1.1. The comparative method had already been extensively developed for the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European before it came to be applied, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, to the Romance family of languages. Nevertheless, it is generally recognised that the comparative reconstruction of Proto-Romance provides a uniquely valuable testing ground for the method and its theoretical basis.

1.2. In the first place the Romance languages are descended from a common language, the written form of which is abundantly attested for the period before they themselves first emerged as independent entities, and which continued to exist as a learned lingua franca alongside them for centuries afterwards. Moreover there are written records of all the Romance languages going back at least several centuries and in the case of Italian, French and Spanish for well over half their independent history. Thirdly the geographical location of the languages has been very little changed over the centuries, so that convergences due to bilingual interaction can be ruled out except between border dialects of adjacent languages or where specific and well documented cultural or political pressures (like the French influence on Romanian literary usage during the last two hundred years) can be identified. It is because we know so much of the history of Romance-speaking communities that we are able to discern and chronicle such interaction. Even those notoriously difficult concepts, substrate and adstrate, can be explored somewhat more realistically in various areas of Romance, where the earlier languages that were displaced or remained in bilingual contact over a long period are known to us at least in their recent forms. One thinks in particular of Galician Spanish and Breton French (Celtic), Walsh and Walloon French (Germanic) and Rumanian (Slavic and Greek).

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1 The classic formulation is appropriately that of J. Vendryes, Le Langage (Paris, Albin Michel, 1923), pp. 337-41.
1.3 In each of these areas of linguistic enquiry Romance has the advantage over most other language families; all of them combined give it an unrivalled status. However, the lessons to be learned from Romance concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the method are seldom taken as seriously as they ought to be. The object of this paper is to look at a few test cases.

2.1. Given the confused and confusing history of the two terms, we had best begin by defining what is meant here by *Vulgar Latin* (VL) and *Proto-Romance* (PR).2 The latter is used of the language reconstructed primarily by the application of the comparative method to the surviving Romance languages. As such it has the obvious limitations. For instance we cannot take account of members of the family that are no longer extant. We have only to ask what PR would look like if there was no evidence from Sardinia to become aware of this limitation. Moreover PR is a monolithic abstraction of asterisked items. It has no precise location in time, being situated only in relative time, at some point prior to the earliest divergence required by the diachrony of reconstruction. Nor does it have a precise location in space or the dialectal variation found in natural languages, including of course those from which the reconstruction begins. Indeterminacies in reconstruction like *either \( x \) or \( y \) must leave open the question whether the dilemma reveals a dialectal variation in the proto-language or one of the rivals can be plausibly assigned to the post-proto stage or both can be derived from the true proto-form \( z \).

2.2. By *Vulgar Latin* is meant primarily that form of the language which was used by the illiterate majority of the Latin-speaking population. In contrast to PR it had a diachrony of its own and also dialectal variation. It was distinct from, though not of course independent of, the written

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language attested in classical (c. 100 B.C. - A.D. 150), pre-classical and post-classical times. It was out of the earliest VL that the formal registers of the language emerged by a process of selection and refinement. These included ritual and legal texts, public oratory, senatorial and priestly records and the native Saturnian poetry. This heterogeneous tradition of formal writing, further refined by the imitation of Greek models and the application of Greek rhetorical doctrine, developed into Classical Latin, which has a linear relationship with Medieval written Latin, as VL has with Romance. In strictly linguistic terms Classical Latin must be regarded as a deviation from VL rather than the reverse.

2.3. The subsequent course of written Latin was determined by the interaction between the traditional models provided by Classical Latin and the current pressures of VL. In every period there was a whole spectrum of usage from the most uncouth forms of VL to the most sophisticated and artificial products of the highest literary registers, as exhibited in the works of a Livy or a Vergil or of their literary successors of later ages. The upper band of this spectrum is represented by Cicero's orations, technical treatises and also his letters, which, though characterized in a letter to Paetus (ad Fam. 9.2) as examples of plebeius sermo, are a long way from true plebeian Latin. The latter is, strictly speaking, almost inaccessible, since the most vulgarized inscriptions are already to some extent removed from pure Vulgarism in as much as the very ability to write, however imperfectly, imposed some degree of conformity to the conservative canons of literacy. Remember that our own take-away proprietor who advertises "frying tonite" is revealing an awareness of the convention that the graphic sequence te, here as in cute, mate, note, is used to indicate a change in the quality of the preceding vowel (cf. nit, cut, mat, not) even if he chooses to ignore or does not know the archaic spelling night.

2.4. The ultimate break-up of the spectrum is reflected in the contrast between the French version of the Strasburg Oaths (A.D. 842) and the Latin of Nithard's chronicle reporting them. Cicero would have found the former totally unintelligible. Nithard's text he would have recognised as a somewhat imperfect version of his own language, though he would have

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3 In corrupt and fragmentary form these are preserved in e.g. The Hymn of the Arval Brothers (CIL 1.2) the Hymn to Mars (Cato Agr. 141), the formula for the declaration of war (Livy 1.32. 6-13), the Twelve Tables (Riccobono Fontes 1. pp. 23-75). Uncorr upt but relatively late testimonies are given by the senatorial regulations on the cult of Bacchus (186 BC, CIL. 1.581) and the verse epitaphs of the Scipios (c. 250-150 BC, ibid 1.6-11).
had difficulty following it if Nithard had recited it to him. The interference of Romance speech habits with the national pronunciations of Latin led eventually to the Babel that Erasmus reports at the court of Maximilian.4

2.5. At this point the question arises with reference to the intervening centuries: if Vulgar Latin, as the language of the illiterate, has left no written record of itself before the Strasburg Oaths burst on the scene, whence do we derive our knowledge of it? One potentially promising source of information, the voluminous writings of the late Latin grammarians and lexicographers, turns out in practice to be disappointing. There is no systematic account of Vulgar Latin at any period. The grammarians were concerned with preserving the tradition of classically correct usage5 and their rare citations of vulgar forms were merely cautionary.6 Vulgar usage was, like dialect, regarded as the product of stupidity or ignorance, as it continued to be by philologists until the mid-19th century, when the historical significance of these deviations from 'correct' usage came to be recognised.

2.6. Our principal way of access to VL is through vulgarized texts, viz. those showing deviations from the norms of written Latin that can be linked in some way to PR asterisked forms. An illustration is provided by a late Christian epitaph from Gondorf on the Mosel (CIL 13.7645), hoc tetolo fecet Montana coniux sua Mauricio qui uisit con elo annus dodece et portauit annus qarranta transit die VIII kl Iunias, where the deviations from the written classical tradition, hunc titulum fecit Montana coniunx sua Mauritio, qui uixit cum illa annos duodecim et portauit annos quadraginta. transiit a.d. IX Kal. lun, all point forward to Romance. Even here however a few classical forms remain and we are still some way from the Romance of the Strasburg Oaths and, presumably, from the pure VL of its own period and place.

4 De recta Latini Graecique Sermonis pronuntiatione (1528).

5 See e.g Augustine de doctrina christiana 2.13.19.

6 Servius (4.517 Keil) even says nemo enim dicit 'ab ante'. In fact most people were saying precisely that, as avant, avanti etc. show; ab ante is found in local abverbial (but not temporal prepositional) function in inscriptions; e.g. CIL 6. 2899. The grammarians themselves are not always infallible: the anonymous author of the Appendix Probi prescribes doleus, nouiscum.
2.7. Diachrony is important here. Spellings like *cedre, edus* for *caedere, haedus* characterized certain rural dialects in the republican period.7 The confusion of *ae* and *e* is found as a vulgarism at Pompeii, e.g. *querite, aduaentu* for *quaerite, aduentu*. Already after A.D. 400 the confusion has found its way into manuscripts of Vergil, e.g. *que, praessae* for *quae, pressae*, and Servius (4. 421. 21 Keil) implies the monophthongal pronunciation in contemporary educated usage. The testimony of grammarians like Papirianus (*ap. Cassiod.7.216.8 Keil*) on the palatalization of *-ti+V* to *tsj+V* also shows the acceptance of an earlier vulgarism into educated usage, which is why Erasmus did not purge *[tsjo:]* etc. and the monophthongal pronunciation of *ae* in his reformed pronunciation of Latin.

2.8. VL and PR, though they coincide at many points, are not at all the same thing, as has often been assumed. What is important for the historical linguist is that their testimony is often complementary. PR reconstruction confirms the outcome of the increasing confusion of *ae* and *e* in later Latin texts, vulgarized and non-vulgarized; conversely these texts enable us to uncover the existence of the diphthong in pre-PR.8 The loss of a phoneme without trace in the prehistory of a protolanguage that is not recoverable by ordinary reconstructive procedures gives food for thought, not least to Indo-Europeanists.

3. PR without the collateral and earlier evidence of written Latin texts would in a number of ways be a very jejune thing to set in comparison with other IE languages—few diphthongs, an attenuated case system in which there is no way of reconstructing the multifunctional ablative, analytical exponents of future and perfect, etc. etc. The lexicon too would look very different; basic lexical items like *ferre, ignis, res, urbs, os, ictus, lapis, crus* replaced by other native words, *portare, focus, causa, ciuitas, bucca* or by foreign imports, *colpus, petra, gamba*; others like *edere, loqui, pulcher* by dialectally distributed pairs, *comedere* and *manducare, fabulare* and *parabolare, bellus* and *formosus*, all of which are

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8 This complementary relationship is also shown in the absence of final /m/ in PR, which was of course much more critical for the case system, and its sporadic omission in Latin texts of all periods.
attested in written Latin but not in a way that anticipates their subsequent geographical location.\(^9\)

4.1 Let us consider in detail a familiar lexical example, the words for 'horse' and 'mare'. These are three attested pairs:

(1) *caballu, *equa\(^{10}\) reflected in Rum. cal, iapā; Sp. caballo, yegua, etc.;

(2) *caballu, *caballa reflected in Walloon Keval, Kevale; It. cavallo, cavalla;

(3) *caballu, *iumentu reflected in Fr. cheval, jument.

All the languages and dialects reflect *caballu; so unless all have independently lost the PR form and either independently or by diffusion replaced it by the same word, we can confidently set up PR *caballu.

4.2 The 'mare' word is more difficult. Occitan has cavala (beside m. cavall) with èga (**equa) in a few dialects. It looks as if *caballa is an analogical innovation to replace an incognate pair, rather as Logudorese ebbu, modelled on ebba (**equa), has encroached on Kaḍdu (**caballu). It cannot be taken for granted of course that the cognate pair is the more recent; OE hors (ncut.) was used of both sexes, and mare reflects the fem. mēre of mearh 'steed, riding horse', and—to cite a more relevant example—Latin had equus, equa. The presence in some scattered Occitan dialects of èga is difficult to account for as an innovation, since there is no

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9 The VL lexicon is continually being added to. Philip Burton, who is currently working on the Latinity of the Vetus Latina, has pointed out to me that sonium 'care' (>OFr. soin, Olt. sogna), known hitherto only from the corrupt 7th century gloss cited by Du Cange, somnium phrontis idīōtikos, is directly attested in the 5th century Codex Bezae, where at Luc. 21.34, Gk merimnais is translated by sonis. In view of the well known links between this codex and the Gothic version it is likely that there is a connexion, as Meyer-Lübke accepts, with Gothic bisunja, even though the semantics are not easy.

10 The forms are attested for VL but here it is specifically PR reconstructions that are in question; hence the asterisks.
obvious source. We must conclude therefore that cavala has indeed replaced èga generally.

4.3. The availability of earlier data from the language enables us to see that the reflex of *equa, O. Fr. ive, has similarly been replaced, by the innovatory jument.11 PR *iumentu is reflected in Occ. jumen ‘beast of burden’; Engad. gūmain ‘mare’ has replaced the older iewna (< *equ-) and giumenta ‘mare’ occurs in some Italian dialects, though the masc. giumento normally means ‘donkey’, like its Catalan cognate jument.12 Comparativists who were not constrained by this abundance of precise data would have a field day with all this, speculating about Romance population movements and language contacts, the possibility that *iumentu originally meant ‘mare’ and so on. In fact the evidence for VL and from earlier Latin indicates that ‘beast of burden’ is the original sense. The new meaning ‘mare’ arose independently in the languages where it is attested and reflects simply a common material culture, the use of female animals as beasts of burden, reminding us incidentally that effective analysis of the lexicon often depends on extra-linguistic information.

4.4. If Fr. jument and the reflexes of *caballa in Walloon and Occitan are all innovatory, then the conventional interpretation of the isogloss pattern here13 as classically defining a central innovatory area over against a conservative periphery must be, if not abandoned, at least heavily modified. Not many isoglosses could be found linking Occitan and Walloon against central French and their sharing of *caballu, *caballa could be due simply to recent independent innovation. It is certainly independent in Italian. Moreover, if the Walloon and Occitan pairs preserve a situation earlier characteristic also of central France, it would have to be ancient enough to predate palatalization; in which case ive would have to be a later innovation, again with no obvious source. It is

11 One cannot resist reminding readers of Bloch and Wartburg’s note: ‘jument a éliminé dès le XIVe siècle l’ancien français ive (lat. equa), qui avait moins de corps.’ (Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française s.v.)

12 PR *asinu ‘donkey’, confirmed by vulgarised texts and earlier Lat. asinus, is reflected in this sense all over Romance, including Italian, Occitan and Catalan.

13 e.g. R. Anttila, Historical and Comparative Linguistics (Amsterdam, John Benjamins 1989) p. 294.
therefore more prudent to see \textit{jument} and \textit{*caballa} equally as innovations, with \textit{jument} for obvious socio-political reasons the expansionist member of the pair.

4.5. The foregoing argument agrees with the orthodox PR reconstruction \textit{*caballu} \textit{*equa} (variant (1) in 1). At which point we can turn to the evidence from VL. As a hyponym of \textit{equus} the (Gallic?) loan-word \textit{caballus} occurs already in the second century BC satirist Lucilius. It is always found in the lower literary genres, being used characteristically by Juvenal to mock the mythical horse Pegasus (Sat. 3.118). The precise pair that we set up for PR is attested in an Iberian inscription (\textit{CIL} 2. 5181.17), \textit{mulos mulas asinos asinas caballos equas}. In the 6th century \textit{Lex Salica} 10.1, \textit{si quis seruo aut caballo vel iumentum furauerit}, it is probable that \textit{caballo} is used of a ‘steed’, ridden by a \textit{caballarius} and \textit{iumentum} in its old sense ‘beast of burden’ rather than as an astoundingly early instance of the meaning ‘mare’.

4.6. Here the amount of dialectal variation within each language and of information about diachronic replacement enables us to construct a much more accurate interpretation of the history of this lexical pair than would otherwise have been possible.

5.1. Another instance—this time phonological—in which the variety of dialectal material available in one Romance language provides a more precise context for a generally agreed hypothesis: it is well known\textsuperscript{14} that Sardinian has a two-vowel division of the front axis against the three or four vowel division in the rest of Romance; e.g.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{lccc}
Logud. & \textit{iskriere} & \textit{pira} & \textit{Kreere} & \textit{mele} \\
Fr. & \textit{écrire} & \textit{poire} & \textit{croire} & \textit{miel} \\
It. & \textit{scrivere} & \textit{pera} & \textit{credere} & \textit{miele} \\
Rum. & \textit{scrie} & \textit{pară} & \textit{crede} & \textit{miere} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The two-vowel division of the back axis occurs not only in Sardinian but also in Rumanian; e.g.

\textsuperscript{14} A conveniently clear summary is given by Väänänen (1981) pp. 29-36.
The PR reconstruction that most economically accounts for all this is of course

\[ /i\ i\ e:\ e\ u:\ u\ o:\ o/ \]

with the feature of length, recovered from Latin verse texts, providing the redundancy condition necessary to precipitate the diachronic shifts.

5.2. Now a comparativist who had strayed in, say, from Indo-European studies might be tempted by this situation to postulate a stage of Sardo-Rumanian unity in the post-PR period and to set about gathering supportive isoglosses for the hypothesis. But of course we know from the extra-linguistic history of the two populations that there never was a time when Sardinian and Dacian Latin speakers formed a single exclusive speech community. Moreover the 'Sardo-Rumanian' development is not unique. It is also found in a tiny pocket of south Italian dialects, south west of Matara and south east of Potenza, while the 'Sardinian' development occurs in another pocket immediately to the north of Castrovillari and Diamante. These dialects were always remote even from other areas of Italian, let alone Sardinian and Rumanian. The parallels in the vowel systems must therefore be independent. The south Italian developments can be set in the context of the diachrony of the 'Sicilian' vowel system and ascribed at least in part to Oscan and Greek influences. But such influences clearly cannot have been operative in Sardinia, or in the Danube region, where whatever Greek adstrate may have to be recognized at a later date (cf. 8.2.) was not likely to have been significant at this early formative stage of Dacian Latin.

15 See the map in Harris and Vincent, p. 484.
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5.3. In fact the abundance and diversity of the relevant data compel us to recognize not only independent parallel development but also multiple causation.

6.1. Next a detail from morphology in which the evidence of VL does not fit tidily with PR: the 3 sg. past definite form of first conjugation verbs. Three Romance variants are found, all easily connected with Lat. -āvit, which is well attested even in vulgarized texts:

(i) Sp. cantó, It. canto (OIt posao, durao, etc.) <-*aut, <-*āut <-āuit by syncope;

(ii) Occ.cantet,16 Logud. penseit etc. (OSard. cumandait) <-āit by analogy with 4 conj. -iit (-āit: -āī = - iī: -īī <-īuit, -īit)

(iii) Fr. chanta, Cat. cantá, Rum. cintá. < *-āː (*-āː: -āstī = ĭt: ĭstī <-ūit, -ūisti),

The question arises: do these reflect allomorphic or dialectal variation in PR or independent developments in post-PR?

6.2. All the relevant forms are attested in Latin texts:

(i) -au- forms are found, rarely, in Rome and S. Italy: donaut (6.6870), educaut (11.1074), pedicaud (4.2048). The last example, from Pompeii, gives an early 1st century date. No examples have been found in Spain, but posiut (2.6302; < posīuit) is attested.

(ii) -ā- (the assumed model occurs in class. Lat. adīt audiit expediit etc.) is found only in S. Italy and N. Africa: laborait (10.216), dedicait (8.5667). No examples are recorded from S. Gaul or Sardinia.

(iii) -ā- (The assumed model again occurs in class. Lat. abīt, desīt, peītī is probably attested in Lucretius's invitāt and

16 Alternatively derived by transfer from 3 conj. vendet etc.; but the latter set are themselves innovatory.
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disturbat (1.70, 6.587)\textsuperscript{17} and the grammarians recognize a distinction between *fumát* (pf.) and *fúmat* (pres).\textsuperscript{18}

Epigraphic evidence is meagre: *pugnat* (10.7279) from Italy, but nothing from Gaul or Dacia. Nor do vulgarized texts contribute much; Fredegar’s *iudicat, denumerat* are late enough to reflect the spoken language of the Frankish kingdom.

6.3. The only prudent conclusion must be that -áit, -áut, -áit, along with -áuit were all there in PR, though presumably not all in competition in the same dialects, and that the tidy dialectal selection came later, within the independent history of the separate languages.

7.1. There are other instances too where the evidence for VL does not fit tidily with the Romance evidence for the related phenomenon. The convergence of PR /w/\textsuperscript{19} and /b/ in intervocalic position to give ([))] /v/ is widely attested: It. *cavalllo*, Fr. *cheval* v. *bene, bien*; *voce voix*. The two phonemes are kept distinct in Portuguese, as they once were in Spanish, where again we are able to exploit the information provided by earlier records.\textsuperscript{20} In some regions the convergence occurs also in initial position; giving /b/ in Sard. *biere, boge* v. It. *vivere, voce, /v/ in Neapol. *vratse*\textsuperscript{21} v. Nlt. *braccio*. Some of the VL attestations fit well with all

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\textsuperscript{17} The contexts do not favour an historic present meaning, as they do in Vg A. 3.3, where *fumát* clearly has an imperfective sense.

\textsuperscript{18} Donatus 4.394K, Priscian 2.587 K, where the example is bracketed with *cupit pro cupiuit*.

\textsuperscript{19} The preference for /w/ in PR is based merely on the more plausible diachronies that it provides. VL /w/ is of course guaranteed for the early Empire.

\textsuperscript{20} John Green’s observation (Harris and Vincent p. 92) that ‘if etymological relics were eliminated from all Romance languages, their visual relatedness would disappear overnight’ can be extended further. Historical spellings at all periods often provide valuable clues to earlier diachronics that would otherwise be difficult to establish by the strict application of pure reconstructive procedures.

\textsuperscript{21} Here and in parallel phenomena elsewhere in south Italian Greek substrate and adstrate are probable.
this; e.g. in inscriptions from N. Italy and Gaul iuuente, brebis, uiua for iubente, breuis, uiuat, from the Bay of Naples baliat, bendere for ualeat, uendere, but many do not; e.g. from Rom. bixit, uene for uixit, bene; from Iberia leuens, reqiebit for libens, requieuit.

7.2. Take also the incidence of prothetic vowels before s+C in W. Romance and Sardinian (Port. escrever, OFr. escrire>écrire, etc., and Logud. iskriere) against It. scrivere, Rum. scrie etc. In fact numerous examples of prothesis occur on inscriptions from Italy, e.g. iscola, isperabi, istatam for schola, speraui, statuam.

7.3. Such untidy connexions might in some instances be explained by the presence of immigrants speaking ‘prothetic’ dialects of VL in non-prothetic regions; not by any means possible, given the considerable population mobility across the Empire, for which there is plenty of explicit epigraphic evidence. However, it is much more likely that a number of sound changes occurred sporadically all over VL but were generalized eventually only in certain regions, where they are reflected in the local Romance languages.

8.1. Finally there are instances in which it is impossible without the assistance of Romance to decide whether a deviation from classical usage in late Latin texts is a vulgarism or not. A famous instance is habeo +inf., which is found in quasi-future functions in Latin texts from Tertullian onwards, without ever approaching the frequency of the classical synthetic future forms. In many instances it could be interpreted as the exponent of a modality ‘I have to do, I can do’ overlapping with, but not fully equivalent to, futurity. If it is correct that the temporal function began with the future-in-the past urbs habebat capi ‘the city would be/was to be

22 CIL 11.137, 6.30125, 12.2762, 4.4874, 10.2244.
23 CIL 6.29884, 132.71, 2.2705, DChr. 1428.
24 CIL 6.32965, 10.8189, 11.5996. ismurna (4.7221) <Smyrna is a special case, since sm- is an alien initial. By the 3rd century forms like istratioteis are often found in Greek inscriptions from Asia Minor.
captured’, then we can see that there was a functional gap that the phrase neatly filled. For as the cumbersome acc.+inf. construction came to be replaced by *quod/quia + finite verb*, whether or not this began in VL and under Greek influence or independently, the lack of an exponent of passivity in the future-in-the-past needed to be repaired. Whereas *dixerunt se urbem capturos* could easily be replaced by *dixerunt quod urbem capturi essent* (or by the less ‘classical’ *erant*), there was no such replacement available for *dixerunt urbem captum iri*. The reflexes of inf. + habere as a future and future-in-the-past/conditional in West Romance confirms that the construction was vulgar in origin, whether or not this functional gap provided its entry point into non-vulgar texts.

8.2 Now conversely it is important on the basis of the Romance evidence alone to reconstruct a single PR exponent of futurity or even establish that there was one. Variants like Med. Occ. *cantar los ai, cantarai los* and Mod. Portg. *darmeá, darámé* enable us to recover the analytical origins of Fr. *chanterai, It, canterò*. But was *cantare habeo* the only or even the chief PR exponent of futurity? Logud. *depo kantar* (<Lat. *debo cantare* ‘I ought to sing’), Rum. *vôitá cinta* (<uoleo cantare ‘I wish to sing’) have to be taken account of. Both have retained their analytical form, so could well be more recent innovations that the *habeo* forms. The use of volitive auxiliaries to make future tenses is often cited as an areal characteristic of Balkan Languages, and the evidence for such formations goes back a long way, to early Byzantine Greek and Old Bulgarian, for instance. But what did *uoleo +inf.* replace in Dacia? What was replaced by *debo* in Sardinia, where no comparable adstrate influences can be discerned? A number of South Italian dialects show no trace of ever having had a future tense, but it is unlikely that this was the situation in PR. For it is extremely improbable that the widespread Romance reflexes of *habeo*

26 If this did develop in VL, it must have been before the loss of the passive voice.

27 As well as the reflexes of *uoleo +inf.* to signal futurity in some northern dialects of Italian. See G. Rohlfs *Historische Grammatik der italienischen Sprache* (Berne 1949-53) 2.592.

28 The possibility of a parallel in African VL, based on the slender evidence of one or two instances of *uoleoulo +inf.* to translate Greek futures in African Christian texts and a couple more much later in the poetry of Corippus, does not of course affect this hypothesis. The development of volitives as futures is attested independently in many languages.
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+ inf. would have been formed independently or, having been formed in one dialect of VL, would have spread by diffusion to the others. So PR must have had at least this specific exponent of futurity alongside the old synthetic forms. On the whole it seems unlikely that debeo or uoleo + inf. would have replaced the habeo construction, though both may have been in competition with it in PR after the collapse of the older synthetic forms. However, it is not impossible that the latter survived into proto-Sardinian and proto-Dacian and were replaced subsequently in the independent history of both languages.

8.3. We are left with the uncomfortable conclusion that even where VL and PR do provide complementary evidence, it is not always enough to yield the information that we seek.

9. It has not been the intention, nor do I hope that it will be the effect, of this paper to cast doubt on the procedures of the comparative-historical method as a whole. Rather have we seen that by exploiting the unique situation in Romance it is possible to distinguish the areas of strength and weakness in the method, precisely by setting the rigorous application of its procedures against the array of relevant data from the history of the languages themselves and from the records that survive of written Latin. The fact that in most other comparative fields, not least in the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European, we do not have these checks available to us provides grounds for caution as well as for moderate optimism. It is only by minding the gaps (in both senses of this phrase) that we can ensure the scientific status of Romance comparative reconstruction and by extrapolation of comparative reconstruction generally.

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