

THE LANGUAGE IN THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT OF 1850-1890. THE GRAND DEBATES AND THEIR OUTCOMES

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LIMBA ÎN GÂNDIREA POLITICĂ ROMÂNEASCĂ ÎNTRE ANII 1850-1890. MARILE DEZBATERI ȘI REZULTATELE LOR

Abstract. *The article focuses on the Romanian linguistic debates of the second half of the 19th century and their influence on the processes of state- and nation-building. The essay concentrates on the attempts of using the ties of the common language as a defensive element that can not only mark the local nation-building strategies, but oppose similar competing foreign schemes. The current paper can be considered an effort to see and analyze the place of language in the Romanian political thought between 1850 and 1890 when Romanian national state emerged on the world arena and its manifestation sharpened the disputes regarding its linguistic and ethnic homogeneity. Furthermore, the article regards the language as a primary strategic instrument in the process of state-building, used by the participants of the debates, whose views and ideas were strictly tied to linguistic unity. The ideas of languages being parts of the “bodies of nations” expressed by Romanian thinkers are put into the General European context, which is briefly investigated as well.*

Keywords: *nation-building, Romanian political thought, Romanian language, linguistic policy.*

Rezumat. *Articolul abordează dezbaterile lingvistice românești din a două jumătate a secolului 19 și influența lor asupra proceselor de construire a națiunii și al statului. Lucrarea se focusează asupra încercărilor de a folosi legăturile de limba comună ca un element apărător care poate nu doar caracteriza strategiile locale de construire a națiunii, ci și se împotrivi schemelor rivale străine. Lucrarea poate fi considerată o tentativă de a vedea și analiza locul limbii în gândirea politică românească între 1850 și 1890 când Statul Național Român a*

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apărut pe arena mondială, și manifestările lui au ascuțit dezbaterile privind omogenitatea lui etnică și lingvistică. Mai mult, articolul se referă la limba ca fiind principalul instrument strategic în procesul de construire a statului care este folosit de participanții la dezbaterile, ideile și părerile cărora erau strict legate de unitate lingvistică. Ideile despre locul limbii în “trupul națiunii” exprimate de gânditori români sunt puse în contextul general European, care este cercetat la rândul lui.

Cuvinte cheie: *contruirea națiunii, gândirea politică românească, limba română, politică lingvistică, istoria limbii.*

The notion of linguistic peculiarity has not always been the most important aspect in the shaping of the development of European political thought, however, it has framed the notions of the nation and later contributed to the progression of the national states. Stephen Barbour supports this claim while pointing out that “the ideal of the nation closely identified with a particular language is even more restricted, being chiefly European, and little more than two centuries old.”¹ The author later expands this affirmation writing that the idea of “the mutual dependence of languages and nations, which has had a great impact on the modern world, is most strongly seen in Europe.”² However, this does not mean that the connection between the language and the nation has not been changing throughout the two subsequent centuries and that there were no clearly expressed ideas on this interaction before the bloom of the European Enlightenment, Romanticism and later Positivism.

The languages and the connections of their origins with those of the nations had become an object of interest long before the second half of the 18th century in Europe, nevertheless, the tight cooperation between the language as an “inseparable component” of the nation and the people is a relatively recent factor. Gellner explains this aspect, reflecting on the process of the making of modern languages that could not have emerged as such without the spread of literacy, printing and the availability of mass education.³ Hence, one can hardly affirm that there existed a standard national language in its contemporary sense in the Early Modern European world. Moreover, it should also be added that neither did there exist the “nation” in the contemporary meaning of the word. What did

¹ Barbour; Carmichael, 2000, 14

² *Ibidem.*

³ Gellner, 1983, 47-50

exist, however, was an ethnic notion of belonging and social identity. Although not dominant, this awareness of the ethnic origin cannot be disregarded as its connection with the language laid a basis for various nation-building strategies and linguistic disputes analyzed below.⁴

Eric Hobsbawm in his book “Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality” describes the way the mere word “nation” acquired its meaning and place in Europe; the historian asserts that there cannot be any nation defined by its ethno-linguistic criterion before the 19th century.⁵ The “nation” as such was a novelty, as well as the realization of its strong connection with language as one of the most important parts of its body.⁶ This new notion later gave an impulse to the idea of the “national state” which had also not existed before.⁸ Hence, one can claim that the language beginning its existence within the borders of “ethnic bonds” later moves to the frames of a “nation”. Hence in this article the language is primarily viewed and analyzed as a state-building instrument.

The “national state” had as its basis not only the commonwealth, but relied also on people sharing memories of a common past, the same real or imaginary origins, the same myths and the same language. Common faith, another significant binding issue, could not, however, be introduced in all the cases because of the religious dissociation of many of the European nations in the 18-19th centuries: those non-homogenous states could be equated with nations only with the help of language, an important power bringing them together. The Germans,⁹ the Hungarians and the Slovaks became only a few of examples of nations not united in

⁴ In the current article the language itself is regarded as primarily a proof of ethnic identity that later was applied in the nation-building strategies. I believe that the disregard of the connection between ethnicity and nation cannot explain the significance of linguistic ties in nation and state-building strategies, therefore I view the language as one of the elements not just of a “nation” but also of an “ethnic origin”. Hence, the “naturalization” of a foreigner in many cases would depend on his acceptance of a new language. As an example of this acceptance of a language in the process of “naturalization” see Lordachi, 2013, 71-75

⁵ Hobsbawm, 1992, 15-18.

⁶ Renan, 1939, 190-192

⁷ Barbour; Carmichael, 2000, 15-17

⁸ For further details see Hobsbawm, 1992, 101-130

⁹ For further details see Böckh, Richard, 1863. The Prussian linguist and statistician proposes an effective way to unite the Germans scattered all over Central and Eastern Europe and divided by religious differences with the help of the language inserted into the questions of the state censuses. Böckh’s contribution to the German national cause is also mentioned by Hobsbawm. See Hobsbawm, 1992, 21-22

religious matters.¹⁰ Although the question of faith did not lose its actuality,¹¹ it was overshadowed by the linguistic feature that turned out to be much more powerful in making a nation and subsequently paving a way to a homogenized national state.

The debates and the studies concerning the place of language and its role in forming a nation were flaring up with distinct power everywhere in Europe,¹² and Romanian political thought of the 19th century was no exception. Just like in Italy, Northern Europe or German-speaking lands, debates concerning the status of the language were held in the Danubian principalities and Transylvania. The Romanian case can hardly be named absolutely unique in comparison with other European linguistic-political disputes and researches of the 19th century, since many of the Romanian linguists, philosophers, historians or politicians were profoundly influenced by foreign ideas spread not only in their circle, but almost everywhere in Europe.¹³ Nevertheless, their vision of the language and its place in the body of the nation had its peculiar specific traits that distinguished it from other European discourses on similar subjects and finally led it to a different path by the turn of the century.

One such feature was the notable radicalism¹⁴ of the Romanian “liberal”¹⁵ thinkers expressed also in their attitude to language, another one is the “strengthening of the patterns of conservative characterology based on appeals to ethnic, rather than institutional continuity”¹⁶ that grew out of the gradual “radicalization” of Romanian liberalism. The political element seeming in many cases conservative or moderate was, however, much more tolerant than the liberal one in terms of the linguistic

¹⁰ It should be added that religious elements can be regarded as binding “cultural instruments”, as religion itself brings certain cultural patterns that become characteristic for a society.

¹¹ Brock, 1976 In his work the author thoroughly describes how finally the common Slovak language wins over Catholic and Lutheran distinctions of the Slovaks.

¹² In order to perceive the whole picture one may refer to Barbour; Carmichael, 2000

¹³ Trencsenyi, 2008, 127-129

¹⁴ Timotei Cipariu, one of the most fervent reformers of the language presented his ideas as the liberal project of modernity. For details see Sata, 2009, 81

¹⁵ The neo-romantic poet Mihai Eminescu can be regarded in some aspects as an extreme nationalist who tried to express clearly xenophobic ideas regarding the Romanian language and its importance. However, the detailed evaluation of the poet’s complicated ideas regarding the “nation” and its “borders” goes far beyond the frames of the current article. This idea is extremely well developed in Murărașu, 1995. See *Chapter 5 and 6, „Xenofobul” and „Antisemitul”*, 183-202

¹⁶ Trencsenyi, 2009, 174

debates.¹⁷ Referring to the Romanian language discourses of the 19th century one may notice that they were also extremely productive, not only proposing experiments, but also putting them into practice. Not the exceptionality of these linguistic debates makes them worthy of thorough research, but the originality of their paths. Being a perfect example of an entanglement of ideas and opinions, the Romanian linguistic debates of the second half of the 19th century, as it is argued in the current article, represent attempts of using the ties of the language as a defensive element that can not only mark the local nation-building strategies, but oppose similar competing foreign schemes.

The current essay can be considered an attempt to see and analyze the place of language in the Romanian political thought of the second half of the 19th century when the Romanian national state emerged on the world arena and its manifestation sharpened the disputes regarding its linguistic and ethnic homogeneity.¹⁸ Furthermore, the article regards the language as a primary strategic instrument in the process of state-building. The ideas about languages as parts of the “bodies of nations” expressed by Romanian thinkers are put into the General European context, which are briefly investigated in the first place. After that, the different sides in the Romanian polemics of the second half of the 19th century are examined. The ideas of the participants of the debates are classified according to several important features of the nation’s body associated with language. Language is explored as an element of national unity, its connection to the nation’s past is viewed and, finally, it is regarded as a manifestation of the national spirit.

The sources that are actively used in the work can be divided into three categories, the first of them being the extracts of the works of Romanian historians, politicians, philosophers, poets or linguists, actively expressing their opinion on the subject in the second half of the 19th century.¹⁹ The second group consists of several books dealing with the

¹⁷ Alexandru Xenopol although his opinion about the language reforms can be viewed to some extent similar to those of Laurian and Cipariu (the emphasis on the Latin origin and structure of the Romanian language), firmly criticized their radical projects, attempting to find a sort of a balance between the opposite ideas and hoping for some tolerant way out of the situation. See Xenopol, 1999, 214-219

¹⁸ For further details, see the significant work of Dan Berindei, Berindei, 2009.

¹⁹ Some of them are Kogălniceanu Mihail, “*Discursuri parlamentare din epoca unirii, 22 sept. 1857-14 dec. 1861*”, 1959, “*Documente diplomatice*”, 1972, Bălcescu, Nicolae, “*Privire asupra stării de față, asupra trecutului și viitorului patriei noastre*”, 1970, Negruzzi Costache, “*Megtiport ország: (Alexandru Lăpusneanu)*”, 1951, Maiorescu, Titu, “*Prelegeri de filosofie*”, 1980, Xenopol Alexandru, “*Natiunea romana*”, 1999, “*Scrieri sociale si filosofice*”, 1967, “*Principile fundamentale ale istoriei*”, 2003,

development of political thought in Romania and the particular analysis of the linguistic theme as one of the most important in the process of the framing of a nation.²⁰ The third type of sources that are important for the work incorporate those dedicated to the history of European nationalism, political and linguistic aspects in general.²¹ These sources also comprise works of eminent non-Romanian authors of the end of the 18th and 19th century.

The European context

The concept of a strong connection between language and nation was developed in Europe by several philosophers, historians and linguists before it managed to reach Romanian soil and find its specific way there. The special attitude to the language as the flesh of the nation is probably more evident on the basis of the German examples.²² At the beginning of the 19th century the Germans did not yet have one national state, being territorially distributed all over Eastern and Central Europe, not united in faith, but sharing the same linguistic and cultural heritage. Already in the second half of the 18th century philosophers like Hamann and Herder began expressing their ideas about language and its ability to bring together a nation. For Hamann “language has a mediating relationship between our reflection, one another, and our world; and as it is not simply the cries of emotion of an animal, so too it is not a smothering curtain between us and the rest of reality. Language also has a mediating role between God and us.”²³ Hamann viewed the origins of language as partly human and partly divine. The most important functions of the language for him became the abilities of creating metaphors, imaginative constructions and symbolic description.

Later the same features would also be seen as the most significant by Mihai Eminescu,²⁴ who willingly or unwillingly also became

Bogdan-Duică, Gheorghe, Maiorescu, Titu și Eminescu, Mihai, “*Documente din Blaj, societatea de mâine (I), 1924*”, Ibrăileanu Garabet, “*Spiritul critic în cultura românească*”, 2011, etc.

²⁰ Murarasu, 1999, Mishkova, 2009, Mitu, 2008, 127-129, Hiemstra, 1987, Hitchins, 1983, Preda, 1999, etc.

²¹ Cloeren, 1988, Barbour; Carmichael, 2000, Hobsbawn, 1992, Hamann, 1759, Herder, 2002, etc.

²² As an example of relatively early attempts to bind the language with the nation see the detailed work of Dunning, Dunning, 1979

²³ Griffith-Dickson, 2008.

²⁴ Murarașu, 1999, 196-198

influenced by Hamann's ideas. Hermann Cloeren notes in his book that unlike the instrumentalists who viewed language just as a simple communication tool, Hamann saw language as the "uterus", the "Deipara of our reason".²⁵ In contrast to Herder's and Sussmilch's idea of a ready-made language given by God, Hamann admits the role of men in constructing it.²⁶ Still more important is the idea of a special function of the language in the life of a human that would also be later actively used by Romanian authors.

Hamann's younger friend Herder also developed the idea that the poetry was the purest form of language that was grasped not as a practical device, but as a spiritual revelation.²⁷ He strongly criticized Rousseau for seeking the origins of the language in purely natural spheres.²⁸ While Rousseau's language was entirely internal, for Herder, the genuine origin of language must be sought in the capacities of the human soul itself.²⁹ The same spiritual attitude to the language would be also typical for Romanian poets like Vasile Alecsandri and Mihai Eminescu.

The idea of the "corrupted" and "uncorrupted" pure language as the essence of a nation, another important feature for the analysis of the Romanian linguistic case, was thoroughly explored by Fichte.³⁰ The German philosopher considered his language to be almost independent from dramatic foreign influences, the tongue that was still baring the fundamental nature of his predecessor³¹ and, hence, a manifestation of the spirit in the Hegelian sense. From the Romanian side Laurian, Cipariu and Maxim would be later preoccupied with re-attachment of the "original" Latin forms to Romanian language,³² "de-corrupting it" in this precarious way. Their rhetoric would strikingly resemble that of Fichte; they would try to present their tongue as pure and binding with the ancestors as possible. However, other participants to the debate, like Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, for instance, would already refer to later European ideas like those of Franzer, Muller and Krohn.³³

Hașdeu's work can be easily related to positivism and viewed within the tendencies of the researches of the German school regarding

²⁵ Cloeren, 1988, 22

²⁶ *Ibidem.*

²⁷ Herder, 2002, 65

²⁸ Herder, Rousseau, 1996, 5-7

²⁹ de Souza, Nigel, 2012, 221-240

³⁰ Fichte, 1922, 55-57

³¹ *Ibidem.*

³² Murărașu, 1999, 190

³³ Datcu., 2006, 455

national folklore with its attempt to use biological classification and infatuation with mystical oriental or ancient languages. He also probably borrowed such terms as “archetype” from Krohn’s Finnish school, and such notions as “ethnopsychology” in linguistics from Steintal.³⁴

Haşdeu also attempted to document the history of the nation relying on folklore and linguistic devices, referring to Muller’s claim that simple myths give roots to later folk legends and tales, therefore this “pure life” of the tongue is the main object of study.

The fact that the Romanian political thought of the 19th century was much influenced by widespread European ideas is obvious. One can also easily see that the concepts of language could also fit into the general frame of the European, especially German ideas. Nevertheless, this fact does not deprive the Romanian debates about language of their originality and peculiarity, but underlines its interconnectedness with the ideas circulating beyond Romanian borders.

The language and the nation. The idea emerges.

“With the failure of the revolutionary movements of 1848 and the formation of the modern Romanian state on the basis of piecemeal political deals of the elites” the Romanian “discourse of national specificity developed a markedly anti-liberal tone as early as the last quarter of the nineteenth century.”³⁵ The ideas of the “generation of 1848” were still influencing the later discourse, but apparently, they were re-digested and acquired slightly nostalgic forms. Hiemstra in his book dedicated to the role of Alexandru Xenopol in the development of Romanian historiography, notes that the views of Mihail Kogălniceanu and Vasile Alecsandri³⁶ and especially their ideas expressed in “The wishes of the National Party in Moldavia” strongly affected Xenopol and later found reflection in his views on Romanian society.³⁷ This influence later resulted in a collection of essays continuing and trying to find the actuality of past debates where the Romanian language played its significant role.³⁸

³⁴ For extended information on Haşdeu’s investigations of folklore and its perception see Barlea, 1974

³⁵ Trencsenyi, 2008, 129-130

³⁶ In order to perceive the character of Vasile Alecsandri’s political activities one may refer to Berindei Dan, 2009, 396-406

³⁷ Hiemstra, 1987, 12-64

³⁸ For further details see Xenopol, “*Natiunea romana*”, 1999 and “*Scrieri sociale si filosofice*”, 1967

The idea of the association of the language with the nation and therefore the attempts to introduce the linguistic factor to a political debate, flared up with distinct power in the beginning of the 50s continuing the disputes begun by Heliade-Rădulescu (the author of the famous Romanian grammar of 1828, who promoted the necessity of the adoption of the phonetical principle of writing and the use of foreign words in order to express new notions),³⁹ Bălcescu (the “stylistic ideal” of Eminescu),⁴⁰ Asachi (like Heliade-Rădulescu, the propagandist of the Romanian language and the founder of the Mihăileana Academy),⁴¹ Kogălniceanu (not only the eminent politician, but also the founder of the journal “*Dacia literară*”) and others. One should also notice that in the 19th century a revolutionary switch from Cyrillic to Latin through the mixed script takes place “modernizing” and “westernizing” Romanian. The change occurred in 1860-1862, preparing the language for the new circumstances. It brought more commodity and regulated the spelling and writing of the words from the purely practical point of view, however, this rapid change also broke a sort of historical continuation with the past, which was essential both for the most fervent reformers and the most convinced “autochtonists”.⁴²

The Romanian linguistic debate of the second half of the 19th century clearly has its roots in the first half of the century. One can trace its origins even further, looking for attitudes to Romanian language and attempts to find the origins of the nation in the works of Dimitrie Cantemir or even in the brâncovenesc chronicle of Radu Greceanu, but it was not until the first half of the 19th century when the idea of language as an inseparable part of a truly national representation emerged. Gheorghe Asachi draws attention to the Moldavian chronicles, proposing the use of the Moldavian dialect as a sample for the whole of Romanian language, the tongue that had to reflect the spirit of the nation.⁴³ Supporting Westernization on the one hand, Asachi remained attached to the old Church language, which he tried to put into the frames of the Latin alphabet; his numerous unregulated experiments with the Latin script, however, found firm criticism from the side of Kogălniceanu.⁴⁴ From the

³⁹ For further details, see Călinescu, 1983.

⁴⁰ Murărasu, 1999, 198.

⁴¹ See Cărăbuș, “*Asachi - un separatist avant la lettre*”, 2004.

⁴² Negruzzi has expressed his personal hard experience when dealing with this rapid change of the script. See Negruzzi, “*Cum am învățat românește*”, 1837.

⁴³ Ibrăileanu, “*Spiritul critic în cultura românească, Amestec de curente contradictorii: G. Asachi*”, 2011, 45-57.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

essays of Garabet Ibrăileanu it becomes clear that Asachi with his infatuation with Latin neologisms, later passion for the “purification” of the language (and sudden support for Heliade-Rădulescu’s ideas to reform it on the basis of modern Italian) and attempts to discover the origins of the nation through its tongue, became the predecessors of the Transylvanian school of purists (first the Bukovinian Aron Pumnul and then Maxim, Cipariu and Laurian).⁴⁵

One may conclude that the debates about the Romanian language had begun much earlier than the second half of the 19th century. However, it was not until the beginning of the 50s when the idea of a general linguistic propaganda appeared: the enthusiastic appeal of Heliade-Rădulescu “Write, boys, write, whatever you want, just write in Romanian!” expressed in “Dacia literară”⁴⁶ gradually lost its initial sense when already in the 60s there appeared many authors expressing their thoughts in Romanian, and the question of “quality” became more important than that of simply “spreading the language”.

The language and the nation. The idea develops.

Viewing the way the language was grasped in the Romanian political thought of the second half of the 19th century, one may notice that its perception was a form of spirit that legitimizes the shift of the nationality (despite the actual origin of the person one may be considered Romanian if one embraced by the national spirit expressed also in the language⁴⁷). New nationalism that emerged later would change the perception of the language and the nation that would result in Hasdeu’s ideas of dealing with the language and the nation on biological terms.⁴⁸

Between these two tendencies the language debates were fluctuating from “Autochtonists”⁴⁹ to the radical “Purists”. The wide range of opinions allows to classify at least a modest number of the participants, viewing them as close to one or another pole, although the

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ Rădulescu, 1978, 22.

⁴⁷ Clearly variations of Hegel’s ideas expressed in his “Phenomenology of spirit”, for further details see Hegel, 1998, 487.

⁴⁸ For further information about the process of formation of Haşdeu’s ideas about the language see Oprişan, 1990.

⁴⁹ In the current essay the word “Autochton” or “Traditionalist” is used only in the sense of the attitude of the language regardless of social or economic ideas of the Romanian authors.

picture in many cases turns out to be much more complicated than presented within the sketched “groups”.

In 1854 Cipariu’s famous book “Elements of the Romanian language on the basis of dialects and old monuments”⁵⁰ appeared. Cipariu’s attempts to “reanimate” the past were, however, strongly connected to his idea of a “Romanian nation that once existed”.⁵¹ A rather moderate attempt of discovering the national roots of Cipariu was not unique. It was a logical step on the romanticist path of understanding the past. Introducing plural ending forms of “-ure” in the language (Eminescu borrowed them from Cipariu, his poem “Mirror” (“Oglinda”) being an example), Cipariu hoped to re-discover the nation in the language, viewing the tongue as a proof and a witness at the same time. Though, he hardly wished to go beyond the “rediscovering”.

Cipariu’s view was much less radical and focused on the Latin roots than that of Laurian and Maxim, who finally decided to “invent” the pure Latin forms that had hardly ever existed, without referring to chronicles or any accessible historic source that could contain any sort of linguistic evidence. These tendencies were already clear in 1840 in Maxim’s “Tentamen criticum”, where he tried to turn the Romanian language into an almost classical Latin.⁵² Active mostly in Bukovina and Transylvania, the radical purists had ideas going further than simple reconstructions. With the help of their linguistic creations they tried to “craft” a nation, the one they supposed that had once existed. The “Purists” were not pleased only with the ideas of invoking the Roman historical heritage of the Romanians, but actually wished to make the Romanians of the 19th century with their linguistic and cultural background the most evident continuation of Ancient Rome. This continuation, evidently, presupposed no cultural break or disjunction that had to be reflected in the language.

Pumnul, one of the leading Latinists from Bukovina, was one of those who successfully introduced the ideas of the pure neo-Latin Romanian language in practice, trying to educate the “new nation” in the purist way. Petrino in his “Puține cuvinte despre coruperea limbii române în Bucovina” (‘a few words about the corruption of the Romanian language in Bucovina’) wrote that the young men coming from the gymnasium in Cernăuți after completing their studies, returned to their

⁵⁰ Murărașu, 1999, 190.

⁵¹ *Ibidem.*

⁵² *Ibidem.*

homes speaking in such a way that nobody could understand them.⁵³ The students left their homes speaking Romanian and returned expressing themselves in some artificially made language. Petrino's attitude to this philology and its reforms is totally negative; he generally views it more like an "illness" than something useful.⁵⁴

The "purists", trying to re-attach Latin forms to Romanian and borrow French or Italian (the idea promoted already by Heliade-Rădulescu) met very strong criticism from the side of their opponents. Those adversaries were the "Autochtonists" (Negruzzi, Alecsandri, later Hașdeu, Odobescu) and also individuals with their specific positions "in-between" the two edges like Eminescu, Xenopol and some others.

The "autochtonists" saw the language as a natural product, not corrupted by the Latin, Slavic or Greek words and constructions, but built and shaped by them all together: those were the elements that had contributed to the making of the nation, and their presence in the language simply reflected the fact that was extremely hard to deny. The literary group Junimea with Maiorescu as its spiritual leader⁵⁵ took a conservative position supporting such traditionalist politicians and literary critics as Vasile Pogor and Petre Carp.⁵⁶ The reaction of Junimea to Cipariu's grammar (less radical than "Temtanem criticum")⁵⁷ and radical purist experiments, was well expressed by Burlă who underlined that the "philologists (meaning apparently Cipariu, Laurian and Maxim all together) did not see the language as a natural organism, they did not want to learn from it, but wanted it to learn from them".⁵⁸ The "autochtonist" view of the language was simple and had a logical core: the language was the "treasure" of the nation, its representation,⁵⁹ and it had to be preserved in its original forms even if they were archaic. In their eyes, the heritage of the people was being corrupted by the "Latinists" and their attempts to segregate the nation from its real spiritual aspect.

In 1872 Hașdeu's comedy "Ortho-Nerozia" ("Orthographical stupidity") appeared, where one of the heroes, Hagi Pana, finally reminds the public that the mutilation of the language in French manner is not

⁵³ Petrino, *Putine cuvinte despre coruperea limbii române în Bucovina*, 1869.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ Maiorescu's position regarding the linguistic discourse in terms of the nation is a bit more complicated and it is viewed later in the text.

⁵⁶ Maiorescu, 2010, 87.

⁵⁷ An example of a very cautious view of Timotei Cipariu's grammar can be found in Barițiu, 1867, 1-2.

⁵⁸ Burlă, 1872, 41.

⁵⁹ Murărașu, 1999, 191-195.

orthography, but orthographical stupidity.⁶⁰ As a reaction to Laurian's and Maxim's dictionary of Romanian, Odobescu, another opponent of the Latinists and the "Frenchisits" wrote in his Pseudo-Kynegetikos:

„D-aşa lătinie dobitocească,
d-aşa păcălitoare franţuzească
unul Domnul să ferească
limba noastră părintească!”⁶¹

The same views were shared and defended by Iacob Negruzzi and Vasile Alecsandri, who, being a poet, was especially enraged by the attempts of the Latinists to “steal” the language from the nation.⁶²

The spirit of the nation. Expanding the issues.

The notion of the language becomes almost identical to that of the nation for both sides; their active debates seem to be sharpening in the second half of the 19th century as the tongue, viewed nearly as the face and spirit of the nation, had to answer to some specific criterion, created by both sides. Notably it was not the new script that caused the main disputes (the Latin script was accepted primarily because it made the spelling of the words closer to their pronunciation and was much easier to perceive),⁶³ but the grammar and the vocabulary, the “core” of the language. While all the participants of the debates finally began to discover the language in its national sense, there were some who could not fit in neither the Latinist, nor the purist circle.

Maiorescu, for instance, strongly criticized the Latinists,⁶⁴ but in “Neologisme” he clearly expressed the idea that “foreign words” did not have to be tolerated (including the relatively newly borrowed Slavic and French examples). Maiorescu willingly accepted and supported the new Latin script (out of practical reasons, primarily) and recognized the Romance structure of the Romanian language, however, never showed any sympathy for the purists.⁶⁵ Unlike Maiorescu's considerations, the

⁶⁰ *Papadima*, 1968, 225.

⁶¹ Odobescu A. cited in Murarasu, 1999, 193 (From this frigging Latin, from this French fooling, God only can protect the language of our parents!).

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ For detailed and extended informati on the process of the transformation of the Romania language see Lörinczi Angioni, 1982, 75–85.

⁶⁴ *Analele ştiinţifice ale universităţii A.I. Cuza din Iasi*”, volume 14, 48.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

views of the eminent national poet Mihai Eminescu on the Romanian language had become almost symbolic.⁶⁶ For Eminescu the language was exactly “the nation”,⁶⁷ he viewed its forms as almost sacred in the sense of the spirit, not always the form. Eminescu despised the “Franco-Bulgarian jargon”⁶⁸ of many of his contemporaries, expressing admiration only for Bălcescu’s style. His Romanian nationalism was not that based on the Roman or Latin element (he supported neither the “Latinists”, nor the “Traditionalists” in the linguistic debates), but the one nostalgic about the long ago gone Dacian myth.⁶⁹ Murărasu, in his influential book, shows Eminescu’s nationalism as the one based on language and neo-romantic ideas, but also going beyond that.⁷⁰

The poet is neither liberal, nor purely conservative. The only aspect of his views that is definite is his radicalism: Eminescu hated the foreign elements (not making any distinction between French, Italian, Slavic or Turkish borrowings), held a skeptical attitude towards the Romans, and idealized the Dacian legends and firmly criticized the linguistic ideas of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, the poet had a rather close relation with Aron Pumnul, whose linguistic ideas he did not purely support, but whose attitude to the language was very similar to that of Eminescu himself. This attitude again strongly reminds of Fichte’s and Hegel’s concepts, although for Pumnul it also presupposed a possible reform in order to reach the spiritual core of the tongue. Pumnul wrote: “The people are the flesh of the nation, the language is its spirit. And because the body without the soul is dead, dead is the nation without the language. The nationality is the divine, eternal, inborn and inseparable right to use one’s language in all the needs of life: at home, in church, in school, in official places”⁷¹.

Similar admiration for the language is characteristic also for the historian, Alexandru Xenopol. However, language for him is a natural physic aspect, almost as race.⁷² The historian was against the purists because they “confronted the nature of the language”, however, he also believed that France was Romania’s “bigger sister”,⁷³ the Romanian language was profoundly Romance and the other elements were of much

⁶⁶ Rădulescu-Pogoneanu I, 1903.

⁶⁷ Murarasu, Op, 1999, 190-203.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ See Eminescu, *Geniul Pustiului*, 1966 or refer to his poem “Rugăciunea unui dac”.

⁷⁰ Murărașu, 1999, 190-203.

⁷¹ Pumnul, 1889.

⁷² Xenopol, 1999, 197-203.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 147.

less importance. He also noted the “noble Roman origin of the Romanians” saying that “Cantemir would have felt such shame for the Romanians who had fallen so low, when they came from such a noble breed,” referring mainly to the ethnic aspect of the nation.⁷⁴ Xenopol admitted the usefulness of Greek, Slavic or Turkish words and constructions in Romanian, but he claimed that they did not form the “essence” of the language and the nation⁷⁵ the way traditionalists saw it. All the participants of the discourse, despite the differences in their views on history, nation and language, agreed that the tongue was the unique element that could bring the nation together. Xenopol pointed out that language possesses much stronger binding power than religion.⁷⁶

Language could break or restore the connection of the nation with its past, imaginary or real causing more profound arguments about origin and descent to appear. For this reason Hasdeu, another important figure in the debates, was trying to perceive the nation from its linguistic side, attempting to discover its past through its language, however, without reconstructing it,⁷⁷ Maxim and Laurian were “inventing” the tongue that they supposed could bring them closer to the authentic Roman past, and Eminescu wrote in an article in 1876: “And as the spirit and the language are almost identical, and the language and the nationality are the same, it becomes clear that the Romanian wishes himself, he wants his nationality, and this he wants fully”.⁷⁸ When reflecting on Petru Maior’s claims (notably a Transylvanian and a Greek-Catholic⁷⁹), Maiorescu opposed him, pointing out that the supposition that the Romanians were “purely Roman-blooded descendants of Ancient Rome because all the Dacians had been exterminated by the conquerors”, was a dangerous lie.⁸⁰ Just like Maiorescu, Kogălniceanu expressed the same ideas already in 1843 when addressing the audience in his “Introduction to the course of national history”: “You will find a Romanian in me, and I would never so far contribute to the cause of “romanomania”, the madness to call ourselves

⁷⁴ Xenopol, 1999, 145

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, 151

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 185

⁷⁷ Barlea, 1974

⁷⁸ Eminescu, 1876, 138

⁷⁹ For further information see Protase, Maria, 1973 Notably, the Transylvanian thinkers tended to emphasize the role of the language much more than that of religion or common past shared with the Balkan countries mainly because of the Greek-Catholic background of many of them. Unlike the majority of their Moldovan and Wallachian kin under the influence of the continuous Greek Orthodox tradition, they were much more exposed to assimilation policies of the Austrian Empire.

⁸⁰ Maiorescu, 2010, 91

“Romans”, a passion that now rules mostly in Transylvania, but is also common among some writers from Wallachia”.⁸¹

History seemed to be a much simpler accessible target than language, which could not be deprived of its true character, in spite of the attempts of the purists. However, Maiorescu agreed that the language needed modernization as well (in this aspect the purists did act as the pioneers of orthographical commodity), because without linguistic reforms one could hardly achieve the modernization of the country. It should be noted that only linguistic unity could create a modernized state, and only language could make it homogeneous.

The methods of uniting a state through the methods of the language were not original. For instance, they were actively put into practice by the Hungarian government in the last quarter of the 19th century. In the example of the city of Pressburg (contemporary Bratislava) one may see how the “magyarization” (just one of the numerous examples) worked. Bratislava was supposed to become a city of one language and people loyal to this language and to the Hungarian state.⁸² However, one should notice that these methods were originally introduced not because of the national hatred towards one’s nationality, but because of the need of the country’s industrial modernization. Without one official language, nobody could ever modernize any state. This fact explains to some extent the reason for the establishment of such a strategy that soon became very oppressive. While in the fifties the people who declared themselves Hungarians were outnumbered by the German majority and a rather large number of Slovaks, by the beginning of the 20th century the situation had changed completely, the Hungarians being the majority in the city.⁸³ In this case not only the main aspect, but also the main “weapon” was the language, because the Hungarians or the “Hungarian speakers” did not only have to magyarize the Slovaks or the Germans, but first to modernize their own language, having debates of their own.

Just like the Hungarians, the Romanians had to modernize the language and the arguments of the “glorious past”, “historical legacy” and “national unity” not only in history, traditions or religion, but also in the language that had absorbed all of these characteristics, in the language that was almost identical with the notion of the nation. For Eminescu and Hașdeu, as also for the majority of linguistical “Autochtonists” the true

⁸¹ Ibrăileanu, 2011, 22

⁸² Babejová, 2003, 156

⁸³ Van Duin, 2009, 33-43

uncorrupted language was strongly connected with folk tradition. Eminescu would write that there was “one undividable language” of all the Romanians, the same in the village and in the palaces that had brought the nation together unlike the “parrot’s tongue” of “the new Academicians”.⁸⁴ The “new Academicians”, however, believed they were reanimating the past and bringing it back to the nation, that could be united just with the same device – the common, but apparently “forgotten” and, hence, “new” language. The “Traditionalists” were against any interference with the tongue’s life in any possible way as it had to preserve every of its part in order to truly represent the nation.

When exploring the linguistic debate in the context of the Romanian political thought of the second half of the 19th century, one may observe that the polemics about the language and its ties to the nation and modernization of the national state had their roots not only in the issues developed by the earlier generation of Romanian authors, but also in general European and especially German philosophical ideas of the time. The language was regarded as a strong tie to the past, the part of the national mythology and a key to a modern state by the participants of the debates, however their competing agendas and ways of claiming “rights over the tongue” differed significantly. Not only poets, linguists and literary critics, but also politicians, philosophers and historians were greatly involved in the disputes about the forms and the origins of the language. One may also admit how the status of the language slowly changed from that of the admiration for a spirit of the nation (like in the case of Eminescu, Pumnul and others) to that of a natural, almost biological element of the nation (Hașdeu, Xenopol). Later the language discourse was continued in the 20th century by a new generation of poets, historians, writers and philosophers (Iorga⁸⁵, Blaga, Bacovia, Noică and Arghezi are only few examples of them). Based on the ideas of their predecessors they would still see the language as a unique binding element of the nation. As Xenopol pointed out, “our national idea has started once with the introduction of the Romanian language in Church in the course of the 17th century”⁸⁶ and then continues “the unity of the Romanian spirit at least remains through its key element – the language –

⁸⁴ Cited in Murărasu , 1999, 198

⁸⁵ In Iorga’s case see his reflection of the spaces of the spread of the Romanian language in Iorga, 1996, 39-40

⁸⁶ Xenopol, 1999, 205

both in the cultured class and in the lower layers of the whole Romanian people”.⁸⁷

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⁸⁷ Xenopol, 1999, 217.

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