just as in the neighbouring German language area, whereas in the coastal dialects and thus also in the standard, only primary umlaut operated. Second, at a broader level he draws attention to the structural significance of the absence of secondary umlaut: Whereas in the traditional view, the (incorrectly formulated) failure of *i*-umlaut in western and standard Dutch is but one of a list of largely unranked characteristics (e.g., Van Loey 1970: 253), Goossens (1988: 77ff.) not only sees the absence of secondary umlaut as

³ For a recent example, see Van der Wal's (1992) history of Dutch, in which the presentation of the linguistic identity begins with a discussion of the High German consonant shift, proceeds on to a brief discussion of "*kustverschijnselen*" and ends with a sketch of Old Dutch sound changes and the morphological and syntactic characteristics of Old Dutch; nowhere is there mention of the peculiar development of *i*-umlaut in Dutch, however defined.

the most important defining feature of Dutch but further shows that the bundle of umlaut-related isoglosses that separate the coastal dialects of Dutch from the rest of continental West Germanic is itself intimately connected to other phonological and morphological features which are themselves of structural significance. The Dutch language area is thus no longer to be seen as a relictal zone on the periphery of continental West Germanic but rather as a language area with its own dynamic or "expansive" core, namely the coastal dialect group of Flanders-Zeeland-Holland, characterised by its own very particular linguistic structures which largely relate to its peculiar development of *i*-umlaut (Goossens 1988: 87).

Given the relative lack of attention that the peculiar development of umlaut in Dutch has received from Netherlandicists, it is perhaps not surprising that the problem has also been essentially ignored or summarily dismissed in the vast majority of general discussions of umlaut in Germanic. Yet, it would seem that an exceptional pattern of development of such an intensively studied diachronic process as umlaut is precisely where one should look for a better perspective on the normal, as it were, pattern(s) of development. However one formulates the limitations on the development of *i*-umlaut in Dutch it is, indeed, abnormal from a Germanic perspective. As I have argued elsewhere (Buccini 1989: 66; 1992a: 19ff.; 1995: 19), a limitation to only short vowels, following the traditional view, would make the Dutch pattern not only exceptional but even un-Germanic, insofar as there is no trace elsewhere in the entire language family of such a length-based distinction in the operation of *i*-umlaut. Put another way, the failure of *i*-umlaut to operate only on short vowels and not on long vowels has no parallel in Germanic and would therefore require explanation in extra-Germanic terms, that is, through the demonstration of a link between umlaut failure and some other structural characteristic of Dutch without parallel in the cognate languages, be it with or without an appeal to some externally-motivated or contact induced change.

Mercifully, Goossens' correct and amply supported formulation of the limitation of *i*-umlaut brings the problem squarely back within a Germanic context, since in his theory the western Dutch pattern of operation (primary umlaut) and failure (secondary umlaut) cor-

responds to patterns of umlaut known not just somewhere else in Germanic but specifically in the continental West Germanic dialect continuum, including much of the Dutch language area. Even so, the ability to frame the Dutch umlaut failure in familiar Germanic structural terms does in and of itself neither constitute nor immediately suggest an explanation of the phenomenon. Goossens himself, in concluding a lucid discussion of the Dutch language area, poses two questions concerning the coastal dialects. The first of these appears above as the epigraph to this paper; the second asks whether there once lived in that area a people "dat zich als geheel in zijn taalgebruik zo duidelijk tegen de andere Germanen van onze streken afzette?" He then ends with the following: "Het oudste Nederlands, de taal van de drie-eenheid Vlaanderen-Zeeland-Holland, blijft een mysterie" (1988: 88).

Taking Goossens' views on umlaut in Dutch as a starting point, the present writer has in previous work (Buccini 1989, 1992a, 1995) attempted to address the issues raised in the aforementioned questions and to shed light on the mystery of how and why *i*-umlaut is reflected to such a limited degree in the coastal dialects and thus, in effect, how and why a structurally distinct Dutch language first arose out of the continental West Germanic dialect continuum. Briefly, I have argued on linguistic grounds that the Dutch failure of secondary umlaut can best be explained as the result of language contact, specifically contact between Ingvæonic speakers of the coastal areas and Franconian speakers of the interior, a contact in which the Ingvæonic speakers acquire Franconian but in so doing disrupt the development of (secondary) *i*-umlaut.

The goals of this paper are twofold. First, in section 2, I review the analysis of umlaut on which my theory of the origins of Dutch are based and in doing so address criticism and alternative views that have been published since the appearance of my dissertation (1992a) and long article (1995) on the subject. Then in section 3, I offer an expanded treatment of the sociohistorical background to the linguistic development, amplifying part of the view which was only very briefly sketched in my 1995 study. Specifically, I examine evidence for the early Germanic settlement of the Low Countries and the subsequent colonisation and integration of the region into the Merovingian kingdom by the Austrasian Franks in the 7th and 8th centuries.

2 The Dutch Development of Umlaut in Germanic Perspective.

This section is divided into three parts. The first of these contains a very condensed presentation of my views on umlaut in general and its development in Germanic in particular.⁴ In the second part, I summarise briefly my own solution to the problem of umlaut failure in Dutch and then discuss three approaches to the subject that have appeared in recent years. The concluding part of this section places the writer's explanation of the Dutch umlaut problem in its broader context and shows how that solution is intimately linked to and supported by several different bodies of evidence.

2.1 *An Outline of Germanic Umlaut.*

2.1.1 Umlaut is a vocalic (distance) assimilation in which the vowel of the accented or prominent syllable assimilates to one or more of the distinctive features of the vowel in a neighbouring, unaccented or non-prominent syllable. This assimilatory process is inherently linked to the dominant type accent and also to the process of reduction in non-prominent syllables. From a diachronic perspective, the umlaut assimilation often can be said to have a 'compensatory' function (i.e., preserving morphological and/or lexical information), with the mutated prominent vowel bearing distinctive information previously borne by the non-prominent vowel which has been reduced.⁵

2.1.2 At least some and perhaps many or all umlaut assimilations and the related reductions arise in allegro and/or informal speech; thus, there is a period in which there occurs variation between allegro/informal forms with umlaut assimilation and reduction and deliberate/

⁴ Since space here is limited, my views on umlaut will in part be only declared, not fully argued, but the matters broached here have for the most part been treated *in extenso* in my dissertation (1992a) and long article (1995); for detailed presentations with supporting evidence and references, see those works. Note, however, that references herebelow concerning my crosslinguistic study of umlaut phenomena are based on Buccini 1994 Ms.; a revised and expanded version is under preparation. Findings of the crosslinguistic study are summarised in Buccini 1992a: 44-51 and 1995: 21, 42-3.

⁵ See most recently Van Coetsem 1996 (esp. pp. 84-5) and 1999 with further references.

formal forms without umlaut assimilation and reduction.⁶ Such variation may be reflected by graphemic variation found in some of the earliest attestations of the Germanic languages (Buccini 1992a: 40-4, 207 & 1995: 25-33, 37; cf. Lass 1992:106).

2.1.3 Insofar as accentual features are often shared across the daughter dialects of a language family and insofar as accentual features are often shared among genetically unrelated or only distantly related languages which are in abiding contact and form a *Sprachbund*, so too is umlaut (and concomitant reduction) shared across individual members of a genetic family and across unrelated members

⁶ The claim by Fertig (1996: 180) that I, following Hammerich and Liberman, suggest that "we totally abandon the conventional view of umlaut as a conditioned split, and see it instead as a compensatory process" is inaccurate: in my dissertation I indicate clearly that I believe umlaut mutations to be in essence straightforward assimilations that arise as rate-related coarticulations (1992a: 40). In my view, umlaut is metaconditioned by the dominant accent and proximately conditioned by the non-prominent vowel; the potential compensatory nature of the assimilation for loss of information through reduction may very well be the chief mechanism by which is driven the phonologisation of the mutations and of the irrevocable blanching of the conditioning factors, where it occurs (pp. 41-4), but the mutation itself is clearly co-articulatory in its basic development, presumably with mistiming, as it were, of the vocalic gestures in relation to the consonantism between the prominent and non-prominent vowels. Since there are very often specific consonantisms which inhibit or block umlaut assimilations, there clearly is an articulatory (and conceivably auditory) interaction between vocalic and consonantal gestures at work. — Smith (1999) also characterises my view of umlaut as a "compensatory theory" and gives initially a fairly accurate and positive summary of my position on the mechanisms of mutation and its phonologisation (pp. 138-40). Her ultimate point is quite interesting, (in some cases) obviously true and worth full exploration, namely, that phonologisation of *i*-umlaut may occur without *total* loss of the conditioning. This possibility I accept but she directs her argument against a "strong version" of my view to serve as man of straw, an extreme version which is not and cannot be supported with direct citations from my work; indeed, she (p. 140) even cites a passage where I state that phonologisation of umlaut "need not lead to an abrupt and wholesale switch to rendering only reduced unaccented vowels" (1992a: 44; cf. pp. 205-7). Especially unwelcome is the inaccurate treatment (Smith, p. 44-6) of my discussion (1995: 25-32) of variation. Such ventriloquism from afar is unnecessary and detracts from an otherwise worthwhile study.

of a Sprachbund. This familial and areal participation in umlaut is generally (probably always) to be seen not as the result of 'borrowing' of the umlaut process from one language to another but rather as a reflexion of the shared suprasegmental metaconditioning (cf. Höfler 1955: 58-9). Western Europe is one such Sprachbund, where neighbouring and in various ways historically connected Germanic, Romance and Celtic languages exhibit umlaut phenomena. Similar in this regard is a large portion of South Asia, in which languages belonging to three unrelated families, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Munda, exhibit umlaut phenomena in their historical developments.

2.1.4 Umlaut assimilations in a given language develop gradually over relatively broad spans of time. Furthermore, the character of the assimilations can and often does change markedly at a certain point, allowing us to recognise distinct stages of umlaut development; these stages are almost certainly not separated in time but rather generally run together. This change in character is in a general sense mirrored by and probably related to changes in the character of the process of reduction of non-prominent vowels.

2.1.5 In the Germanic languages there were clearly two stages of umlaut which can be distinguished in a number of ways, with regard both to structural elements (target, trigger, relationship to intervening consonantisms, relationship to reduction) and temporally. The first of these was the period of *raising and lowering (R/L-)umlaut* and the second the period of *fronting/backing (F/B-)umlaut*.

2.1.6 Raising and lowering umlaut is the group of vowel-to-vowel height assimilations that clearly occurred early on in the Northwest Germanic macrodialect; while on the basis of the evidence of Wulfila's Bible the occurrence of R/L-umlaut in East Germanic cannot be demonstrated conclusively, there is evidence to suggest that R/L-umlaut (albeit with dialectal differences of detail) was a pan-Germanic development (Van Coetsem & Buccini 1990: 185-98). The period of fronting and backing umlaut follows immediately the period of R/L-umlaut in each dialect and is represented most widely by the fronting or *i*-umlaut developments.

2.1.7 Each of the two aforementioned umlaut types are attested in languages outside Germanic.⁷ In those instances where both types have occurred, there is generally evidence that R/L-umlaut preceded F/B-umlaut, indicating that there probably exists a natural, ordered relationship between the two types and also between them and the process of reduction.⁸ This crosslinguistic evidence lends indirect support to the view that all umlaut did not coöccur simultaneously in Germanic as claimed by Antonsen and Penzl.⁹ The two types of umlaut contrast in the following ways:

- a) R/L-umlaut tends to be relatively very symmetrical with respect both to the targets (i.e., both front and back vowels affected in parallel fashion) and triggers (i.e., both front and back vowels in non-prominent position condition parallel mutation on both front and back prominent vowels). Raising and lowering, moreover, very often (though not always) coöccur. In F/B-umlaut, developments are typically not symmetrical for in many instances, only fronting occurs with no concomitant backing (or rounding) umlaut (e.g., German) and, even when some form of backing umlaut does coöccur, it does not necessarily show a set of triggers and targets fully parallel to those involved in fronting umlaut (e.g., Old English back umlaut which unlike *i*-umlaut affects only short vowels and produces diphthongs).
- b) In languages that have distinctive vocalic length, R/L-umlaut generally affects only short vowels (e.g., South Dravidian, Germanic,

⁷ The term Fronting-Backing umlaut is used here since Germanic is the primary concern, but the second type of umlaut (i.e., which follows R/L-umlaut) can involve other kinds of mutations, e.g., what might best be called the 'tensing' umlaut of Romance which involves the development of diphthongs *ie* and *uo* from the front and back low mid vowels; see Van Coetsem & Buccini 1990: 204ff. for examples, discussion and further references.

⁸ Outside Germanic we find evidence of this developmental pattern, to wit, first R/L-umlaut and subsequently F/B-umlaut, in Irish, (probably) Brittonic, various Romance dialects, Sinhalese and Rotuman; a development of only very symmetrical patterns of R/L-umlaut is seen in Bengali, (Proto-)South Dravidian and some Romance dialects such as Portuguese and Sardinian (Logudurese and Campidanese); see further the notes below.

⁹ For recent critiques of their extreme structuralist view of umlaut, see for example Buccini 1995: 34-5 and Howell & Salmons 1997: 85-6.

Irish); in instances where those languages also develop a second type of umlaut, vocalic length does not limit fronting umlaut, though it may limit backing umlaut (e.g., Germanic, Irish).¹⁰

c) The two types of umlaut correlate in a general way with patterns of reduction. Specifically, it appears that R/L-umlaut is accompanied by only a moderate degree of reduction, involving for example shortening of non-prominent long vowels, limited mergers of short vowels (perhaps with loss of one aperture in non-prominent position); in other words, these reductions are often the first steps in the development of well differentiated vocalic subsystems in prominent and non-prominent syllables. F/B-umlaut, on the other hand, is typically accompanied by more drastic reduction which in many cases leads to the complete effacement of quality distinctions and apocope in certain non-prominent positions, as in Germanic, Celtic and Romance.¹¹

¹⁰ What I refer to here as the secondary or F/B-umlaut in the history of Irish has often been viewed primarily as an effect caused proximately by the consonantism following the prominent vowel but I would argue that the consonantal colouring and the 'infection' of the preceding vowel space coöccured, with both being conditioned by the following non-prominent vocalism; in that case the vocalic development itself is quite similar to Germanic fronting/backing umlaut (cf. Greene 1973: 132). That the F/B-umlaut in Irish is generally realised through addition of a glide to the prominent vowel has parallels in other languages, e.g., Rotuman and also in Old English back umlaut. Note that systematic consonantal colouring may develop in connexion with reduction and vocalic mutation but there is certainly no need to believe that this is always the case (the so-called 'mouilleringsteorie' of umlaut) and good reasons to think that it is a language-specific path of development. — The case of Sinhalese is particularly interesting with regard to the tendency for R/L-umlaut to be limited to short vowels. In this language, Indo-Aryan vocalic length has been lost but the two types of umlaut reflect a prosodically based contrast: R/L-umlaut operated only in light syllables (short vowels only), whereas fronting umlaut operated in both light and heavy syllables (short and long vowels). For data, see Geiger 1938: 18ff.

¹¹ One notes that drastic reduction, in ultimately removing the conditioning factors, clearly brings the umlaut process to a close (if it has not already ended through phonologisation and deautomaticisation), but the limited reduction associated with R/L-umlaut is sufficiently gradual that R/L-umlaut can for an extended time be a stable process, that is, an abiding active phonotactic constraint. If the accent type

2.1.8 One of the most central and important aspects of the general study of Germanic umlaut in Buccini 1992a is, I believe, the discussion of the status and nature of primary umlaut in continental West Germanic. Building on Goossens' reformulation of the western and standard Dutch case of umlaut failure as a failure of secondary umlaut to develop fully and a comprehensive examination of other instances of umlaut failure across all of Germanic, I argue at length that primary umlaut developed earlier than secondary umlaut.¹² This view is prevalent in the older literature but in recent decades had been widely rejected in favour of the Twaddellian structuralist model, according to which both primary and secondary umlaut developed together at the subphonic level, with the earlier graphic appearance of umlauted *a* in Old High German texts being only a reflexion of the precocious phonemicisation of that one umlaut product, not of any staggered development of the actual phonetic fronting process. The idea that primary umlaut began before secondary umlaut has, however, retained some proponents and I believe that a proper analysis of the Dutch facts together with the broader perspective on the two types of umlaut developments discussed above lends strong support to this view.¹³ Indeed, primary umlaut can be seen as a transitional form of umlaut between the R/L- and F/B-umlaut types described above. From a structural standpoint it resembles F/B-umlaut in that it is limited to affecting only a short vowel but with regard to the actual umlaut

subsequently changes and moves toward a non-dominating type, what started as umlaut can begin to resemble more a vowel harmony system; such is the case, I believe, in the history of Bengali.

¹² See Buccini 1992a: 208-9, 233-7, 451, especially 482; also 1995: 43.

¹³ Note that Robinson (cited also in Iverson & Salmons 1996: 75) had already in 1975 (p. 20) suggested in a note that the western Dutch failure was one of secondary umlaut and further that the Dutch evidence "speaks for the earlier application of 'primary' umlaut" than of secondary. Note too that Voyles has long held the position that primary umlaut was earlier, though his views on umlaut differ significantly from those of the present author (e.g. Buccini 1995: 34-6); see Voyles 1992 and further references there. More recent arguments in favour of this position, overlapping with those I have offered, are found in Howell & Salmons 1997 and also Iverson & Salmons 1996, who in their discussion directly cite some of my arguments (pp. 73-5, 77).

effect, the development of $a > e$ is both raising and fronting. Further evidence for the temporal staggering is the fact that in many dialects, the product of primary umlaut ultimately has a more closed realisation than the secondary umlaut product of a , perhaps indicating that the primary umlauted a was subject to mutation for a longer period of time (see, e.g., Goossens 1980: 184ff.). Finally, it is surely not a coincidence that evidence for this transitional form of umlaut is found in those same dialects which had a relatively slower development of umlaut in general and the most extensive development of R/L-umlaut in particular.¹⁴

2.1.9 Though many Germanicists have commented on the differences of absolute chronology of umlaut developments in the Germanic daughter languages, this issue has been insufficiently recognised as a fundamental element of dialectal differentiation in the family. Of particular relevance to the problem of the early development of Dutch is the striking contrast between the chronology of umlaut developments in North Sea Germanic, as known from English and Frisian, and the main body of continental West Germanic (i.e., the Upper German and Franconian dialects; hereafter 'South Germanic'). Also underappreciated is the related contrast in the degree to which the two types of umlaut were carried out in the two dialect groups. The contrasting dialectal developments can be summarised as follows (from Buccini 1995: 41-2):

<i>R/L umlaut</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>High German</i>
consonantal interference	+	-
expanded conditioning	-	+
expanded range of targets	-	+
general characterisation	weak	strong

¹⁴ In Old High German, there is clear evidence of a stronger lowering umlaut of i to e than is found, for example, in Old English. Similarly, Old High German R/L-umlaut also exhibits far less consonantal interference of the assimilation than in Old English. On the other hand, consonantal interference with i -umlaut in Old High German, and especially so in the far south, is considerable, as is well known, and without parallel in the North Sea Germanic dialects. On consonantal interference in general, see Buccini 1992a: 76-92; in connexion with R/L-umlaut, pp. 149-76; in connexion with i -umlaut in German, pp. 193-4, 250-2. See also Howell & Salmons 1997.

F/B umlaut

consonantal interference	-	+
expanded conditioning	+	-
expanded range of targets	+	-
general characterisation	strong	weak

dating

transition of R/L to F/B	5/6th cent.	7/8th cent.
end of <i>i</i> -mutation	7/8th cent.	10/11th cent.

Thus, while both Old English (and more broadly North Sea Germanic) and Old High German (and more broadly South Germanic) underwent both umlaut processes in roughly parallel fashion, they show with respect to various structural parameters a mirror image of one another, with R/L-umlaut being carried out more thoroughly and F/B-umlaut less thoroughly in South Germanic than in North Sea Germanic. Finally I call attention to the fact that at the time when the process of *i*-umlaut had almost without doubt been completed in Old English and probably generally in North Sea Germanic, to wit, roughly around 650-700 A.D., the South Germanic dialects were in the period of transition between the two types of umlaut, that is, they were in the stage of primary *i*-umlaut.¹⁵

2.2 *The Aberrant Development of Umlaut in Dutch.* As mentioned briefly above, on primarily linguistic grounds, though obviously with a general awareness of the broader historical context, I have proposed that the failure of secondary *i*-umlaut was the result of language contact (1992a: 398-477; 1995: 43-60). More specifically, I claim that the contact took place roughly at the time when the North Sea Germanic or Ingvaënic dialects of the Low Countries' coastal areas had already completed the development of *i*-umlaut and concomitant reduction, while the Franconian of the region had only entered the stage of primary umlaut.¹⁶ Since there is good evidence that Ingvaënic was

¹⁵ Concerning chronology, see Buccini 1995: 24ff. Due to space restrictions, I leave aside the question of Old Saxon but will briefly address its dialectal affiliations below.

¹⁶ Note that I use the term 'Ingvaënic' to denote the dialect(s) once spoken along the eastern Channel coast, from northern France to Holland, which was from the relic evidence clearly in all essential ways a member of the North Sea Germanic dialect group, as known from English and Frisian. Use of this term to refer to the

spoken in the coastal zone but had clearly disappeared south of northern West Friesland by the onset of the Middle Dutch period, it seems clear that at some point, Ingvæonic speakers abandoned their native speech and acquired Franconian. If, at least in certain ultimately important areas, this contact occurred in the mid to late 7th or early 8th century, it seems likely that the Ingvæonic speakers, in the process of acquiring Franconian, would not only have imposed various features from the stable domains of their language onto Franconian, including reduced non-prominent vowels, but would have failed to acquire non-salient, sub-phonemic phonetic processes of the target language; in other words, they would surely have acquired Franconian without any incipient secondary *i*-umlaut process (if present) and in addition without *i*-umlaut conditioning factors in many or most positions.¹⁷ It is in this way that I envision the disruption of secondary umlaut in the Dutch language area. Out of this contact then, there arose the structurally independent Dutch language: a form of Franconian but one with ultimately markedly individual phonological and morphological characteristics.

In this section I address briefly some alternative views on the failure of *i*-umlaut in Dutch which have been published since my work appeared.

2.2.1 In 1995, Van Loon published a short piece on the issue of why Dutch has no umlaut of long vowels, taking as his starting point the traditional formulation of Dutch umlaut failure rather than that of Goossens, as discussed above. He suggests that there may have been a prosodically conditioned development, similar in ways to the vocalic balance of Swedish. The change he envisions would allegedly have in

Dutch Coastal dialects (Flemish, Zeeuws, Hollands) is misleading and to be eschewed: those coastal dialects cannot be considered members of the North Sea Germanic group but rather are quintessentially Dutch, i.e., a structurally distinct form of Franconian. Equally infelicitous is the use of the term Coastal Dutch (Schrijver 1999) to refer to said extinct North Sea Germanic varieties of the Low Countries, for they were in no linguistic sense 'Dutch'.

¹⁷ The model of language contact which I employ is that of Van Coetsem 1988 (also 2000), with one theoretical adjustment or addition presented in Buccini 1992b (taken up by Van Coetsem 1997). See further Buccini 1992a: 326-81.

effect altered the quality of nonprominent high vowels and thus rendered the *i*-umlaut conditioning factors after prominent syllables containing long vowels incapable of exercising the fronting mutation: e.g. **baki* > MDu. *beke* overagainst **kâsé* > MDu. *case* (p.169-70). Unclear to me is how the secondary accent which is posited here developed on nonprominent vowels after prominent long vowels as well as how that secondary accent is related to the muting or dulling ("verdoeffing") of **-i* to **-e*. A further issue insufficiently treated is how **j* developed and why it also failed to condition umlaut fronting (i.e., e.g., why **wandjan* > *wenden* but **hauzjan* > *horen*?).

That there is a prosodic and accent-type related aspect to umlaut is made manifest by the various instances in which vocalic length and syllabic weight play a rôle in limiting the range of a given assimilatory process.¹⁸ It is therefore reasonable to consider a possible prosodic cause of the Dutch problem. Yet, as Van Loon himself acknowledges, a real match between a length-based distinction and the Swedish vocalic balance, which involves syllabic weight, does not exist. I would not wish to categorically deny the possibility of there being some peculiar (prosodic) characteristic of Dutch along the lines suggested by Van Loon, but the absence of any evidence for such an explanation and the preponderance of comparative, typological and historical evidence pointing away from it incline me to look elsewhere.¹⁹

2.2.2 Krygier, in the course of a review of umlaut phenomena across Germanic, briefly comments on my views. Unfortunately, his pre-

¹⁸ For example, vocalic length limits the operation of R/L-umlaut as well as in the development of backing umlaut in various languages, as discussed above. Syllabic weight has in some cases played a rôle in the development of *i*-umlaut in the Germanic languages, most notably in the distribution of fronting in Old Norse and the differing treatments of heavy *i*-stems in OHG *gast* (without fronting) vs. OE *giest* (with fronting).

¹⁹ Note that the vocalic balance occurred in (Early) Old Swedish (Van Loon 1995: 171), long after the operation of *i*-umlaut had ceased, and thus had no effect on the development of that process. Note too that Van Loon's suggestion resembles Hesselman's attempt to account for the, in some sense, opposite problem in Old Norse, namely, why *i*-umlaut is absent in (most) light stems (see Buccini 1992a: 261).

sentation is rather confused in that: a) he states that "there can be no doubt as to the validity of [Buccini's] findings about the state of affairs in Old Low Franconian and its daughter languages"; but b) finds my views on umlaut in Germanic, with which my interpretation of the Dutch developments is inextricably linked, "untenable" (1997: 66-7).²⁰ His own claim, which cannot be squared in any way with my apparently valid findings, is that "Old Low Franconian originally did possess a set of umlaut vowels identical with that of other NWG languages" (p. 68). The absence of *i*-umlauted vowels he sees as the result of "external factors" which "disrupted the process of their development at an early stage" and which "resulted in massive analogical removal of umlauted forms from both lexicon and morphology of the language" (loc. cit.). This theory, essentially taken over from Franck 1910, is clearly and genuinely untenable: as Howell (2002: 187-8) so pertinently observes, there is no conceivable way to explain by analogy the absence of umlaut in forms such as *groen* (a *-ja* stem, cf. Eng. *green*, Ger. *grün*, Sw. *grön*), for which there was never any paradigmatic alternation of umlauted and non-umlauted forms and thus no basis for analogical removal of the umlauted vowel (cf. Buccini 1992a: 293).²¹

²⁰ The claim that my views are a return to the Neogrammarian position on umlaut is less the intended indictment of my reasoning than a demonstration of the superficiality of Krygier's study. In claiming that I posit "a number of periods separated in time," Krygier has somehow managed to misread badly a point that comes up many times in the course of the almost 500 pages of my dissertation. His own discussion of primary vs. secondary umlaut, which is promised to present "arguments against viewing umlauts of individual vowels in isolation from each other" (p. 63) does nothing of the sort: no single datum or specific aspect of the issue beside spelling is discussed (p. 66). Instead, the views of Buccini, Voyles and presumably whoever else thinks primary umlaut began earlier are in effect represented by and dismissed with a citation of Grimm expressing an outdatedly sanguine view of Old High German scribal practices.

²¹ Of course, removal or, better, replacement at the lexical level of umlauted forms with non-umlauted forms can and obviously has taken place in the dialects but then on the model of the expansive western and ultimately standard varieties in which secondary umlaut did not develop. The point is to explain the original failure of umlaut in the west.

2.2.3 The alternative view of umlaut failure in Dutch to my contact related explanation which is most compelling is the one presented by Howell & Salmons 1997. Though these authors apparently do not reject my explanation of Dutch umlaut failure, there is, I believe, a clear implication that they regard the absence of secondary umlaut in Dutch in some measure as the result of or in part connected to a simple petering out of the development as it unfolded across continental West Germanic (p. 92).²² In a certain sense they thus take up a position similar to those held by some earlier scholars,²³ but they do so from their own perspective on Germanic umlaut and with much more sophisticated arguments about the actual linguistic mechanisms involved. Although their discussion of Dutch is quite brief, their position warrants careful consideration, since, other than Buccini 1992a, it is the only discussion of Germanic umlaut that attempts to address a wide variety of instances of umlaut failure, including that of Dutch, and to explain those cases in terms of an overarching view of the phenomenon as a whole.

The central theoretical concept on which Howell & Salmons build their view of umlaut generally and of umlaut failure in Dutch is that "it is the *degree* of difference between two vowels in height and frontness that determines the likelihood of their participation in an umlaut process," and further that "[t]hose sequences that are most different with respect to tongue position will be most susceptible to umlaut and, conversely, those segments which are least different phonetically tend to undergo umlaut chronologically later or not at all" (p. 89).²⁴ With

²² Cf. Iverson & Salmons 1996: 75: "[W]e consider them [the Dutch umlaut data] - along with similar evidence from Old Saxon - to suggest that primary umlaut was a relatively uniform process throughout the continental dialects descending from West Germanic, including Netherlandic, whereas the later nonprimary umlaut process spread only into border and transitional areas. Yet another notable possibility is that language contact led to the abandonment of nonprimary umlaut in western Netherlandic as a result of Franconian-Ingvaconic contacts (as argued at length by Buccini 1992)."

²³ I.e., Dutch as a relict area with respect to *i*-umlaut; v., e.g., Van Hamel (1928: 9-10); Frings (1944: 19).

²⁴ This insight can complement nicely the model of competing vocalic and consonantal conditioning I present in Buccini 1992a: 80-3, where in a formal sense and

regard to the assimilations involved in *i*-umlaut, they argue that there is, in effect, an implicational scale: *a* is more susceptible to fronting than *o* and *o* in turn is more susceptible than *u*. Unfortunately, they do not directly address the rôle of vocalic length in the discussion of Dutch, that is, how length interacts with differences of quality (tongue position) in the implicational scale: does quality take precedence over quantity (i.e., long and short *a* before long and short *o* etc.) or vice versa (i.e., first the short vowels from *a* to *u* and then the long from *ā* to *ū*) or do the two patterns overlap?²⁵

Howell & Salmons see in the Dutch dialect data a reflexion of the operation of the implicational scale mentioned above, insofar as they see the individual umlaut isoglosses as reflecting differing degrees of extension toward the coast by the successive specific umlaut developments, unfolding presumably outward from a central zone of innovation, with only primary umlaut (of short *a*), involving the vowel most susceptible to *i*-umlaut, being carried out everywhere (p. 92); in this we are essentially of one mind. With regard to the development of secondary umlaut in the west, it appears that they are at least willing to allow for a disruption of the normal development of umlaut along the lines I have proposed: "... what we call 'secondary umlaut' in German does not affect coastal Dutch. In these dialects, the umlaut process has been arrested at an early date (cf. Buccini 1992), regularly affecting only environments where target and trigger are phonetically most highly differentiated" (loc. cit.). The environments which are mentioned here in the last clause of the citation are not discussed in great detail but from what precedes and follows the quote, they seem

without discussion of specific phonetic factors of the type envisioned by Howell & Salmons, I discuss competition of conditioning in terms of interrelationships of three types of vocalic and consonantal conditions, namely, those that with respect to a given mutation 1) favour the change, 2) are neutral, 3) disfavour the change. Particularly attractive in Howell & Salmons' view is the shift of the focus away from just the conditioning and the change and inclusion of the susceptibility of the target.

²⁵ Later in the article, but then in a footnote, they cite the suggestion of an anonymous reader that "long vowels are more resistant to change..." (p. 99), a point which might be true also in the context of *i*-umlaut developments; nevertheless, exactly how length interacts with the parameter of quality in the unfolding of umlaut warrants explication.

here to be arguing that in fact there was a partial development of the secondary umlaut of *u* and *ā* in at least (some of) Flanders, while *i*-umlaut of the reflexes of **ō* and **au*, less susceptible according to their model, is restricted in the south and part of the north to more easterly areas.

There are three specific points which conceivably have bearing on the validity of my explanation of the disruption of secondary umlaut in the west. Howell & Salmons (pp. 92-3) indicate that: a) there was at least a "limited distribution of *i*-umlaut of **u* in [the] coastal dialects"; b) "the areal distribution of *i*-umlaut of the long vowels in Dutch is predicted by the degree of articulatory difference between target and trigger. WGmc. **ā* shows *i*-umlaut in the entire southern part of the Dutch linguistic area except for a small West Flemish enclave"; c) "[r]eflexes of umlauted WGmc. **ō* and **au* are, except in a small part of Utrecht, found well to the east of the isogloss for umlaut of **ā* and at no point reach the coast." In response to these possible challenges I offer the following.

First, with regard to the development of **u* in the southwestern (Flemish) dialect area, a situation which is, as all agree, extraordinarily complicated and even, as Goossens (1980: 192) calls it, "chaotic," the problem obviously cannot be treated properly without lengthy discussion and analysis and yet sometimes must be referred to. That being said, the claim made by Howell & Salmons that coastal Dutch exhibits reflexes of umlauted **u* is hardly unjustified and possibly true but in my opinion probably not in the sense intended in their account. Impossible as it is to explain chaos in a few sentences, I can only say here that my argument attributes the apparent (partial) operation of *i*-umlaut in Flemish to a crossing of the Flemish 'spontaneous' palatalisation with older, complex distributions of **u* and **o* arising in large measure through the Ingvaëonic/Franconian contact I posit in the region; in other words, a regular, if even only partial, operation of *i*-umlaut on **u* in the (Franconian) coastal dialects and standard I do not see. Beyond that, I can only refer the reader to my detailed discussion (Buccini 1995: 52-60).

In the case of the umlauted reflexes of **ā* (PGmc. **ē₁*), I do not believe the geographical distribution in the south deviates to the extent indicated by Howell & Salmons from the rest of the umlaut iso-

glosses which, according to Goossens, all gather quite closely around the Dender near Geraardsbergen and run thence northward along the Schelde or a bit east of it past Antwerp.²⁶ In particular, it seems there is general agreement that the isoglosses for the umlaut of **ā* and **ō* run especially close together in the far north (in Utrecht province) and in the whole south from the national border between Zeeland and Antwerp province all the way south to the linguistic frontier with French, a coincidence which does not demonstrate a staggered unfolding of secondary umlaut. Between these zones of near complete coincidence, there is a marked bulge westward of the isoglosses associated with umlaut of **ā* not in Flanders but in southern Utrecht where the westward turn soon links up with an area with a consistently fronted reflex ('spontaneous palatalisation') of **ā* comprising part of South Holland and Zeeland. Given the existence of a similar such area in the north of North Holland, old West Friesland, and sporadic evidence of such a fronted reflex of **ā* from the intervening zone, this feature is generally viewed as an Ingvæonism and it seems reasonable to seek an explanation of the apparent westward bulge in connexion with the presence of this area of unconditioned fronting. A similarly fronted reflex of **ā* must once have also been a feature not only of the doomed Ingvæonic dialect of Flanders but of the Ingvæonised Franconian that arose there as well. Consequently, the occurrence of individual lexical items with a fronted realisation of **ā* in the coastal areas that do not generally have such a realisation must be considered in light of several possibilities: i.e., they could be Ingvæonic relicts reflecting the North Sea Germanic fronted realisation of PGmc **ê* / and if applicable the normal operation of *i*-umlaut of this vowel, or importations through lexical diffusion from an area with unconditioned fronting or even from an inland area with se-

²⁶ See the citation from Goossens 1988: 77 below and further Goossens 1980: 181-3 and map 2; also Taeldeman 1985: 184-5 (with map); cf. Van Loey 1976: 42, Van Bree 1987: 114-5. Note that south of Aalst, the relevant isoglosses for the reflexes **au* cannot be drawn due to the unconditioned fronting in East Flanders and southwestern Brabant.

condary *i*-umlaut, as is assumed for some apparently umlauted forms in the standard (Van Loey 1937: xv).²⁷

With regard to the third point mentioned above, we have already discussed to some degree the relationship between the umlaut isoglosses for **ā* and **ō* and will just add that according to Heeroma (1935: 104 and map 6) there is a small area in the far north, just south of the Zuiderzee, where the umlaut of **ō* extends further west than that of **ā*. Be that as it may, it seems clear that the isoglosses for the umlaut of **au* are more consistently further east and this fact may well ultimately be explained best in the manner Howell & Salmons suggest; further investigation along these and other lines is needed. We should, however, also note that the modern isoglosses for **a* affected by only secondary umlaut (open *e*) and **a* affected by both primary and secondary umlaut (closed *e*) run generally even further to the east than those for the umlaut of **ō* and **au* (Goossens 1980: 184ff. and map 2). With strict application of the principle of the implicational scale and a straightforward projection of the modern isoglosses back in time as reflexions of where the sundry individual developments of *i*-umlaut ran out of steam, as it were, this relative position of the isoglosses is either problematic or requires explicit consideration; that is, how do the conditions which limited **a* to secondary umlaut interact with the more basic principle of phonological difference?²⁸ In my view, however, the more easterly position of the

²⁷ One form which may reflect umlaut and has a particularly wide dialectal distribution, including most of the Flemish dialect area, is *leeg* (with variations) for *laag* 'low'. The discussion of umlaut of **ā* in the ANKO (Daan & Francken 1972: 63-7) is primarily based on the dialectal distribution of this form and consequently gives a very exaggerated impression of how far umlaut of **ā* operated in the southwest (though elsewhere (p. 60) they characterise all the coastal dialects, including East and West Flemish, as generally not having umlaut of long vowels). There is, however, clearly something particular about this word that has affected its development and distribution but that I must leave for another venue. A few other words with umlaut of **ā* (e.g. *strelen*, *onveer* and *bedeerd*) are found in Flanders (and even on the coast; v. Sercu 1972: 195) as well as in the standard, but can be and have been seen as lexical importations from the east (Verstegen 1938).

²⁸ The basic conditions for failure of primary umlaut of **a* are: 1) consonantal interference of *-ht* (e.g. *machtig*) and 2) intervening syllable between umlaut trigger

isoglosses for the secondary umlaut of * α , as well as the relative positions of those for the other vowels, needs to be examined in terms of the overall structural development of the dialectal vocalic systems and in relation to the sociolinguistic dynamics of the region over the course of the Old, Middle and Modern Dutch periods.²⁹

My point here is not to challenge the theoretical position of Howell & Salmons but rather only to say that I do not believe the Dutch umlaut isoglosses can be seen to reflect in any obvious or straightforward way the vowel by vowel unfolding their theory posits with respect to the operation of secondary *i*-umlaut in this region. Rather, I am inclined to see these umlaut isoglosses as reflecting what is now a somewhat but once was a rather compact bundle which, taken together, allows us to say with confidence that in some basic sense, to the west of the bundle secondary umlaut did not operate, only primary umlaut, and to the east both did.³⁰ If this more cautious view of the re-

and target (as in western *bakker*, *manneke* vs. central and eastern *bekker*, *menneke*); this latter conditioning is not discussed in Howell & Salmons' article.

²⁹ Cf. Goossens 1988: 77: "De umlaut isoglossen vormen op het ogenblik nog een bijna compacte bundel langs Dender en Schelde, van de taalgrens bij Geraardsbergen tot de monding van de Rupel. Hier hebben kennelijk sinds de middeleeuwen nauwelijks verschuivingen plaatsgehad. Verder noordelijk wordt de bundel losser; de afzonderlijke lijnen maken bogen rondom de steden Antwerpen en Utrecht, waarvan de eerste zich in de meeste en de tweede alle gevallen op westelijke standpunt heeft geplaatst. In de regel bereiken de isoglossen de Zuiderzee tussen Naarden en Elburg. We moeten aannemen dat zij tussen Schelde en Zuiderzee van de 13e eeuw tot nu, de ene minder, de andere meer, een eind in oostelijke richting zijn teruggedrongen. Als Utrecht, wat waarschijnlijk lijkt, in de middeleeuwen op oostelijk standpunt heeft gestaan, kunnen wij de oude tegenstelling beschrijven als een contrast tussen Vlaanderen-Zeeland-Holland enerzijds en Brabant-Utrecht met een zeer diep achterland anderzijds."

³⁰ But note that according to my view of the formation of Dutch through the contact of Ingvaëonic and Franconian in certain limited areas and in certain social milieus, the full-blown contrast between western and central dialect areas as known from the Middle Dutch period was not created instantly: "...[W]at wij uiteindelijk als Vlaamse dialecten enerzijds en Brabantse dialecten anderzijds kennen, gedeeltelijk te beschouwen zijn als verschillende cristallisaties uit... continua. In het geval van de Vlaamse dialecten hebben wij te maken met taalvariëteiten die uit het Ingwe-

latively minor deviations of the individual isoglosses is true, then the original problem as to why secondary umlaut is absent from western Dutch, remains: the process was broken off abruptly, as a total package. Finally, we must insist, as Höfler (1955: 57-8) from his own perspective remarks, the general failure of secondary umlaut in western Dutch is in no way comparable to the kinds of umlaut failure we can observe in Upper German. In this connexion, I call attention to the fact that there is no evidence indicating that western Low Franconian as a whole was peripheral to the development of *i*-umlaut; this one can say on the basis of the evidence of the Brabants and Limburgs dialects, where it appears *i*-umlaut developed essentially as it did elsewhere in the Franconian dialect area, that is, with noticeably less of the consonantal interference found in the Upper German dialects. Why secondary umlaut would so abruptly peter out as it neared the Dender, Schelde and Maas-Rhine delta, even if approached from the valid theoretical perspective of Howell & Salmons, requires an answer that challenges notions of natural sound change.³¹

2.3 Explaining the Failure of Secondary Umlaut in Western Dutch. Given the fundamental status of the abnormally limited development of *i*-umlaut in Dutch for the independent structural evolution of the language and the degree to which this development deviates from its analogues in the cognate Germanic dialects, it seems likely and desirable that a solution to the problem be interconnected with and

oons-Nederlandse continuum gegroeid zijn. In de Brabantse dialecten, zien wij taalvariëteiten die uit het Frankisch-Nederlandse continuum gegroeid zijn" (Buccini 1995: 55). From this perspective, the fact that all umlaut isoglosses do not completely coincide is more expected than surprising. Admittedly, one could counterclaim that the 'crystallisation' process obscured a pattern that reflected the phonological difference model but the onus of proving such a claim is heavy.

³¹ I believe Howell & Salmons' view of umlaut does not inherently run counter to my account of the Dutch failure of umlaut, nor does their theory of the rôle of phonetic difference as an important factor in umlaut developments run counter to my model, namely, of a gradual development of umlaut with accentual metaconditioning and proximate vocalic conditioning with possible consonantal interference. By the same token, my view of the secondary umlaut isoglosses in Dutch does not negate the validity of their theory and I accept the possibility that some of the staggering they suggest did occur.

supported by a broad array of data both linguistic and historical in nature: the greater the number of issues which can be fit into a coherent explanation, the less the risk that the argumentation is circular. From this perspective, I suggest that the explanation of umlaut failure in Dutch which I have argued extensively elsewhere and outlined briefly above draws together in a coherent manner such a broad array of data. Specifically, the proposed solution:

1) is founded on a comprehensive analysis of umlaut in Germanic, itself supported by observations from a crosslinguistic perspective. In this view the Dutch failure can be explained without recourse to otherwise undemonstrable prosodic features or unwarranted claims that Low Franconian was especially peripheral or extraordinary in its participation in pan-Germanic suprasegmental and segmental structures and tendencies.

2) links in a logical and plausible way the two most striking features of western Dutch, namely, the absence of secondary umlaut and the presence of the various Ingvæonisms. In particular, it resolves the apparent paradox of why (western) Dutch, with its severely limited development of *i*-umlaut, shows so many relictal connexions to 'Ingvæonic', that is, North Sea Germanic, precisely the branch of Germanic in which *i*-umlaut developed with the greatest regularity.

3) places the striking pattern of increasing phonological and morphological complexity from west to east across the Dutch language area in intimate connexion to the development of *i*-umlaut and the dialectal distribution of Ingvæonisms and does so in terms of well known principles of structural development and recent models of language contact.

4) lays the basis for a relatively complex sociohistorical situation already in prehistoric, i.e., Old Dutch, times. Already before the onset of the Middle Dutch period, it is obvious that dialect contact or "expansion" had taken place. In my view this dynamic dialectal and sociolectal landscape can best be understood in terms of three poles: Dutch (i.e., the form of Franconian that was partially restructured in the course of acquisition by Ingvæonic speakers), western Low Franconian, and the moribund Ingvæonic of the coast. Here I am reminded of Goossens' characterisation of Brabants as "vervlaamst, d.w.z. ver-nederlandst Limburgs" (1988: 79). But Flemish itself, the restructured

and Ingvæonised Franconian of the coast, shows internal complexity and indications of a sociolinguistic relationship between the least Ingvæonised variety, i.e., the ultimate basis of the standard, and more strongly Ingvæonised varieties; it is precisely in the context of this considerable linguistic and sociolinguistic complexity (arising out of and generated originally by the Ingvæonic/Franconian contact) that problems such as that of the "chaotic" development of **u* must be explained.³² Indeed, the social motivations that caused the Ingvæonic speakers to abandon their native language and acquire Franconian have later reflexions that continue to this day: Once Dutch, in the narrow sense, stabilised, it has always shown a continual aversion to Ingvæonic features and has been "expansive" at the cost of both Ingvæonic and Franconian.³³

To the above list there is, I believe, one more body of data that can be added which provides yet further support to our proposed explanation of umlaut failure in western Dutch, to wit, the historical evidence for the language contact scenario in which the Dutch language came into being.

3 The Sociohistorical Background to the Genesis of Dutch.

It is clear from a cursory examination of the linguistic and historical facts that a contact of the sort envisioned in this writer's work *could* have happened. The question arises: is there further historical evidence that will change the status of the posited contact from possible to probable? I believe there is and in this section I present an amplified and partly modified analysis of the sociohistorical background to the contact based on the brief discussion in Buccini 1995: 45 and sub-

³² From this perspective the coöccurrence in the Old West Flemish *probatio pen-næ* of *nestas* 'nests', with a North Sea Germanic desinenence, and *uogala* 'bird', with the expected Franconian desinenence, finds ready explanation and helps obviate the need for baroque accounts of the origins of plural -s in Dutch (cf. Nielsen 1992: 339-43).

³³ On Ingvæonic features and the parameters that have governed their distribution in Flemish, see Tældeman 1982 & 1987. More broadly on Ingvæonic, see Van Bree 1997 with further references.

sequent, ongoing research; a fully detailed treatment of this subject must appear elsewhere.

3.1 *The Low Countries in the Early Merovingian Period.* So far only indirectly discussed but ultimately crucial to my theory of the disruption of secondary umlaut in western Low Franconian is the notion that the linguistic contact out of which the Dutch language arose involved two relatively very well differentiated varieties of West Germanic. Given the close genetic relationship between the Ingvæonic dialects and Franconian and further the relatively early date (ca. 700 A.D.) of the posited contact, some may be inclined to reject out of hand this supposition, but it is supported by both linguistic and historical evidence.

Within Germanic, the sharpest overland boundary with regard to linguistic difference is that which divides North Germanic from West Germanic at the neck of the Jutland peninsula. Briefly, one can explain this boundary as a result of a break in the Northwest Germanic dialect continuum, which extended from southern Scandinavia, across the Danish islands to Jutland, and thence southward into Germany and the Low Countries. This gap arose as a result of the large-scale emigration of North Sea Germanic speakers, an emigration which is most closely associated with the Germanic settlement of Britain in the 4th and 5th centuries (Bede's Angles, Saxons and Jutes) but which also involved movements of groups to other places, including, by sea, to points along the coasts of the Low Countries and France and, by land, to points further south in Germany. When the Danes moved from southern Sweden into that gap (Haugen 1976: 106-7), they surely came across remnants of a local population but, judging from Bede's famous statement about the deserted condition of Angeln, in some areas that population may have been very sparse.³⁴ However small the old North Sea Germanic population was, clearly it was overwhelmed

³⁴ Bede I.15 (p. 17-8): "Advenerant autem de tribus Germaniae populis fortioribus, id est Saxonibus, Anglis, Iutis... Porro de Anglis, hoc est, de illa patria quae Angulus dicitur et ab eo tempore usque hodie manere desertus inter provincias Iutarum et Saxonum prehibetur..." On this Wallace-Hadrill (1988: 22) comments: "Archæology supports this statement. Contact had therefore been kept, 'usque hodie', between Bede's informants and the English homelands."

and/or absorbed by the Danes. The Danes expanded southward into Schleswig until they met a substantial Saxon population whose dialect was sufficiently different that a border arose (cf. Seebold 1995). Of no less importance, the two groups' social interests must also have been sufficiently different and their networks of communication sufficiently separate that no linguistic bridge was formed and the two languages continued along largely different developmental trajectories. The formation of this language boundary in northern Germany is both indirectly linked and substantially analogous to the linguistic background of the genesis of Dutch.

During the same period that the migrations of the North Sea Germanic peoples largely took place, roughly in the 4th-5th century, and, to at least a degree, connected to those migrations, Roman administration and military power in Britain and northern Gaul broke down. In northwestern Gaul, attacks and localised settlement of the North Sea Germanic groups were accompanied by a number of devastating attacks and ultimately large-scale settlement in the east originating from across the Rhine. In modern day Belgium, the effects of these attacks on the population were considerable and, even if the claims of older scholarship that large parts of the Low Countries were virtually depopulated now appear exaggerated (Blok 1981: 144), it still is clear that there was a dramatic drop in the overall size of the population, judging from the archaeological evidence for the precipitous decline of urban centres in the region, the abandonment of Gallo-Roman villas and the apparent return of much cultivated land to a wild state (Faider-Feytmans 1964: 14ff.; Verhulst & Blok 1981: 117-8). Particularly affected was the coastal zone of present day Belgium where already in the 3rd century, on account of the North Sea raiders, most Gallo-Roman settlements were abandoned with only a Roman military presence remaining. Close on the heels of these developments came natural disaster with the rise of the sea level and the large-scale and abiding coastal flooding known as the 2nd Dunkirk Transgression, which rendered much of the Flemish coastal plain uninhabitable (Thoen 1980).

A Gallo-Roman presence remained in the southern half of present day Belgium, including some areas north of the current language boundary, most notably in southeastern Flanders (roughly the area

around Kortrijk) but also further east in Brabant and near the Maas in Limburg (Gysseling 1981: 112-5; Blok 1981: 147). Concerning the tribal and linguistic identity of the Germanic inhabitants of the future Dutch language area during the period from 350-650, that is, during the collapse of Roman rule and on into the Merovingian period, our knowledge is limited. What does seem reasonably clear are at least the following facts which pertain to this question:³⁵

a) The Salian Franks, after whom is presumably named the Salland area in Overijssel, were settled in the Betuwe during the early 4th century and around 350 A.D. entered Toxandria and were there granted residence with *fœderati* status in 357. In the 440's, the Salians again attempted to expand southward, this time into modern day northern France, where they ultimately established themselves in the region around Cambrai and down to the Somme; here they gained anew status as *fœderati* under Aëtius around 450. Over the next thirty years or so, the Salian Frankish presence and power in northern Gaul seems to have grown steadily, reaching a first high point with Clovis' defeat of Syagrius in 486 and setting in motion the series of conquests which led gradually to the formation of the massive Merovingian kingdom. While scholars disagree strongly about the intensity of Frankish settlement in Gaul and the degree to which it had a lasting impact on the linguistic development of French, it seems to this writer incontestable that both settlement and linguistic influence were considerable across the north of France.

b) From early on, there was clearly a sense of relatedness between the Franks settled in Gaul and those settled to the east and north, in eastern Belgium, Luxembourg and the adjoining areas around the Moselle and Rhine in western Germany. There was, however, also a tradition of political separation between the two groups. From a wide variety of evidence, it is clear that the Silva Carbonaria (the immense forest stretching from near Leuven and Brussels toward the southwest, continuing through Hainaut and on to the area around Valenciennes) was considered the northern part of the border between the

³⁵ The following basic historical points have been harmonised out of a number of general and more specialised studies with an eye toward representing, if not a universal view, than at least one with reasonably broad support.

two Frankish groups.³⁶ Thus, the Franks settled east of the forest, along the Maas and in the Ardennes in eastern Belgium and the southern Netherlands (by modern provinces: eastern Belgian and southern Dutch Limburg, Liège, eastern Hainaut, southeastern Brabant, Luxembourg) were in the eastern Frankish kingdom (from the late 6th century 'Austrasia') and, from various historical facts, it is clear that the nobility of this region was intimately connected to that of the Moselle and Rhine regions of this kingdom.

c) The coastal areas both in the Netherlands and Belgium were not densely populated. Moreover, the population that was there seems to have been fairly heterogeneous with regard to tribal origins except at the extreme flanks; of course in the north of the Netherlands the population was Frisian and at the opposite end in the Boulonnais and Pas-de-Calais, the population was clearly largely "Saxon" or perhaps one should say pre-English (participants in the migrations that resulted in the settlement of England) with quite possibly a later reinforcement from England (Gysseling 1960: 1132). The peoples implicated in the settlement between these two poles, which is to say Flanders, Zeeland and at least much of Holland are several and include Suevi, Jutes, Warnes, Eruli, as well as Frisians and Saxons (see, e.g., Gysseling 1981: 104ff.). Even without recourse to the ample toponymic and dialectal evidence from these areas, one could reasonably surmise that the population must have spoken a dialect akin to English and Frisian, given the location on the coast, the more obviously North Sea Germanic neighbours to the north and south, and the fact that several of these groups (Jutes, Warnes, Eruli) have historical links to the area in present day Denmark whence came many of the settlers of England. If we take the evidence of Ingvæonisms into consideration, the conclusion need not be belaboured: the eastern Channel coast was colonised predominately by North Sea Germanic speaking groups by sea as part of the general population movement that resulted in the Germanic colonisation of Britain and overland

³⁶ On the location, size and importance of the Silva Carbonaria, see Higounet 1966: 360-1 and Vander Linden 1923, esp. 210ff. The border between the two kingdoms to the south of the forest in northern France was less stable; see Faider-Feytmans 1964: 38 for details.

from nearby Frisian territory. This colonisation was surely carried out primarily in the course of the 4-6th centuries with the Frisian expansion perhaps later.

The picture of the Low Countries that arises from the above gives us a frame, as it were, with Frisians in the north, Frisians and other Ingvæonic groups in the west, Franks in the east, and Franks and Gallo-Romans in the south. Within this frame is something of a blank space, in the area stretching from the great rivers in the central Netherlands southward through the Kempen and on to the *Silva Carbonaria*. What these two areas have in common is their relative unattractiveness for agriculture of the sort practiced by the Germanic peoples of the period; for the Kempen, the problem was the soil type, which is poor (Verhulst & Blok 1981: 125), for the great forest, the trees, which would require clearing (Verhulst 1966: 84-5). That the Kempen region was not very densely populated during the early Merovingian period and beyond seems certain, given its limitations for exploitation, and this is borne out by the sparseness of archaeological finds there and in much of the surrounding zone to the north and east for the period (Blok 1981: 148). The situation further south in the region of the *Silva Carbonaria* cannot be as easily interpreted for there clearly was substantial settlement around the forest to the south and during the early Middle Ages there was an ongoing process of clearance and cultivation throughout.

While this central area may have been relatively sparsely populated, there remains the interesting, if not really answerable, question of what Germanic speakers may have been there. There are three candidates and any combination of them could have been present: 1) Salian Franks, who remained behind as many or most of their compatriots moved on for greener pastures, as it were, in northern Gaul; 2) eastern Franks, expanding gradually westward from the area between the Rhine and Maas; 3) remnants of the Germanic groups settled in the region already during the Roman period (*Germani Cisrhenani*, *Tungri*, etc.).³⁷ There is, of course, no *a priori* reason to assume these groups'

³⁷ Van Loon & Wouters (1991) argue convincingly that, on the basis of the continuity of some apparently very old Germanic placenames associated with the Senne and its tributaries, such old 'autochthon' *Germani* must have survived the

dialects were the same nor to assume they were especially different, given their close geographic proximity. If one further takes into account the fact that Salian Franks presumably must have settled in the area among the older, local groups (insofar as they still existed and spoke a form of Germanic) in the 4th and 5th century, that is, at a time when dialectal differentiation in continental West Germanic was relatively modest, and further that starting in the 6th and then strongly in the 7th century this area was clearly drawn into the Austrasian kingdom, one is justified to presume on the basis of principles of dialectology and sociolinguistics and common sense, that the dialects of all these groups must have been developing essentially more along a South Germanic and particularly Franconian trajectory rather than anything else.

Assuming that most of the Salian Franks settled in France but also that some settled in the more attractive areas of the south-central Low Countries (parts of Brabant in the old broad sense and also south-eastern Flanders), one must consider too what the dialectal affiliations of their speech was, though here there is only space for a brief, general characterisation. On the basis of evidence of their dialect from onomastic material gathered from Merovingian sources, as well as from the more problematic material from the Salic Laws and loan words into French, one comes inevitably to the important though not exciting conclusion that their dialect was, with respect to the general development of the phonological system and especially the vowels, closely akin to what we would reconstruct for the period for the later

Roman period. They argue further: "De belangrijkste conclusie die uit onze taalkundige bespiegelingen kan worden getrokken, betreft de geschiedenis van het Nederlands zelf. Reeds eeuwen vóór de invallen van de Franken, die volgens de gangbare theoriën aan de grondslag zouden liggen van onze taal, zou ten noorden van de huidige taalgrens een Oergermaans dialect zijn gesproken dat een verre maar rechtstreekse voorloper zou zijn van het Nederlands" (pp. 62-3). Such a rôle for this group is interesting only insofar as they were linguistically different from those later arriving Franks and that difference was essential to the structure of Dutch, neither of which claim can be demonstrated. One notes too that the evidence for survival of this old dialect is from the valley of the Senne and its tributaries, all found in and about the *Silva Carbonaria*, a logical place for the survival of a small and marginal group.

attested Low Franconian dialects of the eastern Low Countries and neighbouring areas.³⁸ This judgement is supported by the lexical evidence of the Malberg glosses, which shows interesting connexions to the same group of Franconian dialects in the Low Countries and on the Rhine (Schmidt-Wiegand 1969, esp. 405ff.). One might further surmise that the dialect of the Salian Franks may have shown more minor similarities to North Sea Germanic dialects (e.g., expanded application of the loss of nasal before voiceless fricative with compensatory lengthening of the vowel) than other, more southerly dialects, since they appear to have been in Overijssel and thus relatively nearer the North Sea Germanic area during the 3rd and 4th centuries. It seems very likely that they participated in some of the more expansive innovations often associated with North Sea Germanic which also are found in Low Franconian and Old Saxon (e.g., spread of *h-* to the anaphoric pronouns, loss of *-z* in monosyllables) but direct proof of such assumptions is wanting. Nevertheless, all indications point to the dialect of the Salian Franks being more akin, especially with regard to the crucial issue of the development of umlaut, to the dialects of the Franks on the Maas and Rhine than to the North Sea Germanic dialects.³⁹

3.2 *The Integration of the Low Countries into the Frankish Empire.* From the above discussion, I suggest that circa 600, the core of the future Dutch language area was comprised of three major zones: a western, coastal zone with a relatively small population who by origin and orientation were connected to the North Sea Germanic peoples; a

³⁸ One must allow for conservative scribal habits but the onomastic evidence from the diplomas (Wells 1973) and coins (Felder 1978) gives a consistent picture for roughly the 7th and early 8th century: **ē₁* has been lowered to *ā* and primary umlaut is not yet graphically represented (Felder p. 92).

³⁹ Both the Franks and the Saxons were, as is well known, not single tribes but rather confederations of tribes with originally somewhat fluid membership. Both were dialectally homogeneous and both surely included groups which spoke a relatively conservative form of West Germanic, exhibiting few or none of the eccentricities of the North Sea Germanic group on the one hand or the Upper German group on the other. It is also clear that the Saxon confederation did include groups that were linguistically core members of the North Sea Germanic group, while the Frankish confederation apparently did not.

central zone, also with a small population of uncertain composition but most likely by origin and orientation connected to the Franks to the east and south; an eastern zone of Frankish settlement, including the southeastern area around the Maas which, together with the mixed Gallo-Romance/Frankish areas in Wallonia, formed the heartland of Austrasia, the soon to be fully ascendant locus of political and military power in the Frankish world. Under these conditions, which reigned roughly from the 5th to the 7th century, the sociolinguistic situation was in many respects analogous to the one described above in southern Jutland and quite propitious for the development of a sharp linguistic boundary between North Sea Germanic or Ingvaëonic speakers on the coast and in essence Franconian speakers in the interior, a linguistic contrast which was manifested in large measure through the radically different rates and patterns of umlaut developments discussed earlier.

It has been assumed by many historians and some linguists as well that the Salian Franks were responsible for the bulk of the Germanic settlement of the Low Countries, including Flanders, during their expansion in the 4th-5th century. Leaving aside linguistic issues, there are good historical reasons to think that was not the case.⁴⁰ First, there is a general scarcity of evidence, textual and otherwise, for the Germanic areas along the coast and west of the *Silva Carbonaria*, i.e., Flanders in the broader sense, which contrasts strongly with the central areas of the Merovingians in northern France (cf. Faider-Feytmans 1964: 38). Indeed, up until the reign of Dagobert I (623-639) there was generally little interest in the regions to the north.⁴¹ This peripheral or even external status is perhaps further demonstrated by lists of enemy tribes which may well include references to groups

⁴⁰ The interesting and important issue of the significance of placenames cannot be treated here. For the moment, I will say only that older efforts to see clear links between tribal and dialectal identities and the occurrence of placenames with specific elements, most notably *-heem* (*-haim) and *-zele* (*-sali), are not convincing and have been largely abandoned.

⁴¹ Cf. Petri (1937: 801), more generally on the Low Countries "[sie] nahmen gegenüber der fränkischen Kultur keine zentrale, sondern eine ausgesprochene Randstellung ein."

settled on the Low Countries' coasts from the late 6th century.⁴² When finally the Merovingians turn northward with sustained interest in the early 7th century, the history of missionary efforts emanating from northern France gives the impression that once past southeastern Flanders, the Franks and their churchmen were in hostile and, in some sense at least, foreign territory. In this regard, one notes that in the life of St. Eligius, Bishop of Noyon from 641, he is said to have met with hostility among the "Flandrenses atque Andoverpenses, Fresiones quoque et Suevi et barbari quique circa maris litora degentes" (Lebecq 1983: 48-9).

Other missions to roughly the same general area (St. Amandus and later St. Willibrord) were clearly needed before it was brought more fully into the fold and one suspects that this missionary work was done in close conjunction with less spiritual methods of persuasion; in this regard, Wallace-Hadrill's (1983: 143) comments concerning Frankish expansion to the east into Germany are likely no less appropriate for much of the Low Countries: "The Merovingians were the Christian princes whose military power made all this possible... The inference can be drawn that missionary activity was thus no more than the cultural aspect of a successful military take-over of the areas whence the Frankish Rhine was threatened." We know that this was the case in Frisian territory, where Willibrord's mission was clearly done in close conjunction with the pursuit of Frankish and more specifically Austrasian military, economic and political interests in the area of Utrecht and Domburg and was ultimately realised in part through the colonising settlement of Frankish nobility, the *Homines Franci*, following the course of the Maas north from Maastricht (Niermeyer 1953: 151ff.). All in all, the evidence indicates that most of Flanders, including the area around Ghent, Zeeland and the area around Antwerp, Ingvæonic speaking territory, had to be drawn forci-

⁴² One such list occurs in a letter from Theudebert I to the East Roman Emperor Justinian which seems to claim Frankish hegemony over Saxons and Jutes. Another occurs in a praise poem by Venantius Fortunatus which enumerates the tribes which fear the Frankish king. Part of the list could be read as proceeding down the North Sea/Channel coast from north to south: Danes, Jutes, Saxons, Bretons. For discussion of these texts in a different context, see Seebold 1995: 8-9.

bly into the greater Frankish and Christian community.⁴³ A colonial effort involving the plantation of Frankish nobility in the southern Low Countries, similar to (though less well documented than) the slightly later one along the Maas, emanating from the Austrasian Frankish heartland to the east and southeast of Silva Carbonaria, has been posited by some historians.⁴⁴ In those areas across southern and northern Brabant, with a Frankish population or at least one speaking a form of West Germanic essentially like Franconian, the colonising effort of the Austrasian nobility had no great linguistic impact. But in those zones where an alloglot population was being drawn into the Frankish empire, the stage was set for the formation of a new, structurally distinct form of Franconian.

Though further research is needed to elucidate how the process unfolded across space and time, I feel certain that the initial language shift that resulted in the formation of Dutch began in limited areas, at first probably especially focussed in a small group of settlements on the eastern edge of the Ingvæonic areas, to wit, Ghent, Antwerp and Utrecht, which were later to become important cities. In these places Frankish religious, political and economic interests met and so too Frankish and Ingvæonic speakers. That similar conditions existed in various other places throughout the coastal zones is almost certain to have been the case, there where in the context of the large domains,

⁴³ Lebecq's (1990: 33-4) comments regarding a Saxon settlement further south are interesting: "Les recherches anthropologiques les plus récentes donnent même à penser que telle communauté saxonne - en l'occurrence celle que révèle la nécropole de Vron, dans le Ponthieu - a pu vivre totalement repliée sur elle-même, dans une endogamie restée stricte de la fin du IV^e siècle jusqu'à un VI^e siècle bien avancé."

⁴⁴ Particularly interesting in this regard is Bergengruen's (1958) discussion of the archaeological evidence of the "Reihengräber" which are essentially absent from much of the Low Countries but found with considerable density in old Gallo-Romance territory from the early 6th century, presumably in connexion with their rôle in society; he characterises the culture that produced them as "vorwiegend eine Krieger- und Erobererkultur" (p. 167). Few are found north of the language boundary: "...die wenigen Reihengräber nördlich der Sprachgrenze, in Brabant und in Flandern, erst dem 7. und beginnenden 8. Jahrhundert angehören" (p. 166). He also argues that the Frankish nobility in Flanders and Brabant "sich erst spät hier niedergelassen hat", i.e. in the 7-8th century.

were they property of the church or property of Frankish noblemen, Franks interacted on a daily basis with the original Flemings, the Frisians and the other Ingvæonic speakers. Given that this was conquered territory, some or perhaps even many of those Ingvæonic speakers may have been slaves taken from the local population, or Anglo-Saxons bought in one of the nearby North Sea emporia. But we need not think the impetus to acquire the prestigious language of the empire was found only at the end of a whip. In large measure it was surely simply part of the process of creating a new society.

Under Frankish auspices, the Ingvæones of the west were ultimately liberated not only from the error of their pagan beliefs but from their North Sea Germanic language as well. In the end, however, they transformed the speech they learned from the Franks and transformed it into a new language which ultimately became the medium for a distinct linguistic and cultural identity for the Low Countries by the sea.

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