# Religious Elements in the Romanian Political Oratory: from 1848's Spring of Nations to 1877's Independence War

**Roxana PATRAŞ**

*Les grandes victoires de l'art oratoire de la Roumanie inaugural n'ont pas été fabriqués à partir de simples mots et petit entretien. Les grands hommes politiques et intervenants publics ont réellement fondé leur art de l'éloquence sur la connaissance approfondie de la nature humaine et sur ses phases historiques marquantes. Dans un siècle d'incrédulité amer, quand les philosophes ont proclamé la mort de Dieu, ou au moins la chute de Dieu en désuétude, les orateurs inspirés ont su se glisser dans les robes des prêtres. En bref, les prédicateurs se sont transformés en orateurs politiques. Notre étude suit les étapes de cette transition (de la chaire à prêcher à l'éloquence politique) en demandant des questions telles que: le trope de matrones sanctifiés ( la mère sacrifiée, la fidèle épouse et veuve rédemptrice) comme un symbole de la nationalité et du dévouement sacrificiel; le trope de « peuple élu de Dieu», définissant les Roumains comme les derniers chrétiens des Balkans , le trope de la sainteté des institutions de l'État, qui sanctifie le Roi, la Constitution, le Parlement et les parties . Les mutations stylistiques, les glissades idéologiques et la mobilité générique de l'éloquence politique moderne doivent beaucoup à ses conditions de production spécifiques: tout d'abord, la construction du discours politique roumain concerne le processus de la formation et de l'affirmation des élites, ensuite, en dehors de la liberté d'expression, d'un forum débat et la démocratie, l'éloquence du discours politique est découpée selon une logique de discours écrit, troisièmement, l'extrême implication de l'Eglise orthodoxes (nationales) dans les combats centenaires du peuple roumain contre la dissolution, infuse les discours des pionniers d'un veine prophétique et une disposition visionnaire, qui reviennent avec une force pathétique de temps en temps.*

*Mots-clés: rhetorique, l'éloquence politique, la prédication, le peuple élu de Dieu, les institutions d'état.*

## 1. Introduction

During the 19th century, the Romanian oratory styled itself both as a widely celebrated art of public speaking, and as an inclusive linguistic platform, where the national idiom could expose its hasty development, youthful dynamism and dashing variety. In spite of its opening toward Western world and quasi-mimicry of great European eloquence (for instance, Napoleon III's political circle, the French or the English Parliament are frequently called in so as to anchor the orators' stands), a bunch of cultural traits imprints its personality with an indisputable local air.



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First of all, we notice that the construction of the Romanian political discourse relates, on the one hand, to the process of the elites' constitution and self-assertion and, on the other hand, to the specificity of cesitary suffrage and representatives' selection. At any rate, this should imply a pretty high standard of public display, proportionally with the elevation and democratic education that the Romanian young intelligentsia just acquired after leaving their old Phanariotes' ways. Second, a quick investigation of the Romanian orators' biographies might reveal that a tremendous majority of our public speakers formed their skills and framed their mental schemes not within an oral medium, reproducing the forum conditions of dialogue, but within the written media. To the point, it should be mentioned that, before being elected as parliamentary representatives, these personalities had been journalists or reputed columnists. It follows that – at least, for the "founding fathers" of Romanian oratory such as I. C. Brătianu, C. A. Rosetti, Mihail Kogălniceanu and Vasile Alecsandri – the eloquence of the political speech is cut according to a rationale of written discourse. Third, having in mind the extreme involvement of (national) Orthodox Church within the Romanian people's centennial fights against dissolution, let us note that the pioneers' speeches are travelled over by two main underground currents: Christian faith and nationalism.

Actually, the rhetoric of inceptive Romanian oratory comprises a set of religious and nationalist tropes that sometimes overlap, but oftentimes overrun into complete indistinctness. It is not at all surprising that the reference anthologies of Romanian oratory – e.g. Vasile V. Haneş's *Antologia oratorilor români* (*The Anthology of Romanian Orators*, 1944), Vistian Goia's *Oratori şi elocinţă românească* (*Romanian Eloquence and Its Orators*, 1985), Gh. Buzatu's *Discursuri şi dezbateri parlamentare* (*Parliamentary Speeches and Debates*, 2006) – display a blend of eloquence genres and styles, ushered in by speeches belonging to famous personalities of the Orthodox Church such as Antim Ivireanul. As a matter of fact, the varieties of Romanian oratory (political, juridical, theological, and academic) seem to spring from the same stem: invariably, this is the tradition of pulpit speeches delivered by Orthodox priests into Romanian in order to differentiate them from the official language of sermons, the old Slavonic.

**2. The Figure of Sanctified Matrons: Nationality and Devotion**

It is from the first appeals of The Romanian Students' Society in Paris that the figure of sanctified motherhood – both as a signal of national coalescence and as a trope of devotion and mystic sacrifice – is fashioned precisely to impress the formless and crude soul of the Romanian nation. One of the Society's first formal documents, edited under Lamartine's high patronage, reads as follows: "*Come, thou Romania, to take your first rank, your ancient radiance, some used to say, and Romania shook out the dust of her grave, and her face started catching the colours of life; had it been more like him and like them, her blessed womb would have carried forth sons of glory and light, that God would send to sing, believe and love; had it been more like him and like them, the light would have got down among us, and brotherhood would be among us, and faith would be within our hearts, and the heavenly blessing onto all of us! The Romanians had found under the Capitol a living and bloody head, who betrothed them*



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*that he would be the Head, the Judge of whole World; and they believed him; so, all of you, Romanians, have faith! That head is for us our country [...] Old parents, have mercy on the land that had seest you getting old [...] Yet, you still have the religion's staff as foothold; in your defiance, many of your sons have neither the religion, nor the morality of philosophy as foothold [...] Wherefrom could your sons get this teaching?*" (*Anul 1848…- Year 1848 in the Romanian Principalities*, 1902: 17-19)[1].

The quotation illustrates hence a drift from an established topos, that is, the country represented in martial Virgin, draped by the freedom's flag. This starts its career within the Western iconic tradition once with the French Revolution. For instance, Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* or Jacques-Louis David's *Intervention of the Sabine Women*, and also the legions of Joan D'Arc thematic paintings ("la pucelle d'Orleans" is a recurrent face, hunting everybody, from the neoclassic school to the Pre-Raphaelites) bring their contribution to the settlement of a symbolic connection: an interbreeding between the Virgin's figure and the pagan "vestal"/goddess, between the Christian Saint Mary and the purity of new national pursuits.

However, the primeval Romanian oratory drops out the "virginal" representations, *les pucelles*, and adjusts its political purposes to the figures of married women, of gentility matrons. Three of them occur constantly, namely the sacrificed mother, the loyal spouse and the redemptive widow: "*Women! Thou who had been the last to the cross' foot and the first to the gravestone [...] Women-wives! Thou who ruined thyselves in thy husbands' underneath prisons [...] Women-mothers! Thou who knowest the great and beautiful mystery of creation [...] thou, God's true mirror!*" (Ibidem)[2]. The oratorical expression turns mainly to pregnancy as a striking visual image of painful buoyancy, a pregnancy whose fruitage is meant to be a newborn race; nonetheless, this company of freed men introduces itself both as God's chosen people ("*again, the womb shall carry forth sons of glory and light, that God shall send to sing, believe and love*"), and as the "*corpus matris*", actually a suggestion of maternal birth

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[1] *"Vino, Românie, să-ţi iei rangul tău cel dintâiu, lucirea ta cea veche, dziseră unii, şi România se sculă, scuturâ de pe dânsa pulberea mormântului, faţa ei începu iar a-şi lua colorile vieţii; încă câţiva ca el şi ca dânşii, şi pântecele-i binecuvântate de ceruri vor începe iar a rodi fii de glorie şi de lumină, ce Dumnedzeu îi va trimite să cânte, să creadă şi să iubească! Încă câţiva ca ei şi ca dânsul, şi lumina se va coborî şi la noi şi frăţia va fi între noi, şi credinţa în inimile noastre, şi binecuvântarea cerului pe noi! Românii găsiră sub Capitoliu un cap viu şi sângerat ce le făgădui cum-că vor fi capul, judecătorul lumii; şi ei credzură; şi aşa fiţi cu credinţă Români! Căci capul acela la noi este ţara [...] Părinţi bătrânî, fie-vă milă de pământul pe care aţi îmbătrânit [...] Dar voi aveţi credinţa religiei drept reazăm: şi mulţi din fii nu au nici religia, nici, în locu-i, moralul filosofiei, ca să-i sprijine[...] şi aceasta de unde să o înveţe fiii voştri?"*

[2] *"Femei! voi, ce furăţi cele mai de pe urmă la picioarele crucii, cele dintâi la capul mormântului; voi ce daţi cununi la eroi, miresme la martiri; ce daţi vieaţa pe schimbul de moarte; ce furăţi jertfe şi niciodată junghitori; ce covârşiţi pe bărbat prin instinctele sentimentului. Femei soţii! voi, ce vă ruinaţi în temniţe adânci cu soţii voştri; ce v-aţi mistuit în flăcări după moartea lor; în numele suferinţelor voastre, pe floarea frumuseţii ce v-o vestesce suflarea profană a celor neluminaţi; pe inima voastră cea sfântă, ce o speculă, o vând, o usucă şi o spulberă în vânturi acei ce nu sciţi ce este Dumnedzeu! Femei mume! Ce sciţi şi simţiţi taina cea mare şi frumoasă a creaţiei; voi, ce murinde depuneţi cu iubire pe om la porţile vieţii şi el adesea cu indiferenţă vă pune în mormânt; voi oglinda dumnedzeirii"*



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sacrifice, enabling a post-sacrificial, national communion. For the Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the female body epitomizes the newly united country: "*Now thou are the sons of the same country: is it not Romania's land which feeds all of you?*"[3] (*Proclamaţiunea Măriei-sale Domnitorul Alexandru Ioan I - The Proclamation of His Higness*, *Prince Alexander John I to Peasant Inhabitants,* 1900). It might raise some interest the fact that the allegory of the ripped body does not belong only to 1848 oratorical texts, but travels along two historical decades, up to 1877, when Mikhail Kogalniceanu puts it in the following words: "*And the victim of all these wars had always been poor Romania, who was always paying for everyone, who was paying the quarrels, the disputes, the others' ambitions, and she paid even more copiously by paying the price of her own body: sometimes Bucowina, other times Bessarabia*"[4] (*Discursul lui Mihail Kogălniceanu asupra politicii externe a României în condiţiile crizei orientale - Mikhail Kogălniceanu's Speech on Romania's Foreign Policy under the Conditions of Eastern Crisis*, in *Discursuri şi dezbateri parlamentare 1864-2004 – Parliamentary Speeches and Debates 1864-2004*, 2006: 74-88.). Briefly, let us observe that, appealing to fertile motherhood and not to austere chastity, the customary tropes of founding nationalist speeches revert to O. T. Hebrew motives, which are supposed to be more effective for audience persuasion. Jesus Christ's pacifism does not suit for now the combative humour of Romanian "founding fathers" and their speeches.

Established by the Romanian students from Paris around 1840, the Society repeatedly hosted Edgar Quinet, who formerly had married Gheorghe Asachi's daughter, Hermiona Asachi. One of the most prominent society figures is Dimitrie Brătianu, a well-known political leader of the 1848 Revolution. His discourse from 1847 (with a brisk of prophetic improvisation) brings about the image of the unkempt Temple, disputed between the Evil Spirit and God. Its discursive formula blends in the allusion to the dishonoured mother who is left in decay and poverty by a hoard of prodigal sons: "*And in this solemn moment, fatal indeed, don't you hear the child? When the child yells and yells, and rolls, when the child yells, and thrusts back into Romania's womb, so that he won't be delivered anymore, so that he won't witness the shame of his mother's ripping, we, all of us in the blossom of our years, right in the middle of Paris, we line up at the hotel's doors [...] Oh, God! Alas! Fie on us! Fie on you, poor Romania, who crawling, soaked in blood and soiled, at our feet, still have faith in our salvation! Ay! You, cruel! You, wretches! Don't you see it, don't you really see it, wretches? Here she is, here she is, she is your own mother, your mother, your parents' and your children's mother. Don't you see her, don't you hear her, and don't you feel her, wretches, while she is clinging on your necks [...] calling with an expiring*

[3] *"Acum sunteţi toţi fii ai aceleiaşi ţări: au pământul României nu este muma care va hrăneşte pe toţi?".*
[4] *„Şi victima mai tuturor acestor războaie străine era tot biata Românie, care plătea pentru toţi, care plătea certele, neînţelegerile, ambiţiunile altora şi plătea pierzând chiar părţi din trupul ei: când Bucovina, când Basarabia".*



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*voice: Mercy! Mercy! Don't leave me, my beloved!*" (*Anul 1848 – Year 1848*, 1902: 61-73)[5].

The cataclysmic end of Dimitrie Bratianu's political speech builds on the tropes of a crowned almighty Mother whose eyes shine like God's fire. Its presence does not have the material reality of flesh and blood because Romania borrows God's fiery face and seems to turn into the God of Gospels Himself: "*Cause the time of Romania has stroked, and the coronation day has come! Romania's diadem is ready, and Romania's diadem is the most beautiful turned out by God's hands. It has been for 18 centuries since God is chiselling her raiment. We cannot see her: if only we had seen her once, our faces would have burned to ashes. Her brilliants shine, and burn like God's eyes; the sunrays are just the reflection of her rays! Her brilliants! Her brilliants are saint like the blood that was shed on Jesus' cross; her brilliants are the very tears of Romanian martyrs*" (*Ibidem*)[6]. Nevertheless, the symbol of Jesus' Cross and the Calvary narration keep themselves undertone, complying the function of mere expressive ornament; on the contrary, all brilliants and jewels, Romania's character figures out of her august air and motherly demeanour.

Correspondingly, the so-called "protestations" written by the Moldavian political leaders of 48' Revolution draw the figure of the Biblical Father in order to slant it ironically into a phrase such as "the country's father" (see *Protestatie in numele Moldovei, al omenirii si al lui Dumnedzeu - Protestation on behalf of Moldavia, Humankind and God*, in *Gândirea românească în epoca paşoptistă - Romanian Thought of 1848 Revolution*, vol. I, 1969: 150-169). Counting on the accumulative effect of repetition, the well-known poet and revolutionary leader Vasile Alecsandri names Price Mihail Sturza – the cruel oppressor of poor people, the rude censor of the blossoming Moldavian press and the robber of the people's pension fund – "the country's father" (*parintele patriei*). The manifest spread by the 1848 revolutionaries slap the Prince with phrases such as "crowned beast that sucks the country's best blood" („*fiara încoronată, care suge sângele cel mai bun al ţării*"). Just the same, fired by the independence cause, the 1877 speeches count several ironic turns on the figure of fatherhood, targeting either the Pope or the Sultan, as perfectly coincident enemies of the Romanian national ideals: "*who was always blocking us in achieving such*

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[5] *"Şi într-acest moment solenel, fatal, când copilul nu-l audziţi? Când copilul ţipă, când copilul ţipă, se svîrcolesce, când copilul ţipă, se opintesce în pântecele României, ca să nu nască, numai ca să vadă ruşinea înjunghierii maicei lui: noi, noi în floarea juniei noastre, în mijlocul Parisului, la picioarele otelului [...]. A, Dumnedzeule! Vai! Vai noue! Vai ţie, biată Românie, ce te târăsci înmuiată în sânge şi batjocorită la picioarele noastre, şi mai nădăjduesci scăpare în noi! A! Crudzilor! Nenorociţilor! N-o vedeţi, n-o vedeţi, nenorociţilor! Eat-o, eat-o, este ea, a voastră maică, maica voastră, a părinţilor şi a copiilor voştri. N-o vedeţi, n-o audziţi, n-o simţiţi, n-o simţiţi, nenorociţilor, n-o simţiţi agăţată de gâturile voastre [...] strigându-vă cu suflarea murindului: Milă! Milă! Dragii mei, nu mă lăsaţi!".*

[6] *"Căci ceasul României a sunat, dziua încoronării a sosit! Diadema României este isprăvită, şi diadema României este diadema cea mai frumoasă ce a eşit din manile Dumnedzeirii. Sunt optspredzece veacuri de când Dumnedzeu el însuşi lucrează la podoabele ei. Noi nu o putem vede: de am zări-o numai, feţele noastre ar arde. Briliantele ei lucesc, ard ca ochii lui Dumnedeu; radzele soarelui nu sunt decât refletul radzelor lor. Briliantele ei! Briliantele ei sunt sfinte ca sângele ce a curs pe crucea lui Isus, briliantele ei sunt lacrămile martirilor Români."*



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*deeds, for exactly 20 years, that is from 1857 to present day, who else than Turkey? And Turkey only ? Always the Sultan, like a second Pope, like the Pope of Islam, has answered our claims with 'Non possumus'. Whether from Rome or Constantinople, all around, we met with the same word: Non possumus*" (qtd. source, in *Parliamentary Speeches and Debates*, 2006: 74-88)[7]. The only exception to the rule can be found in Alexandru Ioan Cuza's "proclamation" of peasants' right to land property: "*And now, my most beloved peasants, be glad and step to your work good-heartedly, cause work elevates and brings fruit, and let that your parents' God bless the first seed that you shall sow into the first freed blade of your own lands*"[8] (*The Proclamation of His Highness the Prince Alexander John I to Peasant Inhabitants,* 1900)

All in all, the sacrificial figure of "gentility matrons" and the demonic countenance of the "country's father" create an effect of fearful ideological symmetry between democracy motherhood icons and tyranny fatherly frowns.

**3. The Romanians – God's chosen people, the last Christians from the Balkans**

The second line of religious elements pertains to a set of apocalyptic warnings and menaces. Drawing from the first stirs of Decadent Movement, which virtually influenced the community of Romanian students dwelling in Paris around 1840, the Armageddon is actually incensed by the sore acknowledgment of exile; already an epitome of projected national unity, the students from both Romanian Principalities decry the actual conditions of administrative and political division: "*we soiled our own name, the name 'Romanian', and God punished us, so that we don't have a name anymore […] God punished us, so that we don't have a country anymore*" (*Year 1848*, 1902: 61-73)[9]. At times, arrested by visionary pauses and silences, as rhythmical and explosive as thunder, Dimitrie Bratianu's prophetic voice can be almost listened to: "*Ay! Don't you protest? Aren't your chairs crushing under your weight? I howl against you, I slaughter you, and you don't even protest? God be praised! […] Still, all our life was nothing but a lie; all our life was nothing but idolatry, a long idolatry, a filthy idolatry; we cry "country", we raise our hands to the skies, and deep in our hearts we worship only ourselves*"(*Ibidem*)[10].

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[7] *"cine ne-a împiedicat mai mult în aceste opere, şi anume de la 1857 şi până astăzi, adică în 20 ani, decât Turcia? Şi numai Turcia? Pururea sultanul, ca un al doilea papă, ca papa islamului, a răspuns la cererile noastre prin zicerea: Non possumus, acelaşi cuvânt în Roma şi Constantinopole: Non possumus."*

[8] *"Şi acum, iubiţilor mei săteni, bucuraţi-vă şi păşiţi la muncă în bună voie, care înalţă şi creşte, şi Dumnezeul părinţilor noştri să binecuvântedze seminţia ce veţi arunca pe cea întâia bradzdă liberă a ogoarilor voastre".*

[9] *"Am batjocorit numele de Român, şi Dumnedzeu ne-a pedepsit, nu mai avem nume; am scuipat pe legea părinţilor noştri şi Dumnedzeu ne-a pedepsit, nu mai avem lege; am traficat cu patria noastră şi Dumnedeu ne-a pedepsit, nu mai avem patrie. Sunt câţiva ani, noi închinam la masă şi cu cine!... când Românul, după ce lucra toată dziua pământul cel mai roditor al globului, seara era redus să se hrănească cu coaje de copaciu, voi, dar voi, dănţuiaţi".*

[10] *"A! nu protestaţi? Scaunele nu se sfarămă sub voi? Eu strig împotriva voastră, vă arunc defăimări, şi voi nu protestaţi? Dumnedzeule, fii lăudat! […]dar, toată vieaţa noastră n-a fost decât o minciună, o minciună din toate dzilele; toată vieaţa noastră n-a fost decât o idolatrie, o lungă idolatrie, idolatrie*



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It is precisely this oratorical vein that flares the future discourses which deal with Romania's historical mission. Moreover, within the cultural and religious landscape of the Balkans, the biblical motif of the "chosen people" develops into the recurrent idea that the only nation left to save Christendom is the Romanians: "*That land was the grand duel's theatre, the most dramatic, most terrible and saint that has ever been written in the human race's annals; a few years before, on behalf of humanity, on behalf of God, the Romanians fought the duel between past and present, between darkness and light, between barbarity and civilisation, between paganism and Christendom, between chaos and God; and the Romanians were victorious, saving humankind and the God of humankind […] That much was the blood poured on the Romanian land, that much was the blood shed in Romania that the whole earth could not blot it! And too much Romanian blood should be shed, way too much, so that the whole humankind's sin could be washed away and the humankind be bargained back from the hands of Evil. Do you remember now? Thence, the Romanian of those times, the last Romanian who gave his breath, could not close his eyes until he saw the triumphant Christendom; passing away, the last Romanian saw the Cross floating under his breath, on the Salvation Ocean, dipped into Romania's blood*" (*Ibidem*)[11].

Thoroughly convinced by the sacredness of their cause ("*Our cause is sacred! Our judgement is clear! God is with us!*")[12], the leaders of the Moldavian Revolution connect the Christian promise of happiness with their circumstantial political claims: "*So, brothers, have good faith! Good faith and unity, because God will fulfil our wishes!*" (*Proclamatia partidului national din Moldova către români – The Proclamation of the National Party of the Moldavian Principality to All Romanians*, in *Romanian Thought of 1848 Revolution*, vol. I, 1969: 62-64)[13]. For instance, the "Proclamation" launched by the National Party from the Principality of Moldova leaves aside the strict line of reasoning and emphasizes on the fact that Christian status

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*scârboasă; strigam patrie, înălţăm manile către cer, şi în inimile noastre nu adoram decât pe noi înşine".*

[11] *"Acel pământ fu teatrul duelului celui mal grozav, mai dramatic, mai mare, mai sfânt, ce veţi vede înscris în analele vieţii omenirii; câţiva ani mai înainte, în numele omenirii, în numele dumnedzeirii, pe pământul român, Românii ţinură duelul între trecut şi între viitor, între întuneric şi între lumină, între barbarie şi între civilisaţie, între paganism şi între creştinism, între chaos şi între Dumnedzeu, şi Românii biruiră, căci scăpară omenirea şi pe Dumnedzeul omenirii. […] O dzi Românii vor întreba occidentul, cum a adorat în societăţile, în instuţiile lui, pe acela care, botezat pe crucea Iudeei, fu uns de Domnul lumii, pe pământul român, cu sânge de Român. "se vărsase atâta sânge pe pământul român, atâta sânge cursese în România încât pământul întreg nu-l putea înghiţi şi soarele nu mai avea putere ca să-l absoarbă! Şi trebui să curgă mult sânge de Român, mult, mult, ca să se spele păcatul omenirii întregi şi să rescumpere neamul omenesc din mânile răului; dar, să răscumpere neamul omenesc din mânile răuluï, căci vă aduceţi aminte?... Românul de atunci, care muri cel din urmă, nu închise ochii până nu vădzu creştinismul triumfător; dându-şi sufletul, el vădzu crucea plutind sub suflarea lui în oceanul isbăvirii, în sângele României".*

[12] *„Cauza noastră este sfântă! Cugetul nostru este curat! Dumnezeu este cu noi!".*

[13] *"Nădejde bună dar, fraţilor! Nădejde şi unire, căci atunci numai Dumnezeu va împlini dorinţele noastre".*



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is a straight enough condition to legitimate all its petitions[14]. Vasile Alecsandri articulates this discursive strategy on a threefold legitimacy ("Moldavia"-"Humankind"-"God"), naming his appeal *Protestatie in numele Moldovei, al omenirii si al lui Dumnedzeu* (*Protestation on behalf of Moldavia, Humankind and God*); this document presents a particular relevance because, among the listed political claims, we can discover, under the given historical conditions, the gross antagonism between State and Church. Now, it is already known that the Romanian Orthodox church preserved its "institutional" status not only due to its vernacular services and cohesive role among the masses; as a matter of fact, going hand in hand with the Romanian princes, the patriarchs and high prelates had a strong grasp on political whereabouts. Nonetheless, the 1848 documents show that the Church had taken the revolutionary side and, what is even more perplexing, the rumours went that the mixture of State into Church's business had driven to the moral decadence of clergymen: "*Because the ministry of Moldavia decayed to the worst state due to the actual reigning; because Prince Mikhail Sturdza did not fulfil the duty of a Christian ruler, a sacred duty, which should have put him under obligation to raise the ministry's moral, social and intellectual standards […] and because, following to that disregard, the people of Moldavia lost all respect for the nowadays clergymen*" (paragraph 15 from *Protestation…*, in *Romanian Thought of 1848 Revolution*, vol. I, 1969: 150-169)[15].

Himself an active part of the former Moldavian "poets' riot" in 1848, Mikhail Kogalniceanu made a career and gained fame with his balanced political position and his apt eloquence, swift and clear, lacking foolish effusiveness and phrase jigsaws. However, the charged political atmosphere around the "Oriental issue" (which also made come true the dream of Romanian independence), turns his parliamentary speeches into a sea of flames, upsurging an arsenal of religious tropes, symbols and exempla. In the following fragment, he points at the awesome story of a Romanian cross carried illicitly by the Romanian princes enrolled in the Ottoman army (in the 17th century, when the Romanian Principalities observed the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire), and which turned afterwards into an object of ritual for Western Christendom: "*Gentlemen of the Senate, Romanians – as you, yourselves are – were also our former princes Şerban Cantacuzino and Gheorghe Ghica who, pushed by the circumstances to wage the war against Vienna, [...] alongside with the Turkish soldiery, right in the middle of the Ottoman legions, dared to worship the Saint Cross, and being forced to bomb the walls of Vienna, they charged the canon with straws. [...]*

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[14] *"Aveţi toată nădejdea în Dumnezeu care vă ocroteşte şi care în curând vă va scăpa de nevoile voastre şi, de sunteţi creştini, de sunteţi oameni cu durere, daţi mâna cu acei ce au pătimit pentru binele vostru şi cari iarăşi pentru binele vostru sunt gata a se jertfi!" ("Put all your faith in God who protects you and soon will free you from all your hardships and, if you are true Christians, if you are people in grieve, give hands to those who suffered for your well-being and who are ready to sacrifice again for it if necessary").*

[15] *"Fiindcă clerul Moldovei se află în cea mai proastă stare prin neîngrijirea ocârmuirii; fiindcă Mihail Sturdza nu şi-a împlinit, în vreme de 14 ani, datoria sa de domn creştin, datorie sfântă, ce-i poruncia să ridice starea morală, socială şi intelectuală a preoţilor […] şi fiindcă în urmarea acelei nepăsări a ocârmuirii, poporul Moldovei a pierdut tot respectul către tagma preoţească de astăzi".*



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*After the siege was over, the people of Vienna took the Cross raised by the Romanian princes and, in sign of gratification, that Cross had been kept in their town for many years*"[16] (qtd. text, in *Parliamentary speeches and Debates* 1864-2004, 2006: 74-88.). In spite of his rationalist and pondered temper, the general touch of Kogalniceanu's independence speeches is provided by a fatalist, rather excited, vision: "*Perhaps it is God's rule that, from the old ages, this land be doomed and kneaded and trotted by the invader's hooves*" (*Ibidem*)[17]

In a nutshell, when we inquire into Ion C. Bratianu's parliamentary speech addressed to King Charles I of Romania on the occasion of Independence Celebration, we find that it compiles a long-lasting idea: "*the Romanian people preserves the old wisdom and energy of ancestors, which has always enabled them to keep a free country in the middle of the most angry cataclysms*"[18] (*Sărbătorirea Proclamării Independenţii 10 Mai, 1877* – The Celebration of Independence Declaration, 10th of May 1877, in *Lui C. A. Rosetti. La o suta de ani de la naşterea sa - To C. A. Rosetti. A Hundred years from His Birth*, 1916: 329-335).

**4. The Sanctification of State Institutions: the Royalty, the Constitution, the Parliament and the Political Parties in religious hallow**

Once established as a nexus of public eloquence, frequently called upon by Romanian politicians, the heroic destiny of Romania among the Balkan nations builds to the top an institutional vision hallowed and legitimated by higher religious purposes. No sooner than 1840, the young elites used to mention "the saint laws of Moldavia" or the "saint provisions of the Organic Regulation" (see *Proclamaţia… – The Proclamation of the National Party of the Moldova Principality to All Romanians*, in *Romanian Thought of 1848 Revolution*, vol. I, 1969: 62-64). Similarly, the documents attest that the revolutionary community of 1848 pursued nothing but the "saint justice" (*Protestatatie…- Protestation on behalf of Moldavia, Humankind and God*, in *Romanian Thought of 1848 Revolution*, vol. I, 1969: 150-169). Other leaders – Gheorghe Magheru, for instance – from the Principality of Wallachia counted on the untouchable virtues of "saint and Christian constitution". Actually, Christ's oath and baptism overlaps the patriotic oath made by Romanian soldiers. Overall, we can notice a proclivity of Romanian eloquence towards the discursive sanctification of all state institutions: "*cause our country is crying, cause freedom is suffering, cause the Romanian nation moans and is calling us for salvation; cause Lord Christ reminds us the oath we had made for guarding and defeating bare-handed the saint and Christian*

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[16] *"Domnilor senatori, tot români au fost şi acei domni, Şerban Cantacuzino şi Gheorghe Ghica, care, siliţi să meargă cu oştirile lor alături cu ordiile turceşti ca să ia Viena [...], ei în mijlocul ordiilor turceşti ridicase spre închinăciune sfânta cruce şi fiind siliţi de a trage cu tunurile în zidurile Vienei ei le încărcau cu paie! După ridicarea asediului mulţumită lui Sobiesky, vienezii, spre recunoştinţă, au luat sfânta cruce, ridicată de domnii români, şi mulţi ani acea cruce s-a păstrat în Viena"*

[17] *"A fost poate dat de la Dumnezeu, a fost poate un blestem pentru acest pământ ca el din timpurile cele mai străvechi să fie destinat de a fi frământat de copita cailor năvălitorilor".*

[18] *"poporul român păstrează încă înţelepciunea şi energia care, în timp de secole au inspirat pe străbunii noştri şi i-au făcut a păstra o patrie liberă, în mijlocul celor mai teribile cataclisme".*



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*Constitution, where the truths that Our Lord had proclaimed beforehand are provided for*" (*Year 1848…*, 1902: 354-358)[19].

During the consolidation of Romanian institutions, almost every public debate borrows the colours of religion. Therefore, Alexandru Ioan Cuza presents a bare juridical principle (property inviolability) as a gift from God. No wonder that a radical Conservative like Al. Lahovary projects the theme of *aubaine* rights (the rights granted by national authorities to foreigners) within the general choir on Romania's historical mission and "providential" open-mindedness (see *Discurs asupra proiectului de poltiţie rurală – Speech on the Draft of the Rural Police Act*, in *Discursuri parlamentare II - Parliamentary Speeches*, n.d.: 82-86).

Distinct from what is generally called "monarchy of divine right" (specific to feudal political systems), a new sort of divine legitimacy is cast upon the monarch's head. Cuza even claims that his arm and signature are lead by God's will, thence all his political decisions (the "coup d'état" inclusively) represent varieties of heavenly energies. Galvanized by the Napoleon III's trajectory, the Prince of the united Romanian Principalities (i. e. Alexander John I) styles himself in the fashion of O. T. representations: he is the Almighty Father who could lend his ear to those in trouble. Next thing in line, the Almighty Father will not hinder from bringing to the open his tyrant's schemes (see *Proclamation…*, 1900)[20]. Ensuing the proclamation of independence, the parliamentary speeches present the next monarch (King Charles I of Romania) as a Godsend blessing, as a Saviour, as a redeemer from millennial doom. Ion C. Bratianu, for example, emphasizes upon the interference of royalty and sainthood. "*Ahead, your Majesty, with the Lord's will!*" is what the salted politician wishes to the Hohenzollern offspring.

Not only the Constitution, the Laws, the Parliament or the King's figure turn into subjects of discursive sanctification. The figures of eloquence also enwrap the mystic of political parties (the Romanian politics in the 19th century developed a Left and a Right Wing, consolidated into the National Liberal Party and the Conservative Party). While making a toast to a reunion held at the NLP quarters, the same Ion C. Bratianu arrests his auditorium with a blunt declaration: "*Well, I'm an Orthodox!*" (Toastul-program din 1869 - *Toast-programme from 1869*, in *Acte şi cuvântări* - Documents and Speeches, 1938: 1-13)[21]. The forthright approach packs together with his own

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*[19] "căci patria plânge, căci libertatea sufere, căci naţionalitatea română geme şi ne cheamă a o mântui; căci Christos ne aduce aminte de jurămintele ce am săvârşit spre păzirea şi apărarea cu braţele noastre, a sfintei şi creştinei Constituţii, în care sunt consfinţite adevărurile, ce el mal întâiu le-a proclamat în lume"*

*[20] "Şi acum, dupe ce cu braţul celui de Sus am putut săvârşi asemenea mare faptă, Mă întorc către voi spre a va da un sfat de Domn şi de Părinte, spre a vă arata calea pe care trebue să o urmaţi, de voiţi să ajungeţi la adevărata înbunătăţire a soartei Noastre şi a copiilor voştri."*

[21] "Ei bine, da, sunt ortodox!"; "Cum dar, voiţi voi să credem noi astăzi că, dacă ne vom face renegaţi, o să veniţi voi să vă vărsaţi sângele pentru noi, când n-aţi făcut-o pentru vechii voştrii coreligionari! Să vă văd întâi făcând ceva şi apoi vom vedea; până atunci, sunt şi voi fi ortodox, cum m-a lăsat D-zeu [...] Suntem ortodoxi, însă voim să fim la noi acasă; pot şi ruşii să fie în bună voie ortodoxi, cum sunt, dar la ei acasă, iar nu pe spinarea noastră. (*Bravo! Aplauze*), voim să urmăm a fi ortodoxi, însă cu biserica



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biographical account, with C. Negri's sensitive biography and with an exciting anecdote on the old conflict between Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The *exemplum* force of C Negri's decision to keep his name and not to chance it into "Konachi" (after his step-father's) activates the general understatement of political principles: to be a Liberal is to be an Orthodox Romanian and the other way around; in the negative form, the subtext reads as follows: who is not a Liberal is not a true Orthodox Romanian; contrariwise, the political deceit and either-side political bouncing alludes to Orthodox Church abjuring, to national treason and to loss of citizenship: "*If Negri would not change his last name, how can I change being named 'Romanian' and to be an Orthodox?*" (*Acte şi cuvântări - Documents and Speeches*, 1938: 1-13)[22].

I. C. Brătianu himself narrates how he had just got to Paris, and his parents warned him that he must keep the straight line of Orthodoxy in that Babel of languages and religions. Then, the leader of the Liberal Party confesses that, frankly, the French experience turned him into a better Orthodox, as Petru Maior and Gheorghe Şincai had become, paradoxically, even better Romanians only when they were sent to Rome in order to be converted to Queen Maria Thereza's faith and nationality. Next, the speech tone lowers to anecdotic regime, playing on the audience's need to compose and cool off; apparently, it seems that a learned Catholic priest had intimated Brătianu once that the only rescue for the Romanian nation is to convert massively to Catholicism and worship the Pope's sanctuary from Rome. However, the political hound had the inspiration to retort that Rome had never sacrificed for the Polish people in spite of their rooted Catholicism. Further on, the leader's statements are welcomed with thunders of applause and a febrile admiration for his heroic behaviour against the Catholic enemy. By far a deliberate ideological strategy, the appeal to religious hints from liberal leaders' speeches is prone to superpose the terms of the axis "Romanian"-"Orthodox"-"Liberal".

**5. Conclusions**

Having in sight the pieces of eloquence produced within a span of time that goes from 1848 Revolution to 1877, when Romania gained its independence, it is easy to arrive at the conclusion that religious elements ascend into modern political speeches on the channels of the old pulpit preaching. Nevertheless, the tradition of religious oratory (its prophetic, warning and didactical tone, its moral stake and its characteristic figures of expression) sideslips into pure ideology; all the same, the whole cluster of religious tropes and themes derives into pure garnish. Our study followed – albeit not in detail – the evolution and discrete changes of tone and attitude in Alecsandri's, Alexandru Ioan Cuza's, I. C. Brătianu's and Mikhail Kogălniceanu's political discourses.

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noastră, în casa noastră, cu clerul nostru român, care a fost totdeauna în capul poporului, în lupta pentru naţionalitate.".

[22] "Apoi, dacă d. Negri, n-a voit să-şi schimbe numai numele de familie, cum voiţi ca eu să-mi schimb numele de român şi religiunea mea?"



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It appears that the "founding fathers" of the Romanian modern state were, according to historical contexts and oratorical disposition, both harsh rationalists and clandestine mystics. Anyway, their great victories were not made out of mere words and small talk. They actually based the art of eloquence on the thorough knowledge of human nature and on its shifting historical phases[23]. In a century of bitter disbelief, when philosophers proclaimed God's death or at least God's fall into disuse, these political orators knew how to slip into the priests' robes. Practically, the Official Gazette of Romania ("Monitorul oficial"), which recorded the clinging swords of eloquence from the Parliament, came to fulfil now the duties of a worldly Bible.

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[23] See V. A Urechia, *Despre Elocinta Romana (On Romanian Eloquence)*, Bucharest, The Royal House's Publishing House – Carol Göbl, 1878, pp. 127-158.



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