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Philological aspects discussed in the 19th Century press from Transylvania

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The aim of this paper is to point out the outstanding contribution of the 19th century press in Transylvania to the development of the Romanian literary language, thus setting a fertile ground for its modernization.

Keywords: language, unity, unification, vocabulary, phonetics, grammar.

At an ideas level we have identified within each branch of linguistics the existence of themes that are significant for the 19th century philology, which aspects in essence delineate the end of a transition period and also the entire modern period of the Romanian literary language.

The content of the then published studies was instrumental in the emergence of tenets that underpinned the way in which the concept of *cultivation* of language was understood and resolved, according to the respective ideological context. These tenets were the need to *unify* the language, the amplification of the *patriotic sentiment* and the ideas of *progress* and “*genius*” of language, the enriching of its notional content, the initiation of a comparative approach between Romanian and the other Romance languages and the demonstration of our language’s Latin roots. (Marino, 1964, 571-586)

The unity and unification of language, as aims promoted within the larger context of *national unity*, represent the paramount objective around which are gravitating all efforts connected to language cultivation. (Grecu, 1988, 24). The majority of intellectuals of that period envisaged this aim by proposing concrete ways to reach it. Some of these were: proving the very *commonality of language* (I. Heliade Rădulescu, Timotei Cipariu, George Bariț), *returning to its Latin roots* and adopting Latin structures (I. Cipariu, dr. Grigorie Silași), *or giving value to the language of simple people* (Athanasie Marienescu, Aurel C. Popovici), *proving the necessity of establishing a scientific fore*, able to ensure the unification of language at all levels: lexic, phonetics, grammar (George Bariț, Iosif Vulcan, N. Maniu, G. I. Munteanu, George Sion, C. Vișoreanu, T. Cipariu, Zaharia Boiu), *or proving the importance of language unity as a prerequisite to achieving the cultural unity for all Romanians* (Nestor Simon, Alimpiu Barbolovici).

As part of this endeavour towards language modernization, special attention was given to the development of the *national and patriotic sentiment* assumed to spring out from acknowledging the existence of a relation of mutual conditioning between linguistic instrument and nation. Scholars and linguists expressed different understandings of the connection between these two entities, such as: the history of language is equal to the nation’s history (I. Cipariu, G. Seulescu), cultivation of language influences the state of the nations

(I. Vulcan, P. Branu), language represents an expression of a people's mind and heart (I. H. Rădulescu, Z. Boiu, Al Russo, I. M. Moldovanu), language represents the people's sanctuary (V. Roman, Ath. Marienescu), language has a social function, facilitating relations between human beings (A. Şaguna, G. I. Munteanu).

The idea of improving language, in order to render it capable of expressing realities of the age and notions specific to the scientific language was also recurrent in the Transylvanian press. A number of scholars has highlighted the necessity to enrich and modernize language, revealing its role in stimulating linguistic progress: George Bariţ (*Ce este limba românilor*) [*What Is the Romanians' Language*], Meletie Drăghici (*Rugare către literaturii româneşti*) [*Request to Romanian Litterati*], C. Boerescu (*Domnul meu*) [*My Lord*], Timotei Cipariu (*Sistem ortografic*) [*The Orthographic System*], Ioan Marcu (*Despre necesitatea să dădătorint'a de a necultiva limb'a*) [*Of the Necessity and Duty to Cultivate Our Language*], Petru Caba (*Cultură limbii române*) [*The Romanian Language Culture*], Marcu Emilian (*Limba română în România*) [*The Romanian Language in Romania*].

Developing the linguistic instrument means enriching its notional content, hence the cultivation of language becomes a matter of intellectual cultivation at the same time. (Marino, 1964, 572). The ways in which this aim could be achieved were by studying foreign languages (G. Bariţ), publishing lexicographic works (N. Bălăşescu), and intensifying dialect research (Ath. Marienescu), borrowing terms from Latin (T. Cipariu), and theorization of the relationship between language and thinking (V. Roman).

By employing one other enunciated principle in the process of cultivation of language, the *comparative approach between the Romanian language and the other Romance languages*, the perfectible character of our language comes to view. This realization comes to light in the studies of Ion Heliade Rădulescu and Timotei Cipariu. In his article *Paralelismul. Intre limba română şi italiana* [*Paralellism. Between Romanian and Italian*], Heliade Radulescu is constructing an entire theory by which he tries to demonstrate that the Romanian and Italian languages simply represent two dialects of a common language once spoken in Italy. The differences between them were merely generated by culture, which acted upon Italian only, while our language was deprived of it. In his opinion, the solution resides in a revival of ancient forms of Romanian, which should not be searched in classical Latin or in the language of Church writings (as he had proposed before 1840), but rather in a time when Romanian was still very close to Italian. (Munteanu, Ţăra, 1983, 148). Of a different opinion yet was Cipariu, who considered that the assimilation of elevated forms and grammatical structures coming from Latin would make the Romanian language comparable to the other cultivated languages.

The hypothesis that every process of cultivation ought to abide by the *genius of that language* is found repeatedly in the Transylvanian press. On the one hand,

intellectuals request the adopting of certain principles abiding by the "nature" and "being" of the language, by help of actions such as maintaining the etymology (proposed by an author named V. P.) and eliminating accents (S. M. Cavalcanti). Conversely, there were also different ways of understanding the concept of "genius", "being" or "nature", such as the Latin etymon (T. Cipariu) and the specificity or essence of our national language (T. Mera quoting the members of the "Junimea" literary club).

The idea of affirmation and demonstration of the Latin roots of the Romanian language as part of efforts towards modernization is evident in the columns of all periodicals. Among scholars who have demonstrated the Latin origin of our language were I. H. Rădulescu, T. Cipariu, C. Negruzzi, G. Bariț, I. Genilie, G. Munteanu, Gavril Pop, S. Manguica, I. Circa.

As for the state and evolution of orthography, an examination of the entire state of the issue at that time reveals the significant role played by these publications in *highlighting* the importance of this most debated linguistic issue and in attempting *to solve it* by analyzing combatant systems, all this done in the spirit of a *most mature and balanced attitude*.

The most important orthographic conceptions were exposed, generating heated debates and polemics. In this respect, the Transylvanian press recorded „the Ion Heliade Rădulescu event“ (Munteanu, Țâra, 1983, 111) (1828-1840), by taking from the magazines *Curierul de ambe sexe* [*Herald for Both Sexes*] and *Curierul românesc* [*The Romanian Herald*] a few memorable articles and reproducing them in *Foaie pentruminte, inimă și literatură* (*Correspondență între doi români unul din Țara Românească și unul din Moldova, Korespondință asupra limbii românești. D-luicăminarului C. Negruții, Prospect de regule*) [*Correspondence between Two Romanians, One in Vallachia and One in Moldova, Correspondence Over Issues of the Romanian Language. To Mr. Tax Minister C. Negruzzi, Collection of Rules*], which illustrate the thinking of this vallachian philologist from the first part of his career. According to Heliade, „the selection of unique norms of the cultivated Romanian language was going to happen based on four fundamental criteria: Latinity of forms, usage or circulation of forms, criterion of grammatical regularity and euphony. Overarching all, in Heliade's view, were to be «the logic» of language, its inner structure and tendencies, that no «lawmaker» could ignore“¹ (Munteanu, Țâra, 1983, 116). The public correspondence between Heliade and Negruzzi is „an essential moment in the process of establishing the common rules towards the unification of the Romanian language, by recognizing and accepting Heliade's authority in the matter“ (Munteanu, Țâra, 1983, 121).

The press in Transylvania also published articles (*Literații români, Domnule redactor*) [*The Romanian Litterati, Mr. Editor*] signed by Heliade, that reflect the

¹*Ibidem*, p.116.

negative, compromised and subjective phase of this philologist's over-Italianism. (Butnariuc, 2006, 134)

Cipariu's name appears permanently in the press of the time, not so much in his own magazines, but in other papers that recognize his authority. His system was well-known to all journalists and intellectuals, due to his very active presence in the important literary and cultural institutions. The leading idea of his conception was „to arrive at a point of repairing the language in its form and substance that existed in a previous phase, by introducing the Latin alphabet in writing and by returning the orthography to its initial unitary form taken from ancient writings“. (Butnariuc, 2006, 138)

Speaking of the issue of orthography after phonetic principles, among those who pleaded the cause of phoneticism in the publications analyzed here are also Vasile Popp (who proposed a set of norms), Georgie Bârsanu (who dismantled the nonsense and absurdities of etymologism with scientific arguments), Papiu Ilarian (who called etymologism „a new kind of intolerance, censorship and tyranny in science“), I. G. Sbiera (who asked for the achievement of language *unity* solely from the perspective of phonetic doctrine), and also an anonymous author, „member of the literary society“ (who displayed the most consistent phonetic system, that has remained valid until today), Titu Maiorescu (one of the first Romanian modern theorists that facilitated a correct understanding of our language's Latinity, while removing retrograde biases).

The basic principle on which Maiorescu's phonetic system is built consists in his tenet that „an alphabet does not, can not and does not have to comprise and express all sounds and nuances in a language“ (Butnariuc, 2006, 163). By retorting to the argument of rational dependence of phonetic rules on the “principle of logic” in Romanian writing, Maiorescu created the foundations for phonetic writing on phonological basis. (Macrea, 1978, 38)

On the other hand, etymologists were G. I. Munteanu (a more tempered etymologist, whose system was not accepted by the other members of the Philological Commission from Sibiu, on October 2, 1860), Simeon Manguica, I. Cav. de Pușcariu, I. M. Moldovanu (Cipariu's sole collaborator in *Arhivul pentru filologie și istorie*), and Ph.D. Grigorie Silași.

A neutral position was adopted by Ath. Marienescu, N. Mihălițianu, I. Vulcan and Ph.D. Atanasie Șandor, who were in favour of a compromise between etymologism and phoneticism. Other intellectuals, such as C. Vișoreanu and I. Genie merely forwarded propositions in matters of orthography.

The confrontation between etymological and phonetic orthography, as it was represented in the press, was not merely a *linguistic*, but also an *extralinguistic* debate, i.e. a confrontation in terms of culture and national affirmation (Oalde, 1981, 109). As a linguistic phenomenon, this dispute consisted in „**the search** (emph. added) and **the motivation** (emph. added) for orthographic solutions,

or, in other words, it led to **the very c r e a t i o n** (emph. added) of those systems“.(Oalld, 1981, 109)

From an extralinguistic perspective, each project was trying to prove its *(practical)utility*. The success of one system over another was „both a matter of linguistic **elaboration**, and one of **adoption and acceptance** in the practice of writing, one of **introduction into the cultural circulation**(emph. added)“.(Oalld, 1981, 109)

Since in the era of Austrian-Hungarian dualism the justification of origins had ceased to be a necessity, etymologists concentrated their efforts on national *fortification* and *conservation*. In that time, the *origins* (Romanity, Latinity, continuity) did not have to be demonstrated to foreigners, but rather required to be *cultivated* within a process of national education(Oalld, 1981, 110) ,this reality being unfortunately not understood by supporters of phoneticism.

From this perspective, etymologism must be appreciated for its contribution to the spreading of ideas of linguistic and national unity: „The etymologists' merit, even if their orthography failed to be accepted, and the proposed rules did not contribute to reaching the goal, consists in having upheld the idea of unity, of the necessary unification of language as an argument for national unification, which they defended passionately, while contemplating it as an achievement that would precede the full political unification. Thus analyzed, the current of etymologism, so far characterized only as an exaggeration, as an aberration harmful to orthography and to the language, receives a new significance that asks for reconsideration. [...]Etymologism has always kept alive the awareness of national unity, for whose achievement it paved the way, by means of unification of language, therefore of culture itself” (Grecu, 1971, 102-103).If Cipariu and Hasdeu can be considered to be the „founding fathers of Romanian philology” – as proponents of modern scientific study – for their significant contribution to the field of comparative-historical approach, Maiorescu earns a top position in scientifically applying the historical principle in halting over-etymologization in orthography. (Şuteu, 1966, 514)

Through the six aforementioned papers, the Transylvanian press initiated a *campaign in favour of introducing the Latin alphabet*, and showing the beneficial consequences from adopting it. The issue of the Latin alphabet was largely analyzed, in order to highlight its multifaceted significance and to strengthen the conviction in the necessity of introducing this alphabet as soon as possible.

The activity of the *Romanian Academic Society* towards establishing a *unitary orthographic system* embraced by all Romanians was diligently recorded by each publication, some of them commenting the approved decisions, others simply respecting them. Almost all periodicals had a permanent column dedicated to publishing opinions and conflicts of ideas within this high academic fore.

Transylvanian journalists also dedicated attention to the proceedings of the *Sibiu Commission*, by reporting in minute detail the exchange of opinions that took place prior to adopting Cipariu's etymological project.

The scholar's opinions on the crisis of orthography were recorded, each of them striving towards coming to terms between the two factions, either by *consensus* or by *compromise*.

The refined education level of some exceptional intellectuals such as Aron Pumnu and V. Pop is reflected in their elaboration of *orthoepic rules* that are indispensable to a literary language.

During discussions between editors and collaborators on issues referring to the *lexical modernization*, five major themes emerged: *unification of language from a lexical point of view; borrowings from other languages; the necessity to cleanse the vocabulary, by formulation of viable ways towards this aim; the role of the Romanian Academic Society in writing the Dictionary of Romanian literary language and other lexicographic works; popularization of etymologies and explanations meant to facilitate knowledge, acquisition and study of word meanings and their evolution.*

For the *linguistic unification* at a vocabulary level, two different possibilities of realization were identified. While some scholars such as G. Bariț, T. Cipariu, Heliade Rădulescu, P. Săulescu, were in favour of the *Church language as a model of linguistic unity*, valued and improved in order to be made able to express the concepts of the time, the majority have pointed out that it is the *living language of the people*, with its inexhaustible resources that represents *the foundation of the unification process of the Romanian literary language*. According to the majority of scholars, this model had to be submitted to a rigorous selection and permanent cultivation until it became able to express the realities of the age.

The problem of borrowings entailed heated discussions and attracted very interesting viewpoints. Many voices were expressing different suggestions on how this aim could be achieved concretely. All scholars shared views on the *necessity* of lexical borrowings. It was unanimously affirmed that the renewal and enrichment of vocabulary must happen through assimilation of notions that belong to the spirit and “genius” of our language. While some intellectuals agreed to borrowings from Latin only in case of *necessity*, to the purpose of expressing new ideas and realities, on the other hand scholars like Cipariu, PhD Silași and Hasdeu pleaded in favour of adopting new words *exclusively* from Latin. Cipariu added that the Latin terms had to be close in form to similar Romanian ones.

If some intellectuals declared themselves to be supportive of studying the language of church writings and the ancient historical chronicles, others however were against such an endeavour. However, they all agreed upon the idea that *usage* will be the one factor to confirm the compatibility of the newly entered concept with the spirit of the language. One first step would be *to adapt*

the existing foreign expressions into the lexical, phonetic and morphologic Romanian structure. In this respect, it was proposed to eliminate Slavism from the Romanian vocabulary, yet most journalists and collaborators requested that this operation be made with discernment, since many of these had already been adopted by the people and had entered common *usage*. A middle line position was held by I. Lepădatu, in whose view both the Latin and the non-Latin fund, grounded on the Romanian syntax, had to contribute to the making of the Romanian vocabulary. One anonymous author suggested *two sources of lexic renewal*: one found in the assimilation of as many neological terms as possible, and another in the reactivation of old, "popular" concepts specific to national culture. Worth noticing is the fact that almost all scholars, with the exception of R. Năsturelu objected against adopting words of Slavic, Turkish and Greek origin. Support was granted at the same time to the idea of respecting and valuing the contribution of all tongues and dialects of Romanian language.

The necessity of an action of linguistic purification, truly indispensable in the general process of language cultivation, was consistently highlighted in the Transylvanian press. In the center of discussions was the issue of "Slavonisms", for which some precise rules were being set. Therefore, Dr. Vasici did not welcome the prospect of complete and urgent replacement of Slavic words with Latin ones, since the former were already adopted into usage, making this endeavour if not impossible, at least very difficult. Gavril Munteanu approached the issue in an original way, by avoiding to name Slavism explicitly, but rather hinting at them instead. His theory prescribed a necessity to eliminate from the lexicon all words that did not exist in Latin dictionaries or in any other dictionaries of Romance languages or in the tongues of Romance nations. The linguistic "cleansing" ought to come in form of *Purism*, by elimination of barbarisms, archaisms, provincialisms, out of respect for the "matter", and of solecisms, Latinisms, Gallicisms, out of respect for the "form" and "construction" of the Romanian language. The technical terms were to be taken from the cultivated Romance languages. Conversely, G. I. Munteanu was criticizing the vision of "purists" or "radicalists", qualifying their claims as irrational. In his view, the place of barbarisms ought to be taken either by terms from cultivated Romance sister languages (for the scientific language), or from provincialisms or archaisms. To avoid any confusion, he defines regionalisms, archaisms, solecisms, Galicisms, Germanisms and Latinisms.

The principle expressed by Bariț, "let us not shed anything too lightly" reveals his good linguistic instinct. He requested that increased attention be given to maintaining "forms" (on which linguists ought to agree), without ignoring the contribution of the "matter".

Also for the middle line solution were C. Negruzzi and I. Vulcan. The former sustained adopting Slavisms into the „stem“ of Romanian language, while the latter insisted on giving value to the cultural heritage, by way of highlighting positive aspects of both currents: *popularity and Latinity*. Vulcan,

editor of the *Familia* was aware of the reality that the *linguistic cleansing* could only be done in time: “slowly, step by step, along years, decades and centuries”.

The urgent issuing of a Dictionary of literary Romanian language under the aegis of the *Romanian Academic Society* was insistently requested by all linguists, columnists and associates of the here analyzed periodicals. They presented in detail the decisions and discussions of this academic fore. In 1885 was published an agreement between members of the Academy to embark on discussing and debating the issue of printing *Marele Etimologic al limbii Române* [*Great Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian Language*] compiled by B. P. Hasdeu, keeping readers constantly updated on the progress. T. Maiorescu adopted a balanced position, sustaining that finishing this work at a tight deadline was impossible. With all his admiration and consideration for the valuable content of this dictionary and for the laudable effort of Hasdeu, Maiorescu felt compelled to intervene and propose tasking other linguists with finishing it.

As for the *Dictionary* of Massimand Laurian, the press reports printing the *Project Dictionary* in 4,000 copies and three volumes. The first two volumes included words of Romance origin, while the third contained “foreign” words in their origin and form, together with words of uncertain origin. The two linguists’ work was harshly criticized (with the exception of Bariț), since its content did not match the currently spoken language of the people and the already famous writers. The Dictionary’s words were presented in a twofold manner: the external or phonetic element (the word’s “body”) and the inner element, or meaning (the word’s “soul”). Each of these perspectives was defined and explained. However, the work could not fulfill its purpose because it was infused with a Latinistic spirit viewed by many as being much too strict.

To present *etymologies and explanations* was, in the conception of press writers, one of their responsibilities, aimed at helping their readers fully understand certain concepts and at highlighting their origin and evolution. Among those who have contributed valuable articles are G. Seulescu, G. Bariț, Heliade Rădulescu, S. Manguica, Chitiu.

In the *Transilvania* magazine we have found a philological study (*Studiu filologic*), unique by its approach and content, belonging to doctor At. Marienescu, who attempted at emphasizing the idea that a root must be studied from a semantic perspective (by meanings). The same magazine explained meanings of certain concepts, in order to facilitate the in-depth learning of the Romanian language.

Works of the *Romanian Academic Society* were also published, beginning with the report of the commission in charge with analyzing the three works participating in the contest, to the purpose of elaborating the analytical part of the Romanian Grammar, and continuing with revelations on this scientific committee’s views on the state of grammar in that time. D.A. Sturdza made a

summary of the Romanian Academic Society's 25 years of existence, expressing appreciating recognition for its merit in the progress of Romanian grammar.

Writers and partner columnists at periodicals in Transylvania gave less attention to grammar than to other issues in the field of linguistics, since they lacked the solid specialization required. In general, they focused their attention on three main themes: achieving *unity of the language*, ultimately also achieved through grammatical means, reflecting opinions concerning grammar issues and recording the efforts of the Romanian Academic Society towards writing the *Grammar* book.

The necessity to achieve language unity at a grammar level was firmly proclaimed by Ioan Maiorescu and Nicolae Maniu, both emphasizing the urgency in producing a grammar that would ensure that all speakers follow the same language norms.

The most active contributor in the field of grammar was Timotei Cipariu, who came with a great number of concrete proposals. His efforts were propelled by the ideal of language unity, a very coveted prospect that exacted so much sacrifice.

In the center of preoccupation of *Transilvania* magazine's writers was also the issue of syntax, around which there were valuable contributions printed on its pages, by authors such as G. Bariț, A. Șuluțu Cârpenișeanu and Dr. Gr. Silași. In these scholar's opinions, the grammatical construction typical to the popular language reflects the spirit and genius of the Romanian language, which entails a necessity to study and imitate these patterns.

By the attention and importance granted to Romanian literary language, these six publications: *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură* [*Paper for the Mind, the Heart and Literature*], *Organul luminării* [*Organ of Enlightenment*], *Arhivul pentru filologie și istorie* [*Archives of Philology and History*], *Amicul școlii* [*School's Friend*], *Familia, Transilvania* occupied a significant place in the Romanian press of that time, since they contributed in real time to the strengthening of relations between the three Romanian provinces, and to a growing awareness of the necessity for cultural and national unity.

Very telling in this sense is the statement of scholar Nicolae Iorga: „The history of Transylvanian press is the most beautiful page in the history of this land, and it has been so for more than a hundred years. Its pages contain thoughts and feelings of the most prominent men that the entire Romanian nation has produced in this province. In these columns, writers and teachers have brought forth the purest treasures of their souls, all that they considered to be most precious in their time. Literature, history, economy – all that was crafted there in a century is lying there hidden between dusty collections of our old newspapers...” (Iorga, 1926, 3)

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