Readings in Romance Linguistics

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Edited by

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Acknowledgements

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Preface

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Why a reader in Romance Linguistics covering only the past twenty
years? Considerations of size dictate some chronological limitation since
even the most spartan selection of influential works over the past century
would run to several thousand pages. Beyond this, recent years have
witnessed a burgeoning of activity in several important theoretical frame-
works. Most of this work is characterized by a trend away from the
accumulation of facts in the tradition of Meyer-Lübke and to more
emphasis upon the ordering of these facts.

   Romance Linguistics, as Linguistics, partakes of a variety of theories
and methodologies. Some of these, such as the functional-structural
approach of Martinet, produce a rich harvest of research within the field.
Others, such as glottochronology, yield only isolated results. Among the
most fruitful directions in recent years, in terms of amount of research
stimulated, we would cite, in addition to functional-structuralism, the
rise of etymological research as reflected in the work of Malkiel, glosse-
matics and generative-transformational grammar. Nor can one ignore
the active continuation of approaches well established by American
structural linguists of the 1940's and 50's.

   The present reader makes no claim to being a complete reflection of
Romance Linguistics since the 1950's. Certain areas, such as etymology,
have regretfully been excluded altogether, since to permit them adequate
coverage would have required a considerable increase in size. Selections
have been made on the basis of theoretical interest rather than data
treated. Where possible, several applications of each theoretical frame-
work have been included in order to give a balanced view of strengths

and weaknesses. Obviously such a procedure is most feasible for those approaches which have stimulated the most research. No attempt has been made to include all or most of the Romance Languages, except that where two articles were of equal theoretical interest, that one treating a language not represented elsewhere in the volume was chosen.

The editors realize that no two scholars will agree on the optimal composition of such a volume. Many excellent articles which others would have liked to see here have not been included, but we particularly regret that several authors whose permission to reprint had been obtained had to be rejected in the final selection due to considerations of length and balance.

Special thanks should go to Sol Saporta for his assistance on many problems and for his constant encouragement. The editors also wish to express their gratitude for suggestions to Robert Austerlitz, Eugene Dorfman, Robert Hall, Jr., Alphonse Juilland, Yakov Malkiel, Luigi Romeo and Sanford Schane, and especially to Sheridan Anderson for administrative assistance in the preparation of materials for the volume.

We accept all responsibility for any shortcomings in the selections.

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Introduction

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Yakov Malkiel

DISTINCTIVE TRAITS OF ROMANCE LINGUISTICS

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

At the critical borderline between physical sciences, social sciences, and humanities, general linguistics has become one of the rallying points for particularly ambitious mid-century scholars. Earlier systems of analysis are being appraised and mostly repudiated on the strength of their insufficient applicability to the widest possible range of differently structured languages. Under these conditions, is it feasible and advisable for workers in a neatly bounded subfield of linguistics to strive for limited autonomy, i.e., for their right to use a private scale of values, not incompatible with the broad principles and aims of the chosen science, but neither necessarily identical with such tastes and emotional preferences as have in actual life become inextricably tangled with those theoretical foundations? Many will hasten to deny this privilege without further hearing for disciplinary reasons that can readily be anticipated, but the problem has too many ramifications to be summarily dismissed. Indeed, the chances are that the most effective answer that can be provided will be neither a flat denial nor an exuberant affirmation, but an unhurried tracing of the limits beyond which the autonomy of a part cannot be stretched without impairing the common weal.

Let Romance linguistics serve as a test case of a defensible share of "separatism", in a climate of debate free from apology and inculpation. Once a strong case for a partial autonomy of one meaningfully delimited subdiscipline has been established, spokesmen for any other comparable smaller unit may legitimately invoke this principle, adjusting its implications to varying circumstances.

This paper contends that most distinctive traits of Romance linguistics may be deduced from an inventory of its characteristic resources. The chief advantage of this strategy is the reduction of subjectively colored choices to a reasonable modicum. This platform does not force one to disregard the agency of other powerful determining factors. At least three such additional ingredients seem worthy of mention: the specific evolutionary stage that the subdiscipline has reached, the matrix of the national (or continental) culture that gave it birth and initially sheltered it, and the impact of magnetic personalities among its leaders, past and present. The discussion of these supervenient influences will be relegated to the concluding section.

CHARACTERISTICS TRACEABLE TO THE MATERIAL

The available records

The peculiar ambit and even the tone of Romance linguistics have to an astonishing extent been predetermined by the abundant material — either relatively well-preserved petrifacts or elements still in a state of flux and accessible to direct scrutiny — which generations of competent workers have become accustomed to handling. The bulk of these raw data, in its bare essentials, includes several standard languages, observable over periods of from four to ten centuries and known to have served as carriers of influential literatures; a wide variety of not too sharply differentiated clusters of dialects, a few of them lacking archival documentation, hence explorable through field work alone; scattered vestiges of ancestral lexical material in less closely related media, e.g., stray Latin words fossilized in Numidian (Berber), Germanic, or Celtic dialects; plus — a priceless possession — the thoroughly documented parent language itself, Latin. This language, used at widely discrepant social levels, counted among its speakers many who were in the process of gradual assimilation to Graeco-Roman culture; it occupied a farflung expanse of territory fringed by ever fluctuating contours, an area subjugated in the course of four centuries of almost relentless warfare. An inwardly corroded Roman empire started falling apart at its seams in the third century; it is plausibly argued that as a result of its piecemeal dismemberment in the following two hundred years, colloquial Latin, except possibly among the highly literate, began to adopt several regionally colored forms in ever quickening tempo.

Scarcely any reliable records of the suspected varieties of spoken Latin have been directly transmitted, with the probable exception of the early comedy (Plautus), phrased in an idiom true to life, and of Petronius'

sensitive rendition of conversations held by a motley crowd at Trimal-chio's Banquet. However, an impressive mass of circumstantial evidence enables the experienced "restorer" to piece together a few of the fleeting or (as we sometimes know from retrospect) lasting features of that submerged Latinity. Between the gradual extinction of a relatively unified, if finely graded, Latin and the emergence of the earliest, awkwardly styled texts in the major vernaculars (ninth to twelfth century), there lies a critical gap ranging, according to zone and language, from four to six hundred years, with Portuguese, Spanish (except in its archaic Mozarabic garb), and Italian trailing conspicuously behind French and Provençal. Texts (legal, historiographic, religious, didactic, and epistolary) dating from this transitional period (the tag "dim" rather than "dark" would most eloquently characterize such a twilight age) were often composed in some kind of semiconventional minimum Latin, affording occasional glimpses of the presumable actual speaking habits of writers, copyists, and notaries.

Eventually the vernaculars were recognized as fitting media for at least some literary genres and for charters; their coming-of-age was exceedingly slow in entailing the recession of medieval Latin as a favorite vehicle of writing, a vehicle subject, not unlike many other immobilized and slightly rusty prestige languages, to periodic attempts at "purification" imposed from above. This strained situation nourished a protracted osmosis between, on the one hand, an artificially maintained Latin seemingly almost arrested in its development but in fact never quite immune to steady erosive infiltration, and, on the other, a constellation of local dialects each almost free (but at no time entirely so) to follow its own natural bent or drift. In short, early Romance in all its protean manifestations is the very image of shackled spontaneity.

Overlapping of philology and linguistics

At this point a short terminological digression is in order. Whether one takes philology in its narrow, archeological sense (bibliography, paleo-graphy, textual criticism, epigraphy, numismatics, toponymy) or in its broader meaning of cultural history moored to the meticulous examina-tion of records, there are many temptations for moderns to establish valid contrasts, as regards definition and characterization, between this "antiquarian" branch of knowledge and a thoroughly refurbished lin-guistics.

The provinces of the two disciplines are not exactly coterminous, their respective degrees of abstractness are incongruous, their appeals to imagination are unequal in intensity and in direction, and their affinities to other lines of learning could not, one is at intervals sharply reminded,

be less germane. But granted this pervasive divergence between the two climates of research, it still remains true that a radical, unhealable break between the two approaches cannot be seriously advocated in a subfield as clearly predestined to yield a perfect testing ground for experiments in diachronic research as is the Romance domain.

In this privileged precinct ancient idiosyncrasies of spelling (suggestive, if deftly interpreted, of otherwise unobservable or elusive vocal habits) and present-day patterns of dialect speech, lending themselves to advanced techniques of recording and analysis, are at bottom mutually complementary and invite systematic comparison. One can, then, with a measure of justification set off philology from historical linguistics in formal presentation (much as in Ernout and Meillet's admirable etymological dictionary the unexciting inventory of recorded and readily inferrable Latin forms has been neatly segregated from the corpus of hazardous reconstructions relating to a nebulous past); but one cannot, in actual operations, expect to enforce this disentanglement without grave damage to the chosen inquiry.

The changing hierarchy of approaches (arrangement vs. sequence)

In theory most linguists are likely to admit the perfect equality of status between synchronic and diachronic studies. Yet in practice powerful currents of fashions in scholarly thinking have tended to upset this equilibrium in favor of some kind of hierarchization. Fifty years ago, under the aegis of historicism refined by evolutionism, the dominant perspective in language study was diachronic. Today's heightened concern with exotic languages — many of them lacking a knowable past — and a general shift of focus in the direction of behavioral sciences, reinforced in some tone-setting milieus by an emotionally nurtured indifference to history, are jointly giving tremendous impetus to synchronic studies and concomitantly tend to discourage large-scale undertakings along the time axis. Romance linguistics can only profit from increased sophistication in structural analysis, but its stock of precious material is so distributed as to have inescapably predetermined the greatest potential services that its practitioners can hope to render to the advancement of knowledge. These services lie unequivocally along the path of diachronic inquiries. To put it differently: the patterns of arrangement in Romance languages and dialects seem less diversified, hence conceivably less thought-provoking, than those discovered in other not quite so prominent families. In contrast, the patterns of temporal sequences can here be recognized in all their complexity with such uniquely gratifying precision as to lead one to expect from the Romance quarters particularly weighty contributions to this phase of general linguistic theory.

Some special implications of historicism

Just as some perceptive theorists make it a point to discriminate between the labels "general", "synchronic", "descriptive", "functional", "structural", and "static" applied to closely allied perspectives in linguistics, so the three tags used in the opposite camp, "diachronic", "historical", and "dynamic", though practically interchangeable in informal scholarly discourse, deserve each to evolve a slightly distinctive connotation. Diachrony preëminently implies unilinear reconstruction of earlier stages by means of linguistic comparison alone, a procedure reminiscent in its rigor of logical and mathematical analyses. Historicism may well with equal force suggest a scholar's indebtedness to all sources of historical information (external and internal evidence alike) and presuppose on his part a special virtuosity in tapping these disparate sources as well as a liberal endowment of judiciousness in weighing them against one another. Dynamics, though inconclusive with regard to the selection of sources, seems closer to historicism, being chiefly attuned to the interplay of such forces as shape (or forcibly keep intact) a closely cohesive mobile mass of linguistic molecules.

Granted that much, one may thus elaborate upon the preference which most Romance linguists display for the time perspective. Theirs tends to be a truly historical approach with all the heavy implications of this qualifier rather than purely diachronic extrapolation; consequently the grasp of the dynamic formula presiding at each juncture over the combination of forces and counterforces locked in a ceaseless struggle is to them a goal worthy of earnest endeavor.

To be sure, it is hazardous to introduce nonlinguistic assumptions into the reconstruction of most hypothetical parent languages, which the analyst is rarely in a position to assign, on independent grounds, to specific primeval habitats and itineraries, still less to definite ethnic stocks; few who have played with this avenue of approach have entirely eschewed the risk of circular thinking. On the other hand, the events surrounding the gestation of Romance languages were for a long time in the limelight of ancient and medieval historiography, hence merited rough dating and localization at the hands of articulate and literate contemporaries, including not a few eyewitnesses. Also, archeology and physical anthropology, furnishing their evidence under so tightly controlled conditions, may act as fairly trustworthy handmaidens to "linguistic paleontology" (to use G. I. Ascoli's and W. Meyer-Lübke's favorite term). For these reasons numerous Romance linguists, to round out their training, have striven to acquire additional skills in ancillary disciplines and have cheerfully put these skills to good use in linguistic projection.

This proclivity toward an intricate argument, involving frequent and adroitly executed shifts from one discipline to another, in turn explains why most Romanists have tacitly avoided an austerely isolationist theoretical platform. Their policy, on the tactical and the strategic levels, has rather been interventionist (at times excessively so for their own good), that is, geared to the exploration, by free imaginative blends of all devices legitimate in identification, of the constant interaction between language and nonverbal culture. Hence a Romance linguist is more likely than not to deprecate any rash equation between linguistics and straight grammar, while acknowledging a flair for formulating grammatical relationships as a desirable part of one's professional equipment.

Lexical emphasis

Heightened alertness to concrete detail, viewed at close range in multidimensional projection, calls for sharpness of focus balanced by narrowness of scope. Applied to linguistic conditions and translated into the appropriate terminology, this kind of curiosity ordinarily signifies keener concern with the loosely split-up lexicon than with close-knit soundsystems or with fairly tight morphological scaffolding. In fact, Romance linguistics has lately perfected to an enviable degree lexicography (the art of cogently arraying lexical data in reference works of varying size), lexicology (stage-by-stage analysis of bundles of lexical trajectories), and etymology (inquiry into the inceptive phases of lexical evolutions), pouring out lavishly documented monographs on individual words of rich associative potentialities, striking cultural implications, or unusual areal configurations; on intricately ramified word families; on neatly delineated semantic clusters (including anatomic designations, kinship terms, and especially names of tools, containers, vehicles, buildings, and textiles examinable in the graphic *Wörter-und-Sachen* style). Other researches revolve around strings of secondary formations tied together by powerful morphological bonds, e.g., sharing a prefix, a suffix, or an "interfix", a compositional pattern, a characteristic distribution of sounds in "expressive" words. Regrettably, this praiseworthy sustained excellence on the lexical side has sometimes been gratuitously achieved at the painful cost of relative indifference to equally thought-arresting grammatical patterning.

Visual aspects of language

Like all linguists, Romance scholars recognize a flexible pattern of auditory symbolism as the primeval origin and continued foundation of all speech. Yet their special preoccupation with the lexicon, in particular

with semantic extensions and restrictions, has furthermore sharpened their awareness of visual problems in language. (Visual is here taken in the psychological or poetic sense of imagery, not in the pragmatic sense of written records or of any comparable artificial devices.)

At the present stage of scientific progress the student of imagery finds himself at a disadvantage, since he lacks apposite machinery or even an unassailable rule of thumb that would lend authority to his observations, whereas the auditory base of speech invites a dual set of precise descriptions: one on the articulatory and one on the acoustic level. But even impressionistic work, with its unavoidable margin of subjectivity, may be rewarding as long as its limitations (calling for further revision) are expressly recognized and as it is superadded to more rigorous dissections. Moreover, within the fabric of our culture this pictorial approach, for all its imprecision or even, paradoxically, on account of it, has acquired a certain inherent charm which attracts into the fold of linguistics not a few artistically sensitive and imaginative intellectuals who might feel discouraged by an accumulation of unmitigated severity.

Pictorial analysis can be of great usefulness for any investigation into the metaphoric extensions of a word's limited semantic ambit. Thus, in studying the names of the flail across language and dialect borders, one needs a statement that would set this tool apart from others displaying comparably sharp and suggestive contours, like the ax, the pickax, the shovel, the pitch fork, the saw, and the comb. The typical features of a European flail, reduced to its bare essentials, include a long slender bar (handle) at one end of which a stouter or shorter stick (swingle), occasionally curved or rounded, is so attached as to swing freely. Normally it serves to beat the grain out of the ear, but it may equally well qualify for separating beans from their pods, for handling flax, and for comparable subsidiary functions. There are many variables: the connection between the two sticks shows several degrees of elaborateness, the material out of which the sticks are carved is mostly, but not always, wood (for instance, in the medieval military weapon called flail the swingle was replaced by a metal ball or a piece set with spikes and the short handle was generally of metal). The irreducible elements that make up the pattern, then, are three: (1) difference in length between the two bars, ordinarily in favor of the handle; (2) irreversible distribution of functions between them; (3) provision for free swinging, yet solid attachment. This last-named condition explains such figurative uses in English as (obs.) *flail* 'swinging part, as a gate bar or the lever of a press'; (anat., surg.) *flail joint* 'joint showing abnormal mobility'; (coll.) *to flail about (one's arms*, etc.). One may similarly go about defining with utmost economy the basic design of a comb, to appreciate its use, in numerous languages, as a designation not only of certain toothed tools and adorn-

ments for separating, cleaning, and keeping well-groomed human hair
(primarily, the woman's hair), but also of a miscellany of characteristic-
ally shaped instruments adopted in traditional crafts and trades no less
than in modern industry for the processing of wool, flax, oakum, etc.,
for weaving fabrics and mats, and for embroidering. Moreover, the local
word for comb denotes a musical instrument (in classical Portuguese);
parts of the human or animal body ('crest of a cock' in English; 'pubes'
in Latin and Ibero-Romance); the top of a wave or a hill (in Germanic);
an aggregation of cells for honey (in English); several plants, some of
them expressly described as prickly (in Brazilian Portuguese), etc.

The geographic dimension and the diffusionist doctrine

The general propensity of Romance linguists toward concreteness, plus
their prominent representation among the pioneer dialect cartographers
and fieldworkers have sensitized most younger workers in their ranks
to the crucially important geographic factor in every ensemble of causes-
and-effects bearing on language. In their consciousness a given linguistic
form and its neatly pinpointed locus belong as intimately together as
do the numerator and the denominator of any vulgar fraction. Other
teams of linguists may have displayed a more impressive degree of
attention to such variables as oscillations on the social scale, the tempi
of speech, the intonational curves, the controlling phrasal environment
of words at issue; on the credit side of Romance scholarship one must
place progressive alertness to localization.
    This flair for static ordering of restricted or vast zones, in conjunction
with a vivid grasp of the subtle interlocking of historical events, has made
Romance dialect geographers experts in stratigraphy, centering their
attention on patterns of successive layers, and, indirectly, the staunchest
advocates — and most enthusiastic practitioners — of the diffusionist
doctrine outside the Boasian school. The major risk that one runs in
putting these ideas into practice lies in calculating on the scale of in-
creasing abstractness the precise degree beyond which any appeal to them
may become more of a liability than of an asset. The staking-out of
minor self-contained linguistic zones *(Sprachlandschaften)* bounded by
an approximate consensus of isoglosses is an unimpeachable procedure.
The identification of recurrent specific areal patterns in the linguistic
growth of a major territory (say, the pervasive aloofness of Gascon
vis-à-vis the remainder of Gallo-Romance or the coincidences, too fre-
quent and striking to be discounted as fortuitous, between Leonese and
Aragonese on either flank of Old Castilian) also deserves unqualified
endorsement. But Bàrtoli's attempt to advance one step further by
extracting, from the comparison of some such concrete situations, a set

of generally valid norms for the reconstruction of hidden sequences of events on the sole basis of resultant areal configurations ("Age-and-Area Hypothesis") has failed to outgrow the stage of a stimulating experiment.

Literary languages as objects of study

The earlier variety of anthropological linguistics, which crystallized at a moment when anthropologists were mainly engrossed by primitive, exotic societies lacking any sustained tradition of literacy, militantly emphasized not only the temporal priority of speech over script, but — less persuasively — also its supremacy in other respects, the chief argument being the customary omission from most conventional notations of such prosodic key features as pitch and stress (also of juncture). In some quarters this attitude of diffidence toward any kind of records coalesced with cultivated indifference toward the study of fine literature, possibly as a recoil from the excessive subjectivism in esthetic appreciation or in tacit protest against the glaring disparity in recognition which our society bestows on broadly literary as against stringently linguistic pursuits.

Romance linguists here stand apart almost en bloc: they cherish treating the spoken and the written on a par, delight in tracing their interactions (including the increasingly frequent surrender of speech habits to the pressure of spelling), and refuse to abjure their active interest in literary analysis, again along the axes of time and of arrangement. In fact, joint concern with spontaneous dialect speech and with stylized, sophisticated discourse, and purposefully developed deftness in examining their complicated interactions have become the hallmark of Romance scholarship at its most satisfying. Such specialists as choose to concentrate exclusively on the one or on the other unwittingly relegate their researches to some fringe of our domain.

There are numerous reasons for this idiosyncrasy. For one thing, the Romanist — unlike, say, the Latinist — witnesses no gradual spread of a single, fairly homogeneous city dialect over a widening expanse of territory, but rather protracted rivalry between clusters of cognate dialects vying for the privilege of serving the needs of a written standard, especially at the opening period of the vernacular literatures and with particular regard to the frequently conflicting preferences of authors, revisers, and copyists. With the possible exception of the Old Provençal troubadour lyric couched from the outset in a fairly undifferentiated idiom (a leveling of form that matches the exquisite conventionality of much of its content), the early Romance texts from France proper, Italy, and Spain all show a high incidence of regional features, and those transmitted through devious routes often display a confusingly erratic intermingling of such traits. Though medieval and modern dialect

literature, despite its spontaneous ring, uses a vehicle not entirely immune to inroads of convention, the distance separating unpremeditated utterances from polished written statements is here conspicuously short.

For another thing, in such complexly structured and tradition-ridden societies as those of the northwestern and central Mediterranean it would be naïve to reckon with the consistent preservation of parochial speech habits, transmitted from mouth to mouth, except in a few almost hermetically isolated nooks. All over the plains, in hilly terrain, along the coasts, and especially down the valleys of navigable rivers it is perfectly normal for trends of local and regional drift to have been disturbed by the infiltration not only of patches of neighboring dialect speech, but also of chunks of the prestige language (which, in the last analysis, merely represents the sublimation, through deliberate sifting, of just another humble rural dialect); to this formula add, for the earlier periods, the ever-present unweakening grip of Latin, especially in the ecclesiastic domain. Symptomatic of this ceaseless bidirectional oozing is the presence, by the hundreds, of original dialect words in the most selective standard languages: Tuscan, for example, is replete with words drawn from Lombard and other northern dialects, Spanish and Galician-Portuguese are, at least lexically, a classic illustration of communicating vessels, and the French vocabulary teems with patois words, despite early political centralization and aloofness to rusticity. By way of compensation, as it were, rural and partially rural dialect speech has absorbed a vast amount of "semilearned" features, often not immediately recognizable in their new disguises: combinations of sounds — typically, jarring diphthongs or unfamiliar medial consonant clusters —, garbled pretentious affixes, half-understood sesquipedalian words, syntactic constructions clumsily imitative of classical Latin, even accentual schemes and pitch contours. These linguistic tradingposts are ideal breedingplaces for folk etymology and hypercorrection.

Two final considerations. First, no coolheaded Romance linguist would deny the chronological priority and continued preëminence of the actual flow of speech, provided one makes due allowance for the fact that the written language, whether living or dead, may at any propitious moment have acted as a powerful force (a stimulant or a barrier) in the shaping of that speech and will in all likelihood continue to leave its impress on the colloquial medium at an accelerated rhythm. In not a few instances spelling has demonstrably deflected pronunciation from its predictable course (a fact gratuitously played down in some quarters), while the luxuriant growth of hyperurbanism reveals in what direction the pressure of social forces is most effectively at work. In modern western societies average speakers, for scientifically valid or indefensible reasons, are eager to attach to their pronunciation a cachet of respect-

ability, i.e., of a certain conformity to recognized spelling habits, and correspondingly to mould their grammar and vocabulary, as best they can, by standards officially encouraged or enforced. If linguists are sincere in confining themselves to the role of detached observers and analysts rather than of active participants, they should refrain scrupulously from either abetting or obstructing this controversial trend.

Second, the fully grown literary language, whatever trickling or torrential sources and tributaries may have fed it, tends to fall into a system, or subsystem, of its own, laying itself open to analytical inspection no less than does any representative corpus of elicited utterances. In some respects (nonobligatory features of lexicon and clausal architecture) this stylized language may display a greater abundance of resources or more delicately-graded patterning, bordering on the ornamental. As an intricate but ordered whole (if one discounts the rare occurrences of intentional obfuscation), it invites individuating study at the same levels — sounds, forms, constructions — as any adequate speech specimen and is available in various sizes, ranging from a single passage, stylistically uniform or split, via an extant text, fragmentary or complete, to the collected works of a given author, to a genre, or to the cross-section or even the sum total of writings attributable to a certain period.

Romance scholarship and the structural approach

Do these deeply rooted, in part immutable, traits of Romance linguistics create a barrier to the establishment of fruitful liaison with structuralism? Divorced from surrounding circumstances, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, the injection into Romance researches of a reasonable dosage of structuralistic thinking — bent on the redefinition of basic concepts, relativistic, and intent on subordinating the irrelevant to the relevant — would act as a wholesome corrective to any measure of lopsidedness and staleness that might otherwise develop and would thus produce an effect at once remedial and rejuvenating. Under adverse conditions an overflow of primary data and a plethora of uncoördinated studies bearing on them may constitute two focuses of acute danger; the reintroduction of a compelling hierarchy would, at least temporarily, tend to restore the balance. Historical grammar, in particular, might profit from some degree of tightening through integration of myriads of disconnected details not into a congeries of gross facts, but, after meticulous distillation, into elegantly designed chain reactions, such as have been proposed by economy-minded phonologists. The scrupulous, but excessively detailed dialect studies bearing the hallmark of Romance workmanship may profit from streamlining through diminishing resistance to the phonemic principle, refined through increased

attention to contrasts in the chain and in the system. Yet in those domains in which Romance materials happen to flow most copiously, e.g., the lexicon, one hesitates to apply structuralistic thinking except cautiously and, lest it cause more harm than good, without detriment to other viewpoints. Effects of analogy (associative interference), which, until one has learned how to handle raw statistical data with assurance, do not seem to fall into comparably clear-cut patterns, excite the Romance scholar not one whit less than does the establishment of schemas, while familiarity with geographic shifts doubles his awareness of temporarily unstable, oscillating systems. As a result of these cautioning experiences, he is not quite at ease in an environment where stringency and trenchancy of static classification alone are judged matters of overruling importance. It is not the essence of functional thinking traceable to Saussure that seems difficult to reconcile with the finest traditions of Romance research, but, on the one hand, strident demands for a new orthodoxy pressed by certain reformers, which clash with the ideal of elasticity and with the standards of tolerance cherished by most Romanists, and, on the other, the well-founded realization that structuralism at its most daring and successful has come to full fruition in descriptive inquiries into exotic languages, with whose unique conformation it seems impossible to cope intelligently in other terms, whereas in the Romance domain, given the peculiar slant of its data, structuralism at best is apt to play a powerful supporting rôle. The full implications of this briefly sketched suspicion would require a thorough discussion of the seldom admitted correlation and mutual conditioning between favored method and the material at hand.

Modern alternatives to formal analysis

It has been occasionally suggested that the inescapable alternative to standard structuralistic practice is utter chaos, a haphazard array of colorful odds and ends, a bric-à-brac shop. This description of the choices facing a beginner might be partially correct if it did not operate with a straw man. The conventional type of Romance linguist — a scholar versed in philology, old-style historical grammar, a conservative variety of dialect geography, and an etymology heavily mortgaged with conjectures — may have shied away from steeper altitudes of abstract reasoning and stopped short in his phonological pursuits at the precise unambitious point where they served to localize a text, to circumscribe a dialect, or to identify a word-origin; measured by modern demands, his semantics and esthetics may appear homespun. Yet a program of studies conducive to this meaningful blend of diverse interests and techniques, with a perceptibly heavier emphasis on the unassuming

establishment of sober facts, or approximations to facts, than on pre-
tentious experiments with untried explicative or classificatory methods,
has distinct virtues of its own, and future generations may some day
declare our hasty retreat from this program to have had deleterious
consequences.

Richer in potential repercussions is the fact that Romance scholars
(and others in their company) have tried out significant patterns of
ordering fairly removed from the prime concerns of organized structural-
ism. The most exacting and promising among such experimental group-
ings has been the attempt to present sound shifts of a particular language
not in a routine enumeration based on articulatory conditions (or, worse,
on the alphabetical order), but in their presumable chronological succes-
sion. In broad outline, Meyer-Lübke essayed this tour de force for proto-
French as early as 1908; a quarter of a century later, E. Richter
embroidered on his master stroke. The elaboration of such relative chrono-
logies may be extended to inflection, derivation, syntax, etc., and seems
perfectly compatible with research in diachronic phonology. Other
scholars have endeavored to segregate certain sound shifts as particularly
illustrative of a unique nonlinguistic sequence of events, so as to weave
them into the fabric of specific demographic processes and cultural
developments. This Menéndez Pidal strove to accomplish for the period
of the early *reconquista* (eighth to eleventh century) in the bulk of his
masterly treatise *Orígenes del español* (1926); W. von Wartburg matched
his effort for the prehistory of French, Provençal, and Italian, in a
proliferation of books and monographs issuing from his famous pro-
grammatic article (1936) on the fragmentation of Late Latin. The
theoretical justification for this preferential treatment of assorted features,
to the neglect of others, rebellious to the favored pattern, a treatment
without explicit vindication of the criteria of selection, remains to be
provided.

A third cogent marshaling of disjointed facts, eminently characteristic
of the historical method, would be to arrange them roughly in the order
of decreasing transparency. Thus, an etymologist grappling with thou-
sands of equations of unequal complexity may procede from relatively
simple cases involving no (or just a few easily eliminable) unknowns to
progressively intricate tangles, ending up with a residue of issues in-
extricably confused or wholly recalcitrant. (He may at least toy with
this grading at the operational stage, if not in the definitive product
which, like most dictionaries, should be alphabetical to satisfy the lay-
man's need for maximum speed in casual consultation.) This rational
arrangement presupposes, on the worker's part, the ability to denude
each situation of its frills, reducing it to an algebraic formula, and a
concurrent willingness to deëmphasize, without ruling them out entirely,

the ingredients of intuition and of chance that have undeniably presided over some etymological discoveries.

Finally, to reconcile the various causes of linguistic change so far adduced (phonological drift, which may run afoul of inertia or of morphological obstacles; a state of bilingualism created by ethnic sub-, ad-, and superstrata, by intermarriages, by economic inducements, by religious habits, or by intellectual aspirations; diffusion; social upheavals; unconscious internal economy revolving around minimum effort, evenness of distribution, and a desirable degree of clarity; "expressivity", sensuous delight in certain well-developed features; deliberate search for reputed betterment), one may attempt to excogitate some system of possible alliances, concomitancies, mergers, or mutual hindrances and exclusions between these discrete forces.

These are just a few possibilities that can, at first glance, be successfully tried out within a limited subfield; a broader frame would invite other, more tempting experiments, such as the audacious survey of well-established categories across language families, a type of monograph launched by Humboldt, or the discovery, delimitation, and labeling of new categories, either static (witness É. Benveniste's newly identified "delocutive verbs") or dynamic (such as E. Schwyzer's overstated "hypercharacterization" or B. Migliorini's neatly delimited "synonymic radiation").

CHARACTERISTICS TRACEABLE TO THE STAGE OF THE DISCIPLINE

Transition from learning to science

The absolute age of a semiautonomous discipline and the stage that it has currently reached in its development are matters of great moment in any inventory of its salient features. There is no denying that Romance linguistics has irreversibly outgrown its adolescence. As a fully developed discipline, conscious of its topical independence and later also of its methodological originality, it is at least 130 years old. Even certain ingredients of markedly older Renaissance scholarship can hardly be brushed aside as prescientific, inasmuch as traditional linguistic "learning" and modern linguistic "science" have failed to drift apart from each other with anything like the same speed as, say, alchemy and chemistry. (Even some of the etymological lore of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, if adroitly winnowed by discriminating minds, continues to be grist to our mills, and for the external history of pronunciation we still rely heavily, if with reluctance, on the quaintly phrased statements of the old normative grammarians, foreign language teachers, and missionaries.)

Cycles of emphasis

Even if one restricts his observation to the probings of indisputably solid science, certain recurrent cycles of emphasis become discernible. Thus rough grammatical sketches, diachronically slanted, became available for most Romance languages under the Neo-grammarians and their immediate followers in an atmosphere of austere isolationism and un-questioning dogmatism not very different from the atmosphere prevailing until all too recently among all too many straight descriptivists. After the richest yield of this method had become exhausted, the pendulum began swinging in the opposite direction, when the talented generation of Gauchat, Jaberg, and Jud, sated with schematization which at best had merely accounted for a privileged portion of the total stock of data, started exploring with great alacrity those attractive problems of erratic growth that had slipped through the wide meshes of the Neo-grammarians.

This new trend, at least among the level-headed, did not entail the abandonment of phonetic correspondences (though their magic glitter had become tarnished) or the neglect of the edifice of historical grammar built on this foundation. But it implied diversion of the focus of attention toward other goals: word biographies replete with cultural content, welters of dialectal cross-currents, fireworks set in motion by homonymic clashes, and lexical masquerades unleashed by folk etymology became the staple food of the most imaginative Romanists. Among the sound changes examined at rare intervals, most were of an abnormal nature; they included either broad, tendential, recurrent transmutations (meta-thesis, haplology, assimilation, dissimilation, echoing of nasal resonance; in short, Ascoli's "accidenti generali"), reaching athwart such basic shifts as are sharply limited, by definition, in space and time; or they were confined to the language of the educated and the gifted and spiced by some manner of cultural piquancy, i.e., again cutting across the major drift. The new watchword was the reconstruction of the unique set of circumstances, not a few of them extraneous to linguistics proper, that govern the trajectory of each separate word.

This vigorous reaction to schematization, aside from filling in countless factual gaps, tended to place linguistic research in another academic (and marginally even artistic) context; it made itself felt not in Romance quarters alone, but nowhere did its impact produce a more powerful jolt. Still later, abstractionism became again the irresistible fashion in general linguistics, geared by definition to ceaseless search for constants, even universals, and, in the New World, concerned primarily with skeletal sketches of unexplored indigenous languages. At this point the smaller pendulum in the restricted Romance field was temporarily delayed, failing to swing back into its initial position; the retardative

force was, of course, the special commitment of this team of workers to the ideals of concreteness, plasticity, and individualism.

An inherent affinity between the Neo-grammatical and the (American-style) descriptive approach explains the curious paradox that to the Romance scholar, steeped exclusively in the tradition of his subdiscipline, some elements of the most advanced speech analysis (e.g., the schematization, the evasion or postponement of references to meaning, the emphatic divorce from other cultural analyses) may smack of reaction, insofar as they remind him of premature generalizations in Neo-grammatical practice, i.e., of errors which he was cautioned to avoid or trained to correct. Conversely the shortsighted avant-garde descriptivist is not unlikely to deride the present-day Romanist for being behind the times in clinging so tenaciously to minute concrete details. By the same token, half a century from now students of exotic languages (by then, let us hope, no longer in critical need of provisional sketches) may very well, in their predictable anxiety to cover each "skeleton" with flesh and skin, fall back, perhaps unknowingly, on many assumptions and techniques that now hold sway in the Romance camp.

Couched in more general terms: aside from its pivotal theoretical postulate the unvarnished Neo-grammatical position (or some of its modern derivatives) need not be regarded as something absolutely right or wrong, but rather as a method which at fairly early stages of a typical inquiry is apt to yield optimal results. Beyond that stage, once the requisite sound correspondences have been set up, the usefulness of the method diminishes rapidly, since such painstaking operations, for instance, as must be brought to bear on the hard core of refractory etymologies demand a program of research at the opposite pole of isolationism, presupposing close integration with kindred disciplines, if attainable without loss of identity. Granted that this cyclic argument has any merit, then a tolerant (though by no means lax) attitude of relativism, which for decades has been the stock-in-trade of any enlightened anthropologist and linguist analyzing the raw data of a culture not his own, however aberrant, should at long last be extended to the serene appraisal of heterodox linguistic doctrines.

Degree of specialization

The age of a subdiscipline carries with it one peculiarity which some may deem an asset and others, a liability: the tendency, on the part of each successive generation, to examine under a more powerful microscope a commensurately smaller sliver of material. The reason for this temptation is obvious. As a rule, the pioneers have no qualms about surveying, as best they can, a vast slice of territory, at the risk of a high quota of

errors. Their successors, on the average more scrupulous but less daring, set about to eradicate these flaws by allowing themselves more leisure to examine a smaller piece from all possible angles. An ambitious generation of workers will always succeed in weeding out a crop of inaccuracies, oversimplifications, and plain slips in the research of their immediate predecessors by concentrating on more narrowly staked-out assignments.

But such victories may turn Pyrrhic through the concurrent loss of perspective and of evenly spread competence in the broader field. By cutting up a language into countless subdialects and analyzing each to the limit of one's patience one merely succeeds in scratching a surface with ever greater effectiveness. Some of the truly important problems plaguing a historically-minded linguist do not even acquire shape except through reference to closely and even distantly related languages. And yet, pathetically, wide-ranging comparatism has been on the decline. The full magnitude of this danger of excessive shrinkage has begun to dawn upon us, but no infallible means has yet been devised for underpinning the entire discipline without disrupting the flow of useful small-scale operations.

Analysis of facts and analysis of opinions

Another peculiarity — which again may constitute an advantage or a drawback — flowing from the respectable age of Romance linguistics is the overgrowth of earlier pronouncements on many crucial issues. In extreme cases (for instance, to etymologize certain words that have exercised or merely titillated the imagination of generations of conjecturers, such as Fr. *aller*), up to twenty or even thirty irreconcilably different hypotheses have been advanced over the years. Points of syntax prominently represented in practical language teaching, such as the use of the subjunctive in French, have been mercilessly labored, for the most part by unqualified analysts.

To what extent should a modern scholar, before or after frontally attacking a chosen problem, attempt to disentangle this complicated skein of previous opinions? No entirely satisfactory answer to this ever-present question has been offered in the past or seems to be forthcoming. Some escapists from bibliography, infatuated with the idea of a clean slate, altogether disregard the toiling of their predecessors. Other scholars apologetically relegate the digest of earlier researches to some kind of supplement or annotated bibliography (which a last-minute decision may then prompt them to omit). Still others, in an effort to draw a line somewhere, confine their curiosity to a limited span of time, starting from, say, the threshold of the twentieth century or from the publication date of some revolutionary book. A minority may decide on the selective

coverage of a long period, using as the prime criteria of choice the originality, accessibility, temporary influence, or continued relevance of pertinent statements. A very few are likely to aim at exhaustiveness, and among these an occasional virtuoso may present the expected meandrous account with such zest and incisiveness as to afford fresh insight into turning-points in the history of linguistic science. From case to case, considerations of expediency and economy may dictate the most opportune course of action. Generally speaking, a subfield like Romance is not a suitable maneuvering terrain for scholars emotionally reluctant to examine with patience, sympathy, and humility the gropings of their elders.

THE MATRIX OF NATIONAL CULTURES

The remaining determinants need not detain us long. A particular national culture fostering a line of inquiry on a grandiose scale inevitably leaves its impress on nomenclature, tone of phrasing, and even slant of analysis. During its critical growing years Romance linguistics was preponderantly under the tutelage of Central European scholarship, entrenched far beyond the boundaries of the German-speaking countries proper. This style of learning displays a peculiar cleavage of accumulated knowledge — especially at the standard-setting level of the Academies — into a "physical" and a "spiritual" realm, the latter roughly coincident with the Humanities (minus their concern with pedagogy and the arts), to the virtual exclusion, especially at the outset, of some such stretch of middleground as is suggested by the social sciences. Without hesitation linguistics, initially embedded in philology, was assigned to the domain of the flourishing *Geisteswissenschaften* and so tailored and weighted as to fit its surroundings with a minimum of rough edges.

For a while this classic design was indiscriminately imitated in other countries, from St. Petersburg to Chicago and Santiago de Chile, even though the academic edifice of some was quite differently designed, until it became clear that an immediate transfer of isolated pursuits of knowledge from one citadel of learning to another, reflecting divergent tastes and dissimilar aims, was impracticable, at least in fluid disciplines lending themselves to multiple classification. This discovery came as a shock and has ever since provoked considerable and, all told, unnecessary irritation, inasmuch as a few workers hypersensitive to differences in national taste and regional traditions have magnified out of all reasonable proportion the importance of clashing integuments, oblivious of the incomparably more significant common pith. The smoothest way of producing within a locally underdeveloped subfield a style of research

that harmonizes with the broader trends of a self-conscious national culture, instead of violently impinging on them (and grating on some participants' nerves), is to channel unobtrusively as much talent as possible in that neglected direction. The prompt acquisition of apposite styling will then presumably take care of itself.

Outside Central Europe there crystallized some minor styles, in part ephemeral and hardly qualifying for exportation. In his memorable essay on "The Spaniards in History", Menéndez Pidal, musing on Spain's destiny, remarked that his country was apparently foredoomed to regale the world with the late, exquisitely mellow fruits of cultural attitudes and endeavors elsewhere long extinct. It certainly is true that the recipe for this century's Spanish linguistics, a few drops of which spilled over into Latin America, represents a blend of studies in folklore, literature (down to Gongorism), straight history, and linguistics proper that calls to mind the Germany of Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, propelled by philological curiosity. Peculiar to romantic Germany and to neo-romantic Spain alike is further the close and, on the whole, gratifying liaison between current creative literature and organized research in philology and linguistics, a spontaneous harmony comparable to that which exists between deep undercurrents of modern American civilization and the fine flowering of professional anthropological inquiries.

The Italian scene is quite different. The character of linguistics has there been cosmopolitan and polygot, its ambit encompassing with undiminished intensity Latin and Greek, but rarely extending beyond the ancient and modern Near East, in accord with Italy's severely limited commitments to, and investments in, overseas territories (aside from immigration). Two facts give extra touches of authenticity to that country's native school of Romance linguistics. First, knowledge of Latin (as a member of the Indo-European family), of the "Mediterranean substratum", and of the neo-Latin, i.e., Romance, languages is typically imparted by the same chair of *glottologia*, a state of affairs maintaining a vital cross-connection severed or curtailed elsewhere. Second, dialectology, long fostered by political conditions and to no appreciable extent thwarted by the late unification, until very recently here enjoyed almost the same prestige as the study of the literary language.

The inclusion of a given language in a nation's collegiate curriculum may act as a stimulant or as a deterrent to its liberal utilization in advanced linguistic inquiry. The former possibility undoubtedly points to a healthy climate; the alternative, to some conflict of loyalties, some exaggerated fascination for the unknown, or some morbid revulsion against the known mistaken for the stale and banal. Many hope that the almost complete divorce of advanced linguistic investigation not only from Latin and French, less thoroughly explored than the voice of

rationalized indifference avers, but also from Spanish and Portuguese, which boast enormous stretches of uncharted territory, will not harden into an unremovable characteristic of progressive British and American scholarship, otherwise so elastic and versatile.

THE IMPACT OF POWERFUL PERSONALITIES

As the final component, whether or not one inclines to consider it an imponderable, it is fitting to mention the impact of magnetic personalities. Diez, Schuchardt, Ascoli, Cuervo, Meyer-Lübke, Leite de Vasconcelos, Gilliéron, Menéndez Pidal, Bally, Jaberg, and Jud are some of the luminaries in the ranks of Romance linguists who have each opened up new vistas, set or raised standards, and for decades left the stamp of their private and public performance on a wealth of significant output. On the debit side of the ledger let us readily admit that among these splendid thinkers, writers, and teachers only very few have cultivated in more than casual fashion either languages not included in, or bordering upon, the Romance domain (Ascoli) or linguistic theory for its own sake (Bally); the incomparable Schuchardt, dynamically curious along both lines, represents the great exception. In this single respect of deplorable self-sufficiency the logbook of Romanists has lately been in less than satisfactory shape, particularly if one wistfully contrasts the glorious elasticity and ability for forceful synthesis of a Jespersen, a Troubetzkoy, or a Sapir; here alone they may do well to chart their future course with a livelier spark of imagination.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ROMANCE SCHOLARSHIP TO LINGUISTICS

The distinctive features of Romance linguistics as here projected from four vantage points are by no means immutable. Very opportunely they contain, caught in an attractive balance, both variables and near-invariables, thus offering the dual guarantee of flexibility and continuity. Easily the most precious gifts that Romance scholarship has so far tendered to general linguistics include an almost oversubtle approach to dialect geography, a firm grasp of the osmosis between literary languages and the corresponding gamuts of vernaculars, and a vast reservoir of practice in etymology, with a record of meticulous, zestfully conducted monographic researches not yet welded into a single thoroughly integrated doctrine. At this critical point Romance linguistics happens to represent a highly atypical subdiscipline. But is typicality a measure of inherent value? And may not a closer rapprochement with general

linguistics be smoothly achieved through mutual concessions? Thus far Romance linguists have handled with astonishing assurance slivers of concrete, unique, historically controllable material, at the crossroads of language and nonverbal culture and at the opposite pole from that of sweeping schematization. No general theory of language nor, indeed, any history of linguistic science is complete that fails to treat understandingly such a privileged store of experiences and experiments.

The recognition that one major subdiscipline may, under favorable conditions, quite legitimately develop certain unmistakable characteristics of its own carries with it the significant implication that linguistic research at its most engaging and rewarding need not, indeed should not, be conceived as monolithic. There must, of course, exist a hard core of agreement on essentials of purpose, assumptions, and techniques; it may be useful, in times of stress, to set limits to the margin of tolerable individual departures from the common standard. But the leeway left to individual taste and initiative and to the preferences of well-defined groups must be more than minimal and should take into account such factors as peculiarities of material, stage of research, academic traditions, and personal leanings. A community of linguists at its best calls to mind a fine symphony orchestra in which, enviably enough, each instrument and each group of instruments retains a perceptible measure of individuality while contributing its share to the tonal effect of the whole.

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Rebecca Posner

POSITIVISM IN HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS*

Hall's book is obviously meant to be provocative,[1] so he will forgive me for not allowing my respect for his distinguished scholarship to hold me back from the fray, following the "no holds barred" rules he has laid down.

His pugnacity leads me to spring to the defence of theorists whom I would normally oppose, perhaps only because many of them are now dead or aging, hence not, in my opinion, capable of doing the harm H. associated with them.

For H., apparently, the present ills of Romance linguistics spring from the "idealist" approach, and his unsparing attack on some of its lumi-naries is waged with righteous indignation and missionary zeal. His characterization of their contribution to the discipline reminds me of what we, as undergraduates in the 'fifties, lampooned as the "Poor Old..." attitude to the history of philosophy ("Poor Old Plato thought ideas were things, Poor Old Berkeley thought things were ideas", etc.). H.'s catalogue of commiseration would go thus: "Poor Old Croce didn't know syllables are chest-pulses",[2] "Poor Old Vossler never outgrew the

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[1] Robert A. Hall, Jr., *Idealism in Romance Linguistics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Uni-versity Press, 1963) ix, 109. Previous reviewers have also been provoked to varying degrees — ranging from J. Cremona's mild "less than fair" (*JL* I [1965] to K. Togeby's biting "a better title would have been that of Zola: *Mes Haines*" (*IJAL* XXX [1964]). Cf. also Heger in *ZRPh* LXXX (1964) and G. Gougenheim in *BSLP* LIX (1964).
[2] In fact, the syllable is probably not completely identical with a chest-pulse: cf. A. Rosetti, *Théorie de la syllabe* (The Hague, 1959). H. himself bites his tongue half-way through his condemnation: "It has been shown, for example, that syllables, far from

question-begging of a ten-year-old", etc. Does he not dread the youthful arrogance that might continue: "Poor Old Hall believes the Proto-language existed, and, worse still, doesn't realize that the aim of linguistics is to construct a model of the language acquisition process"? Fear that our weapons may be turned on ourselves should make us cautious to ascribe excessive naïveté and stupidity to our predecessors: If we DO see further, it may be only because we are Voltairian dwarfs on giants' shoulders.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ROMANCE LINGUISTICS?[3] According to H., "from a methodological point of view, Romance linguistics has, taken as a whole, fallen badly behind other fields in the development and adaptation of modern techniques of analysis and statement" (3). It is undoubtedly true that descriptive techniques and formal statements are little used in Romance linguistics, partly because historical questions most occupy the minds of its practitioners. But H. himself is here concerned not with linguistic description, but with history. His definition of the task of Romance historical linguistics is moreover far from "modern":

There should be going on in the Romance field — should have been ever since Meyer-Lübke's time — an intense activity in the reconstruction of Proto-Romance and intermediate proto-stages, and in the testing and refining of already proven procedures (19).[4]

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being imaginary, have a real existence, and SOME SCHOLARS consider them directly related to the chest pulses with which air is expelled from the lungs in speaking" (34; emphasis mine).

[3] Risking the accusation of sycophancy, I must refer to the brilliant survey, by the editor of *Romance Philology*, of "what's right with Romance linguistics": Y. Malkiel, "Distinctive Traits of Romance Linguistics" in D. Hymes, ed., *Language in Culture and Society* (N.Y. — Evanston — London, 1964). I should also add that my own ideas on historical linguistics owe so much to Malkiel's numerous studies that I am unable to tell when I am plagiarising (and perhaps distorting) his ideas. Two recent general surveys from his pen should perhaps be given particular mention here: "Each Word has a History of its Own" — a paper for Symposium 25 of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, on "Revolution vs. Continuity in the Study of Language" (August 1964), to appear in *Glossa*; and "Some Diachronic Implications of Fluid Speech Communities" in *Amer. Anthr.* LXVI (1964), 177-186.

[4] Strangely enough, the only three recent text-books in the field, by Vidos, Tagliavini, and Elcock, meet with H.'s approval (85). The other recent comparative books can surely not be labeled "anti-regularist": R. Dardel's *Parfait fort...*(1959), Lausberg's *Romanische Sprachwissenschaft* (1956-62), and my own *Consonantal Dissimilation...* (1961). Perhaps H.'s anxiety is due to the paucity of comparative writings: Historical questions are more often treated within the framework of one language than by comparison. This state of affairs MIGHT be due to idealists' insistence on cultural factors and linguistic creativity, though it is more likely to spring from the nature of the material available.

That this task is not being fulfilled is set at the doors of a data-obsessed Schuchardt and of the "idealists" whose rejection of the Neo-grammarian discovery of certain regularities in sound-change has led, we read, to the predominance of an anti-scientific trend in the field.

The very existence of masses of data in our field creates special problems, as Malkiel has pointed out. I should agree that too many of our colleagues are engaged in a micro-study in which the wood is obscured by the trees. On the other hand, generalizations that do not slalom skilfully through the trees of the data may have to be disqualified from the contest; the more data produced by micro-dialectology, the more difficult, and worthwhile, the game of macrolinguistics becomes.

However, H.'s side-swipe at the "dead hand of Schuchardtian attitudes" is only a preparation for his onslaught on the idealists'

emphasis on the *a priori* assumption of "spiritual" factors as prime determinants of linguistic activity and change, and on the belief that any "mechanical" factors are too "base" to be admitted as exerting a major influence on human language (20).

H. has my sympathy as he takes refuge in sarcasm from the persistent misunderstanding and neglect of "modern" (READ "our favoured") methods, a comportment rather typical of Italian linguistic circles. But is it really their "obscurantist attitude", prone to "facile teleological explanations", that has led to the evident decline of Romance comparativism? Trained as I was myself in the old-fashioned "sound-law" school, and observing how the sterility of the regularist approach nipped the interest of many a budding Romanist, I can fully understand the reaction among students which led to a "humanist" approach, with its tempting promise to relate linguistic fact to individual creativity and cultural community.

Boredom with a technique that has already yielded the easy answers might also have helped the pendulum to swing: The excitement of discovery had given way to fat tomes of "tables of sound-change" to be learned by heart. The plodding job of "testing and refining...already proven procedures" holds little attraction when whole areas of language remain unexplored.

THE PRESENT TASK FOR ROMANCE LINGUISTICS. Rather than merely polish the tools left us by our seniors, modern Romance linguists had better re-examine some of the questions to which only botched answers were previously given: Any text-book will yield dozens of problems that remain unsolved beneath the slick, implausible answer offered by the regularist and reconstruction techniques.[5] In reworking such problems

[5]   May I cite, as examples, my own attempt to explain the imperfect *-ia* ending of many Romance dialects as traditionally relegated to an insufficiently explained Proto-

we hope to be establishing a methodology applicable to language families less well endowed with historical records than is Romance. While refusing to simplify an inherently complex set of variables we should hope to succeed in unraveling the evolutionary strands and to formulate hypotheses about what kinds of linguistic change are connected with what kinds of other factors — social, political, psychological, or cultural.

WHICH SCIENTIFIC METHOD? H., like all of us, is agin' the sin of anti-science: For him, it seems, the devil takes the shape of refusal to make general statements.[6] How these general statements are to be formulated is not clear, however. Is the scientific method relevant to linguistics that of natural history seeking "regularities in given forms", or that of mathemato-physics which "seeks the form of given regularities"?[7] H. firmly equates our field with physics (56), declaring moreover that "a statement of phonetic change ("phonetic law") may be deduced from one or two examples and depends on no large number of attestations for its validity".[8] Sound-laws are, then, not hocus-pocus generalizations from an adequate

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Romance reconstruction *-EA (*TPS* 1961) and Malkiel's recent subsumption under one complex and dynamic model of the different developments of the CL-, FL-, PL-... clusters in Ibero-Romance (*ArL* XV and XVI [1963-64])?

[6] Though H. attacks Bàrtoli for making too facile general statements, insufficiently based on data: Bàrtoli presumably thought that he was himself scientific.

[7] Cf. S. Toulmin, *The Philosophy of Science* (London, 1953), 53.

[8] As one example of how formulation of laws based on a meager amount of data might affect our explanation of an apparently irregular form, I can cite Fr. *loup* < LŬPU, which breaks the sound-law: Cl.L. ŭ > Proto-W.Romance *o > (when tonic and free) Early OFr. *ou* > Later OFr. *eu* > ModFr. [ø] / [œ] (distribution phonologically determined). The /u/ that appears instead of regular [ø] is often unconvincingly attributed to the analogical influence of fem. *louve* < LŬPA where the development VL *o > Fr. [u] is held to be regular in a pre-labial-consonant environment. The number of examples supporting this last "sound-law" is small: *louve* < LŬPA, *louvre* < LUPARA, *estuble* (alongside *éteule*) < *STŬPŬLA, *double* < DŬPLU, *douve* < *DŌGA (cf. M. K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French*₂ [Manchester, 1952], 185; another illustration, omitted, is *couve* < CŬBAT). These six examples include one place-name (notoriously subject to capricious treatment) and two forms reconstructed (hence unsuitable as data for inference of sound-laws for fear of circularity of argument). If we were not to hold fast to the Proto-W.Rom. reconstruction *o, we might be tempted to reinterpret the French data with the following law: Cl.L. ŭ > (when tonic and free) Fr. [u]. This would allow us to include in our relevant data such examples as *coude* < CŬBITU, *doute* < DŬBITU (traditionally explained by complex chronological ordering of rules) as well as *loup* < LŬPU. We should still be left with a few "exceptions" of course: *gueule* < GŬLA, *deux* < DŬOS, *couleuvre* < COLŬBRA, *jeune* < JŬVENE (but cf. OFr. *coluevre, juesne,* OSp. *culuebra,* suggesting Proto *ŏ* not *ŭ*; dial. *leu* < LŬPU; yet these are no more difficult to explain — and are less numerous — than the original "exceptions". For a fuller discussion of some of these data, with a new attempt to reformulate sound-laws, see C. A. Robson, "Literary Language, Spoken Dialect, and the Phonological Problem in Old French" in *TPS* (1955), 167 n. 1.

sample of data, but formulations of God's-truth regularities. While I am a "God's truth" supporter to a great enough extent to believe that the descriptive linguist's task is to formulate the regularities (i.e., the structure) inherent in the native speakers' "competence" (*la langue*, to use more old-fashioned terminology), I wonder whether sound-laws are more than *post hoc* generalizations from the data. Many questions relevant in historical linguistics may be quantitative rather than qualitative; one of the crucially important would then be: On the basis of how many data, and of what kind of data, should generalizations be made?

THE "REGULARIST" METHOD. The data traditionally considered are delimited in several unrelated ways: Lexical items subject to "regular" change must exist in a geographically and chronologically defined dialect and must be exempted from diverse influences, whether physiological — such as assimilation, dissimilation, etc. — or socio-psychological — such as analogy, folk-etymology, sound symbolism, learned transmission, and the like. Where the data examined include lexical items which are not conceivably so influenced, yet fail to exhibit regular changes, these lexical items are often presumed to have entered the dialect after the regular changes had ceased to operate — borrowings, new formations. As a last resort one may presume that the irregular lexical item was in some way aberrant BEFORE the regular changes began (e.g., where, as in French, CAUSA and CAUDA show different developments of CAU-, the difference is assumed to have originated in the forms subject to certain regular changes — thus, *chose* < CAUSA, *queue* < CŌDA). The effect of this last-resort gambit often amounts to brushing the difficult problems under the carpet of pre-history (as when Sp. *-ia* is "explained" as proceeding regularly from unaccounted-for and unattested Proto-Rom. *-EA).

The whole process of sifting out the data is rather like peeling an onion — we take away layer after layer (analogical changes, sound-substitution changes, borrowing, learned forms, etc.) only to discover, often, that the core of "regular" forms is minimally small. What, we may wonder, prevents us from advancing further — from peeling away the core, too? This is, in fact, what Schuchardt, Gilliéron, and their like were attempting to do in their refusal to play the regularist game according to the rules. However much they criticised the game, though, they were playing a version of it. This is perhaps the truth behind "the frequent observation that, although many scholars have opposed the principle of regular sound-change in theory, all competent workers have followed it in practice" (16).

Exactly when the rules of our regularist game allow us to pop through the various permissible loopholes is not generally agreed: Presumably the more rigorously we play the game, the less we wish to use the loopholes and the more data we reserve for consideration in formulating our

sound-laws; normally we require some independent QUALITATIVE evidence to support our classification of "exceptions" — like citing a source for postulated borrowings. But when we reach the last stage of delimiting our data, the core of our onion, we must surely be influenced by QUAN-TITATIVE considerations as well; whether we decide to regard the phonemic shape of our residual lexical items as proceeding from "regular" change or as aberrant in some way must depend on the relative number of items in each category, as well as the degree to which we can fit our sound-laws into a general schema, taking into account both symmetry and plausibility. It may be true, as H. states, that the absolute number of examples from which we deduce our sound-law is one or two, but the relevant information here is the RELATIVE number of examples, as well as how much reliance we can place on our preliminary sifting of the data.

Thus the rejection of the Spanish imperfect ending -*ia* as a "regular" development depends on our formulation of a law based on the majority of examples in duly sifted data, Cl. Lat. V$_B$V > VL *-β- > Sp. -β-. Moreover, we postulate the early "irregular" change Cl. Lat. -ĒBA > VL *-EA (> Sp. -*ia*) in order to incorporate into the same schema data found in, say, French (Mod. Fr. [ɛ] < OFr. -*eie* < *-EA) and Spanish (-*ia* < *-*ea* < *-EA). Such neat formulation and equations might, however, raise as many problems as they solve — in this case, what conditioned the irregular change from -ĒBA to *-EA? Once again we can sift this example out of the data on which we base our V$_B$V > *-β- law by resorting to "dissimilation" and "analogy" as perturbing influences in the transition from Cl. Lat. to VL, or by claiming that *-EA was not a descendant (in a straight line) of -ĒBA, but some dialectal or archaic replacement.

If we wish to avoid shoving our problems further and further back into the past, we might find it fruitful to approach the question from different premises, and to cast a fresh look on the "unpeeled onion". Our unsifted VL data contain a significantly large number of items in which Cl. Lat. V$_B$V yields zero: Instead of pigeon-holing these rebellious pieces into our "exception" categories we could be tempted to formulate an alternative law, involving a POTENTIALLY "regular" change which was arrested before it could affect the whole of the vocabulary, but which left traces in susceptible items (where, for instance, analogical, dissimilatory, or assimilatory influence helped it on its way).

The advantage of the approach I have just delineated is that it enables us to incorporate into a single model linguistic changes which are traditionally considered as springing from different motivations.[9] The

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[9]   The traditional hypothesis has the effect of setting aside certain facts — "regular" sound changes — as given, and of focusing attention on exceptions, which are explained away in various ways. A more satisfactory model embraces both the "regular"

issues that it raises are these: What are the causes of the changes formul-
ated in our laws? And why were some of these potentially regular changes
arrested before they were completed? The first question is one inevitably
raised, though seldom answered, by the regularist hypothesis: I should
agree with H. (87) that the answer is to be sought in the possibility of
"pattern pressure".[10] The second question is to be answered, I think,
by reference to extra-linguistic factors — social influences, geographical
distribution, etc.

The postulation of sound-laws has always of necessity implied a
beginning and an end to their effects. The volcanic eruption thrown up
by structural pressures would occur at the *terminus a quo*, while the
terminus ad quem would be marked either by the complete submersion
of the lava, or by the petering-out of the eruption. Hollows in the ground
would be filled early by the lava, but some granite-like protuberances
(such as learned forms) might resist to the end. Perhaps too in some
social circumstances a wall of conservatism, or a force of reaction, could
succeed in stemming the flow of the lava, or even in forcing it into
retreat.

It is unlikely that the natural-force analogy would appeal to H., who
appears to view the whole process as more machine-like: Perhaps he
would condemn the approach I have outlined as operating "with un-
defined and undefinable tendencies instead of a clear-cut regularist
assumption" (89).[11] H. may also quarrel with my suggestion that the

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and the "sporadic" changes as similar in action, though with different end-products.
The items displaying sporadic change may either show an unfulfilled "regular" change
or be the residue left after a "regular" change has petered out. The model could go
further by capturing the interaction of the different levels in linguistic change. Thus,
phonemic merger might be connected with lexical losses which reduce the "functional
load" of a phonemic distinction (cf. on a related topic, Y. Malkiel, "Économie phono-
logique et perte lexicale" in *Mél. Delbouille* [Gembloux, 1964], I, 409-416); phonemic
split, with the entry into the language of lexical items as a result of language contact.
The success of any phonemic or lexical change might be influenced by the morpho-
logical structures of the language, analogical change or conservation being a key factor.
The very complexity of such a model makes it more likely to approach the truth than
the straightforward regularist model. — As of this writing, I have not yet seen Malkiel's
forthcoming papers "Multiple versus Simple Causation in Linguistic Change" (to
appear in the new Testimonial Volume for Roman Jakobson) and "Linguistics as a
Genetic Science" (to appear in the Bernard Bloch Memorial Issue of *Lg.*), which,
I understand, happen to be slanted in much the same direction as this section of the
present review article.
[10]   I hardly need mention here our debt to A. Martinet's exploration of this possi-
bility in his *Économie des changements phonétiques* (Berne, 1955).
[11]   The main advantage of "clear-cut" assumptions, in my view, is that they allow the
"ordering" of sound-laws; on this point see, e.g., M. Halle, "Phonology in Generative
Grammar", *Wd.* XVIII (1962), 54-72, and S. Saporta, "Ordered Rules, Dialect Differ-
ences, and Historical Processes", *Lg.* XLI (1965), 218-224. N. Chomsky has suffi-

"What?" questions should be evaluated in the light of such "Why?" questions as they raise. One of his objections to the idealists is their preoccupation with "Whys?". It is of course true that "Why" questions, posed prematurely and in an inadequate frame of reference (e.g., "Why does nature abhor a vacuum?"), can lead the investigator to follow false tracks and to establish invalid correlations based on insufficient or even irrelevant data" (37). However, our ultimate aim must surely be explanation, and in the lesser task of description we must constantly test the utility of our methods by suggesting possible answers to the "Why?" questions raised. After all, it is asking too much of most human beings that they should refrain from asking the interesting questions until a sufficient dosage of data has been garnered — probably long after their death.

Sometimes, moreover, it may happen that changes in techniques of description spring primarily from changes in the questions asked. For instance, one of the basic questions of linguistics must be: Why are languages different? (with its corollary: In what ways are they the same?). This basic question might lead to the hypothesis that languages in some way change. If we start from a stabilist premise, like the 19th-century diachronic linguists, we then ask: WHY do they change? If, on the other hand, we start from a 20th-century dynamic premise, regarding change and differences as a fact of life, we are wondering: Why do they not change more? It is this question that leads us to the idea of linguistic economy and structure.[12]

THE "RECONSTRUCTIVE" METHOD. H. seems to regard any "regularist" hypothesis of linguistic change as inextricably linked to Proto-language reconstruction. He fails, however, to make clear whether (and if so, to what extent) he believes the reconstruction to represent a language actually spoken: His reference to the "ancestral language [that] must clearly have been the everyday speech of ordinary people in the late Roman Republic and in Imperial times" (8) seems to indicate such a belief, though he does add the qualification: "Of course this speech community had dialectal differentiations (what speech community does not?)" (18).

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ciently demonstrated the advantages of ordered rules in economical description. But the too close equation of logical order with chronological priority might lead to the acceptance of a simpler model than the data allow (see my discussion of *loup*, fn. 8, above).

[12]   Cf. C. F. Hockett, "Sound-Change", in *Lg.* XLI (1965), 185-205, who suggests that somewhere in the evolutionary process certain languages might have been slurred into an incomprehensible buzz: The law of the survival of the fittest has led to the retention of only those languages in which paradigmatic structure pulls against the process of syntagmatic change.

The utility of reconstruction as a way of stating concisely the highest common factor of forms obviously related in form and meaning[13] is evident. The starred forms produced by our reconstructive exercise can easily be matched against any new sets of data that may emerge, providing a valuable check on the method. In some cases, as in the reconstruction of, say, Proto-Negro-African, the chances of finding corroborating documentary evidence are slim: The methods used must be modelled on those carefully worked out in a data-rich field like Romance. In Romance the match between our reconstruction and the data provided by Latin texts is amazingly good (of course, the fact that we know Latin BEFORE we embarked on reconstruction kept us on the right tack). Still, the match is not perfect, and much of the research done in Romance linguistics aims at accounting for the discrepancies between our Proto-forms and their attested counterparts.

However, the reconstruction exercise by its very nature must be atomistic and any "language" produced by collocation of the reconstructed elements is an abstract construct that is unlikely to jibe with any natural language structure. When H. admits the likelihood of "dialectal differentiations" he is already begging the question — for it would be possible to call our reconstructed Proto-Romance the "language"[14] within which French, Spanish, Italian, etc. display dialectal differences. The hare of the delimitation of "dialect" and "language" is not one the comparativist hound is trained to course, but it is started from its covert once our Proto-construction is equated with a real language.

The concept of the "ancestral language" as a way of explaining certain types of similarity between languages presumably grew from the known historical facts in Romance, coupled with the assumption that certain items of the language — grammatical morphemes, basic lexicon — tend to be transmitted from generation to generation, not being subject to loss and substitution at the same rate as other parts of the language; the Tower of Babel legend also had its share in the crystallization of the concept. Another observed fact that led to the "ancestral language"

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[13] When the relationship is not obvious, it is doubtful whether the exercise is worth the trouble. One of the fundamental difficulties of any classificatory device (of which the "comparative" method is one) is knowing what can usefully be conjoined and where the boundaries of the classes at issue should be drawn. Though attempts have been made (e.g., by M. Swadesh and G. Herdan) to establish statistical measures of genetic relationship, reconstructive techniques may not be delicate enough to operate on any but the most clearly delimited groupings. What prompted the *Ursprache* hypothesis in the first place was the temptation to link glaringly obvious similarities between different languages.

[14] Or "diasystem". On this question see E. Pulgram, "Structural Comparison, Diasystems, and Dialectology" in *Linguistics* IV (1964) and "Proto-Languages as Proto-Diasystems: Proto-Romance" in *Wd.* XX (1964).