

# DICE 22/2



## DIVERSITÉ ET IDENTITÉ CULTURELLE EN EUROPE

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## DIVERSITATE ȘI IDENTITATE CULTURALĂ ÎN EUROPA



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**DIVERSITÉ ET  
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**TOME 22/2**

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**București, 2025**

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# I. FUNDAMENTALS

## LES NOMS DES DIEUX ET DES DÉESSES DANS LA CULTURE ROUMAINE ANCIENNE

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Names of gods and goddesses in old Romanian culture**

Names of gods and goddesses in Greek and Roman mythologies are commonly considered proofs of speakers' classical culture. The information on Greek-Latin mythology and the employment in texts of names of divinities illustrating it have been interpreted, almost without exception, as signs of cultural renewal in modern Romanian writing. The Enlightenment, particularly receptive to Latin, Old Greek or Romance Western Literature, followed by classicism and romanticism, literary currents that facilitated the dissemination into Romanian space of texts representative of Western modern culture, favoured the reception of themes and ideas associated with mythology. These aspects were often illustrated by means of proper names as signs of a new artistic sensibility and as stylistic markers.

Historical dictionaries of the Romanian language further argue this idea by referring to the generally accepted meaning of the lexeme *dumnezeu* (god) and its synonym *zeu* (deity) in the old Romanian literary language, the former seldom used as a common noun before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, the two nouns, *dumnezeu* and *zeu*, designated "the supreme, eternal being, the primordial transcendent cause, the fundamental principle of existence and universal order, the creator and judge of the world" (*Dicționarul limbii române* [Dictionary of the Romanian language]) whenever they were used in the singular, usually articulated form and many times as proper names. In the plural and with direct reference to polytheistic religions, the nouns indistinctly denoted "pagan deities, false gods, idols, deities; beings imagined as having supernatural powers" (*Dicționarul limbii române* [Dictionary of the Romanian language]).

Therefore, the occurrence of proper names designating gods and goddesses in Greek-Latin culture and mythology is scarce in old Romanian texts. The dissemination of these names can be explained especially through the type of text

(secular or religious) and the form and content of the sources used by translators. However, the rare citation and use of the names of Greek or Roman divinities in old Romanian writing, as well as the current meaning of the plural forms *dumnezei* and *dumnezeițe* or *dumnezeoiae*, as opposed to the singular (*dumne*)*zeu*, must not be linked with the lack of knowledge of Greek-Roman mythology. They should be related to the prohibition imposed by church officials (constantly promoted by canonical texts) on the use of names of “idols, false gods”, which were considered elements resulting from the influence of heathen beliefs.

**Key words:**

Old literature, mythology, *dumnezei* (gods), *dumnezeițe*, *dumnezeoiae* (godesses).

**1. La connaissance et l'utilisation des noms des dieux et des déesses des mythologies grecque et latine** sont considérées, en général, des preuves de la culture classique des locuteurs. Ainsi, les informations concernant la mythologie gréco-latine et leur mention dans des textes des noms des divinités qui l'illustrent ont été reçues, presque sans exception, dans notre espace culturel, comme des signes d'un renouvellement culturel propres aux écrits roumains modernes.

Les Lumières, avec leur ouverture marquée vers la littérature occidentale d'expression latine, grecque ancienne ou romane, puis, de la même manière, le classicisme et le romantisme, des courants littéraires qui ont permis la réception de la culture occidentale moderne, ont facilité l'introduction de thèmes et d'idées associés à la mythologie ou illustrés plus d'une fois par des noms propres devenus à la fois les signes d'une nouvelle sensibilité artistique et une marque stylistique. (La soi-disant « allusion mythologique », fréquemment attestée dans la littérature roumaine du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, a favorisé l'utilisation des noms de divinités comme de véritables noms communs. Je pense, par exemple, dans une série qui peut être enrichie à tout moment, à Adonis, Aphrodite, Apollon, Hercule ou Minerve, et *zeu* „dieu” et *zeiță* „déesse”, assimilés, de manière surprenante mais significative, par le locuteur non spécialiste, au fonds néologique moderne, ont commencé à avoir des sens figurés, qui se sont imposés dans l'usage littéraire et ont été assez rapidement acceptés dans le langage courant.<sup>1)</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> Voir des attestations dans *Dicționarul limbii române (DLR)*, serie nouă, tomul XIV, Litera Z, Editura Academiei Române, [București], 2000, s.v. *zeu* et *zeiță*.

Les dictionnaires historiques de la langue roumaine viennent appuyer cette constatation par le sens donné couramment, dans la langue littéraire ancienne (avec des répercussions dans la langue littéraire actuelle), au lexème *dumnezeu* et à son synonyme *zeu*, ce dernier étant peu utilisé comme nom commun avant la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. (Les attestations du nom hérité *zeu* renvoient uniquement à des textes antérieurs au milieu du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, seule l’interjection *zău*, devenue populaire et familière à l’époque moderne, ayant connu une continuité d’utilisation.) Désignant dans les religions monothéistes, telles que le christianisme, en association obligatoire avec la forme singulière, souvent articulée et ayant constamment le statut de nom propre, «l’être suprême, éternel, la cause transcendante primordiale, le principe fondamental de l’existence et de l’ordre universel, le créateur et le juge du monde» (selon le *Dictionnaire général de la langue roumaine*, communément appelé *Dictionnaire de l’Académie*<sup>2</sup>), les deux substantifs, *zeu* et *dumnezeu*, désignaient (et désignent encore) indistinctement, au pluriel et en référence expresse aux religions polythéistes, «les divinités païennes, les dieux, les idoles, les divinités; des êtres imaginés comme ayant des pouvoirs surnaturels». (La définition est à nouveau tirée du *Dictionnaire académique de la langue roumaine*.<sup>3</sup>)

Cette signification globalisante, devenue, par son utilisation répétée, une information culturelle à valeur générale, suggère l’idée que la mythologie gréco-latine n’était pas connue des locuteurs plus ou moins instruits de la langue roumaine ancienne, ni des lecteurs de notre littérature ancienne.

Le caractère prédominant religieux, de facture chrétienne, de nos écrits littéraires anciens ainsi que leur type, respectivement le contenu de la plupart des textes transposés ou créés en roumain jusqu’à la seconde moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, lorsque l’influence des Lumières, tant occidentales que celles arrivées par la filière néo-grecque, se manifeste activement, semblent corroborer cette idée.

(Nous partons de la prémissse que la langue des textes connus reflète généralement l’état de la langue parlée, et que cette dernière est un témoin pertinent du niveau de développement et du mode d’expression d’une culture.)

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<sup>2</sup> *Dicționarul limbii române (DLR)*, serie nouă, tomul I, partea a 6-a , Litera D. *discord-dyke*, Editura Academiei Române, [București], 2009, s.v.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Dicționarul limbii române (DLR)*, serie nouă, tomul XIV. Litera Z, s.v. *zeu*.

2. Les premières traductions bibliques roumaines prouvent toutefois le contraire, car, par exemple, les premières versions, relativement contemporaines, de l’Apôtre, conservées dans *Codicale popii Bratul* [le Codex du prêtre Bratul] (copié à Brașov en 1559-1560), dans *Codicale Voronețean* [le Codex de Voroneț] (le célèbre manuscrit nord-moldave, daté par filigranologie entre 1563 et 1583<sup>4</sup>), ou dans le texte imprimé par Coresi, à Brașov en 1566-1567, contiennent des références explicites à *Jupiter* [Jupiter], mentionné sous le nom grec *Diopet* [Diopet], et à *Artemida* [Artémis]: „spre despus fiind marelui *Artemidea și Deopetului*” [qui était, comme on le dit, pour la grande Artémis et Diopet] (*Codicale Bratul*, 211)<sup>5</sup>, „spre despusu fiindu mariei *Artemide și lu Diopetu*” (*Codicale Voronețean*, 6<sup>v</sup>)<sup>6</sup>, „spre despus fiind atâta mare și *Artemidea și Diopetovi*” (*l’Apôtre* de Coresi, 92-93)<sup>7</sup>.

Dans la plus ancienne version manuscrite de l’Apôtre, transcrise par le Bratul de Brașov, on peut lire également: „făcea case de argintu *Artemideei*” [il construisait des maisons en argent pour Artémis] (206), „mariei zeiasă casa *Artemideei*” [une maison pour la grande déesse Artémis] (207). Ces passages ayant dans *Le Codex de Voroneț*, manuscrit un peu plus récent que la copie du prêtre Bratul, la forme „făcea case de arrgintu *Artemideei*” (4<sup>v</sup>), respectivement „a mariei dumnedzeaie casă, a *Artemideei*” (5<sup>r</sup>), et dans *l’Apôtre* de Coresi, la forme suivante: „făcea casă argințită *Artemideei*” (91), respectivement „marea dumnezeița casa *Artemida*” (91). La version de l’*Apôtre*, insérée dans le *Nouveau Testament de Bălgrad*, imprimé en 1648, remplace le nom grec de la déesse, suite à l’utilisation d’une version latine du texte, par le nom latin correspondant: „beseareca a marei dumnezeiasei *Dianii*” [l’église de la grande déesse Diane] (160<sup>v</sup>). Comme une conséquence du même modèle latin, *Jupiter* remplace l’ancien *Diopet*: „cinsteaște pre mare dumnezeiasa *Diana și chipul lui Jupiter* pogorât” [il

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<sup>4</sup> Voir la synthèse de Ion Gheție, Al. Mareș, *Originile scrisului în limba română*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1985, 191-213.

<sup>5</sup> *Codicale Bratul*, ediție Alexandru Gafton, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> *Codicale Voronețean*, ediție Mariana Costinescu, Editura Minerva, București, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Coresi, *Lucrul apostolesc. Apostolul*, ediție facsimilată I. Bianu, Cultura Națională, București, 1930.

vénère la déesse Diane et l'image incarné de Jupiter] (160<sup>v</sup>)<sup>8</sup>. En même temps, dans la *Biblie de Bucarest*, le passage se modifie, par un retour à la tradition orthodoxe du texte, sous la forme suivante: „e purtătoare de grija besearecii *Artimidei*, dumnezăoaiei cei mari, și a lui *Diopetus*” [elle s’occupe de l’église d’Artémis, la grande déesse, et de Diopet] (847)<sup>9</sup>.

Les noms de certains dieux et déesses de la mythologie grecque ou latine sont également mentionnés dans d’autres écrits religieux de la seconde moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle ou de la première décennie du siècle suivant.

Ainsi, Dosoftei, érudit connaisseur et utilisateur avisé tant de la langue grecque, courante dans l’Orthodoxie orientale, que de la langue latine, met en relation, dans *Parimiile preste an* [le *Prophétologion* pour toute l’année ecclésiastique] (imprimé en 1683), dans un passage qui est, bien sûr, une rédaction personnelle, les noms grecs et latins de certaines divinités importantes: *Afrodita* ou *Chipra* et *Venera* [Aphrodite ou Vénus], *Cron* ou *Saturnus* [Cronos ou Saturne], *Zeves* ou *Iovis* [Zeus ou Jupiter] et *Dumnedzăul Tunului* [le Dieu du Tonnerre], respectivement *Athina*, *dzâna-nțălepciunilor* [Athéna, la fée des sagesse] (III, 123<sup>v</sup>-124<sup>r</sup>)<sup>10</sup>.

Quant à Antim Ivireanul, le célèbre métropolite de Valachie, il utilise dans *Cazania la Sfântul Nicolae* [Homélie pour la fête de Saint Nicolas] de ses *Didahii*, recueil original d’homélies, conservé dans plusieurs copies, dont la plus ancienne date des deux premières décennies du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le nom *Afrodita* (51)<sup>11</sup>, et dans les *Chipurile Vechiului și Noului Testament* [Images des personnages de l’Ancien et du Nouveau Testament] (texte daté en juillet 1709) retient l’information selon laquelle Antiochos Épiphane (roi de 175 à 164 av. J.-C.) a mis „idolul *Diei Olimbiului* în beseareca Ierusalimului” [la statue de Zeus dans l’église de Jérusalem] (311)<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> *Noul Testament tipărit pentru prima dată în limba română la 1648*, reeditat din inițiativa PS Emilian, Editura Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române a Alba Iuliei, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> *Biblia, adecă Dumnezeiasca Scriptură a Vechiului și Noului Testament, tipărită întâia oară la 1688*, retipărită după 300 de ani, în facsimil și transcriere, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1988; cf. *Biblia 1688*, I-II, ediție Vasile Arvinte și Ioan Caproșu, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2001-2002.

<sup>10</sup> Dosoftei, *Parimiile preste an*, Iași, 1683, ediție Mădălina Ungureanu, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Antim Ivireanul, *Opere*, ediție Gabriel Ștrempele, Editura Minerva, 1972

<sup>12</sup> Antim Ivireanul, *Chipurile Vechiului și Noului Testament*, în Arhim. Sofian Boghiu, *Sfântul Antim Ivireanul și Mănăstirea Tuturor Sfinților*, Editura Bizantină, București, 2005, p. 31-123.

Des attestations des noms de divinités grecques ou latines peuvent également être trouvées dans de nombreux écrits profanes, traduits, adaptés et copiés en roumain au cours des siècles précédant l'arrivée des Lumières dans notre espace culturel.

Dans la *Cronica universală* [Chronique universelle], compilée par le moine olténien Mihail Moxa au début du XVIIe siècle, sur la base de sources parmi lesquelles figurait la *Chronique* de Constantin Manasses, à côté d'*Apolon* [Apollon], mentionné comme une divinité („ducea daruri *lu Apolon*” [il apportait des offrandes à Apollon] 34<sup>r</sup>), apparaissent *Afrodit* [Aphrodite] (6<sup>r</sup>), *Aris* [Aris] (6<sup>r</sup>), *Ermia* [Ermia] (6<sup>r</sup>) et *Zevs* [Zeus] (6<sup>r</sup>), tous notés comme des noms donnés aux planètes Vénus, Mars, Mercure et Jupiter.<sup>13</sup>

Dans les pages des *Histoires* d'Hérodote, transposées en roumain par Nicolae Milescu Spătarul [le Spathaire], entre 1668 et 1670<sup>14</sup>, mais connues exclusivement par une copie tardive, où les noms propres des pages de l'original n'ont peut-être pas été remplacés, on retrouve parmi les divinités grecques les noms *Apollon* [Apollon] (I 87, IV 159, VII 26), *Artemis* [Artémis] (I 26, II 137), *Posidon* [Poséidon] (II 43), *Triton* [Triton] (IV 179, 188) et *Zef(s)* [Zeus] (IX 122, V 105, VII 56)<sup>15</sup>.

Des constatations similaires peuvent être faites à travers la lecture de *Ceasornicul domnilor*, version roumaine de *Horologium principum*, le célèbre livre d'Antonio de Guevara. Dans le texte de Nicolae Costin, fils érudit du chroniqueur Miron Costin, sont mentionnées, parmi les divinités: *Apollo* [Apollon] et sa «capiște» [son temple] de Delphes (256; voir aussi *Apolon* 360, 541), *Berecintia* [Berecintia] (nom également orthographié *Berețintia*, 569), *Ian* [Janus] (569), *Iunon* [Junon], „bodzul lui Nero” [l'idole de Néron] (21; voir aussi 254, 255), *Jupiter* (Zeusu) [Jupiter], „dumnedzăul dumnedzăilor” [le dieu des dieux] (389; voir aussi *Iupiter* 392, 569, 665; *Zeusu* 612), *Mars(u)* [Mars], dieu de la guerre (17, 196, 360, 569, 610; également orthographié *Martie* 452, 621), *Miercurie* [Mercure] (390), *Teresa* (orthographié: *Țețera*) [Cérès], «déesse» - „dumnedzăița” - de l'agriculture (32), *Vesta* (569) et *Vinerea* [c'est-à-dire Vénus] (678)<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Mihail Moxa, *Cronica universală*, ediție G. Mihăilă, Editura Minerva, București, 1989.

<sup>14</sup> Vezi Liviu Onu, *Prefață*, în Herodot, *Istoriile*, Editura Minerva, București, 1984, p. VII.

<sup>15</sup> Herodot, *Istoriile*, ed. cit.

<sup>16</sup> *Ceasornicul domnilor de Antonio de Guevara, traducere de Nicolae Costin*, ediție Gabriel Strempel, Editura Minerva, București, 1976.

De tels noms apparaissent également dans les copies de plusieurs soi-disant «livres populaires», textes de sagesse ou écrits narratifs qui évoquent des événements ou des faits de l'Antiquité, sur la base de sources provenant directement ou indirectement de la culture grecque. Ainsi, à *Alexandrie*, le roman historique consacré à la vie et aux exploits d'Alexandre le Grand, roman connu dans l'espace roumain depuis le XVIe siècle<sup>17</sup>, fait référence à „*Amon dumnezeu*” [Amon dieu] et à *Apolon* [Apollon] (180<sup>18</sup>. Dans *Istoria Troadei* [L'Histoire de Troie], roman historique, dont la plus ancienne version roumaine connue de nos jours remonte à 1689, sont consignée „*biserica lui Iracleu dumnedzău*” [l'église du dieu Héraclès] (93), „*o capiște ... a lui Apolon dumnedzău*” [un temple ... du dieu Apollon] (104; voir aussi 105) et est mentionné aussi un sacrifice accompli par l'empereur Ménélas à „*Dios dumnedzău*” [le dieu Dieu] (91)<sup>19</sup>. Dans *Esopia*, le livre de sagesse qui raconte la vie et les fables d'Ésope, il est fait référence, dans une copie réalisée également à la fin du XVIIe siècle, aux „*popi ai lui Artemidie*” (123<sup>r</sup>) [les prêtres d'Artémis] et à „*biseareca lui Apolon*” [l'église d'Apollon] (145<sup>r</sup>)<sup>20</sup>; et dans une nouvelle traduction du texte, imprimée en 1795, Petru Bart, imprimeur transylvain qui, à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, se trouvait sous une autre influence culturelle que les copistes mentionnés précédemment, fait un commentaire dans lequel sont mentionnés, parmi les „*dumnezeii elinești*” [les dieux helléniques]: *Apolon* [Apollon], *Aris* [Aris], *Cron* [Cronos], *Dia* [Dea Dia], *Ermis* [Ermia] et *Zevs* [Zeus] (117; voir aussi „*Die, dumnezeul elinesc*” [Die, le dieu hellénique], 159; „*alt boz, ce-i zic Zevs*” [une autre idole, appelée Zeus] 159; „*Oh, Zevs dumnezeu!*” [ô, dieu Zeus], 159<sup>21</sup>.

De manière presque naturelle, les noms de certaines divinités gréco-romaines apparaissent dans la traduction du pronostic intitulé *Foletul novel*,

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Dan Simonescu, în *Cărțile populare în literatura românească*, I, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1963, p. 6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Etant donné le fait que le plus ancien manuscrit de *Alexandria*, copié par le pope Ioan Românul [le Roumain] en 1620, est lacunaire, nous reprenons les noms qui renvoient à la mythologie grecque dans la version illustrée, en 1790, par le Moldave Alexandru Negrule. (Voir la transcription de cette version dans *Alexandria ilustrată de Năstase Negrule*, coord. Gabriela Dumitrescu, Editura Sapientia Principium Cognitio, București, 2015, p. 177-221.)

<sup>19</sup> *Împărația lui Priam, împăratul Troadei, cetății ceii mari*, ediție Dan Simonescu, în *Cărțile populare în literatura românească*, I, p. 89-108.

<sup>20</sup> *Istoria lui Esop*, ediție Violeta Barbu, în *Viața lui Esop. Studiu critic*, Editura Minerva, București, 1999, p. 175-208.

<sup>21</sup> *Esopii*, ediție I. C. Chițimia, în *Cărțile populare în literatura românească*, I, p. 117-160.

réalisée d'après des sources italiennes, au tournant des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, à la demande du Prince régnant Constantin Brâncoveanu. On y trouve *Afrodită* [Aphrodite] (58, 162), *Belona* [Bellone], appelée „dumnezoaia războaielor” [déesse des guerres] (80, 163), *Cronos* [Cronos] (124), *Iupiter* [Jupiter] (26), plus souvent mentionné sous le nom de *Zeus* [Zeus] (121, 124, 135; voir aussi *Zevsu* 119), *Marsu* [Mars], „dumnezeul războaielor” [dieu de la guerre] (25, 28, 29), *Mercurie* [Mercure] (119, 124) et *Neptun* [Neptune] (25)<sup>22</sup>.

La liste la plus riche de noms mythologiques, principalement latins, connue à l'époque étudiée, figure toutefois dans le lexique latin-roumain (*Dictiones Latinae cum Valachica interpretatione*) compilé, dans la dernière décennie du XVIIe siècle, par Teodor Corbea, érudit de Brașov. Il s'agit d'une source particulièrement pertinente, compte tenu de la nature du texte (dictionnaire contenant des informations de type encyclopédique), de la culture moderne de Corbea, mais surtout de la formation et de la profession principale du commanditaire. (La réalisation de la version roumaine du dictionnaire latin-roumain mentionné ci-dessus<sup>23</sup> a été demandée par Mitrofan, évêque de Buzău, ancien collaborateur, en tant qu'évêque de Huși, du métropolite Dosoftei.) Fait pertinent pour la mentalité et la culture de certains de nos anciens érudits, le manuscrit réalisé par le savant transylvain à la demande d'un haut dignitaire ecclésiastique de Valachie, adaptation massive de la source, et non simple traduction fidèle, comprend de nombreuses mentions de noms de dieux et de déesses, parmi lesquels nous sélectionnons, à titre d'illustration (en conservant uniquement la signification mythologique et en éliminant les indications grammaticales, spécifiques à un lexique), quelques exemples (les entrées des articles sont, naturellement, en latin): *Aphrodite* [Aphrodite], „dumnezăoaia Vineri” [la déesse Vénus] (47), *Apollo* [Apollon], „al cântătorilor, al prorocilor și al doftorilor dumnezău” [dieu des chanteurs, des prophètes et des médecins] (47), *Artemis* [Artémis], „Diana sau Luna” [Diane ou la Lune] (56), *Bacchus* [Bacchus], „dumnezăul vinului” [le dieu du vin] (68), *Bellona* [Bellone], „dumnezăoaia războaielor” [la déesse des guerres] (72), *Ceres* [Cérès], „dumnezăoaia grânelor” [la

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<sup>22</sup> *Foilețul Novel. Calendarul lui Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu, 1693-1704*, ediție Emil Vîrtoșu, [f.e.], București, 1942.

<sup>23</sup> Comme le note lui-même, le savant transylvain, le manuscrit de Teodor Corbea s'inspire de l'édition de 1604 du *Dictionnaire latin-hongrois* (*Dictionarium Latino-Hungaricum*) d'Albert Szenci-Molnár.

déesse des céréales] (96; voir aussi *Teres* [Cérès] 152), *Cupido* [Cupidon], „dumnezăul dragostei în chip de copil, fiulețul lui Mars și al ii Venus” [le dieu de l’amour sous les traits d’un enfant, fils de Mars et de Vénus] (140), *Demeter* [Déméter], „Teres, dumnezăoaia pâinei” [Cérès, la déesse des céréales] (152), *Diana* [Diane], „Luna, dumnezăița vânătorilor, fata lui Iupiter” [Lune, la déesse des chasseurs, fille de Jupiter] (158), *Flora* [Flora], „dumnezăița florilor” [la déesse des fleurs] (206), *Jupiter* ou *Jovis* [Jupiter ou Jovis], „fiiul lui Saturnus, pre care l-au țănut poeticii prea de sus a fi” [le fils de Saturne, que les poètes ont élevé au-dessus de tout] (274; voir aussi 158, 311, 453), *Mars* [Mars], „dumnezăul războaielor” [le dieu de la guerre] (302), *Minerva* [Minerve], „dumnezăița învățăturei și a înțeleptiei, fata lui Iupiter, găsătoarea tortului și a țăsutului” [la déesse de l’enseignement et de la sagesse, fille de Jupiter, inventrice du filage et du tissage] (311), *Neptunus* [Neptune], „fiiul lui Saturnus, dumnezăul mărilor” [le fils de Saturne, dieu des mers] (326; voir aussi 274, 453), *Saturnus* [Saturne], „tatăl lui Iupiter, Iunei, al lui Neptunus și Pluto, pre care în păgânlime l-au țănut dumnezău” [le père de Jupiter, Junon, Neptune et Pluton, que les païens considéraient comme un dieu] (453; voir aussi 274), *Venus* [Vénus], „dumnezăița dragostei” [la déesse de l’amour] (537; voir aussi 140). Et la liste peut être enrichie à tout moment.

**3.** Les attestations dans la littérature roumaine ancienne de certains noms qui désignaient, en référence à la mythologie grecque et latine, *dumnezei* et *dumnezeie* ou *dumnezeoae*, c’est-à-dire, dans la terminologie moderne, des dieux et des déesses, sont donc, dans l’ensemble, relativement nombreuses et leur répartition s’explique principalement par le domaine illustré par certains écrits et par le contenu des sources utilisées par les traducteurs. Elles apparaissent généralement dans des écrits profanes, mais, comme nous l’avons montré, les attestations dans les textes canoniques, ecclésiastiques ne manquent pas. Les auteurs, traducteurs ou compilateurs de ces écrits sont généralement des érudits extérieurs à l’Église, mais des informations et des commentaires significatifs proviennent d’écrits dus à de hauts dignitaires ecclésiastiques.

Trois de ces mentions, toutes faites dans des passages originaux, dues à Dosoftei, à Antim Ivireanul et, près d’un siècle plus tard, à Petru Bart, le célèbre imprimeur transylvain, viennent également attester, en contradiction

avec les informations fournies par les dictionnaires historiques de la langue roumaine, la bonne connaissance par les érudits anciens des données essentielles relatives à la mythologie grecque et romaine. Cette connaissance était également favorisée par la circulation dans l'espace roumain de textes provenant de l'espace occidental, textes qui entraient souvent dans les bibliothèques princières ou dans celles des hauts dignitaires ecclésiastiques de l'époque.<sup>24</sup>

Dans ces conditions, la citation et l'utilisation relativement peu fréquente des noms de divinités grecques ou romaines dans les écrits anciens, ainsi que la signification désormais courante du pluriel des noms communs *dumnezei* et *dumnezeițe* ou *dumnezeoai*e doivent, selon nous, être mises en relation non pas avec l'absence de connaissances sur les mythologies grecque et romaine, mais avec l'interdiction, imposée par l'Église et constamment soutenue par les textes canoniques, d'utiliser et de promouvoir les noms des „idoli, bozi” [idoles], considérés comme des éléments dus à l'influence des croyances païennes.

On sait, bien sûr, que dans les dix Commandements [*Cele zece porunci*], largement diffusés sous forme imprimée ou manuscrite dès le milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, lorsque paraît la version roumaine du *Catéchisme* de Coresi, il était dit: „*Eu sănt domnul Dumnezeu al tău, pre lângă mine dumnezei striini să n-aibi*” [Je suis le Seigneur ton Dieu, tu n'auras pas d'autres dieux en dehors de moi] (4<sup>v</sup>)<sup>25</sup>. C'est toujours durant le siècle de commencement des écrits littéraires en langue roumaine, que l'interdiction de mentionner les noms des divinités païennes était reprise dans les pages de *Palia*, imprimée en 1582 à Orăștie: „*despre alți domnedzei să nu nici pomeniți, nici den gură-vă să nu-i audză*” [«Ne parlez pas d'autres dieux, ne les mentionnez pas, ne les prononcez pas] (255)<sup>26</sup>. Et le passage revient dans les pages de la *Bible de Bucarest* dans la formulation suivante: „*de numele*

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<sup>24</sup> Le dictionnaire latin-hongrois (*Dictionarium Latino-Hungaricum*) d'Albert Szenci Molnár, utilisé par Teodor Corbea pour obtenir, par traduction et adaptation, *Dictioines Latinae cum Valachica interpretatione*, était certainement connu de l'évêque de Buzău, Mitrofan, à moins que le texte ne fasse partie de la bibliothèque du prélat.

<sup>25</sup> *Catehismul lui Coresi*, ediție Alexandra Roman Moraru, în *Texte românești din secolul al XVI-lea*, coordonator Ion Ghetie, Editura Academiei Române, [București], 1982, p. 101-105.

<sup>26</sup> *Palia de la Orăștie. 1581-1582*, ediție Carmen Pamfil, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1962; cf. *Palia de la Orăștie (1582)*, I. *Textul*, ediție Vasile Arvinte, Ioan Caproșu și Alexandru Gafton, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2005.

*altor dumnezei să nu vă aduceți aminte, nice să să auză den gurile voastre*” [Ne vous souvenez pas des noms des autres dieux, et qu’ils ne soient pas entendus de vos bouches] (55)<sup>27</sup>.

«Le commandement» a été très tôt renforcé par une certaine interprétation de la signification des noms des divinités gréco-latines, interprétation promue par les autorités ecclésiastiques en vertu des canons de la religion chrétienne.

Voici une note à ce sujet rédigée par le métropolite Dosoftei dans les pages du *Parimiar* [le *Prophétologion*] imprimé en 1683:

*„Pre-aceale vremi, de veaci era-n toată lumea slujba idolilor, că-mvătașă vrăjmașul pre oameni de-ș făcusă dumnațări drăcești. Cine ce rău făcea, așea avea dumnațău aceluia feali de păcat. Curvele și curvarii avea pre dzâna dragostelor, lătinii îi dzâcea Venera și o mutară la Luceafărul cel mare, că acela Luceafăr face tărie gonițelor, de să gonesc dobitoacele, și oamenilor le face poftă spre plod, de să mulțasc oamenii pre lume și viața. Grecii o chema acea dzână Chipra și Afrodita și dzâna dragostelor; iară noi, creștinii, îi dzâcem dzâna spurcăciunelor ș-a necurățăilor, ce ș-au scornit păgânii, oamenii cei nestâmpărați a păgânătățai. Sugubeții avea pe Cron, lătineaște-l chema Saturnus, Luceafărul Sâmbetei. Spurcăcioșii iubiia pre Zeves, latineaște-i dzâcea Iovis, adecă Gioi. Să fie fost și om ca acesta spurcat și după moarte, l-au pus nebunii, oamenii iubitorii de spurcăciuni, în dumnațăi, de-l cinstiia, de făcea toate pângăriturile fără nice un păcat. Și i-au pusu-i nume Dumnațăul Tunului și-l scriu [adică îl zugrăvesc] a mâna cu fulgerul, în car infocat, cu 2 hulturi înhămaț. Cine iubiia curățăia, aceluia încă-i scornisă vrăjmașul pre Athina, dzâna-nțalepciușilor, ca nice cei înțalepți și curaț să nu fie fără păcat. Era Soarele, Luna, Marț, și Miercuri, și Luna și alte multe basne de dumnațăi.”* [À cette époque, le culte des idoles était répandu dans le monde entier, car l’ennemi avait enseigné aux hommes à se prosterner devant des démons. Quiconque commettait le mal avait pour dieu le démon de ce mal. Les prostituées et les débauchées avaient la déesse de l’amour, que les Latins appelaient Vénus et qu’ils avaient transférée à l’étoile du matin, car cette étoile rend les chiennes en chaleur, pour qu’elles

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<sup>27</sup> *Biblia, adecă Dumnezeiasca Scriptură a Vechiului și Noului Testament, tipărită întâia oară la 1688, retipărită după 300 de ani, în facsimil și transcriere, ed. cit.; cf. Biblia 1688, I, ediție Vasile Arvinte și Ioan Caproșu.*

chassent les animaux, et donne aux hommes le désir de procréer, pour que les hommes se multiplient sur terre et le bétail. Les Grecs l'appelaient Chipra et Aphrodite, la déesse de l'amour; quant à nous, les chrétiens, nous l'appelons la déesse des souillures et des impuretés, inventée par les païens, ces hommes impénitents dans leur paganisme. Les malfaiteurs avaient Cronos, que les Latins appelaient *Saturnus*, l'étoile du samedi. Les impurs aimait Zeus, appelé en latin *Iovis*, c'est-à-dire Jeudi. Pour qu'il soit un homme aussi impur après sa mort, les fous, les amateurs d'impuretés, l'ont placé dans un temple pour l'honorer, car il commettait toutes les souillures sans aucun péché. Et ils lui ont donné le nom de Dieu du Tonnerre et ils le représentent avec la foudre, dans un char enflammé, attelé à deux chevaux. À ceux qui aimait la pureté, l'ennemi avait inventé Athéna, la fée des sagesses, afin que même les sages et les purs ne soient pas sans péché. Il y avait le Soleil, la Lune, Mardi, Mercredi, la Lune et bien d'autres dieux imaginés.] (III, 123<sup>v</sup>-124<sup>r</sup>).<sup>28</sup>

Il existe des annotations dans lesquelles le nom d'une divinité, emprunté au grec ou au latin, est accompagné, de manière significative, de l'ancien nom, hérité du latin par le roumain, pour désigner une planète et, par là même, un jour de la semaine. (Je fais référence à Luna - Lundi, Marți - Mardi, Miercuri - Mercredi, Gioi - Jeudi et Vineri -Vendredi).

L'interprétation donnée par Dosoftei, l'érudit métropolite de Moldavie, dans le passage cité devait être courante dans l'Église orthodoxe, puisque Antim Ivireanul note également dans *Didahii*, dans le texte de *Cazania la Sfântul Nicolae*, que le célèbre Nicolas, évêque de Myre en Lycie, a agi, par des dons salvateurs, contre un père qui „*au socotit să chiiame în casa lui pe Afrodita, adecă curviiă, și pentru ca să căştige puțin aur și argint*” [a jugé bon d'inviter chez lui Aphrodite, c'est-à-dire la prostitution, afin de gagner un peu d'or et d'argent] (51)<sup>29</sup>.

Vers le milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'interprétation contenue dans les deux passages attribués aux métropolites de Moldavie et, respectivement, de Valachie, semble avoir été générale, puisque dans une traduction du grec (il s'agit du *Trésor de Damascène le Studite*), datant de 1747, traduction attribuée à

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<sup>28</sup> Voir Dosoftei, *Parimiile preste an, Iași, 1683*, ediție Mădălina Ungureanu, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Antim Ivireanul, *Opere*, ediție Gabriel Ștrempeal, Editura Minerva, 1972.

Mihalcea logothète<sup>30</sup>, nous trouvons un passage qui exprime une position similaire à celle contenue dans le *Parimiar* [le *Prophétologion*] de Dosoftei:

„*Si cea mai rea decât toate era închinarea la idoli; că lăsa de a să închină lui Dumnezeu, ci fieștecare om după faptele sale să numească un dumnezeu: plugarii pământul, adecă pe dumnezeoaia Dimitra, păscarii și corăbiarii pre dumnezeul Posidon, adecă pe mare, curvarii și preacurvarii pre dumnezeoaia Afrodita, înțelepții pre Athina, hoții și ucigașii pre Ariei, viteajii pre Ira, bețivii pre Dionis, mincinoșii pre Ermi, clevetitorii pre Arin, cei călduroși și luminați și împărații pre Apolon, vânătorii pre Artemis și, mai pre scurt, fieștecare om avea și câte un dumnezeu ...*” [Et le pire de tout était l'adoration des idoles; car elle empêchait d'adorer Dieu, mais chaque homme, selon ses actes, devait nommer un dieu: les laboureurs, la terre, c'est-à-dire la déesse Déméter; les bergers et les marins, le dieu Poséidon, c'est-à-dire la mer; les fornicateurs et les adultères, la déesse Aphrodite; les sages, Athéna; les voleurs et les meurtriers à Arie, les braves à Ira, les ivrognes à Dionysos, les menteurs à Ermi, les médisants à Arin, les passionnés et les illuminés et les empereurs à Apollon, les chasseurs à Artémis et, en bref, chaque homme avait son dieu.]<sup>31</sup>

Et à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, Petru Bart, imprimeur transylvain connu pour les nombreux ouvrages profanes qu'il a mis à la disposition des lecteurs dont la mentalité avait été transformée par les Lumières, notait dans la préface de *Esopia*: „*pre multe locuri pomeneaște istoria de dumnezeii elinești: de Apolon, de Dia, de Zevs, de Ermis, de Aris, de Cron și de alți mulți, cum să fie fost grăind și răspunzând, dară aceaea o putem creade cum că s-au fost săleșluind diavolul într-acei idoli și au fost răspunzând și au fost făcând îndămnături, de s-au fost înșălând ticăloșii oameni și au fost zicând că sănt dumnezei și s-au fost închinând lor.*” [à de nombreux endroits mentionne l'histoire des dieux grecs: Apollon, Dea Dia, Zeus, Hermès, Aris, Cronos et bien d'autres, comment ils parlaient et répondaient, mais nous pouvons croire que le diable s'était installé dans ces idoles et qu'il répondait et donnait des

<sup>30</sup> Gabriel Ștrempeal, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești, BAR. 1601-3100*, II, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1983, p. 336.

<sup>31</sup> Nous transcrivons la citation sur la base du fragment reproduit par M. Gaster, dans *Chrestomathie română*, II, F.A. Bockhaus, Leipzig – Socceu & Co, București, 1891, p. 38-42

conseils, trompant les hommes méchants et leur disant qu'ils étaient des dieux, et ils se prosternaient devant eux.]<sup>32</sup>

C'est une idée similaire à celle formulée un demi-siècle plus tôt par le logothète Mihalcea, traducteur du *Trésor* de Damascène le Studite, mais aussi à celle exprimée précédemment par Dosoftei ou par Antim, ce qui montre que l'attitude des dirigeants de l'Église orthodoxe avait trouvé un écho ou que cette attitude était l'expression d'une position déjà bien établie dans la culture roumaine ancienne, illustrée par l'usage et la signification dominants des lexèmes *dumnezei*, *dumnezeoiae* et *dumnezeițe* dans les textes de l'époque.

**4. La culture des grandes personnalités de notre littérature ancienne,** qui connaissaient de manière avisée à la fois les écrits grecs et latins, ainsi que la circulation de textes occidentaux dans notre espace culturel, confirmée par l'inventaire des bibliothèques humanistes riches et bien organisées (les données concernant la bibliothèque d'Udriște Năsturel, du *Stolnic* Constantin Cantacuzino ou de Mihail Halici sont relativement bien connues) ne sont pas toujours correctement reflétées dans l'histoire de la langue roumaine littéraire ancienne. En effet, la traduction de certains écrits et, en particulier, la diffusion de certaines informations, telles que celles concernant la mythologie gréco-latine, ont été clairement influencées ou censurées par les autorités religieuses de l'époque.

Dans ce contexte, la circulation de certains lexèmes, tels que *dumnezeu* et *dumnezeoiae*, ou la citation de noms de divinités grecques ou romaines, pendant la période de nos écrits littéraires anciens, et surtout leur utilisation et leur signification, doivent être établies en mettant en relation des informations de nature diverse. En effet, la culture roumaine ancienne s'avère être, de ce point de vue également, un phénomène complexe, pas toujours facile à évaluer et à interpréter.

Différents, sur le plan linguistique et culturel, des noms des anciennes divinités latines, assimilés dans la langue roumaine dès sa formation en tant qu'idiome roman et transformés, comme dans toutes les langues romanes, en noms des jours de la semaine ou de certaines planètes (*Luna*, *Mars*, *Mercurius*, *Jovis* ou *Venus*), les noms des dieux et déesses de la mythologie

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<sup>32</sup> *Esopiia*, ediție I. C. Chițimia, dans *Cărțile populare în literatura românească*, I, p. 117-160.

gréco-latine ont été reçus puis constamment utilisés, jusqu'à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme des noms propres à relevance exclusivement culturelle.

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# REALITY AND ITS MODES OF KNOWLEDGE

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## **Abstract:**

The text briefly outlines the principal types of knowledge concerning reality, highlighting their genealogical and functional interrelations.

## **Keywords:**

Reality, knowledge, science, segmentation and delineation of reality, paths of knowledge, humanity.

*“We, naturalists, do not imagine  
the subject of our inquiries;  
we simply ascertain it.”*

(E. Racoviță)

## **1. Reality exists**

Reality exists independently of the entities it contains, of individuals' minds and of all their products and subproducts (mental, ideological, spiritual, cultural, moral), whose existence and functioning it partially determines. It is manifold and diversified, coherent and unified, complex in its genesis, structuring, functional exercise, development and evolution; and the relations within it, together with the effects thus produced, augment its complexity. Reality may be known as a result of the interactive processes between human beings and their environment.

## **2. Knowledge**

Since the human being is a component of the environment, it can exist and function only by responding to environmental demands (in conjunction with the requirements of its internal needs and tendencies). Through the attributes of perception, representation and expression, humankind has extended its adaptation to the environment, thereby integrating the functions

of sensory-affective, rational and communicative structures, and generating the biological epiphenomenon of knowledge that serves survival. Consequently, the organs and processes that procure knowledge have evolved as instruments for understanding the real world, while the cognitive and linguistic categories thus generated have developed and evolved in correspondence with the environment and as a result of accommodation to it. In consequence, human adaptations are biologically determined by the imperative tendency to seek and possess truth – a tendency arising from the organism's correct orientation toward the reality of its environment, thus enabling the transition from potentiality to actuality in the possibility of survival.

### **3. Segmentation and Delineation of Reality**

Even so, the senses, cognitive aptitudes and linguistic communicative capacities exhibit severe limitations regarding sensory amplitude and depth, information-processing and storage capabilities and the structural-functional accuracy of expressive instruments. Therefore, for humankind, reality is only partially knowable and expressible, and that in varying degrees, yet solely as a result of mental and subsequently linguistic segmentations and delineations that modulate the manner in which it is understood. In this way, the various sciences (physics, chemistry, biology), their branches (mechanics, optics or neurology, cardiology etc.), then the domains of knowledge (sociology, psychology, philosophy) and the methods and instruments of knowing (logic, mathematics) are defined. This means that reality has been segmented not because it was constituted, exists and produces its effects in such a way, but because the being that strives to know it possesses no other means of encompassing, investigating and understanding it.

### **4. Paths of Knowledge**

After the sensory perception of reality and the processing of signals by neural networks, perceptions and then representations are necessarily mirrored faithfully. Sequentially and constantly requiring stimuli, energy, maintenance and verification, and being a component of the selection mechanism, the process is neither always successful nor ever guaranteed. Thus arisen and exercised, the activity of knowing develops and arranges itself in relations of adequacy to reality. Since the organism possesses the potential to perceive and process reality through multiple paths – incongruent in scope and depth, strongly marked by their nature –, the human being has

developed and practised several modalities of knowing throughout their existence. Because the purpose of these variants was to serve survival, they interrelated in a collaborative-competitive manner, so that they have come to coexist in positions both of dominance and exclusion, yet always with a measure of complementarity.

*Sensory and intuitive knowledge* arise from the processing of information supplied by the senses during ongoing activities, and subsequently by recalling memories of past experiences. This type of knowledge, therefore, belongs to the primary equipment of organisms, manifests spontaneously and instinctively and its results impose themselves under the imperative of the act itself.

The evolution of the senses and then of the brain's processing capacities has likewise permitted the emergence of confusion, uncertainty and insecurity, which led to the decoupling of instinctual behaviour from cognitive behaviour. In this way, the multitude of mentally conceived possibilities could be somewhat regulated through sociality and magic, which allow for the modulated expression and simulation of reality – modalities of ritualisation governed by emotional-affective behaviour.

*Magico-mystical and artistic knowledge* graft themselves upon and grow from intuitive knowledge. In the first paradigm, intuitions generate mental constructions that produce convictions expressed through myths, later reinforced by judgements with the appearance of reasoning, and ultimately dogmatised. In the parallel paradigm, representation and expression guided by the senses generate a delicate canvas of superimposed and interwoven conjectures. Governed largely by subjectivity and mediated by perceptible and intelligible conceptual patterns, the imaginative constructs produced by religion and art are built upon experience (both personal and socially mediated), and the categories of information they bear direct behaviour, connecting it with motivational systems and their roots (feelings, ideas, values). In this context, stakes constitute an essential feature of mystical and artistic knowledge. Given their relation to ideological stakes and their incapacity to offer rationally valid explanations – as they are not concerned with correspondence to reality – beliefs and doctrines impede recourse to the criterion of validity (to the concept of 'truth'). Eschewing empirical evidence and urging the construction of sensory-mental constructs, possibly the building of arguments of authority, they ultimately come to establish sets of dogmas.

Possessing the capacity to organise experience by imparting meaning in subjective forms, religion and art continue to hold crucial roles in formulating, managing and sharing representations of internal and social emotional, affective and ideational life; they thus constitute necessities for the development of the individual and of the social self. It becomes evident, therefore, that this second type of knowledge is self-representational and, in essence, refers to itself.

*Scientific knowledge* emerges as the complex effect of developmental processes undergone by the human being and differs profoundly from the preceding forms. Although it remains of biological essence and, at its point of origin, likewise rests upon the senses, it detaches itself from its material provider, subjecting it to meticulous and methodical formal and substantive verifications grounded in internal and rational bases. In relation to observed reality, its primary products (hypotheses) are tested and then employed as building material for other products (theories and explanations), all subjected to verification at every step. Thus, observation and the initial conclusion thus generated are followed by analysis, reflection and experiment (all reproducible), and as a result of their collaborative yet competitive interplay, knowledge accumulates and gradually develops, constituting an integrated and increasingly complex network of data. The system thus self-structured is constantly subjected both to the natural requirements of internal coherence and unity and to the imperative demands of conformity with expressed reality. Constantly referred to objective reality, the exercise leads to the elimination of sensory-intuitive, emotional-affective and intellective-rational impurities. Rational and reasoned decisions regarding anything (object, method, instrument) are subjected to revision, without implying that final and absolute knowledge has been attained, but rather that the sequence of improving reasonings and their results, and then selecting the latter, is ongoing and generates outcomes conducive to progress – in the development of knowledge, of its methods and of its instruments. As a historical process through which both the world and the researcher become clarified and edified, scientific knowledge is provisional and partial, always perfectible. Populated by uncertainties, it is more capable of indicating *what something is not* than of decisively asserting *what something is*.

Moreover – as Darwin observes – scientific knowledge is unconcerned with hopes and fears, but solely with the discovery of truth, insofar as human capacities permit. Consequently, it is devoid of ideological

stakes of any kind, since it acknowledges that objective reality is as it is regardless of any human consideration or calculation, whether religious, philosophical, artistic, economic or otherwise.

All this reveals that science is a historical-evolutionary process of continuous acquisition, accumulation, verification, hierarchisation and selection of data and products, in pursuit of certainties. Occurring through the constant interplay of observation, experiment and reasoning, scientific knowledge persistently seeks data with the smallest possible degree of contamination – by: a) senses, thought and language; b) methods and instruments; c) other modalities of knowledge –, systematically subjects its products to 27nterna land external verifications (through experiments and rational methods), and develops continuously in increasingly complex modalities (monitored by improved methods and instruments), being capable of evolving at the level of all its components. All unfolds as a consequence of successive transgenerational-processual corrections, mediated by methods and instruments which themselves are subjected to all the processes to which knowledge itself is subjected. The entire system of control (from thought) and validation (from reality) aims at obtaining knowledge that faithfully reflects the state of reality.

It is thus understood that this third path of knowledge possesses the highest possible degree of cognitive potential, being not merely a provider of knowledge but also a procedure that legitimises itself insofar as it confirms the validity of reason constantly subjected to the test of truth. Scientific knowledge does not impose itself and does not speak of itself. If authentic, it can only seek conformity with reality and present its conclusions.

## **5. Conclusion**

Although they may refer only to state, moment and sequence, the results obtained through any single path can prove useful. Full understanding, however, arises only as a consequence of a thorough knowledge of the premises, origin, constitution, emergence, exercise, functioning, development and evolution of that entity. Matters stand thus simply because entities are the products of premises: they have an origin, they have been constituted, have emerged, have been exercised and function, have developed and, eventually, evolve. And all these induce various determinations that cannot be ignored without consequences for the quality of knowledge results. Furthermore, given the unitary character of reality, an authentic knowledge of it tends towards the pursuit and comprehension of the entire becoming of reality.

Since reality does not merely exist but becomes, and since the purpose of science is to procure knowledge precisely of reality, genuine scientific inquiry should constantly observe reality, perpetually accommodate itself to it and allow itself to be guided in the wake of reality's evolutionary processes, in which evolution itself evolves.

Modes of understanding and judgement that do not derive from the conjunction of what is empirical with what is reasoned belong to the realms of Religion and Arts, where they operate freely and assume the role of supreme guides. Authentic knowledge, however, does not arise from an imaginative and seemingly creative act, but from one that is comprehensive and replicative of reality. Moreover, even if a sequential grasp might be operational, if it does not start from the beginnings and act cohesively, through selective inclusions, if it does not traverse reality together with the entire context upon which it depends, then, however fruitful, pleasing and beneficial it may appear, it remains deficient and bears a high potential for generating error.

Sensory, ideological and aesthetic stimuli may provoke feelings, intuitions and experiences that seem refined and elevating. Likewise, imaginative products – whether ideological, artistic or scientific (when they seek not conformity with reality but only crystalline coherence with themselves) – occupy the supreme rung of human ecstasy. Naturally, for the being that considers itself created through a special and separate effort of the Creator, it may be discomforting and deprive one of satisfactions to discover and admit that the fascinating, synesthetic and uplifting minuet of sensations, states of consciousness and aesthetics is nothing more than the apparent effect of electrochemical reactions occurring in neural structures, as a result of the biochemical processing of physical information received from receptors upon which the determined play of the entire theatre has acted. However it may seem and however it may be preferred, matters stand thus and not otherwise.

In truth, serving survival, knowledge serves the edification and evolution of the human being – and herein may lie its sacredness and splendour.

(Translated from Romanian by Oana Voichici)

## II.

# BRANDS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

## EPISTÈME DE LA CULTURE À LA RECHERCHE DU RECIT NARRATIF <sup>1\*</sup>

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### Résumé :

Si la littérature structure, nourrit, ouvre des perspectives sans cesse renouvelées sur l’Etre humain, sa Conscience et le Réel, le contact de plus en plus faible avec celle-ci (la littérature) engendre des « dysfonctionnements » auxquels la psychologie dans sa vaste gamme d’approches thérapeutiques tente d’y remédier.

Le questionnement que l’autrice propose concerne la place et le nouveau rôle de la thérapie (plus connue sous le nom de Thérapie Narrative) mettant au centre le récit et la métaphore.

Nous tenterons de saisir en quoi ladite Thérapie Narrative exerce son rôle substitutif à la littérature, en analysant la transposition des principes narratifs jusqu’à là réservés aux domaines disciplinaires dits littéraires, et ceci dans le but d’une réconciliation de l’être humain avec sa nature profonde et ses aspirations de créativité et liberté.

### Mots clé :

Culture systémique, littérature, accompagnement, approche (thérapie) narrative.

### Abstract:

This article aims to examine the state of culture (and more specifically, literature as a constitutive and evolving art of the human person) in its civilizational vision.

While the appetite for literature is experiencing worrying declines, followed by the emergence of manifestations of malaise, loneliness, and even social rejection, it is clear that other practices related to the culture of support, such as new community affiliations, are taking over.

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<sup>1\*</sup> Ce travail est dédié à mes amis, aux consultants et collègues qui soutiennent cette part lumineuse de la Vie ayant trait directement ou indirectement aux approches (thérapeutiques) narratives.

The questioning that the author proposes concerns the place and the new role of therapy (better known under the name of Narrative Therapy) putting the story and the metaphor at the center.

We will attempt to understand how the Narrative Therapy exercises its role as a substitute for literature, by analyzing the transposition of narrative principles reserved for literary disciplinary fields, and this with the aim of reconciling the human being with his deep nature and his aspirations for creativity and freedom.

**Keywords:**

Systemic culture, literature, support, narrative approach (therapy)

## Introduction

« *Nu există cultură fără istorie și fără trecut.* »  
Mircea MARTIN, Interview *Dialoguri academice*, 2024.

Depuis Aristote et Saint Thomas d’Aquin nous savons que la culture est traversée par des besoins et des capacités humaines. Elle est inhérente à la double nature humaine, physique et spirituelle.

Elle est (ou l’était ?) une structure vivante. A la fois structure et substance, c’est-à-dire fluide vital puisant sa source essentiellement dans deux des facultés les plus précieuses chez l’être humain, l’imagination et le langage, la culture s’emploie à trouver forme et expression, langage et communication.

C. Lévi-Strauss insiste sur le principe fondamental de réciprocité et d’échange qui serait l’expression de la logique binaire, structure fondamentale de l’esprit humain, en définissant la culture comme « *un ensemble de systèmes symboliques au premier rang desquels se placent le langage, les règles matrimoniales, les rapports économiques, l’art, la science, la religion.* » (C. Levi-Strauss, 1950)

La plupart du temps associée aux arts, la culture renvoyait à la sphère littéraire orale ou écrite, musicale, picturale, architecturale et à tout autre domaine de l’esprit. Or il s’avère que depuis deux décennies, la culture revêt une autre dimension davantage technique et scientifique. Ainsi la frontière entre les deux rives est de plus en plus poreuse, en allant jusqu’à un effacement de la rive droite au profit de la rive gauche<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Cette métaphore peut faire également référence aux hémisphères cérébraux, avec l’hémisphère gauche réservé à l’esprit analytique, ordonné, logique, tandis que celui droit concerne davantage les processus analogiques, intuitifs, non linéaires, globaux.

## I. Trois approches de facture systémique de la culture

Dans notre double souhait d'aborder la culture comme construit social sur une période relativement récente, et ceci sans nous s'éloigner de notre objectif, nous allons retenir trois approches de facture systémique : système sémiotique, système technique et enfin la relation éducation-accompagnement comme sous-système.

### 1. *La culture comme Système de signes*

Cette approche développée plus particulièrement par les chercheurs russes des années '70 (Y. Lotman) met en avant le structuralisme de facture sémiotique. Au départ l'école du formalisme russe (Ecole de Moscou) s'était axée sur l'élaboration d'une théorie littéraire en se donnant comme objet d'étude à la fois le langage et les structures narratives. C'est grâce aux travaux de M. Bakhtine, précurseur de la sociolinguistique que le langage littéraire, poétique a pu être perçu d'une manière différente et en quelque sorte corrélé à l'objet-langage proprement dit linguistique. Dans une émission sur France Culture<sup>2</sup>, Julia Kristeva mentionne que dans la conception de Bakhtine, le dédoublement du sujet s'accompagne aussi d'un dédoublement du discours : « (...) *Par conséquent, l'univocité, l'objectivité du discours est un leurre.* »

### 2. *La culture comme Système Technique*

Cette approche se développe à partir des années 90, en marquant le début d'une nouvelle ère avec le développement technologique sans précédent. Se voulant une culture de la rationalisation de plus en plus associée à la vitesse et à la conception individualiste du monde, elle est relayée par la sphère socioéconomique et les nouveaux outils de communication.

Dans cette vision, le rapport que l'homme entretient avec la culture bascule vers une autodétermination de plus en plus marquante dans le choix, la nature et la quantité à consommer.

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<sup>2</sup> Julia Kristeva, « *La tendance de polyphonisation du texte est la découverte de Mikhaïl Bakhtine* », 7/09/2025, première diffusion 23/11/1970, France Culture.

C'est la culture de la consommation par bribes (une culture de l'enchevêtrement) décrite par J. Baudrillard dans laquelle la matérialité (et donc les objets), prendra de plus en plus de place dans la vie de l'esprit.

Alimentée par le système technique et technologique, et culminant avec la culture dite numérique, cette évolution renvoie la culture-art aux périphéries du nouveau culturel, en marquant ainsi des ruptures avec les approches culturelles classiques. Cette culture devient de plus en plus visible en étant associée aux domaines relevant des sciences humaines et sociales, pour culminer avec le secteur du management. Ainsi culture, management et communication forment une triade dont l'imaginaire social va s'imprégnier petit à petit.

**3. La culture systémique de l'*accompagnement*** : dans cette troisième typologie, il s'agit davantage d'une culture ponctuant la nature des interactions humaines et environnementales. C'est en quelque sorte une psycho-socio-culture. Nous y inscrivions la culture numérique (maîtrise des outils et fonctionnalités liés au web), l'éducation et la formation des adultes, sans oublier l'orientation professionnelle et personnelle, le coaching et le recrutement dans leur dimension psychologique. Culture éminemment productrice d'un état d'esprit, de nouveaux paradigmes, elle ponctue ce que nous appellerions une *psychologisation de la société*, culminant avec l'emploi massif d'un jargon pseudo-académique, un appauvrissement de la langue poétique et une démultipliation de techniques et approches psychothérapeutiques. C'est parmi ces approches que nous situons l'approche relevant de la thérapie narrative.

Ces approches décrivent d'une manière assez illustratrice la constitution du nouveau paysage culturel que la plupart d'entre nous connaissent. Ce paysage interpelle, intrigue, agace ou au contraire, rassure, stimule, facilite le quotidien de milliers de personnes.

Or il s'avère que c'est justement de ce quotidien qu'il est question, la culture n'étant jamais ni désincarnée, ni éloignée de la vie dans toute son inhérente tension. Expression des profonds questionnements, la culture irrigue au quotidien le territoire de la pensée en prise directe avec la réalité. En puisant dans l'imaginaire, en œuvrant à transgresser les frontières spatio-temporelles, la culture, qu'elle soit artistique ou technique, relève de cette

appétence pour la transgression, et c'est justement dans ce besoin de transgression à la fois des limites physiques et spirituelles dans une quête incessante de valeurs et de connaissances, que la culture rejoint la civilisation. Mais bien qu'avançant avec son temps, ne devrait-elle rester fidèle aux principes esthétiques et de vérité malgré les fractionnements antagonistes ?

Dans le paysage occidental contemporain devenu de plus en plus « espace monde », la culture système, la culture objet reste pour sa majeure partie une culture textuelle<sup>3</sup>. En avançant avec son temps, en le devançant même, la culture s'auto-façonne par l'emploi et l'usage des signes nouveaux, allant des « icônes émotionnelles » à des formes de langage inclusif. Culture de l'écrit ou du signe, elle symbolise en partie et désacralise massivement. Se faisant autrefois porteuse des valeurs communes (beauté, vérité, noblesse de cœur, spiritualité) la culture devient petite, réduite comme peau de chagrin, se laisse entraîner dans un tourbillon d'incertitudes pour prôner des multiples points de repère dont le manque de référence commune ne fait qu'augmenter encore plus la confusion<sup>4</sup>. Cette reconversion de la culture sur le terrain du profane corrode la véritable appétence pour une culture de qualité. Ainsi si nous prenions le cas du livre, paradoxalement plus il y a des livres imprimés et moins on en lit. Plus les produits culturels de substitution se développent et moins on est en mesure d'appréhender des questionnements complexes ayant trait à la vie sous tous ses aspects, l'interprétation et la posture critique étant bannies au profit des nouvelles postures politiquement préférables.

Dans son livre « *Le bonheur en plus* », F. de Closets évoquait le déséquilibre entre « l'assistance culturelle » et l'assistance technique : « *l'homme moderne, si douillettement pris en charge par ses ingénieurs et ses chercheurs, est abandonné par ses prêtres, ses philosophes, ses penseurs, ses artistes. Il est d'autant plus vulnérable au divertissement des marchands qu'il est moins retenu par le discours de ses « maîtres » à penser ou plus* »

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<sup>3</sup> On comprend par cela la production massive de contenus alimentant par ailleurs les bases de données où puise l'Intelligence artificielle IA. Malgré une surproduction virtuelle de contenus « image », la plupart des interactions humaines, qu'elles soient professionnelles ou de loisirs (culturels inclus), se réalisent principalement sous forme textuelle et langagière.

<sup>4</sup> Ileana Vulpescu : « *Deocamdată cultura se află în insuficiență respiratorie, sufocată de avalanșa semidocților agresivi, a nonvalorii, a vulgarității. Poate e naivitate din partea mea, dar eu cred în supraviețuirea culturii.* » (Interview 2014)

*exactement « à vivre ». La démission de l'assistance culturelle rend illusoire toute réaction. » (F. De Closets, 1974)*

En bref, le concept même de culture restructure les rapports entre l'humain, la nature et la technique. La *proximité*, la *relation*, les *rituels*<sup>5</sup> se voient relégués au second plan si ce n'est à l'arrière fond, détrônés par les « communautés de contenus ». De plus, le développement progressif d'une culture de l'écran n'est pas sans conséquences, car dorénavant la mise en relation entre l'homme et l'information (voire les connaissances) s'effectue par écran interposé. Or l'écran ne tient pas de substitut aux valeurs : « *après la sémantique, c'est bien le symbolique et le relationnel que la technologie a envahis.* » (J. Lohisse, 2002)

Tous ces aspects nous incitent à conclure à une culture marquée du sceau de la crise de la rationalité, culture assez mal servie, voire plutôt desservie, par les outils de communication. Ces outils, nous avons eu l'occasion d'en débattre lors de nos précédents articles, loin de résoudre des problèmes comme la baisse de niveau éducationnel allant jusqu'à l'illettrisme<sup>6</sup>, la souffrance psychique et morale, la perte de repères et l'insociabilité, soutiennent le développement progressif des « communautés de contenus » au détriment des véritables « communautés de personnes ».

## **II. Une culture du récit ? Ou Pourquoi reléguer l'histoire au second plan ?**

L'anthropologue anglais Edward B. Tylor donne la définition suivante de la culture :

*«Culture ou civilisation, pris dans son sens ethnographique étendu, est ce tout complexe qui comprend la connaissance, les croyances, l'art, la morale, le droit, les*

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<sup>5</sup> Dans les rituels on inclue les fêtes et les célébrations de facture laïque et/ou religieuse, la lecture, les contes contés, les moments privilégiés de discussion, d'écoute, de regard, **de présence active**.

<sup>6</sup> Selon une enquête du Ministère de la culture de 2024, un jeune sur trois chez les 16-19 ans ne lit pas du tout dans le cadre de ses loisirs, et encore, les genres plébiscités sont les BD, les mangas, ... (Centre National du Livre, Etudes « *Les jeunes français et la lecture* », 2024).

*coutumes et toutes les autres aptitudes et habitudes acquises par l'homme en tant que membre de la société. »<sup>7</sup> (E. B. Tylor, 1871).*

Dans la culture comme système des interactions et de la bipolarité, telle que décrite par C. Lévi-Strauss, il est question d'un élément implicite et auquel on accorde une importance capitale, le temps.

Dans la culture comme empreinte historique révélée et relevée par l'anthropologie et l'ethnographie, l'analyse de ce qui est raconté se place sur l'orbite d'un présent irradiant vers le passé (ce qui s'est passé, comment, dans quel ordre) ; à ce titre les éléments (situations réelles ou imaginaires, traits de caractère, faits, ...) propres aux sous-systèmes culturels tiennent lieu de repères, de balises, de normes. Ils recentrent, resserrent les liens. Autrement dit, il s'agit de cette culture tissée qui est culture du maillage.

Avec la culture du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle (culture de l'enchevêtrement) il semblerait que l'histoire s'efface progressivement et cela pour plusieurs raisons.

Citons-en deux : **la quantité d'information** relayée par l'appétit de la connaissance au détriment de celui des valeurs, et ensuite, encore **le temps**, sauf que cette fois-ci, il s'agit d'un temps *suractivé* par les pratiques de la surproduction (encore les objets !), surproduction monnayée par une offre culturelle de plus en plus dense et cela à tous les niveaux ; ce temps est également celui de la paresse et de l'indiscipline intellectuelle<sup>8</sup>.

Il n'est pas rare que l'on constate et cela dès le plus jeune âge, un manque criard de concentration : concentration sur une tâche, concentration pour développer ses capacités (artistiques inclus), concentration effective dans la durée.

Ces aspects plaident en faveur d'une culture du récit dont l'étymologie latine *citare* veut dire *dire à voix haute* ou *ce que l'on sait par cœur*<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Traduction de Louis-Philippe Gratton.

<sup>8</sup> Toute création d'esprit, intellectuelle ou artistique requiert de la patience, de la concentration et un travail soutenu afin de garder intact le contact avec l'idée et sa réalisation effective dans l'œuvre, sans oublier le talent. Ecrire un livre, monter un spectacle ne veut pas dire seulement du travail mais également une responsabilité qui rappelle celle des apôtres. La foi dans sa mission artistique, l'homme de culture la perçoit dans toute sa singularité et sa trans-historicité.

<sup>9</sup> Situation assez cocasse lorsqu'on pense aux discours pédagogiques bannissant l'apprentissage par cœur. Si dans les années '90 des approches pédagogiques tentaient de résoudre la question avec succès, nous constatons depuis l'apparition de Chat GPT en 2022 un terrible revers de la médaille : ni esprit d'analyse, ni récitation par cœur mais un banal

Le récit investit le discours public, par le fait qu'il opère des mises en relation d'évènements supposés à être vrais alors que ce n'est pas toujours le cas. Comme le remarque R. Walsh, « *le « récit » est généralement perçu comme la temporalité interne au récit, c'est-à-dire l'ordre dans lequel les événements représentés par le discours sont supposés s'être déroulés.* » (WALSH, R., 2007)

Si nous allons plus loin, dans la conception de R. Barthes, « *le récit se moque de la bonne et de la mauvaise littérature : international, transhistorique, transculturel, le récit est là comme la vie.* »

Quant à P. Ricoeur, connu pour son ouvrage « *Temps et récit* », les récits ont le pouvoir d'agencer, de réfléchir et de conférer un sens au temps : réalité problématique et angoissante, celui-ci devient « humain » grâce aux narrations, qui le travaillent, le mettent en forme et le donnent à penser. (cité par DUBIED A., 2000)

Donc lesdits évènements sont supposés s'être déroulés d'une certaine manière, appréhendés d'une autre manière, pour être finalement intégrés dans un temps éminemment personnel qui la plupart du temps ne concerne que le présent et encore un présent à forte charge émotionnelle.

Le récit ne fait pas littérature et la littérature ne saura se réduire au récit, en effet, car la littérature dépasse de loin la simple fonctionnalité du langage et la temporalité de ce qui se donne à raconter.

Le récit peut miser certes sur le transhistorique, en puisant sa force vitale dans la vie-même, mais malheureusement, le plus souvent il ne fait que reléguer l'histoire au second plan.

Il est intéressant de noter que certains mots sont voués à disparition tandis que d'autres apparaissent. Avec l'ubérisation de l'économie et de la culture, le mot *histoire* semble en faire partie de la première catégorie.

Cette mise à mal, pour ne pas dire à mort, de la culture va à l'encontre du projet louable qui serait de faire de la culture une action « *de la création par nous-même de notre humanité, de la réalisation pour tous, concrètement du droit d'être homme.* » (, H. Bartoli, cité par D. Leroy, 2011).

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copier-coller généralisé à l'échelle mondiale. Quelle influence aura cela sur le développement neuronal et moteur des enfants ? Voici une question que nous devrons nous poser dès maintenant sous peine que demain serait-il peut-être trop tard.

Il est évident que dans la culture de type *syntactique* à l'intérieur de laquelle les individus sont pris comme dans un filet (individualisme poussé à l'extrême, pragmatisme exacerbé, management de la performance), l'histoire et l'historicité comptent peu, la place revenant de droit à l'instant présent. C'est très probablement le projet de la production d'une amnésie généralisée faisant en sorte que dans vingt ou trente ans, plus personne n'aura entendu de Henri Bartoli ou de Marguerite Yourcenar, et encore moins de Nietzsche ou de Schopenhauer ; les justifications ne manqueront certes pas.

Ces constats nous invitent à réfléchir autour de ce qui pourrait constituer un *syndrome de l'amnésie* dont nous relevons trois possibles causes :

1) La vision réductionniste ou utilitariste conduisant à une confusion de plans, de niveaux, de dimensions. Nous devrions plutôt parler d'un rétrécissement de la vision. Ce brouillage de la vision est d'autant plus grave que l'appétence pour la culture est en chute libre, à cela s'ajoutant les baisses spectaculaires de crédits alloués à ce domaine un peu partout.

2) La valorisation marchande, mercantile comme seul étalon de la valeur. La pression sociale étant tellement grande, l'être humain semble manquer en permanence de temps, ce temps qui coûte de l'argent. Ce manque n'est pas sans influer sur sa productivité et sa compétence qui parfois se traduit par burn-out, dépression, rejet, solitude et perte d'emploi.

3) La prise en otage de l'humain par la technologie. Dans une culture se voulant celle de la rationalité, l'individu devrait de plus en plus faire fi de ses sentiments et sa nature humaine profonde. Par conséquent, l'être humain ne cesse de se débattre aux prises des fins érigés en objectifs mesurables et en absence desquels son existence-même se voit dépourvue de sens.

S'il fallait nommer seulement ces trois causes, ce serait suffisamment pour dire que l'amnésie programmée crée de l'inculture, de l'imposture et donc de la pathologie.

La recherche-même est orientée, devenant trop couteuse, éminemment monnayée et monnayable en rompant avec le paradigme d'une recherche fondamentale.

Ces aspects ravivent certaines dimensions dont témoigne le récit, et particulièrement le récit narratif<sup>10</sup> sur lequel nous allons nous pencher par la suite : la **narration**, le **territoire** et le **souffle de vie**<sup>11</sup>.

### III. Le récit Narratif. De la littérature vers « une Thérapeutique du Récit »

En faisant état et lieu(x) de la culture dans sa triple approche systémique, nous avons tenté de dresser un portrait contemporain de la culture, et plus particulièrement de l'appétence pour la culture littéraire. Dans la mesure où la littérature est délaissée progressivement, nous formulons l'hypothèse d'une (re)prise du récit narratif par le biais des thérapies de l'accompagnement illustrées avec l'exemple de la thérapie narrative.

Nous nous proposons de saisir ce qui constitue le point d'infexion entre la littérature et la thérapie narrative<sup>12</sup>, tout en analysant le crayonnage des espaces de rencontre et de discussion (forums, réseaux sociaux) autre que ceux dont nous avions encore l'habitude il y a une vingtaine d'années.

1) Point d'infexion : ce qui est commun aux deux, à la fois à la littérature comme art et à la thérapie narrative

2) Distanciation : délaissement de la culture littéraire au profit de la culture de(s) rencontre(s)

3) La place de communautés : la *soupape* narrative

1) Ainsi la littérature et la pratique thérapeutique de l'accompagnement se rejoignent dans le sens où, dans les deux cas, la sensibilité opère le réglage entre les faits bruts et la signification attribuée.

Si dans la littérature il s'agit plutôt de structuration et d'interprétation, dans les pratiques narratives ce qui compte relève davantage de la compréhension socioconstructiviste et du cheminement (l'itinéraire narratif). En se référant au récit biographique ou à l'histoire de vie versus la narration

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<sup>10</sup> Il s'agit de la pratique narrative telle qu'elle a été abordée et développée par Michael White et David Epston dans les années '80 en Australie.

<sup>11</sup> Ces dimensions résultent du fruit de nos réflexions à la matière.

<sup>12</sup> Pour ce qu'il est du lien entre la littérature et la thérapie narrative, notre tâche se relève facilitée dans la mesure où l'autrice de cet article est à la fois femme de lettres et praticienne narrative.

littéraire, H. Breton remarque justement une certaine absence de structuration propre à ceux-ci :

*« c'est ce qu'il n'est pas possible pour les formes d'expression en première personne dont la dynamique est de faire passer au langage les évènements tels qu'ils se sont donné à vivre dans le cours de l'existence. » (H. Breton, 2020)*

La logique extrinsèque aux faits et aux normes se transforme en une logique interne capable de relier différents niveaux de réalité et de complexité selon ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler en thérapie narrative les « conversations en échafaudage ». C'est la logique « dialogique » (E. Morin, 1977), une logique intrinsèque qui peut prendre l'apparence d'un récit magique, un peu comme les narrations considérées relevant du courant littéraire du réalisme magique et dont un des chefs de file est Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Grâce aux conversations en échafaudage, le thérapeute guide la personne qui ainsi se retrouve dans le droit de s'affirmer, de s'exposer, de se raconter. En certains cas, l'action de raconter, de narrer devient une expérience vitale allant jusqu'au maintien en vie du sujet narrateur.

Un autre exemple fort parlant est le conte. Cette forme de récit propre à la littérature est employée avec beaucoup de succès au cours des pratiques narratives utilisées dans les domaines de l'accompagnement (comme le management, l'orientation personnelle et professionnelle, la reconversion, la gestion de projet et l'acquisition des compétences).

Le conte raconte une histoire dont la vocation serait plutôt universelle. A travers la narration, l'action des personnages, les métaphores employées, nous assistons non seulement à une découverte de soi (éveil des sensations et des sentiments en résonnance) mais également nous prenons conscience du fait qu'à notre niveau, nous sommes des créateurs, des auteurs de récits.

De plus, la vocation du conte traduit l'oralité. Dans cet espace de la parole dite, écoutée, redite et saisie comme continuum magique et réel, nous jonglons avec les ambivalences et les nouvelles interprétations métaphysiques : celui qui écoute prend part active à **ce qui se dit, se lie et se délie en permanence**. C'est en ceci que consiste très probablement le pouvoir extraordinaire des contes, perçus à la limite de la littérature et du narratif. Grâce aux contes, le narratif nous est révélé de la manière dont il est censé se déployer par et dans la pratique ; autrement dit, comme métaphore.

Ce troisième élément, la métaphore, constitue un nouveau point d’infexion sur l’orbite duquel la thérapie narrative rejoint la littérature.

Néanmoins il existe des limites à ce parallèle, et l’une de celles-ci concerne justement l’exploration de soi. Il s’agit d’une exploration de l’être social et culturel en continue interaction avec son milieu et ses semblables, et dont le but serait « *de se raconter, et en se racontant, (de) s’inscrire dans d’autres perspectives.* » (MORI S., 2012)

Donner une version de faits vécus, amplifier ou minimiser certains aspects grâce au rapport entretenu avec le souvenir, voici en résumé en quoi consiste l’approche du récit de soi, fort différenciée du récit littéraire. Soulignons également qu’il est fort possible que cette expérience de soi manifestée dans le récit, trouve une forme plus ample, cela d’un côté grâce au langage, et de l’autre, grâce à la conscience d’une vision projective. Cette amplitude concerne une identité personnelle que la thérapie narrative appelle *identité préférée*, et qui petit à petit, gagnant en consistance, peut s’affirmer librement sans peurs ni rejets.

De plus, dans la culture de l’accompagnement narratif, il s’agit d’un tandem: la production est réalisée sous l’œil et l’oreille attentive de l’accompagnateur – thérapeute, en état de saisir ce qui possède une nature « flottante » :

*« ce sont des narrations – et si j’ose dire des « contre-narrations » - où je vais écouter le récit qui est fait, et aller débusquer les constructions profondes du sujet en dégageant ce qui fait point de certitude et qui embrume l’évolution et l’épanouissement du sujet. » (MORI S., 2012)*

C’est grâce à cette vision prospective, constructive selon le principe des échafaudages, que le sujet narrateur sera capable de tisser des connexions durables, de facture intérieure-extérieure, lui permettant de se sentir à la fois acteur et narrateur, autrement dit « *narra(c)teur* »<sup>13</sup>.

2) Il n’est plus nouveau pour personne qu’avec le développement d’une culture des interactions fragiles, une culture des liens invisibles et virtuels, nous ressentons ce dérolement par rapport à une histoire collective. Certains d’entre nous s’adaptent, d’autres prennent le train en marche, faute

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<sup>13</sup> Ce terme appartient à Serge Mori.

d'avoir connu *l'avant*. Nous l'avons vu, l'ère des récits est en marche, ces récits qui saisissent timidement les manifestations des ravages provoqués par la faillite de la Culture.

Le culte de l'image dans une culture de plus en plus visuelle, joue pour beaucoup contre la culture de l'écrit. L'écrit est destiné à être lu, et pour lire, il faut posséder ce temps précieux que la société numérique nous retire, et également en avoir l'envie, en ayant appris à cultiver ce plaisir à lire. C'est en sa compagnie que l'on peut prendre le temps de cheminer, de se poser des questions, tout en favorisant l'intériorité. La technologie aidant, l'image contribue fortement au décentrage de soi malgré l'apparente préoccupation quasi-constante d'une culture de l'image de soi.

Dans son dernier ouvrage, S. Tisseron remarque à quel point la photo numérique et plus particulièrement les images créées ou retouchées à l'aide de l'IA, entretient le récit individuel au détriment de l'*histoire*, en l'occurrence l'*histoire familiale* (avec ses codes, son ancrage, le désir de mémoire et de souvenir, ...) :

*« le grand récit se déplace de la famille au groupe des followers d'une personnalité qui invite ses fans à copier ses poses. Mais il s'agit moins d'une mémoire que d'un récit ponctuel et éphémère. » (TISSERON, S., 2025).*

Cette posture mimétique entraîne vers un glissement de plus en plus accentué vers l'*indistinct* sans individualité propre. C'est également la posture qui permet avant tout de trouver des réponses tout faites là où il aurait fortement besoin de commencer par se poser des questions, d'*interroger*. On pourrait même en déduire qu'à l'ère de l'IA, il s'agit avant tout d'une culture éphémère auxquels effets ne tardent pas à se faire sentir : perte de sens à l'*existence* et au travail, mal être, inadéquation entre des besoins profonds et l'*exercice* d'un métier, rejet, incommunicabilité, voire incompétence.

C'est dans ce cheminement allant de la littérature vers la culture de l'*image éphémère* que nous intégrons une possible réponse, une aide (ou assistance) narrative<sup>14</sup> palliant à l'*incommunicabilité* et très souvent à l'*absence* des mots.

3) Si la littérature est progressivement délaissée au profit d'autres formes de culture, les communautés sont en grande partie responsables. La

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<sup>14</sup> Dans un prochain article nous allons développer plus amplement en quoi consiste cette approche et donnerons des exemples concrets issus du monde managérial.

constitution progressive dédites communautés (réseaux, forums de discussions, ...) accentue l'atomisation de l'espace culturel perçu comme un espace de consommation : contenus, messages, commentaires, réactions diverses prennent beaucoup de place, tout en laissant l'impression à l'émetteur qu'il procède à une véritable participation sociale. Si la littérature a l'avantage de se pratiquer seul, la prise de parole au sein des communautés active la surexcitation de la participation.

Face à l'affaiblissement d'une culture systématique de la littérature comme pilier d'une éducation humaniste, il semblerait que la thérapie narrative arrive à point pour palier aux désaccords, aux insuffisances, aux valeurs fuyantes mais surtout à l'absence d'ancrage (ubiquité, instantanéité, hyper-technicité, culture prônant l'augmentation cybernétique des capacités de l'humain, ...).

Grâce à l'approche narrative nous renouons avec un temps qui dorénavant pourrait se réclamer non linéaire et non lisse pour être imprégné de toute sa complexité dynamique, historique et ambiguë qu'offrent les multiples chemins de la narration. Ces retrouvailles forgent « l'identité narrative » (P. Ricoeur, 1985), identité attentive à l'autre et à soi, aux inflexions de la voix, à ces mille mystères dont le numérique nous prive, et en même temps elles représentent bien plus : une sorte de réconciliation avec le passé.

C'est le temps de la connaissance qui ancre et honore, nous libère de la *pensée vide* en nous (re)liant par le biais du **cérémonial du souvenir** aux ancêtres, aux parents, au roman social et sociétal dont nous peuplons les interstices. Dans cette vision, tout personnage secondaire voire périphérique devient un personnage principal contribuant à l'écriture d'une narration qui autrement lui serait refusée, à la fois d'accès et dans une légitime quête de reconnaissance.

Les différences avec les réseaux sociaux sont marquantes, car à l'intérieur de ceux-ci, plus un quelconque contributeur participe, moins il a le sentiment d'ancrage, car paradoxalement, une activité intellectuelle et émotionnelle quasi-permanente ne va pas sans produire certains dégâts.

Néanmoins ces tentatives d'un permanent *sortir du soi* s'accompagnent de ce que nous pourrions appeler une relation de centrage-décentrage, éminemment narrative. Le besoin de dire, de s'exprimer dénote un besoin profond de prise en compte, qui va du besoin d'être entendu au besoin d'être source de changement. Bien que la marge de manœuvre soit mince, ce sentiment doublé de l'addiction aux écrans, sollicite la création des récits ayant besoin d'être revus et corrigés, voire, comme le dit S. Mori, soignés. C'est par ce biais que nous pouvons évoquer la soupape narrative

dans le rôle et la place que les communautés (pratiques ou échanges autour des contenus culturels de quelque nature soient-ils) ont pris dans nos vies.

## En conclusion

Nous avons vu qu'il existe une nouvelle manière de transposer les principes narratifs à un territoire, en captant l'énergie personnelle (créatrice inclue) afin de permettre une réconciliation de la personne avec un soi déstructuré socialement, économiquement ou culturellement, mais néanmoins en quête avide de sens.

En somme, l'apport que la thérapie narrative offre en contrepartie de la littérature se situe clairement du côté de la justice sociale. Ce concept de justice sociale intégré aux pratiques narratives a été largement débattu par le praticien et théoricien français P. Blanc-Sahnoun.

Le sentiment d'injustice que peut ressentir une personne face à la culture du numérique, la culture-objet en passant par l'ubérisation, n'est pas de moindres. Il est évident que dans de telles conditions, l'affect, la sensibilité personnelle tout comme les traits d'individualité, soient perçus comme peu souhaitables ; en ce sens, la nouvelle culture du Management à l'aide de l'IA pourrait aller jusqu'à leur bannissement progressif de nos vies.

L'appel massif aux techniques dite de l'IA permet la constitution culturelle d'un nouvel espace de vie et de travail devenu déjà pour certains d'entre nous un espace vie-travail. Nous avons compris pourquoi dans cet espace, la part de la littérature et des loisirs culturels se voit diminuée. Et c'est justement sur ce terrain là, le terrain des valeurs, celui d'*« un riche patrimoine élaboré par les aînés et que les générations nouvelles reçoivent lorsqu'il existe un point de rencontre possible entre cet apport et le récepteur de cette formidable offrande »* (SAEZ, G., 1985) que la thérapie narrative intervient<sup>15</sup>.

Il est fort probable que des approches de ce type se développeront progressivement et cela, non seulement dans un cadre jusqu'à là strictement réservé aux psychothérapies. Avec l'approche narrative, les pratiques d'accompagnement individuel et collectif n'ont qu'à gagner, car il s'agit avant tout de quitter l'enfermement du récit dominant, ce récit qui nous assiège comme si nous étions des simples objets.

Il ne s'agit pas non plus de tomber dans le carcan d'une psychologie positive à tout va et déconnectée du réel, mais de construire un récit dont les

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<sup>15</sup> A cet effet nous aimerions mentionner James March, professeur de management et auteur du cours *« Le leadership dans les organisations »* paru en 2003 aux Presses de l'Ecole des Mines de Paris grâce à Thierry Weil, qui étayait son approche en choisissant des modèles de héros littéraires comme Don Quichotte et Pierre Pezoukhov.

facettes multiples peuvent se découvrir ou obscurcir selon les besoins, les attentes, les moments et bien sûr, le talent (nous dirions plutôt l'humanité) de l'accompagnateur.

Simple consolation ou facette d'une littérature délaissée, le narratif rassurons-nous, aura encore des beaux jours devant soi.

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# L'INSOUCIANCE PICARESQUE DE BUCAREST

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## **Abstract:**

Are foreign travel writers not the best positioned to capture, through their curious and nomadic gaze, the soul of a capital and its people? In the 1930s, Paul Morand, who would later become France's ambassador in 1943, brought back from his stays in Romania a series of postcards depicting a country between the West and the East, as well as informed and endearing reflections on the Romanian soul. In doing so, he developed a myth-analysis of Bucharest that achieved well-deserved renown.

## **Keywords:**

Bucharest, francophonie, royal family, gardens, character of the people.

L'image française de la Roumanie, brouillée par la chape de plomb totalitaire, gagne à être étudiée dans la première moitié du XXe siècle, qui a su en dresser un portrait flatteur à la mesure de l'influence que la France avait encore en cette région balkanique. On dispose d'une exemplification talentueuse chez un observateur diplomate, fortement impliqué, futur ambassadeur de France en Roumanie, et qui avait épousé une roumaine, Hélène Chissoveloni, en l'occurrence l'écrivain Paul Morand. Son essai sur Bucarest, paru dès 1935<sup>1</sup>, où il reviendra comme ambassadeur en 1943 allie un souci d'historien, ouvert à une compréhension empathique de son objet, et un goût, fait de brillant et de légèreté, pour ce peuple qui l'alimente en exotisme salubre, lui qui s'est complu pendant des décennies à voyager à travers le monde en dandy, avec une élégance un peu condescendante, façon « fin de siècle ».

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Morand, « Bucarest », in : *Voyages*, Bouquins, Paris : Robert Laffont, 2002 p 573 sq. La première édition a été publiée chez Plon en 1935.

Ce tableau de Bucarest, intégré à une longue présentation de l'histoire de la Roumanie, se révèle minutieux, plein d'observations attentives et documentées pour comprendre un peuple et son milieu, mais aussi engagé subjectivement, plaident chaleureusement pour une défense des relations franco-roumaines, et se prévalant de ses affinités politiques avec le régime monarchique, puisque les pages les plus généreuses concernent la famille royale, dont il brosse un portrait intimiste. Dans ces pages légères et justes, P. Morand parvient à restituer quelques « instantanés de la ville » (page 75), à peindre de manière harmonieuse un pays encore rural, avec sa capitale bon enfant, aux moeurs picaresques, animée cependant par une vie mondaine voire aristocratique, dans laquelle il est particulièrement à l'aise, et qui lui sert assurément de lunettes pour découvrir le charme roumain, incarné en particulier par le rayonnement esthétique et politique de l'orthodoxie.

Indépendamment de la valeur historique du livre, qui déroule dans sa plus grande partie une chronologie détaillée de l'histoire roumaine, plusieurs passages permettent d'abord aux lecteurs peu informés, de se familiariser avec les grandes étapes des relations franco-roumaines et de découvrir le bilan mitigé de leur état dans l'entre-deux guerre. P. Morand évoque, entre autres, l'invasion des Français à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le succès remporté par le théâtre français dans la capitale (p. 615-616), puis décrit les séjours parisiens des Roumains après la révolution de 1848, chez Madame Quinet par exemple (p. 618-619). On retiendra en particulier le croquis, bien enlevé, sur l'ambiance de l'*Athénée Palace* de Bucarest où « tout vous parle de la France » (p. 655), le récit des frasques de « Rose Pompon », amie de célébrités du temps (A. de Musset, par exemple) et qui défraya qui défraya la chronique mondaine à Bucarest et Paris, où elle fut victime de cabales relayées par Napoléon III (p. 659), les notations humoristiques sur l'influence de la langue française dans les néologismes de la langue roumaine (p. 648). P. Morand se félicite tout particulièrement de la persistance du français, constatée en 1934, malgré déjà les concurrences de l'allemand et de l'italien (p. 674-675), tout en faisant écho aux agacements des Roumains devant la politique surtout commerciale et financière de la France, qui les desservirait (p. 703).

*« Nous aurons encore quelques temps l'orgueilleux plaisir d'entendre des Roumains de qualité comme Monsieur Philippide, le traducteur de Baudelaire, M. Sadoveano, le célèbre auteur dramatique, M. Densushianu, le savant philologue et bien d'autres,*

*célébrer nos écrivains en français qu'aucun français ne pourrait parler plus purement » (p. 675).*

Plus typiques et attachantes sont les pages dans lesquelles Morand livre ses confidences sur ses amitiés et affinités avec la famille régnante, qui lui semble incarner une sagesse politique typiquement roumaine, qu'il retrouve d'ailleurs dans la typologie psycho-culturelle du peuple, comme en témoigne cette belle page du voyage vers Balcic pour y rencontrer la reine Marie :

*« Je garde un merveilleux souvenir de quelques jours passés chez la souveraine au bord de la mer Noire, à Balcic, il y a cinq ou six automnes. Dans ce village roumain, perdu près de la frontière bulgare, où se dressent encore des minarets, le jardin anglais de la reine Marie descend jusqu'à la mer. Les graines de chez Sutton, sous ce soleil torride, ont jailli de mai à octobre en fusées réglées pour éclater à chaque saison.*

*Quel spectacle que cette féérie britannique de couleurs au milieu du désert ! Je pensai à Malte, à Gibraltar, où les tommies arrivent à faire pousser du gazon sur le ciment salé d'embruns. Après la Dobroudja, immense plaine bossuée ça et là d'anciens tombeaux scythes, mamelons couverts parfois d'une herbe jaune, une herbe de commencement du monde, après ces collines qui sont les plus vieilles du globe, après la traversée cahoteuse de villages où les femmes tartares, à pantalon bouffant, se cachent encore la bouche par pudeur islamique, où les enfants tondus grouillent comme des porcelets, le sol s'était effondré soudain et le petit village de Balcic m'était apparu dans le creux de la falaise.*

*Sous un crépuscule lilas, au fracas frais d'une cascade tapissée de pariétaires, au bas d'un escalier en chicane aux dalles disjointes, ma chambre s'ouvrait dans le roc qui soutenait deux anciens moulins turcs, aménagés en bungalows. Amenée par de minuscules canaux, l'eau chantait de terrasse en terrasse, baignant les fleurs. Je vois encore la haute silhouette mauve de la reine Marie arrêtée au bout d'une allée » (p. 625).*

Véritable page d'anthologie où paysage, histoire et institutions de Roumanie se croisent, témoignant aussi de la séduction opérée par cette femme forte et protectrice sincère de son peuple. D'autres pages déploient une peinture chaleureuse de la ville, à la fois récit de voyage, écriture de guide touristique cultivé et notations d'anthropologue qui a beaucoup voyagé. On est en présence d'un grand nombre de scènes de genre, de descriptions de

lieux et de quartiers, de croquis de personnages sur le modèle de la peinture hollandaise, véritables miniatures animées de couleurs et de bruits.

Ces descriptions brillantes forment une véritable mythanalyse culturelle du Roumain qui délecte l'auteur, le détend ; le réconcilie avec l'optimisme (sur fond de caractère hautain et acerbe). Pays de l'entre-deux, la Roumanie développe chez ses habitants une légèreté insouciante, un peu cynique. Morand restitue particulièrement bien la personnalité suggestive de l'intelligentzia roumaine, à bien des égards surprenante.

*« Les spéculations abstraites ne semblent pas les passionner ; je n'ai pas deviné chez eux de réelle préoccupation politique religieuse ou métaphysique et les chemins qui tendent vers l'absolu les attire médiocrement. Les Roumains sont réalistes et polémistes ils sont même merveilleusement doué pour la polémique. Leur drôlerie leur verbe leur mort dans leur rapidité leur bon sens cynique les rendent redoutable il n'est pas facile de tenir sa place dans une discussion entre Roumains. Aussi sont-ils d'excellents journalistes aussi leurs intellectuels fonde-t-il des journaux ou la politique tient presque toute la place si c'est trois » (pp. 673-674).*

Bien plus les Roumains ont, à la manière des Écossais, une aptitude rare à l'excentricité, à l'extravagance, à l'insularité morale, ce que Morand décrit par une gamme d'anecdotes, qui le rend proche en ces pages d'un Tocqueville ou d'un Montesquieu décrivant les mœurs de leur temps.

*« En Roumanie ni la religion qui a peu de prise sur les vies ; ni l'éducation qui n'en n'a guère (ce qui ne veut pas dire que ce peuple, beaucoup moins éduqué que nous, soit plus mal élevé ; je lui trouve au contraire une politesse native que nous pourrions lui envier), ni les contraintes sociales très réduites dans un pays où il y a place pour tous et où le coude à coude est inconnu, ni l'appareil de lois tempéré par la douceur des mœurs, ni l'opinion publique dont les éclats se dissolvent vite dans l'indulgence générale ne pèsent sur les individus et ne les empêchent de se développer selon leur type et même de l'exagérer jusqu'au tic et à la manie » (p. 686).*

Cette magistrale analyse du tempérament roumain met en valeur la bonne humeur, l'élasticité, le sens de l'éphémère, le fatalisme du transitoire (p 709), l'ironie à la française, le pragmatisme poussé jusqu'à la

complaisance, à la corruption, la mentalité bonhomme qui surmonte les malheurs, accepte l'austérité, l'esprit nomade enfin.

*« Ces fils de Rome n'ont pas hérité de la rigidité romaine : chez eux rien ne marche droit, tout va de travers, la politique et les rues, les habits et les autos, les trottoirs se gondolent, les chaussées se soulèvent comme les dalles du jugement dernier ; édifications et écroulements se succèdent parmi les quartiers inertes ou exaltés ;...A Bucarest, hier est vite oublié, aujourd'hui est sans valeur et le seul mot qu'on vous réponde et que finissent par apprendre, la rage au cœur, après de longues stations dans les ministères, l'Américain ou le Suédois qui s'y sont égarés dans l'espoir de quelque concession ou de quelques adjudication c'est « mâine », c'est-à-dire demain »* (pp. 713-714).

C'est bien pourquoi pour Morand, aller en Roumanie c'est faire « une cure d'insouciance » (p 710), puisque « *la Roumanie n'est pas un pays toxique ; ses plaies sont offertes au soleil ; la pluie du ciel, la pleine lumière, la poussière des grands chemins sont ses meilleurs pansements ; sa guérison est confiée à la grâce de Dieu et à l'indulgence du diable* » (p. 710)

Ainsi Morand, à travers cette carte postale d'une belle écriture matinée de sensibilité, nous semble avoir saisi avec finesse et subtilité un pays et son âme. Il se montre comme bien d'autres séduit à la fois par la rationalité latine, colorée à la française, et par le charme du fatalisme oriental, lesté par un imaginaire archaïque qui remonte à une histoire agitée, à un peuple de paysans très orientaux, à une légèreté typique de l'Europe centrale, dont la Roumanie serait le centre.

La Roumanie apparaît ainsi comme un espace culturel de l'entre-deux, non seulement mitoyenne entre Occident et Orient mais sachant préserver les deux formes d'ethos civilisationnel que sont la rationalité et l'imaginaire. Sa francophonie et sa francophilie, greffées sur une latinité ancienne, l'ont familiarisée avec le rationalisme voire le cartésianisme, mais son enracinement dans un fonds historique pré-chrétien, tamisé d'orientalisme turc et au-delà, lui a légué un capital de rêves, de symboles et de mythes qui la mettent à l'abri de l'histoire orientée par la seule raison.

Cet entrecroisement original confère à la Roumanie une double face, archaïque et moderne, de progrès et d'anhistoricisme, de liberté et de destin,

qui constitue un patrimoine unique dont l'Europe à venir aura tout à gagner ; Depuis Morand, bien des Français y ont découvert ce charme discret où malgré les tragédies de l'histoire récente, on peut y goûter une gaieté nostalgique teintée d'authenticité inexpugnable.

C'est pourquoi nous tenons toujours pour vraie cette conclusion :

*« La leçon que nous offre Bucarest n'est pas une leçon d'art mais une leçon de vie ; il enseigne à adapter à tout, même à l'impossible, il incarne sous ce rapport l'âme d'un peuple dont la patience est infinie, sublime comme celle des bêtes, et dont l'indulgent optimisme a inventé ce dicton « Grand est le jardin du bon Dieu ». Capitale d'une terre tragique où souvent tout fini dans le comique, Bucarest s'est laissée aller aux événements sans cette raideur, partant sans cette fragilité que donne la colère. Voilà pourquoi à travers la courbe sinuuse d'une destinée picaresque Bucarest est resté gai. »* (p. 714).

# THE MAN IN PROVERBS

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## **Abstract:**

The essay proposes an interpretation of proverbs as condensed forms of practical thought, organised by a proverbial reason articulated through three interdependent dimensions: functional, cognitive and expressive. The functional dimension orders experience through relations of causality, proportion and temporality. The cognitive dimension regulates critical judgement by mechanisms of reciprocity and limitation. The expressive dimension fixes meanings through contradiction and analogy. The paremiological examples illustrating this interpretation are drawn from Mihai Eminescu’s journalistic writings and highlight the mechanisms that convert empirical observation into norms and instruments of collective validation.

## **Keywords:**

Proverb, practical reason, causality, proportion, limit, contradiction, analogy.

*Geaba vii, geaba te duci, geaba spargi niște papuci. Țara pierde de tătari, baba bea cu lăutari. Dracul, când n-are de lucru, își cântărește coada. A poruncit câinelui și câinele pisicii, și pisica șoarecelui, iar șoarecele de coadă și-a atârnat porunca. Trage nădejde ca spânul de barbă.*<sup>1</sup>

This small string of proverbs, excerpted from Eminescu’s journalism (Milică 2023), though seemingly nonsensical, sketches the figure of the man in proverbs: the man who runs without purpose, the man who ignores catastrophe, the man seized by cosmic boredom, the man who issues commands for the sheer pleasure of commanding, the man who, against all evidence, believes that hope never dies. Beneath the cloak of absurdity, proverbs bear the cut of human inconstancy, striving to capture, in memorable

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<sup>1</sup> These proverbs can be roughly translated into English as follows: *In vain you come, in vain you go, in vain you wear out your shoes. The country perishes under the Tatars, while the old woman drinks with the fiddlers. The devil, when idle, weighs his tail. He commanded the dog, and the dog the cat, and the cat the mouse, and the mouse hung the command from its tail. He clings to hope like a beardless man to his beard.* (T. N.)

formulas, the very order of the world. The man in proverbs is the synthesis of collective experience and practical thought, codified in the grammar, semantics and pragmatics of these miniature texts of wisdom. Considered as miniature wisdom texts, these lapidary verbal structures are characterised by cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativeness, situationality and intertextuality (Beaugrande & Dressler 1981: 1-12). Within their structure, these features govern both form and meaning: cohesion and coherence organise parallelisms and oppositions; intentionality and acceptability establish pragmatic valences and cultural recognition; informativeness and situationality ensure practical relevance; and intertextuality integrates them into the sapiential architecture.

Proverbs condense practical observation into short, transmissible formulas, recirculated in new contexts. Each proverb stands at the intersection of individual experience and collective memory, of personal reflection and the tradition of common thought. These texts do not appear in isolation but form a network. They constituted diachronically, through accumulation and selection, until they became stable elements of a shared rationality. Taken together, proverbs express an implicit worldview, elaborated through experience and verified over time. Norms of action, criteria of judgement and forms of expression sustain one another, maintaining the balance between knowledge and conduct.

Proverbs encode the practical reasoning of a community, fixing it in relatively stable linguistic patterns. Through them, language acquires an ordering function: it establishes relations between facts, causes and consequences, norms and exceptions, ends and means. In oral cultures, these anonymous texts, collectively recognised, serve as moral and cognitive guides, preserving criteria of judgement and rules of prudence.

Proverbial reason is articulated in three dimensions (functional, cognitive and expressive) that sustain the architecture of practical thought. Correspondences link and differentiate these dimensions, each contributing, through its roles, to the equilibrium of the whole. The functional dimension organises the way experience is understood through relations between action and consequence, cause, measure and time, extracting a verifiable order from the repetition of facts. The cognitive dimension regulates judgement and sets the limits of knowledge through relations of reciprocity and adequacy that confer stability to reasoning. The expressive dimension ensures the transmission and permanence of proverbial expressions, transforming observation into concise form through contrast and analogy. Through the interaction of these dimensions, the sphere of proverbial reason takes shape,

where world, knowledge and language mirror and balance one another in a durable form of experience.

Within the *functional dimension*, proverbial reason orders experience through recurrent relations between actions and consequences, rendering the practical structure of the world intelligible. *Causality* expresses one of the relations through which this dimension manifests itself, as illustrated by texts such as “Cine alege, culege” (‘He who chooses, reaps’), “Unde nu-i cap, vai de picioare” (‘Where there is no head, woe to the feet’) or “Vorba multă, sărăcia omului” (‘Many words will not fill a bushel’). In these texts, the link between action and outcome is reduced to its verifiable essence: the deed brings the result, and the result confirms the deed. What is expressed is not an abstract causality but one drawn from the repetition of observation. Proverbs retain only what recurs constantly in experience and transform the finding into a short, transmissible and applicable rule. Also within the functional dimension, *proportion* represents another type of relation through which experience is ordered and evaluated. It establishes the balance between action and result, cost and gain, means and ends. This principle is illustrated by texts such as “Cu măsura cu care măsori ţi se va măsura” (‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you’), “Mai mare daraua decât ocaua” (roughly ‘Much ado about nothing’) and “O mâna spală pe alta și amândouă obrazul” (‘One hand washes the other and both wash the face’). In these paremiological illustrations, practical observation underpins the norm of balance, and the deed is judged by the fit between effort and effect. In “Mai mare daraua decât ocaua”, disproportionality has no moral sense but a material one: the weight of the packaging exceeds that of the contents, and the loss arises from the imbalance between means and ends. “O mâna spală pe alta” expresses the reciprocity of efficiency and shows that effort shared symmetrically multiplies the result. Proverbs about measure formulate the principle of proportion as a rule of action. Every deed is evaluated through the internal balance of its resources and its purpose.

*Temporality* completes the series of functional relations through which experience is ordered. The temporal relation establishes the link between timing and efficiency, showing that the value of an action depends on the moment in which it is fulfilled. This principle is illustrated by texts such as “Bate fierul până-i cald” (‘Strike while the iron is hot’), “Toamna se numără bobocii” (roughly ‘Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched’) and “Mai bine mai târziu decât niciodată” (‘Better late than never’). In such proverbs, time is not a mere duration but a condition of success. “Bate fierul până-i cald” formulates the rule of intervention at the right moment.

“Toamna se numără bobocii” fixes the time of evaluation after the process has ended. “Mai bine mai târziu decât niciodată” acknowledges the value of delayed action when the optimal moment has passed. Through these texts, practical experience defines time as an element of functional reason and integrates the rhythm of moments into their natural order.

The relations of the *cognitive dimension* introduce the self-regulation of judgement: what is legitimate, what is possible, what is true in a practical sense. Through the *relation of reciprocity*, balance is formulated as symmetry: “Omenia, omenie cere” (‘Kindness demands kindness’), “Cu măsura cu care măsori tă se va măsura” (‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you’), “Fă ce zice popa, nu ce face el” (‘Do as the priests say, not as they do’). Virtue is not preached in itself; rather, a relationship is stabilised: what you give returns in the same register; coherence between word and deed is the criterion; authority is measured by rules, not by the personal example of the one who utters them. Reciprocity converts morality into social calculation: equity becomes a form of balance.

The *relation of limit* defines the threshold between desire and possibility and fixes the boundary of reason within the field of action. It functions as a filter of adequacy and as a mechanism of protection against confusion between what seems and what is. In such proverbs, the sign of limitation does not close off action but orients it toward what can be accomplished. “Nu tot ce zboară se mănâncă” (‘All that glitters is not gold’) tempers credulity and prevents the waste of effort. “Din coadă de câine sită de mătase nu poți face” (‘You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear’) identifies the impossible and restores the relation between matter and intention. “Cară apă cu ciurul” (‘Carry water in a sieve’) signals an unproductive method and reveals the error of an unsuitable means. Through these texts, proverbial thought transforms prudence into a form of lucidity and keeps action within the field of the real, avoiding the squandering of effort.

The relations of the *expressive dimension* ensure the transmission and fixation of meaning through form. In this dimension, contradiction and analogy are the means by which proverbial reason preserves its clarity and durability: the former through opposition, the latter through correspondence. The *relation of contradiction* renders intelligible the tension between planes and transforms it into an instrument of understanding. In these texts, opposition does not dismantle meaning but organises it through contrast. “Dracul nu face biserici” (‘The devil does not build churches’) expresses impossibility and safeguards the coherence of values. “Una zice, alta face” (‘One thing said, another done’) denounces the rupture between word and

deed and warns against incongruence between intention and realisation. “Capra râioasă ține coada sus” (‘The mangy goat holds its tail high’) exposes the conflict between appearance and condition, offering the criterion for recognising false prestige. Through such formulas, contradiction does not unravel reason but compels judgement to distinguish between what seems and what is.

The *relation of analogy* expresses the link between forms and meanings and constructs correspondences between different orders of experience. In these texts, resemblance implies a transfer. “Lupul părul îl schimbă, dar năravul nu” (‘The wolf changes its fur but not its nature’) establishes the equivalence between appearance and character and shows that external modification does not touch inner nature. “Așchia nu sare departe de trunchi” (‘The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree’) fixes continuity between origin and result, while “Cum e sacul, și peticul” (‘Such carpenters, such chips’) formulates the rule of compatibility between parts. “Părinții au mâncat aguridă și copiilor li se strepezesc dinții” (‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’) extends the relation of cause to the level of generations and transforms a physical observation into a moral law about the transmission of consequences. Through such texts, analogy does not merely describe resemblance but uses it to generalise, preserving the concreteness of observation. It organises thought through correspondences and gives proverbial reason a stable form capable of linking the particular case to the constant structure of the world.

The three dimensions of proverbial reason do not act separately but converge in the same order of signification. The functional dimension regulates the relations between action, measure and moment and maintains the balance of practical processes. The cognitive dimension ensures the validation of judgement through balance and limit. The expressive dimension guarantees the transmission and preservation of meaning through contradiction and analogy. In a single text, all these layers can be recognised, each with its role in constructing reason. “Cine s-a fript, suflă și-n apă rece” (‘A scalded dog dreads cold water’) links deed to consequence, limits excess through prudence and fixes its memorable form in concise expression. Each proverb is thus a complete unit in which thought is applied, verified and transmitted. Through the convergence of these dimensions, proverbial language codifies observation into rule or norm and experience into knowledge, preserving harmony between action, judgement and expression.

Proverbs thus actualise relations of cause, measure and limit in different contexts, adapting them to particular situations. “Bate fierul până-i cald” (‘Strike while the iron is hot’) indicates the right moment for action,

while “Toamna se numără bobocii” (‘Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched’) highlights the potential benefit generated by the completion of a process. The same law of opportunity is calibrated for different phases of experience. “Cu măsura cu care măsori ți se va măsura” (‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you’) and “Omenia, omenie cere” (‘Kindness demands kindness’) reiterate the principle of proportion but apply it in different domains – moral and relational. “Mai mare daraua decât ocauă” (‘Much ado about nothing’) and “Vinde pielea ursului din pădure” (‘Don’t sell the skin till you have caught the bear’) warn against disproportion, one in the calculation of effort, the other in the promise without substance.

In proverbial thought, authority does not belong to the speaker but to the formula confirmed by time. A proverb endures not because it is ingenious but because it works in practice. “Unu-i adevărul, oricum l-ai spune” (‘Truth is still truth, however you phrase it’) is recognised for the stability of the meaning it expresses, and “Cum e sacul, și peticul” (‘Such carpenters, such chips’) for the precision of the fit it formulates. Language preserves what has been verified and eliminates what does not hold. The authority of a proverb is founded on proven usefulness, not novelty. Through this mechanism, the proverb becomes a collective form of validation, and time the criterion that separates transient expression from enduring truth.

Proverbs do not transmit principles but proportions between facts, time and measure. The reason that organises them is empirical, grounded in the balance between action and consequence. In this order, truth is not asserted but problematised. Ultimately, the reflections condensed in these small sapiential texts do not speak of others. The man in proverbs exists in the mind and in the words of each of us.

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# **EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCERS ROMANIAN YOUTHS LIVE BY: AN ANALYSIS OF HOW RELIGION IS SHARED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA**

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## **Abstract:**

Romanian celebrities on social media (influencers) have begun to exert persuasion on a massive scale, potentially influencing the young people who follow them while pursuing individual profit. This study sets out to investigate the content shared by such educational influencers (edu-influencers) on three popular social media platforms (Instagram, Tik-Tok and YouTube) where influencer culture has been rife in recent years. In so doing, it seeks to examine how religion (often combined with personal development content) is shared through social media and whether edu-influencers' behaviour is predominately promotional, thereby failing to link to important societal issues. The religious content of edu-influencers will be investigated along two themes: encouraging education and fostering participation. The results will facilitate a better understanding of influencer culture and will emphasize the need for developing critical digital literacy among youngsters who use social media for communication, education, and individual purposes.

## **Key words:**

Social media, educational influencers, religion, personal development, engagement, social-media followers, Romanian.

## **1. Introduction**

As a new, convenient means of communication, social media (SM) has become an essential and almost indispensable part of modern society. The main SM consumers are digital natives (a.k.a, Google generation, millennials, or more recently, the Z generation) who understand the digital world and stay hyper-connected online as part-and-parcel of their daily work and leisure patterns. Whether as Millennials - people born between 1981 and 1996 - who seek interaction and information to get updated and entertained or as Generation Z youngsters - born after 1997 – who have become the largest

cohort of consumers - these natives are often framed within certain social stereotypes such as excessive reliance on technology, less social interaction, and a strong inclination towards advocating for social justice causes. Generally, they are commonly regarded as possessing traits such as tolerance, optimism, restlessness, civic-mindedness, conscientiousness, individualism, technological proficiency, sophistication, maturity, and, most importantly, a strong sense of personal identity (Dabija et al., 2018).

This paper aims to investigate the content of *Religion and Personal Development* (RPD) shared by Romanian edu-influencers on popular SM platforms (Tik-Tok, YouTube and Instagram). In particular, it will seek to identify the main profile features of Romanian educational influencers and examine the communication and engagement strategies used in engaging with new audiences through their RPD content. Following an introductory part, the first two sub-sections will address social media (1.1.) and educational influencers (1.2.). Section 2 describes the corpus and research methods, and Section 3 presents the findings, structuring RPD channel-wise (3.1.) and content-wise, respectively. Finally, the conclusion of the study (section 4) restates the main findings and outlines the implications for further research.

### **1.1. Social Media (SM)**

The use of Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter has exploded among young people in recent years and has emerged from a strong desire for communication, self-expression, personal branding, and socialization, bringing about a fundamental change in the way young people communicate, socialize, and ultimately learn.

*“In 2023, the number of internet users worldwide was 5.18 billion, around two thirds of the global population being currently connected to the world wide web. In 2022, over 4.59 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost six billion by 2027”* (Statista, 2023).

In particular, Facebook and Twitter boast a substantial user base. Instagram has also emerged as a more prevalent choice among the younger demographics due to its captivating nature as a social network that facilitates the generation and composition of content in visual, audiovisual, and

hypertextual formats. Additionally, Instagram is widely acknowledged as the foremost social network that prioritizes visual content, providing its members with regularly updated material derived from their interactions with other accounts, profiles they follow, and their engagement through likes, among other factors. This platform seamlessly integrates static photographs with both brief and extended video clips.

In Romania, out of nearly 17.82 million internet users in 2023, well over 15.13 million are social network users (Statista, 2023). Being the second most widely adopted social media application, Facebook boasts a substantial usage rate of 87 percent and a potential advertising reach of approximately 9.55 million individuals. Yet, since March 2022, the total number of Romanian Facebook users has been on a downward trend while Instagram and/or TikTok users have registered a constant upward trend (Statista, 2023).

## **1.2. Educational Influencers (EI)**

Research has shown that social media can influence a person's innovative capacity (Eickhoff & Muntermann 2016), performance (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015), perception and knowledge, online shopping (Zhang et al., 2017; Martínez-López et al., 2020), and learning behaviour (Abbas et al., 2019), which subsequently impacts students during their transition to adulthood (Zhu et al. 2017; Shelton et al., 2020), heightens depression (Vernon et al., 2016) and/or leads to distraction and decreased productivity (Emerick et al., 2019; Koessmeier & Büttner, 2021).

Within the context of web-based social network use, social media influencers (SMIs) are producers of content who enjoy extensive authority on their social media as digital opinion leaders and moderators. With an impressive number of followers and engagement power in their shared transmedia content (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2020; Lajnef 2023) they project themselves as trendsetters of the new audiences. Their opinions are commonly perceived as honest, which is why SMIs often evince a strong persuasive power capable of impacting even political attitudes and behaviour (Naderer, 2023). While engaging in frequent interactions with social media users, SMIs share details of their everyday life through posts and/or videos, thereby creating the perception of participating in a close dialogue with their viewers and developing a perception of mutual tastes and common interests

with their followers (Hudders & De Jans, 2021). Followers actively respond to the interactions established by SMIs through various digital behaviours, including liking, commenting, and sending direct messages. Socially, since social media usage remains a fundamentally individual media consumption act, the imagined connection between the SMI and media viewer is apt to determine a wide array of complex psychological processes, attitudes, and behaviours (Balaban et al., 2022).

In its incessant quest for new technologies, innovation, and adjustment to the digital realm, the educational world could not remain alienated from the digital age and has been therefore continuously looking for its own modes to adapt to the new globalized forms of communication and environments to disseminate and emphasize the significance of any pedagogical elements that may be of interest to educational stakeholders. Hence, a special subtype of SMIs has emerged, that of educational influencers (EIs), who share notes, didactic resources, educational reflections, and book recommendations with their audiences, operating as learning mediators and supporters of the teaching and learning process. Benefiting from large and captive audiences, many of them have seized the opportunity to create and promote paid apps that support informal learning. These apps provide access to exclusive content, such as live Q&A sessions, personalized feedback, quizzes, and interactive challenges, all designed to motivate and engage users while making learning more enjoyable. Additionally, being widely consumed on the internet, educational influencers are often actively engaged in the mercantilist phenomenon within the media landscape by leveraging their online platforms to display products and services - offered by companies or themselves - and by influencing the purchasing decision-making of their respective audiences (San Miguel, 2017).

## **2. Corpus and Research Methods**

This study employs mixed analytic models, which involve the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods. To facilitate progress systematically and empirically, two distinct categories have been delineated, prioritizing an improved approach to data analysis. These two distinct analysis categories concern (a) *educational influencers and new audiences* on the one hand, and (b) *content* on the other.

The corpus consists of top 40 Romanian EIs (Instagammers, YouTubers, TikTokers) who are ranked by StarNgage+, a platform that facilitates the acquisition of insights for brands and influencers, enabling them to have a better understanding of their followers' preferences and the topics being discussed by influencers.

Our research objectives are: 1) to identify the profile and features of the Romanian educational influencers within the SM landscape in Romania; and 2) to analyze the RPD content they share on SM platforms. Within a preliminary stage, the quantitative analysis reviews the study results of a 2022 analysis conducted by the Media Education Program of the Center for Independent Journalism, together with a series of updated StarNgage+ rankings of the corpus described above. Subsequently, as part of our qualitative analysis, which allows us to employ several descriptive analysis techniques, the study analyzes various variables within the two-mentioned categories. These variables include characteristics of EIs such as followers' number and profile, account type, engagement rate, average number of likes, and content category. ('Clickbait' and manipulation of EIs to keep their followers engaged remain outside our research concerns.) Additionally, our qualitative methodology facilitates our content analysis, showcasing the generation and development of transmedia RPD content by the Romanian EIs.

### **3. Findings**

The profile of Romanian social media users is vague and much understudied. A 2022 analysis conducted by the Media Education Program of the Center for Independent Journalism (CJI) found that out of the 894 surveyed students - aged between 10-20 years, of which 70% live in urban areas - 77.18% follow web pages frequently, while 12.97% do not follow web pages frequently. In what follows, we will detail the study's results.

Based on the diversity of young people's responses and the content of web pages, their preferences for certain pages were analyzed according to the purpose and type of content associated with the page: information, education, entertainment, and socialization. More specifically, out of the 690 respondents who provided at least one example of a frequently viewed web page, 42% follow pages with associated informational content; 30% follow

pages with entertainment-related content; 16% opt for social media pages; and 12% identified pages with associated educational content.

Regarding their preferences for informational web pages, young individuals favored Digi24.ro, Vice.ro, and Recorder.ro. For entertainment purposes, the most frequented platforms were YouTube, Netflix, and Animekage. In terms of social networking sites, students predominantly engaged with Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Lastly, concerning educational web pages, the most cited resources were Wikipedia, Dexonline.ro, and Brainly.ro.

Furthermore, the features of the groups with which the surveyed young people and children interact most often online are as follows: 61% of young people belong to at least one group made up of people with common interests, usually large groups, in which the members have not necessarily met each other outside the virtual environment, but have common interests (for example: they like movies, they like video games, they like a certain party, they like a certain influencer/star, etc.). Among the most frequently mentioned groups in the category of common interests are those related to video games (Discord), groups for high school or college admissions, and GirlUp. Specifically, 21% of young people belong to groups, usually of medium size, in which group members are peers and know each other outside the virtual environment, whereas 18% of students belong to friends/family groups, which are usually small and exhibit a close connection between the members of the group.

Next, we mapped the presence of Romanian EIs in the online environment by identifying them and by analyzing their social media presence, their reach and influence within the online space. We thus found the top 10 Romanian EIs (Table 1) listed on SM (Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok and Threads) by topics of education addressed, number of followers and engagement rate (which represents total engagements divided by number of followers).

Influencer	Content	Nr of followers	Engagement Rate	Nr of Average Likes
@radu.co	Acting and Drama; Education	494.4K	0.39%	1.9K

Influencer	Content	Nr of followers	Engagement Rate	Nr of Average Likes
	Celebrity; Marketing and Advertising			
@andreeaibacka	Acting and Drama; Family Education; Celebrity	576.9K	0.43%	2.4K
@andreizbir	Education; Upskilling	600K	2.26%	13.5K
@gabriel.rolon	Education; Automotive; Actors	1.2M	2.36%	27.2K
@xgilham	Education; Luxury	678.6K	0.83%	5.5K
@reflexion.diaria	Education; Life and Society	2.7M	0.7%	19.6K
@addabaladda	Education; Moms	788.2K	0.92%	7.2K
@lucianbusuioc	Beauty and Self Care; Education; Styling; Hair Salons	279.4K	0.54%	1.4K
@catalin_maruta	Education; Upskilling	801.6K	2.07%	16.4K
@christina_ich	Education; Upskilling; Lifestyle	827.9K	2.68%	22K

**Table 1. Top 10 Romanian EIs listed on Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok and Threads by topics of education addressed, number of followers, and engagement rate** *Source: Author*

All these findings describe the Romanian SM environment and facilitate a comprehensive landscape for each social media (SM) platform. Furthermore, our mapping process has enabled us to determine the extent of RPD content and draw some preliminary conclusions.

### **3.1. Channels: Religion and Personal Development**

The first surprising aspect in our search was the missing religious content shared on Instagram and YouTube by Romanian EIs. Given the large number of audiences and the type and extent of the visual content that they are apt to disseminate, Religion as part of the Education content is absent on Instagram and YouTube as compared to the newly emerged TikTok platform. This finding is also confirmed by recent statistics. According to Statista (2023), the year 2022 saw the decline of the total number of Romanian Facebook users by almost one million users, from 13.03 million to only 12.24 million beginning in March 2023. Such a gradual decline has been determined by the Romanian users' increased interest in Instagram and/or TikTok, platforms which seem to exhibit far greater levels of engagement in terms of photo and story sharing.

The examination of the EIs' activity on TikTok relative to media impact provides a clearer view on the features of the channel, communication pattern, as well as audience engagement, highlighting values that are closely associated with the impact of EIs on TikTok. This impact is achieved by examining the reception and response of audiences to RPD content published on their channels. Table 2 below shows data correlating the number of followers with the rate of engagement and the number of average likes. In what concerns the audiovisual content, it is important to note that the EIs that garner the maximum number of reproductions of audiovisual content are those who possess a substantial number of followers.

Influencer	Content	Nr of followers	Engagement rate	Nr of Average Likes
<u>@andratwork</u>	Education	1.4M	0.1%	2.1K
<u>@coloab</u>	Product Education	430.7K	-	55
<u>@elena.urdu.speaker</u>	Education	427K	-	38
<u>@alinchiforej</u>	Education	317.1K	0.1%	330
<u>@trinitas.tv</u>	Education	48.2K	0.4%	146
<u>@tutorialepenet</u>	Education	15.9K	0.7%	84
<u>@bookminutes</u>	Education	15.6K	0.1%	14
<u>@theonabalan</u>	Education	13.9K	0.4%	37
<u>@patriciapruneanu</u>	Education	11.6K	1.1%	85

**Table 2. Top 10 Romanian EIs listed on Tik Tok by nr of followers and engagement rate**  
**Source: Author**

In terms of engagement rates, the first four positions (patriciapruneanu, tutorialepenet, theonabalan, and trinitas.tv) indicate that audience engagement is largely determined by the purpose and use of information provided, in close relationship with the transmedia content developed and shared by EIs. The results also show that TikTokking EIs with the highest engagement rate are almost in reverse proportion with their number of followers, pointing out that the EIs' relationship with their audiences is stable, targeted and interest-based, addressing a well-defined segment.

### **3.2. Content: Religion and Personal Development**

The analysis of the SM landscape has allowed for the identification of several characteristics based on the objectives and content types associated with the webpage, including information, education, entertainment, and socialization. Thus, out of the total sample size of surveyed participants, 42% engage with pages that offer informational content, while 30% prefer pages that provide entertainment-related content. Additionally, 16% of the respondents indicated a preference for social media pages, while 12% identified pages that offer educational content. It can be thus seen that the purpose of surfing the Internet to seek educational content comes last across the general spectrum of youth's preferences. Here, a distinction should be made between those accessing informational content (of any sort) and those specifically looking for educational content, which could be didactic educational resources, various educational reflections and/or book recommendations. In such cases, EIs operate as learning mediators and educational supporters for youngsters who use social media predominantly for socialization, communication, and individual purposes.

The utilization of content analysis using the StarNgage+ platform metadata has additionally provided important data on the most frequent practices of EIs on Instagram, YouTube and Tik Tok platforms. The scrutinization of the EIs' accounts has revealed insights into the posts design, message features and codes utilized (Table 3).

<b>Characteristics of the message</b>	
Visual feed	81%
Codes	82% hashtag 95% mentions 72% emoticons 87% links

**Table 3. Features of posts by EIs** *Source: Author*

Considering the visual appeal of the posts, the attributes of the content produced, and the coding techniques employed, we notice that education content is shared in combination with maternity, automotive, celebrity, memes and commercial content (Table 4).

Influencer	Content
@radu.co	Acting and Drama; Education, Memes, Celebrity; Marketing and Advertising
@andreeaibacka	Acting and Drama; Memes, Family Education; Celebrity, Commercial
@andreizbir	Education; Upskilling
@gabriel.rolon	Education; Memes, Automotive; Actors, Commercial
@xgilham	Education; Memes, Luxury, Commercial
@reflexion.diaria	Education; Life and Society
@addabaladda	Education; Moms, Maternity
@lucianbusuioc	Beauty and Self Care; Education; Styling; Hair Salons, Commercial
@catalin_maruta	Education; Upskilling
@christina_ich	Education; Upskilling; Lifestyle, Commercial

**Table 4. Top 10 StarNgage+ ranked Romanian EIs and their profile content**  
**Source:** Author

This finding - that educational content is disseminated alongside themes of maternity, automotive, celebrity, memes, and commerce - suggests that EIs utilize a hybrid content strategy. Educational discourse is integrated within larger lifestyle and entertainment contexts, enabling EIs to increase engagement and expand their audiences. The integration of educational and non-educational content is indicative of how pedagogical objectives are increasingly influenced by the aesthetics and principles of the attention economy. Furthermore, when engagement rate is correlated with the purpose of sharing (see Table 2 on TikTok ranking), it can also be noticed that, in the majority of instances, they disseminate concepts about tangible resources, which can be utilized within educational settings by their followers (as in the case of @tutorialepenet). Certain EIs possess a distinct purpose of deriving economic gains from such content through the sale of materials on their respective websites. Other EIs may not aim to generate direct monetary gains

through the dissemination of these materials on social media platforms, nonetheless they do engage in sharing sweepstakes or offering discounts on materials and items from other accounts or firms. In addition to providing educational resources, certain EIs, such as [@tutorialepenet](#), also offer diverse educational training opportunities to their subscribers. In other cases, such as [@andratwork](#), a business model to provide services is evident by utilizing SM as a means of promoting these services. On the other hand, [@trinitas.tv](#) incorporates a theological purpose, serving as a platform for disseminating religious instruction and promoting awareness of Orthodox Christianity in a wide array of forms of expression.

#### **4. Conclusions**

SM influencer education has emerged as a new way of consuming educational content through SM platforms, where individuals with a significant wake of followers and expertise in a certain subject share their knowledge and resources with their followers.

This study set out to examine three popular social media platforms (Instagram, Tik-Tok and YouTube) with a view to analyzing the RPD content shared by Romanian educational influencers. We have looked at ways of audience engagement, preferred content, posts and account designs in an attempt to determine whether RPD content is predominantly promotional and hence fails to link to important societal issues or alternatively, encourages youth's education while being connected to significant societal concerns.

The results of this study demonstrate that a considerable percentage of Romanian youth utilize social media predominantly for socialization, communication, and personal expression rather than for educational objectives. In this setting, Romanian EIs have become important figures who often mix educational content with lifestyle, business, and self-improvement topics. Most of them are actively working to promote products and services that make money, which shapes the consumption patterns and purchasing decisions of their audiences. Social media influencers' educational content can therefore be useful and highly motivational, but at the crossroads of entertainment, personal branding, and business, it can hardly be a replacement for formal youth education.

This study also looks at how religion, which is often linked to stories about personal growth, is shared on social media. The analysis indicated that religious content disseminated by Romanian EIs predominantly centers on two principal themes: the promotion of education and fostering participation, frequently integrated within motivational or self-help narratives. This combination, however, tends to be mostly promotional, with little mention of larger social or moral issues.

Subsequent research may thus benefit from a comprehensive analysis of edu-influencers' rhetorical and linguistic tactics designed to attract new audiences, alongside a more profound discourse analysis of the utilization of religious and educational narratives to boost engagement, promote interaction, and optimize online influence. These inquiries would enhance comprehension of the interplay between knowledge, belief, and commerce within Romania's digital media environment.

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# INTERCULTURAL IMPRINTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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## Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that teaching and learning a foreign language are interdependent with the socio-cultural contexts in which these processes occur. Integrating an intercultural approach in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms, however, presents a significant challenge, as teachers must facilitate the understanding and acquisition of values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour that may differ or even conflict with their own. Therefore, when translating theoretical insights into practical teaching, intercultural strategies should be implemented thoughtfully, competently and sensitively, in order to provide an effective means for cultivating – among others – tolerance, respect and understanding among students. This movement from theory to classroom practice requires experimentation with new methods and often invites teachers to explore unfamiliar territories in EFL education. This also involves the selection of those teaching strategies, activities and materials that respond to the students’ needs, proficiency levels and abilities, and that address issues of context and culture or foster cultural awareness.

By exploring the sociocultural challenges in EFL teaching and learning, this study seeks to contribute to both the theoretical framework and practical strategies that enable the integration of context and culture into EFL classrooms. It also investigates effective classroom procedures and principles for addressing sociocultural challenges in contemporary EFL education, in order to make English classes more engaging, and enable students from diverse cultural backgrounds to internalize, apply and transfer new knowledge in meaningful ways, and interact harmoniously.

**Keywords:** interculturality, language teaching, EFL/ ESL, sociocultural challenges, cultural awareness

## Introduction

As far as the interest in intercultural communication is concerned, one can say that it emerged in the early 1970s and it was underlain by previous studies in several fields such as anthropology, international relations and

social psychology. Almost two decades later, the term “intercultural” gradually permeated debates centred on the principles, strategies and techniques employed in foreign or second language teaching, being also fuelled by globalization. Phrases such as “intercultural communication”, “intercultural competence” and “intercultural understanding” became regular occurrences.

This suggests that the emphasis does not fall anymore on the target culture, but on the language learner, who should become acquainted with a new culture. Thus, the encounter of various cultures entails the creation of a third space, envisaged as a free area destined to meaning negotiation, which is needed especially in case of contradictions and even conflicts triggered by interactions between members of different communities worldwide. Based on these ideas, the literature pinpoints that intercultural training is preoccupied with the development of receptivity to other cultures, the advocacy of cultural diversity and the assistance furnished in the fight against cultural bias and ethnocentrism. Moreover, according to Buzarna-Tihenea (Galbeaza) (2024:156), the benefits of intercultural education also encompass the promotion of “*critical thinking, inclusion and open-mindedness*” and the enhancement of international communication; it also “*prepares students for the global labour market; develops learning experiences*”.

## **Literature review**

Having in view the different intercultural issues (e.g., comprehension problems, confusion or even conflict), foreign language teaching has been concerned with a series of goals – such as offering learners the opportunity to grasp and tackle intercultural differences, boosting their openness, empathy and respect towards other cultures– that also contributed to the enhancement of communicative skills. In this context, a great emphasis is placed on the ability to communicate in an adequate manner, often suggested by concepts such as “*intercultural competence*” (seen as englobing attitudes, values and skills connected to foreign cultures), “*intercultural communicative competence*” and “*intercultural speaker*” (Byram and Zarate, 1997; Sercu, 2002).

The innate connection between language and culture is widely acknowledged in the literature, and it is also made evident in foreign or

second language education, where it has usually been seen as a customary practice (Stern, 1983). Kramsch (1995) traces this connection back to the practices implemented in the teaching of Latin and Greek, which was aimed not only at the development of the learners' language skills, but also at the enrichment of their universal cultural knowledge, as (future) members of the European educated elite. Moreover, in some situations, culture studies have motivated people to learn foreign languages (Risager 1989).

Kramsch (1997) explains that culture was also taught by allowing cultural elements to permeate foreign language education disguised as lexical items employed by speakers in everyday, common settings. This triggered several issues about the genuineness of the language and even behaviour patterns infusing the teaching materials which supposedly referred to neutral, universal environments. In other words, it was thought that learners were taught generic language and behavior items that could be employed in adequate interactions in various foreign cultural contexts. However, when English has acquired the status of *lingua franca*, criticism of its imperialistic effects (i.e., of imposing Western values and behaviour patterns on English language learners) has emerged, spawning fears of cultural, political and economic manipulation and control (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook 1998). This criticism is reinforced by the idea that language use in authentic contexts is inherently shaped by a wide array of factors specific to a certain culture (usually the dominant one), and overlooks the means of organizing and understanding the discourse typical of other cultures (Phillipson 1992).

Kramsch, (1997) notices that, in the 1960s, foreign language education integrated the cultural dimension in novel and various means, with more focus on the enhancement of learners' practical language competencies, which can be implemented in daily contexts. According to the literature, two main ideas fuelled the need to include cultural elements in foreign or second language teaching, i.e. cultural content supports appropriate learning and language use (Lado, 1964), and cultural insight is tightly connected to learners' ability to boost their cultural understanding and communication skills in various target contexts (Seelye, 1984). It is noteworthy that these elements were connected to the target culture and to the native speakers' daily life, which entailed novel challenges regarding the choice of the cultural aspects to be taught (Stern 1983).

For instance, Brooks (1964: 89) proposed a list of 60 topics connected to various fields such as customs, rituals, and personal relations, and militated for their introduction at the beginning of each lesson via a short presentation in the target language (not longer than five minutes), in order to familiarize learners with “*identity, similarity, or sharp difference in comparable patterns of culture*”. In his turn, Nostrand (1974: 277) also endeavoured to design a sociocultural teaching inventory including various themes; this scholar saw each theme as an “*emotionally charged concern, which motivates or strongly influences the culture bearer’s conduct in a wide variety of situations*”. He identified, for example, twelve themes as being characteristic of the French culture: individualism, intellectuality, the art of living, realism, common sense, friendship, love, family, justice, liberty, patriotism, and traditionalism.

Therefore, a review of the literature in this area revealed distinct perspectives on the incorporation of intercultural issues into EFL/ ESL education. For instance, in Byram and Zarate’s opinion (1997), the enhancement of learners’ intercultural competence, requires teachers to employ isolated intercultural questions. The scholars underline that these questions should be seen as components added to and not included in EFL/ ESL teaching, because intercultural competence can be associated both to foreign language use and to cultural encounters in the learners’ native language. According to Byram and Zarate (1997), intercultural communicative competence results from the interweaving of intercultural competence and communicative competence, while other scholars employ the two types of competencies interchangeably.

Based on the assumption that language plays a significant role in increasing the opportunities to reach success beyond cultural borders, Duranti (1997) militates for the direct connection of cultural and intercultural questions, on the one hand, and work with the language itself, on the other hand. Consequently, he supports EFL/ ESL learners’ exposure to cultural manifestations and differences, so that they could explore and tackle them.

Claiming that the concept of culture is blurred and too broad as far as the exploration of the differences in language use are concerned, other scholars, among which Scollon and Scollon (2001), employ the notion of discourse system, which is inspired by discourse analysis. They explain that every discourse system is characterized by a distinct communicative style,

and by different communication ways, ideas and rules; nevertheless, this entails difficulties when it comes to the interpretation of the components of other systems, and when speakers – as members of various groups – are compelled by different circumstances to vacillate between discourse systems. Speakers usually adapt subconsciously when they navigate between discourse systems, especially since the systems they are familiarized with are endowed with a self-evident character. Challenges arise particularly when they are faced with completely new discourse systems. Scollon and Scollon (2001) explain that these challenges are similar, to some extent, to those tackled by speakers when they encounter and communicate with individuals from various cultures. They also profess that since individuals switch from one discourse system to another on a daily basis, juggling with a wide array of values, rules, methods and practices, all communication – including the one carried out in one's native language – can be viewed as interdiscursive communication.

Therefore, the interactions between the members of distinct segments of the same society can be extremely useful in the exploration of cultural differences. Moreover, it can also assist researchers in their quest for solutions to support foreign language learning, since those learners who face difficulties when vacillating between discourse systems will certainly find it even harder to tackle a foreign language and foreign situational and cultural settings.

### **A foray into the connection between language and culture**

Rose (n.d.) envisages culture as “*a way of life, a set of social practices, a system of beliefs, a shared history or set of experiences*”, and, consequently, a certain culture may be seen as “*synonymous with a country, or a region, or a nationality or it may cross several countries or regions*”. According to Day Translation Team (2022), the correlative and complex connection between language and culture is inherent:

*“The two are intertwined. A particular language usually points out to a specific group of people. When you interact with another language, it means that you are also interacting with the culture that speaks the language. You cannot understand one's culture without accessing its language directly.”*

Moreover, according to Rose (n.d.), individuals may perceive themselves as belonging to more than one culture, and speaking more than one native language. Since these two elements (i.e., language and culture) “developed together and influenced each other as they evolved” (Day Translation Team, 2022), the process of language learning stretches beyond linguistic rules, as it also encompasses the cultural elements of its native people. Due to this interdependence, language and culture should not be addressed separately; on the contrary, language learning should also extend to the culture associated with the respective language.

Scholars from all over the world support this innate connection. For example, Körber (2018) explains that culture emerged when speech was present, and the enrichment of either triggered the evolution of the other. Culture sprang from human interactions and the manifestations of culture within a specific group are, in fact, communication acts. Moreover, the behaviour patterns exhibited by individuals are usually modelled by the norms, beliefs, attitudes and common perspectives typical of the group they belong to. The speech domain includes all the messages transmitted and received by individuals in a certain language, and that their society is the one that initially educates its children, conveying knowledge about its native language and culture; thus, these two elements communicate via each other, being interconnected. Since language cannot be separated from the society that has shaped it and from its speakers, Kramsch (2009a; 2009b) cannot conceive the language learning process without culture.

This underlines the idea that every community has its own (unique) perspective upon the world, emphasizing the direct connection between linguistic and cultural knowledge, as language shapes the perspectives shared by the group speaking it and vice versa. Issues emerge from the interactions between the members of different cultures – which nowadays are very common, due to globalisation – and, in such situations, communication becomes the vital ingredient of mutual understanding and discovery of the others’ culture.

Rose (n.d.) also supports the idea that individuals cannot be competent speakers of a certain language if they do not comprehend the culture that models it. Thus, he perceives second language learning tightly connected to the learners’ awareness of the respective culture and of the ways in which it

can be related to their native language and culture. Gao (2006) stresses the idea that learners' cultural competence can lead to intercultural competence. This happens when language is employed as a continuous socialization instrument, requiring both language and culture learning.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that educators, school principals and decision-makers take into account the Council of Europe document on "plurilingual and intercultural education", especially its "founding principles", as main guidelines for teaching languages in cultural contexts ("recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity"; "everyone's right to use their language varieties as a medium of communication"; "every learner's right to gain experience and achieve a command of languages"; "the centrality of human dialogue"). Its main purpose is represented by the implementation of a holistic approach in the teaching process centered on various subjects. Since language competence is envisioned as one entity – although separated across various school subjects – this involves the determination and systematization of their transversal links and convergence points. It also aims at outlining – in a consistent and explicit manner – the teaching objectives and the required competencies so that learners can succeed in their academic tasks and that the learning process is evaluated impartially and clearly.

Language skills influence to a great extent the learners' access to education and academic success. For instance, certain students may unfortunately face downsides from the very moment they begin school as their skills do not align with the school's standards and expectations. Such students usually come from underprivileged settings, have migrant families or speak a regional language as their mother tongue. Nevertheless, regardless of their language repertoire, they are compelled to learn how to communicate efficiently in the school environment in order to access the path towards academic accomplishment and social and personal development. Therefore, all education systems face the same key challenge, i.e., finding the best ways for developing learners' language and intercultural skills that will allow them to function as efficient citizens, gain knowledge, enhance understanding and foster openness towards cultural diversity. This approach to language and culture teaching is known in the literature as *plurilingual and intercultural education*.

## **The development of intercultural awareness**

Intercultural competence involves certain skills: to observe, identify and recognize various similarities and differences among cultures; the capacity to compare and contrast distinct cultures; meaning negotiation; the ability to tackle ambiguity; the skilful and efficient interpretation of messages; the capacity to restrict the likelihood of misinterpretation; the aptitude to defend one's standpoint while acquiescing the validity of others; the capability to tolerate and respect difference (Rose, n.d.). The aforementioned skills should be a requirement in language teaching and the design of materials tackling cultural and intercultural topics should contribute to a more rapid acquisition of intercultural communicative competences.

EFL teachers should act as mediators of cultural relativity by utilizing in their teaching activities their rich backgrounds in various disciplines, the rich experiences they have accumulated, and their vast knowledge and comprehension of different cultures (Rose, n.d.).

Scholars debunk the erroneous association of cultural awareness with advanced language learning, which deemed cultural awareness as mere exercise employed in order to extend ordinary lessons. This association is partly based on the idea that cultural notions cannot be properly understood by beginner language learners, disregarding the fundamental role played by intercultural awareness in language acquisition regardless of the proficiency level.

As far as the incorporation of culture in language teaching is concerned, Liddicoat (2011) identifies two orientations, i.e., cultural (which does not involve the modification of learners' perceptions, attitudes or values, as it involves only the pursuit of knowledge of other cultures) and intercultural (which is endowed with a transformative nature, as learners are required to detach themselves from their own perspectives and acquire novel intercultural identity patterns via the exposure to other cultures).

As far as EFL/ESL learning is concerned, in the context of Liddicoat's orientations to culture teaching (2011), one should take into account that English – as a *lingua franca* of the contemporary world – is employed by millions of speakers from a wide array of cultures in their (daily) interactions. In this regard, research shows that the number of EFL/ ESL speakers is greater than the number of native English speakers (Galloway, 2017). This transforms English into a language of intercultural communication, i.e., “*the language of globalization and internalization and the prerequisite to effective*

*communication in intercultural communities*” (Baker and Feng, 2020: 13). This can create confusions when it comes to the exploration of culture in language classes, as issues arise about the cultural aspects that should be tackled, and the solutions to these issues are connected to language learning goals (Kramsch, 2009a; Kramsch 2009b; Bal and Savas, 2022). In this context, the acquisition of intercultural skills becomes vital, as they enable learners to communicate efficiently in various cultural settings (Byram and Wagner, 2018; Nindya et al., 2022).

Moreover, based on the idea that internalization also encompasses intercultural dimensions, the literature states that intercultural awareness should stretch beyond English instruction and should be underlain by experience and practice (Bal and Savas, 2022).

The intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is outlined in the literature as follows:

*“The communicative ability to understand and negotiate the linguistic and cultural differences with people of other cultures appropriately using a language as well as the capacity to relate to otherness effectively.”* (Nindya et al., 2022: 300).

It is also the ability to understand others’ views (Odağ et al., 2016), and aims at training learners to communicate in an effective and adequate manner with individuals from other geographical areas characterized by different cultural elements (Tran and Duong, 2018). Furthermore, it supports individual and social progress via the broadening of cultural awareness and insight and the improvement of cross-cultural comprehension (Fitriyah et al., 2019).

The literature suggests that the acquisition and expansion of intercultural communicative competences depends on a series of vital factors such as multicultural proficiency and understanding, linguistic and communicative abilities, personal attitudes, self-consciousness, and knowledge of the others’ values, perspectives and norms (Baker, 2016).

EFL/ ESL classes are labelled by scholars such as Vo (2017), Hoff (2014), and Galloway (2017) as key instruments in the promotion of intercultural communicative competencies, by providing learners a wide array of opportunities to engage in intercultural dialogues against various multicultural backgrounds. In addition, one of the main purposes of EFL/ ESL

learning is represented by teaching and understanding cultural diversity, strengthening of cultural awareness and the development of certain types of values.

The materials used in EFL/ ESL teaching are of utmost importance as their main goal is to support language learning. However, as Skopinskaja (2003: 39) notices, textbooks “*cannot simply do that since language learning is inseparable from its cultural context*”, because learners should be prepared to employ language in real world contexts, as well. After reviewing the literature on teaching materials, Skopinskaja (2003: 39) notices that foreign language education focuses mainly on developing learners’ communicative competence in real life settings, raising their awareness of the respective foreign language, fostering the understanding of, and stimulating positive attitudes towards other languages and the people speaking them. Therefore, the teaching materials should be permeated by cultural elements of the foreign language, in order to ensure both linguistic development and cultural awareness.

## **Case study**

This section is dedicated to a case study proposal designed to contribute to the improvement of strategies employed by EFL teachers to foster intercultural communicative competence.

The participants in this case study proposal will be EFL teachers who work in secondary and high school institutions across Constanta County. Their participation in this research will be voluntary, and all responses will be collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality and encourage the provision of honest answers.

The main research method employed in this case study proposal is the survey aimed at gathering data regarding the EFL teachers’ attitudes and practices with regard to intercultural communicative competences. The teachers will be invited to provide anonymous responses to a questionnaire in order to provide data and information about communicative competence, the teaching strategies, techniques and activities that they implement in order to develop it among their students and the additional support they need in order to improve their activities.

The case study will be designed to gather as much information as possible about ways of defining intercultural communicative competence, strategies that can be implemented in order to develop intercultural

communicative competence in class, challenges, resources, additional support and forms of professional training, how intercultural communicative competence can be assessed in the classroom.

By investigating teachers' comprehension of intercultural communicative competences, better insight of its status quo and implementation in EFL education will be provided. This information is essential for the identification of possible gaps and misconceptions that may affect their teaching strategies.

The examination of the strategies that teachers already use will allow the identification of effective or underutilized approaches and will also furnish vital information about possible enhancements. Moreover, the investigation of practical, contextual or institutional challenges will offer valuable insights into the elements that hinder efficient practice and will pinpoint to the areas that require support or improvement.

Since teachers' knowledge and access to adequate resources influence the efficiency of intercultural communicative competence instruction, the information about the existing training and materials will contribute to the identification of professional development needs. It will also provide data that will contribute to the design of more relevant support initiatives.

The teachers' perceptions of student engagement will furnish information about the efficiency and impact of the activities they implement to enhance the students' intercultural communicative competence. This will also contribute to the design of more impactful activities at a time when the necessity for intercultural communicative competences is irrefutable.

Teachers will also have the opportunity to specify what support would be necessary to improve their practice. The comprehension of their needs will ensure the alignment of future strategies, training and resources to real classroom conditions, increasing thus the efficiency of intercultural communicative competence activities.

The implementation of interculturality in EFL classes places “*both learners and teachers as key actors that employ language to solve a variety of tasks*”; it encourages them “*to make connections and compare source and target languages and cultures*”, and to employ critical thinking skills in order to comprehend “*concepts of cultural differences and cultural diversity*” (Buzarna-Tihenea (Galbeaza), 2020: 306). The case study is expected to

furnish a comprehensive understanding of how EFL teachers in Constanta County perceive and implement intercultural communicative competences in their classrooms. It will also identify effective strategies, highlight challenges and impediments, and pinpoint the gaps in their knowledge and training. The study will also examine how teachers evaluate student engagement and select their additional resources or support. Therefore, the findings will contribute to the development of targeted strategies and teaching materials focused on intercultural communicative competences; it will also encourage teachers' professional development initiatives centred on the promotion and implementation of intercultural communicative competences in EFL teaching and learning processes.

### **Strategies for the promotion of intercultural communicative competence**

According to the literature, the promotion of the intercultural communicative competence can be achieved through a wide array of strategies, including the design of language programs; fostering cultural insights and sensitivity aimed at boosting the efficiency of the communication process; incorporating cultural elements into teaching materials and activities through the employment of authentic resources. By interacting in authentic communication contexts, "*a vast range of linguistic and cultural elements*" are triggered, boosting a wide array of EFL skills and soft abilities, enabling students "*to interact in a meaningful way, express and argue their viewpoints on different subject matters*" (Buzarna-Tihenea (Galbeaza), 2023:195).

Scholars have noticed that, although some programs attempt to address intercultural communicative competencies, many still do not furnish enough training in the skills necessary for an efficient exploration and comprehension of cultural differences. As noted by Alvarez et al. (2008), language courses frequently place emphasis on linguistic proficiency, often neglecting the integration of cultural and intercultural learning strategies into the teaching process. Thus, learners lack the competencies required for the successful communication and interaction with individuals from various cultural settings. This highlights the vital key role played by the development of a holistic language program that supports learners in their endeavours to

comprehend their own cultural perspectives and their perceptions of “otherness” (Achieng, 2023: 22).

In their turn, Byram et al. (2002) argue that grammar lessons, in particular, and textbooks in general, should be approached through intercultural and critical lens rather than as fixed authorities. In this regard, teachers can use textbook content as a start line for questioning, comparison and deeper cultural exploration. These scholars warn against choosing topics that reinforce stereotypes or prejudices; they encourage the promotion of more inclusive cultural understanding. This approach supports language development and helps learners reflect on their attitudes and better comprehend other cultures.

Another key strategy that could foster intercultural competence in foreign language teaching is represented by the development of learners’ cultural insights and sensitivity. Fantini (2009) argues that intercultural competence involves active exploration, first-hand experience, and reflective analysis of personal assumptions and values. Teachers must recognize how their own cultural backgrounds influence their interactions with students; they should remain open to their diverse perspectives as well. Although this can be challenging due to ingrained beliefs and stereotypes, intercultural competences can be strengthened via self-reflection and collaboration.

Teachers can efficiently incorporate cultural elements into foreign language teaching by employing authentic resources, encouraging engagement with native speakers and promoting (inter)cultural exchanges.

Teachers should perceive intercultural competence as a lifelong learning process and actively immerse learners in multiple cultural backgrounds. By exposing them to a wide array of cultural perspectives, they can promote a dynamic classroom atmosphere (Achieng, 2023). The advantages of this approach are numerous, as it broadens learners’ understanding, enhances their tolerance and respect towards other cultures, and boosts their academic success.

## **Conclusion**

The examination of the intercultural communicative competence performed in this paper was focused on challenges and strategies. It highlights the difficulties in fostering this competence and the need for holistic

approaches, beyond the traditional methods. The paper also emphasizes the importance of teacher training and calls for further research on practical implementation. While centred on language teaching, intercultural communicative competence is relevant across educational contexts and should be valued by all the professionals who carry out activities in the educational field.

The case study proposal has the potential to illustrate the vital part played by EFL teachers in promoting intercultural communicative competences and evidences the intricacy of implementing it in an efficient manner in secondary and high school classrooms. The exploration of EFL teachers' perceptions, strategies, challenges and professional development necessities highlights the idea that knowledge and resources are key factors to the gateways of intercultural education.

The expected findings will shed light on the current status as far as the implementation of the intercultural communicative competence is concerned in Constanta County secondary schools and high schools. They could also furnish evidence-based guidance for the improvement of teaching approaches, practices and materials, via relevant training programs, and the creation of supportive classroom resources. Moreover, the enhancement of EFL teacher's capacity to integrate intercultural communicative competences into their lessons can trigger meaningful student engagement, improve learning outcomes and boost the appreciation of cultural diversity in education.

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# ENTRE SUPRÉMATIE DE L'ETHOS ET ABSENCE D'ALTERITÉ : LES PRODRAMES D'UNE GUERRE ÉMOTIONNELLE

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## **Abstract:**

As a subject of discord, moral, verbal and physical violence, our study examines the anticipated representations of marriage and divorce among single female students. Drawing on Abric's theory of social representations, alongside thematic and discourse analyses, our results indicate that this union is perceived as an anticipated source of harm, rejection and conflicts between the Self and the other. The heightened emotional management of this traumatic theme obscures any reflexivity, alterity and empathy, hence the necessity of a university education in order to reconsiderate the Other.

## **Keywords:**

Representations; Marriage, Divorce, Alterity, Trauma.

## **1. Introduction**

La vie est une pléthore de faits sociaux à partir desquels l'individu élabore une représentation mentale sur la base d'un vécu ou d'échos indirects; laquelle représentation met en convergence les relations interpersonnelles et intrapersonnelles. C'est ainsi que les interactions humaines sont complexes et modulent la perception de son éthos et de l'Autre. En didactique des langues et des cultures, appréhender l'expression humaine de ces situations est une voie de réflexion sur l'altérité. C'est ainsi que nous analysons les expressions verbales et mentales d'étudiants de français langue étrangère sur une thématique sociétale, celle du divorce et son corolaire le mariage, en raison de l'intérêt de la littérature et des études socioculturelles envers ce thème, de même parce que le maniement de la langue sert à « *s'exprimer, c'est-à-dire pour analyser ce qu'il ressent* » (André Martinet, 1960, p. 13).

Notre travail tente ainsi de répondre à la question suivante : quelles représentations de Soi et de l'Autre sont envisagées au sein d'une future union

interrogeant forcément l’Altérité ? Etant peu objectivée, nous formulons l’hypothèse que l’expression verbale de cette conjugalité serait dominée par une forte charge émotionnelle, occultant réflexivité et Altérité. Afin de mettre à l’épreuve cette hypothèse, nous avons invité des étudiants de langue et littérature françaises à s’exprimer en suivant trois phases d’investigation de leurs représentations. La première est l’évocation hiérarchisée associée à la détermination du noyau central et des éléments périphériques des représentations suscitées. La deuxième phase est une narration argumentée sur les liens de causalité de ce phénomène exponentiel, narration associée à une prise de position justifiée. Enfin, la troisième et dernière étape est une expression argumentative de leur attitude suite à deux évènements d’infidélité conjugale, caractérisés par une aura mondiale, en l’occurrence le cas du président américain Bill Clinton et Monica Lewinsky d’une part, et d’autre part, celui de l’ancien Directeur général du Fonds monétaire international (FMI) Dominique Strauss-Khan et Nafissatou Diallo. Les jalons théoriques ayant présidé à la mise à l’épreuve de notre hypothèse de travail se focalisent sur les représentations du rôle de l’éthos et de l’Autre dans l’expression verbale que nous mettons en écho avec l’altérité au sein de cette interaction sociale. Enfin, suite à nos résultats de ces trois phases nous clôturons notre étude par la plus-value de la didactique des langues et des cultures à la gestion de Soi et de l’Autre en situation de conflit et de détresse émotionnelle.

## **2. L’expression verbale de l’opinion à l’aune de Soi et de l’Autre**

L’expression verbale de l’opinion est une manière de lire le monde à un moment donné de sa vie et qui est rarement sous le sceau de la neutralité. Ce trajet énonciatif amende la compétence communicative et l’appréhension des faits sociétaux. Ce positionnement énonciatif, façonné par des représentations, met en discours une prise de position émotionnelle qui mire ses effets dans la manifestation linguistique puisqu’ « *il est impossible de construire un point de vue, un intérêt, sans y associer un affect* » (Plantin, 2005 : 103). C’est ainsi que la posture énonciative de l’opinion façonne le discours et le module au grès des représentations émergentes, a fortiori lors d’expression d’opinion sur des thématiques sociétales qui sont nécessairement des faits interprétables. Le divorce, ébranlant l’image de paix

du couple, sollicite indubitablement un cheminement complexe de Soi et de l’Autre, charriant avec lui les représentations des interactions communicatives entre ces deux instances. En considérant la complexité émotionnelle de ce sujet de réflexion, nous mobilisons un cadre théorique complexe mais nécessaire à l’atteinte de l’objectif de notre recherche. Nous combinons l’approche structurale des représentations sociales pour comprendre la dynamique des représentations, par l’extraction du noyau central ainsi que des éléments périphériques. La structuration du contenu représentationnel s’envisage par la mobilisation de la technique de l’évocation libre puis structurée ou hiérarchisée, que nous avons associées à une narration argumentative permettant aux étudiant de présenter leur point de vue sur l’expansion du phénomène du divorce, tout en justifiant leur prise de position. Enfin, dans une voie de triangulation des données, nous permettant de renforcer la fiabilité des résultats des deux précédentes étapes et d’explorer davantage les représentations appréhendées, nous avons sciemment proposé aux étudiantes d’exprimer leur positionnement par rapport à deux situations d’infidélité conjugale, issues de la vie réelle de deux couples à échos international et dont les évènements ont eu un émoi médiatique considérable. En sus de cette approche, nous avons usé de l’analyse thématique et l’analyse du discours pour circonscrire qualitativement les données recueillies. La théorie du noyau central d’Abric (1994) présente l’avantage d’analyser les significations que l’évocation hiérarchisée révèle (Verges, 1992). Cette approche montre ainsi le rôle de la verbalisation dans l’élaboration des représentations et l’agir de l’individu. L’association libre des mots ou expressions générés par le sujet inducteur permet de circonscrire le champ sémantique tel qu’il est représenté par l’énonciateur. Quant à la hiérarchisation des évocations, elle promeut l’appréhension de l’importance relative de ces dernières, ce qui aboutit à l’esquisse d’une image graduée de ces représentations par l’analyse de la fréquence d’apparition et du rang d’importance des évocations. La fréquence, la valeur significative des énonciations linguistiques et leur classification catégorielle selon leur importance et leur pertinence établies par l’individu reflètent les associations verbales et mentales liées au sujet de notre investigation, ainsi que leur dynamique et par ricochet, une compréhension des perceptions des étudiants et des représentations sociales, ce qui permet

d'envisager des voies de déconstruction des soubassements normatifs socioculturels (Smadja, 2011 ; Bawin-Legros, 1989) ainsi que des stéréotypes, notamment en matière de genres (Adambadji & Djossou Segla, 2023). De ce préalable théorique, nous mettons à l'épreuve du terrain notre hypothèse de recherche.

### **3. Jalons méthodologiques**

A la quête des représentations des étudiants au sujet du divorce, en tant que phénomène en progression en Algérie comme à l'échelle mondiale (Anaris, 2023), nous avons adopté une démarche triptyque. Au préalable, c'est l'approche structurale qui permet de déterminer le noyau central renfermant les représentations sociales caractérisées par leur permanence ainsi que les représentations mouvantes qui se situent à la périphérie de ce noyau (Abric, 2003). Par la suite, les étudiants ont été sollicités pour rédiger texte répondant à la consigne suivante :

*« Le divorce au sein des jeunes couples est un phénomène qui prend de l'ampleur. Qu'en pensez-vous ? Rédigez un texte au niveau duquel vous exprimez votre point de vue sur le divorce en lui-même, sur ses possibles causes et conséquences en explicitant votre point de vue par des arguments et des exemples. Quelle serait votre attitude si vous étiez face à ce phénomène (ami (e) ; cousin(e) ; etc.) ? et quelles suggestions de prise en charge pouvez-vous proposer ?».*

Cette consigne a été élaborée de manière à impliquer l'étudiant non pas uniquement en tant que spectateur de ce fait, mais également en tant que potentiel individu susceptible d'y être confronté.

Enfin, suite à l'analyse des données de ces deux étapes, nous confrontons les étudiants à une situation d'infidélité conjugale ayant eu un écho mondial et face à laquelle les épouses concernées ont eu une attitude inverse aux représentations exprimées par les étudiants lors des deux premières phases de cette étude. Nous souhaitons ainsi comprendre si le fait que des personnalités médiatiques ayant eu une attitude différente de celles de leurs représentations pouvait induire des changements. A cet effet, notre public a été invité à émettre son point de vue sur le soutien et l'accompagnement d'Hillary Clinton et d'Anne Sinclair à leurs époux respectifs suite à une infidélité conjugale avérée. Il est également important de noter que l'infidélité ou la tromperie était la première cause unanime du

refus de l'Autre et de l'encouragement au divorce exprimé par les étudiants. La consigne de travail se présente ainsi :

*« Hillary Clinton a choisi de pardonner l'infidélité de son époux, le président Bill Clinton, dans le contexte très médiatisé de l'affaire Monica Lewinsky en 1998. Cette décision est également celle d'Anne Sinclair, journaliste de renom et ancienne épouse de Dominique Strauss-Kahn (DSK), qui a pris la décision de pardonner ou de rester auprès de lui pendant de nombreuses années malgré des accusations répétées d'infidélité et de comportements controversés. Cette situation a suscité un grand intérêt médiatique. Que pensez-vous de l'attitude de pardon que chacune d'elle a adoptée ? Argumentez votre point de vue. »*

Nous avons exploité l'analyse thématique et l'analyse du discours pour mettre en exergue le contenu sémantique des deux écrits argumentatifs produits par les étudiants. L'analyse thématique nous éclaire sur les référents récurrents des énoncés produits ; et l'analyse du discours sur les choix énonciatifs de la pensée par laquelle s'implique l'énonciateur et par ricochet, implique inévitablement l'Autre (Amossy, 2010 ; Goffman, 1987), au sein d'une thématique émotionnellement prégnante. Ces choix linguistiques sont des paramètres de la grille de lecture d'une situation du monde particulière à chacun (Ghiglione, 1986).

Concernant notre public, il est à dominante féminine, âgé entre vingt et trente-huit ans, composé de quinze étudiants de niveau Licence en langue et littérature françaises et de dix étudiants de niveau master 2 en didactique des langues et des cultures. Cette différence de niveau d'étude a pour finalité de vérifier l'existence d'une éventuelle divergence des représentations en fonction de l'âge des concernés.

Nous présentons ci-après les résultats obtenus par rapport à chaque étape de notre investigation du terrain.

#### **4. Résultats et interprétations des données**

Il est à rappeler que notre recherche a pour objectif de circonscrire les représentations des étudiants au sujet de Soi et de l'Autre au sein d'une situation de discorde liée au divorce, lesquelles représentations sont verbalisées par le truchement de trois différentes verbalisations linguistiques. Au regard de la charge émotionnelle de cette thématique, nous formulons

l'hypothèse que les représentations seraient dominées par une absence d'altérité, au profit d'une focalisation sur Soi.

L'évocation libre émanant des deux groupes d'étudiants s'est élaborée par rapport au mot déclencheur « Divorce », à partir duquel il fallait proposer cinq mots libres de manière spontanée, reflétant l'image mentale du divorce. Par la suite, l'évocation hiérarchisée de ces mots selon un ordre descendant, du plus important au moins important, nous permet d'obtenir les univers sémantiques suivants, ainsi que leur hiérarchisation en noyau central et en éléments périphériques leur donnant sens. Pour les étudiants de niveau Licence, le divorce est ainsi structuré: déception, égoïsme, toxique, irresponsabilité et violence. Pour les étudiants de niveau master, la structure comporte les mots ci-après : Cupidité, blessure, trahison, libération et irresponsabilité. En nous référant à la technique de Vergès (1992) croisant la fréquence d'un mot énoncé avec son rang d'importance jugé par l'étudiant, nous circonscrivons le noyau et la périphérie des représentations grâce au tableau schématique suivant :

Fréquence / importance	Elevée	Faible
Elevé	Zone centrale	Zone de première périphérie
	Violence, égoïsme	Toxique
Faible	Zone de deuxième périphérie	Zone contrastée
	Irresponsabilité	Déception

**Tableau 1 : Représentation du noyau central et des éléments périphériques du Divorce**

L'interprétation des données du croisement de la fréquence et de l'ordre d'importance des évocations hiérarchisées montre que « la violence » et « l'égoïsme » forment le noyau central de cette représentation, en tant que mots à fréquence élevée et à importance avérée. Ils sont renforcés par « la toxicité » en tant qu'évocation fréquente mais ayant une importance moindre que les deux mots du noyau central. S'ensuit « l'irresponsabilité » en tant qu'évocation de faible fréquence mais d'importance élevée, ce qui suppose que cette représentation de la toxicité est liée à l'individu dans sa spécificité contextuelle. Enfin, « la déception » est évoquée dans la zone de contraste parce qu'elle est de faible fréquence et de faible importance, ce qui lui confère un caractère sporadique dans la représentation du divorce.

Au final, les éléments centraux et consensuels de la représentation du divorce sont « la violence » et « l'égoïsme », ce qui dénote une représentation conflictuelle des relations interpersonnelles entre Soi et l'Autre, traduisant une agressivité renforcée par l'évocation du mot « toxique », qui réverbère également une forme de violence psychologique ou verbale à l'encontre de l'Autre. L'apparition du mot « irresponsabilité » au niveau de la structure représentationnelle renvoie au déni de responsabilité de l'Autre et à la suprématie du Soi, faisant écho au dernier mot « déception ». En somme c'est une représentation négative et conflictuelle entre Soi et l'Autre qui constitue les éléments stables et consensuels de la représentation du divorce ; sans évoquer aucunement la responsabilité de Soi dans ce conflit.

Concernant les étudiants de master 2, les données se présentent comme suit :

Fréquence / importance	Elevée	Faible
Elevé	Zone centrale	Zone de première périphérie
	Cupidité, trahison	Irresponsabilité
Faible	Zone de deuxième périphérie	Zone contrastée
	Blessure	Libération

**Tableau 2 : Représentation du noyau central et des éléments périphériques du Divorce**

La zone centrale des représentations du divorce est fondée sur « la cupidité » et « la trahison », ce qui renvoie à une violence émotionnelle liée à des conflits interpersonnels fondées sur l'intérêt à l'inverse de l'empathie et de l'altérité. L'irresponsabilité en tant qu'évocation de première périphérie renvoie au déni de l'autre dans l'entraide et le partage. La blessure, en tant que conséquence psychologique fortement liée au noyau central fait écho à la libération, en tant qu'évocation contrastante.

Au final, l'analyse structurelle montre que les représentations du divorce sont dominées par des évocations reflétant une violence explicite entre Soi et l'Autre, au sein d'une union qui souffre d'une représentation traumatisante du « Je » et du « Tu » comme l'évoque Dupré La Tour (2006, p. 23)

*« Ce passage du je, de la juxtaposition de deux "je", à la pensée du "nous" est le moment instituant du couple».*

Ces expressions ont supprimé toute voie de communication, d'interaction ou de négociation de la place de Soi et de l'Autre. Analysons à présent les récits au sujet de la représentation des causes et des conséquences du divorce ainsi que l'attitude à adopter. En voici quelques exemples de production:

Exemple 1 :

*« Ce phénomène n'est plus circonscrit au monde occidental mais s'est propagé aux sociétés arabo-musulmanes. À mon avis, en me référant aux expériences de proches, de même que celles partagées par les médias, les raisons de ce phénomène social sont considérables, mais il est possible de les segmenter en raisons individuelles et d'autres sociales. Les raisons liées à l'individu peuvent concerner sa représentation idyllique du mariage ; l'existence d'un déséquilibre psychosociologique ; ou encore sa personne dominatrice effaçant l'autre au sein de cette union ; sans nier les problèmes économiques. Concernant les raisons d'ordre social, elles peuvent renvoyer aux relations conflictuelles entre les familles impliquées dans cette situation ; la représentation sociale de la femme et de l'homme ; et l'éducation familiale. ».*

Exemple 2 :

*« Principale cause est l'argent et le travail surtout du côté de l'homme. Au début la femme accepte la situation matérielle mais avec le temps elle refuse, ce qui fait des problèmes. Je pense aussi que la différence d'âge joue un rôle important dans l'échec de la relation, à partir de mon expérience, j'étais mariée par l'acte seulement avec un homme qu'avait 31 ans et moi j'étais 20 ans, ce que fait des problèmes entre nous c'est pour ça j'ai divorcé après 2 ans de la relation, parce que j'avais encore une mentalité d'une petite fille et lui avait une mentalité d'un grand homme. Je trouve aussi que lorsque le couple avaient des problèmes entre eux les parents de l'homme n'aident pas dans la réconciliation, au contraire ils parlent négativement. Une autre cause aussi est le contrôle de l'homme sur la femme, il n'entend même pas son avis comme par exemple ne travaille pas ! Ne porte pas pantalon comme ça ! à cause de sa jalousie. »*

Exemple 3 :

*« Cette séparation est devenue normale. D'ailleurs, j'ai vu plusieurs cas dans mon environnement, des membres de la famille ou des connaissances. L'infidélité, la violence de l'homme, le*

*changement de comportement du mari, le doute et la jalousie sont les causes. A mon avis, dans ces cas-là, il est impardonnable. »*

**Exemple 4 :**

*« Ce phénomène augmente plus qu'avant. A mes yeux, je n'encourage pas les jeunes pour se marier. Les causes : L'âge, c'est-à-dire les jeunes ne sont pas calmes et patients, ils sont encore jeunes et ils n'ont pas la sage pensée, manquent de responsabilité surtout l'homme qui ne pense pas au futur, des problèmes familiaux par exemple entre la femme et sa belle-mère ou sa belle-sœur, toujours le manque de respect de l'homme. J'imagine pas un jour je serai avec quelqu'un qui n'a pas été éduqué pour respecter la femme. Ce qui détruit une relation : la trahison et l'infidélité d'un homme c'est le manque d'honnêteté. Aussi aujourd'hui c'est la drogue. L'homme qui consomme cela, son mariage va être échoué. ».*

**Exemple 5 :**

*« Le divorce est une bonne solution pour que la femme reste tranquille et ne tombe pas malade à cause de lui. La femme peut tout oublier sauf qu'une autre femme fréquente son mari. Aujourd'hui, malheureusement beaucoup de femmes font tout pour se marier peu importe la situation de l'homme, l'essentiel pour elles s'est décrocher un titre de « mariée » et ne pas être une « bayra » (vieille fille) ! après elles se révoltent Il y a aussi celui qui se marie avec une fonctionnaire, après deux, trois mois la galère commence, par jalousie, il ne cesse jamais de recommander à sa conjointe de délaisser son job, la majorité du temps, la femme choisit son salaire que compléter sa vie à ses côtés. La majorité des hommes sont nerveux, on entend parfois il a divorcé sa femme enceinte, c'est malheureux ! Personnellement, j'ai vécu le divorce de ma tante à mon jeune âge, et ce scénario s'est gravé dans ma mémoire. C'est pourquoi je préfère compléter ma vie célibataire. ».*

**Exemple 6 :**

*« Moi je suis contre le mariage parce qu'il est la plus grande guerre entre la femme qui veut avoir une belle vie et l'homme qui veut faire le fort alors qu'il ne l'est pas. Alors pas de mariage, pas d'exploitation, pas de cohabitation avec l'ennemi. »*

**Exemple 7 :**

*« Le mariage est quelque chose de nuisible à la personnalité de la femme car le mariage empêche la femme de sa liberté. De plus,*

*le mariage est un chemin direct vers l'enfer. Personnellement, je vis comme une reine dans la maison de mon père et je ne veux pas devenir esclave pour mon mari. N'oublions pas que certains hommes sont comme des monstres, ils insultent leur femme. De plus le mariage n'est pas obligatoire dans l'Islam, il est simplement recommandé, le mariage est une parure de la vie et non la raison de la vie. La femme est maîtresse de sa vie, elle n'a pas besoin de mariage et de divorce sauf si elle est une femme faible. »*

Exemple 8 :

*« ... certaines se marie pour avoir une reconnaissance sociale puis elles divorcent parce que l'homme est insupportable. »*

Exemple 9 :

*« ...le mariage apporte que du stress. ».*

De ces extraits, il en ressort que l'expression langagière de l'image mentale du divorce et son corollaire le mariage se présente sous la forme d'un « *débordement émotionnel* » (Kafetzi, 2013 : 113) angoissant. Les écrits témoignent de conflit entre l'individu, la société, Soi, sa famille et l'Autre. Le rapprochement et la piété s'effacent au profit de l'éloignement et la haine. Ces pensées agissent comme des « *forces qui s'exercent sur l'individu dans son action* » (Wald, 2012 : 104) et expliqueraient des changements sociétaux, particulièrement concernant la représentation de la femme dans sa globalité et de l'épouse dans sa singularité.

Le pathos est ainsi incriminé et jamais l'éthos. En effet, les liens de causalité exprimés par les étudiants renvoient inlassablement à l'Autre, sa mentalité et sa famille. Quitte à être qualifiée d'anticonformistes, les étudiantes préfèrent préserver leur célibat et leur liberté qui fonctionnent tel un bouclier les préservant de la douleur. Des exemples personnels sont cités pour illustrer l'opinion avancée en y intégrant des arguments socioculturels au sein d'une union où le partenaire masculin jouit de la légitimité d'un statut social quasi suprême.

L'analyse thématique fait ressortir les thèmes suivants : stress, conflit, déception, attitude victimaire, accusation de l'Autre et enfin Animosité. Ils fonctionnent à l'exemple d'un processus « *de pré-codage de la réalité car elle détermine un ensemble d'anticipations et d'attentes* » (Abric, 1994, p. 13), qui ont été formulées sous une forme pessimiste et « *éminemment explosive* » (Neuschäfer, 1986, p. 37) avant leur survenue, ce qui impacte et

détériore les rapports sociaux en raison du contraste négatif entre le constat observé (qui est nécessairement réduit et biaisé), et les attentes et anticipations implicitement envisagées (Bourassa, Serre & Ross, 1999).

Il est aussi utile d'ajouter que ces extraits discursifs renvoient à trois modalités : appréciatives, déontiques et axiologiques. Concernant la modalité appréciative du discours, nous relevons des choix lexicaux dénotant un jugement émotionnel tel que l'illustre cet extrait : « le mariage devient un cauchemar, il est donc inutile par rapport au temps de ma grand-mère » Ainsi, le jugement de valeur de l'union maritale conduit à considérer cette dernière comme étant un acte ou une union à effet pragmatique inutile par rapport à une situation ancienne inverse. Cette évocation d'une situation passée liée aux traditions des ancêtres permet à l'auteure d'exprimer une modalité déontique où le mariage était considéré comme une étape obligatoire dans la vie. Une autre étudiante exprime cette modalité déontique pour se révolter contre un ordre moral mais également social en ces termes :

*« Maintenant, la femme travaille comme l'homme et il ne veut pas aider à la maison ; je refuse cette vie même si elle est normale pour la société que la femme fait tout dehors et dedans. »*

Il y a une remise en compte d'une norme sociale jugée contraignante qui s'argumente par le changement du statut professionnel de la femme moderne. Enfin, un autre extrait reflète la modalité axiologique du discours où l'étudiante émet un jugement de valeur dépréciatif à l'encontre des tâches socialement imposées à la femme « *de plus, les gens oublient que les temps ont changés et que maintenant on n'est pas obligé de se marier, la société a changé et la femme n'est plus esclave de son mari et de sa famille* ». Un autre extrait remet en cause l'éducation familiale des genres « *même à la maison, je ne suis pas d'accord avec maman qui ne demande aucun travail à mes frères et moi et ma sœur on fait le ménage et on l'aide dans la cuisine, ce n'est pas normal !!!* ». L'emploi de trois points d'exclamation renforce cette prise de position en impliquant l'énonciateur dans son énoncé

Ces extraits indiquent « *la rencontre de deux cadres différents d'interprétation de la réalité* » (Pilon, 2002 : 139) qui peuvent être dépassés par la communication (Dallaire, 2011). Certes, cette relation se construit par rapport à des attentes imaginées (Finzi-Dottan, Cohen & Tyano, 2004), toutefois, elle ne se limite pas à l'Autre mais interroge également Soi, sous

une forme « d'accueil de l'Autre et de souci de Soi » (Müller, 1991), lequel accueil est assujetti à la représentation que l'on possède de l'estime de Soi « *en tant que variable fortement à l'œuvre dans le fonctionnement social et la relation du couple.* » (Delelis & De Bosscher, 2023, p. 516).

Enfin, nous avons confronté nos étudiantes à deux récits d'une tranche de vie de deux personnalités internationales en lien avec cette thématique, en raison du fait que « *discuter des personnes célèbres participe à une élaboration continue des valeurs morales (...) de reproductibilité* » (Juan & Picard (2012, p. 95), ce qui suppose une opportunité de confronter ses représentations à celles des célébrités.

Un autre argument en faveur de cette dernière phase de notre étude est l'idée de confronter les étudiantes à une autre vision de l'infidélité et de l'attitude qu'il est possible d'adopter dans cette situation qualifiée par notre public de violence extrême à l'égard de la femme. Ainsi, leur proposer une situation réelle de tromperie est utile afin de les exposer à d'autres réalités possibles (Clermont, 2013).

Les résultats au sujet de l'opinion portée sur l'attitude d'Anne Sinclair et d'Hilary Clinton montrent un avis unanime selon lequel le pardon, qui est l'attitude adoptée par ces deux femmes de renom, est considéré comme une erreur envers Soi, argumentée par le fait que « la trahison détruit la confiance à jamais » ; « et la reconstruction est impossible » ; ou encore « *le pardon dévalorise l'estime de soi, de la femme et la pousse à accepter un traitement injuste* », « le pardon nuit à sa dignité personnelle », « *la femme mérite de vivre dans une relation saine et respectueuse et de vivre sans la peur d'être trahi à nouveau* » ; « le pardon impose une pression émotionnelle importante sur la femme » ; « *en refusant de pardonner la femme se protège des blessures émotionnelles futures* » ; et enfin « *le pardon peut engendrer un déséquilibre dans le couple, où la femme reste fragile tandis que l'homme se sent fort.* ».

Cette seconde narration a confirmé les mêmes représentations que celles énoncées lors de la précédente expression langagière et indique que les attitudes divergentes que les célébrités ont adoptées, ne parviennent pas à modifier les représentations initiales des étudiantes. Ce qui renforce la nécessité d'exposer les étudiants à des données aux antipodes de leur prise de position initiale du fait que

*« Si aucune information ne vient contredire les hypothèses faites sur la situation, il y a tout lieu de penser que l'individu va conserver cette grille de lecture pour agir et pour communiquer à propos de la situation. » (Molier, 1988, p. 759).*

En sommes, les deux narrations produites par les étudiantes consolident l'analyse du noyau central et des éléments périphériques de leurs représentations initialement collectées.

## 5. Conclusion

Amener les étudiants à s'exprimer sur ce thème est pertinent, au regard de son importance à instaurer une formation à l'altérité. Ce sujet constitue un objet social au profit des unions endogames et consanguines (Ben M'rad & Chalbi, 2004). Il est aussi un thème d'actualité universitaire (Oulebsir, 2024), de débats sur l'augmentation du phénomène de Khol' octroyant à la femme musulmane le droit de divorcer, ainsi que suite à la signature de l'Algérie de la convention Cedaw le 4 aout 2025, ce qui nous interpelle afin d'appréhender les représentations de Soi et de l'Autre au sein de cette union particulière. A ce sujet, une étude interrogeant les deux genres atteste que

*« Les deux représentations sont complètement différentes (...) ce qui n'est certainement pas sans conséquence sur le comportement, les attitudes, les prises de position » (Zitouni & Cherif, 2019, p.199).*

D'autres recherches actuelles mettant en exergue « *le malaise* » du jeune couple d'aujourd'hui par rapport à celui des générations précédente (Arezki, 2002, p. 108). En sommes, cette thématique est l'objet de réflexions de diverses études (Schrod, 2015), notamment celles indiquant une expansion du phénomène de la violence conjugale (Jbir et al., 2025) ce qui pourrait constituer une assise explicative aux résultats obtenus. Au regard de l'expansion des cas de violence conjugale, particulièrement à l'égard de la femme, en temps du confinement lors de la pandémie du Covid-19 (Moiron-Braud, 2020; Sebaa, 2021), de même que la croissance du Le Khul', un « *mode de dissolution du mariage par compensation dont le taux a triplé en moins de quinze ans (de 2007 à 2020) et progresse d'environ 1% par an* » (Moutassem-Mimouni, 2023, p. 44), nous ambitionnons de mettre en exergue les représentations d'une population étudiante susceptible de vivre une

union maritale, l'exposant à la gestion de Soi et de l'Autre, en formulant l'hypothèse que la charge émotionnelle occulterait la réflexion et l'altérité.

Grâce à la narration et l'argumentation qui sont des répertoires discursifs de structuration des expériences et d'appréhension du monde (Karpinska-Szaj & Wojciechowska, 2019), nos résultats indiquent une détermination féminine, l'insoumission aux us et coutumes normatifs, et l'affrontement tout en condamnant l'Autre sans réflexivité au sujet du rôle et de l'implication de Soi, ce qui corrobore les propos de Bourquin et al., (2012, p. 1) selon lesquels « *les conflits sont fertiles en discours d'accusation* », occultant l'idée que la différence est fondamentale puisque « *l'Autre est ce que nous ne sommes pas* » (Senechal, 2005, p. 18) et qu'il revient à la formation universitaire de sensibiliser les étudiants à l'idée de « *l'existence d'une autre liberté à côté de moi* » (ibid).

En outre, le repliement sur Soi qu'évoquent les étudiants, afin d'éviter le mariage et donc les douleurs de la rencontre humaine, apparaît une situation de « *méfiance envers l'Autre qui se perçoit dans la façon dont nous gérons la souffrance* » (Senechal, 2005, p. 53). Ces données pourraient s'expliquer par une défaillance de compétences socio-émotionnelles (Vachon & Guézennec, 2025), permettant d'être en mesure d'enclencher des attitudes équilibrées de gestion de Soi et de l'Autre, au profit de « *faire preuve d'empathie pour soi-même et les autres, établir et maintenir des relations épanouissantes et prendre des décisions responsables* » (Bowen et all. 2022, p. 124).

Nos résultats montrent des représentations dominées par la violence émotionnelle en raison d'une absence de formation à l'altérité d'où l'intérêt d'une « *construction de soi tout au long de la vie* » (Guichard, 2004, p. 500). Ainsi, en référence à cet auteur, il est indispensable de penser à un contenu de formation d'apprenants-citoyens en mesure d'analyser leurs interactions intra et interpersonnelles, aptes à évaluer leur subjectivisation (Foucault, 1981, Audureau, 2003), tout en étant conscients des dérives de l'assujettissement à l'autre. Il incombe à la formation académique de veiller à l'agentivité des étudiants par l'adoption de valeurs relationnelles universelles. Nous questionnons ainsi la formation académique sur le degré de sa contribution à la sensibilisation des étudiants à l'art de Soi et des Autres. Ainsi, afin de reconstruire des voies de dialogue, la formation universitaire nous paraît cruciale en sa qualité de maillon intercesseur entre l'individualité nécessaire

à laquelle est imbriquée la sociabilité complexe et multiforme de toute personne. C'est par le biais d'une « *intelligence critique* » (Müller & Kalinowski, 2012, p. 200) mise en œuvre grâce à la compétence communicative qu'une telle voie est envisageable, à des fins d'une appréhension plus réflexive de Soi et de l'Autre qui

« *Donne à notre vie deux valeurs qui se complètent, même si elles entrent également bien des fois en conflit.* » (Simmel, 1999, cité par Müller & Kalinowski, 2012, p.186).

Au final, nos résultats renforcent l'intérêt de l'enseignement de l'altérité à des fins de prévoyance de la violence et de la radicalisation des relations sociales entre les genres.

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# SOCIOCULTURAL ISSUES IN ESP WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

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## **Abstract**

Modern interdisciplinary approaches to communication have highlighted that this area stretches beyond the mastery and proficient use of vocabulary items or the separate study of culture. In contemporary settings, successful and persuasive communication also requires the speakers' and the recipients' ability to handle various cultural challenges, spawned by cultural diversity. The first part of this paper tackles several definitions of culture and discusses the interconnections between language and culture; it also presents some significant implications entailed by a sociocultural approach to effective communication in ESP - English for Specific Purposes contexts. The second part of this study analyses two instances of ESP written communication, in order to highlight the sociocultural elements that permeate the respective professional messages and stress the necessity to pay due attention to the factors that can contribute to the improvement of communication in professional contexts.

## **Keywords**

Communication, professional contexts, ESP – English for Specific Purposes, written communication, sociocultural approach

## **1. Introduction**

The literature focused on ESP teaching, learning and implementation in authentic contexts has undergone constant transformations over the last decades. An interesting development in this regard is represented by the researchers' and practitioners' interest in the interconnections between the specialized content of ESP texts and their somewhat hidden sociocultural elements. The present paper also aims to explore these relationships and underline the key role played by sociocultural factors in successful ESP communication.

For the purpose of this article, the presentation of the multifaced nature of the term “culture” (as tackled in the literature) and the discussion of its connection with language were considered necessary. Moreover, the theoretical part also makes a brief foray into the realm of sociocultural approaches to reveal some of the factors that can influence the efficiency of communication in ESP settings. The case study examines two emails – examples of ESP written communication – to illustrate how sociocultural elements shape the messages, and to highlight the necessity to focus more on strategies that can contribute to the improvement of written communication across various ESP settings.

## **2. Literature review**

Dictionaries generally define culture as “the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time”, or “the attitudes, behaviour, opinions, etc. of a particular group of people within society” (*Cambridge Dictionary online*). Similarly, *Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries online* define culture as “the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group”.

In the context of globalization, however, we can no longer talk about culture in the singular. Modern societies have an accentuated multicultural nature, which the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries online* define as the presence of “people of several different cultures (beliefs, languages, customs and traditions, etc.)”, and the *Cambridge Dictionary online* describes as encompassing “people who have many different customs and beliefs”, and as “relating to a number of different cultures, esp. to the traditions of people of different religions and races”. Nevertheless, these dictionary definitions offer only a superficial understanding of culture and fail to capture the intricacy and multidimensional nature of this concept.

As far as the literature focused on defining the concept of culture is concerned, scholars have proposed a wide range of interpretations that reflect the concept’s dynamic, multifaced and context-dependent nature. For instance, according to Hall (1976), culture can be properly understood only by its active participants. The scholar explains that, initially, newcomers mainly notice overt behaviours and that, over time, the fundamental beliefs,

values, and thought constellations that trigger those specific behaviour patterns are sequentially revealed.

While Kramsch (1998: 10) conceptualizes culture as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings”, Samovar *et al.* (1998: 36) attempt to furnish a more encompassing definition, envisaging culture as follows:

*“the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.”*

This definition highlights that culture has a socially constructed and inherited nature. Since it is transmissible across generations, the aforementioned authors argue that culture is learned and consequently becomes automatic and subconscious. Moreover, this definition places greater emphasis on the intangible heritage of a community (cognitive and normative aspects, behavioural and social structures), with material products mentioned only at the end of the list of elements that constitute culture. It also draws the attention to its collective nature, as it arises from the efforts and experiences of a group over time.

Both Peterson (2004) and Lee (2009) distinguish culture into two broad categories: Big “C” culture and little “c” culture. The former encompasses prominent themes, i.e., architecture, classical music, geography, history, legislative framework, literature, political matters, social standards, fundamental values, and reasoning processes (Peterson, 2004). In contrast, the latter refers to everyday aspects of life, including more ordinary and minor elements such as perspectives, preferences, stance, body language, spatial behaviour, attire, dress styles, food, and hobbies (Peterson, 2004). In his turn, Lee (2009: 78) further elaborates that little “c” culture captures “the invisible and deeper sense of a target culture”, encompassing mindsets or convictions and underlying assumptions.

Among the plethora of theoretical approaches to defining culture, it is worth highlighting the work of Baldwin *et al.* (2006). These authors explore the historical metamorphoses of the meanings assigned to the term “culture”, and compile over 300 definitions of this somewhat elusive and flexible term. They present a comprehensive multidisciplinary framework that spans a wide

range of academic fields, emphasizing that culture cannot be confined to a single domain or perspective, as its vast meanings stretch across a broad myriad of disciplines.

Baldwin et al. (2006) propose several interesting ways of approaching the varied definitions of culture, i.e., the historical trajectory of the term; a content-based analysis structured around seven major themes (“structure, function, process, product, refinement, power/ ideology, and group membership”) along with their subthemes; and a series of conceptual models derived from these themes (Baldwin et al., 2006: xvi). The first group of definitions encompasses structural, functional, and process-based perspectives, which delineate culture as consisting of “structures and processes that serve a variety of functions” (Baldwin et al., 2006: 67). The second group includes definitions that tackle the relationships between culture and power relations, ideology and group identity. The third group contains those definitions that envisage culture in relation to products and refinement.

Shaeda Isani (2025) explains that due to its complex, multifaced nature, the term “culture” is difficult to define. This scholar tackles culture against specialized (ESP) backgrounds, and delineates it as a unique concept that interweaves linguistic conventions, professional standards, and contextual comprehension, which influences communication and patterns of behaviour in a wide array of professional domains. Isani (2025) also explains that it encompasses specialized terminology and elements that are usually typical of a certain genre, but also social and cultural norms, perspectives and expectations that delineate relationships and interactions within the respective society. Her perspectives on specialised ESP culture are grounded in anthropological and ethnographical sources. Furthermore, in her research, she examines the ways in which members of a community carry out tasks, collaborate, communicate and develop within their specialised settings (Isani 2025). Other researchers, such as Barron (1991), also examine the connections between culture and specialized languages in their works. This scholar presents culture as a system for processing and conveying information, highlighting its functional link to ESP and education Barron (1991: 176):

*“Culture is an information-processing system which has links with education, and ultimately, therefore, with ESP, because it involves the transfer of information in a factual system, the purpose of which is to produce fit members of society.”*

Thus, culture contributes to people' metamorphosis into competent members of the society, as it plays a key role in the dissemination of shared knowledge and practices.

A pivotal conceptual representation of culture belongs to anthropologist Edward Hall (1976), who developed the “iceberg” model, which envisioned culture as an iceberg. From his perspective, just as only a small portion of an iceberg is visible above the water, with the bulk of its mass lying beneath the surface, culture too consists of visible elements (i.e., the conscious portion of culture encompassing behaviours and artefacts) supported by a far larger, underlying structure – which stands for the subconscious portion of culture, which comprises the convictions, principles and thought structures that shape behaviour. This conceptual representation of culture suggests that there is more to culture than meets the eye, as its visible elements are mere manifestations of its invisible ones (Hall, 1976). This iceberg metaphor also pinpoints to the need for careful effort to comprehend the patterns of behaviour and thought of individuals from various cultural settings, since the visible aspects of their culture do not always reveal the underlying foundations of that culture.

Based on Hall’s “iceberg” (1976) and Hofstede’s “onion” (1991) conceptual representations which explain the surface-level and foundational components of culture, Isani (2025) seeks to render the concept of “specialised culture” as more practical by categorizing its traits into observable and non-observable dimensions. In her view, instances of the observable dimensions are represented by “institutional edifices and architecture, dress and behavioural codes, gestural rites and rituals, etc.”. She further provides more specific examples:

*“The idiosyncratic way lawyers in Britain live, speak, behave, act and dress are well-documented observable traits specific to the culture of the English law community.”*

As far as the non-observable dimensions are concerned, these encompass the following elements:

*“institutions, norms, beliefs, values, practices, socio-professional organisation of the community, etc., as well as the knowledge, evolution, ethics, legends, heroes and villains, the darker sides of a professional community and the current issues it faces.”* (Isani, 2025)

In addition, technological developments and globalization have triggered increasingly multicultural environments, which made researchers such as Atkinson (1999) and Sercu (2002) to militate for the need to recognize and address diverse, intricate cultural identities when introducing foreign cultures in language education, and when determining how learners are encouraged to reflect on their own stance in relation to the target language. Learners should acquire linguistic-cultural competence through foreign language education in order to meet the challenges involved in negotiating cultural meaning during interactions with people with diverse cultural environments and to develop a deep understanding of their own culture (Scollon and Scollon, 2001). Apart from mastery of the use of English, successful interactions in multicultural settings dominated by market competition also involve the adaptability to cultural needs and particularities, the strategic use of resources, and the implementation of the latest technologies (Nădrag, 2024).

### **3. A sociocultural approach to written communication**

Communication – as a field of study – is inherently marked by interdisciplinarity, which mirrors the complex nature of communication as a process (Nădrag, 2011), and its wide variety of configurations, spanning from spontaneous, unpredictable informal conversations to elaborate speeches and pre-established discussions in formal meetings (Ionițiu, 2022). Professional (and even personal) success requires a steady preoccupation to model confident, competent and engaged individuals who exhibit respect for cultural and social diversity regardless of the environment they are exposed to. In order to enhance linguistic-cultural competences, sociocultural approaches to language learning and teaching should be implemented. These approaches tackle, among other matters, the symbiosis between language, communication, culture, background and identity, and envision language learning as “inherently embedded in and shaped by situated social actions” (Hawkins, 2004: 6).

The sociocultural theory originates in Vygotsky's research (1978), which conceived learning as a social phenomenon entailed by social interactions. According to the literature, learning is more than a cognitive process focused solely on the acquisition of academic content; it also has a social dimension that may be modelled by the interactions between students and teachers, as well as among students. Thus, apart from the language skills and knowledge already acquired at home, the learners' capacity to be emotionally, socially, and motivationally involved is equally important (Hawkins, 2004). In other words, they must demonstrate the capability to adjust to new classroom expectations, implement the social skills required to contribute meaningfully in classroom communication, and display the self-confidence and initiative necessary to work diligently.

Sociocultural research conceives language as a situated phenomenon that is constructed and employed within social and cultural settings. The creation of meaning relies on more than just language; it also involves knowledge of the communicative context and nonverbal communication, which conveys messages about people's social identities, attitudes, intentions, etc. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interactions trigger the learning process, as it also involves the negotiation of novel concepts and language. Thus, in order to boost the learning process, activities and tasks should focus more on social interactions, requiring language use and collaboration.

Moreover, sociocultural scholars explain that newly taught information is always related to previously acquired knowledge. The educational context is inextricably connected to the sociocultural environment and to the learners' knowledge, insight and personal histories – all of which are deeply intertwined with life paths and developmental journeys and are actively drawn upon when participating in interactions (Hawkins, 2004). Therefore, in order to motivate learners, teachers should present content and tasks that make sense to them. Moreover, teachers should be aware that students do not always share the same perspectives and/ or experiences. To bridge these gaps, Gonzalez *et al.* (2005) suggest that teachers should become acquainted with their students' communities, beliefs, and distinct perspectives on the world, and include these elements into their teaching practice as well. Attention should also be paid to the school environment, as its elements can convey diverse messages about learners'

current and potential identity patterns, as well as their sense of belonging to that environment, which can in turn impact their academic success (Hawkins, 2005; Toohey, 2000).

Since “the sociocultural theory places emphasis on the role of social interaction and collaborative performance in learning and cognitive development” (Alqasham, 2022: 2), the researchers in this field recommend the implementation in the teaching process of those activities that furnish learners as many opportunities as possible to communicate and interact in order to express their wishes, intents and necessities.

Learning a second or foreign language is a complex process as it involves, in fact, the exploration of distinct social languages embedded in cultural belief systems and contextual meanings (Hawkins, 2004). Research in the field has demonstrated that understanding the ways in which these elements operate in foreign or second language learning triggers the improvement of speakers’ proficiency and communication skills (Gee, 1998). For this purpose, emphasis should be placed on students’ knowledge and identity patterns in connection within their learning environment. Hawkins (2004: 6) notices the key role played by teachers in this regard, as they model their students’ identities, influence their lives both in formal and informal educational environments, and thus contribute to some extent to significant social metamorphoses. Based on this idea, the scholar recommends teachers to implement inclusive activities that meet their learners’ needs. Another interesting perspective belongs to Hyland (2013: 95), who explains that written communication permeates all aspects of life and is central to the activity carried out in institutions and organizations; such activities include, among many others:

*“educating students, keeping records, engaging with customers, selling products, demonstrating learning and disseminating ideas.”*

In their turn, Hu1 and Chen (2022) profess that enhanced ESP writing skills provide individuals with opportunities to participate in, and contribute to the development of internationalized professional communities and that they are also able to enrich their research in various professional areas. For instance, written communication skills play a key role in experience exchange and dissemination of research findings through a vast array of documents, from books and academic articles published in specialized journals, to work-

related texts, such as reports, minutes and emails. The aforementioned authors explain that ESP writing should not be tackled only in terms of linguistic accuracy; the choice of an appropriate genre and writing style should also be taken into account, as they are based – among many others – on contexts, targeted readership and sociocultural practices. In this regard, Hyland (2013: 96) notices that “different languages seem to have different ways of organizing ideas and structuring arguments”, and that the socio-cultural context impacts the individuals’ choices in terms of semantics and syntax, and also affects their language comprehension. In line with these observations, Paltridge and Starfield (2013: 96) assert that:

*“In recent years, the field of ESP has become increasingly sensitive to the ways in which texts are written and responded to by individuals acting as members of social groups.”*

Moreover, when discussing about the connection between culture, society and specialized terminology in ESP, Vişan (2018: 81) states the following:

*“It is generally accepted that concepts are not necessarily bound to specific languages, but the cultural and social background of the human beings who generate the concepts and the environments in which they are used affect the way they manifest themselves in any given situation.”*

Thus, the aforementioned scholar stresses the idea that concepts – although universal to some extent – depend on cultural and social contexts when it comes to their expression and interpretation. In ESP writing, the emphasis falls upon the development of competences in targeted academic and/ or professional contexts. Thus, the practices of text production and response – implemented by individuals as members of diverse social groups – are very important in ESP, implying that writing varies and that it is employed to achieve specific aims and interact within communities. Hyland (2013: 96) notes that the notion of community has become central to the development of writing skills, being influenced by novel perspectives. Therefore, ESP is no longer regarded in the literature as an isolated cluster of language items, but rather as inherently connected to communication and to the processes whereby texts are produced and employed (Hyland, 2013: 96).

As previously implied, since each professional discipline has its own culture, ESP written communication stretches beyond linguistic accuracy or grammatical correctness, bearing the imprints of the socio-cultural contexts that model it. For example, medical ESP is characterized by objectivity, precision and ethical sensitivity, while business ESP focuses on persuasive clarity, audience orientation and strategic politeness. These contexts influence key aspects such as the organization of ideas, the structure of arguments, the presentation of information, citation practices and the linguistic devices employed to convey politeness and professionalism. Such features can be observed, for instance, in the use of modal verbs to express caution or politeness, as well as in intertextual and citation practices. Thus, writing proficiency in ESP entails knowledge and awareness of the values, norms and rhetorical conventions that characterize the specific discourse community. When these conventions are not appropriately followed in the target language, the resulting text may be perceived as impolite or unprofessional, regardless of its grammatical accuracy.

#### 4. Case study

This section is dedicated to a brief analysis of two short emails extracted from an ESP book, i.e., Catrin Morris's *Flash on English for Tourism*, ESP Series, Eli, 2012. This analysis will focus on the influence of socio-cultural factors, revealed by aspects such as language use, tone, structure, and communicative purpose in the context of English for tourism. It is noteworthy that the first email is dedicated to external written communication (the email is sent by the representative of a tourism department to its partner – probably a representative of the municipal administration), while the second is an instance of internal written communication (the manager of a tourism company addresses the travel agents).

**Table 1. Corpus**

Email 1 (source: Morris, 2012: 14)	Email 2 (source: Morris, 2012: 47)
“Dear Sir/Madam,  As you know our town is twinned with yours and we are currently working on a joint project to promote tourism in both	“Dear Colleagues,  As competition increases from DIY online holiday bookings, we are asking all our travel agents to come up with some new

<p>towns. I am writing to you to find out about the local transport services available. I am preparing a leaflet with information for our residents about what local transport to expect on arrival in your town and I would like some help from you.</p> <p>We would like to know what public and private hire transport is available; how much it costs on average; whether it is convenient and reliable for getting around town and visiting tourist attractions and any other relevant information.</p> <p>Please could you write back to me as soon as possible with as much detail as possible?</p> <p>Kind regards</p> <p>John Humphries Tourist information officer”</p>	<p>holiday destinations and activities in each area. We would like you to make a short list of five: one sports based; one staycation idea; one cultural holiday; one recreational holiday; and one other of your choice. Please write a brief paragraph describing each one and email it to me ASAP.</p> <p>Best wishes,</p> <p>Tony Good European Manager Dream Travel”</p>
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**Source: Table processed by the author of this study, based on Morris, 2012: 14; 47**

The communicative purpose of the first email is to request information about transport services from a representative of the municipal administration in a partner town, which evidences the professional nature of the communication. Thus, the register is formal and polite, in line with the context of inter-institutional correspondence, reflected by elements such as: neutral salutation (“Dear Sir/ Madam”) – which reveals that the sender does not know the recipient’s name; polite request structures and forms (“I am writing to you to find out...”); use of modals to convey a respectful tone that accompanies the respective requests: “I would like some help from you...”, “Please could you write back to me...”); standard closing formula for balancing professionalism with politeness (“Kind regards”). It may be inferred that this tone aligns with English politeness conventions, characterized by indirectness, courtesy and cooperation, which mirrors the socio-cultural expectations set by professional communication.

In terms of discourse and rhetorical structure, the first email reflects a structure typical of professional communication. In the beginning, it creates the context, which focuses on the collaboration relationship between the towns (“our town is twinned with yours”, “a joint project to promote tourism

in both towns”). Then, the sender clarifies the reason for writing, which is then followed by an organized list of specific information requests that are content-focused and conveyed in a polite manner. The email ends with a closing request for timely response (“Please could you write back to me as soon as possible”) and a professional sign-off. This logical structure characterized by clarity and politeness reflects the genre conventions in ESP written communication at institutional level.

Furthermore, socio-cultural elements such as collective and cooperative orientation, politeness strategies, shared understanding of formality and the cultural norms of written professionalism are evident in the first email. These are reflected by the emphasis on collaboration typical of institutional discourse (e.g., the adjective “joint”, the possessive “our”); indirect questioning structures and modality typical of English professional communication (“I would like some help”, “Please could you”), which mitigate imposition and place emphasis on deference; lack of colloquial language. The writing style suggests the existence of a mutual professional framework between municipal officers on similar positions, evidencing intercultural professional register and awareness of institutional hierarchy, characterized by respect, conciseness and cross-cultural readability.

The first email is thus an instance of formal, cooperative and polite ESP written communication that reflects discourse conventions typical of professional English in institutional and intercultural contexts. Not only is writing grammatically correct, but it is also modelled in accordance with the norms of the (professional) socio-cultural context in order to achieve specific communicative goals.

The communicative purpose of the second email – sent by the manager to the travel agents within the company – is to request contributions (i.e., holiday destinations and activities in five areas) so that the tourism company could keep up with market competition. Thus, the email falls into the category of ESP for Business and Tourism, as the communication is focused on coordinating professional tasks and encouraging the employees’ initiative.

Compared to the first email, the register of the second one is semi-formal, typically of intra-organizational communication. This is reflected by elements such as: horizontal politeness and team inclusion, expressed by the

greeting “Dear Colleagues”, the pronoun “we” and the possessive “our”; the direct, time-sensitive style characterizing corporate communication (“we are asking”; “email it to me ASAP”); the balance between formal and informal structures (“DIY online holiday bookings”, “come up with some new holiday destinations”). Since the sender of this message is a manager who addresses his subordinates, the tone – although collaborative – is also infused by authoritative nuances, which is typical of a leader in a team-oriented culture.

As far as the structure of the second email is concerned, the task-oriented discourse pattern can be noticed, which is specific to workplace instructions. First, it delineates the situational contexts, which is characterized by a sense of urgency and rationale: “As competition increases from DIY online holiday bookings...”. Then, the sender provides task details, ensuring clarity (“short list of five”; the enumeration of the five categories; “write a brief paragraph describing each one”). The email ends with a closing directive (“email it to me”), a deadline (“ASAP”) and a closing remark (“Best wishes”). Politeness (“Please”) is interwoven with efficiency and time sensitivity, suggested by the deadline. Therefore, this structure is typical of the business communication genre, being characterized by clarity, call for action and responsibility.

A key element of the professional discourse that can be identified in the second email is the reference to hierarchical but collaborative relationship between the sender and the recipients of the message, suggested by the addressing formula “Dear Colleagues” and the use of the first-person pronoun in the plural form, “we”; this combination softens managerial authority, which is specific to Western corporate norms that focus on inclusivity and teamwork. The message has a direct nature (as it is task-oriented and time-pressured) moderated by politeness (due to the verb “please” and the closing remark “Best wishes”), which reflects the collegial courtesy typical of English business communication environments. Shared professional context and cultural norms of efficiency and initiative are also made evident through the assumed background knowledge (highlighted by the specialized terms “DIY”, “online holiday bookings”, “holiday destinations”) and the expectation for creative input (suggested by the verb “come up with”, and the adjective “new”). These elements reflect several key professional values in corporate tourism, such as innovation, accountability and independence.

Therefore, the second email is characterized by genre awareness, and discourse and sociolinguistic competence, as the sender employs a format that is adequate to professional collaboration and teamwork, and structures the information in a logical and efficient manner. Moreover, the email mirrors the rules of managerial written discourse, which is typically permeated by an authoritative yet cooperative tone. Therefore, this email is a typical instance of organizational ESP communication between a manager and his/ her subordinates. Collaborative hierarchy, teamwork, indirect politeness, goal-oriented pointedness are socio-cultural norms that permeate this text and that are also specific to English cultures. Furthermore, the structure and tone of the email emphasize its alignment with institutional culture and workplace dynamics.

## **5. Conclusion**

The importance of languages for specific purposes in general, and of ESP in particular, in the development of professional practices has been discussed in the literature and made evident in practical settings. The analysis of these two emails demonstrates the connection between language and culture in ESP written communication, as the use of certain structures, tones and words is influenced by specific socio-cultural and professional settings. Efficient communication may be hindered by misinterpretations, conflicting norms between source and target languages and cultures, limited exposure to authentic texts in target (specialized) field, and tensions between the writer's personal identity and the need to conform to the norms of the target discourse. Therefore, successful, competent and persuasive writing requires more than knowledge of appropriate language use; it also demands sociocultural awareness, which contributes to successful, sensitive and authentic communication, in diverse social and professional environments.

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# EMIL CIORAN ON THE DILEMMAATIC *OTHERNESS*

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## **Abstract:**

Defined as “man’s fatal passion”, *otherness* represented for Cioran the corollary of a philosophy of “infinite possibilities”, born of an irrepressible longing to depart. This form of inner freedom, transmuted into the impossibility of settling, turned, in his view, from a spiritual symbol into a condition of human nature. Yet, by choosing the alternative of *otherness* over the *something* of his origins, Emil Cioran ends by asking himself, rhetorically, what good the change had done him: had he remained in his native village, would he not have grasped life’s essential truth just as well, perhaps even better, than amid the tumult of technicist blessings offered by a civilisation that estranges man from primordial wisdom?

## **Keywords:**

Something, otherness, alternative, change, return.

The indefinability of *otherness* paradoxically grafts itself, at times, onto the concreteness of a particular *something*. In Cioran’s case, that *something* signifies his given origin, his roots; yet from early on he experienced a thirst for *otherness* as a mode of living the distant, projecting it into the dream of change, of wandering, a dream which, once fulfilled, would engender a fundamental dilemma: did the obsession with choosing *otherness* over *something* not imply that the alternatives confronting him were destined, in the end, to converge upon the same disquieting conclusion?

To live the distant is to live in exile – spatial or temporal. Emil Cioran endured both, driven by the passion of pride and an immeasurable vanity that forbade him the conviction of belonging to any one place or time. Even in choosing France as the geography of his exile, Cioran obstinately denied any repatriation as spatial fixation. In *Amurgul gândurilor* (‘The Twilight of Thoughts’) he states explicitly:

“Inner depatriation is the absolute climate for rootless thoughts. You do not attain the majestic futility of the spirit so

*long as you have a place in the world. One always thinks from the lack of a homeland. Without borders, the spirit has nowhere to confine you. That is why the thinker is an emigrant in life.”<sup>1</sup>*

The inception of this “inner depatriation” occurred in Cioran’s life journey with his departure for Sibiu – a rupture from an ancient, somewhat primitive world (as childhood in Răşinari would later reveal itself to him). Though still in his own country, he felt somehow abroad, living in Sibiu between two civilisations, a condition owed largely to his frequenting of the German-language library. Thus, when he later arrived in Berlin on a Humboldt scholarship, his perceptions were far from those of a wholly new world. And when, abandoning Berlin for a month to visit Paris, he experienced – premonitory – the “revelation of falling into the future”, the young Cioran began to be consumed by an obsession with France, and above all with its capital, which he could reach only through another scholarship, this time from the French Institute in Bucharest, in exchange for a promised doctoral thesis in philosophy. In Paris, immediately after the war (1944), he specialised in Old Romanian literature, consulting primarily religious writings at the Romanian Church library. Yet realising he no longer wished to return to Romania and that such specialisation would serve him no purpose, he became aware that he must sever ties with the past, a rupture that demanded renunciation of his mother tongue. He could not continue in Romanian while his aspirations moved toward a new vision: writing in French.

The change came with unusual rapidity while translating Mallarmé, when confronted with the direct “clash” between the poetic resources of two distinct languages (though of common origin), he endured the painful experience of transposition with its inherent semantic losses. At that moment, assailed by the lucidity of imminent identity loss, he understood that liberation from the past presupposed, above all, the leap of detachment from his former language:

*“For if language is the limit that confers identity within the order of spirit, abandoning a language means giving oneself another limit (finis), another de-finition; in short, changer*

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<sup>1</sup> E. Cioran, 1991, *Amurgul gîndurilor*, Bucureşti: Humanitas, p. 193.

*d'identité. The phenomenon is so abrupt that it amounts to a death and reincarnation in another linguistic body.”<sup>2</sup>*

Yet comparing the two idioms did not bring only disadvantages; Cioran repeatedly rediscovered a Romanian of inimitable poeticity:

*“Our language is the most poetic of all I know or intuit. What luck – and yet what misfortune. A people condemned to isolation.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“Our language is among the most expressive. I was deeply moved the other day when I came across **Căci te priveam cu ochi păgâni** (‘For I would gaze at you with pagan eyes’ – T.N.) – **păgâni** is haunting and has force only in Romanian. What absurdity to write in these ‘civilised’, conventional languages.”<sup>4</sup>*

The “confrontation” between two languages conceals, in equal measure, a clash between two worlds: distancing oneself from the initial geographical space lends one’s gaze a sharper comprehensiveness through the aspiration towards objectivity. This is not the case with Emil Cioran, who, both during his years in Romania and after leaving it, continued to perceive his country in a single light: that of “historical misfortune”.

Ten years after his arrival in Paris (1947), Cioran submitted to Gallimard the manuscript of his first book in French, *Précis de décomposition*. This came after his last Romanian work, *Îndreptar pătimăș*, written between 1940 and 1944 (the previous five had been composed and published in Romania).<sup>5</sup>

By then, he had acquired the necessary ease in writing French, after years of labouring, like no one else, in its mysteries. His definition of French as “a mixture of straitjacket and salon” said everything about his mastery of it: to reach the “salon”, that is, the refinement of an elevated spirit, he first

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<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Liiceanu, 1995, *Itinerariile unei vieți: E. M. Cioran*, București, Humanitas, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> E. Cioran, 1995, *Scrisori către cei de-acasă* (Letter to Aurel Cioran, 27 November 1976), București, Humanitas, French translation by Tania Radu.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Letter to Aurel Cioran, 23 February 1979.

<sup>5</sup> These are, in chronological order, *Pe culmile disperării* (București, Fundația pentru literatură și artă, 1934), *Schimbarea la față a României* (București, Editura Vremea, 1936), *Cartea amăgirilor* (București, Editura Cugetarea, 1936), *Lacrimi și sfinti* (tipăritură privată, 1937), *Amurgul gîndurilor* (Sibiu: Editura „Dacia traiană”, 1940).

had to pass through the stage of the “straitjacket”, the disciplining of new configurations of thought and expression in a language “for jurists and logicians”, as he himself called it. Regarding his first French book, Cioran confessed:

*“The **Précis** was an explosion. Writing it, I felt as though I were freeing myself from a crushing weight under which I could not have endured much longer; I needed to breathe, I needed to explode. I felt the need for a decisive reckoning, not so much with men as with existence itself: I would have liked to summon it to a fair fight, if only to see who would triumph. To be honest, I was almost certain I would prevail, that it was impossible for existence to triumph. To corner it, to press it against the wall, to reduce it to nothingness with the aid of frenzied reasoning and accents recalling Macbeth and Kirilov – that was my ambition, my aim, my dream, the programme of every moment.”<sup>6</sup>*

The competition awarding the best French manuscript by a foreigner ended with the resounding success of Emil Cioran’s writing, greeted with praise by illustrious voices of the time (André Maurois, Claude Mauriac, Jules Romains, among others), as well as by the press, which dedicated laudatory pages through Maurice Nadeau’s pen:

*“Here, then, is the one we were waiting for: the prophet of concentrationary times and of collective suicide, the one whose coming all the philosophers of nothingness and absurdity were preparing, the true bearer of the evil tidings. Let us salute him and look closer: he will bear witness for our age.”<sup>7</sup>*

Nadeau distilled the essence of a newly discovered talent, confessing that it shocked by the intensity of the cry of a suffering being seemingly beyond “the great commonplaces of despair”. In truth, Cioran was resuming the frenzy of reckoning from his first Romanian book, *Pe culmile disperării* (*On the Heights of Despair*), a fact underscored by the philosopher’s own penetrating spirit:

*“My way of seeing things has not fundamentally changed; what has undoubtedly changed is the **tone**. Rarely*

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<sup>6</sup> E. Cioran, 2003, *Exerciții de admirătie*, translated by Emanoil Marcu, București: Humanitas, p. 202.

<sup>7</sup> M. Nadeau, in : *Combat*, 29 septembrie 1949.

*does the substance of a thought truly alter; what metamorphoses is the turn of phrase, the façade, the rhythm.”<sup>8</sup>*

Cioran's voluptuousness for contradiction manifested itself in daily life as well: all the stir surrounding the *Précis*<sup>9</sup> and the works that followed brought him substantial prizes – Rivarol, Sainte-Beuve, Combat, Nimier – which, with the exception of the first, he refused. His explanation was in perfect accord not only with the philosophy emanating from his writings but also with the way he chose to live: “*You cannot write a book like **The Trouble with Being Born** and then accept a literary prize.*”<sup>10</sup>

To his refusal to bow before any cliché was added his reluctance to be understood “too soon” by a public too close to him. In this respect as well, Cioran cultivated *distance*, preferring rather the favourable reception of his books by readers in Spain, Italy, Germany, Japan or America than by the French public.

Living *the distant* placed him outside any precise space and outside any given time. His unwillingness to fix himself upon a firm coordinate became a cardinal rule. The “need” or “longing to depart” would become the corollary of a philosophy circumscribed by a single word: *Otherness*.

“*And this Otherness is man's fatal passion.*”<sup>11</sup>

By choosing the paradigm of *Otherness*, the thinker advocates a philosophy of “infinite possibility”, interpretable as the impossibility of settling:

*“There is no place under the sun to hold me, nor shadow to shelter me, for space becomes vaporous in the surge of wanderings and insatiable flight. To remain somewhere, to have your ‘place’ in the world, you must have accomplished the miracle of finding yourself at some point in space, unbent by bitterness. When you find yourself in one place, you do nothing but think of another, so that nostalgia organically*

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<sup>8</sup> E. Cioran, *Exerciții de admirare*, ed. cit., p. 201.

<sup>9</sup> *Syllogismes de l'amertume* (1952), *La tentation d'exister* (1956), *Histoire et utopie* (1960), *La chute dans le temps* (1964), *Le mauvais Démurge* (1969), *De l'inconvénient d'être né* (1973), *Ecartellement* (1979), *Exercices d'admiration* (1985), *Aveux et anathèmes* (1987).

<sup>10</sup> E. Cioran apud Gabriel Liiceanu 1995, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> E. Cioran, 1991, *Amurgul gîndurilor*, București, Ed. Humanitas, p. 111.

*takes shape as a vegetative function. The desire for otherness, from spiritual symbol, becomes nature.”<sup>12</sup>*

The “nature” Cioran speaks of here signifies the human condition – contradictory in its restlessness – a conclusion he reaches after first projecting, into the flight of time, a flight from self:

*“As a child, you could not keep still. You roamed the fields. You longed to be outside, far from home, far from your own. You blinked playfully toward the edge of the sky and rounded the heavens to the measure of nostalgic yearnings. Leaping from childhood into philosophy, the years magnified your horror of settling. Thoughts took the world by storm. The need to wander entered into notions.”<sup>13</sup>*

This *longing* or *need to wander* tormented Cioran even when he seemed closest to having settled forever in the place once imagined as the ideal of permanence: Paris. Yet, in the meantime, the ideal Paris had given way to a metropolis in twilight, in the decline of a civilisation that had once meant everything to him. And thus, through the longing to wander, *the distant* assailed him anew. Dissatisfied with the futility of fate, of which he felt himself the “defeated master”, he was lured by the phantoms of his earliest years: a return in time projected fragments of his first steps, when, with the ardour of youth, he aspired to conquer the world:

*“Caesar? Don Quixote? Which of them, in my arrogance, did I wish to choose as a model? It does not matter. The fact is that, one day, from some distant land, I set out to conquer the world, all the perplexities of the world...”<sup>14</sup>*

That Cioran, upon leaving for Paris, startled the cultural world with the delirium of lucidity with which he cried out his metaphysical anxieties is already a matter of record. But in Paris, that same lucidity would lead him to reconsider the values of existence, which he would detach from any contact with contingency:

*“Today I believe it would have been far better for me had I remained a shepherd’s helper in the small village I come*

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>14</sup> E. Cioran, *Silogismele amărăciunii*, Bucureşti: Humanitas.

*from. I would have understood the essential just as well as now. I would have been closer to the truth there [...] It would have been better to live among animals, with simple people, shepherds, in particular. When I go to utterly primitive places, when I speak with utterly simple people, I always have the impression that truth resides in these people [...] Culture, civilisation are not necessary for what is essential. To understand nature and life, you do not need to be cultivated.”<sup>15</sup>*

In one of his letters to his brother Aurel, as early as the 1970's, the writer had a premonition concerning the authenticity of existential truth, which he elevates to the rank of *ultimate truth* in our lives:

*“The more primitive you are, the closer you are to the primordial wisdom that civilisations have lost. [...] Any shepherd from our land is more of a philosopher than any intellectual here.”<sup>16</sup>*

After seeking and finding his adopted country, Emil Cioran chose to return – though only as an ideal projection – to his origins, to that place where man, untouched by the appearances of technicist blessings of civilisation, stands face to face with his own image and surrenders to disarming sincerity. But to accept the way back, it was inevitable that he first “go astray” (a phrase designating a reality so dear to him), for only thus could he compare and choose.

The alternative of *otherness* proved absolutely necessary for him to traverse the reverse path and end by asking himself, bewildered and resigned: *Pourquoi avoir quitté Coasta Boacii?*

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# MARIN SORESCU TOUCHED BY THE WING OF DESTINY

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## **Abstract:**

This study explores a series of previously unexamined aspects concerning the reception of Marin Sorescu’s poetry during his early literary debut. It also delves into literary history as a reflection of the reverence the poet extends to the eminent cultural figure G. Călinescu, in gratitude for having his verses commented upon in the latter’s renowned column in *Contemporanul*.

We are not, strictly speaking, dealing with a correspondence, but rather with a brief epistolary moment in Sorescu’s life. The two letters sent to G. Călinescu during the final months of his life received no reply. Yet they reveal Marin Sorescu’s “monologue” on his own lyrical universe, through which Călinescu gains insight into the young poet’s views on the role of poetry, interwoven with examples from his own work. This unveiling of a creative programme unfolds in the form of a confession, one that does not shy away from acknowledging certain (literary) transgressions.

The “meanings” conveyed by G. Călinescu in his laudatory article *Un Tânăr poet* (‘A Young Poet’) represent the final evaluative text in his long career and acquire the significance of a message to posterity. Călinescu’s critical intuition proved accurate regarding the literary future of the one who would become, as poet, playwright, literary critic and essayist, one of Romania’s most important writers. In conclusion, it may be said that the great Romanian critic stamped his authoritative seal upon the auspicious destiny of the young debutant in Romanian culture and literature.

Lastly, the handwriting of the two letters invites nuanced interpretations regarding the way this native possessor of the “simple perfect” tense wrote and thought.

## **Keywords:**

Epistolary, original, poetry, debut, Marin Sorescu, G. Călinescu.

## 1. Destiny as Challenge

This article aims to investigate the literary beginnings of Marin Sorescu (1936-1996), a poet whose remarkable oeuvre has illuminated the firmament of Romanian and world literature for several decades. His early literary steps reveal a constellation of elements that affirm his exceptional destiny, suggesting that from birth, fate had bestowed upon Sorescu “gifts” that endured through his formative years and were later confirmed by his mature artistic achievements.

The first sign of this destiny is found in the date of his birth: 29 February 1936, a day that recurs only once every four years. This calendrical rarity inaugurates a series of paradoxes that marked his biography, with the physical man and his spiritual double continuously interweaving life and work throughout the years.

The second sign is the intervention of the “divine critic”, who spots Sorescu’s latent, unmanifested talent. G. Călinescu lifts the veil from a debut rich in promise, becoming the first to accelerate the poet’s recognition and validate his worth. Călinescu’s two interventions in *Contemporanul* overnight transformed Marin Sorescu’s artistic status – from a promising verse writer to a celebrated poet.

The third sign in this play of chance is the *sui generis* nature of Sorescu’s artistic endowments, profusely highlighted by Călinescu. Over time, the “poet’s planet” generously and deservedly granted to him becomes a halo of fame: Marin Sorescu’s works are translated into widely circulated languages and his oeuvre remained for years in the antechamber of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Focusing on this phase of existence, we offer several fragments from the puzzle of this Romanian Don Quixote’s “youth”.

## 2. Marin Sorescu Writing to G. Călinescu

This subtitle is deliberately chosen, as the gerund form of the verb suggests a continuous, durative action, immediately dispelling the assumption that we are dealing with a reciprocal exchange of letters. The epistles discussed in this article were not answered through postal correspondence. The poet could not have expected a similar gesture from the great scholar. All plausible hypotheses confirm, beyond doubt, that G. Călinescu was unable to

respond to the young Sorescu's letters. We shall return to this point.

Nevertheless, an interaction between the two does occur, albeit in an atypical manner, via different "channels". This deviation from the norm becomes, in this case, the exception that proves the rule. The messages contained in the poet's letters, forming what might be termed an "interpersonal" format<sup>1</sup>, receive a response through mass media, a social channel with far greater reach and visibility. This method reconstructs the sender-message-receiver schema, completing the communicative paradigm at both ends.

Beyond the factual details of their correspondence, the "film" of this literary debut must be expanded from three to seven episodes, allowing for a reconfiguration of the whole along a temporal axis.

### 3. The Film / Thread of Events

1. On the occasion of the launch of the poetry volume *Lauda Lucrurilor* (1963)<sup>2</sup>, from among the crowd of admirers present in the bookstore, a very shy young man gathers his courage and asks G. Călinescu for a dedication in the newly released book. Following a brief dialogue, consisting of questions about the stranger's name and interests, G. Călinescu writes on the front page: "To Marin Sorescu, to whom I wish to become a Morning Star". The dedication leaves a deep impression on him.

2. Less than a year later, in March 1964, Marin Sorescu makes his editorial debut with the small volume *Singur printre poeți. Parodii*<sup>3</sup> ('Alone

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<sup>1</sup> In this case, the *sender-receiver* relationship (or *emitter-receiver*, in communication theory) is deprived of its second term and, consequently, fails to satisfy the paradigm of communication.

<sup>2</sup> *Lauda Lucrurilor*, Editura pentru Literatură, Bucureşti, 1963, comprises poems written between 1937 and 1963. The volume was reviewed, in chronological order of publication, by Şerban Cioculescu ("Gazeta literară", 22 August 1963), Radu Enescu ("Tribuna", no. 39/26 September 1963), Eugen Simion ("Gazeta literară", no. 44/ 31 October 1963), Mihail Petroveanu ("Secolul 20", no. 11, 1963), Silvian Iosifescu ("Flacără" (25 January 1964) and Savin Bratu ("Luceafărul", no. 4, 15 February 1964).

<sup>3</sup> Marin Sorescu, *Singur printre poeți*, Editura pentru Literatură (1964), with a *Foreword* by Marcel Breslaşu. The volume was reviewed by: G. Dimisianu ("Gazeta literară", 5 March 1964), Eugen Simion, ("Gazeta literară", 19 March 1964), Mircea Anghelescu ("România liberă", 25 March 1964), Ion Dodu Bălan ("Luceafărul", 11 April 1964), Ion Lungu ("Tribuna", 16 April 1964), Nicolae Dragoş ("Scânteia tineretului", 25 May 1964), Sanda Radian ("Viaţa Românească", no. 7/July 1964). G. Călinescu welcomed the appearance of the *Parodies* in a sentence from his article *Muzica uşoară*, published in his column *Cronica*

Among Poets. Parodies'). Known and appreciated in literary circles – as evidenced by the seven reviews dedicated to the author, as well as the provocative title, rich in layered meanings that many tried to decipher<sup>4</sup> – Sorescu was, at the time, among the young authors eager to assert themselves, highly active in the field of literary journalism.

The parodies reach – certainly not through Marin Sorescu himself – the eyes of the critic, who mentions them in a digression published in *Contemporanul*, no. 40 / 20 September. Without suspecting for a moment that the poet named in the review *Muzica ușoară* ('Light Music') was the same unknown youth who had once requested an autograph, G. Călinescu writes: "A young poet, Marin Sorescu, of rare critical intelligence, which belongs to the realm of creative imagination (*Singur printre poeți*), leads me to suspect that he will succeed in serious poetry. He has written a number of parodies..."<sup>5</sup>.

4. A few days later, or very shortly thereafter, Marin Sorescu places a letter of thanks into the post-box of the residence on Vlădescu Street no. 53, accompanied by 21 poems already published in the magazine *Luceafărul*. The reaction to the thanks is one of Călinescu's characteristic pride<sup>6</sup>, yet the verses arouse his interest to the highest degree. At the same time, the lines received allow him to identify the author as the same person to whom he had once offered a more-than-flattering dedication.

5. Three weeks later, in *Contemporanul*, no. 43 / 9 October, G. Călinescu signs the article *Un Tânăr poet* ('A Young Poet'), this time dedicated to the poems that Marin Sorescu had placed in his post-box. The idea, common in the biographies of both men, that G. Călinescu had praised

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*optimistului* ('The Optimist's Review'), in "Contemporanul", no. 40/20 September 1964). *Singur printre poeți* would go on to have three editions. The volume, republished by Editura Junimea, Iași, 1972, includes two additional chapters (*Postume* and *Meridiane*). The third edition, revised and expanded by the author, was published in 1990, by InterCONTEMPPress.

<sup>4</sup> Mircea Anghelescu, *Singur printre poeți*, in "România liberă", no. 6046, 25 March 1964, was the first to draw attention to the symbolic references in the title.

<sup>5</sup> The record could be interpreted, with justified goodwill, as a continuation of the dedication, had *Singur printre poeți* appeared a year earlier.

<sup>6</sup> "I am flint when it comes to praise and generally suspicious *en diable*, so my young friend should be assured that I will be incorruptible, like the jury in Tokyo". That year, the Olympic Games had taken place in Tokyo.

a debut volume takes on new meaning: the digression<sup>7</sup> through which he had greeted the poet did not refer to his editorial debut, but rather represents a premonition, a gesture *avant la lettre* pointing towards the future of Marin Sorescu's creative work. It is the "literary sign" through which destiny marks the encounter between these two personalities.

6. On 9 November 1964, Marin Sorescu sends, this time by post, a second letter. Only in the content of this letter does a dialogue begin to take shape – atypical, yet in the true sense of the word. The newspaper clippings containing the poems sent to G. Călinescu include, in addition to those from *Luceafărul*, poems published in the magazine *Viața Românească*.

7. Three weeks after receiving Sorescu's final epistle, more precisely on 24 November, gravely ill, G. Călinescu is admitted to the sanatorium led by Ana Aslan in Otopeni, where he passes away on 12 March 1965.

#### 4. From the Biography of Beginnings to the Biography of Endings

Marin Sorescu's editorial beginnings occur within the historical-literary circumstances surrounding the death of the great scholar. The well-known biographer of the critic, Ion Bălu, records this fact in his monograph *Viața lui G. Călinescu*<sup>8</sup> ('The Life of G. Călinescu'): "In literary circles, it was known that G. Călinescu was gravely ill". Recently appointed deputy editor-in-chief of the magazine *Amfiteatru*, Fănuș Neagu signed the column *Eram bărbatul care...*<sup>9</sup> ('I Was the Man Who...'). Invoking the title of a poem by Călinescu, the author recounts in his unmistakable style, full of stylistic exaggerations, that "he had sat several times, at night, on the vacant lot at the end of the street, as if patiently waiting for tram no. 5, watching the 'house guarded by dragons'. When the curtain swayed at the window, threatening to reveal my shadow, I would retreat, carrying within me *the fascination*

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<sup>7</sup> Review *Muzica ușoară*, in: "Contemporanul", no. 40/ 20 September.

<sup>8</sup> Ion Bălu, *Viața lui G. Călinescu*, Editura Cartea Românească, București, 1981, pp. 424 - 429, *passim*. The text written by Ion Bălu, highly condensed, contains a series of brief references to articles, notes and recollections from the press of the time, brought as additional arguments: Fănuș Neagu, *Eram bărbatul care...*, in "Amfiteatru", no. 1, 1966, p. 1; Ion Bălu, G. Călinescu, Biobibliografie, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1975.

<sup>9</sup> Fănuș Neagu, *Eram bărbatul care...*, in "Amfiteatru", no. 1, 1966, p. 1.

of a unique moment, the one in which I might have truly glimpsed his leonine brow”<sup>10</sup>.

Concern for the health of the man who, from the heights of the literary empyrean, had become attached to new social values<sup>11</sup>, was widespread. This is evident in the fifteen lines from the final part of Ion Bălu’s monograph. Of particular note is the mention of Marin Sorescu: “Others were bolder”, writes the biographer, adding: “Encouraged by the laudatory mention in an ‘optimist’s review’, Marin Sorescu clipped and sent all his published poems to him. The verses pleased the recipient.” Ion Bălu summarises the episode of reading the poems, also drawing on other sources: “Dinu Pillat found him in the upstairs bedroom ‘delighted’.”

The portrait written by Dinu Pillat<sup>12</sup> three years after the critic’s death is also explicit: “The last time I visited him, shortly after his admission to the sanatorium in Otopeni, he was lying in the upstairs bedroom, with his eyes on a page from an issue of *Luceafărul*, containing some poems by Marin Sorescu. He read me a few of them (*Danseză, Shakespeare, Trebuiau să*

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<sup>10</sup> We quote from the opening verses: “Eram bărbatul care-n singurătăți petrece, / Ca vulturul pleșuv pitiț în stâncă rece./ Nesiferind câmpia fugeam de cei de jos,/ Băteam din aripi iute spre muntele sticlos, / Și peste creste ninse făcând ocoluri rare/ Granitul mohorât îl apucam în ghere/ Să scriu pe cer eclipse eu mă credeam ales. Pe sus scoteam un tipărt de nimeni înțeles.” (which roughly translates as: ‘I was the man who dwelled in solitude, / Like the bald eagle hidden in the cold rock. / Not bearing the plain, I fled from those below, / Beating my wings swiftly toward the glassy mountain, / And over snowy peaks, circling rarely, / I seized the grim granite in my claws / To write eclipses on the sky—I believed myself chosen. / Above, I let out a cry no one understood.’).

<sup>11</sup> Hinting at the importance of the “lyre” in new times, G. Călinescu made subtle allusions to the social role of the creator: “Cântam. Dar prea departe de ei ședeam în șa,/ Din gura mea un murmur nedeslușit ieșea.//Descălecai. Le-am zis: - În obște mă prenumăr,/Lăsați-mi bușteanul să-l țin și eu pe umăr,/Din moară să scot sacii, albit tot de făină,/Să trag cu voi din baltă de pește plasa plină./Veghea-voi turma noastră-n ocolul de nuiele,/ Cu plumb și cu mistrie urca-mă-voi pe schele./ Frățește mi-au strâns mâna: - Tovărăș fiu cu noi,/ Un fluior simplu taie-ți și fă-ne cânturi noi”. (i.e. I sang. But too far from them I sat in the saddle, / From my mouth a murmur indistinctly emerged. / I dismounted. I said: ‘Count me among the commune,/ Let me carry the log on my shoulder, / From the mill let me haul the sacks, whitened with flour, / Let me help you draw the net full of fish from the pond. / I shall watch our flock in the wicker pen, / With lead and trowel I shall climb the scaffolding. / They clasped my hand brotherly: ‘Be our comrade, / Carve yourself a simple flute and make us new songs.’).

<sup>12</sup> Dinu Pillat, *Mozaic istorico-literar. Secolul XX*, EPL, București, 1969, pp. 171-180. Dinu Pillat, *Mozaic istorico-literar*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1971, pp. 254-256.; Dinu Pillat, *Mozaic istorico-literar. Secolul XX*, Humanitas, București, 2013, pp. 222-230.

*poarte un nume*), confessing that he wished he could be a poet like Marin Sorescu.” Confronted with the up-until-now novel letters, Dinu Pillat’s account must be amended: it is likely that the former assistant of G. Călinescu mistook the clippings from *Luceafărul* for the publication itself.<sup>13</sup>

However, the information “that G. Călinescu wished to be a poet like Marin Sorescu” sheds clarifying light on the affinities of their artistic substance and the communion of two spirits, both immortalised through their membership in the Romanian Academy. In his evocation *G. Călinescu*, Dinu Pillat also presents the concerns of the researchers from the institute that would bear the name of the great departed. The inevitable biographical end is described as follows: “... In his final days, visited at the Otopeni Sanatorium by someone who hesitated at the door before entering, he was overheard saying aloud to himself: ‘There is nothing more to be done.’ This detail seems to me the most tragic in the story of G. Călinescu’s end.”

Equally moving, in its tragic dimension, was the death of Marin Sorescu. For the poet, who departed from his contemporaries at only 61 years of age, “there was nothing more to be done”.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. The Letter of Gratitude Prompted by the First Article by Călinescu

In the review titled *Muzica ușoară*, published in *Contemporanul* no. 40 / 20 September, in fact a digression, G. Călinescu writes the brief sentence already quoted above. Deeply moved by the mention of his name, the young poet places a letter of

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<sup>13</sup> We must fulfil our duty to note that among the poems sent by Marin Sorescu, the poem *Trebuiau să poarte un nume* ('They Had to Have a Name') (noted in the correspondence under the title *Eminescu*) is not found or was not preserved/attached to the letters.

<sup>14</sup> Although it may seem unrelated to Marin Sorescu’s literary beginnings, the ending brings them together once again. With a lucidity that many lose in the face of death, Marin Sorescu wrote a series of 47 poems titled *Ultimale* ('The Last Ones'). Here is an excerpt from *Scără la cer* ('Ladder to Heaven'): “*Un fir de păianjen/ Atârnă de tavan,/ Exact deasupra patului meu./ În fiecare zi observ/Cum se lasă tot mai jos./ Mi se trimită și/Scără la cer – zic,/Mi se aruncă de sus!/Deși am slăbit îngrozitor de mult,/Sunt doar fantoma celui ce am fost./Mă gândesc că trupul meu/Este totuși prea greu/ Pentru scără asta delicată.// – Suflete, ia-o tu înainte, Pâș! Pâș!*” (roughly ‘*A spider’s thread / Hangs from the ceiling, / Right above my bed. / Each day I notice / It droops lower and lower. / I say to myself: / A ladder to heaven is being sent to me, / It’s being thrown down from above! / Though I’ve grown terribly thin, / I am but the ghost of who I once was. / I think my body / Is still too heavy / For this delicate ladder. // – Soul, you go ahead, Tiptoe! Tiptoe!*”)

gratitude into the post-box of G. Călinescu's residence, accompanied by poems clipped from the magazine where he had recently been employed<sup>15</sup>. The salutation (*Mult stimate domnule professor*, 'Most esteemed Professor') indicates deference towards the most prestigious social position, one denied to G. Călinescu following his removal from the university chair in 1947, under circumstances that have been documented<sup>16</sup>. The sender gives voice to the emotions stirred by reading the article: "On Friday morning, picking up *Contemporanul*, and first reading *Cronica optimismului*, I felt a great emotion upon seeing my modest name brought to your attention."

The young Sorescu gives the two lines written by G. Călinescu the dimension of an *astral moment*: "Your words of warm appreciation were a happy surprise for me, for which I thank you and am deeply grateful." He adds, equally respectfully, that the praise came from his great cultural "model": "I grew up in the magnetic field of your writings. A presence like that of Călinescu in a culture makes one optimistic, makes one think that even from this earth one can touch the celestial vault with one's brow." He then explains why he did not send his debut book to the critic, thus revealing his timidity, which acted as a barrier between his desire for recognition and the respect he felt was due: "I did not dare to send you the book upon its release. It would have been as if I had placed in an envelope, addressed to Eminescu, some random poetic attempts. For no one, I believe, since Eminescu, has attained the prestige you enjoy, and which is destined to grow unceasingly in the consciousness of this people."

Seeing in G. Călinescu the most representative figure of literary criticism in Romanian history, Marin Sorescu considers him akin to Eminescu in the realm of poetry. Although in the field of historical-literary research and analysis rankings are out of place, the idea of primacy remains admissible, and the young poet's assertion continues to be supported by arguments even today.

The letter contains a postscript of inner satisfaction: he reminds the critic of the dedication he received: "On your volume of poetry you wrote: 'To Marin Sorescu, to whom I wish to become a Morning Star.'" By reproducing it, Marin Sorescu implies that it was "the hand of destiny." After which the hesitant, withdrawn young man instantly becomes doubtful: "Oh, if only I could hurl myself

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<sup>15</sup> We list the titles: *Reminiscență*, *Pașaport*, *Melcul*, *Fuga*, *Viziune*, *Leda*, *Moartea Ceasului*, *Rame*, *Shakespeare*, *Don Quijote și Sancho Panza*, *Vis*, *Tatăl nostru*, *Soarele*, *Galileo Gallilei*, *Bătrânuș fără mare*, *Dansează*, *Vibrății*, *Ceramică*, *Prinț-un ochi de stică*, *Muzeul satului*, *Imn*, *Pornire*, *Laocoон*, *Marii bărbați*, *Horoscop*, *Am legat*, *Viscol*, *Totul*, *De două ori*, *Şah*, *Focul sacru*, *Poveste*, *Munții*. The poem *Trebuiau să poarte un nume* is missing from the recorded series.

<sup>16</sup> Al. Piru, 1992, pp. 139-142.

into that wish, like Don Quixote into the plains of Spain!”<sup>17</sup> The image of the knight of the woeful countenance would haunt him obsessively over the years. For instance, the programmatic article written by Marin Sorescu for the launch of the new series of *Literatorul* (September 1991) was titled *Cu avânt pe apa Sâmbetei* and was accompanied by Pablo Picasso’s famous sketch (1955) depicting the dreaming hidalgo and his companion, Sancho Panza.

Under these auspices, Marin Sorescu confided in his first letter, not sent by post, but slipped, after long hesitation<sup>18</sup>, together with the group of poems clipped from *Luceafărul*, into the slot of the post-box on the street where G. Călinescu lived.

## 6. A Young Poet

Under the circumstances described above, the magazine *Contemporanul*, no. 43, dated 9 October 1964, in the column maintained by G. Călinescu, an extension of the series once titled *Cronicile mizantropului* (‘The Misanthrope’s Reviews’), which had since evolved into the ideologically necessary *Cronicile optimistului* (‘The Optimist’s Reviews’), published the article *Un Tânăr poet*<sup>19</sup> (‘A Young Poet’), entirely focused on the poems sent to him by Marin Sorescu.

Several aspects emerge from the article.

The first concerns the verbatim repetition of the brief appreciation from the previous article: “In my review of *Muzica ușoară*, I quoted a parody by Marin Sorescu, highlighting *his rare critical intelligence, which I placed within the realm of creative fantasy, suspecting that the young man ‘will succeed in serious poetry.’*”

In the second, the critic recalls the letter and the poems received, admitting that, through a twist of fate, he had met the young Sorescu nearly a

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<sup>17</sup> The one who had already written several poems dedicated to “Don Quixote’s youth” would obsessively preserve the image throughout his entire career. For instance, the programmatic article in *Literatorul*, new series, 1991–1996, was titled *Cu avânt pe apa Sâmbetei* and was accompanied by Pablo Picasso’s famous sketch (1955) depicting the Spanish literary hero and his companion, Sancho Panza.

<sup>18</sup> “I realised once again how many readers you have and what your word means to them. I was so moved that I was almost sad. I had regrets after sending you those poems (I carried the envelope in my briefcase for several days, one day I went to the post office and sent it registered, only to return half an hour later, desperate to retrieve it. When I set out for your residence, the subconscious reasoning that almost drove me was that the road being very long – I walked – I would change my mind.”

<sup>19</sup> The article was republished in G. Călinescu, *Literatura nouă*, 1972, pp. 211-216, and later in G. Călinescu, *Opere*, vol. XI *Publicistica* (1963-1965). *Conferințe*, pp. 464- 469.

year earlier: “The poet sent me clippings from *Luceafărul* and a few kind lines from which it appears that I met him not long ago.” His penetrating gaze misses no defining detail: “I now perfectly recall the words exchanged and *the sudden timidity of the young man.*”

After a *captatio benevolentiae* (“In recent times, a few young poets have emerged with an undeniably novel style”), G. Călinescu moves into an *exordium ex abrupto*. The abstract noun “fundamental” is followed by the phrase “exceptional capacity”, and then by a series of qualities we extract: “the fantastic of humble things”, “the immense dimension of common themes”, “enthusiastic and intoxicated by the universe”, “childlike, sensitive and full of thoughts to the edge of fear of the novelty of existence”, “a cry of admiration before sublimity”, “the *witz*, the malice, fantastic as well”.

Drawing attention to the shift of metaphor towards paradox (“the method floats in the air throughout universal poetry and produces, without departing from intelligible language, considerable effects”), the critic concludes: “Marin Sorescu, in the 21 poems he sent me, uses a simple technique, which is permitted only to spontaneous talent. He finds a point of view that has occurred to no one else, places the egg like Columbus, breaking the shell at the spherical end, and then, finding stability, speaks in the simplest manner.”

G. Călinescu quotes and extensively comments on the poems *Capriciu*, *Shakespeare*, *Galileo Galilei*, *Eminescu* [*Trebuiau să poarte un nume*], extending his appreciation to the whole. He also defines Sorescu’s lyrical portrait, distancing him from the parodic tradition of G. Topârceanu, in order to confer upon him a new artistic status: “Marin Sorescu is already a lyric poet full of originality. [...] I can now say only this: that ‘parodist’ in the usual sense of the word, even in the sense of G. Topârceanu, he is not, but, if you will, a fantasist.”

## 7. The Second Letter

Retracing a path that resembles walking on air, shortly after the publication of *Un Tânăr poet*, Marin Sorescu sends, this time by post, a second letter. As in the previous case, the salutation is “Most esteemed Professor” and contains the same ebb and flow of emotions. Overcoming the complexes caused by the great intellectual disparity in this dialogue that unites an

academician with a young editor from *Viața studențească* (by then transferred to *Luceafărul*), he confides to the critic that, after long hesitation stemming from the considerations above, he decided to write because “I had to thank you. For everything you have done for me”. The same kind of indecision clarifies how his first letter reached G. Călinescu: “I had regrets after sending you those poems (I carried the envelope in my briefcase for several days, one day I went to the post office and sent it registered, only to return half an hour later, desperate to retrieve it. When I set out for your residence, the subconscious reasoning that almost drove me was that the road being very long – I walked – I would change my mind.”

He then returns, allusively, to the magnetic effect of Călinescu’s personality<sup>20</sup>, now reflected upon himself: “For several days, a vast telephone network was in operation, I received congratulations from all sides and felt something of the love that surrounds you directed toward me. I realised once again how many readers you have and what your word means to them.”

Finally, after these introductory passages, wearing his modesty like a cloak weighed down by inevitable obligations, Sorescu confesses: “I must tell you that I never wrote a poem with the intention of publishing it (that would inhibit me), but rather with the desire to throw it out the window.” This paradoxical statement is justified as follows: “I can do whatever I want with my thoughts and I can think everything for myself, with an absolute sincerity – that seems to me a formidable human trait.”

After this true confession, not lacking in paradox, Marin Sorescu responds to Călinescu’s comments, revealing the types of emotions and feelings experienced while writing the poems: “The emotional states in the poems I sent you are real. I wrote the poem about *Eminescu* while crying, thinking that any one of us could be *Eminescu, just as great and just as unhappy*. With *Shakespeare* I was cheerful until almost the end, then a great sadness overcame me. Once I felt a lot of electricity in me, I wanted to discharge it by reading the verses I had written to someone, and after walking a lot through the streets, I returned home with the sensation of a vast emptiness around me. *Capriciu* is indeed, as you observed, a poem of fear.”

Redefining himself as a poet and assuming the value already conferred by the great critic, Sorescu explains: “This is why your review had such a powerful effect on me. Thanks to you, my world suddenly filled with people – on every empty chair, a person, serious, joyful, troubled, happy, unhappy, as each happens to be –

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<sup>20</sup> “I grew up in the magnetic field of your writings.”

and I felt richer. I thank you once again for the optimism your words have instilled in me.”

It is worth recalling and commenting on a brief passage in which G. Călinescu writes: “He is enthusiastic and intoxicated by the universe, childlike, sensitive and *full of thoughts to the edge of fear of the novelty of existence, romantic in the broad sense of the word.*” Considering that the great critic was referring to “the verses dedicated to Eminescu” [*Trebuiau să parte un nume*], we propose the hypothesis that the scholar had premeditated this in the spirit of ideas suggested by Titu Maiorescu nearly a century earlier. At the level of ideas, the quote almost rhymes with Maiorescu’s portrayal<sup>21</sup> of the young Eminescu, the very poet about whom Marin Sorescu wrote the poem so highly praised by G. Călinescu: “The surprising and moving poem is the one dedicated to Eminescu. The idea is simple: Eminescu has become a myth, his work presenting a familiar universe to us [...] It is the most beautiful thing written recently, and without cliché, about the great poet.”

Renouncing, one might say, all the accolades and praises received as if they were decorations, orders and medals (“the fantastic of humble things”, “the immense dimension of common themes”, “a cry of admiration before sublimity”, “the *witz*, the malice, fantastic as well”), Sorescu points to the most precious: “You called me ‘my young friend’ – it is the most beautiful compliment I could have aspired to.” Thus ends Sorescu’s *Second Epistle*<sup>22</sup>, with the affirmation of the thought that he might one day stand at the critic’s right hand – a thought that, slowly but surely, came to pass over the decades.

## 8. Temperaments and Performances of Personality

*Est modus in rebus*, it is said. In the case of great authors, native temperament and the mysteries of writing lend a particular turn to personality, forming in the readers’ minds an aura that pulses or grows in the name of their

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<sup>21</sup> “Entirely distinct in his manner, a man of the modern age, for now jaded in thought, fond of somewhat exaggerated antitheses, reflective beyond the permissible bounds, so far scarcely formed (...) but in the end a poet, a poet in the full sense of the word is Mr. Mihai Eminescu.” (Titu Maiorescu, *Direcția nouă în poezia și proza românească*, 1872).

<sup>22</sup> The new letter is accompanied by a new “batch” of poems, clipped from the first issue of *Viața Românească* from 1965, during the period when G. Călinescu was in the Otopeni sanatorium. His increasingly fragile health would not have allowed him to comment on them. However, of heightened importance is the content of this epistle, much more extensive than the previous one, through which, as we have already stated, one may accept the idea that a dialogue existed between the two, stimulated by each other’s affirmations.

unconditional admiration for their favourite writers.

Among all possible variables, those that separate G. Călinescu from Marin Sorescu stand out, i.e. those that mark the difference between the expansive and the taciturn.

In the foreground of cultural history and literary memory, the dazzling fireworks of G. Călinescu's ideas and writing persist, ever vivid, his brilliant speeches delivered in a vibrant voice, unmistakable in their musical pronunciation, cantabile in tones now high, now low. Numerous examples preserved in film and audio archives testify to the extraordinary performance of personality created around him by the great man of culture.

Opposite to this, though not inferior in talent or other human and artistic qualities, stands the “performance” of the taciturn. Those close to Marin Sorescu and readers who had the chance to be near him, even once, saw in his person (not his personality) the image of an extremely withdrawn, modest and quiet man, with rare verbal interventions, below the natural acoustic threshold. If, temperamentally, G. Călinescu's belonging to the first category is indisputable, Marin Sorescu was, just as indisputably, an opaque mineral. G. Călinescu perceives and publicly acknowledges this<sup>23</sup>. Metaphorically speaking, he polishes the facets, giving brilliance to the carats in the pulley of the work. How could the continuous performance of personality produced by the great critic be harmonised with the faint impression left by the timid, then-anonymous poet, with his halting speech, his slow, almost retracted manner, his laboured repetition of words and his attitude of one who feels comfortable only within the shell of his own thoughts? His personality “comes from within” and the observation belongs to the critic.

To the poet's “external” silence – he was considered more or less mute – G. Călinescu reveals, in the most laudatory terms, the inner spectacle of the work, a true gala performance.

The critic had intuited from the first reading what seemed difficult to discern in the concrete being: the performance of personality was located within, in his ideas so provocative and their therapeutic humour, in the ineffable horizon opened by his poems, in the adrenaline of the *perfect simplu* (i.e. the perfect simple tense) flowing through his Oltenian blood, not in the

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<sup>23</sup> “... I now perfectly recall the words we exchanged and the young man's sudden timidity”.

uncommunicative poet (in society), always defensive, seated in the back seat even in the car driven by his wife!

## **9. From Calligraphy to the Wings of Imagination**

Călinescu's manuscripts bear the calligraphy of the century in which he was formed – orderly, slightly slanted, flowing – allowing ideas to unravel the skein of thought quickly and efficiently. Among the recollections of G. Călinescu's wife, Alice Vera Călinescu, is a testimony to his writing habits: he worked for hours in absolute silence, laying down lines at first hesitantly, after which the stream of ideas seemed unstoppable, growing continuously as drops of sweat fell from his brow onto the written page.

Marin Sorescu's manuscripts reveal a constant state of urgency in writing, with significant graphic ablations (barely sketched, unfinished words), directly illustrating the whirlwinds of ideas in his mind and imagination. This exercise in extreme concentration of writing... of thought had atrophied in Marin Sorescu, if not the organ of speech, then at least the habit of public expression. Faced with other burdens of existence, especially social ones, writing had become a priority for Marin Sorescu.

However, the two letters sent to G. Călinescu were written with much greater care. Alongside the effort to write complete words, the disorder of the handwriting in these two letters reveals the immense emotional tension in which they were conceived.

## **10. Meridians of the Romanian Language**

If G. Călinescu foresaw a special place for Marin Sorescu in national literature, it becomes particularly interesting to consider the perspective from which the critic's visionary ideas and commentaries – and in some cases, even the poems he discussed – reappear in the later assessments and visions of translators and preface writers of Sorescu's work. His oeuvre, now comprising over one hundred books published in French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English, German, Hungarian, Serbian, Polish, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Dutch, Swedish and many other languages, confirms the enduring

relevance of his literary output.<sup>24</sup>

The column that Marin Sorescu established in *Literatorul* under the title *Meridianele limbii române* ('Meridians of the Romanian Language') was undoubtedly inspired by the global presence of his work.

It is certain that the vast majority of editors, preface authors and commentators on Marin Sorescu's work were unaware of the details revealed in the two unpublished letters, and almost certainly of G. Călinescu's assessments published in *Contemporanul*. Moreover, Sorescu's translators did not have access to the volume *Universul poeziei* ('The Universe of Poetry') (1947), with its delightful studies on poetry, a book reissued under the title *Universurile poeziei* ('The Universes of Poetry') (2023), nearly three times more extensive. The editors of the new edition, Nicolae Mecu and Ileana Mihăilă, offer specialists a scholarly portrait of G. Călinescu's views on poetry, noting that the new book "contains not only a series of additional theoretical reflections, but also numerous examples drawn from a significantly broader range of literatures (Romanian, French, Italian, German, Latin, English, American, Russian, Spanish), presented more extensively than in the previously known version, often in the original language, and selected from a truly impressive number of poets, some well-known and others quite obscure, quoted at length either in the original or translated by Călinescu himself."<sup>25</sup> To force a tautology, *Universurile poeziei* also refers to the *universality of poetry*, which G. Călinescu knew intimately. This fact becomes the missing demonstration needed to fully understand the spiritual kinship between G. Călinescu and the literatures of the world, connections that extend beyond time.

This explains the exceptional role G. Călinescu played in establishing the equally exceptional talent of Marin Sorescu. Among other reasons, because G. Călinescu was perfectly informed about the domain in which he placed Sorescu. Regarding the "shift of metaphor toward paradox" in Sorescu's poetry, Călinescu noted that "the method floats in the air

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<sup>24</sup> He was one of the most widely translated Romanian poets of all time. According to the Wikipedia entry, there are 97 published volumes of his work in various languages.

<sup>25</sup> G. Călinescu, *Universurile poeziei*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2023, 382 pages. Edited by Ileana Mihăilă and Nicolae Mecu. This manuscript contains the primary version (nearly three times more extensive) of the text published during G. Călinescu's lifetime, in 1947.

throughout universal poetry and produces, without departing from intelligible language, considerable effects.” In other words, he immediately included Sorescu in the family of universal poetic spirits of the time – and soon, confirmations followed in succession.

Roy MacGregor-Hastie likened Marin Sorescu’s vision to that of Dylan Thomas, an opinion shared by Norman Simms (*New Zealand Monthly Review*, May 1973), who added: “I believe that in Sorescu’s poetry there are also echoes of Donne and the English metaphysical poets<sup>26</sup>, noticeable in the alternation of tones (from solemnity and incantation to colloquial speech) and in the juxtaposition of cosmic imagery with concrete details of the domestic universe.”

Referring to the bilingual anthology *Rame/Frames*, Norman Simms observed that “the Romanian poet reconstructs the coherence of the world in his work”, through “the opening of a spiritual perspective and a sense of meaningful continuity between man and cosmos, or even a moral value inherent in the structure of the universe.”

Stravros Deligiorgis, a Romanian poet of Greek origin, translated *Tinerețea lui Don Quijote/Don Quixote’s Tender Years* in 1979 in Iowa City, a work that had once been under the “critical” gaze of G. Călinescu at the beginning of Marin Sorescu’s literary career.

A few years later, publications such as *El País*, *Die Zeit*, *London Magazine*, *Le Courier* (Belgium) and *Il Tempo* placed the Romanian poet at the centre of universal attention: “It is useless to compare Marin Sorescu with anyone else. He represents an entirely new voice”, wrote *Le Courier* (1981, Belgium).

In 1982, *Il Tempo* headlined: *Vivere a Bucarest e interrogasi sul mondo*, which included the information that Marin Sorescu was among the candidates for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The Spanish newspaper *ABC* referred to him as *Un poeta rumano en la antesala del Nobel*.

In the preface to the volume *Selected Poems*, Bloodaxe Books,

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<sup>26</sup> Norman Simms, in the same commentary, does not overlook the poet’s compatriots: “Sorescu belongs to that tradition of Romanian letters which gave us Tristan Tzara and Eugène Ionescu: the tradition of spiritual verve, of the grotesque and the absurd.”

Newcastle upon Tyne, England, 1983, Michael Hamburger noted: “Sorescu’s verse parables approach human realities through the means of fantasy and irony. But not to liberate his own consciousness or that of others, but to reach the truths of human existence situated at the level of consciousness. The interweaving of fantasy and irony places Sorescu’s work equidistant from surrealism and mimetic photographic realism. Yet his self-reflective, generous irony above all – generous because it spares not even his own seriousness, aspirations or sensitivity – strikes me as a national trait. This irony may be considered deeply and authentically egalitarian in spirit. Sorescu’s parables ironize the human condition by including themselves within it; and they do so with such impartiality, with a minimum of bias.”

William Scammell (*The Times*, 15 July 1984) titled his profile *A Generous Irony*.

In the preface to the volume *El huracán de papel / The Paper Hurricane*, Mexico, 1985, Marco Antonio Campos wrote: “The man recounts things as if they were banal and which suddenly, especially at the end, take a surprising turn that paralyses and takes one’s breath away. Bites, blows, lashes, slaps. Verses with sap or bitter grass. There is almost always a dark background in play. A poet who, as Stevenson demanded and Borges repeated, possesses the most precious gift: he enchant[s].”

The poet Jon Silkin, who wrote the preface to the volume *Let’s Talk About the Weather* (translators Andreea Deletant and Brenda Walker), associates the Romanian writer with the tradition of wit, characterised by the verse becoming a spark of intellect, a reflection fixed within a framework whose core is the opposition between the concrete term and the concept. Jon Silkin considers that “such wit is also found in Marin Sorescu’s poems, and it is this that gives them most of their qualities”. Exactly two decades earlier, G. Călinescu had written: “Some poems are merely a cry of admiration before sublimity; in others, *witz*, malice, fantastic as well, slip in.”

Irish poet John F. Dean writes in the preface to *The Youth of Don Quixote*: “The strength of Marin Sorescu’s work lies in the novel blend of elements, a dark humour and deep intelligence, sharp irony and total compassion, an awareness of absurdity and the soul’s unfulfilled desires.”

Alan Bold (*The Scotsman*, 13 May 1987) believes that “The laconic manner and the finesse of touch create a delicate balance between delight and

despair, a balance that tilts toward the former. Sorescu is a declared enemy of gravity, urging his reader to receive the beauty of the world as a blessing.”

In a profile published in *Sunday Tribune* (31 March 1987), Fintan O’Toole asserts that Romania has established itself in the European cultural avant-garde through creators such as Brâncuși, Tzara and Ionescu, and considers Marin Sorescu’s work “the most recent contribution of Romania to European culture”.

A unique experience was represented by the volume *The Biggest Egg in the World*, published in 1987 by Bloodaxe Books. Conceived as a tribute to the Romanian writer by eight renowned poets from the Anglophone world, the book offered a remarkable exercise in the art of translation, with many poems appearing in two versions, each rendered by a different translator. These included: Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, David Constantine, D. J. Enright, Michael Hamburger, Michael Longley, Paul Muldoon and William Scammell.

As can easily be seen, G. Călinescu’s ideas about Marin Sorescu’s poetry, and about poetry in general, float weightlessly through the writings of foreign translators and commentators on Sorescu’s work.

## 11. Total Writers

The final characteristic, with a conclusive significance, of the G. Călinescu-Marin Sorescu tandem, one not yet brought into the equation, is the scope of their creative output, as total writers.

G. Călinescu’s literary originality is easily detectable in all the texts written by the great scholar. Even his celebrated *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (‘History of Romanian Literature from Its Origins to the Present’) can be read not only as a scholarly literary history, but also as an adventure novel or an essay brimming with aphorisms. G. Călinescu asserts himself in literary life through the positions of the humanist scholar, through the “wise man’s quarrel with the world”<sup>27</sup> (as Geo Șerban aptly titled

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<sup>27</sup> G. Călinescu. *Gâlceava înțeleptului cu lumea*, edited by Geo Șerban. Editura Minerva, 2 vol., București, 1973–1974. “In light of this affinity with the philosopher prince, affirmed by the literary historian and confirmed by the publicist, it seems to us that G. Călinescu is best understood, as a personality, through the portrait of a Renaissance humanist with a resilient soul, yet with an intellect tempted by melancholy and scepticism, if not by a serene form of misanthropy, remaining always tonic in the Stoic sense, expressing himself in a language always doubled by a vivid irony, as defined by Schlegel to characterise the Romantic spirit:

his two-volume collection of texts published by Editura Minerva, 1973-1974), through the logic of his judgements, even when literary in nature, through his intellectual fervour and the pantheistic delight of his humanist certainties.

As with the life and work of G. Călinescu, Sorescu's creation undergoes similar transformations: the poet becomes a prose writer, playwright, literary critic and historian, essayist – “all” inhabiting the same frail physical body, bearing the same name under the sign of exception: Marin Sorescu.

Unlike the concentration of literary works into ideas and concepts or the precipitates of critical wisdom that characterise the intuition of Călinescu's judgements, in Marin Sorescu we find “the wise man's quarrel with himself” compensated by and drawn from the realm of artistic competence and appreciation. Marin Sorescu himself would, years later, affirm this belief: “The function of poetry is rather one of knowledge. It must include philosophy. A poet is either a thinker or he is nothing. [...] His thoughts, his fears are transformed into instruments of inquiry. [...] I believe that a genius poet can, through poetic intuition alone, discover a new star, which may later be confirmed by scientists through parametric calculations. That is what poetry can offer.”<sup>28</sup> I link this situation – Marin Sorescu as a total writer – to the existence of a superordinate element, which is not strictly style (as this varies from genre to genre), but rather, in the case of this visionary, a consciousness that becomes an instrument of inquiry.

The entire oeuvre of Marin Sorescu is imbued with this subtle inclination towards paradox, which gradually, imperceptibly, transforms into duration. And the one who first revealed it was G. Călinescu.

## 12. Instead of Conclusions

To tie together the threads of this unusual correspondence – atypical, as we have repeatedly noted – it is necessary to project and interpret the

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*as detachment, as nourishing doubt, as a 'form of paradox', while simultaneously adopting the naivety of the child's first gaze upon the world, promoted by Schiller as an ancient source of the genuine inspiration of the Romantic genius.”* (Dana Shishmanian, *Călinescu și Cantemir sau gâlceava înțeleptilor cu lumea*, in RITL).

<sup>28</sup> Sorescu's statement intersects the meeting point of the sciences and the arts, at the confluence of imagination, the first and perhaps greatest virtue of the human spirit. Before the poet from Bulzești, it was celebrated by Leonardo da Vinci, Jules Verne, and Eminescu.

information within a broader framework, one that unites, in the spirit of *coincidentia oppositorum*, the two personalities who are not merely different, but profoundly different in the general sense. Not so much through events relatively close to the period in question, but through the revelation of the uniqueness of these opposing personalities, drawing on data and commentary of a more general nature.

If we accept that the temperament and public image of each, G. Călinescu and Marin Sorescu, were situated at 180 degrees from one another, the question remains: how did the miracle occur? What mysterious forces lay behind the so-called “theory of spheres of influence”?

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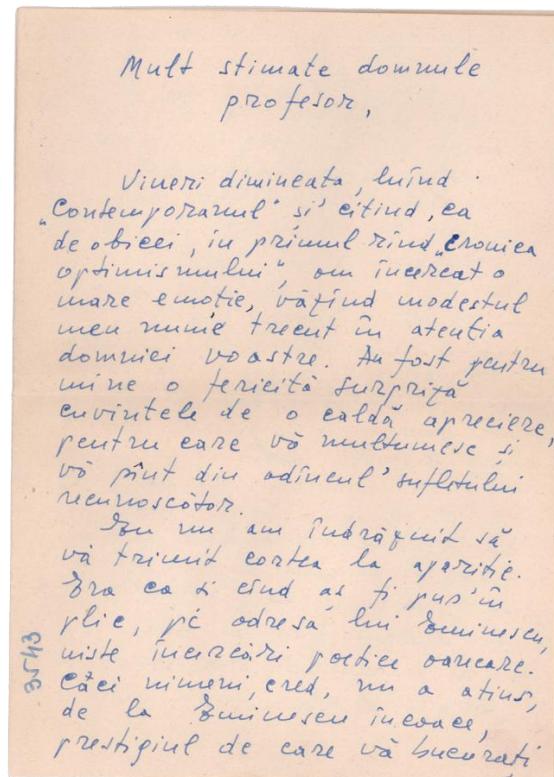
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si eore e uruit să prească, în  
 conștiința acestui popor, neconștient.  
 'Zeci'ou' prezent în cîmpul  
 magnetic al serierilor comunică  
 voastre. O prezență eo acesa a  
 lui Călinescu într-o cultură  
 te face optimist, te face să te  
 simdesti că și de pe acost  
 rîmnic se joacă atinge cu fructe  
 bolta cerasă.

Vă rog să mă iertăți că sun  
 devenit liric. Româncii sun  
 facut atâtă căz de empatie, ~~tot~~  
 încât sun devalorizat și cîteva  
 școale înainte. Si deacea totușă  
 vîlto sun făcând eforturi desparate  
 de să sun ne empatizan, de să sun  
 fi lirici. Tătu, 'înțe' că sun ne  
 putem deghiza tot deconu perfect,  
 că din cînd în cînd nu se vede  
 și sufletul, ea frigide la clovn.  
 Poate că sună lucruri foarte  
 banale cele pe care vi le sun  
 spus nemul. Da că-i aşa,

- 2 -

atunci sună până totată speranța  
în sunul și salvatorul  
principiu: sevisorile răchitățe  
nu se eliberează pînă la capăt.

Cu deosebită  
stima,

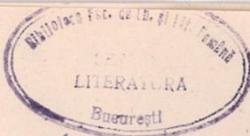
Mariu Sonoren

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P.S.

Pe volumul dumneavoastră de  
versuri auri-ati seris: „Lui Mariu  
Sonoren cărția îi urează să devină  
un bueafăr.“ O, de apă puțea să  
măriști în acastă urare, ea  
deșteaptă în cîmpile spaniei!

- 3 -



Mult stimație domnule profesor,

Au ezitat mult pînă să mă hotărască să vă răspîndesc într-un mod care să nu vă supără, dinăuntria unei feluri de a fi interpretat cu astfel de gest și să nu fi vrut să vă supără, dinăuntria unei feluri care contează în orice relație. Totuși trăsucia să vă mulțumește. Pe cînd tot e astăzi cînd pe cînd văd.

Aprecierile dumnei voastre atât de generoase despre versurile mele, încărcături cu oameni de interes, cu care nu erau învinși.

Cîteva zile a funcționat în vest sistem de telefoane, deci primul felicitări și îndrumările

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# AUGUSTIN BUZURA'S *ORGOLII*: ON THE "FACES" OF ROMANIAN COMMUNISM

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## Abstract

This study aims to demonstrate that Romanian novelists of the 1960s unveil both the terror of the Dej regime and the more sophisticated methods of torture employed under Ceaușescu. Augustin Buzura's *Orgolii* exemplifies this dual exposure, structured across two temporal planes: the 1950s and the 1970s. The link between these eras is embodied by Dr. Ion Cristian, a character caught in the relentless machinery of history during both periods. Notably, the novel introduces a unique typology of the informer – an agent of the Securitate – who records in a private journal (embedded by Buzura in 10 of the novel's 24 chapters) the conversations and experiences of those under surveillance, adding his own interpretations. The result is a biting comic effect, both situational and linguistic, which conceals a harsh truth: even in the Ceaușescu era, the individual remains a victim of the oppressive practices wielded by those in power.

## Keywords

Pride, tyrannology, "obsessive decade", Ceaușescu regime, informer.

In a debate hosted by *Luceafărul* magazine, titled *Romanul actualității: roman al complexității umane și al conștiinței politice* ('The Novel of the Present: A Novel of Human Complexity and Political Consciousness'), Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu argues that most 1960s novelists focus solely on the "obsessive decade", neglecting – whether out of conformity or cowardice – the shortcomings of the Ceaușescu era, despite the General Secretary himself acknowledging certain deficiencies in socialism that require reform:

*"What I would reproach some political novels for, including Galeria cu viață sălbatică, is a certain veiled form of idealism. Certainly, compared to earlier, formulaic literature, these books offer a more honest and truthful testimony of the era. Yet many set their action in the 1950s. The negative phenomena they depict were indeed harshly criticised by the Party and measures were taken to*

*eradicate them. The structure of many novels suggests that from a certain point onward, everything runs smoothly. Unfortunately, even today there are many aspects of social life that deserve criticism, and the first to courageously point them out is the General Secretary himself... I do not see many novels daring to expose the difficulties, inertia and condemnable practices still present today.”<sup>1</sup>*

Crohmălniceanu's critique proves unfounded, as there are novels from the period that capture the societal shifts accompanying the transition from Gheorghiu-Dej's regime to that of Nicolae Ceaușescu. One such work is Augustin Buzura's *Orgolii* ('Vanities') (1977). Its protagonist, Ion Cristian, is a renowned physician, university professor, academician and distinguished researcher, author of numerous scientific studies and treatises. He is the father of Andrei Cristian, to whom he wishes to pass on his passion for medicine, and he grieves deeply after the death of his wife, Stela, from cancer. Feeling he has failed both as a husband and as a doctor, he obsessively searches for a cure to the merciless disease. His solitude in the laboratory – surrounded by dogs, test tubes, chemicals, and guarded by his loyal assistant Anania – is shattered by the shadows of the past (the 1950s) and the intrigues of the present, unfolding within the academic world.

The novel operates on two temporal levels: one set in the 1950s, the other in the 1970s. In both, Buzura suggests, the individual who refuses to submit to imposed ideology must fight to preserve inner freedom against the aggression, envy and cynicism of unscrupulous characters. Though the methods of oppression evolve, the goal remains unchanged: the neutralisation of genuine values and the promotion of imposture and mediocrity as societal norms. The catalyst for revisiting the past is the arrival of Constantin Redman, a former friend of Cristian, who seeks hospitalisation at his clinic, suspecting he has cancer. Cristian's cold and ironic behaviour puzzles his son, Andrei, who seeks out Redman to uncover details about his father's past. Pressured by his son's doubts about his integrity, Ion Cristian is forced to confront the ghosts he had hoped to erase. He confesses to Andrei the harsh experiences of the 1950s, and the young man listens to the confessions of both rivals. A pivotal moment occurs in a meeting between Cristian and Redman, where

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<sup>1</sup> Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, 1977, “Colocviile Luceafărului”. *Romanul actualității: roman al complexității umane și al conștiinței politice*, with contributions by Nicolae Ciobanu, Eugen Simion, M. Ungheanu, V.F. Mihăescu, in “Luceafărul”, no. 49, 3 December, p. 7.

only the doctor is honest; Redman, cowardly and envious, fails to admit his resentment. He eventually does so in a letter discovered by Andrei in his father's room, confirming Cristian's innocence.

The present-day narrative, set in the 1970s, centres on the struggle for the position of university rector following the retirement of the academician Coja-Dorneşti. Codreanu, a representative of the younger generation, aspires to the role. His demagoguery and social climbing evoke Nae Gheorghidiu from Camil Petrescu's *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* ('The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War') and *Patul lui Procust* ('The Bed of Procrustes'), though with a key distinction: Gheorghidiu is a product of interwar capitalism, while Codreanu is a creation of 1970s socialist communism. Like Gheorghidiu, Codreanu marries the daughter of a former dean for personal gain and the position of lecturer as a wedding gift. He has two influential godfathers: one a rector, the other a mayor. The former ensures his promotion by blocking other candidates from the exam, while the latter gifts him a state-owned villa. Codreanu identifies two rivals in his quest for power: Ion Cristian, whose scientific achievements are either admired or envied, and Professor Crețu, a capable administrator lacking scholarly credibility.

Exploiting favourable historical moments, Codreanu orchestrates behind-the-scenes manoeuvres to secure his dominance in academia. Though he respects Cristian's professional stature and initially tries to persuade him to run for rector, he soon realises Cristian is a perfectionist unwilling to compromise. Codreanu then seeks to neutralise both rivals by inciting conflict between them, while he remains in the shadows, posing as a progressive socialist. Buzura uses Codreanu's intrigues to expose the persistence of opportunism and careerism under Ceaușescu's regime, further amplified by the journal entries of a lab assistant and informer who despises Cristian and spies on him and his associates.

Upon the novel's release, some critics argued that the two narrative threads are disconnected and that Ion Cristian is idealised, rendering him a one-dimensional and implausible character. *Orgolii* has been compared to Buzura's earlier novels *Absenții* ('Absentees') and *Fețele tăcerii* ('The Faces of Silence'), as well as to G. Călinescu's *Bielul Ioanide* ('Poor Ioanide'), given that both protagonists, Ioanide and Cristian, encounter corruption and envy within the academic sphere.

According to Nicolae Manolescu<sup>2</sup>, *Orgolii* resembles *Fețele tăcerii* in structure, though it is more overtly *demonstrative*. Beginning with an exploration of a personal crisis, the novel evolves into a social critique, in which Buzura dissects a corrupt environment. While *Orgolii* presents multiple perspectives, it focuses primarily on Dr. Cristian, whereas *Fețele tăcerii* features three distinct characters:

*“While Redman is minimised, Cristian is idealised. The entire investigation from the 1950s, conducted by the repugnant Varlaam, seems designed to validate the doctor’s heroism. And it is anything but subtle: between the interrogator and the interrogated, a direct, overt and naively simplistic relationship is established. Rather than complementing each other, the two narrative versions cancel each other out. What gave *Fețele tăcerii* its merit was precisely the unresolved tension between Radu and Carol Măgureanu, the impossibility of reaching a definitive conclusion. Neither character possessed the full truth, unlike the current situation, where (in a thankless role!) Dr. Cristian is portrayed as its sole bearer.”<sup>3</sup>*

Manolescu contends that *Orgolii* risks falling into schematic representation, as the author tends to classify characters as either righteous or unjust, subordinating psychological depth to ethical judgment. The novel unfolds along two distinct lines: one serious, reflecting the moral and intellectual crisis of Dr. Cristian; the other caricatural, emblematic of social opportunism. Particularly noteworthy to the critic is the grotesque dimension of the novel, through which Buzura stages “a grotesque spectacle of corruption, aggressive stupidity and petty villainy. It is a bestiary. Augustin Buzura shows the makings of a satirical prose writer.”

Virgil Ardeleanu<sup>4</sup> identifies two distinct novels within *Orgolii*: the first centres on the confrontation between Dr. Ion Cristian and his “friend” Redman; the second focuses on the informers targeting the scientist. The first part bears Buzura’s signature style, marked by “intellectual phrasing” in the portrayal of Cristian. The second part, however, is unexpectedly vibrant:

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<sup>2</sup> Nicolae Manolescu, 1977, *Romanul de moravuri*, in: “România literară”, no. 19, Thursday 12 May, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> Virgil Ardeleanu, 1977, *Augustin Buzura: Orgolii*, (“Cronica literară”), in: “Steaua”, no. 6, June, p. 35.

*“I never suspected that the author of *Absenții* harboured a desire for subtextual expression, for dismantling irony, for tonic laughter and absurd comedy. [...] Such breath, derived from mimicking blindness adorned with vulgarity and treachery, is something I haven’t encountered in contemporary prose for a long time.”*<sup>5</sup>

Cornel Regman<sup>6</sup> argues that *Orgolii* resembles Buzura’s debut novel *Absenții* more than *Feelele tăcerii*, due to its focus on the medical world. In *Feelele tăcerii*, the present is crucial for the characters, as it allows them to recall past experiences in the presence of a witness. In *Orgolii*, however, the present is “too vivid and overwhelming for the past insertions – often arbitrarily induced – to appear as anything other than *sensationalist* supplements.” For Regman, the present-day narrative is more compelling than the past, which he finds artificially constructed. The protagonist appears split into two distinct entities with no real connection, and the temporal gap between the two periods is too wide. The antagonist’s continued efforts to harm Cristian in the present bring this part of the novel closer to “the realm of satanic productions.” More interesting to the critic is the “vanity fair” staged in the provincial academic-medical setting:

*“Here, petty intrigue triumphs over darker plots, as Buzura’s originality emerges most clearly in the presence of satirical and even caricatural elements. As is often the case in satire, the focal moment is the anticipation of an election – in this case, the agitation and manoeuvring surrounding the election of a new rector at the medical institute.”*<sup>7</sup>

Victor Atanasiu<sup>8</sup> draws parallels between *Orgolii* and G. Călinescu’s *Bielul Ioanide*, noting similarities in the academic setting. In *Orgolii*, Dr. Ion Cristian is envied and attacked through intrigue by his colleagues, much like Călinescu’s protagonist:

*“All characters evoke the bizarre and ridiculous intellectual fauna of Călinescu’s novel: Hagieniș, Suflețel, etc.; Dr. Codreanu, always cheerful, always adaptable, quick to seize a suggestion and*

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>6</sup> Cornel Regman, 1977, *Augustin Buzura: Orgolii* (“Cronica literară”), in: “Scânteia”, no. 10851, Saturday 9 July, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>8</sup> Victor Atanasiu, 1977, *Augustin Buzura: Orgolii*, (Cultură), in: “Scânteia tineretului”, no. 8754, 14 July, p. 4.

*adept at pouring fuel on the fire to serve his own interests; [...] Ottescu, arrogant, gossipy, insecure, unable to compete with Cristian scientifically and thus striving to eliminate him.”<sup>9</sup>*

Atanasiu finds the journal entries of the uncultured lab assistant particularly intriguing. The assistant harbours hatred for Cristian and accuses him of reprehensible acts. However, Atanasiu notes that these accusations have no real consequences, remaining confined to the journal:

*“Consequently, the attack is never direct; the individual merely pours his venom into the journal and occasionally resorts to exposing Cristian through timid, clumsy and overly complicated manoeuvres that ultimately prove useless.”<sup>10</sup>*

Despite its strengths, Atanasiu also highlights certain flaws in the novel, one being the weak construction of the protagonist. Like Ioanide, Cristian is idealised – consistently inflexible and *irresistible*. He rejects compromise, despises cowardice and always emerges victorious. Another shortcoming lies in the novel’s composition: “awkward phrasing, sluggish rhythm and structural flaws that occasionally make for a tedious reading experience.”<sup>11</sup>

Eugenia Tudor Anton<sup>12</sup> views Augustin Buzura as a novelist who favours direct communication, deliberately avoiding “the facile metaphors that envelop the reader to the point of dizziness.” A proponent of polemical realism, Buzura is primarily concerned with uncovering the truth about the human condition, revealed through brutal confrontations or through “lengthy and tormenting” debates. In *Orgolii*, as in *Fețele tăcerii*, the author employs monologue and dialogue, but introduces a new element – sketch and sarcasm. Irony is present in *Fețele tăcerii* as well (for instance, during journalist Toma’s visit to a friend in a provincial town, where he attends a party in a corrupt environment). However, “what was marginal there becomes central in *Orgolii*, as the denunciatory letters of the anonymous lab assistant, a semi-educated, inferior individual, constitute a significant portion of the novel, a third narrative mode through which the world is depicted.”<sup>13</sup> The reviewer

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Eugenia Tudor Anton, 1977, *Romanul unei dezbatere morale*, (Cărți-Oameni-Fapte), in “Viața Românească”, no. 8, August, pp. 56-58.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56.

also identifies a weakness in the protagonist, stemming from his “unyielding hardness” and “endless strength”. Initially, it seems that Stela, his wife, and Andrei, his son, soften the cold soul of the hero. But Cristian’s vulnerability proves illusory, as his love for Stela resembles veneration of an icon rather than affection for a “living” woman.

Mircea Tomuș<sup>14</sup> identifies three “layers” in *Orgolii*: one ideological, one typological and thematic, and one stylistic or narrative. The ideological message conveyed by Buzura is “a resolute condemnation of all forms of exacerbated terror, a stance of solid human dignity”<sup>15</sup>. In the second layer, focused on human typologies, Tomuș sketches a portrait of Dr. Cristian that aligns with the expectations of official doctrine, transforming the protagonist into a model communist:

*“Augustin Buzura’s main character is a spirit haunted by the fever of creation, a fighter on the barricades of both collective and personal justice, a man of great merit and considerable experience, though ultimately not of the highest vitality.”*

C. Ungureanu’s literary review<sup>16</sup> of *Orgolii* is largely favourable, though his laudatory remarks risk turning the novel into a thesis-driven work. He describes Dr. Cristian as “a rare man, extraordinary in every attitude, validated by history as an exceptional individual”, and asserts that “the righteous triumph, as we can infer even from the pages in which they endure particularly painful trials”.

As seen in the aforementioned literary critiques, reviewers appreciate the narrative style typical of the 1970s, particularly the confessions of the informer-lab assistant. However, they avoid directly acknowledging the subversive critique of the Ceaușescu regime embedded in the novel. Instead, they resort to suggestive concepts to characterise the corrupt environment: novel of manners or *bestiary* (Nicolae Manolescu), “vanity fair” (Cornel Regman).

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<sup>14</sup> Mircea Tomuș, 1977, *Augustin Buzura. Orgolii*, (“Cronica literară”), in: “Transilvania”, nr. 9, September, p. 43

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> C. Ungureanu, 1977, *Orgolii de Augustin Buzura*, in: „Orizont”, nr. 39, September, p. 2.

### Between vanities and cowardice

In *Orgolii*, Augustin Buzura is not concerned with action or suspenseful confrontations typical of narrative fiction. Rather, he reflects on the causes of terror and abuse in society, and on the tools dictators use to eliminate their adversaries. Through Varlaam and Dr. Ion Cristian, Buzura presents two typologies: the brutish egotist and the intellectual egotist. Both characters are driven by vanity, by the desire to be right and to assert their superiority over the other. Mediating between these two consciences is the opportunistic coward, Redman, who feels diminished in the presence of their moral strength. harbouring resentment toward his friend, he allies with Varlaam and, through false testimony, secures the position of city prosecutor. The confrontation between Cristian and Varlaam takes place in the 1950s, during the heyday of brutes, “soldiers with three boots: two on their feet and one up their backside”, who terrorise those blacklisted by the Party with violence and aggression.

A former butcher’s assistant and amateur boxer, Varlaam becomes useful to the regime during the “obsessive decade”: he helps capture class enemies and extracts compromising confessions from suspects, especially bourgeois or liberal individuals. During one interrogation, he beats a colonel so severely that the man dies. A formal investigation follows, and three doctors are appointed to the case: Crețu, Vasiliu and Ion Cristian. While the first two comply, claiming the death was due to a heart attack, Cristian refuses to compromise and tells the truth. From that moment, Varlaam sets out to destroy him. He befriends Redman, who denounces Cristian for allegedly providing medical aid to a suspicious individual who arrived at his home at midnight. Imprisoned, Cristian discovers the true nature of his friend Redman and proves to himself the strength he possesses to remain steadfast in defending his truth:

*“The weakest willpower will give in, and I know that a brute’s repertoire is limitless, but my body defends itself in its own way: I become dizzy from the first blows. Varlaam knows he’s committed abuse, which is why he presses harder; if he fails to prove my guilt by extracting a confession, he loses. Even if it’s later shown that I had no involvement in Sterian’s plot – or whatever it was – Varlaam is justified, absolved, if I admit to something untrue. He even becomes the victim, claiming I deceived him, right? No*

*matter the risk, I cannot. I would be disgusted with myself for the rest of my life.”<sup>17</sup>*

Dr. Ion Cristian analyses his adversary and identifies his weaknesses in order to strike effectively. Lacking education, Varlaam despises intellectuals and loses his composure when the doctor uses irony to highlight the cultural gap between them. Gradually, the proud brute and the proud intellectual grow accustomed to one another, and in his confrontation with Varlaam, Cristian senses his dominance over an opponent who relies solely on brute force, not intelligence:

*“Varlaam was not as cunning as he tried to appear; he relied on strength, intimidating more through the setting and the position from which he spoke than through intelligence or knowledge. We had grown used to each other over time, and once I understood the parameters within which he operated, I was certain that if I could endure physically, he would not be able to defeat me. I relied heavily on surprise in our dialogues: I attacked directly, harshly, when he least expected it, doing everything to maintain my confidence and superiority, but that came at a cost. Deprived of a comeback or suddenly pulled out of his familiar universe, Varlaam was thrown off; I was amused by his small eyes, hidden beneath thick, hairy brows, how they relaxed into a sincere, childlike astonishment that could instantly turn into rage.”<sup>18</sup>*

Between these two adversaries, a pale yet destructive shadow emerges: Redman, a cowardly and opportunistic intellectual who borrows his principles from men of iron will. For a time, he is fascinated by the ideas of Aurel Șoimescu, lawyer and father-in-law to Ion Cristian, later becoming the doctor’s confidant, only to ultimately carry out Varlaam’s orders. He is rewarded for his submission: in addition to being appointed city prosecutor, he secures a teaching position at the Faculty of Law after falsely denouncing Professor Hileanu, who is arrested, allowing Redman to take his place.

Redman and Cristian first meet during university: Redman was the top law student, Cristian the top medical student. They reunite during postgraduate studies in Paris, where Redman stops Cristian from striking a Nazi propagandist. In his confession to Andrei, Redman projects his own

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<sup>17</sup> Augustin Buzura, 2016, *Orgolii*, definitive edition edited by Angela Martin, Editura Rao, București, pp. 160-161.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 296-297.

flaws – opportunism, ambition without effort – onto Cristian. Yet he also has moments of clarity, recognising his friend's strengths and weaknesses. Redman is overwhelmed by Cristian's willpower, his passion for research and his magnetic personality. Focused solely on his own projects, Cristian rarely listens to others, speaking mostly about himself. This leads him to trust Redman's honesty, despite considering him "fragile".

### Among dictators or a course in tyrannology

Gifted with lucidity, Ion Cristian, as a student, observes the grotesque spectacle staged across Europe by fascist leaders in the 1930s, whose hate-filled speeches crush the will of millions, captivated by the machinery of propaganda. Confident in his physical and intellectual strength, Cristian does not hesitate to confront fascist representatives – verbally or through articles published in obscure provincial journals. He collects news and photographs of dictators such as Hitler and Mussolini, intending to write a book on the subject:

"Idiots and History, or The History of Global Stupidity, or a Course in Tyrannology. What must a tyrant do to become laughable to the world? *Of course, others have done it better and more thoroughly, but instead of collecting stamps or diplomas, I'll write it too, with the same effect.*"<sup>19</sup>

The doctor is interested in all historical periods – Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the modern era – because he observes that regardless of the era, dictators share similar oppressive practices: physical elimination of opponents, suppression of free will and the imposition of a standardised linguistic code designed to stupefy the human being and flatter the tyrant's inflated ego:

*"I have always hated the mass of fascist brutes with brainwashed minds, the unconscious mob ready to tear apart anyone at the first signal – a world ruled by vanity, ignorance, deceit and terror. Criminals who had no need for culture, only for a set of loud words meant to impress the uninformed. Should I say I don't believe in what I believe? We don't share the same vocabulary, we don't speak the same language, how can we communicate?"*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 149.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 160.

At a reception hosted by the German Embassy in Bucharest, Cristian, disturbed by a counsellor's admiration for the Führer's politics, erupts, declaring his hatred for dictators and their armies of sycophants and assassins. For his excessive honesty, Cristian is imprisoned at Jilava, then sent to the Târgu Jiu internment camp. There, he meets his future father-in-law, Aurel řoimescu, a lawyer and Peasant Party deputy, himself imprisoned for refusing to wear a swastika badge:

*[...] he simply stomped it underfoot. 'I couldn't stand the coercion,' he boasted. 'I've always been anti – under Carol II, under the Legionnaires, under Antonescu... I feel truly free after serving my prison sentence. I can't tolerate a foreign soldier's boot on our soil, nor any form of tyranny.'*<sup>21</sup>

Haunted by the thought that “brutes in green shirts” might rule the world through marches, songs, terror and hollow speeches, Ion Cristian decides to join the War of Liberation, even at the risk of losing his life. Yet the reality of the front, where confrontation with death is constant and the human being is reduced to mere survival instinct, repulses him. Upon returning from the war, the doctor seeks to recover lost time in research and devotes himself to scientific study, distancing himself from politics. He places his trust in the democratic ideals promoted by members of the Communist Party and joins the party. He participates in conferences held in workers' clubs and rural communities, convinced that totalitarian regimes like fascism can no longer emerge. However, this trust is shattered when he is arrested by Varlaam. Though Cristian's discourse remains allusive, the reader perceives the subversive critique of the communist regime, which has managed to perpetuate and refine its methods of oppression over time:

*"Hitler with Eva Braun, Mussolini with Clara Petacci seemed like ham actors in a play written by an idiot. You didn't know whether to laugh or vomit. [...] I'll never forget the documents and photographs. I was certain such a regime couldn't last. But, you see, history is cruel: sometimes it rushes forward so fast you can't keep up with the pace of events, other times it stretches its monotony over decades, leaving people in bizarre, anachronistic situations, as if to issue a warning."*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 151.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 303.

### **Love between vanity ad emotional blockage**

In the literary reviews published upon the release of *Orgolii*, some critics argued that Ion Cristian is idealised, with Buzura crafting a perfect but one-dimensional figure. Yet Cristian is a complex character, endowed with exceptional inner strength, but also with limitations, most notably, emotional sterility, which he himself acknowledges. The harsh experiences he endures alienate him from others; he retreats into himself like a shell, refusing to communicate, especially with his son, Andrei. After his wife's death, Cristian fails to connect with Andrei, despite being deeply concerned about his future. He remains cold and rigid, and their conversations are limited to banalities or topics related to medicine, as Andrei has followed in his father's professional footsteps. Cristian avoids sharing his past, fearing that doing so might influence his son's development by transferring his own anxieties and obsessions:

*“— Father, Andrei interrupted, we haven’t spoken this sincerely in a long time. Maybe never. I’m glad, though I think you regret it. — No, Andrei, I don’t regret it, but too many years separate us, and it seems words mean different things to each of us... — All the more reason not to limit ourselves to just this conversation, Andrei added. — Though perhaps it would’ve been better without it; I’d be more at peace. I’m afraid of influencing you, of indirectly transferring my anxieties, the trivialities that belong to the man in me. I might disturb your life, your ideas. I’ve tried to make you see me as a researcher — honest and fair.”<sup>23</sup>*

After hearing a distorted version of the truth from Redman, Andrei begins to doubt the scientist's integrity and investigates on his own to confirm his father's innocence.

In his relationships with women, Dr. Ion Cristian is proud, reminiscent of Camil Petrescu's protagonists (Ştefan Gheorghidiu, Fred Vasilescu). During his student years, he falls passionately in love with Cristina Fărcaşu, a young woman from a peasant family with a strong personality. It is the only time he loses his lucidity, surrendering to passion and indulging her every whim. Enchanted by the luxurious life offered by another man from a wealthy family, Cristina leaves him. This is Cristian's first emotional defeat, and he feels deeply humiliated. From that moment on, his relationships with women become fleeting and superficial:

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 96-97.

“Women no longer interested me in any particular way. Everything was reduced to physiological needs, so I chose them by colour, country, region of France, arrondissement, and then forgot their names and faces.”<sup>24</sup>

Cristina’s betrayal prevents Cristian from ever truly falling in love again, a fact reflected in how he chooses his future wife. He marries Stela, despite being drawn to the stronger personality of her sister, Elvira. Andrei’s mother is a gentle, quiet woman who allows herself to be depersonalised by her husband’s iron will. She lives in his shadow, rejoices in his professional success and suppresses her own feelings so as not to disturb him. Her death destabilises the scientist, who realises their marriage was conventional and regrets not having given her more attention.

### The Vatican mouthpiece, a novel typology

The informant-laboratory assistant, referred to by some characters as Canaris or The Vatican Mouthpiece<sup>25</sup>, belongs to the extended Caragialean family of petty gossips and streetwise meddlers, reminiscent of the *pastramagii* and *mahalagii* from the comedy *O noapte furtunoasă* (‘A Stormy Night’). The difference lies in their ideological formation: while Jupân Dumitrache is a product of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century liberal clichés, Canaris is shaped by the Marxist-Leninist school, having absorbed the necessary slogans to become an exemplary citizen, proud of the social progress achieved through the working class. He is convinced he lives in a superior world, with educational methods far removed from those of the old bourgeoisie, when people were “kept in darkness and social backwardness”. Every situation that deviates from official theories and practices becomes, in the informant’s eyes, suspicious, being denounced and judged through the ideological lens of the

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 250.

<sup>25</sup> “Comrade Dr. Iorga told me there are too many fools with itchy tongues and that the professor doesn’t want to compete with them. Those who fail academically just talk nonsense, and there are fools who listen to mouthpieces instead of learning something.” (p. 133) “Yesterday, the professor was visited in the lab by Comrade Vera Panaitescu [...] And when he saw me in the corridor holding a lunchbox, he mocked me [...] ‘What’s Radio Vatican saying these days? Whose soup are you seasoning now?’” (p. 203) “Today I met Comrade Professor Cristian in the corridor, and when he saw me, he rushed at me in front of everyone [...] ‘Listen, Canaris,’ he said, ‘if I catch you overstepping your duties again, you won’t live to see Easter in my clinic.’” (p. 262)

system. Upon hearing Dr. Ion Cristian and Cristina Fărcaşu speaking in French, the mouthpiece declares:

*“He spoke to an older comrade in a language I didn’t understand, and at the end he said something in Italian or French, I couldn’t hear clearly: noblesoblij or something like that – and that’s proof of his cosmopolitan attitude, his subversion of language, secrecy, and disregard for younger colleagues. We must find out who this comrade is and what she does in her private life.”<sup>26</sup>*

Just as the proud brutes of the 1950s enjoyed their moments of glory through physical and psychological abuse of “class enemies”, so too does the Vatican Mouthpiece, this new Ceauşist typology, step into the spotlight. However, he adapts his tools to the spirit of the age: he practises surveillance and produces reports for the “Vatican” (a euphemism for the Securitate). Blows are replaced by pen and paper, but these seemingly innocuous practices are equally harmful to humanity. The informer neglects his actual duties; his unofficial job description no longer involves patient care but rather monitoring clinic staff and recording his findings in a journal, which he claims he would use against Dr. Cristian only if necessary. Most clinic employees are aware of his role and either ignore or mock him:

*“Comrade Dr. Iorga told me there are too many fools with itchy tongues and that the professor doesn’t want to compete with them. Those who fail academically just talk nonsense, and there are fools who listen to mouthpieces instead of learning something. [...] Comrade Cristian is a good speaker and draws all sorts of wide-eyed listeners. He plays the master. Unfortunately, I couldn’t attend because he saw me in the corridor this morning and said, ‘Hey, Canaris, come here a moment.’ I didn’t understand why he called me that – who is this Canaris, or did he mistake me for someone else? [...] And when he saw me in the corridor holding a lunchbox, he mocked me in the crudest way, making me look ridiculous, and said, quoting Comrade Dr. Savu: ‘What’s Radio Vatican saying these days? Whose soup are you seasoning now?’”<sup>27</sup>*

Upon learning that Dr. Iorga, Cristian’s friend, has gone mad, Canaris visits the psychiatric clinic to investigate the cause. He is disturbed by the patients’ freedom of expression and recommends, in his notes, that the authorities intervene against the “conspirators”: “There was an old man

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p.s., p. 133; 201; 207.

buzzing like a motor, claiming he came from another planet and his name was Ilie. But none of them seemed mad for serious reasons, so I think other organs should take over and re-educate them in meetings, because the doctors are too lenient. I haven't seen anyone convincing them otherwise, although surely there are some doctors who should take a stand. A young man proclaimed himself a philosopher right in front of me, but I didn't have the patience to listen. He has his own philosophy – let him be. Another kept crying, saying he was persecuted. Why were they allowed to end up like this? How can someone be persecuted today? It's an unacceptable mess.”<sup>28</sup>

The compromising materials collected by the informant against Dr. Cristian are deployed when Party protégés request them. Discovering Constantin Redman's hatred for the professor, Canaris persuades the former prosecutor to submit a false testimony, claiming Cristian demanded money to perform surgery. Learning about his father's past from Redman's perspective, Andrei, after drinking, seeks the services of a sex worker and ends up in conflict with her pimp. The man confiscates Andrei's clothes and goes to the clinic intending to blackmail Dr. Cristian. However, the informant intercepts him first, purchasing the garments and securing a promise that, for another fee, the pimp will testify that Andrei raped his niece: “[...] to my surprise, I found the evidence that will bring them to their knees: his son's socks, underwear and shirt – proof that he's following the natural path of promiscuity and moral decay. As I leave the clinic, I see an old bald man at the gate with a package under his arm asking for the professor. I told him he was busy [...]. The man's name is Neacșu, and he said he's ready to be my witness if I want to 'fix' the professor a bit. He doesn't care where the money comes from, only that it comes.”<sup>29</sup> During the staged meeting orchestrated by Codreanu and his allies to discredit Ion Cristian before the medical staff, two photocopies circulate through the room: “one was Redman's statement alleging Cristian asked for money, and the other was from an anonymous source claiming Andrei raped his niece.”<sup>30</sup> From this, it becomes clear that the informer's journal entries were used to discredit others and eliminate rivals in the struggle for power. Lacking professional ethics, Cristian's colleagues accuse him of plagiarism and scientific fraud. The scientist feels that these offenses are more painful than the physical blows once dealt by Varlaam:

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 310-311.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 414.

*“With all that, he still couldn’t bring himself to step away from the door. He was exhausted, as if at the end of a long and tormenting journey, where even standing required careful rationing of his energy. [...] ‘Lately, I’ve wanted to discover myself through my own actions, I needed that mirror, I wanted to know who I am... And now, invented authors! Not even Varlaam seemed harsher.’ [...] He felt the urge to enter and, before he could decide, he heard the faint voice of Professor Negru: ‘Not all of us can be equally gifted,’ he said. ‘Between wanting and being able, there lies, for some of us, an unbridgeable chasm, one that many try to cover with envy and malice, believing that this will bring them closer to their goal. I find it bizarre that Professor Cristian’s scientific work, of indisputable value, is being so vilely denied by another professor. [...] Cristian never climbed on anyone’s back; he walked alone, under harsh conditions.’”<sup>31</sup>*

Just like Jupân Dumitrache, the informant-laboratory assistant clings to the honour of being a family man and strives to educate his household in the spirit of official doctrine. He reads to his children from magazines that glorify Marxist-Leninist principles and is scandalised by his mother-in-law’s mysticism, which he sees as a negative influence on her grandchildren. Lacking critical thinking, the Vatican Mouthpiece does not hesitate to denounce even his own family members (his mother-in-law) when they refuse to shape their lives according to the Party’s directives. Yet the old woman is not intimidated by her son-in-law’s ideological zeal; she insults and physically confronts him, much to his despair:

*“Today I had to make a self-criticism before the whole family because lately I’ve neglected our educational and cultural-recreational activities. So I read the newspaper, commented on current events and then we listened together to a few records from our wonderful folk heritage. After that, I had a dispute with my mother-in-law, who shows belief in supernatural forces. [...] Given the old woman’s behaviour, I criticised her harshly, but she didn’t stop at insults [...] she went out into the yard and, in front of the whole block, called me a pagan, a fool, a nonbeliever, an ass and other such insults, influencing some sentimental and curious neighbours negatively. [...] I, however, acted with restraint, even though the old woman came to my table and shamelessly spat in my beans and hurled more insults in front of the entire family.”<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 415-416.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 267.

Uneducated and lacking any nuanced understanding of life, the informant-lab assistant is not just a ridiculous and harmless spy, as Victor Atanasiu suggests. On the contrary: his intrigues, conspiracies and false testimonies, whether offered or extracted from others, lead, just as in the “obsessive decade”, to the physical or moral annihilation of individuals whose only fault is being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or daring to preserve their inner freedom without adhering to the prevailing ideology.

Through *Orgolii*, Augustin Buzura proves that he is not merely a novelist of the “obsessive decade”, exposing the errors committed by the regime’s brutes, but also a keen observer of the informants under Ceaușescu’s rule. Canaris, or the Vatican Mouthpiece, is a remarkable character, distinguished by his language and entrusted by his superiors with a new task in his unofficial job description: to prevent the emergence of hostile elements through surveillance and denunciation.

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### III. LINGUISTIC CONFLUENCES

## ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON ROMANIAN IN THE SPEECH OF A BILINGUAL CHILD: FROM LEXICAL TO GRAMMATICAL CONVERGENCE

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#### **Abstract:**

This article analyses the influence of English on the Romanian spoken by a bilingual child, by using a small corpus of utterances produced during informal conversations. The discussion focuses on the way in which Romanian lexical items and grammatical patterns are adapted to conform to English models in the absence of any formal transfers from this language.

Lexical convergence to English involves semantic extensions in Romanian words on the model of their foreign counterparts, while grammatical convergence is evident in a variety of constructions that replicate English structural patterns, such as the presence of overt subjects in contexts where they are not normally required, marked word order, non-standard use of gerundial constructions, omission of clitic pronouns, and changes in the grammatical properties of some verbs that result in alien-sounding constructions.

#### **Key words:**

*Bilingualism, convergence, semantic calque, grammatical interference.*

### **1. Introduction**

When two languages come into contact, the result can be the transfer of morphemes, words and phrases from one language (i.e. the source language) to the other (i.e. the recipient language) or the mere adoption of meanings and grammatical patterns into the latter on the model of the former. The language contact literature describes these two processes by using a variety of terms, such as ‘importation’ of form versus ‘calque’ (Haugen, 1950), ‘borrowing’ versus changes in the function of a morpheme (Weinreich, 1953), ‘borrowing’ and ‘codeswitching’ versus ‘convergence’ (Myers-

Scotton, 2002; Silva-Corvalan, 1994, Winford, 2003), or ‘matter replication’ versus ‘pattern replication’ (Matras, 2009). However, ‘codeswitching’ and ‘convergence’ seem to be the terms most often used by researchers.

Although codeswitching and convergence are usually studied separately, the former is generally seen as a precursor of the latter. Thus, Myers-Scotton (2002: 247) believes that codeswitching is “*the main structural mechanism promoting convergence*”, and Winford (2003: 69) points out that the agents of change are “*fluent bilinguals who practiced frequent code mixing*.” Other researchers describe codeswitching as ‘the foot in the door’ or ‘the worm in the apple’ (Bolonyai, 1998) when it comes to language change, and some even use terms like ‘overt’ and ‘covert codeswitching’ (Schmitt, 2000) to describe what they regard as two facets of the same phenomenon. Support for the idea that codeswitching facilitates convergence comes from a quantitative study conducted by Bolonyai (1998) on Hungarian-English bilinguals in the United States, which found more structural convergence in the utterances that included instances of codeswitching than in those that were entirely monolingual.

Convergence is generally defined as a change in the way the lexical and grammatical patterns of a language are realized under the influence of a foreign model, which results in the two languages becoming more similar (Silva-Corvalan, 1994: 4-5; Myers-Scotton, 2002: 166). As far as the motivations behind it are concerned, some researchers see convergence as a compromise strategy resulting from the tension between speakers’ sense of loyalty towards their native language and the need to reduce the ‘cognitive load’ imposed by the knowledge of a foreign language (Weinreich, 1953; Silva-Corvalan, 1994; Matras, 2009). Thus, Matras (2009: 235) believes that “*by allowing patterns to converge*”, speakers become more efficient when they are in bilingual situations.

## **2. Methodology of research**

This article studies lexical and grammatical convergence in the speech of a Romanian/English bilingual child whose native language is Romanian and who is also fluent in English. The child lives in Romania and is being raised in a Romanian-dominant environment.

A total of 120 utterances collected during informal conversations between the child and her parents are used to illustrate the lexical and grammatical changes that occur in her speech under the influence of English. In focusing on one bilingual speaker rather than on the language in general, I follow the direction recommended by Weinreich (1953: 33), who argues that by analysing "*the flowing speech of bilinguals*," "*particularly in circumstances where interference is little inhibited*," one is more likely to come across the many interesting facets of language contact than by focusing exclusively on "*fixed languages*." An important consequence of this methodological choice is the fact that the examples of convergence identified in this study are spontaneous and ephemeral, and thus they cannot be considered representative of what is happening in the Romanian language at large. However, these isolated 'linguistic facts' can indicate the possible outcomes of the contact between English and Romanian.

### 3. Discussion of results

#### 3.1. Lexical convergence

Lexical convergence involves a change in the semantic field of a word in the recipient language under the influence of a foreign model. The transfer of meaning that takes place between the two words is usually supported by some common semantic ground they share and/or by their formal resemblance. Perhaps the mechanism underlying lexical convergence is best explained by Weinreich (1953: 48) as follows:

*"Often two existing semantemes, X and Y, of one language are merged on the model of another language, where the combined content of X and Y is represented by a single sign, Z. In the process, the expression of either X or Y is utilized for the merged pair and the other one is discarded."*

Such semantic changes represent "*the most visible signs of convergence*" (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 196) and a major type of influence between languages, as evident everywhere in the language contact literature. Thus, Weinreich (1953: 48) shows that in Colorado Spanish, *ministro* 'cabinet official' acquired the new meaning of 'Protestant ecclesiastic' on the model of the English *minister*; Silva-Corvalan (1994: 171) notes that the word *parientes* 'relatives' in Spanish acquired the meaning 'parents', and *papel*

‘paper’ acquired the meaning ‘newspaper’ under the influence of English; finally, Constantinescu et al. (2002: 184) show that the Romanian *aplicație* borrowed the English meaning of ‘formal request’ and *audiență* is now used in the sense of ‘assembled listeners, spectators at an event’ on the model of English *audience*.

The prevalence of lexical influence in the contact between languages is supported by quantitative data. For example, in a longitudinal study of the Russian spoken by five Russian boys living in the United States, Schmitt (2000) found that almost 47 per cent of all cases of convergence in her data set were represented by semantic extensions, and that after two years this percentage increased to almost 60 percent.

About half of all instances of convergence in my data set take place at the lexical level, usually between words with similar meanings. For example, while English can use only one verb for ‘break’, Romanian employs different verbs to denote different types ‘breaking’: *a sparge* ‘break glass/shatter’, *a rupe* ‘fracture/split/damage’, *a încălca* ‘break a law/agreement’, *a strica* ‘cause to stop working’. In example (1), the speaker intends to describe an instance of ‘shattering’ involving porcelain, but under the influence of English *break*, neutralizes the distinction made by Romanian and employs the verb *rupe*. It is worth noting that the child is well aware of the verb *a sparge*, which she uses in the phrase *să spargi o farfurie* ‘to break a plate’ earlier in the same conversation.

(1) a. BG Rom.<sup>1</sup>:      *Și o auzit sunetul de parcă s-ar fi rupt porțelan.*  
                                     And he heard the noise as if *porcelain broke*.  
     b. Gen. Rom.<sup>2</sup>:      *Și o auzit sunetul de parcă s-ar fi spart porțelan.*  
                                     And he heard the noise as if *porcelain broke/shattered*.

Also consider the following example:

(2) a. BG Rom.:      *Îl însorăști la pian?*  
                                     Do you *accompany* him at the piano?  
     b. Gen. Rom.:      *Îl acompaniezi la pian?*  
                                     Do you *accompany* him at the piano?

<sup>1</sup> Bilingual Child's Romanian.

<sup>2</sup> General Romanian.

Romanian differentiates lexically between ‘going somewhere with somebody’, for which it uses the verb *a însobi*, and ‘playing an instrument while somebody else sings’, for which it uses *a acompania*. English, on the other hand, uses *accompany* in both situations. In example (2), the semantic field of the verb *a însobi* is extended in the direction of the English verb, probably supported by the homonymy between *acompania* and *accompany*. However, it is not clear why *acompaniezi* is not used instead of *însobești* in this example, since the word is congruent with its English equivalent both formally and semantically, and the speaker knows and uses it occasionally. This situation seems to offer support to the idea that convergence tends to be “*a much more volatile and opportunistic strategy*” than codeswitching, often taking an unexpected and even “*erratic course*” (Matras, 2009: 243).

Another example of a semantic calque is provided by *urmăresc* ‘follow’ in (3) below. Romanian distinguishes between *a urmări* ‘go behind somebody to see what they do’ and *a urma* ‘accept advice’. The speaker intends to convey the latter meaning, but as a result of her familiarity with the English *follow*, extends the semantic field of *a urmări* to cover the ‘following of advice’ sense too.

(3) a. BG Rom.: Tot timpul încerc să-*ți* **urmăresc** sfaturile.  
All the time I try to *follow* your advice.  
b. Gen. Rom.: Tot timpul încerc să-*ți* **urmez** sfaturile.  
All the time I try to *follow* your advice.

It is possible that the examples discussed above contain calques of whole collocations, but that these calques are evident only in the words where the two languages show semantic differences. Thus, although the phrases *to break porcelain*, *to accompany somebody on the piano*, or *to follow advice* may have served as models for the Romanian constructions, only one word in the each of these constructions has been adjusted under the influence of English.

More than 60 per cent of all semantic calques in my data set involve verbs, for example *a completat școala de boxing* ‘he completed the boxing school’ (standard Rom. *a terminat școala de boxing* ‘he finished the boxing school’), *n-am putut să-i plasez accentul* ‘I couldn’t place his accent’ (standard Rom. *n-am putut să-i identific accentul* ‘I couldn’t identify his accent’), *simte frunzele* ‘feel the leaves’ (standard Rom. *pipăie/atinge*

*frunzele* ‘touch the leaves’), *să porți SPF50* ‘to wear SPF50’ (standard Rom. *să folosești SPF50* ‘to use SPF50’), *poți să-i dai o fontiță* ‘you can give it a bow’ (standard Rom. *poți să-i faci o fontiță* ‘you can make it a bow’), *să fac o decizie* ‘to make a decision’ (standard Rom *să iau o decizie* ‘to take a decision’), *să-l învăț pe ăsta o lecție* ‘to teach this guy a lesson’ (standard Rom. *să-i dau la ăsta o lecție* ‘to give this guy a lesson’), *să obții în greutate* ‘to gain weight’ (standard Rom. *să iezi în greutate* ‘to take in weight’).

Some include nouns, as in (4) below:

(4) a. BG Rom.: Daca vreau să știu ***timpul***, mă uit automat la mână  
If I want to know ***the time***, I look at my wrist.  
b. Gen. Rom.: Daca vreau să știu ***ora/la cât e ceasul***, mă uit automat la mână  
If I want to know ***the hour/ the clock*** ....

Clearly, the semantic field of the noun *timp* ‘time’ in this example has been extended under the influence of English *time* to cover the meaning ‘time shown on a clock’, normally expressed in Romanian by *oră* ‘hour’ or *ceas* ‘clock’. Thus, the distinction the recipient language makes between time as clock-related and other meanings of the word is temporarily abandoned.

Some phrasal calques use words which do not exist in the recipient language. For example, the phrase *grână de nisip* in (5) is calqued on the English phrase *grain of sand*, but the word *grână* as such does not exist in Romanian, being used only in its plural form *grâne* ‘grains’. The correct word in this situation would be *grăunte* ‘grain’, which the child probably doesn’t know; however, once the decision to use Romanian is made, the speaker manages to accommodate the intended calque even if she doesn’t have all the necessary linguistic resources at her disposal. It is interesting to note that the phrase *grână de nisip* is used only once, while the codeswitched form *grain de sand* appears twice later in the same conversation. Thus, it seems that the tension between the speaker’s desire to use her native language and the desire to preserve its integrity by avoiding incorrect forms is resolved in favour of the latter.

(5) a. BG Rom.: Ați fost și voi cândva cât o ***grână de nisip***.  
You once were the size of a ***grain of sand***.  
b. Gen. Rom.: Ați fost și voi cândva cât un ***grăunte de nisip***.  
You once were the size of a ***grain of sand***.

Some semantic extensions involve adjectives, for example:

(6) a. BG Rom.: Mi-am dat seama eu singură ca *sunt rea*.  
I realized all by myself that *I was bad*.  
b. Gen. Rom.: mi-am dat seama singură ca *sunt slabă*.  
I realized all by myself that *I was weak*.

In Romanian, the adjective *rău* ‘bad’ is used only in the sense of ‘morally unacceptable/ naughty/ harmful/ unpleasant’ but not to denote ‘something of poor quality’, which is normally expressed by words such as *slab* ‘weak’ or even *prost* ‘stupid’. Still, in example (6) the child adjusts the meaning of *rea* to convey this sense, too, on the model of the English *bad*. Other examples of adjectives that change their meaning under the influence of English include *ferm* ‘firm’ to express ‘hard, solid’ (used in standard Romanian only with the meaning ‘strong/ not likely to change’) and *rezervat* ‘preserved’ with the sense of ‘conserved’ on the model of *preserved* (used in Romanian only for ‘protected, safe from injury’).

Lexical convergence to English sometimes involves the translation of entire collocations and idioms, such as *povești scurte* ‘short stories’ (standard Rom. *povestiri*), *să vină la viață* ‘come to life’ (standard Romanian *să prindă viață* ‘catch life’), *a avea timp pe mâini* ‘to have time on your hands’ (standard Rom. *a avea timp* ‘to have time’), *a cădea bolnav* ‘fall ill’ (standard Rom. *a se îmbolnăvi*), *a da cuiva o lectură* ‘give somebody a lecture’ (standard Rom. *a ţine cuiva un discurs* ‘hold a speech for somebody’).

### 3.2. Grammatical convergence

Although grammatical interference between languages was traditionally thought to be unlikely or even impossible, Weinreich showed as early as 1953 that a close analysis of the spontaneous speech of bilinguals in everyday contexts can reveal a much higher incidence of structural transfers than the study of fixed languages would lead one to believe. He also pointed out that these transfers are short-lived and rarely become established in the recipient language, mainly because of the social parameters of the contact situation. Silva-Corvalan (1994: 166-167) employs the term ‘nonce syntactic borrowing’ to refer to such constructions, while Matras (2009: 240) sees them as evidence of the flexibility and resourcefulness characterizing bilinguals,

who can apparently resort to new grammatical patterns, not only words and meanings, to convey their intended meanings.

There are 70 utterances in my data set that show convergence to English structures, some of them also containing semantic extensions. Although these instances of grammatical interference are marginal in the speech of the child, they can indicate the general direction in which Romanian grammar could change under the influence of English.

### 3.2.1. *Prepositions*

Almost 40 per cent of all cases of grammatical convergence in the corpus are represented by prepositions which acquire new meanings under the influence of their English counterparts. For example, when used with the verb *a se împiedica* ‘trip’, the preposition *peste* ‘over’, which in Romanian characteristically means ‘above,’ acquires a new sense associated with falling, on the model of the English *over*. Thus, we have forms like the following:

(7) a. BG Rom.: *s-a împiedicat peste* un extension cord.  
He tripped *over* an extension cord.  
b. Gen. Rom.: *s-a împiedicat de* un extension cord.  
He tripped *of* an extension cord.

Other examples of changes in the use of prepositions include: *Atriu a căzut peste turn* ‘Atriu fell over the tower’ (standard Rom. *Atriu a căzut de pe turn* ‘Atriu fell off the tower’), *Se ducea la Harry pentru ceai* ‘She went to Harry for tea’ (standard Rom. *Se ducea la Harry la ceai* ‘she went to Harry at tea’), *Are roți pe picioare* ‘It has wheels for legs’ (standard Rom. *Are roți în loc de picioare* ‘It has wheels instead of legs’), *cu un rubin la centru* ‘with a ruby at the center’ (standard Rom. *cu un rubin în centru* ‘with a ruby in the center’), *am scris în persoana întâi* ‘I wrote in the first person’ (standard Rom. *am scris la persoana întâi* ‘I wrote at the first person’), *trăiește pe campus* ‘(he) lives on the campus’ (standard Rom. *locuiește în campus* ‘(he) dwells in the campus’), *a venit pe echipa noastră* ‘(he) came on our team’ (standard Rom. *a venit în echipa noastră* ‘(he) came in our team’), *doarme prin asta* ‘(he) sleeps through this’ (standard Rom. *doarme în timpul* *asta* ‘(he) sleeps during this’), *e bună cu grafice* ‘(she) is good with graphs’

(standard Rom. *e bună la grafice* ‘she is good at graphs’), *nu i-a spus aşa, la faţă* ‘she didn’t tell him to his face’ (standard Rom. *nu i-a spus în faţă* ‘she didn’t tell him in his face’), *pot să mă gândesc despre limerick* ‘I can think about the limerick’ (standard Rom. *pot să mă gândesc la limerick* ‘I can think at the limerick’), *mă duc să vânez pentru o batistă* ‘I’m going to hunt for a tissue’ (standard Rom. .... *să cauă o batistă* ‘to look for a tissue’).

### 3.2.2. *Overt subjects*

When a language in which the subject can be omitted comes into contact with a language in which this is obligatory, the decline in the use of the pro-drop parameter seems to be a common phenomenon. For example, in a longitudinal study of Russian spoken in the United States, Schmitt (2000, cited in Myers-Scotton, 2002: 201) notices a sharp increase in the incidence of overt pronouns in subject position, and the same situation is found by Bolonyai (2000, cited in Myers-Scotton, 2002: 201) in her analysis of Hungarian-English bilinguals. Overt pronoun subjects in pro-drop languages can be explained through the lens of Weinreich's proposal that, when a foreign structural pattern is more explicit than a native one, the bilingual speaker feels the need to reinforce the latter and express the "*categories of one system no less strongly than in the other*" (1953: 33).

The subject is often omitted in Romanian in the first and second persons, as well as in the third person if it can be retrieved from the larger discourse, overtly expressed subjects being generally used only to signal emphasis or contrast. The pro-drop convention is occasionally disregarded in the child's speech, and personal pronouns appear in subject position even if they have no special discourse function and can be easily recovered from verbal inflections. For example:

It is difficult to argue that the construction *ca tu să respi* is the direct result of interference from English, since the pronoun subject, although redundant, does not violate the grammar of the sentence. However, when the

need to express the subject overtly leads to an alien construction, English influence becomes evident. Consider the following example:

(9) a. BG Rom.:           dacă ai timp, o să ţi-l dau **pentru tine să-l încerci**.  
                                  if you have time, I will give it to you *for you to try it*.  
b. Gen. Rom.:            dacă ai timp, o să ţi-l dau \_ să-l încerci.  
                                  if you have time, I will give it to you *to try it*.

Here, the construction *pentru tine să-l încerci* is clearly calqued on the English *for you to try it*, since it introduces a new syntactic pattern to Romanian by allowing a noun phrase in the accusative case to function as the subject of the clause. Moreover, note the superfluous nature of *pentru tine* in this sentence, where the subject can be retrieved both from the verbal inflection of *încerci* and from the indirect object *ti-* ‘you’ in the main clause.

If we compare the sentences in (8) and (9) with their English counterparts, we realize that the influence of English does not necessarily involve a direct reproduction of its structures in a given context. In other words, the speaker doesn’t simply translate the English sentences into Romanian. What is involved here is an implicit knowledge of the English grammar (in this case the fact that the subject is obligatory and that it can be expressed by means of a FOR phrase), and the creative and somehow independent application of this knowledge to the structures of Romanian. Thus, as Myers-Scotton (2002) points out, the bilingual speaker taps into the grammar of the foreign language at an abstract level before the moment utterances are formulated. This idea is supported by other examples discussed in this paper.

### 3.2.3. Word order

Word order seems to be particularly susceptible to the influence of a foreign language, the specialized literature offering many examples of new order patterns introduced either in the speech of bilinguals, or in languages at large. Thus, Weinreich (1953: 38) describes the introduction of the English order MODIFIER + NOUN to Portuguese noun compounds in the speech of Portuguese-English bilinguals in the United States, and Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 55) discuss the change from SOV to SVO in Finnish under Indo-European influence.

Romanian and English are typologically related languages, with many similarities in word order. Moreover, Romanian order is relatively flexible, allowing words to move in the clause according to various syntactic and pragmatic rules, a situation which makes it difficult to argue that the marked ordering of some sentences in the data set represents a change in the direction of English grammar. Consider the following example, where the child explains to a friend why it is better for a basketball team to have only one captain:

(10) a. BG Rom.: Daca *toți* am fi căpitani, *constant* ne-am certa între noi.  
 If *all of us* were the captains, (we) *constantly* would *fight* each other.  
 b. Gen. Rom.: Daca *am fi toți* căpitani, *ne-am certa constant* între noi.  
 If *we were all* captains, (we) *would fight constantly* each other.  
 c. Gen. Eng.: If *all of us* were captains, *we would constantly* *fight* each other.

In Romanian, the subject can be placed before or after the verb according to various syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors, but the postverbal position is generally preferred in subordinate clauses (Pană Dindelegan, 2013: 119-124). Similarly, manner adverbials often follow the verb, although they can also precede it in the marked order. Despite these preferences, both the subject *toți* ‘all’ and the adverbial *constant* ‘constantly’ in (10) are preverbal, reflecting English syntactic patterns. The English influence in this example is also evident at the lexical level: the adverb *constant*, which in Romanian is used only in the sense of ‘without variation,’ has been semantically extended to express ‘all the time, repeatedly’ on the model of *constantly*.

As Weinreich (1953: 38) points out, when a grammatical relation which is obligatory in one language is unnecessarily imposed in another, the result is often monotonous, but not incorrect, speech. Thus, the occasional overuse of the Subject-Verb or Adverbial-Verb orders in Romanian may create the impression of dull, rigid language, but without violating its grammar.

### 3.2.4. *Gerund constructions*

Although gerunds are relatively common in Romanian when they occur as adjuncts, as modifiers of nouns they are more limited in usage, being restricted to the learned style (Zafiu, 2005: 536). Examples such as (11)

below, although correct, are not characteristic of spoken Romanian, where finite relative clauses are preferred, and can thus be attributed to the influence of English:

(11) a. BG Rom.: Era ca *un drum dispărând în orizont*, cu o casuță și niște brazi în depărtare.  
It was like *a road disappearing in the horizon*, with a little house and some fir trees in the distance.

b. Gen. Rom.: Era ca *un drum care dispărea în zare*, cu o casuță și niște brazi în depărtare.  
It was like *a road that disappeared on the horizon*, with a little house and some fir trees in the distance.

Note that grammatical convergence is accompanied by lexical convergence in this example, the phrase *în orizont* being probably a blend between the English *on the horizon* and the Romanian *în zare* 'in the distance'.

Sometimes, a gerund clause combines codeswitching and structural calquing, as in (12) below. Here the speaker first intends to use the English verb *being*, but then changes her mind and finishes the sentence in Romanian, probably due to the difficulty of switching between a Romanian pronoun and an English verb. Even so, the direct relationship between the English and the Romanian gerunds becomes evident:

(12) a. BG Rom.: ar fi putut să fie la fel de bine *gossip*, eu *being* (pause) *eu fiind acasă sick*.  
It could have very well been gossip, *me being at home sick*.

b. Gen. Rom.: ar fi putut să fie la fel de bine bârfa, *eu fiind acasă bolnavă*.  
It could have very well been gossip, *me being at home sick*.

The replication of English gerundial forms sometimes leads to ungrammatical constructions in Romanian. For example, although the gerund cannot function as a subject predicative, the form *șchiopatând* follows the copula *a rămas* in (13) below:

(13) a. BG Rom.: *A rămas șchiopatând* din cauza vaporilor.  
He was left *limping* because of the fumes.

b. Gen. Rom.: *A rămas șchiop* din cauza vaporilor.  
He was left an *invalid/with a limp* because of the fumes.

### 3.2.5. The article

Changes in the use of the Romanian article under the influence of English mainly include the employment of the indefinite article in contexts where Romanian would use a bare noun and, to a lesser extent, the employment of bare nouns in contexts where the definite article is required.

The indefinite article is omitted in Romanian when the noun indicates a property of the entity denoted, especially when it appears in the subject predicative position (Dragomirescu, 2013: 161) (*Ion este profesor* ‘Ion is teacher’) or after prepositions of ‘quality’ such as *ca*, *drept*, *de* ‘as’ (Nedelcu, 2013: 461) (*Lucrează ca receptioneră* ‘(She) works as receptionist). In English, on the other hand, nouns functioning as subject predicatives or following a preposition characteristically require the indefinite article (Biber et al., 2000: 260). Thus, it is probably safe to claim that the use of *o* ‘a’ in front of *menajeră* ‘maid’ in this example is the result of English interference:

(14) a. BG Rom.: Vrea să se angajze *ca o menajeră*.  
                           She wants to find a job *as a maid*.  
  b. Gen. Rom.: Vrea să se angajze *ca \_ menajeră*.  
                           She wants to find a job *as maid*.

Similar constructions in my data set include *încercase să devină o actriță* ‘(she) had tried to become an actress’ (standard Rom. *încercase să devină \_ actriță* ‘(she) had tried to become actress’), *vorbim engleză bine ca o nație* ‘we speak English well as a nation’ (standard Rom. *vorbim engleză bine ca \_ nație* ‘we speak English well as nation’), *cum arătais ca un copil*?

‘what did you look like as a child?’ (standard Rom. *cum arătais ca si \_ copil*? ‘what did you look like as child’). Stan (2013: 294) points out that bare noun structures in the contemporary language are limited compared to old Romanian, where they were “*more numerous and more diversified*.” From this perspective, it could be argued that the examples presented above, although the result of foreign influence, are in conformity with a trend already present in the recipient language.

Conversely, the definite article is sometimes omitted in contexts where it is required in Romanian, but not in English. For example, nouns used in comparative constructions after the prepositions *decât* ‘than’, *precum*, *ca*, *cât* ‘as’ characteristically take a definite article in Romanian, whereas English

nouns used generically in equivalent constructions are usually articleless. Consequently, the employment of the bare noun *plută* in example (15) below is probably a case of convergence to English grammar:

Other examples of bare nouns in syntactic slots that require definiteness are *vrea să spună că e mai bun decât fete* ‘(he) wants to say that (he) is better than girls’ (standard Rom. *e mai bun decât fetele* ‘(he) is better than the girls’) and *tot designul lui Superman era ochelari* ‘Superman’s whole design was glasses’ (standard Rom. *tot designul lui Superman era ochelarii* ‘Superman’s whole design was the glasses’). This tendency towards the omission of the definite article in contemporary Romanian is also discussed by Bors (2021) in her study of the language of cartoon subtitles.

### 3.2.6. *Omission of clitic pronouns*

Romanian clitic pronouns sometimes double direct and indirect objects, but this phenomenon is not categorical. Thus, Pană Dindelegan (2013: 138) points out that, although clitic doubling of postverbal PE-nominal phrases has become obligatory in Romanian in recent decades, “*the present-day use still shows some fluctuations*” and accepts forms both with and without a clitic (e.g. *(il) cunosc pe Ion/ pe elev*). Similarly, doubling of indirect objects is obligatory when these are preverbal, but optional when they are postverbal (Iorga Mihail, 2013: 154). In light of these rules, the constructions in (16) below can be regarded as grammatically correct, although the omission of clitics before the indirect and direct objects in this sentence makes it more similar to English:

(16) a. BG Rom.: *Si aş vrea să \_ spun nepoţilor şi strănepoţilor si copiilor mei că \_ am purtat odată pe spate pe salvator.*  
 And (I) would like to tell my grandchildren and great grandchildren that (I) carried once on my back the savior.

b. Gen. Rom.: *Si aş vrea să **le** spun nepoţilor şi strănepoţilor si copiilor mei că **I-am** purtat odată pe spate pe salvator.*

And (I) would like to CLT.DAT.3PL tell my grandchildren and great grandchildren that (I) CLT.ACC.3SG carried once on my back *the savior*.

c. Gen. Eng.: And I would like to tell my grandchildren and great grandchildren that I once carried the savior on my back.

Citic doubling of direct objects is obligatory when the PE-noun phrase contains a pronoun, even if this is postverbal. Thus, the construction *a făcut pe ei să apară* in (17) is clearly a calque of the English *made them appear*, and, although intelligible, it represents a violation of Romanian syntax. In this case, the omission of the obligatory clitic *i* is accompanied by the presence of the redundant pronoun object *pe ei*, which should normally occur only with an emphatic or contrastive meaning.

(17) a. BG Rom.: ceea ce l-o făcut pe Dudley să creadă că (pause) *ăsta \_ a făcut* (pause) **pe ei să apară**.  
which made Dudley believe that *this made them appear*.  
b. Gen. Rom.: ceea ce l-o făcut pe Dudley să creadă că *ăsta i-a făcut \_ să apară*.  
Which made Dudley believe that *this CLT.ACC.3PL made appear*.

However, such constructions are very rare in the child's speech and, when they occur, they are marked by pauses and hesitations as evident in this example. As a matter of fact, note that an accusative clitic (*l-a facut pe Dudley*) is used earlier in the sentence, but omitted later.

Other constructions involving the omission of clitic pronouns include *să \_ învingă pe alții* 'to defeat others' (cf. *să-i învingă pe alții*), *dacă \_ răneai grav pe vreunul* 'if you hurt badly someone' (cf. *dacă îl răneai grav pe vreunul*), *dacă \_ dădeai mai mult decât o tăietură* 'if you gave more than a cut' (cf. *dacă-i făceai mai mult decât o tăietură* 'if you made him more than a cut'). These examples seem to support the idea put forth by some researchers that foreign interference in the speech of bilinguals is often manifested as a tendency towards simplification and the abandonment of non-obligatory categories in the recipient language.

### 3.2.7. Changes in verb subcategorization patterns

Sometimes, grammatical convergence affects the subcategorization patterns of verbs in the recipient language; this is called 'convergence at the

level of predicate-argument structure' by some authors (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 166). Consider the following example:

(18) a. BG Rom.: Că visele *nu \_ le* prea amintesc.  
 Because dreams (I) not CLT.ACC.3PL really remember.  
 b. Gen. Rom.: Că visele *nu mi le* prea amintesc.  
 Because dreams (I) not CLT.DAT.1SG CLT.ACC.3PL  
 really remember.  
 Because dreams, I don't really remember them.

The Romanian verb *a aminti* 'remember' is ditransitive, requiring both a direct and an indirect object, the latter often realized as a dative/reflexive clitic; still, on the model of the English transitive verb *remember*, the indirect object is dropped in (18). It should be pointed out that the correct form *mi-l amintesc* is used twice earlier in the same sentence, and the reflexive form of the verb (*a-și aminti*) occurs frequently in the child's speech.

Sentence (18) would be correct if, instead of the verb *amintesc*, the speaker had chosen to use its transitive counterpart *țin minte* 'remember/recall', i.e. *Visele nu le prea țin minte*. Thus, this example can be interpreted as illustrating something similar to lexical convergence: the synonyms *a-și aminti* and *a ține minte* are merged under the influence of the English *remember*, but it is their grammatical rather than semantic properties that are adjusted to fit the foreign model. This situation seems to support Silva-Corvalan's proposal that, very often, what looks like a case syntactic borrowing can be accounted for at the lexical level, being triggered by partial congruence between words in the recipient and in the source language. She calls this 'lexico-syntactic calquing' and suggests that "what is borrowed across languages is not syntax, but lexicon and pragmatics" (1998: 226, cited in Winford, 2003: 68).

This idea receives support from other examples in my data set. For instance, Romanian has two verbs corresponding to *sit*: *a șeedea*, which is always intransitive and can denote an action as well as a state, and *a (se) așeza*, which can be used both transitively and reflexively (e.g. *Așază-te* 'Sit yourself'; *Așază copilul pe scaun* 'Sit the child on the chair'). In (19) below, *a șeedea* has its semantic and grammatical properties extended so as to express 'put somebody in sitting position' under the influence of the English *sit*, which combines the transitive and intransitive uses. The influence exercised

on the Romanian construction by the English phrase *sat her in a chair* is also evident in the employment of the preposition *in* ‘in’ instead of the standard *pe* ‘on’.

Also consider this example:

(20) a. BG Rom.: *ăsta și-a crescut* rădăcini.  
                   This CLT.REFL.DAT.3SG *grew* roots.  
   b. Gen. Rom.: *ăsta și-a făcut* rădăcini.  
                   This CLT.REFL.DAT.3SG *made* roots  
   c. Gen. Eng.: *This one grew* roots.

Romanian expresses the meaning 'let something grow' by using the reflexive verbs *a-și face* 'make' (*și-a făcut rădăcini* 'made (itself) roots') and *a-și lăsa* 'let' (*și-a lăsat barbă* 'grew (himself) a beard'), while the verb *a crește* 'grow' is used in other types of constructions (*i-au crescut rădăcini* 'its roots grew', *i-a crescut barba* 'his beard grew'). In English, on the other hand, the verb *grow* can be used in all these situations. The speaker decides to use the reflexive construction, but, under the influence of English, extends the syntactic scope of *a crește* to describe a situation normally covered by *a face*. In this way, a syntactic distinction made in the recipient language is neutralized on the model of a foreign construction, the result being simplification and generalization of patterns. As noted elsewhere in the literature, this is a strategy bilinguals use in order to lighten "*the cognitive load of having to remember and use two different linguistic systems*" (Silva-Corvalan, 1994: 3-6).

Other examples of changes in the grammatical properties of verbs involve passive constructions, for example *sunt spusă sa fiu* '(I) am said to be' (standard Rom. *se spune că sunt* 'it is said that I am') or *s-ar putea să fiu zvonită să fiu* ... 'I might be rumoured to be' (*s-ar putea să se zvonească că sunt* ... 'it might be rumoured that I am'). Also consider this example:

(21) a. BG Rom.: O auzit-o pe soră-sa *să-i spună* despre ăştia.  
b. Gen. Rom.: O auzit-o pe soră-sa *spinându-i* despre ăştia.

c. Gen. Eng.: He heard his sister *telling him* about these guys.  
He heard his sister *tell/telling him* about these guys.

Perception verbs followed by a noun phrase in the accusative can take the infinitive or the gerund in English, whereas in Romanian only the gerund is possible. In (21) above, the speaker uses the subjunctive instead of the gerund as required by Romanian grammar, a situation which might suggest the fact that the Romanian subjunctive is perceived as an equivalent to the English infinitive. This idea is supported by the similarity between the two verb forms in Romanian, where they are interchangeable after certain classes of verbs, but also by other examples discussed in this paper, in which the speaker uses the subjunctive to replicate infinite English constructions (see (8) and (9) above).

## 4. Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this paper shows that the strategies bilinguals employ in order to accommodate two linguistic systems can extend beyond the lexical field, into the realm of grammatical constructions. However, grammatical convergence is often brought about by individual words which change their structural and semantic properties in the direction of English models.

In general, the constructions that result from the influence of English fit into patterns already existing in Romanian and tend not to disrupt its structural makeup. As Silva-Corvalan (1994) also finds in her study of Spanish-English contact, the grammatical convergence described in this paper can be seen as resulting from the relaxation of some syntactic and pragmatic constraints in the recipient language, rather than as the introduction of completely new syntactic patterns. This situation confirms the idea put forth in the language contact literature that "*in cases of light to moderate structural interference, the transferred features are more likely to be those that fit well typologically with corresponding features in the recipient language*" (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988: 54).

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# CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE ADVERB IN THE FIRST GRAMMARS OF THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE (1667-1822)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The study of the adverb in the first grammars of the Romanian language highlights its significant heterogeneous character, from a grammatical and semantic point of view. Regarding its classification, we note that it belongs to the category of inflexible parts of speech. The first framing situation places the adverb in the large corpus of parts of speech (Staicu 1667), which can also be found in other authors' works. Integrating it among the inflexible parts of speech determined the outline of a predominantly invoked characteristic: the inflexibility of this part of speech. Also noteworthy is the syntactic behaviour, carefully highlighted by the authors of the analysed grammars. This aspect was punctuated by clarifications regarding the regency of the adverb, the verb holding the authority.

## Key words:

Adverb, grammar, inflexibility, morphology.

## 1. A chronology of Romanian language grammars

In this study, we analysed adverbial structures, as they appear mentioned by their definitions and classifications, an aspect that varied over time, according to important indicators such as: linguistic peculiarities and approaches and classification perspectives.

The analysis presents the adverb in the first grammars of the Romanian language, starting with Staicu' grammar (1667-1669) and ending with Diaconovici Loga's grammar (1822). The selected period represents an important stage, diachronically, in the periodization applied to the 45 grammar books from the beginning of the history of Romanian grammar. The stages were set up in my doctoral thesis "Concepts, norms and models of

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<sup>1</sup> The study of the above-mentioned grammars is being carried on as the postdoctoral study titled "Constitution of the morpho-syntactic norm in the first grammars of the Romanian language (1667-1914). Inflexible parts of speech".

analysis in the first Romanian grammars (1667-1914). Flexible parts of speech” and are, as follows:

**Romanian grammars from the period 1757-1828:** Staicu 1667-1669, Eustatievici-Brașoveanul 1757, Macarie 1757-1772, *Institutiones* 1770, Micu/Şincai 1780/1805, Văcărescu 1787, Şcoleriu 1789, Tempea 1797, Iorgovici 1799, Budai-Deleanu 1815-1820, Diaconovici Loga 1822;

**Romanian grammars from the period 1828-1870:** Rădulescu 1828, Săulescu 1834, Pop 1835/1839, Bariț 1838, Golescu 1840, Platon 1845, Bălăşescu 1848, Cîmpeanu 1848, Măcărescu 1851, Barcianu 1853, Cipariu 1855, Hill 1858, Massim 1860, Stilescu 1863, Alecsandri 1863, Miheltianu 1866, Neagoe 1869, Cipariu 1869/1877;

**Romanian grammars from the period 1870-1914:** Munteanu 1870, Manliu 1875, Puşcariu 1875, Circa 1878, Pană 1882, Nădejde 1884, Ionescu 1884, Dariu 1886, Tiktin 1891, Ghibănescu 1892, Liuba 1892, Manliu 1894, Suchianu 1895, Philippide 1897, Slavici 1914.

The study of the above-mentioned grammars is being carried out as the postdoctoral study titled “Constitution of the morpho-syntactic norm in the first grammars of the Romanian language (1667-1914). Inflexible parts of speech”, research that respects the criteria (mentioned above) of chronological grouping of Romanian grammars, set up in Iordan’s grammar (1978).

A first analysis will follow the position of the adverb in the system of parts of speech. In the oldest Romanian grammars, the adverb, together with the interjection, the preposition and the conjunction, is included in the section of inflexible parts of speech. Another identified situation is the positioning of the adverb in the integral corpus of the parts of speech, where the classification into flexible and inflexible parts of speech is not achieved. Depending on these considerations, we have divided the analysed grammars into:

- grammars in which the adverb appears included in the large section of the parts of speech;
- grammars in which the adverb is not mentioned at all.

**1.1.** The grammars in which the adverb is included in the large section of the parts of speech are important works, for which the authors, when drawing them up, were inspired by Slavonic, Latin or Greek models.

In this section, we delineate two situations as far as the adverb is concerned:

**1.1.1.** Grammars in which the adverb is included in the category of inflexible parts of speech:

- Eustatievici-Brașoveanul 1757: „părțile voroavei plecătoare și neplecătoare” *numele, în loc de numele* (pronumele) [the name, instead of the name (pronoun)], *graiul* (verbul) [speech (verb)], *împărtășirea* (participiul) [sharing (participle)], *înainte-punerea* (prepoziția) [pre-placement (preposition)], *spregrăirea* (adverbul) [speaking towards (adverb)], *în mijloc-aruncarea* (interjecția) [throwing in the middle (interjection)], *împreunarea* (conjuncția) [connecting (conjunction)];
- Văcărescu 1787: „părțile cuvîntului” *înduplecătoare* (flexibile) și *neînduplecătoare* (neflexibile) *Ârticol, àdică începerea, Nòme adică nûme, Pronome adică pronûme, Vérbu adică gráiu, Particípie adică părtășire, Propozițiúne adică propunere, Advérbiu adică spre gráiu, Conjuncțiúne adică legáre, și Înterjecțiune*; [flexible and inflexible “parts of speech”, *the article, i.e., the beginning, Nòme meaning name, Pronome meaning pronoun, Vérbu meaning speech, Participle meaning participation/sharing, Preposition, i.e. proposal, Adverb meaning towards speech, Conjunction meaning binding/connecting, and Interjection*];
- Școleriu 1789: „părțile voroavei plecătoare și neplecătoare” *Nume: substantiv și adjecțiv), lócū de nume* (pronume), *vórbă* (verb), *împărtășire* (participiu), *a vórbii* (adverb), *prepunire* (prepoziție), *agiungire* (conjuncție), *întráre* (interjecție); [“flexible and inflexible parts of speech” *Name: noun and adjective), place of name* (pronoun), *word* (verb), *sharing* (participle), *speaking* (adverb), *putting before* (preposition), *reach* (conjunction), *entry* (interjection)];
- Budai-Deleanu 1815-1820: „părțile voroavei plecătoare și neplecătoare” *nume* (substantivul și adjecțivul), *pronume, verbú, partitípie, adverbie, prepoziția, conjuncția și interjecția*; [“flexible and inflexible parts of speech” *name* (noun and adjective), *pronoun, verb, participle, adverb, preposition, conjunction and interjection*];
- Diaconovici Loga 1822: „părțile grăirii la etimologhie”, divided into „părțile grăirii declinătore sau care se apleacă și părțile grăirii nedeclinătore, sau care nu se apleacă” *artícul, numele, pronumele, verbul, participul, adverbul, prepozița, conjuncța, interjeța*; [“the parts of speech in etymology”, divided into “the parts of speech that are declinable or inflected and the parts of speech that are not declinable or that are not inflected” *the*

article, the noun, the pronoun, the verb, the participle, the adverb, the preposition, the conjunction, the interjection];

**1.1.2.** Grammars in which the adverb is registered in the general system of the parts of speech:

- Staicu 1667-1669: *numile, locul numelui* (pronomenele), *graiul* (verbul), *părtășiaa* (participiul), *zicerea* (adverbul), *punerea înainte* (prepoziția), *legătura, pre mijloc aruncare* (interjecția); [*names, the place of the name* (pronoun), *speech* (verb), *sharing/ uttering* (participle), *saying* (adverb), *putting before* (preposition), *connecting*, (interjection)];

- Macarie 1757-1772: *numele* (substantivul și adjективul, dar și *numile cele numărătoare*, adică numeralele), *graiul* (verbul), *înpărtășirea* (participiul), *încheiare* (articulul), *în loc de numirea* (pronomenele), *între punerea* (prepoziția), *spre graiu* (adverbul), *legătura* (conjuncția); [*the name* (the noun and the adjective, but also *the counting names*, i.e. the numerals), *the speech* (the verb), *the sharing* (the participle), *the ending* (the article), *instead of naming* (the pronoun), *putting in the middle* (the preposition), *towards the speech* (the adverb), *the connection* (the conjunction)];

- Micu/ Șincai 1780/1805: *De Articulo* (articulul), *De nomine sau substantivi* (substantivul), *De Adjectiva* (adjективul), *De Pronominibus* (pronomenele), *De Numeris* (numeralul), *De Verbis* (verbul), *De Adverbii* (adverbul), *De Praepositionibus* (prepoziția), *De Conjunctionibus* (conjuncția), *De Interjectionibus* (interjecția); [*De Articulo* (the article), *De nomine or substantives* (the noun), *De Adjectiva* (the adjective), *De Pronominibus* (the pronouns), *De Numeris* (the numeral), *De Verbis* (the verb), *De Adverbii* (the adverb), *De Praepositionibus* (the preposition), *De Conjunctionibus* (the conjunction), *De Interjectionibus* (the interjection)];

- Tempea 1797: *articulul, numele, pronumele, verbumul, partițipiumul, prepoziția, adverbiumul, coniunția și interiecția* [article, noun, pronoun, verb, participle, preposition, adverb, conjunction and interjection].

**1.2.** The grammar in which the adverb is not mentioned at all is *Institutiones* 1770: *the noun, the pronoun and the verb*.

## 2. Definition of the adverb

Starting with Staicu's grammar (1667-1669), where we identified the first definition of the adverb, to that of Diaconovici Loga (1822), the definition of the adverb had a heterogeneous trajectory.

We divide the works from the research corpus into two categories, depending on the presence of adverb definitions:

a) The grammars in which the adverb is defined are works that stand out for a unitary and detailed approach to all parts of speech: Eustatievici-Brașoveanul 1757, Văcărescu 1787, Tempea 1797, Budai-Deleanu 1815-1820, Diaconovici Loga 1822;

b) The grammars in which the definition of the adverb does not appear are the following: Staicu 1667-1669, Macarie 1757-1772, Micu/ Șincai 1780/1805, Școleriu 1789.

In what follows, we present definitions of the adverb in chronological order, to highlight their evolution:

- „Ce este spregrăirea? Este a șasea parte a etimológhiei, din cele neplecătoare, a doao, ceea ce adăogîndu-se cuvintelor însemnarea lor hotărăște și împrejur starea numelui, graiului și împărtășirii arată, precum: foarte arătată faptă este”; [“What is pre-speech? It is the sixth part of the etymology, from the non-inflected ones, which, when added to the words, determines their meaning and all around shows the state of the name, speech and sharing, such as: it is a very good deed”] (Eustatievici-Brașoveanul 1757: 114);

- „Advérbiu adică spre grăiul, iarăși din părțile cele înduplecătoare iaste, și acesta adăugându-se și unindu-se la grăiul are putere întălmăcirea lucrurilor sale, adică Petru grăiaște *înteleptăște*, Alexandru scrie *bine*”; [“The adverb means ‘towards speech,’ again from the inflected parts, and this, adding and uniting in speech, has the power of the meeting of its things, that is, Peter speaks *wisely*, Alexander writes *well*”] (Văcărescu 1787: 8);

- „Adverbiile sunt niște cuvinte care însemnează chipul unuia lucru sau altel careva pricină cu care este încheiată și mai cu seamă să pun la graiuri și la nume mutarnice, iară la starnice foarte rar: *Eri* am fost bolnav, am *foarte* învățat”; [“Adverbs are some words that mean the form of a thing or some other reasons with which it is concluded, especially to add to speech and inflected nouns, and very rarely to non-inflected nouns: *Yesterday* I was sick, I learned *a lot*”] (Tempea 1797: 163);

- „Adverbia va să zică ca și *la verb*, fiindcă adverbiile sunt părțicelle ce mai cu seamă să încheie la construcție cu verbele sau le hotăresc, precum: *unde* mergi, *face bine*, *cîntă rău*. Aici *unde*, *bine* și *rău* sunt adverbii”; [“The

adverb addresses *the verb*, because the adverbs are the particles most likely to end the construction with the verbs or determine them, such as: *where you go, do well, sing badly*. Here, *where, well* and *badly* are adverbs”] (Budai-Deleanu 1815-1820: 48);

- „Adverbiile sunt cuvinte, căre nu se apleacă și se pun la Verbură, arătînd lócul ori timpul sau altă însușire a vreunei lucrări. Exemplu: *Petru eră fiind aice mult au vorbit cu mine, despre învățeturile ceale sholasticești*”; [“Adverbs are words that are not inflected and are added to Verbs, showing the place or time or other characteristic of some work. Example: *Petru was here and they talked with me a lot about scholastic teachings*”] (Diaconovici Loga 1822: 146).

## Conclusions

The present study represents a detailed structural description of the adverb, by intersecting two configurational aspects: the definitions and classification of the adverb in the specified works. The analytical trajectory follows the evolution of this grammatical class, revealing both the similarities and the differences that occurred individually, at the level of the adverb, or globally and diachronically, with reference to the analysed works

The first analysis referred to the position of the adverb in the system of parts of speech. From the 10 analysed grammars<sup>1</sup>, we identified a number of 5 grammars that registered the adverb in the class of inflexible parts of speech, while only 4 papers included it in the entire system of parts of speech. According to our findings, there is also one grammar where it is not mentioned at all.

The second part of the study was devoted to adverb definitions. Five authors defined the adverb, presenting it as a part of speech with a corresponding grammatical and semantic status, while in 4 grammars we did not identify its definition.

The beginnings of Romanian grammars give us a fairly clear picture of the adverb, which leads us to consider as very important the classification and conceptualization details of this inflexible part of speech.

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<sup>1</sup> Iorgovici 1799 is a textbook of general linguistics and appears in our research corpus only sporadically, as it does not provide information on the evolution of inflexible parts of speech. We mentioned it among the grammar works for its contribution to the process of cultivating the Romanian language, by identifying some considerable linguistic sources.

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# THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC CONTACT IN THE EVOLUTION OF INTERJECTIONS IN THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This study examines how linguistic contact has shaped the evolution of interjections in Romanian, highlighting both the internal dynamics of this lexical class and the impact of the main languages with which Romanian has interacted throughout history: Slavic, Turkish and Greek. Starting from theoretical premises regarding the hybrid nature of interjections – marked simultaneously by spontaneity and cultural conventionalisation – the research demonstrates that Romanian forms emerged through a complex process of borrowing, phonological adaptation and pragmatic reinterpretation. Slavic influences are most evident in religious expressions and phraseological mechanisms, Turkish in interjections of approval and encouragement, and Greek in the liturgical register. The general conclusion is that Romanian interjections reflect a linguistic space characterised by areal convergences, cultural transfers and parallel developments, constituting a valuable expressive marker for understanding the history of language contact.

## Keywords

*Linguistic contact, Greek influences, Slavic influences, Turkish influences, interjections, lexical borrowing, pragmatics.*

## 1. Preliminary Considerations

Interjections represent one of the most dynamic and expressive word classes, characterised by spontaneity, orality and a strong emotive component. They convey states, attitudes, impulses or imitate sounds from nature and speech. Unlike other parts of speech, interjections are less constrained by strict grammatical norms, which makes them highly permeable to external influences.

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<sup>1</sup> This article, which examines the evolution of the interjection, was prepared as part of The Postdoctoral Research Project UOC, entitled ‘*The Relationship between the Internal Genius and the Universals of Language and Thought in the Romanian Interjectional System.*’

Interjections are not necessarily “universal”, even though they may be shaped by linguistic contact at phonological and pragmatic levels. This assertion underscores a nuanced perspective in linguistics, acknowledging both cultural specificity and susceptibility to external influence.

Although some studies from the 1990’s, such as F. Ameka’s<sup>1</sup>, suggested that interjections might constitute a universal part of speech, similar to nouns and verbs, subsequent research has shown the situation to be more complex. In general, interjections are considered “highly culture-specific”<sup>2</sup>. In 2003, the linguist Anna Wierzbicka argued in an extensive study that interjections are “often among the most characteristic features of individual cultures”<sup>3</sup>, a view echoed by Mark Dingemanse in a recent work<sup>4</sup>.

There is considerable diversity in the sources of interjectional forms, even for similar functions across different languages. Moreover, interjections with similar forms may carry very different functional meanings in distinct languages. In the aforementioned study, Dingemanse cites Wierzbicka’s example regarding the varying values of the interjection *pst*<sup>5</sup>, which in Polish signals a warning to keep silent, while in Russian it expresses disapproval.

Nevertheless, certain tendencies toward universality exist in some types of interjections. For instance, pain-related interjections may have phylogenetic precursors, being linked to common vocalisations<sup>6</sup>.

In a 2013 study, Mark Dingemanse highlighted a case of quasi-universality – the interjection *huh?*, which, according to the author, “*in all languages investigated, it is a monosyllable with at most a glottal onset consonant, an unrounded low front central vowel, and questioning*

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<sup>1</sup> Felix Ameka, 1992, “Introduction Interjections: The universal yet neglected part of speech”, in: *Journal of Pragmatics*, no. 18, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Skafte Jensen, Tina Thode Hougaard, Carsten Levisen, 2019, “Interjections in Scandinavia and Beyond: Traditions and Innovations”, in: *Scandinavian Studies in Language*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Wierzbicka, 2003, *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction*, Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, p. 285: “*In fact, far from being universal and ‘natural’ signs which don’t have to be learnt, interjections are often among the most characteristic peculiarities of individual cultures*”.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Dingemanse, 2023, “Interjections”, in: Lier, E. van (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Word Classes*, Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 488: “*We consider two possible explanations. The first is that *huh?* is similar across languages because it is an innate grunt. The second is that it is similar as a result of convergent evolution.*”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

*intonation.*<sup>7</sup> This convergence is attributed to shared conversational needs. Dingemanse proposes two explanations: (a) it represents an innate grunt; (b) it results from convergent evolution<sup>8</sup>.

Even in such cases, as in others, specific languages impose a degree of conventionalisation and diversification<sup>9</sup>.

Linguistic contact can influence interjections both phonologically and pragmatically.

At the phonological level, interjections constitute an open lexical category for borrowing from one language to another, being even more frequently borrowed than other parts of speech, as shown in a study analysing 27 languages, according to Piispanen Peter Sauli<sup>10</sup>.

At the pragmatic level, borrowing an interjection sometimes involves adaptation to the new language in terms of form and/or function<sup>11</sup>. The borrowed element may cease to function exactly as in the donor language, being reshaped in the recipient language, which can also affect existing forms<sup>12</sup>. An example is the use of the word “jess” in Icelandic, Swedish and Finnish, derived from English “yes”. Although it is used to express a strong reaction to positive events (such as when someone scores a goal in a football match) or to conclude conversations, in Icelandic it is not employed to answer questions of any kind, for which the native form *já* is used<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, while certain underlying universal tendencies may exist for interjections associated with basic emotions or fundamental communicative needs, their specific forms, functions and usage are largely shaped by cultural and linguistic conventions. Moreover, contact between languages can

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<sup>7</sup> Dingemanse M, Torreira F, Enfield NJ, 2013, “Is ‘Huh?’ a Universal Word? Conversational Infrastructure and the Convergent Evolution of Linguistic Items”, in: *PLoS ONE*, vol. 8, no. 11, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Dingemanse, 2023, “Interjections”, in: Lier, E. van (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Word Classes*, Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 488.

<sup>10</sup> Piispanen Peter Sauli, 2020, “An Ancient East Asian Wanderwort”, in: *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 73, no. 4, p. 571.

<sup>11</sup> Helga Hilmisdóttir, Martina Huhtamäki, Susanna Karlsson, 2023, “Pragmatic borrowing from English Pragmatic borrowing from English”, in *Nordic Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 46, no. 3, p. 255.

<sup>12</sup> Helga Hilmisdóttir, Elizabeth Peterson, 2023, “Language contact and language change, Impact on the languages of the Nordic countries”, in: Peterson Elizabeth, Beers Fägersten Kristy, 2023, *English in the Nordic Countries*, New York: Routledge, p. 98.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

significantly alter these elements, both through the introduction of new sounds or the phonological adaptation of borrowed ones, and through the adoption of new usage patterns or functions for pragmatically borrowed interjections.

In the history of Romanian, successive episodes of linguistic contact – with Slavic populations, with the Byzantine Empire and the Greek sphere, with the Ottoman Empire and also with the West (especially France) – have left visible traces in the vocabulary, including within the register of interjections.

In our study we examine Slavic, Turkish and Greek influences on Romanian interjections, and we also offer a brief comparison with French, a language that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century exerted a major influence on modern Romanian, as well as throughout Southeastern Europe.

With regard to borrowings from various source languages, on the basis of research employing modern methods for investigating lexicographic resources, it has been claimed that Romanian has borrowed words from more than 40 languages<sup>14</sup>. The authors use an automated, machine-learning-based data analysis system that “reads” dictionary etymologies and thereby identifies source languages.

Among these lexical borrowings, we consider that a significant number are interjections. However, by their nature, interjections are often spontaneous expressions, strongly anchored in cultural and emotional context, which makes the direct identification of borrowings or strict parallels between languages a complex and highly specialised linguistic task.

## **II. The Influence of the Slavic Languages on the Romanian Interjectional System**

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<sup>14</sup> In the article “Automatic Identification and Production of Related Words for Historical Linguistics”, published in: *Computational Linguistics*, Volume 45, Number 4, Alina Maria Ciobanu and Liviu P. Dinu state in note 23: “*Romanian borrowed words from over 40 languages (Ciobanu and Dinu 2014a). In our experiments, we use the top 20 languages in terms of number of borrowed words, so that we have enough training data.*”. In the bibliography, the work mentioned for 2014a is “An etymological approach to cross-language orthographic similarity. Application on Romanian”, in: *Proceedings of the 2014 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, EMNLP 2014, pp. 1047-1058, Doha. In this paper we did not find an explicit list of the “more than 40 source languages”; however, the authors present the methodology for extracting cognate words from electronic dictionaries when conducting their experiments and consistently select 20 donor languages for which they have more abundant data.

A review of the specialised literature leads to the conclusion that there has been a consistent and significant influence of the Slavic languages, including Old Slavic, on Romanian, as researcher Mihaela Illoiaia states in a 2023 study: “*Romanian has undergone substantial contact-induced influence by Old-Slavic and Balkan languages.*”<sup>15</sup>

Despite thorough search efforts using a variety of specific queries with resources provided by computational systems, we have not succeeded in identifying academic studies that offer a direct and exhaustive comparative analysis of the *corpus of interjections* in Romanian and Old Slavic.

Slavic influence on Romanian is profound and long-standing, affecting the general vocabulary<sup>16</sup>, and only in certain details the morphological particularities. It is therefore plausible that this influence also manifests at the level of colloquial expressions and interjections, albeit not so consistently in the form of direct borrowings, as might be expected, but rather through semantic calques or borrowings of pragmatic structures.

Romanian belongs to an area in which intense linguistic contact has led to structural and lexical convergences among languages from different families. Interjections and particles are often the first elements affected by prolonged contact<sup>17</sup>.

One of the particles of Slavic origin that entered Romanian is *da*. However, in the Romanian grammatical tradition the word “da” is not classified as a particle, but as an adverb (its basic value) or as an interjection (in short replies). Although particles are generally inflexible words, and “da” is likewise invariable, in Romanian the semantic and functional criterion is essential. On the other hand, particles do not have their own lexical meaning, but only modify the meaning of other words in various contexts.

Contemporary normative grammars (GALR, GBLR) classify “da” as an affirmative adverb and as an interjection (in short answers: *Da?* *Da!*). It is

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<sup>15</sup> Mihaela Illoiaia, 2023, *MIHI EST Construction: An Instance of Non-Canonical Subject Marking in Romanian*. Vol. 481. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, p. 54. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111055466>.

<sup>16</sup> As is well known, many lexicosemantic elements of Slavic origin remained confined to the folk, regional and archaic strata of Romanian, especially after the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the so-called phenomenon of “re-Romanisation” of the Romanian vocabulary occurred, cf. P. Gh. Bârlea, 2009, *Limba română contemporană*, Bucureşti: Editura “Grai şi Suflet – Cultura Naţională”, pp. 216.

<sup>17</sup> Grünke Jonas; Andreeva Bistra, Gabriel Christoph, Sabev Mitko, 2023, “Vocative Intonation in Language Contact: The Case of Bulgarian Judeo-Spanish”, in: *Languages*, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 19.

not included in the native category “particle,” which in Romanian has a very specific sense.

Some authors, however, use the term ‘particle’ in the case of “da”, as we find in Tomasz Klimkowski:

*“Although the Slavic etymology of the affirmative particle **da** in Romanian is practically unanimously accepted, it can be explained by applying the ‘theory of support points’ through an internal semantic evolution of Rom. **dar(ă)** ~ **da**, reinforced by an external, Slavic influence. In other words, the Slavic **da** found in Romanian a favourable support point enabling it to be adopted into its vocabulary.”<sup>18</sup>*

Nevertheless, Tomasz Klimkowski also notes that in his work he employs the model found in the specialised literature of German and Slavic scholars, and not the terminology of Romanian normative grammars:

*“... in German and Slavic linguistics these are most often termed particles. In Romanian grammatical tradition, the term **particle** designates rather a strengthening element attached to a word.”<sup>19</sup>*

He also specifies that he chooses to use the term “affirmative particle” in his demonstrative approach:

*“Therefore, regardless of the difficulty in distinguishing particles from other classes, particularly from adverbs, we shall continue to use the term **affirmative particle**, given the special value of such forms.”<sup>20</sup>*

We consider that “da” as an interjection is merely a short reaction used in dialogue. It does not form part of the logical structure of a sentence; rather, it is a response or a call, a brief, self-contained utterance expressing a spontaneous reaction:

“*Da?*” (as a reply to a call)

“*Da!*” (expressing surprise or quick confirmation)

“– *Maria!*

– *Da?*”

Here, “da” no longer represents a sentence but is simply a *verbal interjection* used in dialogue.

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<sup>18</sup> Tomasz Klimkowski, 2020, “Particulele affirmative în limba română – perspectivă diacronică și areală”, in: *Studia Romanica Posnaniensia*, vol. 47, no. 3, p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

These interjectional values are confirmed by the presence in modern Slavic languages (e.g. Bulgarian, Serbian, Russian, Polish) of this particle, which is extremely widespread and, besides similar affirmative functions, may also acquire interjectional nuances in various contexts, such as vehement agreement or surprise.

An interesting case is represented by interjections of religious origin or exclamations based on the Slavic word *Bogū*. The tendency to form interjections and exclamations from the root *bogū* (“god”) is present in many modern Slavic languages, not only in Old Slavic, as Andrea Trovesi notes when discussing the etymology of the word and its homonymous lexical families:

*“In Slavic languages and dialects, two lexical families are attested that can be traced back to the homonymous roots \*bogū with the respective meanings of ‘wealth’, ‘property’ and ‘god’, ‘divinity’.”*<sup>21</sup>

In Trovesi’s study we find a passage describing a phenomenon of grammaticalisation and lexicalisation in several stages, whose source is the Common Slavic form *bogū*:

*“The hypothetical derivational chain would start from a declarative sentence later reinterpreted as an exclamatory phrase, then rigidified into a phraseologism. This, in turn, becomes an adverb with exclamatory value expressing doubt, uncertainty, vague hope – such as ‘only God knows!’ – and finally transforms into a prefixoid.”*<sup>22</sup>

Here we observe a multi-stage process of linguistic evolution, whereby a declarative construction comes to be transformed into exclamatory phrases, fixed phraseologisms, exclamatory adverbs and ultimately productive prefixoids in exclamatory compounds.

We shall further outline the trajectory<sup>23</sup> that Trovesi identifies as a pattern in Slavic languages for expressions such as “God knows”, which he claims gradually evolve from free statements into a crystallised interjectional form.

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<sup>21</sup> Andrea Trovesi, 2023, “La famiglia di parole da base [bog] ‘dio’ nelle lingue slave (con particolare riguardo alle esclamazioni)”, in: Rosanna Benacchio (ed.), Gebert Lucyna (ed.), *Studi contrastivi di linguistica slava: grammatica e pragmatica*, Florence: Firenze University Press, p. 104.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 106-110.

The starting point is the declarative sentence, with the prototypical example: *Bogū znaet.* “God knows.”

In its initial stage, this is merely an ordinary affirmative sentence asserting a fact:

“Only God knows the unknown element.”

Then, Trovesi explains that the sentence is reanalysed pragmatically as an emotional expression marking uncertainty, conveying the speaker’s inability to respond precisely. This leads to values such as:

“Who knows?”

“Only God knows!”

At this point, the first step toward interjectionalisation (transformation into a fixed exclamation) occurs. The expression “God knows” ceases to be a sentence and becomes a lexicalised cliché. Trovesi emphasises that this rigidification is typical of the evolution of exclamatory expressions.

Now we are no longer dealing with the expression in ordinary syntactic terms but as a lexical unit with a general meaning: “Who knows?”

The next stage is transformation into an exclamatory adverb. These expressions come to function as exclamatory adverbs expressing doubt, uncertainty, vague hope, lack of knowledge. They are no longer phrases but autonomous adverbial units.

The final stage is transformation into a prefixoid, as Trovesi states. The exclamatory expression is reduced to its first element (“God” → *bog* / *boh* / *buh*) and becomes a prefixoid included in exclamatory compounds.

These are no longer phrases but lexical compounds with a general sense: “who knows who/how/where.”

Thus, this type of evolution is a classic example of:

- *lexicalisation* (sentence → fixed expression),
- *re-functionalisation* (syntactic unit → exclamatory unit → adverb → prefixoid),
- *partial grammaticalisation* (*bog-* becomes an element with a prefix-like function).

Trovesi stresses that this trajectory explains the emergence in Slavic languages of interjections and exclamations formed on the basis of *bogū*, illustrating the internal dynamics of the Slavic lexical system.

Romanian, although it did not directly adopt these interjections, uses its own religious exclamations (e.g., *Doamne!*, *Sfinte!*, *Maică!*) that can fulfil similar pragmatic functions. These may be linguistic calques or simply

evidence of “universals of thought”, since they function pragmatically in a manner similar to Slavic exclamatives:

Slavic	Pragmatic function	Romanian
<i>Bože!</i>	surprise, fear, imploration	<i>Doamne!</i>
<i>Bog znaet!</i>	ignorance, uncertainty	<i>Cine știe! / Doar Dumnezeu știe!</i>
<i>Bůhvíkdo</i>	uncertainty, indeterminacy	<i>Naiba știe, cine știe cine!</i>

The expressive function is universal, but the forms are cultural, since the reason all languages employ religious exclamations (invoking divinity) is universal: a threat, a surprise or a doubt that activates common emotional mechanisms.

Let us analyse several other interjections.

Category of Interjections	In Romanian	Equivalent in Modern Slavic Languages	Comparative Observations
Exclamations of Pain / Suffering	“au!”, “vai!”	Rus. “ou!” Pol. “oj!”	Exclamations of pain are typically similar across languages due to their physiological basis (natural sounds of pain). <i>Oi!</i> is common in Greek, Slavic and even in dialectal Romanian (in certain regions). Rom. <i>vai!</i> also has an analogue in ancient Hebrew/Greek expressions ( <i>oּוָי!</i> )
Exclamations of Joy / Enthusiasm	“ura!”	Rus. “ypa!”, Srb. “ypa!”	<i>Ura!</i> is an international borrowing, probably via French and Russian, but with wide European diffusion. In this case, Romanian and Slavic languages do not necessarily share a common internal evolution, but rather participate in a pan-European phenomenon originating in the military sphere (victory shout).
Interjections of Urging / Calling	“hei!”	Rus. “еу!” (ei!), Pol. “hej!”	We consider that the similarities are almost entirely onomatopoeic – sounds used to attract attention – which appear to be independent parallel developments rather than borrowings.

## II. The Influence of Turkish

In analysing the corpus of Romanian interjections for possible similarities or Turkish influences, we have observed the interjection “AFERÍM”, a well-known example of a Turkism.

Specialised literature confirms a significant influence of Turkish on Romanian, particularly at the lexical level, as a result of prolonged historical contact, as studies employing modern computational analysis techniques affirm:

*“The top eight languages ranked above are those with which Romanian has had the most intense cultural interaction, either more recently (English, for example) or in the past: during the period of ‘re-Romanisation’ of Romanian (when Italian and French influence was remarkable), or through continuous contact (with Turkish).”<sup>24</sup>*

Ciobanu and Dinu show in their study that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both Romanian and Turkish borrowed a considerable number of lexemes from French, a fact that explains the presence of an extensive corpus of Romanian-Turkish pairs with a common French etymon:

*“As for Turkish, we have decided to investigate the cognate pairs for this language because many French words were imported into both Romanian and Turkish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and we expect to find a large number of Romanian-Turkish cognate pairs with common French ancestors, which might provide deeper insight into lexical similarity between the two languages.”<sup>25</sup>*

The authors identify 1,157 Romanian-Turkish pairs<sup>26</sup> in their dataset with a common French etymon, a finding that confirms the hypothesis formulated in the methodological section.

When it comes to specific interjections, a well-known case is, as mentioned above, *Aferim!*. In Turkish, *aferim* means “bravo”, “well done”, expressing praise or approval. The same function is preserved in Romanian.

Two other terms with exclamatory connotations are *haram* (“forbidden, sin”) and *halal* (“permitted, blessed”). Although primarily nouns/adjectives of Turkish origin, they can be used in Romanian with strong exclamatory value, expressing disapproval or approval<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Ciobanu Alina Maria, Dinu Liviu P., 2019, “Automatic Identification and Production of Related Words for Historical Linguistics”, in: *Computational Linguistics*, vol. 45, nr. 4, 969.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 674.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 676.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mihaela Illoaia, 2023, *The MIHI EST construction: An instance of non-canonical subject marking in Romanian*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 96-97.

In contemporary Romanian, *halal* is almost always ironic, expressing disapproval in the form of irony, equivalent to “shame on you!” or “bravo, but upside down!”. This is an example of lexical influence extending into the sphere of expressivity.

It is widely accepted in Romanian etymology<sup>28</sup> that *hai!* or *haide!* ('come on!') derive from Turkish *haydi* or *hadi*, used to urge or encourage. This represents a strong functional and phonetic similarity between the two languages.

The interjection *haide* has, according to DEX, the following variants: *haida*, *haid*, *aida*, *aide*, with uncertain etymology, its origin disputed among Turkish (*haydi*), Bulgarian (*haide*) and Modern Greek (*áide*).

Vasmer's Dictionary<sup>29</sup>, the principal authoritative source on the etymology of Russian words, explicitly cites Turkic/Tatar forms (*aida*, *äidä*, *haidä*) for the Russian interjection “*aǔda!*”, phonetically and pragmatically similar to the Romanian variant *aida*. Although it does not refer directly to Romanian, the fact that the Russian etymological dictionary acknowledges the Turkic origin of the Russian interjection illustrates how interjections can be borrowed from a contact language and, as is well known, Ottoman influence was strongly exerted for a long time in Southeastern Europe.

### III. The Influence of Greek

Greek exerted a strong influence on Romanian, consisting primarily of lexical contributions, especially in domains related to the Orthodox rite. This influence is distinct from that of Slavic, although both contributed (through the phenomenon of “chains of transmission”, whereby forms and meanings were passed “in relay”) to the development of Romanian vocabulary in the ecclesiastical register<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Ion Coteanu (coord.), Lucreția Mareș (coord.), 2009, *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* (DEX), ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită, Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică, București: Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, s.v. *hai*.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Dicționarul etimologic al limbii ruse*, Vasmer, M., 1964-1973, *Etimologicheskiĭ slovar' russkogo yazyka* (O. N. Trubachev, Ed.). Moskva: Progress, s.v. *aǔda*.

<sup>30</sup> This does not in any way imply that, in the secular register of Romanian vocabulary, Greek-origin words from different periods are fewer: *folos* and *a folosi* (“use”), *frică* (“fear”), *a (se) plăcăti* (“to get bored”), *proaspăt* (“fresh”), *prosop* (“towel”), *sigur* (“sure”), among others, form part of the fundamental vocabulary of contemporary Romanian (cf. P. Gh. Bărlea, 2009, pp. 201–205).

The academic studies consulted emphasise the importance of Greek influence on Romanian not only in Antiquity but also during the Byzantine and Phanariot periods, in fields such as religion and science, as Estelle Variot notes:

*“It is also important to distinguish the strong influence of Greek in Antiquity, which had morphological and syntactic consequences (the Balkan tendency to use the subjunctive mood, lexical contributions in certain domains related to the Orthodox rite and sciences etc.).”<sup>31</sup>*

Regarding loanwords with interjectional value originating from Greek, we have selected several that are known to be connected to Greek through their religious meanings.

*Aliluia!*, meaning “Praise the Lord!”, is an interjection of liturgical origin whose parentage is disputed between Church Slavonic (Sl. *aleluija*) and Greek (NGk. ἀλληλούια). It is clear to all that at the origin lies Heb. *hallelū Jah*, from which the Greeks borrowed it, most likely during the early Christian preaching. From Greek it was transferred into Slavonic. However, it is extremely difficult to determine when it entered Romanian, since Christian communities existed in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area before the great Slavic migrations, yet the earliest church texts were written in Slavonic, using Cyrillic characters.

A similar situation is that of the structure *Chirie eleison!* ‘Doamne, miluiește!’ (“Lord, have mercy!”), with variants such as *Chiralexai!*, *Chiraleisa*, *Chirales!* – versions of Gk. *Kύριε ἐλέησον*. These are likewise liturgical expressions, which appear to be examples of direct borrowings used in religious contexts.

## Conclusions

Interjections – those small outbursts of language – bear the imprint of cultural history more than any other lexical category. They reveal both the instinctive reactions of speakers and the subtle traces of the peoples with whom Romanian has come into contact. From the Slavic echo of *da* to

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<sup>31</sup> Estelle Variot, 2016, “La langue, point d’équilibre et d’harmonie entre le substrat, les innovations et les variations lexicales”, in: Mariana Pitar coord., 2016, *Le français à l’Université de l’Ouest de Timișoara: un demi-siècle d’enseignement et de recherche (1966-2016)*. Prefață și studiu introductiv: Mariana Pitar, Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, p. 313.

the exclamations once formed around the root *bogū*, from the Turkish vigour of *afirim* or *hai* to the Byzantine solemnity of *aliluia* and *Kyrie eleison*, interjections construct a mosaic in which spontaneity intertwines with tradition.

Despite certain universal tendencies – such as cries of pain or the physiological sounds of surprise – most interjections are profoundly cultural, shaped by historical developments, rituals, customs and the affective register of a community. Thus, Romanian, situated at the crossroads of Slavic, Turkish and Greek influences, among many others as in any natural language, has developed a rich and diverse interjectional repertoire, in which each form encapsulates a story of linguistic contact.

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# A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST OBSTETRICS TEXT WRITTEN IN ROMANIAN (1827)

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## **Abstract:**

The article tackles with the first obstetrics text written and printed in Romanian in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The text was elaborated by the Romanian physician Nicolae Chiriacopol and appeared in Iași, in 1827. Apart from its value as regards the useful information for midwives and pregnant women, as regards pregnancy, childbirth, the post-partum period and the diseases of infants, the text exhibits some morphosyntactic features which allow for a better understanding of the literary norm of the period.

## **Keywords:**

Obstetrics, Nicolae Chiriacopol, 19<sup>th</sup> century, morphosyntax, literary norm.

## **Rezumat:**

Prezentul studiu se oprește asupra primul text de obstetrică apărut în spațiul cultural românesc în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Acesta a fost elaborat de medicul român Nicolae Chiriacopol și a apărut la Iași, în 1827. Dincolo de importanța practică a acestui text care oferă informații prețioase legate de sarcină, naștere, momentul lăuziei și bolile sugarilor, o atenție specială merită trăsăturile morfosintactice, care ne pot oferi o mai bună imagine asupra normei limbii literare a perioadei.

## **Cuvinte-cheie:**

Obstetrică, Nicolae Chiriacopol, secolul al XIX-lea, morfosintaxă, normă literară.

## **1. The texts**

In the Romanian cultural space, the first book devoted to midwifery, pregnancy, and childbirth appeared in 1827 in Iași, printed at the Metropolitan Press of Moldavia. Bearing the full title *Doaăsprezece învățături folositoare pentru fimeile acele îngredate, pentru ceasul nașterii, pentru lehusia, pentru chipul a să hrăni copii[i] acei mici și pentru boalele lor* [Twelve useful

*teachings for those women in labor, for the hour of birth, for the postpartum period, for the manner of feeding infants and for their illnesses], the book was written by Doctor Nicolai Chiriacopol „din spitalul sfintei monastiri Precista din Putna și dată în tipariu în zilele prealuminatului domn Ioan Sandu Sturza Voievod” [of the hospital of the Holy Monastery Precista in Putna and published in the days of the most enlightened ruler, Ioan Sandu Sturza Voivode.]*

Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, additional works on this subject were published, most of them manuals intended for female students enrolled in midwifery schools. Among these we mention: *Meșteșugul moșirii pentru învățatura moașelor la Institutul Maternității* [The Craft of Midwifery for the Instruction of Midwives at the Maternity Institute] by Dr. Iosif Sporer (1839), *Manualul pentru îngrijitorii și îngrijitoarele de bolnavi, pentru îngrijitoarele de femei lehuze, pentru moașe și pentru mume de familie* [Manual for Caregivers and Nurses of the Sick, for Nurses of Women in Childbed, for Midwives, and for Mothers of Families] by Nicolae Kretzulescu (after Fodere, 1842), *Manualul pentru învățatura moașelor* [Manual for the Instruction of Midwives] by Anastasie Fătul (1852), and *Arta moșitului* [The Art of Midwifery] by Ștefan Capșa (after Naegele, 1859) (see F. I. Georgescu, 1962: 303).

The 160-page book is dedicated to „pre nobilei și favoritoarei binelui nației, dumisale marei vistieresii cucoanei Anica Roset, născută Bogdan”, to whom the author is explaining the reasons that prompted him to write this book: „Pre nobilă cucoană, văzând cu totul neștiința moașilor patriei noastre, am alcătuit această dieteticească carte pentru partea fimeiască, prin care, nădăjduind că să va pune oareșcare stăvilă primejdiilor ce să pricinuiesc la obștie în vremea nașterii din neștiința moașilor și încredințat fiind eu de binevoința ce aveți pentru folosul obștesc, am îndrăznit a o afierosi pre nobilei persoanei voastre. Doresc deci ca să fie priimită ca o adeverință a adâncei smereniei ce am cătră binevoitoare nației și prietena omenirii”.

The volume is organized into twelve chapters that offer pregnant women and new mothers information and guidance on anatomical structure, the symptoms of pregnancy, appropriate nutrition during gestation, states of discomfort and their possible treatments, miscarriage, the moment of birth, the postpartum period, and the care of infants.

Our analysis focuses on several morphosyntactic features of the text, which we discuss both as continuities with early Romanian and as elements reflecting the prevailing linguistic norms of the period.

## 2. The noun and the article

(1) An occasional instance is recorded of a genitive nominal phrase in which the determiner is indefinite: *cătră binevoitoare nației* (dedicație), *După ce vor trece 5 sau 6 ceasuri după naștire pruncului, să-i dea țița în gură ca să sugă* (109). This structure is very frequent in the texts of the Moldavian bishop Amfilohie Hotiniul, elaborated at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Soare: 2021, 2023).

(2) The *al* genitive is right-adjacent to the definite article, a phenomenon specific to old Romanian that was still to be found in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: *din pricina a multor greșăli* (35).

(3) Regarding the synthetic marking of the singular feminine in the oblique cases, there can be observed the oscillation between the forms displaying the inflections *-ei* and *-ii*: *beșica apii copilului* (52), *din pricina neștiinții moașii* (59), *ograda casii* (99), *lipsa hraniî în matcă* (115), *slujbii* (125), *oricarea greșeală a dietii copiilor* (142), *leacul boalei aceștia* (132).

(4) Rarely, partitive prepositional phrase with *de* are to be found, both with incorporated: *cârnați de cei uscați* (22) and empty head: *de toate acestea va putea ști* (58), but also inserted in a special construction with a genitive partitive complement: *fimeile cele îngrecale au greață neconitenită după care și varsă, au și poftă de ale mâncării* (8).

The partitive *de* is also attested in structures whose head noun lexically denotes *the part*, fixed structures, conserved in modern Romanian: *100 părți de aer al văzduhului* (2), *75 părți de aer înecăcișos* (2), *să iai un pumn de oricare felie din numitele buruieni* (98), *să amestecă la un pumn de aceste prafuri un dram de camforă* (103), *de acest balsam să iei un dram* (117).

Most frequently the author uses structures with *din*, that takes complements in the form of countable nouns or substitutes in the plural: *unile din cele mai alesă organe după cum nevrile, stomahul și mațile au o mare energie asupra rândului matcii* (8), *acesta iaste un semn din cele mai sigure semne ale nașterii* (39), *unile din lehuse la acea vreme au mare greață* (43),

*mare cruzime lăcuiaște în unile **din** iale* (46), *unele **din** moașă au acest obiceiu* (47), *unile **din** ferestre* (93) and rarely with *dintr(u)-*: *însă, deaca va mâncă mult **dintr**-acestea, atuncea cad greu la stomah* (23).

Quite rare is also the incorporated relative clause in the position of a complement of the partitive preposition: *când are poftă de niște mâncări **de** carea altă dată nu au avut* (10).

(5) The possessive marker *al* is usually invariable: *lunile cele dintâi a îngrecării* (34), *la a ei lucru* (60), *acestor trei lucruri a firii la vremea lehusiei* (82), *acest zaiflic să numește friguri a laptelui* (85), *semne și răsuflături a cacohimii[i] săngelui sau a săngilui celui stricat* (123), but variable forms are also recorded, an oscillation specific of the period: *celealte megieșite organe ale trupului* (39), *product umed **al** trupului* (88), *părți **ale** trupului* (138).

(6) The genitive-dative form of the adjectival article is, in the feminine, *cei*, the etymological form: *păreții matcii **cei** dinlăuntru* (82).

### 3. The adjective

(1) The phenomenon of redundant, double marked determination, both in nouns and adjectives, is a feature of old Romanian: *Pre nobilei și favoritoarei binelui nației, dumisale marei vistieresii cucoanei Anica Roset* (f.t.), *am îndrăznit a o afierosi pre nobilei persoanei voastre* (dedication), *Doresc deci ca să fie priimită ca o adeverință a adâncei smereniei ce am* (dedication).

(2) A special situation is that of relational adjectives that, unlike modern Romanian, are in a prenominal position, a structure current in old Romanian: *această dieteticească carte* (dedicație), *dieteticeasca purtare* (13), *dietaticești povătuiri* (28), *oareșcare anatomicescă și fisiologhicească prescriere* (1), *himicească analisis al aerului văzduhului* (2), *la cea pătimașă tiță* (102).

(3) The maximal degree of intensity in adjectives usually employs the mark *foarte*: *foarte puțin* (85), *începe matca foarte încet a să strângă* (41), *Iaste un lucru foarte delicat* (49), *ajunge lehusa la o foarte ticăloasă stare* (87), *un foarte supărătoriu lucru* (115). The specialized marker *foarte* is also observed used independently in the verb phrase: *la aceste luni foarte să să păzească* (35).

There is also to be noted the elative marker *tare*, specific of northern varieties of Romanian: *trebuie să nu fie nici tare ușoare ca să nu răcească, dar nici tare călduroasă* (26), *ca să nu fie capul lehusii tare sus, dar nici tare jos* (57), *însă să nu fie tare rece* (97), *înfășătura cea tare strânsă, de multe ori și tare călduroasă* (138).

The elative marker *prea*, specific of the old norm, appears monolexemic: *în zilele prealuminatului domn Ioan Sandu Sturza Voievod* (f.t.), or blexemic, in stereotypical forms of address or in vocative phrases: *pre nobilei și favoritoarei binelui nației* (dedicație), *Pre nobilă cucoană!* (dedicație).

Maximal intensity is also rendered with the help of the phrase *cu totul* placed before the adjective: *sânt cu totul adormite* (5), *aerul cu totul stricat și vătămătoriu pentru sănătatea fieștecaruia om* (19), *sânt cu totul neînvățate la a lor epihisisis* (45), *să nu fie cu totul somnoroasă, adormită și ticăită la ale ei purtări* (125), *Băutura pentru un copil mic iaste cu totul nebăgată în seamă* (125), which is also to be found in a structure with dislocation: *cu totul iaste greșită socoteala celor ce sfătuiesc aceasta* (105).

Various degrees of intensity are also expressed by the help of the phrase *peste fire*, rarely attested in the text, with the same unmarked topic: *Dacă fimeile îngrecate pătimesc de încuiere, să nu obicinuiască curătenie tare, de sinamichi sau de răvent cu sare englezască, fiindcă acestea sânt preste fire tari pentru o fimeie îngrecată* (31). In other contexts, the structure functions as an adjective phrase, adjunct in the noun phrase: *iaste ceva preste fire* (39), *Atuncea nu ar gândi, nici ar avea acea grija că va da înapoi funioara locului care nici nu să întâmplă fără numai în ideile lor lăcuiaște un așa preste fire lucru* (47).

The superlative value can be expressed by exclamative constructions as well (rarely attested, since the writing is a science popularization text). We recorded a context in which the exclamation mark *ce* appears as an adjunct in noun phrases: *O, ce cruzime și ce tirănie pentru ticăloasa aceea lehusă!* (46), *O, ce ticăloșie și ce cruzime!* (48).

(4) The inferiority comparative is rarely attested: *Organul nașterii [...] iaste mai puțin elasticos și moale* (73-74).

(5) The text exhibits a structure in which there is to be observed the inverted affective noun pattern: *abia să răsuflă ticăloasa de lehuse* (48).

#### 4. The (adjective) pronoun

(1) The distributive quantifiers based on the formative *fiește-* și *fieș-* are frequently recorded: *fieștecare fimeie îngrecată* (14), [...] *hultuitul cu vaccină, pentru care eu sfătuiesc pre fieștecare familist ca să-și hultuiască copiii la vremea până a nu da epidemia de vărsat* (153), *aceasta să întâmplă după crasis a fieștecaria* (83), *vătămătoriu pentru sănătatea fieșcăruia om* (19).

(2) The paradigm of *care* includes invariable forms: *pentru fimeile acelea care nu prea bagă de seamă* (17), and variable, fully inflected forms (*carele*, for m. sg. and f. pl.; *carea*, for f. sg.; *carii*, for m. pl.), a current situation in old Romanian: *acea crasis pe carea au copiii țăranilor* (105), *fimeile îngrecale [...] carele au să nască întâiași dată* (41), *o doftorie carea aduce treapăd* (105), *doftori carii au avut mare praxis atât la moșit [...]* (106). It can also be observed the usage of the form *carea* for f. pl.: *Atunci încep și puține dureri carea pe tot menutul sporesc* (35), *Lehusele carea nu voiesc ca să-și hrănească singure copii[i]* (104).

(3) The contexts in which the relative *care* is used as a global anaphor, resuming the propositional content of a previous passage, are frequently attested (see SILR: 167, SLRV: 440-441): *Acolo, în pelița oușorului, el crește și să hrănește prin vinele locului, care vine să adună toate la mijlocul locului* (7), *Cu acestea își isprăvește moașa datoria și slujba, carea datorie era să o facă la vremea nașterii* (55), *Cu cel mai răzbătătoriu și mai folositoru spirt ci să numește eter sulfuricus, care spirt să află la toate spătăriile* (65), *Firește iaste ca să se nască copilul cu capul înainte, care naștere iaste și mai ușoară pentru lehusă și fără primejdie sau vătămare* (71), *Și după toate acestea, poate să se întâmple și flogosis a matcii sau obrinteala matcii, carea boala iaste foarte primejdincioasă pentru lehuse* (88).

(4) In rhetorical structures, which are very rarely encountered, the pronominal adjective takes on special pragmatic values (disagreement, irritation, reproach): *Ce vinovat este pruncul după ce să naște el să mai aștepte până ce să va naște și locul!* (48)

(5) The relative pronoun *ce*, which introduces prepositional modifiers, often exhibits the phonetic variant *ci*: *Veți ști că, după himicească analisis al aerului văzduhului ce au făcut profesorul Hermstet, iaste aerul văzduhului alcătuit de trei feliuri de aere, adecă de aer viețuitoriu, ce să numește gas oxighenum, de aerul neviețuitoriu sau încăciros ci să numește gas azoticum*

*și de aer de cărbune, ci să numește gas carbonicum.* (2), *din inimă răsar toate vinile cele mai mari ale trupului, atât cele ce duc săngele de la inimă și-l împriștie în toate părțile trupului, ci să numesc arterie* (2), *După multe și nenumărate necazuri ci pătimesc lehusele* (46), *Unile din flori seamănă ca când ar avea amoriu cu soarele pentru că să întorc cătră dânsul după cum iaste floarea ci să numește iliotropion sau soare a soarelui* (128), *Copii[i] cei mici pătimesc de niște bube ci să numesc moldovinește rohii* (148).

(6) The proximal demonstratives are recorded only with strong forms: *și alte ca acestea simptomata* (85), *acest zaiflic* (85), *acestea să numesc latinește afte* (135), *epidemii de aceste boale* (150).

(7) The etymological form, specific of the old norm, of the feminine proximal demonstrative in oblique cases is *aceștii*: *O fimeie au venit la fire la ziua întâi a lunii lui mai și au ținut până la 50 a aceștii luni și s-au curățit de fire* (16), *pricina aceștii boale* (136), *vindecarea aceștii boale* (136), *dau sfârșit aceștii cărticele* (160).

(8) The intensifier *însuși* is recorded solely with an invariable form: *carea însuși iale vor să dea tițe la copii* (41), *nu va voi însuși mumă-sa* (119).

## 5. The demonstrative *cel*

The polydefinite constructions, which are defining for Romanian's sensitivity to the phenomenon of polydefiniteness of the noun phrase, are frequent in the form of the emphatic pattern definite noun + *cel* + qualifying adjective, a pattern that was conserved in modern Romanian: *vinele cele mai mari ale trupului* (2), *adunarea copiilor celor mai mici decât dânsăle* (4), *carnea cea sărată* (22), *vinul cel vechiu și bun* (25), *berea cea bună* (25), *rugăciunile cele cuviincioasă* (61).

*Cel* appears frequently in structures that are not to be found in current Romanian, with relational adjectives: *trupul cel fimeesc* (3), *trupul cel bărbătesc* (3), *fimeile cele îngrecate* (9), *punerea cașcavalului celui prăjit la buric* (36), *aerul cel viețuitoriu* (48), *dobitoacele cele casnice* (63), *mâncarea lui cea copilărească* (113), *laptele cel dulce* (126), *copii[i] cei sugători* (124) or with prepositional modifiers: *să o aşază la crivatul ei cel de lehusie* (55), *păreții cei din preajma patului* (94), *hrana copilului celui din matcă* (115).

The pattern definite noun + *cel* + qualifying or relational adjectives is also recorded in an accidental structure with the demonstrative *acel*, without

the final particle *-a*: *copii[i] acei mici* (f.t.), *copilul acel* sugătoriu (115), *gurguiele acele rănite* (116), *aerul acel* curat (127).

Occasionally, *cel* appears superfluously between a noun and a relative clause dependent on it<sup>1</sup>: *fimeile cele ce sănătate cu munca grea* (41), *Dar moașei ceii ce să va întâmpla la o aşa naştere să i să poruncească ca nu cumva să tragă de capul copilului* (67), *Fimeile cele ce purced îngrecale după 20 până la 28 sau 30 de ani a vârstii lor au mai simțitoare dureri și nasc mai greu* (73).

## 6. The verb

(1) Homonymous forms of the compound past in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural are specific of old Romanian: *o fimeie care au mai născut copil* (11), *după ce s-au deșărtat matca de rodul ei* (44), *s-au lărgit gura matcii* (52), *sănătatea celui ce s-au născut* (56).

(2) The iotaclized forms of the verb with *t*, *d*, *n*, *r* in their root are extremely frequent: *de două ori să să deșchiză ferestrele ca să să aerisască* (21), *carea să cuprinză pântecele de la lingurică* (27), *ca să nu le cază greu* (90), *dar cui spui acestea* (47), *strigă să trimeață degrabă la preut să vie ca să grijască pe lehusă* (50), *să trimiță ca să vie un doftor care să pricepe la moșit* (62), *atunci să o sloboază, mai ales deaca s-au lărgit gura matcii* (52), *să scoată locul afară fără zăbavă* (55), *să aprinză puține prafuri de afumat* (64), *ci îndată să ceaie sfătuire și ajutoriu de la un doftor care să pricepe de moșit sau la nevoie și de la un doftor practicos* (36), *o legătură să rămâie la capătul buricului copilului* (53), *să puie la partea nașterii un burete sau o petică curată* (89).

(3) We recorded the analogical forms of the verbs *a bea*, *a da* and *a lua* in the subjunctive, specific of Northern areas: *poate să beie băutura cu carea era și este deprinsă* (25), *să beie puțin vin* (90), *să deie ajutorință la vremea cuviincioasă* (77), *să iaie seama bine* (73), *să să iaie de pe locul lor și puroile* (152) along with their etymological forms: *fără a ști să dea* *cuvântul pentru care sfârșit fac aceasta* (79), *să dea lehusii un felegean de ceai de*

<sup>1</sup> The structure was observed by Ov. Densusianu in 16<sup>th</sup> century texts: *Au lieu d'être relié directement au nom, ce este précédé du démonstratif (cel) a dans des phrases comme celles-ci: dintru voi...scula-ve-voru bărbați *cei* ce vor grăi răzvretită; giudețulu *cela* ce va să fie; ultără Dzeul *cel* ce spăsi ei; tot omul *cela* ce aşa (acelea) face* (1975: 708).

romoniță să **bea** (89), deaca sănt lehusile obicinuite cu cafea, pot să **bea** atât dimineața, cât și preste zi (92).

(4) The verb *a semăna* „to resemble” is used with the meaning *a părea* „to seem” (a phenomenon explained by French influence, see SILR: 297), more often with infinitives, but also with the conjunction phrase *ca când*: *de multe ori, firea sau rândurile nu urmează și pântecele seamănă a să mări, și tot nu sănt îngrecale* (12), *Cu toate că nașterile intr-acest chip seamănă a fi primejdioasă, însă firea...poate să ajute* (72), *copii[i] să nasc și nu-și dau glasul îndată și seamănă a fi morți* (74), *măcar că seamănă a nu fi strâns laptele la țite, dar tot să află atâta lapte strâns, încât poate să sătare un prunc de o zi născut* (108), *cu toate că fimeile seamănă ca când ș-ar fi făcut o pravilă ca să nu-și hrănească copii[i] cu însuși laptele lor* (110), *Unile din flori seamănă ca când ar avea amoriu cu soarele* (128).

(5) The verb *a răsufla* „to breathe” is used exclusively with a reflexive clitic: *sfătuiesc pre tot omul ca să meargă să să răcorească și să să răsuflă* în aerul cel viețuitoriu al văzduhului (21), *fimeile acele îngrecale au mare greutate la piept și la tot trupul lor și cu greu să răsuflă* (38), *abia să răsuflă* ticăloasa de lehuse (48), *El au ieșit la lumina lumii, s-au răsuflat* în aerul cel viețuitoriu (48).

(6) *A purcede* „to proceed” (verb of motion) and *a se afla* „to be placed” (verb of location) are used as copula verbs, as in old Romanian: *fimeile cele ce purced* îngrecale (73), *laptele fimeii aceia ce au purces* îngreunată (114), *ia să află* în mărimea ei ca o pară sau ca un ou de gâncă (6), *în vremea ce să vor afla* îngrecale, *să se păzească de toate acele mai sus numite pricini* (9), *la al doilea periodos să află* gura matcii deschisă (42).

Another copula verb is *a se numi* „to be called”, a rare value and construction, attested beginning with the 17<sup>th</sup> century in some original documents in Moldova (see SLRV: 161): *Aceasta să numește* moldovinește piardere de copil iar latinește *să numește* abortus și grecește *să numește* apovalma (36), *Când să întâmplă* aceasta, atuncea *să numește* că s-au născut copilul cu cămașă (54), *acest zaiflic să numește* friguri a laptelui (85).

(7) The verb *putea* „can” exceptionally occurs in a construction with the *a-* infinitive: *Dar cu toate acestea, nu putem a zice că aceasta iaște firește* (6); otherwise, only compact structures formed by *a putea* and the infinitive

without *a*, specific of modern Romanian are to be found: *pentru care eu voi putea pliroforisi mai pre întăles* (1), *de toate acestea va putea ști* (58).

(8) Regarding the expression of tense, we can identify several phenomena of interest.

(i) Future perfect forms are observed in contexts where the temporal reference is explicitly indicated: *deacă nu să va fi născut până la acea vreme și va zice lehusa că au mai avut puține și ușoare opintele [...]* (53-54), *Deaca până la vremea aceea nu să va fi născut locul, să întrebe pe lehusă* (69).

(ii) The periphrastic forms composed of *a avea* + *subjonctive* are frequent: *am să vorbesc* (124), *La ferestrele odăii în carea are să lăcuiască el* (134), *carele au să nască* întâiași dată (41), *După aceea, are să ia sama de s-au aşazat beșica apii copilului la gura matcii* (52), but we also identify a future tense structure composed of the auxiliary *a avea* + *infinitive*, very rarely attested in the period in which the text was written: *La vremea când răzbate capul copilului ca să iasă afară, moașa nu are a face altă fără numai a sprijini cu mâna dreaptă șăzutul lehusii* (65), *La acea vreme [...], moașa nu are a face altă fără numai să șteargă balele de la gura copilului* (68).

(iii) A periphrastic construction for expressing the future, consisting of the verb *a fi* plus a verb in the subjunctive, is also found, though it is rarely attested even in earlier periods (see Zamfir 2007: 241-244; SLRV: 42). In a context where *a fi* appears in the imperfect, its meaning is modal, expressing deontic necessity: *Altele iarăși obicinuiesc a socoti din săptămâna aceea la carea era să vie la fire și nu au venit* (15). In another context, the meaning is „urmează să” (going to): *Iar când iaste ca să să întâmple* o așa primejduiincioasă întâmplare, atunci matca începe a-și face lucrarea sa (35), *Iar deaca va înțelege moașa că nașterea va fi ușoară și deaca copilul iaste să se nască cu capul înainte și deaca după ce s-au slobozit apa copilului, îndată după puține opinteli începe a ieși capul copilului prin gura matcii afară* (62), *Moașele au mare datorie când vor vedea sau când să vor pliroforisi că iaste să să nască copilul cu picioarele înainte...să spuie casnicilor* (71).

(iv) In a structure composed by *a vrea* + *subjonctive*, the verb is used with a predicative value and not as a future auxiliary: *Aceasta neapărat trebuie să fie la oricare lehusă, deaca va să fie sănătoasă nu numai în vremea lehusiei, dar și după aceea în toată viața ei* (82).

(v) The presumptive perfect is used in a form that is homonymous with the future perfect: *Însă cu această cercare a laptelui, de multe ori poate să să năpăstuiască o mancă ... al doilea pentru că acea fimeie la casa ei poate nu va fi avut îndestulă și bună hrană* (121-122).

(9) The infinitive is highly frequent, with Old Romanian favoring it at the expense of the subjunctive. It appears in the verb phrase: *încep a se îngrijia de multe* (4), *aceste organe [...] încep a să găti spre a întâmpina cu hrană pe copil* (29), *la întâiul periodos începe matca foarte încet a să strângă* (41), *trupul să mai zăbovească de a să naște* (66), *să pricepe de a le pune* (158), the noun phrase: *este în primejdie de a piarde* (8), *Evghenișii au mare plecare a să priumbla pe uliță* (20), *pentru chipul a alege mancă cu lapte bun și îndestul* (118), *am să vorbesc pentru chipul a să hrăni un copil mic* (124), *Semnile de a să cunoaște de au limbrici sau de nu au sănt acestea* (145) as well as in the adjective phrase: *să fie mulțămite de a începe a număra* (18), *iaste datoare a spune casnicilor lehusii* (55), *pentru ca să-i fie mâinele și picioarele slobode a le purta încocace și încolo* (119).

(10) In a singular context, the gerund is attested as the predicate within a relative subordinate clause: *Lehusele carea nu voiesc ca să-și hrănească singure copii[i], ci voiesc ca să aibă mancă, trebuie îndată de a doua zi după nașterea copilului să-și puie la piept prafurile mai sus numite cu camforă, pe carea purtându-le la piept până la a 7 zi a lehusiei* (104). Nevertheless, the structure may also be interpreted simply as an anacoluthon (see Stan: 111).

## 7. The syntax

The syntax presents displays several features on which we will focus in what follows.

(1) We identify some emphasis and focalization mechanisms that refer to **subject** (see SLRV: 115-120):

(i) long-distance doubling of the relative subject subordinate by the demonstrative *aceea*: *Deci care fimeie va însămna vremea în carea s-au zămislit copilul, aceea poate să socotească* (14), *Iaste și o parimie între fimei carea zice că care fimeie îngrecată doarme și șade mult, aceea face copilul cu capul mare* (28).

(ii) long-distance doubling of the subject by the personal pronoun *el*, with human or non-animate reference: *Bine iaste ca fimeile acelea, carea*

însuși **iale** vor să dea țițe la copii...să înceapă a unge gurguiele țițelor cu puțin unt de migdale proaspăt (30), Iar **țărancele și târgoveștele** acelea care le cam place rachiul, **iale** pot să tot cinstescă pentru sănătatea celui ce s-au născut (56), **Matea** în vremea ce să zămislește copilul într-însa, **ia** să află în vremea ei ca o pară sau ca un ou de gâncă (6).

(iii) long-distance doubling of the subject incorporating a relative modifier by the demonstrative *acela*: *De mirare iaste că fimeile* carea sănt mai netrebnice, mai ticăloasă și mai trecute cu vârsta, **acelea** să fac moașe (49), Iar **laptele** *acela care iaste cam vânăt alb și subțire la mursa lui sau apos, acela nu iaste îndestul hrănitoriu* (121).

(iv) subject left dislocation (its placement in front of the impersonal matrix verb – impersonal verbs, constructions with a copula and an adverb): *Fimeile* îngrecale, care trăiesc în politii mari, bine și de mare folos iaste ca să iasă în toate zilele la priumblare afară din oraș (19), *Pântecele* îngrecalei bine iaste și încins, dar puțin strâns (27), *Foarte puține moașe* sănt care au cuget curat și frica lui Dumnezeu (59), *Și iarăși deaca moare lehusa zic [...] că moartea* i-au fost din lehusie să i să tragă (60), **Aceasta** nu putem zice că iaste vreo boală (140), *Puține fimei* să află carea cunosc boala aceasta (156).

(2) Regarding the position of the **direct object**, we observe variation phenomena specific to the earlier stage, related to clitic doubling and differential marking with *p(r)e*, as well as constructions involving raising. Thus:

(i) The phenomenon of topicalization occurs quite frequently: *Toată lucrarea* aceasta a matcii *o numim* cu un cuvânt naștere (38), *Toată truda* ce are fimeia când naște nu putem nici să *o* asemănăm cu o boală, nici să *o* numim boală, dar nici să *o* socotim că iaste ceva preste fire (39), *Acest zaiflic, neștiindu-i* pricina, *îl numesc friguri de lapte* (86), **Acestea** socotindu-le nimicuri, *rabdă durerile din zi în zi* (87), **Rohiile** nu trebuie cu doftorii să *le* silim ca să să vindece (148). As a particular phenomenon with an emphatic effect, we encounter the resumptive use of the direct object clause introduced by a relative through a demonstrative pronoun: *iale sănt ca momițile, ce văd că fac alții, aceea fac și iale* (48).

(ii) The direct object placed after the verb and expressed by a noun phrase with *pe* is never anticipated by clitic, a situation perfectly in line with the norm of the period (see SILR: 310): *eu sfătuiesc pe fimeile* acelea (42), *acest obiceiu de a îndopa pe prunci* cu sirop de răvent (106), *o fimeie* au

purtat și au hrănit **pre copilul** ei în pântece 9 luni de zile (110), să întrebe **pe lehusă** (122).

(iii) As a rule, the relative *care*, functioning as a direct object, is doubled by a clitic but is not accompanied by the marker *pe*: *cu niște gânduri care altă dată nu le-au mai avut* (10). Nevertheless, we also attested a context in which it appears with the marker *pe*: *de alte nenumărate pricini pe care fimeile cele îngrecate nu le bagă în seamă* (9)<sup>2</sup>.

(3) The noun in the so-called locative dative appears not only in the verb phrase: *șăzând mult locului și dormind neconenit* (27), but also in the noun phrase (with a deverbal noun as its head): *Șăderea cea multă locului și somnul cel mult trândăvește trupul, îl face greu mișcătoriu* (27)

(4) The concessive clause is introduced in several contexts by the connective *măcar că*: *dar sănt înșălate cu aceasta, măcar că o fimeie care au mai născut copil nu poate ca să să înșale nici la săltatul copilului, nici de a nu fi îngrecată* (11), *Măcar că în Tara Moldaviei și a Valahiei nu prea obicinuiesc damele a purta izmene, dar eu sfătuiesc pe fimeile îngrecate ca să poarte pentru folosul lor* (26).

(5) The resultative clause is, as a rule, introduced by the connective *încât*: *Acest spirt are atâta sărie, încât răzbate până la matcă* (65), but also by *încât că*, with a correlative in the main clause, a connective which was not conserved in current Romanian: *o înfașă atât de strâns, încât că abia să răsuflă biata lehusă* (80), *La multe fimei, mai ales la cele ce nasc întâiași dată, să întâmplă de au gurguiele fișelor atât de mici, încât că copilul, după ce să naște, nu poate ca să le apuce cu gura* (115).

(6) The exceptive adjunct is frequently introduced by the preposition *fără*, accompanied by the restrictive adverb *numai*, a structure specific of old Romanian, but conserved accidentally in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see SILR: 353): *În oușor la început nu iaste altă fără numai o umezeală limpede și băloasă* (6-7), *Moașa nu este altă fără numai o slujbă* (51), *Ia nu este altă fără numai un ajutoriu a firii sau la lucrarea ei* (51), *Durerile și opintelile nu sănt altă fără numai lucrarea matcii* (76), as well as by the connectives *afară din* and *afară de*, the latter preserved in present-day Romanian: *când iaste epidemii*

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the competition between *care* and *pe care*, an old variation phenomenon, see R. Zafiu, „Constituirea unei norme gramaticale: relativul *pe care*”, in: *Limba română*, 2009, LVIII, 2, p. 285-296.

de aceste boale, atuncea pătimesc mai toți copii[i] **afară din** acei ce au pătimit o dată (150)<sup>3</sup>, Toate cele mai sus zisă semne ale îngrecării, **afară de** săltatul copilului, nu pot să ne pliroforisească de iaste o fimee îngrecată sau nu iaste (12), toate durerile cele simțitoare contenesc, **afară de** puțină dureri ce vine foarte rar (45).

(7) The conjunction phrase *ca și când* appears exclusively under the form *ca când*, specific of old Romanian: *La fieștecare săltare sămte îngrecata ca când ar săgeta-o ușor prin pântece* (11), *când își simțește tot trupul ostenit, ca când ar fi umblat toată ziua pe jos* (10), *pentru aceasta simțesc fimeile acel loc ca când ar fi zdrobit și amortit* (39).

(8) The complementizer *ca să* is used, as in old Romanian, instead of *să*, introducing subject clauses and other types of complement clauses: *Firește iaste ca să se nască copilul cu capul înainte* (71), *bine și de mare folos iaste ca să iasă în toate zilele la priumblare* (19), *zicând că aşa au fost scris ca să nu trăiască în lumea această mincinoasă* (60), *voieșc ca să aibă mancă* (104), *iar dacă nu să pricepe a isprăvi această slujbă, atuncea iaste datoare a spune casnicilor lehusii ca să cheme un doftor* (55), *Moașale știu ca să-și acopere neștiința* (60), *sfătuiesc pre tot omul ca să meargă să să răcorească* (21), *sfătuiesc pe tot publicum fimeesc ca să nu să înșale* (45), *să să păzească ca să nu saie într-un picior* (34), *fiindcă nu mai iaste ia în stare ca să-l poarte și să-l hrănească până la nașterea sa* (35), *pliroforisindu-să ca să vază de să au născut și locul* (53).

(9) As a direct consequence of using the undissociated form of the complementizer *ca să*, we encounter the conjunctive phrase *în loc ca să* used to introduce the substitutive clause: *deacă nu va avea pântecele înfășat, atuncea, în loc ca să se împuțăneză rosurile, iale mai mult sporesc* (97), *într-acestași chip uită copilul fița și, în loc ca să voiască să sugă, el cere papă* (113), alongside with *în loc să*: *Dar sănt foarte înșălate, ticăloasele, fiindcă iale, în loc să folosescă, mai mult au stricat planul firii* (67).

(10) We also record, even if accidentally, the multiple relativization, with two coordinated relative elements: *Și deacă ar ști iale cum și în ce chip să trage locul afară din matcă, atuncea nu ar gândi.* (47).

<sup>3</sup> *din* has here a partitive value.

## 8. Correlative structures

(1) Within the copulative coordination, the correlative structures appear in structures that emphasize association:

**și...și:** *și iarăși să întâmplă, dar foarte rar, că totodată să naște și copilul, și locul* (54), *Dar mai de multe ori să întâmplă că totodată să naște și capul, și trupul copilului* (66), *acestea ies la unii copii numai pre obraz, iar la alții pre cap și la alții și pre cap, și pre obraz* (148).

**nici...nici:** *Îmbrăcămintele fimeilor îngredate trebuie să nu fie nici tare usoare, ca să nu răcească, dar nici tare călduroasă, ca să nu le aducă stenahorie* (26), *Nu iaste iertat unii fimei îngredate [...] nici să să îmbrătoșaze, nici să să împreune cu bărbatul ei* (28-29), *să nu să pricinuiască trupului nici trudă, nici mare osteneală* (28), *Toată truda ce are fimeia când naște nu putem nici să o asămânăm cu o boală, nici să o numim boală, dar nici să o socotim că iaste ceva preste fire* (39), *într-acest chip nici unul, nici altul nu să hrănește după cum să cade* (115).

**atât..., cât și:** *Atât fimeile acelea care s-au trudit mult la ceasul nașterii, cât și cele ce au născut ușor și fără multe dureri* (40), *Oricare fimeie, când naște, are dureri, atât fimeile cele ce sănătățează cu munca grea, după cum sănătățează, cât și acele care nu știu de muncă, sănătățează durerilor la vreme de naștere* (41), *Toată nașterea, atât a săngelui, cât și a umezălii roșiiatice și a băloasei albe să numește lohie* (83).

**nu numai..., dar / ci (și):** *prin această priumbăre ce vor face în toate zilele nu numai că va face săngele o măsurată chicloforie și să va și înnoi prin aerul cel viețuitoriu, dar, după o aşa priumbăre, vor avea și mai bună poftă pentru mâncare* (20), *Cât ține vremea îngrecării, nu numai copilul în matcă crește și să mărește, dar și matca să lărgește* (37), *pentru că acestea nu numai că nu hrănesc, dar sănătățează supărătoare* (91).

(2) Within the disjunctive coordination, the conjunctions also appear in correlative structures:

**sau..., sau:** *să o umple sau cu bumbac sau cu lână moale sau cu călțăi* (33), *poate să pricinuiască sau îndată moarte lehusii și pruncului sau o vătămare* (50), *ca să nu să chiame sau vreo altă moașă carea iaste mai vestită sau vreun doftor* (59).

**ori..., ori:** *să șteargă balele de la gura copilului ori cu degitul, ori cu o petică subțire* (68).

**când..., când:** *Încep a da lehusii când puține picături, când puțină fertură de buruieni sau rădăcini* (79), *carea să schimbă când cu răceală, când cu fierbințeală* (86).

(3) The correlative pattern *cu cât...cu atât(a)*, specialized for introducing quantitative clauses, is frequently attested: *cu cât mai mare crește trupul copilului în oușor, cu atâtă mai mult crește sau să mărește și oușorul cu pelițile sale* (7-8), *cu cât suge copilul mai mult, cu atâtă și lapte mai mult să strângă* (109), *Cu cât iaste copilul mai mic, adecă de 9 sau 10 luni de zile, cu atâtă să înțarcă mai lesne* (113).

## 9. Negation

(1) The text displays **strict negative concord**: *nu are nicio plecare la bucate* (11), *veți ști că acum, la Evropa, nicio academie nu obicinuiaște a socoti vremea îngrecării 9 luni de zile, ci 40 de săptămâni sau 280 de zile* (14), *nu știu nimică* (46).

(2) **Simple negation** is frequently attested in structures in which *nici* appears as an independent negator; *nici* has the function of autonomous negation in negative bi-clausal structures, where the first clause has the negative marker *nu*: *Atuncea nu ar gândi, nici ar avea acea grijă că va da înapoi funioara locului* (47), *nu vom avea moaște după cum se cade și nici vom avea cuvânt a bănui moașelor pentru că nu știu moșitul* (50), *nu pierd nimica din a lor cinsti, fiindcă nici face nimenea vreo pretenție pentru greșala lor* (51), *ca să nu bea apă rece, nici să umble desfășate* (97).

*Nici* is also attested in the construction *nici...nici* with the value of an independent negator: *aceste friguri sănt nici mult supărătoare, dar nici primejdioasă* (85).

(3) Rarely, in a structure specific of non-standard Romanian, the negative marker *nu* is doubled by expletive *că*: *Eu, cu aceste mai sus zisă, nu că voiesc ca să stric chefurile sau obiceiul acelor ce voiesc numai decât ca să se dea siropul la pruncii cei mici, ci numai sfătuiesc că această lucrare iaste în zădar și mai mult vătămătoare pentru copii decât folositoare* (106).

(4) **The negative marker *nu*** and its equivalent *ba* enter in a coordination relation with the previous clause through the disjunctive conjunctions *sau* and *iar*: *fără a judeca de iaste fapta cuviincioasă sau nu* (48), *de s-au aşazat beşica apei copilului sau de nu* (58), *să întrebe pe lehusă*

de *i-au mai venit vreo opintea* sau *nu* (69), ca să vază de *s-au născut* și *locul sau ba* (53), pe urmă să iaie moașa pe copil și să-l scalde în apă caldă, *iar nu* în apă rece (69).

**(5) Clarification of the statement.** We observe the appearance of coordinated structures, either adversative or copulative, serving to clarify the statement. In the adversative coordination structure, a constituent other than the predicate is negated in order to reinforce, to emphasize the complementary statement: *oricarea fimeie, când va întărca pre copilul ei, să fie foarte îngrijată de a-l întărca cu încetul, iar nu deodată* (114). The same meaning can also be expressed through structures that foreground the statement, to which the negation of the copulatively coordinated complementary term is associated.: *bine iaste lehusa să-și tie picioarele pe jumătate întinse și nu mult depărtate unul de altul* (65).

**(6) Implicit negation. Equivalents of clause negation.** Certain prepositional structures are equivalents of clause negation. The preposition *fără (de)* introduces sequences equivalent to a negative clause: *Sânt cu totul adormite și fără de nicio energie* (5), *Trec fără a face vreo smintea* (10), *să poată suferi suptul fără a să răni* (31).

## 10. Negative structures with values other than negation

**(1) The expletive negation** is attested with two patterns:

**(i)** the pattern with temporal adjuncts introduced by *până* and *până ce*: *Până a nu începe a prescrie învățătura a doua care atârnă pentru dieteticeasca purtare a fimeilor îngrecale, am să zic și oareșce și pentru socoteala zilelor de la zămislirea copilului* (13), *Așijderea și soba sau horna sobii să nu să astupe până ce nu să vor potoli cărbunii ca să nu bată la cap* (22), *aceste organe (țigile) încă până a nu să naște copilul, încep a să găti spre a întâmpina cu hrana pe copil* (29), *după cum era până a nu să însărcina sau până a nu rodi* (45), *nu-i taie buricul îndată până ce nu să naște și locul* (48), *Lehusa trebuie să nu se screamă până ce nu să va slobozi apa copilului* (64), *după cum era până a nu să zămisli copilul* (81), *cu 2 sau 3 zile mai înainte până a nu să naște copilul* (84).

**(ii)** the patterns with *a se păzi + ca...să + nu + verb*: *Așijderea, trebuie să să păzească ca să nu rădice sarcini grele* (28), *la lunile cele dintâi ale îngreacării, să să păzească ca să nu saie într-un picior, să nu rădice sarcini*

grele, să nu să screamă tare când ies pentru nevoia lor afară (34), tot la aceeași vreme, să se păzească de mâncări tare hrănităre [...] **pentru ca să nu** să stringă laptele la piept (104).

(2) **False negation**, in which there is a negative marker and an adjunct introduced by a subordinator with a privative meaning: *această șideare locului nu* va fi fără de folos (93), *aceasta nu* este altă fără numai o prefacere ce să lucrează în organizmosul lor (85).

(3) Rarely, **double negation** is observed, in the structure negative marker + modal governing verb + negative marker + subordinated verb: *Eu nu* pot zice că *nu* poate de a *nu* fi fimei îngrecale care știu bine a-și ținea socoteala zilelor îngrecării lor (13).

## 11. Suffixation

In the field of suffixation, the most striking features appear in the adjective and the verb.

(1) With adjectives, it is recorded the adjective suffix **-icesc**, extremely frequent during the period: *Am alcătuit această dieteticească carte* (dedicație, *dieteticeasca* purtare a fimeilor îngrecale, 13, *dietaticești* povătuiri, 28, *dietaticești* purtări la vremea nașterii, 70), *după ce voi face oareșcare anatomicescă și fisiologhicească prescriere* (1), *himicească* analisis al aerului văzduhului (2).

(2) With verbs, we note the frequency of the suffix of Greek origin **-isi** and its variants. It is used especially in Greek loanwords: *afierosi*: *să afierosăște* această învățătoare carte (f.t., *am îndrăznit a o afierosi* pre nobilei persoanei voastre, dedicație); *cangrenisi*: *cangrenisindu-să* partea ceea răcită și pătimașă, ajuge lehusa la o foarte ticăloasă stare (87), *până a nu cangrenisi* răniturile (87); *chicloforisi* (despre sânge: „a circula”): și *chicloforisește* săngele în trupul omului și fără de acesta nu putem trăi nici o minună (2, *să chicloforisește* săngele, 119); *metahirisi* („a folosi, a utiliza”): *să metahirisască* (31, *metahirisind*, 160); *parigorisi* („a consola, a încuraja”): *Ia are o mare datorie să parigorisească și să îmbărbăteze pe lehuse* (51); *pliroforisi* („a (se) lămuri, convinge”): *să va pliroforisi* că va naște la 19 sau la 20 a lunii lui februarie (17, *ca să să pliroforisească* cum stă copilul în matcă, 52, *pliroforisindu-să* ca să vază de s-au născut și locul 53).

However, the suffix also served for the morphological adaptation of some Latin-Romance verbs, such as *formalisi*: *în oușor el să întrupează și să formalisește din numitul albuș al oușorului* (7) and *regularisi*: *trebuie să să regularisească după cum mai jos însămnează* (15).

## 12. Conclusions

The morphosyntax of the text elaborated by Nicolae Chiriacopol generally conforms to the norm of the period, but it also presents some structures that were archaic in the first three decades of the 19th century, such as double marked determination with nouns and adjectives, the prenominal position of relational adjectives, the use of the weak demonstrative *cel* with relational adjectives or prepositional modifiers, the superfluous use of *cel* between a noun and its subordinate relative clause, the use of periphrastic future patterns with *a avea + infinitive* and *a fi + subjunctive*.

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# THE ALTERNATIVE RELATION AND ITS MARKING STRATEGIES IN ROMANIAN

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## Abstract

This study compares the two meanings of the concept of “*alternative relation*” as it appears in foreign linguistics, particularly in Mauri (2008), and in Romanian linguistics. While Mauri defines the alternative relation as a semantic relation between equivalent, non-co-occurring and mutually replaceable possibilities, Romanian studies emphasize temporal alternation and the succession of states of affairs. The research shows that Romanian linguistics does not offer a unified view regarding the status of the alternative relation: it is considered a subtype of disjunctive coordination, a subtype of copulative coordination, or a distinct type of coordination. The paper argues that the alternative relation from Romanian should be treated as a distinct type of coordination.

**Keywords:** alternative relation, disjunctive coordination, alternation, coordination semantics.

## 1. Introduction

This paper provides a brief overview of the alternative relation, discussing how it is described in international linguistics and in Romanian linguistic research, as well as the markers used to express this relation in Romanian.

As a semantic type of coordination, the alternative relation has attracted considerable scholarly interest. In international linguistics, it has been examined by Dik (1968), Harder (1996), Haspelmath (2004), and Mauri (2008a, 2008b), the latter offering a comprehensive typological analysis and a detailed description of the phenomenon. As will be shown, Romanian linguistics does not present a unified view regarding the classification and description of the alternative relation: Mitran (1962), Trandafir (1986a, 1986b), GALR (2005), and GBLR (2010) treat it as a subtype of disjunctive coordination; Bîtea (1987) and Merlan (2001) consider it a subtype of copulative coordination, whereas Iordan and Robu (1978), Avram (2001), and Irimia (2008) regard it as an independent coordination type.

The present study investigates the degree to which Mauri's concept of the "*alternative relation*" corresponds to the "*alternative relation*" described in Romanian grammars and linguistic studies.

## 2. The Alternative Relation in Foreign Linguistics

### 2.1. Defining the Alternative Relation

Disjunctive connectors in natural languages have long been analyzed as logical connectors and have traditionally been explained through semantic-logical models of truth values, where logical disjunction is interpreted inclusively (a statement is true if at least one of its constituent propositions is true, or if both are true).

Recent in-depth studies (Zimmermann 2000; Simons 2001, 2005; Haspelmath 2004; Geurts 2005; Mauri 2008a, b) have demonstrated that the disjunctive relation in natural languages differs from its logical counterpart, offering various semantic and semantic-pragmatic perspectives for analysis. Among these, this study focuses on Caterina Mauri's (2008a) interpretation of the disjunctive relation as a semantic type of alternative relation.

Caterina Mauri (2008a: 22-55) proposes a detailed typological description of coordination relations, identifying three semantic types: combination, alternative relation, and contrast, which correspond to the traditional coordination types: copulative, disjunctive, and adversative. In Mauri's semantic framework, the alternative relation corresponds to the disjunctive coordination in traditional classifications, with the latter understood as constructions with morphosyntactically specialized elements encoding alternatives between two states of affairs<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the two types of relations – disjunctive and alternative – are placed on distinct levels: the disjunctive relation belongs to the layer of expression, concerning how the relation is formally encoded, whereas the alternative relation belongs to the level of meaning, concerning the content conveyed.

Following the semantic approaches of Dik (1968) and Harder (1996), who critique truth-conditional accounts of disjunction solely on the basis of

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<sup>1</sup> Mauri (2008b: 32) uses the term "state of affairs" as a hypernym for "events," "states," and "situations." This term is preferred because it avoids the dynamic/static opposition implied by "event" and "situation." It specifically refers to verbal groups, as only these can be assigned a truth value – real or unreal – unlike other syntactic groups.

truth conditions and propose semantic analyses focused on alternativity and choice, Mauri (2008a, b) argues that disjunctive sentences present a set of mutually exclusive options. According to Mauri, the alternative relation is the semantic relation established between two or more states of affairs that constitute non-simultaneous alternatives:

*“An alternative relation is the semantic relation which obtains between two or more linked clauses expressing SoAs that constitute non co-occurring alternatives.”* (Mauri 2008a: 25).

## 2.2. Conditions for Establishing an Alternative Relation

Mauri (2008a: 25) notices that the states of affairs involved in an alternative relation must satisfy three fundamental conditions: they must have equal relevance, represent equivalent possibilities, and express contrastive relations, allowing for potential substitution.

The **relevance condition** requires that the disjunctively connected states of affairs be equally pertinent to the context in which they occur. This ensures that both states of affairs carry the same communicative importance, i.e., they are functionally equivalent.

The **equivalence condition** requires that each alternative be equally possible, so that no option is inherently preferred over another (each state of affairs, taken individually, has an equal likelihood of occurring).

The **contrast condition** demands that the states of affairs connected by disjunctive coordination express contrasting relationships and can potentially substitute for one another. The alternatives must stand in a specific contrast, referring to events that oppose each other at certain points, which is necessary for substitution.

The alternative relation is illustrated in sentences like (1), where all three conditions are satisfied:

(1) a. La ora aceasta, Mihai doarme, se joacă *sau/ori* se uită la televizor.

“At this time, Mihai is sleeping, playing, *or* watching television.”

b. La ora aceasta, Mihai *fie* doarme, *fie* se joacă, *fie* se uită la televizor.

“At this time, Mihai is *either* sleeping, playing, *or* watching television.”

Elements connected as in example (1) are in a relation of non-simultaneity/non-co-occurrence and belong to the same functional set:

they can appear in the same context, but not simultaneously. This entails both structural and functional equivalence. Furthermore, the states of affairs are in a certain contrast, as the speaker does not know which of the three states of affairs will be realized.

Utterances of the type illustrated in example (2), where the first clause expresses a certain situation and the second clause appears as a reconsideration or reversal of a prior decision, cannot be considered as expressing an alternative relation. In these cases, the clauses are independent and present distinct states of affairs rather than alternatives:

(2) Rămânem acasă și ne uităm la un film. *Sau* vrei să ieșim în oraș?  
“We’ll stay home and watch a movie. *Or* do you want to go out?”

In example (2), although the states of affairs constitute alternatives, they are not functionally equivalent, as they carry different illocutionary force, thus exhibiting functional asymmetry.

The equivalence condition is not either obeyed in utterances such as those in example (3), where one of the constituents is highly unlikely to occur or is not intended to occur. These asymmetric constructions are known as disjunctive pseudo-imperatives:

(3) Învață *sau* o să iezi o notă mică!  
“Study, *or* you’ll get a low grade!”

Alternative relations are also absent when no contrast exists between states of affairs, as in example (4):

(4) \*O să pic acest examen *sau* nu o să-l trec.  
“\*I will fail this exam *or* I will not pass it.”

Two states of affairs forming an alternative relation are equally possible and mutually replaceable. This description in terms of mutually replaceable, equally possible states of affairs raises the question of their

temporal positioning<sup>2</sup>. Conceived as hypotheses of equal value, states of affairs do not require a placement along the temporal axis, which means that the alternative relation has an atemporal value.

### 2.3. Semantic Types of Alternatives

To identify subtypes of the alternative relation, Mauri (2008b: 159-161) uses *purpose* as a parameter, referring to the speaker's communicative intention when establishing an alternative coordination between two states of affairs. Based on this criterion, two subtypes are distinguished: "simple alternative" and "choice-aimed alternative"<sup>3</sup>, labels that are transparent and neutral.

In utterances expressing a simple alternative, the speaker's intention is to present the entire set of possible alternatives at a given moment, highlighting the equivalence and potential realization of each state of affairs. An example of this is provided in (5):

(5) Ești liber să faci ce vrei: să ascultă muzică, să citești sau să te uiți la televizor.

"You are free to do whatever you want: listening to music, reading, or watching television."

Here, the alternative relation functions to enumerate the set of possibilities without requiring the interlocutor to select a specific option. The alternatives are mutually replaceable and share the same functional relevance within the context.

By contrast, in *choice-aimed alternatives*, the speaker establishes an alternative relation between two or more states of affairs while positioning the interlocutor to choose one of the options presented, as illustrated in (6):

(6) Mergi cu el sau rămâi acasă?

"Will you go with him or stay at home?"

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<sup>2</sup> Mauri (2008b: 54) identifies three semantic parameters involved in the description of combination, contrast, and alternative relations: temporality, conflict, and purpose.

<sup>3</sup> According to Haspelmath (2007: 25), what Mauri (2008b) classifies as a "simple alternative" is referred to as a "**standard disjunction**", whereas the "choice-aimed alternative" corresponds to what Haspelmath terms an "**interrogative disjunction**".

In these cases, the alternative relation is pragmatically oriented: the speaker's intention is to elicit a decision, and the alternatives are still semantically equivalent and contrastive, but the focus is on the act of selection.

According to Mauri (2008a: 22), an alternative relation requires that the linked states of affairs be equivalent, contrastive, and mutually replaceable at a given moment. This relation manifests primarily at the semantic level, concerning meaning, while at the level of expression it is typically encoded through disjunctive constructions.

### 3. The Alternative Relation in Romanian Linguistics

In Romanian linguistics, alternative relations are identified in sentences such as examples (7) — (10), where the elements involved are both equivalent and contrastive, but are not simultaneously replaceable. Instead, they occur successively, implying a temporal alternation:

(7) *Acum/Aici e tristă, acum/aici e veselă, nu știi ce se întâmplă cu ea.*

“Now/Here she is sad, now/here she is happy, you don't know what is happening with her.”

(8) *În ultima vreme, George ba glumește, ba e foarte serios.*

“Sometimes, George has been joking, at other times he has been very serious.”

(9) *Când spune să plecăm, când spune să rămânem.*

“Sometimes he says we should leave, at other times he says we should stay.”

(10) *De câte ori ne întâlneam, sau/ori/fie mă oculea, sau/ori/fie era foarte bucuroasă.*

“Whenever we met, she either avoided me or was very happy to see me.”

One can notice that the elements involved in an alternative relation are often preceded by a series of homogeneous correlatives – *acum...*, *acum...*, *aici...*, *aici...*, *ba...*, *ba...*, *când...*, *când...*, *sau...*, *sau...*, *ori...*, *ori...*, *fie...* – some of which are specific to disjunctive coordination (*sau...*, *sau...*, *ori...*, *ori...*, *fie...*, *fie...*), while others are distinct.

Thus, these examples highlight a clear difference between Mauri's (2008a, b) semantic concept of the “alternative relation” and the Romanian linguistic perspective. Furthermore, Romanian linguistics does not come

forth with a unified approach regarding the status and description of the alternative relation.

### 3.1. The Alternative Relation as a Subtype of Disjunctive Coordination

In Romanian linguistics, the alternative relation is often analyzed as a subtype of disjunctive coordination (Mitran 1962; Trandafir 1986a; GALR I 2005: 642; GBLR 2010: 336), due to the similarities between the two types of relations.

The first similarity appears at the semantic level: in both types of relations, the connected elements express options. However, there are differences in the nature of these options: in disjunctive coordination, the options are hypothetical and represent possibilities (11), whereas in alternative coordination, the options are real, either in the process of being realized or already realized (12):

(11) Copilul scrie *sau* citește.

“The child writes *or* reads.”

(12) Este foarte nervos, *ba* intră, *ba* ieșe.

“He is very nervous; *sometimes* he goes in, *sometimes* he goes out.”

In an utterance like (12), the action of *going in* excludes the action of *going out* and viceversa, indicating that the two actions are mutually exclusive at that moment, yet they occur successively over time.

Another similarity can be observed at the expressive level: the correlative connectors *sau...sau* (“*or...or*”), *ori...ori*, and *fie...fie*<sup>4</sup>, characteristic of disjunctive relations (13), are also used to express the alternative relation, as shown in examples (14a–c):

(13) Nu are prea multe opțiuni - *sau/ori/fie* merge la film, *sau/ori/fie* se duce acasă.

“He does not have many options – he *either* goes to the movies *or* he goes home.”

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<sup>4</sup> Because they appear in contexts expressing temporal alternation, the three correlative connectors (*sau...sau*, *ori...ori*, and *fie...fie*) have been called “alternative coordinating conjunctions.” (GALR I 2005: 642).

(14) a. În fiecare seară *sau* cinea, *sau* se uita la un film.

“Every evening, he *either* read *or* he watched a movie.”

b. De fiecare dată când ne întâlneam, *ori* mergeam la film, *ori* ieșeam la restaurant.

“Every time we met, we *either* went to the movies *or* we went to a restaurant.”

c. Ori de câte ori greșeam, *fie* îmi explica, *fie* mă punea să refac tema.

“Whenever I made a mistake, he *either* explained it to me, *or* he made me do again the homework.”

In disjunctive coordination, the connectors *sau* and *ori* can appear either before each connected element (correlative – (15)) or only between the elements (non-correlative – (16)):

(15) Invitatul nu a ajuns, *sau/ori/fie* pentru că nu cunoaște orașul, *sau/ori/fie* pentru că nu știe ora de întâlnire.

“The guest did not arrive, *either* because he does not know the city *or* because he does not know the meeting time.”

(16) Invitatul nu a ajuns, pentru că nu cunoaște orașul *sau/ori* pentru că nu știe ora de întâlnire.

“The guest did not arrive because he does not know the city *or* because he does not know the meeting time.”

By contrast, in an alternative relation, the connectors *sau* and *ori* must appear before each connected element, as illustrated in (17) and (18):

(17) De câte ori am fost bolnavă, mama *sau/ori/fie* m-a vizitat, *sau/ori/fie* m-a sunat de mai multe ori pe zi.

“Whenever I was sick, my mother *either* visited me *or* she called me several times a day.”

(18) De fiecare dată când întârziam, *sau/ori/fie* ne suna, *sau/ori/fie* ne aștepta până ne întorceam.

“Every time we were late, *either* she called us *or* she waited for us until we returned.”

The connector *fie*, in contrast, always occurs as a correlative pair, irrespective of the type of relation: disjunctive (19) or alternative (20):

(19) Sâmbăta viitoare, *fie* plecăm la Sibiu, *fie* ne întâlnim cu prietenii.

“Next Saturday, we *either* go to Sibiu *or* we meet with friends.”

(20) În weekenduri, *fie* mergeam la serviciu, *fie* plecam la părinți.

“On weekends, I *either* went to work *or* I went to my parents’.”

Thus, in contexts expressing alternation, the disjunctive connectors *sau...*, *sau*, *ori...*, *ori*, and *fie...*, *fie* function as equivalents of Romanian alternative connectors such as *aici...*, *aici*, *acum...*, *acum*, *când...*, *când*, *ba...*, *ba*.

### **3.2. The Alternative Relation as a Subtype of Copulative Coordination or at the Interface between Copulative and Disjunctive Coordination**

Authors such as Ioan N. Bîtea (1987: 38) and Aurelia Merlan (2001: 190-191) argue that the alternative relation represents a subtype of copulative coordination.

In utterances expressing an alternative relation of the type shown in (21), the two states of affairs are interreplaceable, but not simultaneously; they occur at different times along a temporal axis. This suggests that the alternative relation involves a cumulative sequence of actions. The aggregation of elements within an alternative relation brings it closer to copulative coordination: *ba se ceartă*, *ba se împacă* (“*sometimes* they quarrel, *at other times* they reconcile”) is thus equivalent to *se ceartă și se împacă* (“they quarrel *and* reconcile”):

(21) În ultima vreme, *ba se ceartă*, *ba se împacă*.

“Lately, they have been *sometimes* quarreling, *at other times* reconciling.”

Ioan N. Bîtea (1987: 38-39) disagrees with the view that constructions with *aici...*, *aici*, *acum...*, *acum*, *când...*, *când*, *ba...*, *ba* are disjunctive or at the interface between disjunctive and copulative coordination. He argues that, unless an independent type of coordination — “*alternant coordination*” — is recognized, these constructions are semantically and syntactically equivalent to forms where *aici...*, *aici*, *acum...*, *acum*, *când...*, *când*, *ba...*, *ba* are

replaced by: *în unele situații<sub>1</sub>...*, *în unele situații<sub>2</sub>...*, *în celelalte situații* or by *uneori<sub>1</sub>...*, *uneori<sub>2</sub>...* *uneori<sub>n</sub>*:

(22) În ultima vreme, *uneori* se ceartă, *uneori* se împacă.  
“Lately, *sometimes* they quarrel, *sometimes* they reconcile.”

According to Bîtea, such constructions are copulative, and *acum*, *aici*, *ba*, and *când* function as temporal adverbs.

Aurelia Merlan (2001: 190) considers the alternative relation a semantic type of copulative coordination, “realized in coordinated series where juxtaposed units are accompanied by correlative adverbs: *aci...aci*, *acum...acum*, *acuș...acuș*, *ba...ba*, *când...când*, *cât...cât*, *mai...mai*, *unde...unde*.”

The alternative relation involves not only the accumulation of sequential actions, but also mutual exclusion, bringing it closer to disjunctive coordination. Therefore, some studies (GLR II 1966: 247; GR 2013: 518) describe the alternative relation as a mixed type of coordination: copulative in terms of meaning and disjunctive in terms of construction:

“Other disjunctive conjunctions that express only simple alternation and often connect syntactic units whose coordination is at the interface between disjunctive and copulative coordination include: *aci...*, *aci*, *acum...*, *acum*, *ba...*, *ba*, *când...*, *când*, *fie...*, *fie că...*, *fie că*” (GLR II 1966: 247).

“*The term alternative points to the fact that conjuncts participate alternatively in the event(s) denoted by the verb; thus, the general meaning is cumulative, making alternative coordination an intermediate type, between disjunction and conjunction.*” (GR 2013: 517).

### **3.3. The Alternative Relation – A Distinct Type of Coordinative Relation**

In other Romanian studies (Iordan & Robu 1978: 648; Trandafir 1989: 417; Avram 2001: 395; Irimia 2008: 567), alternative coordination is

considered a distinct type of coordinative relation, alongside copulative, disjunctive, adversative, and conclusive coordination<sup>5</sup>.

Iordan and Robu (1978: 648) describe alternative coordination as an emphatic variant of copulative coordination, realized through the juxtaposition of elements and marked by correlative adverbs: *aci... aci*, *acu(m)... acu(m)*, *ba... ba*, *când... când*.

Trandafir (1989: 417) revises his earlier classification of alternative relations as a subtype of disjunctive coordination (1986) and considers alternative coordination a distinct type of coordinative relation in which the constituent elements are successive, alternating, opposed, and associated.

Considering the alternative relation as a distinct type of coordination, rather than as a subtype of disjunctive or copulative coordination, seems appropriate, given that the classification of coordination types is based on the semantic relationship/information conveyed and the mode of its expression. The type of relation encoded by the alternative relation is of a different nature than that conveyed by disjunctive coordination. In disjunctive coordination, the elements involved are presented as mutually exclusive in a selection process (exhaustive relation) or as admitting co-occurrence at the same moment (non-exhaustive relation), without relevance to the temporal placement of the states of affairs. By contrast, the alternative relation implies temporal alternation, with successive realization, in repeated succession, of the connected units.

In sentence (23), the states of affairs *așteaptă* (“waits”) and *merge* (“goes”) are presented as equivalent and interreplaceable possibilities, whereas in sentence (24), the states of affairs *suna* (“was calling”) and *aștepta* (“was waiting”) occur at different moments: *suna* at T1, *aștepta* at T2, with the succession repeating:

(23) După cursuri, *sau* ne așteaptă, *sau* merge în parc.

“After classes, he *either* waits for us *or* he goes to the park.”

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<sup>5</sup> Iordan and Robu (1978: 684) and Avram (2001: 395) identify five types of coordination relations: copulative, alternative, adversative, disjunctive, and conclusive, whereas Irimia (2008: 562) distinguishes six types of coordination relations: copulative, disjunctive, alternative, adversative, oppositional, and conclusive.

(24) De fiecare dată când întârziam, *ori* ne suna, *ori* ne aştepta până ne întorceam

“Every time we were late, he was *either* calling us *or* he was waiting for us to return.”

Another distinction between the two types of relations is that, in disjunctive coordination, the states of affairs represent hypotheses, possibilities, unrealized actions, whereas in the alternative relation, the states of affairs involved are real, realized, or in the process of being realized. The states of affairs involved in disjunctive coordination are future-oriented, not yet realized, as in examples (25) and (26), while those in alternative coordination are either placed in the past, as completed actions, as in (27), or in the present, as ongoing actions, as in (28):

(25) Mâine va vizita orașul *sau* se va întâlni cu un vechi coleg.

“Tomorrow he will *either* visit the city *or* meet an old colleague.”

(26) Azi mergem la părinti *sau* facem cumpărături.

“Today we are *either* going to our parents *or* shopping.”

(27) *Ba* se plimba prin casă, *ba* se așeza pe scaun.

“*Sometimes* he would walk around the house, *at other times* he would sit on a chair.”

(28) *Când* privește pe fereastră, *când* se duce la ușă.

“*Sometimes* he looks out the window, *at other times* he goes to the door.”

In Romanian, alternative coordination is marked not only by the disjunctive connectors (*sau...*, *sau*, *ori...*, *ori*, *fie...*, *fie*), but also by a set of homogeneous correlative adverbs that precede the coordinated units, highlighting the essence of alternative coordination: the presentation of events as occurring in succession. To clearly highlight the distinction between genuine disjunctive coordination and the alternative relation, in which desemanticized correlative adverbs occur, it would be more appropriate to use the term “*alternation relation*” instead of “*alternative relation*”. This terminology reflects the semantic and temporal characteristics of the construction more accurately and enhances terminological clarity.

#### 4. Conclusions

The analysis of the alternative relation in Romanian linguistics highlights features that clearly distinguish it from genuine disjunctive coordination. In addition to the disjunctive connectors typically involved, alternative relations frequently include homogeneous correlatives (such as *acum...*, *acum* ‘now...now’, *ba...*, *ba* ‘sometimes...sometimes’, *când...*, *când* ‘sometimes...at other times’), which precede the coordinated units and signal temporal succession and alternation of events. This temporal alternation indicates that the coordinated elements occur successively rather than simultaneously, thereby marking a distinct type of coordination.

The term “alternation relation” captures the semantic nature of this construction more accurately, distinguishing it from disjunctive coordination and increasing terminological clarity. Consequently, the alternation relation in Romanian linguistics may be regarded as an autonomous type of coordination, characterized by temporal alternation and successive realization of states of affairs. This perspective provides a more coherent conceptual framework for the description and classification of coordination relations in Romanian linguistics.

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# URBAN LEGENDS AND THE SUPERNATURAL IN ROMANIAN FOLKLORE: A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS

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## **Abstract:**

This paper explores the persistence and transformation of supernatural entities and motifs from traditional Romanian folklore, particularly those involving devils and ghosts, within a contemporary urban setting. The study argues that these modern legends function as vital cultural tools for navigating irrational fears and affirming belief in the supernatural amid an increasingly secularised society.

## **Keywords:**

Romanian folklore, urban legends, supernatural, devils, ghosts.

## **1. Introduction**

The notion of a reality that surpasses the confines of everyday human experience has been a persistent theme throughout history. Over the past several decades, scholarly and public interest in phenomena classified as paranormal or supernatural has notably increased. Individuals openly share their beliefs regarding guardian angels, the afterlife, extrasensory perception and the presence of spirits (Steiger, 2003: xiii). According to a 2023 Pew Research Center survey, 83% of U.S. adults believe in the existence of a soul or spirit beyond the physical body, while 81% affirm the presence of a spiritual realm beyond the natural world<sup>1</sup>. A 2025 Gallup poll further revealed that 48% of Americans believe in psychic healing and 39% express belief in ghosts<sup>2</sup>, while in the United Kingdom, a 2025 YouGov survey found that four in ten Britons think ghosts could exist and one in five that

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<sup>1</sup>Pew Research Center (2023). “Americans’ beliefs about the supernatural”, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/supernatural-beliefs-2023>, accessed 22 August 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Yi, Rachael & Hogenboom, Sarah (2025). “Paranormal Phenomena Met with Skepticism in U.S.”, available at <https://news.gallup.com/poll/692738/paranormal-phenomena-met-skepticism.aspx>, accessed 22 August 2025.

communication with the dead may be possible<sup>3</sup>. These findings align with earlier Romanian data from 2014, which indicated that over half of respondents believed in life after death, heaven and hell<sup>4</sup>.

Folklorists frequently exclude elements of the paranormal, the supernatural or cryptozoology (the study of mysterious and unverified creatures) from their definitions of contemporary legends. As J. H. Brunvand observes, few of the narratives classified by modern folklorists as “urban legends” involve overt supernatural intervention, despite the fact that many of them contain bizarre, unusual and generally *unnatural* aspects (Brunvand, 2001: 429). The American scholar cites examples such as “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” and “The Devil at the Disco” as representative of this genre. Nevertheless, Brunvand argues that these are modernised versions of traditional supernatural legends and may be viewed as remnants of past folk traditions, whereas contemporary legends are typically grounded in real albeit extraordinary events. By designating their subject matter as *modern*, *contemporary* or *urban* legend, folklorists tend to exclude these ‘surviving’ supernatural tales from the category, relegating them instead to the domain of *traditional* or *rural* folklore.

On the other hand, Hungarian-American scholar Linda Dégh challenged these views, asserting that modern industrial society not only accommodates but actively fosters the irrational, with legend serving as its ideal mode of expression (Brunvand, 2001: 429). Dégh supports her perspective by citing the existence of contemporary sects and cults, the abundance of narratives involving haunted houses and the return of the dead, as well as the persistent attention the mass media devotes to supernatural themes. Consequently, she proposes that legend be defined also as a narrative of a “extranormal” experience, one grounded in concrete situations encountered by ordinary individuals, yet which defies the norms and values accepted by society:

*“In more explicit terms, the legend is a story about an extranormal (supernatural or its equivalent) experience attested by situational facts. It happens to average people within their cultural realms but contradicts accepted norms and values of society at large.” (Dégh, 1991: 30)*

According to Romanian ethnologist Constantin Eretescu, narratives involving supernatural beings constitute a prolific category, as human existence is inextricably linked to mythological entities: “*These beings accompany us, oversee*

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<sup>3</sup> Difford, Dylan (2025). “Ghosts? Magic? Do Britons believe in the supernatural?”, available at <https://yougov.co.uk/society/articles/52619-ghosts-magic-do-britons-believe-in-the-supernatural>, accessed 22 August 2025.

<sup>4</sup> IRES (Institutul Român pentru Evaluare și Strategie) (2014). “Românii și superstițiile lor”, available at <https://ires.ro/articol/271/romanii-si-superstitionile-lor>, accessed 22 August 2025.

*our actions, punish us and, at times, bless us*” (Eretescu, 2003: 34). Furthermore, Eretescu argues that “*modern society has in no way altered ancient conceptions of the afterlife, reincarnation or the survival of the spirit beyond physical death*” (Eretescu, 2010: 16). The realm of the supernatural and the natural world intertwine, with the dead continuing to linger among the living in a very real sense, bearing witness to earthly events and even possessing the capacity to intervene.

Therefore, given that storytellers do not distinguish these elements from other urban legends and considering their presence within contemporary popular culture, we have deemed it both appropriate and necessary to dedicate a focused study to these narratives. The Internet has served as a primary source for many of the collected legends, in addition to several accounts gathered from within our own circle of friends and acquaintances.

## **2. *Fata Pădurii/ Pădureana* (The Forest Maiden).**

Legends concerning supernatural beings often depict a world fraught with hidden dangers, where “*any misstep may summon a spirit that is at the very least terrifying, if not outright punitive*” (Hedeşan, 2000: 28). One such legend is that of the Forest Maiden, a polymorphic mythological figure encountered predominantly in the Maramureş region. The Forest Maiden is one of the most dreaded and widely known malevolent spirits, surrounded by a rich and elaborate mythology that has evolved over time.

*“I heard this story from a guy I met on the train, on my way to the seaside. He said that in the forests of Maramureş, where he’s from, the spirit of a woman haunts the night and causes great harm, especially to men. It is the spirit of a young girl who, many years ago, got lost in the woods. At one point, a man appeared and offered to help her. But instead of guiding her to safety, he led her deeper into the forest, cast spells on her and transformed her into a hideous creature. Since then, she has wandered endlessly, luring men, because she can take the form of a beautiful woman, only to kill or mutilate them. Some say she even abducts children. They call her the Forest Maiden.”* (Petrica Ș., student)

*“I once had a son. He tended sheep in the Gutâi Mountains. One day, the Forest Maiden came to his sheepfold. A great storm arose, and all the goats scattered across the Gutâi. The boys had to go after them, but the rain and the harsh weather made it impossible. They lacked the strength to pursue the goats. That was the doing of the Forest Maiden. She appeared clad in motley garments, tall and imposing like a great woman. The shepherd boys were left weakened and helpless, so the father had to go after the goats himself. (...) The Forest Maiden corrupted the flocks. (...) Wherever she passed, the*

*sheep became barren, as did the goats and the lambs. And those who crossed her path, those who walked the road she had taken, were afflicted in mind, bewildered, touched by madness.” (adapted) (Bilțiu, 1999: 229).*

Described by Eretescu as a “vestige of an initiation rite into the shepherd’s profession” (Eretescu, 2007: 103), the Forest Maiden tests young men aspiring to this vocation. As Otilia Hedeșan also observes (Hedeșan, 2000: 39), she absorbs and merges the roles of other mythological figures: she becomes a kind of female *Zburător*, seducing young men and exacting revenge, arguably justified, given that her misfortune was caused by a man. She is also often confused with *Muma Pădurii*, the terror of mothers with small children, who “lingers around men, seeks intimacy and sometimes strikes them or cripples their legs” (Candrea, 1999: 190), or abducts infants, takes them into the forest, and devours them.

### 3. The Devil

In 1926, L. Winstanley and H. J. Rose published in the British journal *Folklore* the tale entitled “The Devil at a Card Party”, a version of the urban legend now widely known as “The Devil at the Disco” (Bennett & Smith, 1996: xxiv). In this account, a handsome stranger arrives at an inn in a coastal town, dances with the most beautiful girl and joins a card game. When the girl drops a card and bends down to retrieve it, she notices that the stranger has hooves instead of feet. She faints on the spot and dies shortly thereafter. The two folklorists were unaware that the story, though bearing all the hallmarks of a modern narrative, had long circulated across the European continent, particularly in rural areas, including Romania, as documented by Constantin Eretescu. In the Romanian variant, the stranger appears at a *sezătoare* (a traditional communal gathering) and sits beside the host’s daughter. When the girl drops her spindle and bends to pick it up, she sees that the young man has hooves. She attempts to escape, and in some versions of the tale, she succeeds (Eretescu, 2004: 320). Over time, the legend evolved. One version, circulating in the Târgoviște area (Dâmbovița County) during the 1980s, retains the motif of recognising the devil by his hooves (according to certain beliefs, the only part of his body he cannot disguise when assuming human form).

*“In every town where, prior to 1989, factories and industrial plants had been established, residential blocks for single workers, known as ‘nefamiliști’, were also constructed. These accommodations were intended for labourers who could not commute daily or who had relocated from other regions of the country. My mother recounts a chilling incident that befell a woman employed at the Romlux lightbulb factory. One evening, after finishing the second shift, the woman set off alone toward the*

*nefamiliști block of flats where she lived. Hoping to reach home more quickly, especially as she was carrying luggage, she chose the shortest route, along the city's ring road. Midway through her journey, a man approached and offered to help, claiming he was headed in the same direction. The woman accepted his assistance and as they neared her building, she invited him in for a coffee as a gesture of gratitude. At the door of her apartment, the man attempted to enter first. In that moment, illuminated by the dim stairwell light, the woman noticed that the man who had helped her had hooves instead of feet. She fainted and when she regained consciousness, the man had vanished.” (Costin C., journalist)*

The girl is no longer at the dance, no longer surrounded by the joyful community characteristic of the *șezătoare* or the disco. She is deprived of the protective sphere traditionally offered by the parental home. In this modern iteration, the woman – presumably unmarried, as suggested by her residence in a *nefamiliști* block – returns home alone, fatigued from her labour. The motif of dancing is absent, perhaps reflecting a socio-political context in which work is elevated as the individual's primary vocation. It is late at night, and she is approached by a seemingly helpful stranger in a sparsely populated, potentially hazardous area – the city's ring road. The narrative unfolds at a *liminal threshold*, both temporal and spatial, where the supernatural may easily intrude upon the human realm. The temporal boundary is *midnight*: the woman is returning from the second shift, which typically ends around 11:00 or 11:30 PM. The spatial *threshold*, a site traditionally associated with malevolent spirits, is marked by the ring road, a modern yet symbolically charged frontier (Olteanu, 1998: 134).

In an act of gratitude for the man's assistance, the woman invites him into her home for a cup of coffee<sup>5</sup>, an invitation into her private space that symbolically expresses a desire for social connection and reveals the emotional vulnerability of a solitary woman in search of male companionship. And although this is a “fortunate” version of the tale, where the worst that befalls the heroine is a fainting spell brought on by shock, the story's moralising intent and its cautionary function remain unmistakably clear.

Malevolent spirits also transgress the boundaries between worlds when summoned by the living, as is the case in the following account:

*“In the countryside, it was said that if one looked into a mirror at midnight by candlelight and uttered “I believe in the Antichrist,” or something to that effect, Satan would appear.*

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<sup>5</sup> As an intriguing detail, when coffee first arrived in Europe, it was regarded as the “Devil's drink”. Catholic priests considered it a symbol of the Antichrist, believing it had been invented by the Devil as a substitute for wine (the beverage sanctified by Jesus).

*Everyone in the village claimed to have done it and to have seen him. One girl decided to test whether the tale was true, but she saw nothing. Later that night, while sleeping, apparently beside her grandmother, she felt something pulling her down from the bed... tugging at her legs... she was unable to move, and on the ceiling she saw a large shadow. She made the sign of the cross with her tongue... and it vanished. She never told anyone except me, for fear of being mocked.”<sup>6</sup>*

Present in this account is a sacred object, the mirror, laden with symbolic meaning in folk belief. The mirror is conceived as a gateway between worlds, a liminal space of passage. Hence the widespread belief that gazing into a mirror at night reveals the face of the Devil; the prohibition against looking into mirrors after sunset is deeply rooted among Romanians, Aromanians, as well as the French, Italians and Germans (Olteanu, 1998: 238). The ritual described in this tale, involving a mirror and a lit candle, evokes the magical oracular practices once performed by young women seeking to divine their destined spouse. Such rituals were traditionally carried out only on the eve of major religious holidays and under strict conditions – the girl had to fast and remain silent throughout the day. By violating a double taboo – gazing into a mirror and uttering the Devil’s name<sup>7</sup> – the young woman attempts to test the truth of popular lore. At first, she appears to fail; yet “*later that night, while sleeping [...] she felt something pulling her down from the bed ... tugging at her legs... she was unable to move, and on the ceiling she saw a large shadow,*” a sign that the malevolent entity had crossed into the human realm to torment the living.

Enthusiasts of the horror film genre will undoubtedly recognise in this ritual the legend of *Bloody Mary* (or, in some variants, *I Believe in Mary Worth*, *Hell Mary*, *Mary Whales*)<sup>8</sup>, widely disseminated throughout the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere. Bloody Mary is a spirit or ghost invoked to reveal the future, said to appear when her name is spoken three or more times into a mirror. In the past, young women were encouraged to light a candle in a darkened room and, standing before a mirror, attempt to glimpse their future husband. Today, the ritual is performed primarily by adolescents, most often girls, for amusement, though the magical act is accompanied by feelings of fear and excitement alike. It is said that Bloody Mary’s appearance is not always benign: at times, she kills the summoner, drives them mad or scratches their face.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.lipiciosii.ro/?do=Forum&cat=6&topic=1881&page=29>, accessed 23 February 2012. Note: This forum is now defunct.

<sup>7</sup> “It is said that one should never utter the Devil’s name, for he will appear instantly, as though summoned” (Candrea, 1999: 146).

<sup>8</sup> See Brunvand, 2001: pp. 205-206.

#### 4. *Ghosts*

Stories about ghosts or spirits are numerous and remarkably diverse. These are immaterial beings – the souls of the dead – who haunt various places, especially those where they once lived or where they met their end, typically through an untimely death. As a result, the soul is condemned to wander endlessly. Such is the case in a legend about a girl from Bessarabia who came to study in Rădăuți, became pregnant, gave birth to a stillborn child and overwhelmed by the trauma, hanged herself in the shower. Or the ghost of the student at the Cișmigiu Hotel (formerly a student dormitory), said to haunt the premises after dying in excruciating pain, crushed in the elevator shaft. Most often, ghosts are harmless presences that do not interfere with the lives of the living – at most, they frighten them. This is because, having remained trapped in the material world, the spirit of the deceased is perceived as existing in an unnatural state. Thus, the idea of the ghost is intrinsically linked to a reaction of fear.

*“When I was little, my brother and I were staying at our grandparents’ house, waiting for our uncle to come play cards with us. We waited until midnight, but when he didn’t show up, we went to bed. Suddenly, we saw a trail of cigarette ash moving through the room, and we thought our uncle had arrived and was smoking inside. We called out to him, but he didn’t answer, though the ash kept moving, then it vanished. We turned on the light and there was no one there. We were so frightened that we fell asleep with the light on, wrapped tightly in our blankets up to our necks, even though it was summer and unbearably hot.”* (Hermina P., student)

*“One day, a man returning home by bicycle had to pass through a deserted valley known as Coasta lui Căcărează. As he rode along, he saw a bride who suddenly appeared and perched herself on the handlebars of his bicycle. The man was terrified, and then the bride vanished. It is said that many have seen that same bride. It’s a story from my village, at least, that’s how it’s told around here.”* (Hermina P., student)

Ghosts sometimes manifest as *poltergeists*, that is, they produce noises, move objects and disturb the environment. “*At night, cries for help and the weeping of that tormented soul can sometimes be heard*” (referring to the girl from Cișmigiu). “*The bathroom doors on the second floor creak no matter how well they are oiled or repaired, and the faucets turn on by themselves*” (the Bessarabian girl from Hurmuzachi High School in Rădăuți):

*“There exists an urban legend which claims that a girl from Bessarabia once lived in the dormitory of the Hurmuzachi High*

*School in the town of Rădăuți. Out of fear of her parents and societal judgment, the girl gave birth to a stillborn child in the attic of the dormitory. Traumatised by the grim event, she hanged herself in the showers on the second floor. Even today, it is said that the bathroom doors on that floor creak incessantly, no matter how well they are oiled or repaired, and the faucets turn on by themselves.”<sup>9</sup>*

*“According to legend, around the year 1990, the Cișmigiu Hotel was used as a dormitory for students of the Academy of Theatre and Film. It is said that one night, a female student from the Republic of Moldova suffered a terrible accident. Returning from classes and feeling exhausted, she chose to take the elevator instead of the stairs, as she usually did. Unaware that the elevator was not in place, she stepped into the shaft and fell. The most harrowing detail is that she did not die instantly, but survived for several hours – hours of excruciating pain during which she cried out for help until her final breath. It is said that, because her death was so horrific, her spirit cannot find peace and continues to haunt the Cișmigiu to this day. Employees report that, at night, cries for help and the weeping of that tormented soul can still be heard.”<sup>10</sup>*

The ghost remains suspended between two worlds, disoriented, no longer knowing which path to follow, and becomes “*a traveller who, naturally, when seen by someone still among the living, must reveal their status as a wanderer*” (Hedeșan, 2000: 167), either by appearing in a vehicle or by traversing desolate roads. Perhaps the most evocative expression of this indefinite wandering is found in one of the most widespread urban legends: *the phantom hitchhiker* or *the vanishing hitchhiker*.

This legend circulates globally and although the most widely published examples come from the United States and the United Kingdom, similar accounts exist across Europe, Africa and Australia. The story appears in numerous variants, but the most familiar version tells of a young woman wandering alone along the roadside, who is picked up by a passing driver. She typically sits in the back seat, sometimes silent, other times giving the driver an address. At some point, she vanishes without a trace either upon reaching the destination or while the vehicle is still in motion. Subsequent investigations by the bewildered driver reveal that the passenger was, in fact, a supernatural entity, a ghost.

Here are some notable Romanian variants of the legend:

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<sup>9</sup> <http://mituriurbane.vira.ro/mituri-urbane/68/fantoma-din-caminul-liceului-hurmuzachi/>, accessed 23 February 2012. Note: This forum is now defunct.

<sup>10</sup> <http://romanialapas.ro/legenda-hotelului-cismigiu/>, accessed 23 February 2012. Note: Page no longer available on this website.

*“In Trivale, a neighbourhood in the city of Pitești, Argeș County, urban legends speak of an abandoned house in the nearby forest, haunted by the ghost of a bride who took her own life after her husband was killed by a car on their wedding day. It is said that a taxi driver once picked up the bride and drove her deep into the forest, to that very house. Lacking money, she gave him her wedding ring as a pledge, promising to return shortly with payment. The driver suddenly fell asleep and awoke hours later, parked in front of block of flats in Trivale, far from the forest. Confused, he entered the building to investigate how he had ended up there, only to learn that the bride had once lived in that very block – before her wedding, which had taken place ten years earlier. Realising he had been the driver of a ghost, he rushed back to his car in search of proof: the wedding ring she had given him, wrapped in a handkerchief and gleaming gold when he received it. But when he unwrapped the cloth, he found not just the ring, but a decaying finger, the ring now corroded by time, resembling a piece of rusted iron freshly unearthed.”<sup>11</sup> (adapted)*

*“An incident said to have been reported in the newspapers took place in Craiova. Around 11 PM, a taxi driver picked up a woman, and during the ride, she began to bleed from her nose. The driver offered her a handkerchief, and upon arriving at the destination, the woman gave him her wedding ring, telling him the flat number where she lived. About fifteen minutes later, the driver rang the doorbell and was met by the woman’s husband, who, after a brief altercation, called the police, claiming that the ring belonged to his dead wife. It is said that eight months later, he obtained a court order for exhumation and discovered the woman’s skeleton missing its wedding ring, with a handkerchief clutched in its hand.”*

(Cristina B., student)

We cannot exclude, in this legend, echoes of the folkloric motif developed in the ballad *Voichița* (or *Voica*), recorded at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the motif of the dead brother transformed into a revenant as a result of a maternal curse. A mother reluctantly marries off her daughter to a distant land, persuaded only by one of her nine sons, who promises to bring his sister home whenever she longs for it. The plague, however, claims all the sons and the grieving mother, left alone, casts a curse upon the one who convinced her to part with her child. He rises from the grave, his coffin transformed into a horse, and gallops to his sister, whom he leaves at the doorstep of their childhood home. *Voichița* tells her mother that her brother brought

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<sup>11</sup> <http://mituriurbane.vira.ro/mituri-urbane/79/taximetristul-blestemat/>, accessed 23 February 2012. Note: This forum is now defunct.

her back, but the mother does not believe her until the girl shows her the engagement ring (\*\*\*, 2002: 52-63).

The folkloric motif served as a source of inspiration for the German author Gottfried August Bürger, who in 1773 composed the poem *Lenore*. In this version, however, the revenant is not a brother, but a deceased fiancé whom the young woman awaits to return from war. Her futile waiting turns into a quarrel with God, whom she blames for her misfortune. One night, a mysterious stranger appears at her door, resembling her beloved. She flees with him, and at dawn they arrive at the gates of a cemetery, stopping before a grave – the grave of Lenore's fiancé. It is at this moment that the young man sheds his human appearance, revealing himself as Death, scythe in hand; the grave opens beneath Lenore's feet, and she meets her end beside her lover<sup>12</sup>.

The British essayist William Taylor compared *Lenore* to the English ballad *The Suffolk Miracle*, collected by the American folklorist Francis James Child and included in the *Child Ballads* (published between 1882-1898). *The Suffolk Miracle* recounts the story of a noble-born girl who falls in love with a commoner. Her father, disapproving of the match, sends her to live with relatives far from home. One night, the girl awakens to find her lover on horseback beneath her window. They flee together and at one point the young man complains of a headache; the girl ties her own handkerchief around his head. Upon reaching home, he leaves her at the doorstep and vanishes. Later, the girl learns from her father that her lover had died of heartbreak. The father visits the grave and, upon exhuming the body, is horrified to find his daughter's handkerchief tied around the skull of the deceased<sup>13</sup>.

In Romanian urban legends, the vanishing hitchhiker is consistently a female, often a young bride described as beautiful and sometimes possessing a ghostly, pale appearance. The driver is typically a taxi cabbie, whose profession serves as a plausible reason to take anyone in his car regardless of their physical appearance. The narrative is usually set at night or in the evening to create a mysterious atmosphere, although versions occurring during the day are seen as a way to validate the events' authenticity by removing any doubt of hallucination or confusion. Storytellers also use specific details, such as city names and street addresses, to lend credibility to the supernatural event.

The core plot unfolds when the hitchhiker, upon reaching her destination, offers the driver her wedding ring or another piece of jewellery as collateral for the fare. When she fails to return, the driver seeks payment and is met with a startling

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<sup>12</sup> See the English translation rendered by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in 1844 available at <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/1-1844.harvardms.rad.html#1-1844>, accessed 10 August 2025.

<sup>13</sup> For the full text of the ballad, see *Internet Sacred Text Archive*, available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/child/ch272.htm>, accessed 10 August 2025.

revelation from her family: she died long ago, often in a violent accident on her wedding day. This unexpected disclosure forms the climax of the story. The physical evidence left behind, such as the wedding ring or other personal items, is a crucial element that distinguishes this legend from other ghost stories, providing tangible proof of the supernatural encounter and making it more believable to a modern audience (de Vos, 1996: 342).

These legends, which often feature an innocent victim, serve several functions. They reflect the tragic image of a life cut short by injustice, violence or accident, suggesting a ghost's reappearance is an attempt to fulfil a life that was denied to them (Bennett, 1998: 11). The ghost's desire to return home underscores the importance of not dying alone and the longing for peace. The presence of a family member to confirm the ghost's identity also reinforces the sadness of an untimely death and undermines potential scepticism from the audience. Finally, the inclusion of multiple witnesses in some versions further validates the supernatural by making a rational, psychological explanation less plausible (Main & Hobbs, 2012: 29). This validates the supernatural as the only logical conclusion for the events described.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we may say that supernatural narratives, such as those discussed above, remain vibrant elements of contemporary Romanian urban folklore, highlighting the persistence of traditional beliefs about the paranormal in modern society. Far from being mere cautionary tales, these stories reveal a deeper, enduring human impulse: the need to interpret the irrational and confront the fear of the unknown. The legends explored are rooted in familiar, everyday contexts. This grounding in the ordinary lends a disturbing plausibility to the supernatural events, heightening their emotional impact on the audience. Moreover, the inclusion of specific, tangible details (actual locations, recognisable professions, traces of physical evidence) serves to authenticate these accounts, presenting them not as fanciful myths but as extraordinary experiences that blur the line between fiction and reality.

The continued circulation of these legends, whether through online platforms or shared personal experiences, attests to the enduring permeability of the boundary between the known and the mystical. Their persistent popularity suggests that, even in an age dominated by reason and technology, there remains a profound human inclination to believe in phenomena that defy scientific explanation. These stories do not merely survive; they resonate, revealing a collective yearning for mystery in a world increasingly governed by logic.

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## IV. EVENTS

**ALEXANDRU GAFTON, ȘTIINȚĂ ȘI IDEOLOGIE,  
EDITURA UNIVERSITĂȚII DE VEST DIN  
TIMIȘOARA, COLECȚIA „AULA MAGNA”,  
TIMIȘOARA, 2025, 134 p.**

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**Abstract :**

The book "Science and Ideology" by Professor Alexandru Gafton of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași has just been published by the University of the West of Timișoara Press in the "Aula Magna" collection. A prestigious figure in the academic world, he makes major contributions to diachronic linguistics and Romanian philology and has dedicated himself for more than thirty years to the study of the origin of human language.

**Keywords:**

*The biosocial organism, reality, knowledge, ideologies, the objectivity of scientific knowledge.*

Ce volume fait partie d'un véritable triptyque, comprenant également deux autres ouvrages récents du même professeur : *Biolinguistique. Constitution et fonctionnement du langage humain* (Éditions de l'Université de Bucarest, Collection « Études Interdisciplinaires », 2024), en deux volumes, et *Les Fondements biologiques du langage* (Éditions de l'Université de Bucarest, même collection, 2025).

L'ouvrage *Science et idéologie* a été conçu, de l'aveu même de l'auteur, comme une introduction à la *Biolinguistique*, plus précisément comme « trois des chapitres introductifs » (*Argument*, p. 9). Cependant, il a par la suite jugé plus pertinent de le publier séparément. Dans l'ensemble, ces trois ouvrages constituent une remarquable synthèse des recherches les plus

récentes en biologie, anatomie, génétique, neurosciences, anthropologie, sociologie, orthophonie, linguistique et bien d'autres domaines. Menées dans une perspective intégrative, ces recherches visent à composer un ouvrage fondamental expliquant l'origine et le fonctionnement du langage humain.

Complété par les nuances et les détails nécessaires, le livre acquiert une plus grande force en tant que texte autonome, ne serait-ce que par son caractère d'ouvrage sur l'éthique des sciences, qui ont toujours été confrontés à un « harceleur constant » (p. 9) : l'idéologie. Par conséquent, des trois composantes du « triptyque » mentionné plus haut, celle-ci représente, dans une plus large mesure, un texte épistémologique, donc un texte de philosophie des sciences. Autrement dit, sa composante philosophique est riche, non pas au sens strictement spéculatif, mais plutôt en observation et synthèse de processus et de phénomènes d'une grande généralité. De plus, comme le notent les experts scientifiques (voir couverture 4), elle « s'impose comme un point de repère essentiel pour les recherches futures dans divers domaines » (Mihai Vladimirescu) et, bien qu'« elle s'adresse principalement aux intellectuels travaillant dans les sciences humaines », elle « pourrait également toucher les chercheurs en formation, qui auraient ainsi la possibilité d'éviter les obstacles qui entravent une recherche authentique » (Adina Chirilă).

Les trois chapitres de l'ouvrage, précédés d'un bref argument (p. 9), suivis d'un épilogue et ouverts par des citations illustratives choisies parmi les pensées et les réflexions de célèbres penseurs et scientifiques (Épicure, Léonard de Vinci, Kant, Lieberman, Claude Bernard, Oppenheimer, etc.), constituent une étude documentée et argumentée sur la nécessité du savoir scientifique, sur les relations qu'il établit avec d'autres formes de savoir, sur l'impératif de prendre conscience des pressions idéologiques de toute nature et, surtout, sur l'adoption par le scientifique d'un certain mode d'action face à ces pressions.

La première partie, intitulée « Un sous-produit de l'organisme biosocial » (p. 11-29), est un plaidoyer sincère et éloquent en faveur du savoir scientifique envisagé dans son devenir. Cela n'implique pas l'exclusion d'autres formes fondamentales de savoir : le savoir primaire, sensoriel et intuitif, le savoir magico-mystique et le savoir artistique. L'un des arguments irréfutables est le suivant : « N'étant pas centrée sur les besoins de survie et

de perpétuation (...), la connaissance scientifique s'intéresse avant tout à l'acquisition d'une connaissance correcte, avec des degrés de certitude croissants, vérifiable puis validée par la réalité, et donc cohérente avec les modalités et les formes sensibles de sa manifestation. » (p. 28).

Les réflexions de l'auteur vont de la saisie de l'essence des choses aux véritables paradoxes : « En tant que processus historique (...), la connaissance scientifique est provisoire, partielle et constamment perfectible. Empreinte d'incertitudes, elle est plutôt capable de montrer *ce que quelque chose n'est pas*, plutôt que, rarement, d'indiquer avec certitude *ce qu'il est* (souligné par l'auteur). » (p. 21). Ainsi, nous arrivons finalement à l'expression d'une profession de foi : « Toute manière de juger et de comprendre qui ne découle pas de la conjonction de l'empirique et du raisonné est extérieure à la science. Ce domaine englobe tout ce qui n'est pas vérifiable et qui ne constitue pas un effet direct de l'engagement plénier de la raison. » (p. 29).

Le deuxième chapitre, comme son titre l'indique, « La sphère du réel/de la réalité et le triangle de la connaissance » (p. 31-68), établit un lien entre la connaissance et la réalité, qui constitue en fait son objet d'étude, et développe l'idée de séparer la science de l'idéologie. « L'existence du monde vivant dépend de celle de l'univers physico-chimique, puis de la qualité de l'auto-constitution et de l'évolution des composants, systèmes et mécanismes biologiques », affirme l'auteur en introduction au chapitre. « Elle est (...) indépendante de sa perception, de sa connaissance et de sa communication par les entités qu'elle a engendrées et qui la peuplent. La compatibilité entre elles ne peut advenir que si la connaissance a été acquise dans le cadre d'un effort fructueux pour comprendre la réalité telle qu'elle est, le codage linguistique et la communication étant, à leur tour, aussi fidèles que possible. » (p. 32).

Les sous-titres du chapitre guident le lecteur vers les questions essentielles débattues : la réalité et la connaissance, le système que représente la réalité, la manière dont s'opère le processus de connaissance en général, la nécessité pour l'esprit humain de fragmenter et de hiérarchiser la réalité ontique, qu'il ne peut appréhender dans sa totalité et dans toute sa complexité, le problème épineux de l'autonomie et de l'autarcie recherchées par les différents domaines qui aspirent à étudier les composantes de la réalité, la nécessité de « constance dans la comparaison, la vérification et la validation des résultats obtenus » dans ces domaines (p. 39), etc. Dans cette perspective, et avec une certaine amertume, une étude de cas (pp. 41-50) met en lumière la façon dont la linguistique s'est considérée comme autosuffisante, s'est distanciée des autres sciences et a refusé d'étudier sérieusement l'essence même de son objet d'étude, à savoir l'origine du langage. La conclusion est

sans appel : « l'obligation de connaître les origines et le cours » (p. 50), c'est-à-dire les étapes franchies par la réalité étudiée, mais aussi par sa recherche : « ... sans connaissance des fondements généalogiques de la réalité dont elle s'intéresse, une discipline demeure privée de la seule connaissance du noyau matériel et procédural capable d'initier la compréhension de tout ce qui s'y rapporte » (p. 50-51). Et, de toute évidence, « ... le processus de connaissance implique nécessairement à la fois amplification et approfondissement » (p. 53). L'auteur plaide également pour la compréhension des origines et du lien avec d'autres disciplines : « ... en l'absence de compréhension de l'origine du langage et sans connaissances extérieures à la linguistique, l'ensemble du savoir et de l'activité des linguistes risquerait de n'être qu'une collection de produits superflus » (p. 57), et l'illustre par l'exemple de la norme linguistique (p. 57-63). Enfin, en présentant les « fondements de la linguistique » (p. 63-65), il offre au chercheur spécialiste du domaine un véritable code déontologique.

Le dernier chapitre, « Le Canon de Procuste et la veille de Damoclès » (p. 69-129), le plus long, dissimule sous son titre manifestement métaphorique une exhortation sérieuse adressée à tout chercheur, l'invitant à une vigilance constante afin de maintenir un équilibre entre les pressions inhérentes aux idéologies de toutes sortes et l'objectivité du savoir scientifique. L'enchaînement des cas Lamarck-Darwin-Weismann concernant la théorie de l'évolution révèle les interférences subtiles et pernicieuses de l'idéologie dans le processus d'observation, de recherche et de description du réel (voir p. 78 et suiv.).

L'« Épilogue » (p. 125-129) représente, d'une part, l'expression de la conviction du professeur Gafton, fondée sur le savoir scientifique, quant au rôle fondamental du déterminisme dans l'existence du réel, et d'autre part, un plaidoyer vibrant en faveur d'un savoir scientifique affranchi de toute influence idéologique. L'idéologie elle-même est une conséquence du déterminisme dans l'évolution de la société humaine. L'auteur ne l'affirme pas explicitement, mais cela est sous-entendu.

Dans l'ensemble, il s'agit d'une profession de foi impressionnante et convaincante en faveur d'une approche intégrative du savoir, d'une vision holistique de la réalité et du recours à une forme de transdisciplinarité de haut niveau (voir les considérations p. 65 : « le chercheur spécialiste ne peut rester confiné ni à sa niche ni à son domaine. Il a un besoin vital de parvenir à une compréhension juste et raisonnable d'une grande partie des connaissances apportées par d'autres sciences et domaines, à l'échelle et à la profondeur requises par les paramètres d'un véritable processus de connaissance »).

Le savoir scientifique est essentiel, précisément parce qu'il est continu et solidaire (chaque recherche, aussi modeste soit-elle, constitue une brique de son édifice, et son progrès repose sur les efforts de ses prédecesseurs). Ses domaines sont et doivent être considérés comme interconnectés, et le processus de connaissance doit « prendre en compte la recherche à la fois large et approfondie de l'objet, considéré dans son devenir » (p. 28). « La réalité (...) existe indépendamment de ce que perçoivent les sens, de ce que pense l'esprit, de ce que désire la volonté, de ce que considère la morale, de ce qu'impose la foi et de ce que le langage exprime. Elle n'est donc connaissable que dans la mesure où elle est observée, pensée et rendue fidèlement, ce qui signifie que la véritable connaissance n'advient et ne s'acquiert que si le processus et le résultat sont cohérents avec l'état de l'objet ou du processus à connaître » (p. 32), démontre l'auteur en faisant preuve de pathos.

Pour le père Bacon, la physique était la reine des sciences ; pour Al. Gafton, cette reine est incarnée par le triptyque physique-chimie-biologie. D'où sa conviction qu'il n'existe aucun hasard dans l'Univers, mais un déterminisme permanent, fondé précisément sur l'enchaînement, l'interrelation, l'interdépendance, etc., des éléments et processus physiques, chimiques et biologiques. De plus, « le postulat fondamental de notre départ stipule que l'Univers est un système de systèmes engendré par des activités énergétiques et physico-chimiques, auto-induites et déterminées selon les principes structuraux, fonctionnels et organisationnels de la matière constitutive » (p. 12).

De cette vision découle « l'impératif que la quête du niveau de connaissance le plus précis et le plus élevé possible du monde s'articule autour d'une conception scientifique rigoureuse, englobant et mettant en pratique plusieurs sciences et domaines, afin de découvrir les origines et le développement de la réalité étudiée » (p. 69). La distinction et la dissociation entre science et idéologie ne sont pas aisées, pas plus que les bénéfices de leur collaboration ne sont faciles à déterminer : « Produits de l'être humain, l'idéologie et la science sont toutes deux nécessaires au développement et à l'évolution de l'homme et de sa société. Leur conjonction n'est bénéfique que si la distance qui les sépare reste dans des limites capables de générer l'énergie nécessaire à la réalisation de leurs objectifs respectifs, pour le véritable bénéfice de la connaissance et du développement de l'être dont elles sont les produits. » (p. 129). Dès lors, leur non-ingérence est plutôt requise : « Pour ne pas devenir pernicieuses, il est nécessaire qu'elles demeurent dans les limites naturelles de leurs rôles et de leur propre influence, sans interférer ni se poser en censeurs de l'autre. Produit secondaire et de luxe, la science est en position de faiblesse face à l'idéologie. Ainsi, lorsque l'idéologie se plaint d'être

menacée par la science, elle tente en réalité de mutiler la science authentique, et lorsqu'elle semble la guider, elle la dévore en réalité. » (p. 129).

Le style de l'ouvrage, bien que rigoureusement scientifique et ouvert à la spéculation philosophique, n'est pas obstinément académique. Au contraire, malgré l'examen de problèmes essentiels et très sérieux, on perçoit par endroits le ton proche de l'interlocuteur de l'auteur. Son expression claire et convaincante ne manque ni de profusion de phrases, ni de digressions, ni de recours à la métaphore et à l'épithète, comme le montrent le fragment suivant et les extraits ci-dessous : « Envoûtantes et terrifiantes, cultivatrices du désespoir et porteuses d'espoir, la Religion et les Arts sont dépourvus de la conjonction entre le délicat canal sensoriel par lequel l'organisme est relié à la réalité et la rigueur mesurée et limitante de la raison. Se nourrissant de l'ambroisie de la perception sensorielle et intuitive de la réalité, puis du nectar des états mentaux engendrés par son expérience, ils s'engagent soit dans des cercles vicieux qui, partant des sens, génèrent des émotions et des affects asservis à des enjeux idéologiques, après quoi ils reviennent sans se soumettre au contrôle de la raison, soit ils élaborent des requêtes de principe, partant d'enjeux idéologiques, générant des pensées et des états comportementaux, après quoi ils reviennent sans recevoir de confirmation des sens. » (p. 29), « le temple de l'héritage » (p. 117), « le grand bricoleur qu'est l'évolution » (p. 121).

La conclusion la plus appropriée pour cette analyse semble être le jeu de mots de l'auteur lui-même, qui aboutit à une affirmation percutante : « La science doit déployer un double effort : contenir l'idéologie et se contenir elle-même par rapport à celle-ci. » (p. 43).

À travers la trilogie d'ouvrages étroitement liés du professeur Alexandru Gafton, inaugurée par le volume *Science et idéologie*, nous avons le sentiment d'être en présence non seulement d'un véritable scientifique, mais aussi d'un grand penseur.

# **TRANSFORMING THE SELF AND SOCIETY THROUGH THE POWER OF LANGUAGE. A REVIEW OF *THE POWER OF LANGUAGE: MULTILINGUALISM, SELF AND SOCIETY* BY VIORICA MARIAN**

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## **Abstract:**

Viorica Marian's *The Power of Language: Multilingualism, Self and Society* is a scholarly yet accessible work that investigates the profound impact of multilingualism on the mind, identity and society. Relying on a wealth of empirical studies and personal experiences, the author, a distinguished psycholinguist, offers a compelling and richly informative perspective.

## **Keywords:**

*Language, multilingualism, neural plasticity, cultural identity, communication, society.*

Viorica Marian's *The Power of Language: Multilingualism, Self and Society*<sup>1</sup> offers a comprehensive and insightful exploration of how multilingualism shapes cognition, personal identity and social structures. As a professor of communication sciences and psychology at Northwestern University, Marian draws on decades of psycholinguistic and neuroscientific research to present readers with a thesis that is both intellectually rigorous and remarkably accessible: acquiring and using multiple languages literally rewires the brain and alters our perception of the world.

Structured in two main sections, "Self" and "Society", the book navigates with remarkable fluidity through anecdotal case studies, laboratory experiments, sociological analyses and the author's own reflections as a

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<sup>1</sup> Viorica MARIAN, 2024, *The Power of Language: Multilingualism, Self and Society*, Pelican Books Ltd., digital edition.

polyglot. This mixture of narrative and empirical evidence lends the text a persuasive power, turning often dry scientific facts into captivating stories.

In the opening chapter, “Introduction – or Welcome!”, Marian sets the stage for a re-evaluation of language’s role in human life. She begins with the myth of the Tower of Babel, illustrating how language has long been perceived as a force so potent it was deemed “*the key to reaching heaven*” (p. xv). This biblical tale highlights the dual capacity of language to unite and divide, to facilitate or hinder communication.

Marian emphasises that although language is a daily tool, few truly grasp its power. She likens this to possessing an object of immense value without understanding its worth. Language, she argues, can even shape our perception of objects: for instance, Spanish and German speakers describe a bridge differently depending on the grammatical gender assigned to the word in their respective languages. Through this introduction, Marian seeks to provide readers with a key to unlocking the hidden potential of the mind.

**Part One: Self** is devoted entirely to examining how the acquisition and use of at least two languages reshape the individual’s neural structures and mental processes.

From the first chapter, “Mind Boggling”, Marian challenges the notion, prevalent in monolingual societies, that speaking only one language is the natural state of human beings. She stresses that, generally, multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception:

*“It may be a surprise to learn that the majority of the world’s population is bilingual or multilingual. More than 7,000 languages are spoken in the world today.”* (p. 6)

She points out that much of psychological research has historically focused on monolingual populations, which led to a limited, incomplete and often inaccurate understanding of the human brain. This exclusion of linguistic diversity from research has had serious historical consequences, such as the use of English-based “intelligence” tests to justify discriminatory policies under the United States Immigration Act of 1924.

Chapter 2 extends the idea that the multilingual brain functions as a “parallel-processing superorganism.” Here, Marian introduces experimental evidence, such as eye-tracking and brain imaging, that reveal how bilingual individuals activate multiple languages simultaneously.

Contrary to the traditional hypothesis that speakers “deactivate” unused languages, research shows that all known languages remain co-active. This parallel processing is a survival mechanism, enabling the brain to remain prepared for any linguistic input and to respond more swiftly than if it had to “switch on” and “switch off” each language:

*“This allows the brain to remain open to all possible mappings of sound to meaning, regardless of language, so that it is always ready for any language input, even in unpredictable circumstances, and can understand and respond faster than if it had to reboot a turned-off language.”* (p. 25)

The chapter also reveals that this co-activation is not limited to similar or spoken languages but is also present in bimodal bilinguals (those who use both a spoken language and a sign language). One cited study shows that visual stimuli activate both languages in bilinguals even in the absence of verbal input. Marian concludes that the mind is not modular and that multilingualism influences not only the language system but also perception, attention and memory.

The following chapter, “On Creativity, Perception and Thought”, investigates the influence of multilingualism on creativity and perceptual processes. Marian argues that exposure to multiple linguistic and cultural systems stimulates novel neural connections, fostering a form of complex associative thinking that is essential for problem-solving, innovation and artistic expression.

Cited studies reveal that bilingual individuals consistently outperform monolinguals on tests measuring divergent thinking and cognitive flexibility, such as the *Alternate Uses Task*, which challenges participants to identify as many unconventional uses as possible for a common object. Bilingual children often exhibit advanced visual creativity, frequently producing imaginative and original drawings. Engaging with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Marian postulates that “*although language does not fully determine thought*” (p. 53), it shapes it in subtle yet significant ways, influencing how we perceive time, colour and spatial relationships.

Chapter 4, “The Word Made Flesh”, delves into the biological foundations of multilingualism. Marian presents persuasive evidence of neural plasticity, demonstrating that learning a new language is not merely a

cognitive function but a process of physical transformation within the brain. Neuroimaging studies show increased grey matter density and enhanced white matter integrity in bilingual brains, indicating more efficient use of neural resources.

Furthermore, Marian advances bold hypotheses, suggesting that multilingualism may alter cellular metabolic concentrations and potentially induce epigenetic changes, thereby influencing gene expression. Through this analogy with the biblical transformation of “the Word into flesh,” she raises a profound question about the nature of the interplay between abstract codes and biological matter.

Continuing her exploration, Marian maps the cognitive benefits of bilingualism across the lifespan in Chapter 5, “Childhood, Ageing and In-Between”. Comparing multilingualism to a network of alternative neural pathways (if one route deteriorates, others can be used to access information), she emphasises its role as a form of *cognitive reserve*, capable of delaying the onset of dementia and Alzheimer’s symptoms by an average of four to six years. According to her, multilingualism functions as a continuous mental exercise that requires no additional effort from the individual. As she eloquently puts it:

*“The brain gymnastics needed to manoeuvre the languages you know changes your brain and increases your chances of staying sharper longer.”* (p. 83)

Marian also dispels common myths about childhood bilingualism, demonstrating that early exposure to multiple languages does not lead to confusion or developmental delays; on the contrary, it accelerates the acquisition of metacognitive skills and is correlated with improved academic outcomes. She describes the phenomenon of *perceptual narrowing* in infants, showing that exposure to several languages prolongs this period of receptivity to the diverse sounds of the world.

A particularly moving aspect of the book is its exploration of how language shapes our emotions and identity, addressed in the final chapter of Part I, “Another Language, Another Soul”. Marian argues that for bilingual individuals, each language may correspond to a slightly different version of the self. A person might be more direct, more extroverted, or in contrast, more reserved, depending on the language they are using. This phenomenon,

known as *cultural frame switching*, arises from the fact that each language is intimately tied to a specific culture, with its own norms, values and attitudes.

The author emphasises that the mother tongue, being associated with formative experiences, carries greater emotional intensity, while bilinguals may use a second language to create emotional distance. She concludes by saying that:

*“(...) each language is associated with somewhat different sets of experiences, memories, emotions and meanings, and their accessibility differs across languages. As a result, different aspects of one’s self come to the forefront depending on the language in use.”* (p. 123)

**Part Two: Society** expands the discussion from the individual to the collective level, demonstrating that the power of language extends beyond the human psyche to profoundly influence society.

A fascinating chapter explores how language functions as the “Ultimate Influencer”, employed by politicians and the advertising industry to shape public opinion and behaviour. Marian provides examples of strategic labelling (such as “Death Tax” instead of “Estate Tax”) and the use of alliteration to craft memorable messages. She also shows that bilinguals are less susceptible to such manipulative tactics, as using a foreign language reduces emotional reactivity and enhances rational thinking. In this context, multilingualism becomes a tool for resisting misinformation.

The author also addresses the complex relationship between dialect and language, arguing that distinctions are often arbitrary and politically motivated. She cites the ironic definition by linguist Max Weinreich: “*A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.*” (p. 150) This is exemplified by the case of Moldovan, declared a separate language from Romanian by Soviet authorities, despite linguistic consensus that it is a dialect.

The discussion extends to linguistic stereotypes and their role in perpetuating social inequalities. Marian challenges the erroneous perception that languages or dialects such as African American English (AAE) are “defective” or “inferior”. In reality, AAE is a complex linguistic system with its own grammatical and phonological structures rooted in West African languages.

Chapter 8, “Words of Change”, broadens the analysis to the impact of language on social norms and prejudice. Marian demonstrates how

grammatical structures, such as gender or the animate/inanimate distinction, can shape cultural worldviews.

A significant portion of the chapter is devoted to linguistic diversity in education and healthcare, where Marian critiques diagnostic standards that rely exclusively on monolingual speakers. These standards often lead to over- or underdiagnosis of communication disorders in children from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 9, “Found in Translation”, explores the role of translation in bridging cultures, highlighting its cognitive, cultural, and political dimensions. Marian claims that successful translation is not mere lexical substitution but a recreation of meaning and emotion, an art that demands deep understanding of both languages and cultures.

The chapter concludes with a reflection on the human capacity to learn languages, asserting that multilingualism facilitates the acquisition of new symbolic systems. One study shows that bilinguals learn additional languages more easily than monolinguals, a phenomenon attributed to the continuous exercise of *inhibitory control*, which enables them to suppress prior linguistic knowledge more effectively. Marian concludes: “*The mind’s potential for learning languages may be limitless*” (p. 201) – a capacity that opens new cognitive horizons.

Chapter 10, “The Codes of Our Minds”, deconstructs language into its various symbolic manifestations. Beginning with the decoding of hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone, Marian expands the concept of “language” to include mathematics and programming languages.

The author discusses the particular case of mathematics, “*a language in itself, (...) the closest thing we have today to a universal language*” (p. 219), which has evolved to enable us to describe and understand the universe. Citing recent studies, she suggests that bilingualism may improve mathematical performance by training the brain to use non-linguistic neural circuits more efficiently.

In Chapter 11, “The Future of Science and Technology”, Marian reflects on the fundamental question: “Which comes first, thought or language?”, acknowledging the difficulty of separating the two, noting that: “*we use language to assess thought.*” (p. 227) Looking ahead to the complex future of brain-computer interfaces, she suggests that as technology advances,

we may one day translate neural activity directly into language, though this development may trigger some ethical debates. Marian reiterates the crucial role of linguistic diversity in scientific progress, warning that the exclusion of multilingual populations from research limits discoveries:

*“Leaving linguistically diverse populations out of research means an incomplete understanding of humanity and the stunting of scientific discovery and progress.”* (p. 241)

Ultimately, Marian situates language at the intersection of biology and code, arguing that language is a generative code, like DNA, that enables us to create an infinite array of ideas and forms of life.

Marian concludes with a powerful and poetic statement: *“Multilingualism gives us a greater chance of finding the right key to the right lock.”* (p. 245) Languages, as symbolic systems, hold the keys to unlocking the mysteries of the universe, and multilingualism expands our capacity to do so.

In the final section of her work, “In Conclusion – or Happy Trails!”, the author offers practical advice for those wishing to learn a new language or raise bilingual children. She demystifies the concept of a “critical period” for language acquisition, asserting that while childhood may be the ideal time, the second-best moment is “now”.

Marian provides a list of learning strategies for adults, such as enrolling in classes, using language-learning apps, engaging in social interactions, as well as recommendations for parents, including ensuring rich linguistic input, high-quality interactions and family support. This is an empowering conclusion that transforms scientific theory into practical action, encouraging readers to embark on their own linguistic journeys:

*“Exposure to more than one language, even if fluent multilingualism is not attained, provides an enriching experience likely to yield long-term benefits. It is never too early or too late to start learning another language. It may even be fun.”* (p. 262)

Viorica Marian’s *The Power of Language: Multilingualism, Self and Society* is an essential read for anyone interested in how the human mind works and in the force that shapes us both as individuals and as a society. It is a call to understand and value multilingualism not merely as a useful skill, but as a fundamental human capacity. Marian elegantly dismantles popular

myths, replacing them with an evidence-based perspective that celebrates the complexity and adaptability of the bilingual brain.

This is an inspiring book, one that invites readers to reflect not only on how their native language defines them, but also on the potential each new language holds. It is a book about one of the primal forces of our existence – language – and how, when multiplied, this force becomes a superpower of the human mind.

## REVIEW

**Ştefan Găitănaru, 2025, *Daniil Andrean Panoneanul și limba română din secolul al XVII-lea*, Târgovişte: Editura Bibliotheca, 273 p.**

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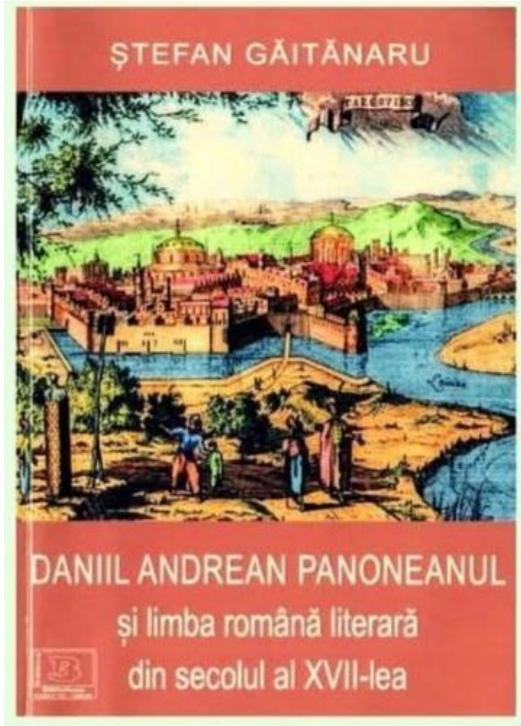
### **Abstract:**

This review of the monograph devoted to the scholarly and literary activity of Daniil Andrean Panoneanul, an activity hitherto scarcely explored, aims to highlight the key points of Ştefan Găitănaru's analysis in his volume *Daniil Andrean Panoneanul și limba română literară din secolul al XVII-lea*, published in 2025.

Through exceptionally rigorous documentation, the philologist Ştefan Găitănaru seeks to fill a gap in studies dedicated to the diachronic analysis of the Romanian literary language, emphasising Panoneanul's contribution to its evolution. The approach is grounded in a systematic examination of linguistic phenomena excerpted from the enigmatic scholar's translations of major works: *Îndreptarea legii*, *Învățurile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie* and *The Old Testament*.

### **Keywords:**

*Romanian literary language, diachrony, translation, lexicosemantic structures, grammatical structures.*



Ştefan Găitănaru's volume<sup>1</sup>, published by Bibliotheca in 2025, reflects a longstanding concern of the linguist, who, beyond his studies on the diachronic analysis of the norms of the Romanian literary language, has also authored works of fiction inspired by the cultural milieu of Târgovişte<sup>2</sup>.

The study *Daniil Andrean Panoneanul şi limba română din secolul al XVII-lea* ('Daniil Andrean Panoneanul and the Romanian Language of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century') offers an in-depth analysis of Panoneanul's contribution to the development of Romanian literary language, thus addressing a significant lacuna in specialised bibliography.

The book's structure mirrors the deep layers of the thematic axes presented to the reader. On the one hand, the researcher focuses on biographical landmarks to outline the profile of a first-rate scholar of his age; on the other, he delineates the key aspects of Panoneanul's scholarly and literary activity:

*"Daniil Andrean Panoneanul, often disadvantaged in disputes between princes and metropolitans, remained faithful to the light of his passion and translated, with erudition and talent, the most important books of his time."* (Preface, p. 7)

The first chapter, *Personalitatea lui Daniil Andrean Panoneanul* ('The Personality of Daniil Andrean Panoneanul'), of a synthetic nature, presents biographical data – (i) Metropolitan in Transylvania, (ii) teacher at the Princely School in Târgovişte, (iii) translator –, in relation to his exceptional philological activity, as N.A. Ursu aptly describes him: *"the enigmatic Romanian scholar of the mid-seventeenth century."* Reconstructing his biography proved challenging, as Panoneanul himself appears to have been an extremely modest and discreet figure. Moreover, Romanian documentary sources from the seventeenth century are notoriously scarce.

In retracing D. Panoneanul's professional and missionary trajectory, Ştefan Găitănaru correlates *author* and *work*, bringing into discussion his major literary and scholarly projects, namely, the translations of *Îndreptarea legii* ('Matei Basarab's Code of Laws'), *Învăţăturile lui Neagoe Basarab*

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<sup>1</sup> Ştefan Găitănaru's monograph is dedicated to Professor Emeritus Petre Gheorghe Bârlea.

<sup>2</sup> Among his literary works, we should mention the novel *Codul lui Dracula* ('Dracula's Code'), published in 2014 by Editura Tiparg, Piteşti.

*către fiul său Theodosie* ('The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosie') and the Old Testament.

Within this context, the author underscores the translator's ability to cultivate the functional styles of the age according to textual specificity – from the theological-philosophical register of the Old Testament to the juridical-administrative tone of *Îndreptarea*.... Furthermore, Găitănaru observes that translating *Învățurile*... required alternating, if not simultaneously employing, multiple functional styles within the same text – theological-scientific, scientific, pedagogical and literary – thus attesting to Panoneanul's mastery as a translator and his role in shaping the Romanian literary language:

“[...] his work constitutes a **defining matrix for the directions in which the Romanian literary language would evolve** (our emphasis).” (Ch. I, p. 18)

The second chapter, devoted to intertextuality in *Biblia de la București* ('The Bucharest Bible'), surveys the levels of intertextuality present in BB88<sup>3</sup>: (i) textual; (ii) technical; (iii) structural – phenomena attributed to the sources employed and the translation techniques adopted.

Regarding technical intertextuality, manifested in the translator's practice of recording alternative equivalences in marginal notes, depending on the source editions, Găitănaru notes Daniil Andrean Panoneanul's fidelity to both Slavic and Latin traditions.

Chapters 3-5 address discursive and narratological aspects, such as *the technique of embedded discourse* in the translations of *Îndreptarea*... and *Învățurile lui Neagoe Basarab*, as well as the *imaginary dimension* of the latter.

In these sections, the author examines *embedded discourse*, an element seldom explored in specialised literature, coded here as a complementary message rather than a superimposed one. The architecture of the juridical text *Îndreptarea legii* reveals “*the formula of the text as a whole*” (Ch. III, p. 45), from which emerge inserted passages from *Cartea românească de învățură* ('Romanian Book of Learning') and texts from the manuscript translated by Eustratie Logofătul in *Pravila aleasă* (1632).

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<sup>3</sup> BB88 = *Biblia de la București*, 1688.

As for embedded discourse in *Învățăturile...*, after reviewing diachronic and synchronic critical perspectives on Neagoe Basarab's work, Găitănaru concludes that the inserted fragments from various writings function as “*exemplification texts*” (Ch. III, p. 52), as arguments of authority, thus excluding them from the realm of intertextual techniques proper, such as mosaic or collage.

Synthesising his findings, the researcher concludes that the insertion techniques employed by Daniil Andrean Panoneanul in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and by Neagoe Basarab a century earlier, constitute strategies that ensure the perlocutionary effectiveness of the text.

The imaginary, abundantly reflected in Neagoe Basarab's work, is examined by Ștefan Găitănaru across several levels: (i) religious, (ii) didactic, (iii) narrative and (iv) artistic. Regarding the didactic imaginary, the scholar naturally emphasises the insertion of parables as evidence of logical clarity: *The Parable of the Serpent*, *The Parable of the Falcon*, *The Parable of the Unicorn* and others.

The artistic imaginary present in *Învățăturile...* is analysed at the lexico-semantic level, based on the lexicon of *affectivity*, richly represented through oppositions such as *love/hatred* and *joy/sorrow*. Furthermore, various metaboles – parameters of the artistic imaginary – are illustrated in Chapter V, highlighting the stylistic potential of *Învățăturile...*

Among the metasememes enumerated, the epithet stands out, assuming diverse rhetorical-pragmatic functions:

**(i) appreciative epithet:**

“*frumoase raiule*” (‘beautiful paradise’) (Ch. V, p. 76), “*propastiile cele adânci*” (‘the deep abysses’) (*Ibidem*)

**(ii) moral epithet:**

“*Calea cea de întristăciune*” (‘the path of sorrow’) (*Ibidem*)

**(iii) individualising epithet:**

“*Un dor al inimii mele, foarte amar și cu foc*” (‘A longing of my heart, very bitter and burning’) (*Ibidem*) etc.

Additionally, rhetorical invocation and exclamations – typical of the style of the age – play a distinct role in the stylistic arsenal of Neagoe Basarab's text.

The fifth chapter, the most extensive, is devoted to a detailed description of linguistic phenomena excerpted from Panoneanul's translations: *Îndreptarea legii*, *Învățurile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie* and the Old Testament. According to the philologist, these works reflect, *sine qua non*, the Romanian literary language of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The material excerpted from the mediaeval scholar's translations, intended to systematically describe the linguistic features of these texts, is organised according to the structure of language: (i) phonetic, (ii) lexical, (iii) morphological and (iv) syntactic.

Phonetic aspects reveal features that allow for a clearer placement of the texts within a dialectal area, notes Găitănaru. Notable phenomena include the syncope of *e* in forms such as “*drept*” ('right') (IL<sup>4</sup>, 352, 2), “*îndreptările*” ('corrections') (IL, 459, 6), validated in contemporary literary Romanian. Also frequent are dissimilated forms of the preposition *pe*, later standardised: “*pe un fur, pe drum, pe trup, pe treabele, pe dreptate*” (IL, 318/1, 319/3, 319/8, 329/6, 329/12, 325/7).

The study of the vocabulary occurring in Panoneanul's translations reflects his linguistic adaptability, as he was familiar with both northern and southern dialectal areas. Examples include:

- *coștei*, specific to Transylvania;
- *hrăbăr* (also attested in Wallachia);
- *priatnic* (Wallachian attestations). (Ch. VI, pp. 103-104).

Ştefan Găitănaru's analysis also highlights instances of lexical innovation, revealing variants closer to later standardised literary forms.

Morphologically, Panoneanul's translations indicate the principle of frequent use of nouns and verbs in Old Romanian. Among noteworthy nominal forms are material nouns, typically *singularia tantum*, common in the texts analysed: “*împodobite cu aur*” ('adorned with gold') (INB, 272), “*darea aurului*” ('the giving of gold') (IL, 520/6, 520/7) etc.

An interesting morphological feature is the analytic marking of the genitive case using the preposition *a*: “*împărat a toată lumea, a toată lumea*

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<sup>4</sup> IL = A. Rădulescu (ed.), *Îndreptarea legii*, 1962, Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Române.

*sobor*” (‘emperor of all the world, assembly of all the world’) (INB<sup>5</sup>, 72, 73). Indeed, the analytic realisation of the genitive is frequent, Găitănaru observes.

As for verbs, the widespread use of reflexive-passive forms is notable: “*să se strice tocmealele; să se scoată ca să se întemeieze și să se întărească*” (‘that the agreements be broken; that they be removed so they may be established and strengthened’) (IL, 498/1, 498/5).

The syntactic description of these texts reflects a structured foundation of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian literary language, based on stratification into syntactic units and well-established syntactic relations.

The final chapter comprises *Appendices* containing reference fragments from Panoneanul’s translations: Preface to *Îndreptarea legii* (1652), Verses to *Îndreptarea legii* (1652), Preface to *The Old Testament, Ms. 4388* and parts from *Învățurile....*

Ştefan Găitănaru’s monograph stands as a landmark work in Romanian philological research. It fills a significant gap in specialised bibliography by situating the virtually unknown Daniil Andrean Panoneanul within his historical context and illuminating his decisive contributions to the standardisation of the Romanian literary language.

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<sup>5</sup> INB = Gh. Mihăilă; D. Zamfirescu, 2010, *Învățurile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*, Bucureşti.



Our journal is dedicated to the European Cultural Dialogue, with reference to universality, and features analyses regarding connections between particular and general, individual and collective, local and universal thinking, language, attitudes, behaviours, creation, and concrete action. The sections of each book entail different aspects of these topics:

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