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Introduction

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This special issue of *Probus* is dedicated to issues in historical Romance linguistics. Although it has antecedents in the Middle Ages, historical linguistics was not systematically studied until the nineteenth century, when it came to dominate the field, especially through the study of Romance where interest in historical structural issues has long been a concern. Indeed, a glance at the list of bibliographical references in this issue should suffice to give some idea of the enormous body of descriptive and theoretical literature on the history of Romance. This profusion of scholarship has frequently provided material for monumental, comparative-historical synopses such as Diez (1838), Meyer-Lübke (1890, 1894, 1899, 1902) and Lausberg (1956–62), or extremely detailed encyclopedic works such as Holtus et al. (1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1996), Ernst et al. (2003, 2006, 2008), Maiden et al. (2011, 2013) and Ledgeway and Maiden (2016). In the past 60 years, the development of both Greenbergian language typology and Chomskian generative grammar has led, at first independently but arguably with growing convergence, to a considerable increase in our knowledge of cross-linguistic variation. Our notion of how language systems vary across time and space and our ability to provide detailed, sophisticated analyses of this variation across a range of languages, dialects, language families and linguistic phenomena is probably greater than it has been at any time in the past. Since synchronic variation reflects and is created by diachronic change, the study of historical linguistics has also flourished and continues to do so.

In this context, the richly-documented diachronic variation and change exhibited by the Romance family, coupled with our extensive knowledge and abundant textual documentation of the ancestral language, Latin, offers privileged insights into a range of variation through time and space largely unparalleled for other Western languages. This has proved to be an inexhaustible testing ground that has a central role to play in challenging established beliefs in linguistics and forming new ideas and perspectives about language structure, change, and variation. In particular, the lessons learnt from language families such as Romance with long recorded histories and vast dialectal variation are

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extremely valuable in the context of trying to understand the role and relevance of reconstruction and internal and external causes of change in establishing the origins and histories of many other languages in the many parts of the world where such documentation is not available. By the same token, a firm grasp of existing linguistic theories is indispensable for understanding the structures and typological patterns of Romance, and, in particular, those known to us only partially through the texts of earlier periods where, in the absence of native speakers to provide the missing empirical pieces of the puzzle, the traditional tension between attested and reconstructed forms can be resolved by appealing to established principles of endogenous and exogenous linguistic change.

Through detailed comparisons of different periods of the same Romance variety or indeed of the entire family we can therefore track and document the individual stages in particular formal developments, potentially allowing us to identify, pinpoint and explain the causes – whether endogenous or exogenous – of such changes, their overt reflexes and potential effects on other areas of the grammar, and the mechanisms involved therein. While successive historical stages of individual Romance varieties are naturally closely related to each other, manifestly displaying in most cases a high degree of structural homogeneity, they often diverge minimally in significant and interesting ways which allow the Romance linguist to isolate and observe what lies behind surface differences across otherwise highly homogenized grammars. By drawing on such historical microvariation, it is possible to determine which phenomena are correlated with particular linguistic options and how such relationships can be represented within the formal model of language. In short, the results of the study of Romance historical linguistics over recent decades have shown how investigation of structured variation along the diachronic axis can be profitably exploited as a scientific tool of enquiry with which to test, challenge and re-assess hypotheses and ideas about the nature of language structure which go beyond the observed limits of the study of the synchronic grammar of individual languages or language families. The merits of this approach to the study of variation have been forcefully advocated by Richard Kayne; see in particular Kayne (2005).

Given therefore the central role of Romance and, in turn, historical linguistics assumed today within the study of linguistics and the many new and exciting perspectives that they continue to afford us in shaping and informing our theoretical understanding of the nature of language, it seemed timely to the editors to bring together in a single issue some of the foremost scholars in the field of Romance Linguistics. In the articles that follow they reflect in fresh and original ways on some major topics in historical linguistics in the light of contemporary thinking across a wide variety of formal approaches and in relation to a large body of empirical research conducted over a vast range of individual Romance

languages and dialects, as well as across sub-branches of Romance from a comparative perspective.

Scheer and Ségéral consider the ‘elastic’ development of s+C clusters in the passage from Latin to Old French, a cluster formation which has long puzzled phonologists in view of its failure to conform to accepted phonological expectations and other established principles and generalizations. Adopting a Strict CV Phonology (Lowenstamm 1996; Scheer 2004), the authors argue for the presence of an empty nucleus separating s+C clusters (viz. /søC/), an elegant solution to the empirical problem which can be readily extended beyond the diachronic French pattern.

Calabrese explores the disparate morphosyntactic roles that the active perfect participle forms have in Latin and Italian morphology, where they also appear as the base for many nominal and adjectival forms as well as in various uses as stative adjectives and passive participles. Unlike in ‘morphomic’ approaches (cf. Aronoff 1994, 2012; Maiden 2005, 2016, 2018) where the assumption of suppletive stem memorization fails to explain why precisely it is a participial form that appears in all such cases, Calabrese adopts the Distributed Morphology framework (Embick and Halle 2005; Halle and Marantz 1993), where the derivation from syntax to morphophonological form is fully transparent. More specifically, he proposes as a first stage of the PF derivation that morphological spell-out includes morphological repairs induced by morphological structure conditions which can manipulate syntactic structures and generate morphological structure that is not motivated syntactically or semantically, thereby creating the observed mismatches between syntactic/semantic structure and surface morphology.

Gianollo traces across differing diachronic stages of Romance the diverging diachronic paths of the descendants of Latin *aliquis* ‘some or other’, an important element of the functional lexicon for our understanding of the interaction between semantic and syntactic change. While some Romance languages continue either its Classical epistemic indefinite use or its later use as a negative polarity item (NPI), other languages maintain both, but distinguish between the two through word order. This positional difference, interpreted as a DP-internal inversion operation, is argued to be motivated by focus and connected to polarity sensitivity as part of a general mechanism of semantic change. As such, the behaviour and distribution of reflexes of *aliquis* instantiate a cline of development that can be related to varying, and hence diachronically changing, constraints on quantificational domains.

The remaining four articles in this special issue all deal with syntactic topics across different sub-branches of Romance, reflecting the central role of syntax and, in turn, historical syntax assumed today within the study of (Romance) historical linguistics and the many new and exciting perspectives that it continues to afford

us in shaping and informing our theoretical understanding of the nature of language. **Dragomirescu and Nicolae** explore the diachronic development of the venitive verb in the history of Romanian and how it has grammaticalized under specific conditions as a modal predicate marking a range of desiderative meanings, a rather rare development cross-linguistically. Unlike typical and well-documented cases of grammaticalization involving verbs of motion in Romance and beyond, this construction originates in a concrete unaccusative change-of-location structure which is still available in contemporary Romanian, thereby giving rise to diachronic layering with all the intermediate structures preserved to the present day.

Andriani, Groothuis and Silvestri examine a rich empirical body of dialectal evidence from Italo-Romance microvariation to test and evaluate the predictions of current generative accounts of grammaticalization. In this contribution the two strictly related approaches of the cartographic model (Roberts and Roussou 2003) and parametric accounts (Longobardi et al. 2013) are tested in relation to three case studies from the sentential, clausal and nominal domains. In particular, it is shown that grammaticalized elements may result not only from the canonical case of upwards grammaticalization, as witnessed in the case of the development of future tense and modality in southern dialects, but also from downwards (re)grammaticalization as in the case of the development of subordinators in southern dialects. Finally, the third case study highlights the advantages of studying the development of demonstratives from Latin to Romance through the lens of a parametric account in order to capture the role of semantic and syntactic features within a fine-grained architecture of the DP. In particular, a detailed analysis of the different stages of development witnessed in non-syncretic discontinuous demonstrative structures across the dialects of northern, central and southern Italy are shown to follow from specific parameter settings and resettings through time.

Sheehan traces the development of Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) under perception, permissive and causative verbs in Romance with a particular focus on the history of French. Significantly, she notes that ECM is often restricted to contexts in which the embedded subject is a clitic, leading her to argue for the existence of a clitic ECM stage in the development of ECM which can be observed in several modern Romance varieties and most probably in Middle French. The explanation for this pattern is interpreted as a consequence of phase theory inasmuch as causative predicates are light verbs which select a phasal complement. As a consequence, accusative case assignment to the embedded subject by the matrix causative predicate is blocked in accordance with the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC), unless the embedded subject is a clitic raised to the matrix phase for independent reasons.

Finally, building on ideas originally articulated in the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture (Baker 2008: 353), the idea that all cross-linguistic variation can be reduced to variation in the formal features of functional heads, in his contribution **Gallego** demonstrates how a cluster of morphosyntactic properties which all have the vP as their locus readily serve to distinguish between two main groups of standard Romance languages. In particular, it is claimed that the availability of VOS and VSO word orders, and Differential Object Marking in Ibero-Romance (together with Romanian) and their absence in Catalan, French and Italian which, by contrast, all exhibit oblique clitics, participial agreement and auxiliary selection, are not to be regarded as independent properties, but, rather, constitute interrelated phenomena which follow from deeper shared v -related parametric choices. In particular, Gallego proposes a microparametric approach whereby v can be associated with an additional projection subject to variation which can be both synchronic and diachronic in nature, witness earlier stages of Ibero-Romance which displayed oblique clitics, participial agreement and auxiliary selection.

All in all, the papers collected here attest to the continuing fecundity of the interaction between the in-depth study of the Romance languages and linguistic theory. It is abundantly clear from these contributions that each field significantly enriches the other.

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