

## II. CONFLUENCES

### THE TERM “ENGAGEMENT” AND ITS DERIVATIVES IN LATIN AND ROMANCE LANGUAGES

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#### **Abstract:**

The terminology of consanguinity is accompanied by a number of lexicosemantic micro-fields which configure the traditional human community. Among them, the concept of „engagement” and its entire lexical family reflect the thinking of entire generations of speakers. This text is a case study on the specialised vocabulary in Latin and the Neo-Latin languages.

#### **Key words:**

Engagement, fiancé, to get engaged, semantic developments, phonetic and morphological changes, synonymic series.

#### **1. The terminology of consanguinity and its multiple meanings**

Anthropologists have long agreed that the basis of any human community is the so-called “nuclear” family, consisting, in principle, of parents and children. The terms designating the positions and roles of each member in what one refers to as the “cell of society” fall within a semantic field which includes not only those particular generations (*great-grandparents, grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren* etc.), but also the collateral kins (*brothers and sisters, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, cousins*) as well as those who represent the

people and processes that precede or succeed, on a practical and symbolic level, the foundation of a family (*engagement, marriage, wedding, christening* etc.). In this way, the relationships of consanguinity are doubled by relationships created by marriage and baptismal, which concur to create the “lineage”, generally considered to be the extended and consolidated form of the family.<sup>1</sup>

A term which includes, throughout its millennial history, all these forms of family relationships, generated by activating the force of community coagulation of all association procedures – sanguine, social-administrative, religious – is that rendering the idea of “engagement”, that is, of “prior establishment of an association of young couple, under certain conditions”.

## **2. The Latin basis of the Romance terms**

The Latin term *sponsalia* ‘betrothal, engagement’ has a rich, but complicated and interesting history. It is based on the verb *spondeo*, *-ēre* ‘to engage’, ‘to pledge’ – in an ordinary situation, cf. Varro, LL, 6,71<sup>2</sup>. The verb also existed in ancient Greek as *spēndein*, a form which strikingly resembles the Latin one. The meaning in Greek points to its ancientness, as the first attestations are related to a ritualistic action, “make libations”, which evolved towards “sanctify something (peace, for example) through a libation, through offerings”, and from here, towards “finalise a treaty, an arrangement (possibly by establishing a condition), to sanction an alliance, a compromise”<sup>3</sup>. The formal similarity seems to signal not so much an old borrowing from Greek to Latin, but rather a common Indo-European origin, i.e., a root such as *spend-*, which is also encountered in Hittite, with meanings related to the act of libation and that of sacrifice for religious purposes<sup>4</sup>.

The Latin noun *sponsalia* was used as such throughout the entire Latinity, acquiring, however, from the very beginning, the “technical”, i.e., juridical, meaning (*sponsalia* is also attested as signifying “signed

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<sup>1</sup> Mihai Pop, 1975, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Apud* Ernout-Meillet, *DELL*, s.v. *spondeo*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. A. Bailly, *Dictionnaire grec-français*, Paris : Hachette, 1939<sup>13</sup>, s.v.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *DELL*, s.v. *sponsalia*.

document”) and the religious one attributed to its current successor. It passed from these two fields of use, through the usual mechanism of “narrowing of meaning”, typical of the processes recorded by historical semantics, into the vocabulary of marriage ceremonies. Initially, the verb *spondēre* referred to the commitment the father of a girl made to a family that had a boy, considered to be suitable for a future marriage between the two youths. Then, by derivative processes, the deverbative nominal *sponsa*, -ae ‘the daughter of the one who commits’ was first created, after which, by motional derivation from the feminine form, the masculine equivalent *sponsus*, -i appeared.<sup>5</sup> All these terms are attested by Aulus Gellius in his *Noctes Atticae*, 4,4,2, with references to Servius Sulpicius and the specification that the nouns forms had somewhat lost their initial meaning and had acquired the additional sense, which became common during the classical age of Latinity, of “wife” and “husband”, respectively.

In fact, the evolution of nouns was more nuanced, as the meaning “promised partner” was rendered through the 2<sup>nd</sup> declension masculine/feminine form (*sponsus*, -i and *sponsa*, -ae), cf. Fr. *promis*, *fiancé*, and the idea of “promise of association by marriage” – through the 4<sup>th</sup> declension word, *sponsus*, -us “promesse, engagement”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The common semantic and ritualistic-religious value preserved over centuries is proven by the use of the masculine form as the title of one of the most important 11<sup>th</sup>-century French religious compositions, the liturgical tragedy *Sponsus* (music and text belong to an anonymous composer), with strophic lines sung alternately in Christian Latin and the French of the age, more specifically, the Limousin dialect (the manuscript, which today is at the Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 1139, was found at the Saint-Martial de Limoges Abbey, although the play was not written for this establishment), cf. Larousse, *Dictionnaire de la Musique*, s.v. *sponsus*, cf. <https://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie/musdico/sponsus/170183>. In terms of diachronic linguistics, this particular text is an interesting example of the language spoken during the period of transition from Gallo-Roman to Common French. It should be said that both the text (a parable of the “foolish virgins and wise virgins” from the New Testament, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 25, 1-13) and the musical score inspired a great contemporary musician to compose an oratorio which also employs various language layers, from Latin to old Occitan and from the latter to modern Occitan and French, cf. Sasha Zalmer-Carhart, *Sponsus*, staged in 2012, in a very elaborate version, at the University of Toulouse II-Le Mirail (<https://www.canal-u.tv/chaines/universite-toulouse-jean-jaures/autour-du-drame-liturgique-medieval-du-sponsus/sponsus-un>).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Felix Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire Latin-Français*, Paris: Hachette, 1934/2000, s.v. *sponsus*.

Aulus Gellius also uses the old generic term *sponsalia*, defined as “*contractus stipulationem sponsianumque*”, cf. *Noctes Atticae*, *loc. cit.*

The nominal forms thus developed resulted, as it often does, in a new verbal form, though included in the 1<sup>st</sup> conjugation – the simplest and most regular in the verb inflectional system, that is, the most open to secondary creations: *sponso*, *-āre*.

All of these are products of the living language from the archaic and classical age of Latin, continued in the Christian Latin. But the diachronic analysis reveals new series of interesting innovations in the post-classical period.

The most striking change concerns the semantics of the term *sponsus*, *-i*. Through a process of semantic “slippage”, common in the historical evolution of languages, the initial meaning “promised husband”, i.e., “future husband”, is replaced by that of “husband”, i.e., partner proper, already socially-administratively and religiously legalised. In Christian Latin (which means after 150 AD), *sponsus*, *-i* is attested as the religious definition of the concept of “husband”: *sponsus sanguinum tu mihi es* “vous m’êtes mon époux de sang”, cf. VT, *Exodus*, 4, 24-25.<sup>7</sup>

As regards the forms, various writers and authors of grammar treatises in the late age of Latinity attest the vitality and fertility of the abovementioned Latin base word, regardless of meaning with which it circulated, justified, of course, by the importance of the concept(s) designated in the life of human society in its entirety. First of all, the productivity of derivation is to be noted, sometimes accompanied, as usual in such situations, by subtle semantic evolutions of denotative and connotative nuances, with (apparently) pleonastic manifestations, in certain contexts. Two examples are illustrative in this respect:

- *conspondeo*, *-ēre* “to engage mutually” (naturally, with reference to both families, of the boy and of the girl, not only of the latter, as the old verb, the base of the derivative in the late period, used to denote);

- *despondeo*, *-ēre* “to engage” and also “to free from/rid of engagement” (because the promised act has been fulfilled) and only after that

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Vetus Testamentum*. The passage is considered quite obscure by the modern exegetes of the *Bible*, but that particular sequence reappears in several places in the *Old Testament* text.

“to withdraw from and engagement”. This verb, resulting from the derivation of the base form in order to denote an additional nuance (of eventive nature), became quite frequent, since it gave rise to other derivatives in the same lexico-grammatical class of the verb or in the nominal class: *desponsare*, *desponsio*, *desponsor*.

The most spectacular result of this long line of re-composition by derivation of the base verb, which generated all these forms, already falling into a rich lexical family, is the verb *respondere*. It was created in the religious field, denoting the speech act of “answers” that the priests and ministers would give to each other during the rituals of the “sacrament of matrimony”. In the beginning, it was apparently the answers proper that clairvoyants would give to the questions asked by youths or their parents<sup>8</sup> regarding the former’s future. In the natural processes of transgressions between registers, styles, language levels, the terms passed from the specialised language into the common speech, acquiring the present-day meaning “to (merely) answer” some question, request, greeting etc. As expected, once it entered the common usage, the verb created nominal derivatives, just as simply and commonly used: *responsum* “response”, *responsabilis* “the one who responds” etc.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Lexicosemantic evolutions in Romance languages**

In the dictionary of Romance words inherited from Latin, Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke records, in the positions 8174-8176, the most frequent representations of the base *sponsus* in Neo-Latin languages, all with meanings that, one way or another, fall into the bivalent conceptual sphere of “engagement/marriage”. Firstly, all Latin forms which, through the aforementioned lexicomorphological derivations and semantic developments, made up the word family that entered the new idioms are inventoried: *sponsus*, *sponsa*, *sponsare*, *sponsalia*, *sponsio*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> DELL, s.v. *respondēre*.

<sup>9</sup> DELL, s.v. *responsum*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke, *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch (REW)*, Heidelberg: Karl Winter/Universitätsverlag Winter, 1936/2009, s.v. *sponsus*.

Of course, the respective lexicosemantic field is significantly enriched in modern languages, along with the evolution of mentalities and of the social-economic context, but the above terms remain at the centre of these terminological areas.

*In Spanish*, the term *esponsales*, meaning “betroth, betrothal”, has been preserved in the archaic and poetic register of the language. With a vowel prosthesis typical of words of Latin origin with a bilabial consonant initial, the specialised lexical tools point to the plural accusative *sponsales* of the Lat. *sponsalis*, derived on Latin ground from *sponsus* “fiancé”, as its etymon<sup>11</sup>. For the agent, there is the motional pair *esposo/esposa*, cf. Lat. *sponsus/sponsa*.

Having the same meaning as *esponsales*, another old Spanish word inherited from Latin was used, Sp. *esponsalias*, from Lat. *sponsalia*, with the common vowel prosthesis and change to the plural, for an abstraction. They gave rise to an entire lexical family – with some words formed on Spanish ground, but with model-correspondents in Latin, others being the direct continuation of the corresponding Latin word, such as Sp. *esponsalicio*, *-cia* “pertaining to engagement”, cf. Lat. *sponsalicius*; also see the phrase *donación esponcalicia*.

The plural feminine form *esposas* used to signify “metal engagement rings”, the symbol of the promised bond.

The old Spanish base terms were rivalled in the modern age by the synonym *dichos*. Apart from the fact that this word also originates from a Latin etymon, *dicere* “to say”, it retraces the same path of successive derivations and alternation of common/specialised languages.<sup>12</sup> In this case, it is the logico-semantic category of *verba dicendi* “verbs of saying”, which is additionally semantically charged with each new form obtained through the

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. DLE, s.v. *esponsales*. In Spanish, the term also acquired a legal value, denoting “the compensation received by one partner (essentially the woman) from the other partner that has left them without a valid reason”.

<sup>12</sup> The noun *dichos* is originally an irregular participle of the verb *decir* “to say”. At first, the deverbative noun had a narrow meaning – “given word”, i.e. “promise”, cf. Sp. *tomarse los dichos* “give one’s word”, cf. *Diccionario de la lengua española (DLE)*, Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1997<sup>21</sup>, T. II, s.v. *dicho*, *-cha*.

derivational devices of composition or conversion. In fact, the initial forms *dichio*, *-cha* “said” in the common speech directly come from the Latin frequentative *dictus*, *dicta*, participles converted into nouns with special values, of the type “saying”, “declaration” etc.

**In Portuguese**, the generic term for the act of promise to marry is *esposoiro* (obsolete), *esposório* (modern), which specialists claim to have had the meaning “marriage” from the very beginning. In both diachronic versions, the word is considered, by Portuguese language histories and etymological dictionaries, to have been derived on Portuguese ground from the verb *esposar*, just like the pair denoting the actants, *esposo/esposa*, the same as in Spanish. Only the base verb *esposar* is regarded as the direct descendant of the Latin word *sponsare*.<sup>13</sup> Other nominal derivatives are *esponsais* “marriage”, “celebration of marriage”, synonymous with *esposório*.

The pair *esposo/esposa* seems to have always signalled in Portuguese the meaning of the late age of Latinity, that of “husband/wife”, paralleled by *marido/marida* and bearing, in common, colloquial speech, as in Latin and so many modern languages, the signification of “man”.<sup>14</sup> But a list of synonyms of *noivo*, the new Portuguese term for “fiancé”, attests the use of *esposo* with this original meaning.

Hence, it is understood that the same phenomenon occurred in Portuguese as well as in all other Romance languages: the descendant of the Lat. *sponsus* acquired the related meaning of already socially-administratively and religiously confirmed “husband” and the concept of fiancé was rendered by a new word, in this case *noivo/noiva*. Naturally, there are also other synonyms of both concepts circulating in parallel: *pretendente* (also obsolete), *prometido*, *companheiro*, *futuro marido*, on the one hand, and *marido*, *cônjuge*, *perceiro*, on the other hand.

**In Italian**, the motional pair *sposo*, *-a* “fiancé/fiancée” comes obviously from the Latin words *sponsus*, *-i* and *sponsa*, *-ae*. The term

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<sup>13</sup> *Dicionário Etimológico da Língua Portuguesa* (DELP), Universidad de São Paulo, s.v.

<sup>14</sup> The best-known case in historical semantics of the phenomenon of meaning generalisation/narrowing is the word denoting the concept of “man”, used in almost all natural languages with the narrow meaning of “male”.

circulated for centuries with the well-known meaning of “il fidanzato ancora non unito in matrimonio”<sup>15</sup>. Special terms were created to designate the various stages of the marriage act and the change in the status of the protagonists, thus gradually completing the respective lexicosemantic field. For example, the girl was referred to as *sperata*, a term from Late Latin (*speratus*, -a “hoped, expected” meaning “fiancé(e)” and *sperator* “he who hopes”, attested in St. Augustine, cf. Meyer-Lübke, s.v. *spes*, -ei “hope”). When still at her parents’ house, she could be called *pacta*, “promised by a pact, by a (verbal or written) understanding, in front of witnesses”; when the two mutually acknowledged the assumed obligation, she was referred to as *sponsa*, and when she was detained in the house of the in-laws, she was *patuitta*. The common terms, which designated the actual union of the youths, were *nupta* “recently wed” or *conubia*, both of evident Latin origin.

The initial base word *sposo*, with its feminine counterpart *sposa*, produced numerous derivatives – verbal, nominal, with abstract, diminutival-hypocoristic meanings etc., such as *sposare*; *sposàrse*; *di-sposàrse*; *sposalizia*, -o (cf. Lat. *sponsali*); *sposerècio*; *sposètta*, -ètto, -ìna, -òne.

However, in modern Italian, the old term has been replaced by the synonym *fidanzato*, -a, the substantivized participle of *fidanzare* “to solemnly promise” (cf. Fr. *fiancer*), which, in turn, comes from the noun *fidanza* (Fr. *fiance*), “engagement”, the archaic form of *fede* “faith, trust”. The old verb had long specialised in the lexicosemantic field of family relationships, meaning “to solemnly promise that a *fanciulla*<sup>16</sup>, i.e. a pubescent girl, will officially marry, when the time comes, a certain boy”.

As expected, the relatively modern term is also of Latin origin, cf. Lat. *fides* “faith”, “trust” etc. Since there was a long period of use of a phrase for the concept in question, *promesso sposo*, we infer that, at some point, speakers lost the etymological sense regarding its second component, *sposo*,

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<sup>15</sup> Ottorino Pianigiani, *Vocabolario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*, Roma/London: Società Editrice „Dante Alighieri”/Wentworth Press, 1907/2019, versione elettronica realizzata de Francesco Bonomi, 2004-2008, cf. [www.etimo.it](http://www.etimo.it)

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lat. *in-fantiolla*, “little girl/female child” from *infans* “child”, this latter Latin word having a very beautiful history (and its Romanian translation no less!).



despite its long and fertile career in the history of the Italian language. This is the only way to explain the juxtaposition of the two words denoting the same concept in one compound word which actually makes up what we call an “alloglot pleonasm”. The treatises of lexicology and historical semantics attest numerous such cases, in any natural dead or living language<sup>17</sup>.

**In French**, there are *épousailles* (< Lat. *sponsalia*) to designate the act per se or the celebration of association, *épouser* (< Lat. *sponsare*) for the action and *époux*, *épouse* (< Lat. *sponsus*, *sponsa*) to denote the protagonists of the action. Phono-morphologically, one recognises the usual historical phenomena – the occurrence of a prosthetic *e-* before the bilabial initial consonant, the disappearance of *n* before *s*, a phenomenon recorded as early as the Latin period of the term, the expected changes of the group *-li*. Semantically, these words acquired, quite early in standard literary French, the meanings “marriage” (and its celebration) and “to associate”, “to share”, “to perfectly adapt”, as well as “husband/wife”, “person united with a partner by marriage” – used today in the official-administrative register of the literary language. Only *épouseur*, a rarer derivative, still reminds of the meaning of the Latin etymon, as in old literary French it signified “celui qui fait la cour à une femme pour l’épouser”.

Otherwise, the term *fiançailles* (from Old French *fiance*<sup>18</sup> “engagement”, “promise”) was used in standard literary French for the generic term “engagement”, generating the corresponding verb *fiancer* “to solemnly promise”, then “promettre solennellement en mariage”. As in other Romance languages, the dual term, with motional derivation, *fiancé/fiancée* was created to denote the “betrothed”, “youths promised to one another”.

The synonyms are diatopically, diachronically and diastratically diversified, as usual: archaic Fr. *accordailles*, with the preservation of the

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<sup>17</sup> For this case, see A. Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*, “The Betrothed”, the famous historical novel (1825-1827) of the writer who is considered the forerunner of the Italian Romantic theatre.

<sup>18</sup> Common dictionaries do not mention an older origin of this term, cf. *Larousse*, *s.v.*, but the Latin etymon “to trust”, “to put confidence in somebody”, with all its lexical family – *fidelis*, *fīducia*, *confido*, *confidentia* etc. – is quite evident. The same etymon explains, even more visibly, the Italian forms *fidanzare*, *fidanzato*, *-a*, and those in other languages as well, such as the Romanian *fidanțat*, *-ă* etc.

unique plural form (cf. the archaic and ironic *épousailles*), and *promis* (archaic), *futur* (familiar) for the protagonists of the act.

**In Provençal**, the most recognisable descendant of the Latin word *sponsare* and its family is the term denoting the action *espousa*<sup>19</sup>, “to marry, to contract a marriage” (cf. *espousa à la comuno* “to civilly marry”; *espousa à la glèsio* “to marry in church”), with the derivatives *espousamen*, *epousament*, used for “the action of getting married”, and the noun *espousalici* “marriage”.

The agent is *espous* (*eipous*, *epous*) / *espousa* (*espoua*, *eipousa*, *espousa*)<sup>20</sup>, e. g. the proverb *Gens de crous, gens d'espous* “No money/jewellery, no marriage”. Therefore, in Provençal too, there is a transition to the meaning of “husband” etc. This semantic “slippage” must have occurred very early in the history of language, for we have not managed to find the primordial meaning “fiancé” attested anywhere in the studied sources. However, all these forms are valid for the archaic and regional, dialectal corpus of Provençal.

In ages closer to the modern times, the generic common term designating the action is (*se*) *fiança* (*fiença*)<sup>21</sup>, meaning “to get engaged, to promise a marriage, to contract a marriage, to marry on condition of dowry”, and *fiançage* (*fiançagi*), “the action of getting engaged” or the derived meaning “marriage contract”, whereas the term for the actant is *fiança* (*fiançat*), which is, as in all languages, both a noun (with a unique masculine-feminine form) and an adjectival participle of Latin origin (see above Lat. *fides* “faith”, “trust” etc.).

Other common forms are *nòvi* (*nòvie*)<sup>22</sup> “newlywed, bound by a marriage document” and also “fiancé(e), promised one”, originating from Latin *novus*, *novitius*, as specified by *Tresor dóu Felibrige* s.v.

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph-Toussaint Avril, 1839, *Dictionnaire provençal-français ...*, s.v.

<sup>20</sup> Dictionaries and treatises on lexicology as well as the text corpus mention several phonological variants of the same word, because Provençal is conserved, as is known, in a number of diatopic, diachronic and diastratic variants.

<sup>21</sup> Mentioned in Frédéric Mistral’s dictionary (1878), *Tresor dóu Felibrige*, s.v.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph-Toussaint Avril, 1839, s.v.

Another interesting term used with this meaning is *caligna* “to court a girl”, with the agent *calignaire* (*calinairé* – a form rendering the Provençal pronunciation as well)<sup>23</sup>, both of which are the unique masculine-feminine form, meaning “sweetheart, fiancé, enamoured, suitor to a girl”. It comes from Vulgate Latin \**calina*, which in French resulted in *câliner* (noun *câlin*) “to cuddle, to caress”.

The dictionary of Lèbre, Martin, Moulin also indicates the term *promés*, *proméssa* for “fiancé(e)”, definitely derived from Lat. *promittere*, which is to be encountered, as can be easily observed, in many other Romance languages.

**In Romanian**, the old term designating the action is *sponsalie*, explained in the DLR as “betrothal; marriage proposal”, which clearly continues the Lat. *sponsalia*<sup>24</sup>, whereas the agent was *spons* (m.) and *sponsă* (f.), which refers back to the Lat. *sponsus*, *-i* and *sponsa*, *-ae*, respectively<sup>25</sup>. It is interesting that in the DLR, i. e. the thesaurus of the Romanian language, the author rather rushes through the definition and lexicographic description of these terms and contents himself with specifying that those particular lexemes appear “in the dictionaries of the past”. References are made to no less than seven such old lexicographic tools – for *sponsalie* and four – for *spons*, *sponsă*. But, as a rule, in dictionaries of this sort, all the more so since this is such an extensive work, any archaism is treated with the utmost attention due to its semantic-conceptual role and its lexical structure, as is any other word, regardless of the historical age it represents. The examples given in those “old” dictionaries<sup>26</sup> go back as far as the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are not resumed in the DLR. Nor is the process of phono-morphological transformations and semantic developments discussed here as is done synthetically in mixed dictionaries, with etymological explanations. However, the fundamental observation is that the forms and meaning of Latin

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<sup>23</sup> The dictionary TLFi – CNRTL <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/calignaire>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. DLR, XV, 2010 (X, 2004), s.v. *sponsalie*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, s.v. *spons*.

<sup>26</sup> References are made to Alexi I. (1826), Stamati (1851), Alexi T. (1866), Tiktin (DRW, 1895-1903), Barcianu (1900) and so on.

sources is strikingly preserved by reference to the innovations in all other Romance languages, in terms of the same lexemes inherited from Latin.

Phono-morphologically, this conservatism is difficult to explain. The Lat. *sponsalia* should have changed into the Rom. *sponsaie*, cf. Lat. *animalia* > Rom. arch. and reg. (Banat) *nămaie* “small bovine”, as the Latin yod affects the preceding consonants, cf. Lat. *mulier* > Rom. *muiere*. Other changes should have occurred in the consonant groups of the initial, namely *sp-* and *-ns-*, both in *sponsalia* and its derivatives *sponsus*, *-i* and *sponsa*, *-ae*. In the other Romance languages, a prosthetic *e* appeared in the first group along with the disappearance of *s* before *p* in French. In all modern languages, *n* was dropped before *s* in the second group, cf. Fr. *epoux*, *-ouse*, Sp., Pt. *esposo*, *-a*<sup>27</sup>. However, in Romanian, only the final sequence *-us* for the masculine was dropped, in parallel with the closing of the feminine *-a* to *-ă*<sup>28</sup>. We know that as compared to the other Romance languages, Romanian has better preserved old Latin forms and perhaps it is precisely these similarities that entailed the uncertainties of the DLR team of lexicographers regarding the Rom. *sponsalie* and *spons*, *-ă*.

Another peculiarity of Romanian might be the absence of the generic plural form – Lat. *sponsi*, with a collective meaning of “association with the purpose of marriage”, masculine and feminine, present in other Neo-Latin

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<sup>27</sup> This reduction of *ns* to *s* is also an old, natural phenomenon in the history of the Latin language, with its continuations in Romance languages. Ever since the preclassical age, *ns* had remained only as a graphic convention for a sound actually pronounced *s*. According to the grammarian Velius Longus, Cicero himself (106-43 BC) would write *forensia* and *hortensia*, but would pronounce *foresia* and *hortesia*, cf. H. Keil, *Grammatici latini*, VII, 79. On the other hand, later on, Quintilian (35-100 p. C.) attested that a word such as *consul* was pronounced, in fact, *cosul*, cf. I, 7, 29. More specifically, the form *sposa* for *sponsa*, appears in the inscription 10013 of CIL, VI. For the entire discussion on the Latin group *ns*, cf. C. Tagliavini, 1977, p. 195, with references to A. Traina, 1967<sup>3</sup>, and Keil, VII, 79.

<sup>28</sup> These are normal developments (cf. Lat. *ursus* > Rom. *ursū* > *ursØ*; Lat. *lupus* > Rom. *lupū* > *lupØ*; Lat. *casa* > Rom. *casū*), in the class of masculine 2<sup>nd</sup> declension nouns and that of feminine 1<sup>st</sup> declension nouns which directly follow the Latin nominative not accusative, as is the case with many nouns from the Latin 3<sup>rd</sup> declension. For the dropping of the final *-s* from the nominative form of Latin words inherited by Romance languages, cf. C. Tagliavini, 1977, p. 195.

languages, cf. Fr. *les époux*, It. *i sposi* etc., but this may only be an issue of availability of the texts which include this word.

On the other hand, on semantic level, the secondary meaning, that of “husband/wife”, is not attested in Romanian for *spons/sponsă*. Instead, another specific word is created, *mire* ‘groom’, with special meanings, in that particular conceptual series (*fiancé/husband*), as we shall further see.

Until then, we should mention that, very early, a synonym with its derivatives emerged in Romanian for the concepts discussed here, spreading and completely replacing virtually all the corresponding terms from Latin. It is the word *logodnă* “engagement, betrothal”, from which the expected derivatives formed on Romanian ground or even in the language of origin: *logodnic*, -ă “fiancé(e)”; *logodire* “engagement”; *a (se) logodi* “get engaged” and so on.

There is a written attestation of the word *logodnic* dated 1540<sup>29</sup>, in a Romanian translation from the *New Testament*, cf. TDRG/RDW, vol. 3, s.v., and as regards *logodnă*, the same H. Tiktin, in the same RDW, refers to a fragment of *Letopisețul lui Grigore Ureche*, 1624.

Etymologically, the base of the noun *logodnă* is Slavonic and linguists invoke different nominal forms, such as *лагоднѣ*, -дно, -дна<sup>30</sup>, just as they invoke the verb *лагодитъ*<sup>31</sup> as well. Recent researchers concede that all terms in that particular lexical family must have originated from the verb, as in the formation of the corresponding family in Latin<sup>32</sup>.

However, again, problems arise in explaining the phonomorphological and semantic developments. Thus, the vowel *a* in *лагодитъ*, present in Slavonic and Old Slavic, and that in the Bg. *лагодя* should have normally been preserved as *a* in Romanian as well, or at least should have closed to *ă*, which would have resulted in *a (se) lagodi/lăgodi*, according to the rules of phonetic evolution attested for similar contexts. That is probably

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<sup>29</sup> That is, less than two decades after the first document written in Romanian, *Scrisoarea lui Neașu din Câmpulung*, 1521.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. DLR, s.v. *logodnă*.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. DLR, s.v. *logodi*.

<sup>32</sup> T. Klimkowski, 2010.

what happened, but then a conditioned phonetic change, just as normal in the phono-lexical historical evolution, appeared quite early, too early for one to find any written attestation: the total remote regressive vowel assimilation with the effect  $a > o$ , under the influence of  $o$  in the following syllable. The final result is the verb *lagodi* > *logodi* and the noun *lagodnic* > *logodnic*, cf. T. Klimkowski, 2010, p. 405.

Semantic developments are also explainable in our opinion. In Slavonic, in Old and modern Slavic, such as the abovementioned Bulgarian form, the verb means “to passionately indulge (in something)”, whereas the Serbo-Croatian form means “to like, to suit”<sup>33</sup>. The Polish researcher T. Klimkowski brings up the possibility of contamination of the Bg. *лагодя* with another verb in the same language, Bg. *зодя* “to betroth”. The phenomenon is also related to the natural developments in the history of the vocabulary of any language. The final result taken in Romanian might be, therefore,  $a$  (*se*) *logodi* “to engage in the act of a future marriage”, already attested in 1560 and 1574, with a participial form, *logoditǎ*, in the old Romanian versions of *The Gospel of Matthew*<sup>34</sup>.

As a term that spread early throughout the Romanian space and has been preserved to this day, the word *logodnǎ* took all the known meanings from the equivalents of the other Romance languages as well (“promise, the solemnity of making the promise, legal and religious ceremony, religious text dedicated to the event, period of time until marriage, union with God, close human connection, material guarantee”). On the other hand, it produced, particularly on the archaic and regional level, the expected derivatives: *logodinǎ*, *logodealǎ*, *logodire*, *logoditurǎ*, as well as various phonetic variants: *logonǎ*, *logondǎ*, *logornǎ* and so on. As regards the meaning “suitor, intermediary of the engagement”, there is *logoditor*, *-toare*, with the agent

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<sup>33</sup> T. Klimkowski, 2010, with reference to *Scurt dicționar al limbii moldovenești* (sic!), 1978, coordinated by N. Raevskii and M. Gabinskiĭ, s.v.

<sup>34</sup> The referent of *logoditǎ* is “Mary of Joseph, His mother”, cf. Matthew, 1:18, cf. *Tetraevanghelul lui Coresi* Brașov, 1560-1561, and *Evangheliarul lui Radu de la Mănăcești*, 1574, edited by Florica Dimitrescu, in 1963. However, H. Tiktin, in his RDW, s.v., provides even older attestation dates for this Romanian verb.

suffix, while the term *logodici*<sup>35</sup> refers to “the celebration of the day on which birds get engaged and start to build their nests” in Romanian mythology, i. e. for 3<sup>rd</sup> March also known as *Dragobete* (the traditional Romanian equivalent of St. Valentine’s Day).

Among the synonyms, we may also mention *așezământ* “arrangement”, *încredințare* “entrustment” – with terms taken, as usual, from other lexicosemantic areas related to the idea of “pact”, “mutual engagement”<sup>36</sup>.

The synonyms attested for *logodnic*, -ă may be *voinea* (masculine only); *fidașat*, -ă; *juruit*, -ă; *încredințat*, -ă (used mainly with the feminine form); *obrăcinic*, -ă (arch.); *tocmit*, -ă. The regional terms *june*, *tânăr*, *tânăr june*, *mireson* are attested in Transylvania and Banat<sup>37</sup>. When it comes to both youths, they are called *logodiți* “betrothed”, the typical masculine plural, as well as *juruiți*, *promiși* or, archaically and regionally, *vorbiți*<sup>38</sup>.

The Aromanian dialect attests *isusit(u)* (the subdialect of the Grămoșteni, with a local variant *isozmată*) and *susit* (the subdialect of the Fărșeroți) to indicate the actant, “logodnic”. For the act of engagement there are *isuseari* (Grăm.)/*suseari* (Fărș.) ‘betrothal, engagement’, with the corresponding verb *isusescu*<sup>39</sup>.

A rich series of verbs may be observed, most of them taken from commercial, juridical, religious practices and conveying the meaning “to mutually assume a future act of association by marriage”. Thus, Roxana Bănașu Stojčić provides a list of ten terms only for the ethnolinguistic area of Dobruja: *a (se) arăvonisi*, cf. *a (se) arvuni*, *a cere (în căsătorie)*, *a credinți*, *a face credință*, *a-și da credință*, *a (se) fidașa*, *a (se) încredința*, *a (se) jurui*, *a*

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<sup>35</sup> DLR, s.v. *logodnic*.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. DLR, s.v. *logodnă* and *logodnic*.

<sup>37</sup> V. Ioniță, 1985, p. 107.

<sup>38</sup> V. Ioniță, *loc. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> We have consulted the dictionaries and the works of lexicology and semantics of Theodor Capidan, 1936; Tache Papahagi, 1974; Matilda Caragiu-Marioțeanu, 1997; Mariana Bara, *dictionline.net/index.php* 2014. We have received valuable information from Prof. Dr. Manuela Nevaci, whom we would like to thank here.

(*se*) *logodi*, *a (se) tocmi*<sup>40</sup> or *a (se) obrăci*<sup>41</sup>, *a (se) vorbi*<sup>42</sup>. Naturally, there are still plenty of synonyms for other areas. In Transylvania and Banat, the terms *capară* “engagement” and *a căpări* “to get engaged” are used, but they are also valid, as others in the synonymic series discussed here, for undertaking some business, a work partnership etc.

A very interesting term briefly mentioned above is *mire* ‘bridegroom’, with the feminine *mireasă* ‘bride’. The interest lies primarily in its very special significance (which does not mean that there are not equivalents in other languages as well). Basically, *mire/mireasă* stand for the betrothed on their wedding day and are only used on that particular day, from dawn, through the ceremony of shaving/combing and clothing the two young people, until the end of the “first night” of marriage. Before these 24 hours, the two youths are “*logodnici*”, after that they are “*tineri căsătoriți*” (“*proaspăt căsătoriți*”, “*însurăței*”, “*tocmai luați*” etc.), i.e. newly-weds.

The etymology of *mire* (from which the feminine formed by means of the motional suffix *-easă*) has sparked discussions among Romanian linguists, which have not yet been concluded.

The Latinists consider it to be the descendant of Lat. *miles*, which is explained by the rhotacism of the intervocalic *-r-* along with the loss of the final consonant *-s*, both phenomena being common in the Latin-Romanian phonetic developments. On the other hand, the semantic change is also acceptable, in that the *mirii* of the first young generations during the Roman rule (105-271 AD) were the soldiers discharged and left behind as settlers<sup>43</sup>. The scientific “evidence” of this evolution is the Serbo-Croatian word *vojnîk*, which initially meant “warrior”, for it comes from the Sl. *vojná* “war”, but it later acquired the meaning of “fiancé”. It is interesting that, through the specific geographic, historical and ethnolinguistic configuration, this word is

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<sup>40</sup> Roxana Bănașu Stojčić, 2022, pp. 7-15.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. DLR, s.v. *a (se) logodi*.

<sup>42</sup> V. Ioniță, 1985, p. 107, acc. to ALR, I, and V. Scurtu, 1960/159.

<sup>43</sup> In this way, the term *mire* is seen as a linguistic proof, along with the material, archaeological and documentary-historical evidence, of the Romanian people’s ethnogenesis.



found in Romanian as well as *voinic* “well-built courageous young man”, “Haiduk”, and even as *voinea* “fiancé”<sup>44</sup>.

The promoters of Thracism advocate the Thraco-Dacian origin of Rom. *mire*<sup>45</sup>. Their arguments are phono-morphological and especially contextual: the occurrence of the word in Albanian (cf. *mirë* “good”), which has a common substrate with Romanian, as well as its generally Romanian circulation, with some exceptions. The latter have to do with the dialectal distribution of the term:

a) Firstly, in Daco-Romanian, there is a region in Banat where the formation of the masculine *miresoń* from the feminine word *mireasă*, by means of the productive regional suffix *-oń, -oăne*, is preferred; linguistic atlases also record the terms *june* (cf. Lat. *juvenis*, Acc. *juvenem*), fem. *govie* “girl”, “bride”, “party” (cf. Panslavic *govje* “bride”, after the palaeo-Slavic verb *govit’* “keep silent, be moderate”) or *tânăr*, calqued after Sl. *mladâi* “young man”, “fiancé”, “groom”;

b) Secondly, south of the Danube, the Aromanian term *mladiťu*, after the Serbo-Croatian *mlada* “young woman”, “bride”, and the Istro-Romanian *hrambo* are attested; the Megleno-Romanians say *tânăr june*<sup>46</sup>. Vasile Ioniță believes that these synonymic replacements were also due to the concurrence with the homonym *mire* “good, handsome”, “place with beautiful grass, pasture”. The latter imposed itself through the force of toponyms and anthroponyms derived from it, which supported it<sup>47</sup>.

Therefore, the concept under discussion here, with all its nuances, is richly and variously expressed in Romanian.

***In other Romance languages***, we find the same transition from the descendants of *sponsus* to widespread equivalent words. The relatively

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. R. Bănașu, *loc. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Cf. I.I. Rusu, 1981, pp. 354-355.

<sup>46</sup> Vasile Scurtu, 1961, p. 58, n. 5, believes that these replacements of *mire* with local synonyms are due to the fact that religious ceremonies and administrative formalities were conducted in a foreign language, namely the official language of the majority population in the respective Balkan countries/regions in which the communities of South-Danubian Romanians lived (Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Greece, Istria and so on).

<sup>47</sup> See the entire discussion in V. Ioniță, *loc. cit.*

modern substitutes for the hypernymic term “engagement” and its hyponyms “to get engaged” and “fiancé(e)” would be:

- In Catalan: *fiança*; *comprometre*; *nuvi/nùvia*, cf. *promès*, -a.
- In Friulian: *fdanza*; *fdanzare*; *fdanzato*, -a.
- In Sardinian: *amorat*; *amurare*; *amoradu*, -a.
- In Galician: *compromiso*; *comprometer(se)*; *prometido*, -a, cf. *noivo*, -a “groom/bride”.

At the present stage of our research, we have not been able to find direct descendants of Lat. *sponsalia*, *spondere*, *sponsus*, -a with the original meaning of “engagement” etc., but only with the developed meaning “marriage” etc.

#### **4. Continuation of Latin terms in non-Romance languages**

Lexicologists and language historians document the Latin inheritance of this word family in some forms in non-Romance languages as well. Thus, Irl. *posaim* “pact” (< Lat. *sponsus*, M-L, is attested; Old High German has *pfāhta* “pact, convention” (< Lat. *sponsalia*, M-L, 6138).

On the other hand, the evolution from Latin to a Romance language seems to have sometimes gone through a non-Romance intermediary. Thus, Spanish lexicologists believe that Sp. *espónsor* (< Lat. *spondere*, *sponsor*, -is) is taken from English, from *sponsory*, meaning “financial supporter”, and not directly inherited from Latin, as it designates a “person who assumes an initiative, who patronises a business based on mutual agreement”, for which there is a more common word in Spanish, *patrocinador*.<sup>48</sup>

### **Conclusions**

1. The most significant general phenomenon in the evolution of Latin-Romance terminology for the concept of “engagement” and its lexicosemantic micro-field is the loss of *sponsalia/sponsus* with its original meaning, that of “solemn mutual covenant regarding a future marriage”, in favour of new terms, which develop their own micro-fields.

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Real Academia Española, *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*, 2005, s.v. Cf. and <https://www.rae.es/dpd/patrocinador>

2. Semantic deviation starts as early as the stage of Late Latin, common Latin, Christian Latin and even literary Latin, through the transition to the meaning in the sphere of “marriage/married/marry”, which would correspond to a broadening of meaning and mainly to a conceptual association hyponymy/hypernymy, within the set of directions of evolution recorded by historical semantics.

3. Whenever Lat. *sponsus* and its family have been preserved with the new meaning, it also undergoes other formal, phono-morphological changes, which started in Latin and continued in Neo-Latin languages: the reduction of the groups of consonants *sp* and *ns*, vowel prosthesis before the bilabial initial consonant, a certain inflectional configuration (*pluralia tantum* etc.).

4. To express the basic meaning of the old word, new terms appeared, usually relying on Latin terms, such as *fidus*, *promissus*, *novus*, *dictus* and so on. With the necessary changes, they created their own nominal and verbal derivatives that configured the new lexicosemantic families for the base concept discussed here. In other cases, terms from superstratum languages (see Romanian), from the adstratum or various other influences as well as from internal creations are used.

5. Romance languages simultaneously created their own wealthy (quasi)synonymic series. They are either diachronic, diatopic and diastratic variants of the respective denotative meaning, i.e. total synonyms, or logico-semantic and expressive-paradigmatic nuances of these. It is the case of the special terms denoting a certain status of one or both of the betrothed, the location in time of the partnership agreement and so on.

6. Conceptually, the history of these terminologies proves the importance of the organisation of family relationships in the Latin-Roman world.

7. Linguistically, the respective lexicosemantic micro-field proves the vitality of the Latin language, manifested by “unity in diversity” and by the balance between the historical heritage and the dynamics of specific innovations in time and space.

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