THE TRANSYLVANIAN SCHOOL
– A NEW ASSESSMENT –

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Abstract:
A recently published anthology, dedicated to the Transylvanian School, allows for a new assessment of the role the well-known cultural, political and linguistic movement played in the creation process of Romanian modern culture. The chrestomathy also offers the possibility of a documented correlation between the ideas formulated by the Transylvanian Latinists and the principles which Ion Heliade Rădulescu included in the programme of implementation of unique supradialectal norms in literary Romanian writing of the 19th century.

Keywords:
The Transylvanian School, modern literary Romanian language, etymological spelling, literary vocabulary, diachronic perspective, Ion Heliade Rădulescu.

I. In any field of activity, newly obtained results allow, and often even require, periodical assessments of previous interpretations of a phenomenon. It is not some individual desire, but a necessity, for sometimes the known data change the perspective from which a certain interpretation was made.

In social sciences, these changes, first and foremost required by the attitude towards the investigated topic, by the way it is approached or investigated, seem more frequent and, at the same time, more necessary than in other fields of scientific research. Especially when the history of facts or socio-cultural phenomena alters not so much due to the discovery of new documents, but to the perception of those doing the research, which often changes over time.

The study of the Transylvanian School, the famous cultural, scientific and political Transylvanian movement, part of the Latinist movement prevalent in the written Romanian culture throughout the 19th century, very well illustrates the above statement.

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In a written culture, traditionally marked by both phonologism and the practice of implicit norm, which required the acknowledgment of a natural language development based on usage, including at the level of the literary norm, therefore without major intellectual constraints, Latinism – that promoted, for the first time in our cultural space, some ideal norms, included in normative works which became official guide books – was and is still perceived as an attempt to create an artificial, unnatural language. This perception manifested as early as the decades in which Transylvanian Latinism was shaping its ideas regarding the standardization of Romanian modern literary language or the ways of renewing the elevated form of our culture language according to the Latin and Romanic model.

Ion Heliade Rădulescu, a distinguished wielder of opinion who soon became the "father" of our literary language, was the first to criticize, in the preface of the 1828 *Gramatica românească* ('The Romanian Grammar'), the etymological spelling and some of the linguistic "creations" (savant derivatives or loan translations), namely the forms of analogical adaptation extracted from the Latinists' writings, although he considered that Latinists were "worthy of all praise for the toils and efforts they make for the Romanian literature". Alexandru Odobescu also taunted the Latinists' "excesses" in an elegant manner by drafting, in an etymological spirit, a list of dishes worthy of an "academic lunch" (*Prandiulu academicu*), which was often commented on but very rarely read. In his turn, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu would exaggerate the features of the speech of Numa Consule, an important character in the play *Orthonerozia sau Trei crai de la răsărit*, which actually dealt with the issues of our literary language soon after the mid-19th century, insisting on the dispute between Latinism, the French influence and the so-called historical and national current. Also to obtain a comic effect with cultural relevance, Ion Luca Caragiale would make use of the linguistic mannerisms of Marius Chicoș Rostogan, "the distinguished ultimate teacher" of Latinist training, or those of Rică Venturiano, "Law student and publicist", also influenced by Latinism and Italianism.

The remoteness from the age in which the etymological alphabet had been created, according to an external model (in the age of the Transylvanian School) or an internal one (through the two directions of the academic Latinism), made it increasingly difficult to understand the etymology-based orthographic principles, which related to a past epoch in the Romanian language history. The idea formulated by Ion Heliade Rădulescu in the preface to his *Grammar* ("we write for the living, not for the dead", "we do

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not write for our ancestors, whom the mighty Trajan brought here, but for our contemporaries") gained new followers after phonologism re-became the prevailing orthographic principle in our literary writing. Although, in this manner, orthography and orthoepy kept being confused.

Under these circumstances, the Transylvanian School texts written with etymological alphabet were less and less understood and therefore, completely unnaturally, became less and less read. Even some of the linguists who supported language progress and synchronic analysis disproved what was constantly called the "Latinist excesses".

This entailed the need to publish the representative writings of Transylvanian enlighteners not in the original orthographic system, a comfortable yet only apparently scientific manner, but in an interpretative transcript, compulsorily relating to the language stage reflected by the texts, in order to highlight, without any major obstacle for readers, important ideas regarding our history, language and culture and thus allow a re-assessment of both the activity and opinions of the scholars of the so-called Transylvanian School.

It is this new assessment of the writing of Transylvanian Latinists that made the anthology, published at the end of 2018 as part of the well-known and appreciated collection of „Opere fundamentale" ('Fundamental Works') issued by the National Foundation for Science and Art, possible.[1] This anthology, which comprises four extensive volumes (of over 6,500 pages), is the result of the work of many important researchers, of various ages and with various philological preoccupations, grouped under the coordination of a distinguished philologist, Eugen Pavel, under the aegis of the „Sextil Pușcariu" Institute of Linguistics and Literary History from Cluj. It is prefaced by a substantial study of the academician Eugen Simion.

II. 1. Those interested in the latest anthology entitled *Școala Ardeleană* (i.e. 'The Transylvanian School') will have the possibility to read, without any difficulty in interpreting the orthography, significant writings regarding the orientation, the goals and principles of the most important Romanian Enlightenment movement, excerpted from texts elaborated between the mid-18th century (1743), the age of the *Supplex Libellus*, the first

[1] *Școala Ardeleană*, I. *Scrieri istorice*, II. *Scrieri lingvistice. Scrieri literare*, III. *Scrieri literare. Scrieri teologice și religioase. Scrieri filosofice*, IV. *Scrieri didactice. Repere critice. Glosar. Indice de autori, traducători și opere antologate,* coordinated by Eugen Pavel, introductory study by Eugen Simion, Academia Română, Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, Muzeul Național al Literaturii Române, București, 2018.

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petition sent by Inocențiu Micu-Klein to Maria Theresa, an authentic Enlightenment programme of national rebirth of the Transylvanian Romanians, and 1830, when the *Antropologhia* of Pavel Vasici-Ungureanu appeared at Buda. As previously stated, these are writings that have been transcribed in an interpretative manner and, in the case of works written in foreign languages (mainly Latin, still the language of European science at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th), the source-texts are translated in Romanian as well.

Excerpts from the works of the coryphaei of the important Transylvanian movement, i.e. Inochentie Micu Klein, Samuil Micu, Gheorghe Șincai, Petru Maior and Ioan Budai-Deleanu, as well as significant texts of other Enlightenment scholars of the age, renowned not only in Transylvania, but also in Banat, Bukovina and, by extension, in Wallachia and Moldavia (of whom we should mention Paul Iorgovici, Constantin Diaconovici-Loga, Ioan Piuariu-Molnar, Dimitrie Țichindeal, Constantin Roja, Ioan Barac, Ioan Corneli, Ștefan Crișan, Ioan Alexi, Gherontie Cotore, Gheorghe Lazăr or Samuil Vulcan), have now been published, complying with all the rules of modern philology regarding the determination, reproduction and commentary of a text. In all, 175 historical, linguistic, literary, philosophical, didactic writings, as well as texts popularizing science (called "instructive writings" in this anthology), or theological and religious ones have been selected from the works of 44 authors. These writings, addressed to readers with various degrees of education, highlight the unity of the Transylvanian Enlightenment movement and prove the facile nature of the attempts to individualize a Banat-based Enlightenment movement distinct from the Transylvanian School.

Comparing the list of fields illustrated by the texts selected for the recently published anthology with that of other chrestomathies dedicated to the Transylvanian School[2], one should immediately note the presence of theological and religious writings, a remarkable editorial novelty which emphasizes the attempt of Greek-Catholic intellectuals to thematically and formally renew the religious writing, according to the requirements and norms of the Church united with Rome. In this respect, we should mention not only the translation of the *Vulgate* by a group of priests directed by Petru Pavel Aaron, the revision of the Bucharest *Bible*, made by Samuil Micu, the

[2] Of these, see first and foremost the impressive anthology compiled, extended and republished, in 1983, by Florea Fugariu (*Școala Ardeleană*, I-II, Editura Minerva, București).

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translation, compilation and writing of a great number of church legal texts, the compilation of important collections of sermons, but also the attempt to renew the religious terminology by restoring old inherited terms (*sânt, sântă* 'saint'), by creating new derivatives based on them in the Latin spirit (such as *sântătate* 'sainthood') or by borrowing religious neologisms from Latin, the official language of the Western Church.

It is also worth mentioning that the etymological alphabet was used, before *Elementa linguae Daco-Romanae sive Valachicae* (Buda, 1780), in *Cartea de rugăciuni* ('Book of Prayers', printed at Vienna in 1779) as a formal indicator needed in the area to distinguish the Greek Catholics from the Romanians who had embraced Calvinism. (The latter used the Latin alphabet as early as the 16th century, but complying with Hungarian orthographic norms.)

2. Etymological writing, invented and promoted by Transylvanian Latinists, was undeniably an essential way of emphasizing the Latin origin of Romanian. However, it was clearly also a way of achieving the unity of our literary writing. (The writing in Cyrillic letters preserved, through its predominantly phonological nature, the differences existing among the old regional literary variants of our culture language.) But Transylvanian Latinists did not aim, as it was thought and is sometimes still believed, to change the literary speech according to norms long gone out of use (useful for "our ancestors, whom the mighty Trajan brought here", as Ion Heliade Rădulescu sarcastically remarked in 1828). Nor did archaization and regionalization (both suggested by graphic forms based on phonetic rules specific to the age of Romanian language formation) always correspond to orthoepic norms, which is proved by the form given to Romanian texts written in etymological alphabet in the chrestomathy we now refer to. The constant use, not only by the Transylvanian School representatives, of the Cyrillic alphabet in writings which were not meant for "opinion-moulders" (such as manuals, guide books or demonstrative and practical writings), but for the mature Romanian, interested in the history, language and culture of his people, leads to the same conclusion. The same interpretation is suggested by the gradual simplification of etymological writing, with a transition from excessive etymologism, typical of the first edition of *Elementa*, to moderate etymologism, such as that in the 1805 edition of the well-known grammar, as well by the acceptance, over time, of graphemes specific to Italian writing (such as *ce, ci, ge, gi* or *che, chi, ghe, ghi*) and usage of special graphemes created by using diacritics (mainly *ş* and *ţ*, which coexisted with *si* and *ti* for

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a long time). Also, the orthoepic indications placed after the entries in our first printed dictionary, commonly called *The Lexicon of Buda*, indications printed specifically in Cyrillic letters, further support this interpretation.

Through the etymological alphabet, the Latinist scholars thus proposed an alphabet they wished to be typically Romanian, using "ancestral letters" to replace the Cyrillic letters (which they considered skimpy) and always seeking solutions to adapt the Latin writing to the phonetic reality of the Romanian language. The editing manner used in the recent anthology *Școala Ardeleană*, namely the interpretative transcription of texts using the etymological alphabet, allows the contemporary reader to verify the truth of previous observations.

3. For the outstanding representatives of the Transylvanian School, etymological writing was thus a means to highlight the Latin origin of our language and, implicitly, a way of achieving the unity of literary Romanian. This unity had to be reached, in the other areas of our elevated writing, mainly the vocabulary, starting from the unity of church writing. "In church books there is one idiom for all", Petru Maior would note in the *Dialog pentru începutul limbei română întră nepot și unchi* (i.e. 'Dialogue on the beginning of the Romanian language between nephew and uncle') (an annex to the *Orthographia* printed in 1819, later resumed, unmodified, in the *Lexicon of Buda*). The religious book has a literary 'collective' vocabulary, "de obște" as Ioan Budai-Deleanu called it in the preface to *Lexiconul românesc-nemțesc* (the 'Romanian-German Lexicon'), a vocabulary known by everybody, which, once "received by the entire people", was of general use.

To enrich this lexicon, which relied on the literary tradition, the Transylvanian scholars would recommend, in addition to the neological loan, intensely commented on by the researchers dealing with the Transylvanian School, the use of old words of Latin origin, referred to as "adevărate strămoşeşti" ('truly ancestral') or "tocma românești" ('Romanian indeed'), "vorbe de rădăcină" ('root words') often forgotten or preserved in conservative areas and dialectal variants spoken even south of the Danube. (Petru Maior even suggested the inclusion of Macedo-Romanian words inherited from Latin in the modern literary vocabulary). Based on these "root words" (Paul Iorgovici), using internal means similar to derivation, applying derivative patterns and affixes of Latin origin, complying (at least in theory) with the features preserved by the Romanian language from the original Romanic corpus, one could create lexemes that were useful for the renewal and enrichment of the literary vocabulary. A little known fact is that this was

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actually an internal manner of highlighting and, implicitly, strengthening the Romanic character of the literary vocabulary ('Romanity through Romanianhood') which works now reprinted bring into focus again.

In this context and given the way of selecting Latin and Romanic neologisms and integrating them into the (phonetic and morphological) system of the Romanian language (the comprehensive final glossary of the anthology provides numerous significant examples), one must return to the idea of re-Romanization (i.e. of strengthening the Romanic nature) of the Romanian vocabulary, which in our opinion is more appropriate than the Latin-Romanic westernization.

III. Viewed diachronically, these few ideas, based on the content and form of the recently republished representative writings of the Transylvanian School, offer the possibility of correlating some of the recommendations formulated by the Transylvanian scholars for the 'polishing', i.e. refinement, improvement of the language, with some of the proposals Ion Heliade Rădulescu made with a view to establishing unique supradialectal norms in the modern literary Romanian language.

We mainly have in mind the observation explicitly formulated by Petru Maior according to which modern literary Romanian should rest upon the language of church books, which is unitary in all its areas ("in church books there is one idiom for all"), an idea entirely taken over by Heliade: "the church language is the same for Romanians, Moldavians and Transylvanians"[3]. The corrections that needed to be made to this language, according to the rules of which modern literary norms were to be constituted, are also similar, because we can easily recognize the common, collective language ("limba cea de obște" as Ioan Budai-Deleanu put it) in the "special dialect of literates", as Heliade would call "the language written everywhere"[4]. Similarly, the way in which Heliade would point out how the selection of forms recommended for the future literary norms should be made, "a choice and a collection of all that is beautiful and classic in the various dialects"[5], brings to our mind ideas and principles used by the Transylvanian Enlighteners to select words and forms with general circulation ("those words

[3] I. Heliade Rădulescu, *Opere*, tom II, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, București, 1943, p. 220.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 238.
[5] *Ibidem.*

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that are common throughout the nation", as Ioan Budai-Deleanu stated) and even to re-establish "root words", inherited words, including words from Aromanian. The two criteria of selecting lexemes likely to be introduced into the modern literary vocabulary, namely wide circulation and Latinity, both promoted by Heliade, are reformulations of ideas present in various writings of Enlightenment scholars. [6]

With the help of now reprinted texts, the same reading from a diachronic perspective allows the correct assessment in relation to the level of development of European linguistics in the age of the Transylvanian School, of the often remarkable scientific contributions of Transylvanian scholars regarding the history of the Romanian language, the place of Romanian among the Romanic languages or etymology.[7]

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We have saved a statement for the end of this article, which is once more an encouragement to read and also an argument for accurate substantiation, by interpreting the old(er) texts diachronically, a statement which, in almost identical terms, we have frequently heard in the last years: „Limba cea românească e mamă limbei ceii lătinești" [which translates as "The Romanian language is the mother of Latin"].

Taken from a manuscript work of Petru Maior, *Disertație pentru articlii limbei românești*, hardly known to the present-day non-specialist reader[8], now brought to the attention of the public at large due to the

[6] For other ideas of Transylvanian Enlightenment scholars, developed or reformulated by Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Ion Gheție and Mircea Seche, see *Discuții despre limba română literară între anii 1830–1860,* in: *Studii de istoria limbii române literare. Secolul al XIX-lea,* I, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1969, pp. 261–271.

[7] For details, see Sextil Pușcariu, *Părerile lui Patru Maior despre limba română*, in: „Anuarul Institutului de istorie națională", I, 1921–1922, pp. 109–119; Ion Gheție, *Opera lingvistică a lui Ion Budai- Deleanu*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1966; Dimitrie Macrea, *Școala Ardeleană și problemele de lingvistica romanică*, in: „Cercetări de lingvistică", XIV, 1969, nr. 1, pp. 7-13; C. Poghirc, *Préoccupations de grammaire historique et comparée romane et indo-européenne chez Ion Budai-Deleanu (1760–1820),* in: *Actele celui de-al XII-lea Congres Internațional de Lingvistică și Filologie Romanică*, II, București, 1971, pp. 1405-1411; *Istoria lingvisticii românești*, coord. Iorgu Iordan, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1978, pp. 18-33.

[8] The editions of *Disertație* due to Timotei Cipariu (published in „Archivu pentru filologia și istoria",1867-1868) and, recently, to I. Chindriș and Niculina Iacob (from the volume *Petru Maior în mărturii antologice*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2016) are practically accessible only to specialists.

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anthology dedicated to the *Transylvanian School*, this assertion seems incongruous with both the position and the conception of one of the most brilliant representatives of the Transylvanian School.

But here is the broader quotation comprising this statement: "Arătat-am în *Disertațiia cea pentru începutul limbei românești*, carea e adăogată la *Istoriia cea pentru începutul românilor în Dachia*, cum că nu limba poporului roman, sau cea proastă lătinească, carea e limba românilor, s-au născut din limba lătinească cea din cărți, și se zice limbă lătinească corectă, adecă îndreptată sau polită, ci ceasta din ceaea. Și pentru aceaea, măcar că ne-am obicinuit a grăi că limba românească e featǎ limbei ceii lătinești corecte, întru adevăr și după firea lucrurilor, limba cea românească e mamă limbei ceii lătinești ce să află până astăzi în cărți." [This roughly translates as: "We have shown in *Dissertation for the beginning of the Romanian language*, which is annexed to *The History of the beginnings of Romanians in Dacia*, that it is not the Roman people's language, or poor Latin, which is the language of Romanians, that sprang from the Latin language of the books, the so-called correct, i.e. polished, refined Latin, but the other way round. Therefore, even if we usually say that Romanian is the offspring of the correct Latin language, in fact the Romanian language is the mother of Latin found in books"].

And in the excerpt from *Istoria pentru începuturile românilor în Dachia* (Buda, 1812), in fact from the annex of *Istoria*, entitled *Disertație pentru începutul limbei românești*, which Petru Maior refers to, we find: "Însă, cum că alta au fost limba lătinească cea îndreptată sau corectă și alta ceaea ce răsuna în gura poporului lătinesc și cum că ceaea fu născută din ceasta și direpț aceaea limba lătinească cea proastă sau a poporului cu dreptul se zice mamă limbei lătinești ceii corecte însăși natura sau firea corecției destul de chiar areată" [i.e. "But, as there was one correct, improved Latin language and one spoken by the Latin people, and because the former sprang from the latter, it is fair that one should say that the people's bad Latin is the mother of the correct Latin, which is clearly shown by the nature of the correction"].

Correlating the assertions contained in the two quotes (the manuscript one is virtually a reformulation of that in the annex to *Istoria* printed in 1812), we note that the great scholar of the Enlightenment expressed an idea completely different from that advocated by the present supporters of the precedence of the Romanian language (considered to be a faithful descendant of the language of Dacians) over Latin. Approaching the issue from a historical perspective, Petru Maior actually referred not to Romanian, but to popular, common Latin that our language continues, which precedes (from a

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certain perspective) the literary Latin. Romanian, a faithful descendant of the common form of Latin, spoken by the Roman conquerors of Dacia, is thus prior, historically, to the classic, literary, grammatical Latin.

By the previously quoted statement, we find ourselves not in front of an authoritative argument supporting the false contemporary scholars interested in the "real" origin of our language, but in front of a remarkable anticipation of the genealogical definition given to the Romanian language.

(English translation by Oana Voichici)

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