

# The Metaphor of Foreign Languages: 'Geopolinguistics' in Romanian Culture

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## Abstract

Countries are typically defined as nation states permeated by a specific culture based on a language which acts as a carrier/guarantor of national identity. 'A language is a culture' seems the right equation to sum up the status of mother tongues and/or official languages. The equation, however, does not seem to extend to foreign languages (second- or third-languages learned by non-natives), which are generally regarded as 'less culture' than mother tongues, as merely 'technical' or professional tools, rather than shapers of (further) cultural identities within a nation. This article sets out to argue that, in the case of Romania, non-native language acquisition has been a cultural transfer in itself at least since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The core hypothesis is that in Romania prevailing foreign language options have enabled cultural empowerment (e.g. mentality 'updates'), implied geopolitical orientations (e.g. military alliances) and allowed for therapeutic solutions (to national psyche downsides).

**Keywords:** *culture formation, Eastern borderlands, multilingualism, Romanian identity, geopolitics*

'Don't you think we've become Americanized?' We had been talking about celebrations, and the best student in the group (a third year undergraduate doing an English minor) had mentioned 'imported' holidays such as the Halloween or Valentine's Day. 'What do you mean *Americanized*?' I asked her. 'Well, why celebrate Valentine's Day, when we have our own Romanian celebration for that? And look at us, English-speaking Romanians: we watch American movies, we listen to American music, English is our second language, and we use English words in our spoken Romanian all the time, so our mother tongue sounds like a mixed language. That's what I mean: Americanized.'

What is a teacher (of English) supposed to reply? The student was doubtlessly clear of any 'suspicion' of blind nationalism; a CAE certificate<sup>1</sup> holder, she *enjoys* her excellent English, which she uses as naturally as she does Romanian. Rather than nationalistic hostility towards 'Americanization', her remark expressed a genuine interest in our current national identity: who are we, Romanians, now that we have become 'Americanized'? Yet comments like hers do voice a historically persistent concern hovering over Romanian culture, circling round our national psyche like a *mythe de l'éternel retour*: the concern that we have been perverted – that our 'national being' has been corrupted by external influences, our identity maculated by foreignness.

Strangely enough, such apprehensions are strongly reminiscent of anti- and/or post-colonial discourses intent on retrieving the allegedly authentic cultural 'fiber' and nationhood of formerly colonized peoples. Is, then, Romania in such a (postcolonial)

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<sup>1</sup> Cambridge Advanced English, attesting C1-level linguistic proficiency on the CEFR scale.

situation? If so, to what extent does it match – or shift – the postcolonial paradigm, in its cultural identity construction? Let us follow the thread.

## Out of Pure Hybridity: The Track Record of a Borderline Culture

The most recent recyclers of the purist stance in Romanian culture have championed a return to what they regard as the unspoiled ancestral values of ‘profound’ (i.e. rural) Romania, while alien identity hazards like corporatism, globalization, multiculturalism, civil rights, non-governmental organizations, as well as feminists and homosexuals in general, are to be removed from our cultural DNA, wherein they were forcibly implanted from abroad.<sup>2</sup> Instead, we should resort to a ‘personalist conservative’ philosophy inspired by traditional Romanian Orthodoxy. The Romanian *race* (sic!)<sup>3</sup> should un-change back to its role as ‘a chosen people’ destined to carry on ‘the Eastern Spirit’: the mystery, the untranslatable soul essence, the mind’s ‘third eye’ of revelation – as opposed to the West’s critical reason(ing), compulsion to clarification, de-personalizing openness and uncontained, therefore intrusive accessibility.<sup>4</sup>

The horror? The hybrid. It is particularly ‘Occidentalized’ Romanian intellectuals<sup>5</sup> who are disparagingly labeled ‘hybrids’ and charged with importing Western values to the fatherland, thus causing the Romanian people to ‘deviate’ from its real identity. Hybridity, in fact, appears to the Romanian purists just as ‘heretical’ as to Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, theorist Homi K. Bhabha upholds it to be the dynamo of culture’s differences,<sup>7</sup> hence openings, a revealer of the ‘borderlines of modern nationhood’,<sup>8</sup> therefore their re-designer. Neither One, nor the Other, and yet ‘presencing’ them both, the hybrid accommodates the Beyond where we have chosen ‘to locate the question of culture’ in our times,<sup>9</sup> reveals overlapping interstices, habitats of intersubjective experiences whereby newness is generated, whether in terms of nationhood or culture. At the core of becoming cultured, hybridity may well be the maternity ward of the ‘new world (b)order’, to borrow Guillermo Gómez Peña’s inspirationally ironic phrase.<sup>10</sup>

That, of course, is the postcolonial paradigm propounded by theorists like Bhabha in the aftermath of at times radical anti-colonial exaltations of ‘nativism’ and demands of purifying de-colonization. Since one cannot fail to notice the parallelism between anti-colonial radicalism and the Romanian purists’ recourse to a traditional ‘Eastern Spirit’ that counteracts the hybrid ‘Occidentalized’ one, exactly how close to the postcolonial paradigm is Romania? The question, *nota bene*, carries a profitable intent: it asks, implicitly, what claim Romanian culture could make on hybridity’s productive outcomes – and benefits.

Insofar as a colony is a ‘non-virgin’ inhabited territory upon which an exterior administrative and political apparatus is imposed, Romania *can* be said to have been a

<sup>2</sup> Ovidiu Hurduzeu and Mircea Platon, *A treia forță: România profundă* (Bucharest: Logos, 2008), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Puric, *Despre omul frumos* (Bucharest: DP, 2009), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Dan Puric, 100-12.

<sup>5</sup> Typically, former recipients of scholarships at Western universities. Cf. Hurduzeu and Platon, 40-1.

<sup>6</sup> Commenting on the fundamentalist reception of Chamcha, Salman Rushdie’s hybrid character in *The Satanic Verses*, Bhabha points out that ‘hybridity is heresy’ from the fundamentalist standpoint. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 225.

<sup>7</sup> Bhabha, 224.

<sup>8</sup> Bhabha, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Bhabha, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Qtd. in Bhabha, 218.

colony. Repeatedly so. The territory, as strategist George Friedman remarks not unpoetically, seems defined by how the Carpathian Mountains' arc divide it into three parts,<sup>11</sup> Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, which were united in a one-nation state, modern-day Romania, only as late as 1918.

Prior to that, parts of the territory had been first colonized by the Romans for about 150 years, during which time the land enjoyed direct subordination to Rome,<sup>12</sup> as one of the Empire's outermost possessions (a status it shared at the time with fellow periphery Britannia<sup>13</sup>). Its inhabitants, the native Dacians along with colonizers '*ex toto orbe Romano*', assimilated Latin as their mother tongue, hence the lasting nickname of 'Wallachians'. Contrived by Germanic tribes to refer initially to Latin-speaking Celtic tribes settled in today's Switzerland and Austria, the name was subsequently extended to any other Latinophonic populations.<sup>14</sup>

After the Roman Empire withdrew its troops and administration from the territory, colonizing enterprises were carried out in the Middle Ages in Transylvania, called *Siebenbürgen* (seven cities) precisely due to the city administration structure set up there by Saxon colonizers,<sup>15</sup> and in Wallachia itself, where Cuman tribes from Ukraine came and settled the land for another 150 years; from them the local population assimilated, apparently, a great deal of place names and 'the art of war (especially cavalry charge tactics)'.<sup>16</sup>

Post-Middle Ages, Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania did evolve into state-like principalities, but almost uninterruptedly under foreign rule, Wallachia a vassal to the Ottoman Empire, Moldavia following suit, when it was not subordinated to Poland, Russia or even Hungary,<sup>17</sup> and Transylvania mainly reigned by Hungary and/or the Habsburg Empire right up to 1918. Finally, the post-World War II Sovietization of the country appears as yet another colonial-type imposition of an administrative and political system<sup>18</sup> upon the territory.

Thus, even though Romania has never been explicitly referred to as a colony proper of one empire or another, quite a few historians concur in suggesting that, at least politically, it has often had a *subaltern* status<sup>19</sup> over the centuries. Since *subaltern* is a key concept in postcolonial theory,<sup>20</sup> and given the colonial traits identified above in the history and making of Romania, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that Romanian culture might be regarded as a 'postcolonial' one *avant la lettre*, partaking of the ethos of hybridity theorized by Homi Bhabha.

<sup>11</sup> George Friedman, 'Geopolitical Journey, Part 3: Romania', *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, 16 November 2010, paragraph 5.

<sup>12</sup> Neagu Djuvara, *O scurtă istorie ilustrată a românilor* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Djuvara, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Djuvara, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Djuvara, 54-5.

<sup>16</sup> Djuvara, 59.

<sup>17</sup> See Djuvara, 81, 85 and 206.

<sup>18</sup> Including collectivization, food rationalization, nationalizations, expropriations, as well as dismissal, imprisonment and/or extermination of political opponents. See Dan C. Mihăilescu, *Castelul, biblioteca, pușcăriă. Trei vămi ale feminității exemplare* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013), 140.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Hannah Pakula's comment on the six great European powers' dominance over the Romanian principalities as late as the 1850s, or how Lucian Boia contextualizes Lithuanian President's recent advice to the Romanian leaders to 'grow up and become responsible'. See also Hannah Pakula, *María de Rumanía* (Buenos Aires: Javier Vergara Editor, 1986), 85. Lucian Boia, *De ce este România altfel?* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), 118.

<sup>20</sup> Launched by Gayatri Spivak in her seminal 1985 essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. See Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 1.

Indeed, the profiles of Romania's leading cultural figures reveal as a common trait a propensity for hybridity which, more often than not, translated cross-culturalization into a civilizing force for their country, investing it, occasionally, with geopolitical directions and commitments.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, Constantin Cantacuzino, a speaker of Slavonic, Greek and Latin, and former student at Universitas Aristarum in Padova, initiated in the Wallachian city of Târgoviște a 'schola graeca et latina' which opened up 'a tradition of humanist [i.e. extra-Orthodox, proto-'Western'] scholarship in Romanian education.'<sup>21</sup> Similarly, historian and chronicler Miron Costin, educated at the Jesuit college in Bar and fluent in Polish, Latin, Russian, Hungarian and Turkish, guided the Moldavian leadership of the time towards an alliance with Poland and rejection of Ottoman rule.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, Dimitrie Cantemir, another prominent scholar and prince, educated in Slavonic, Greek and Latin, chose to place Moldavia briefly under the rule of Peter the Great; exiled promptly to the Tsar's Court, he received the rank of a Russian prince and his son Antioch was later appointed Russia's ambassador in Paris and London.<sup>23</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Transylvanian Gheorghe Șincai, a former student of the De Propaganda Fide college in Rome and fluent in Greek, Latin, Hungarian and German, reestablished the status of Romanian as a Latin language, carried out pioneer studies of Romanian grammar<sup>24</sup> and acted as the 'founding father' not only of schooling in Transylvania, but perhaps also of modern education *per se*, in Romania. Most importantly, his whole work paved the way towards the Romanian principalities' subsequent reorientation towards their 'Latin roots' and affinities, and implicitly away from the Russian-Ottoman grip.

Thus, next century writers and historians like Nicolae Bălcescu (an attendee of Jules Michelet's and Edgar Quinet's lectures in Paris, and a lobbyist with Lord Palmerston, in 1850 in London, for the independence of the Romanian principalities<sup>25</sup>), Mihail Kogălniceanu (a student in France and Berlin, where he published, aged 20, studies written in French and German on the literature of Wallachia and Moldavia<sup>26</sup>), or Ion Ghica (a Sorbonne graduate who set up systematized education in rural areas and acted as Minister of External Affairs and Prime Minister in the 1860s) imported the ideals of the French Revolution into the emerging Romanian principalities,<sup>27</sup> significantly determining their emancipation.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century is, in fact, the age of Romania's great reorientation away from 'the Orient'.<sup>28</sup> With now barely any intellectual leaders learning, using and promoting Slavonic,<sup>29</sup> Greek<sup>30</sup> or Turkish, French took over as the most widespread second

<sup>21</sup> *Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, s.v. 'Cantacuzino, Constantin', 142.

<sup>22</sup> *Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, s.v. 'Costin, Miron', 223.

<sup>23</sup> Djuvara, 206 and 208.

<sup>24</sup> *Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, s.v. 'Șincai, Gheorghe', 829, 831.

<sup>25</sup> *Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, s.v. 'Bălcescu, Nicolae', 89.

<sup>26</sup> *Dicționarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900*, s.v. 'Kogălniceanu, Mihail', 479.

<sup>27</sup> Djuvara, 247.

<sup>28</sup> Historian Neagu Djuvara describes this reorientation as a 'profound mutation' and locates it around 1825. See Djuvara, 238.

<sup>29</sup> Formerly, the language of the boyars (local nobility and political leadership), hence of the schooling and administration system they supported. See Djuvara, 92.

<sup>30</sup> The language of the clergy, which influenced the organization of the local Orthodox Church, its internal hierarchy and external diplomatic links to Mount Athos, the 'Holy See' of Eastern Orthodoxy. See Djuvara, 51.

language in the Romanian Principalities,<sup>31</sup> with German closely following suit not only thanks to Berlin- or Vienna-educated intelligentsia,<sup>32</sup> but also the arrival in 1866 of the founder of the Romanian monarchy, Prince Charles of Hohenzollern.<sup>33</sup> Hence, early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Romania is typically described by the educated class of the time as a society of Francophiles and/versus Germanophiles.<sup>34</sup>

It becomes thus apparent that 'hybridization' was willingly and deliberately embraced by the Romanian intellectual leadership of the previous centuries as a *modus operandi* in the modernization of their country. Its cross-cultural side brings Romania very close to the postcolonial condition circumscribed by Homi Bhabha,<sup>35</sup> insofar as both Oriental and Occidental (b)orders coalesced here, turning this territory into fertile ground for the production of nationhood, identity and culture, which are, incidentally, the three major concerns of any postcolonial territory. On the other hand, the intentionality on the part of the 'colonized', in this case, their 'will to hybridization' marks a major difference from other 'more postcolonial' cultures, which were generally unwilling to accept foreign rule and influence easily (see the vigorous anti-colonial position represented by more radical theorists like Dipesh Chakrabarty).

In Romania, it seems, the (proto-)postcolonial pattern foregrounded so far evinces at least the following unique features: 1) in a national entity where language by excellence has been pivotal to identity throughout its history,<sup>36</sup> foreign languages have been given equivalent relevance, so it can be said that Romanian culture is simply highly sensitive to, and aware of, the weight of second languages. 2) Perhaps paradoxically, the 'colonized' inhabitants of the Romanian territory have demonstrated, since times Roman, a primarily *assimilationist*, rather than counter-reactive attitude towards foreign influences; the latter are usually *appropriated*, oftentimes in cycles of

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<sup>31</sup> Its massive influence cannot be highlighted enough: Djuvara maintains that it 'permeated our language and our way of thinking and living' up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; Lucian Boia identifies a 'Romanian-French cultural symbiosis' in the architecture and urban styling of the day in cities like Bucharest and Iași; and Hannah Pakula points out that it carried into the Romanian Principalities 'echoes of the February French Revolution (1848)' and the 'promotion of the independence and unification of Wallachia and Moldavia.' See Djuvara, 240; Boia, 27; Pakula, 84.

<sup>32</sup> Most notably, Titu Maiorescu, the 'founding father' of modern Romanian letters and an important conservative politician.

<sup>33</sup> While it was the Romanian Principalities' late-19<sup>th</sup> century political elite that demanded specifically a foreign prince as a ruler able to rise above local rivalries, King Charles I, who reigned up until the outbreak of the First World War, was favored and recommended for this position by his uncle Napoleon III of France. It is, perhaps, one more example of how well the 'Franco-German alloy' worked in the case of modern(ized) Romania. See Mihăilescu, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Zoe Cămărășescu, *Amintiri* (Bucharest: Ponte, 2012), 220. This 'bicultural' status whereby French and German came to dominate end-of-the-19<sup>th</sup>-century Romania was also referred to, interestingly enough, as 'acculturation'. See Djuvara, 283.

<sup>35</sup> See also the widely accepted definition provided by Ashcroft et al: 'Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the "grafted" European [i.e. Occidental] cultural systems and an indigenous [in our case autochthonous] ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity.' Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 195.

<sup>36</sup> It is worth quoting in full historian Neagu Djuvara's view on the matter: 'Notice this aspect, as it is not emphasized enough: we [Romania] are the only sizeable country in Europe whose *unity is exclusively based* on language (in fact, ages ago the word language was synonymous to population or people). Almost all of the other European states were constituted on the basis of a shared history, oftentimes with peoples of different languages or dialects (like France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, England, etc.).' See Djuvara, 193.

about 150 years,<sup>37</sup> and brought to regenerate periodically those on-the-go realities called ‘national identity’ and ‘Romanian culture’.

Given this framework, when exactly did Romanians start getting ‘Americanized’? How did English make room for itself between the Romanians’ love for French and their German loyalties? What does English really mean to Romania, and where is it taking us?

## From Loanwords to Loanthink: Renewed Old Expectations

Never underestimate or overlook a nation’s capability to love — or hate — its leaders (and conversely), a saying might go. Queen Marie of Romania (1875-1938), mainly adored and only occasionally judged hard<sup>38</sup> by her Romanian subjects, was the first Anglo-Saxon leader Romania ever had. Her influence, in the opinion of the author of this article, is still seriously understudied and under-acknowledged. Yet it seems strikingly obvious that English started gaining ground in Romanian culture soon after this granddaughter of Queen Victoria’s (and of Russian Tsar Alexander II) accepted her role as Princess Consort to Ferdinand, the heir to the Romanian throne after King Charles’s death.

A language barely employed before in the history of pre-modern Romania, English gradually became, along with French and German, part and parcel of the education of any respectable child during the post-*belle époque* of Queen Marie’s reign.<sup>39</sup> The Queen, moreover, seems the first foreign Romanian leader who cared to explore, with remarkable insight, those flaws in the Romanian psyche and mentality upon which her ‘Anglo-Saxonism’ could work, if not wonders, then at least important corrections. Among those faults she mentions distrust, suspicion and a certain propensity to prove anyone ‘a wolf dressed up as a lamb’, systemic bribery and nepotism,<sup>40</sup> as well as lack of respect, of vision and of determination, and self-destructive criticism — all of which are treated by the resilient Queen with unfaltering Anglo-Saxon honesty, straightforwardness, trustfulness and long-term good will.<sup>41</sup>

Whereas the advent of English as a fairly popular foreign language in the 1920s-1940s may arguably have been caused by the Romanians’ emulation of their British-bred monarch<sup>42</sup>, it was undoubtedly her who, while nurturing the country’s French affiliations, also oriented it, for the first time in its history, towards alliances and closer ties with the English-speaking world, particularly North America. Besides, for example, publishing her Romanian memoirs (*My Country*) in Britain successfully enough as to collect funds for the WWI Romanian troops,<sup>43</sup> in 1926 she enthusiastically embarked on a great tour around the US, on board the ‘Royal Romanian’ train, to summon up

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<sup>37</sup> Neagu Djuvara maintains that it normally took Romanians two or three generations to ‘digest’ new cultural models, while to assimilate Occidental culture, exceptionally, it took them one or two generations. See Djuvara, 281 and 283.

<sup>38</sup> On account of her presumed extramarital love affairs. See Mihăilescu, 17.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, Cămărășescu, 81-3.

<sup>40</sup> Pakula, 234.

<sup>41</sup> Mihăilescu, 22 and 39-41.

<sup>42</sup> And conversely: the Queen chose to emulate some of the local culture by wearing occasionally Romanian folk attire, especially after her 1922 Coronation. (See, for example, the post-Coronation photographs in this online album compiled by the Bran Castle Administration: <http://www.castelulbran.ro/gallery-maria.html>). It is, perhaps, one of the very few examples of deliberate royal ‘(self-) hybridization’ — whether out of aesthetic affinities or sheer propaganda — in Europe.

<sup>43</sup> Pakula, 233.

American support (i.e. diplomatic endorsement, financial help and economic investments) for her adopted country.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, when after WWII the Soviet troops occupied Romania and the related Soviet apparatus started implanting its own structures in the country, the way had already been paved for 'great "American" expectations':<sup>45</sup> an enduring popular saying emerged in the mid-1940s ('The Americans are coming!'), and a pervasive belief that they were to save Romania from the Soviet grip lasted in fact throughout the communist period right up to the present.<sup>46</sup> No wonder, then, that following a couple of Stalinist decades when Russian was forcefully (but rather unsuccessfully) imposed as a second language, English resumed, little by little, its inter-war ascent in Romanian culture,<sup>47</sup> to reach unprecedented popularity today, when Romania has a strategic partnership with the US and hosts a component of the American anti-missile shield in Europe.

Focusing on (American) English as the most widespread foreign language in Romania,<sup>48</sup> let us explore, apart from the geopolitical orientation it carries, the linguistic role it fulfills, since it is illustrative of the mentality-related needs or openings that English, like French in the past, comes to redress or 'prosthetically' complete. Which areas of Romanian has English supplemented? Which realities needed to be expressed through English loanwords? Ultimately, what 'newness' has English brought forth in contemporary Romanian culture, and what exactly is it that the latter is currently assimilating through this yet another essential second language in its history of 'hybrid' self-construction?

Apparently, a great deal of English loanwords come from the area of business (for example, *outsourcing*, *joint-venture*, *dealer*, *stockholder*, *target market*),<sup>49</sup> IT and computer science (*email*, *update*, *link*, *hacker*, *software*, etc.), as well as popular culture or entertainment (*thriller*, *pop*, *rock*, *show*) and various sub-cultures (*hipster*, *junky*, *trendy*). Remarkably, many of them belong to an area which can be only vaguely circumscribed as 'professional': *team building*, *brainstorming*, *knowhow*, *training*, *management*, *think tank*.

To these, which are used as such (i.e. in their original form and pronunciation), we should add 'Romanianized' — whether by article addition, plural ending or some other suffix — renditions of English words such as *hispterită* or *corporatistă*<sup>50</sup> (feminine nouns), *staruri* or *puburi* (plural nouns), and even verbs like *a forwarda*, *a targeta*, *a sharui*, *a brandui*. The latter examples, even though thriving in the now highly prolific

<sup>44</sup> Pakula, 401-3.

<sup>45</sup> Mihăilescu, 142.

<sup>46</sup> As Neagu Djuvara put it, 'Convinced that the great American power, assisted by the other Occidentals, was going to prove superior to Russia, we were hoping that our salvation would come in four-five years. And it came after forty-five! Such is history.' Djuvara, 338. See also George Friedman, 'Geopolitical Journey: The Search for Belonging and Ballistic Missile Defence in Romania', *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, 29 May 2014, paragraph 3.

<sup>47</sup> After Queen Marie, one may speculate that two factors are likely to have made English regain ground even in the communist Romania of the 1970s and 1980s: the Most-Favored-Nation Clause granted by the US to Ceaușescu's Romania under Nixon's presidency, and the defection to the US of Lieutenant General Ion Mihai Pacepa, a top Romanian Secret Service agent whose contribution to the fall of the Ceaușescus in December 1989 is still rather veiled in mystery.

<sup>48</sup> 74% of the Romanian adults aged 25-64 mentioned English as their best-known foreign language, a figure well above the EU average of 38% for English as the most widely spoken foreign language. See *Eurostat Press Office*, 'Eurostat Newsrelease 138/2013', 26 September 2013, 2, and *European Commission*, 'Europeans and Their Languages: Special Eurobarometer 386', June 2012, 5, respectively.

<sup>49</sup> Cristina Athu, *Influența limbii engleze asupra limbii române actuale* (PhD diss., University of Bucharest, 2008), 3-4.

<sup>50</sup> Rodica Zafiu, 'Corporatist', *Dilema veche* 500, 12-18 September 2013, paragraph 1.

area of ‘Romglish’, seem to remain forever banished from the purer realm of standard, academic Romanian, and cause some sociologists to charge their main users, Romanian young people, with ‘xenocentrism’.<sup>51</sup>

While we are not aware how native speakers of English might perceive such versions of ‘their’ vocabulary (the suffix *-ui* attached to the verbs quoted above is, for instance, of Hungarian origin, which renders the said verbs doubly ‘estranged’ - or ‘hybridized’), it has been noticed that one major change English loanwords have been operating in Romanian culture has to do with gender. Romanian nouns go in three genders: masculine, feminine and neutral. The latter category has been considerably consolidated through the influx of English loanwords,<sup>52</sup> while the masculine-feminine divide has started to acquire blurred edges, with cross-gender samples like *tenismenă*, *congresmenă*<sup>53</sup> or ‘top-modelul<sup>54</sup> Naomi Campbell’, not to mention (Romglish) *manageriță*. And that, in a hardly post-patriarchal culture, does make a (mentality) difference.

Therefore, it seems that, broadly speaking, English filled in Romanian lacunae related primarily to professionalization, e-technology, individualization (see the subculture terms) and gender equalization. Viewed against the background of Romanian mentality, these areas of linguistic-cum-cultural input turn out to be, at this moment in history, indispensable to the development of the country.

To illustrate, an influential study carried out in 1937 showed the Romanian people’s psychology to be dominated by gregariousness, which on the one hand ‘was the most suitable weapon’ whereby ‘the unity of language and the church’ was maintained, according to inter-war author Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, and on the other ‘blocked the differentiation of personalities and, with that, of culture.’<sup>55</sup> As for today, a very recent re-make of that study reveals the (certainly paradoxical) coexistence in the Romanian collective psyche of an inferiority complex and a superiority one,<sup>56</sup> as well as a lack of positivist (i.e. empirical) approaches and pragmatic thinking.<sup>57</sup>

Psychologically speaking, what ‘Americanization’ and English as the second language of Romanians might just be doing to the national psyche is, quite therapeutically, to orientate it towards the practicalities of real life: the job, the tools, the person nearby, who is different and can naturally be approached on an equal footing as a teammate, not foe, nor master. The assimilationist pattern propounded above, when the processing of foreign influences was discussed, may well enable Romanians this time to acquire from English the practical thinking their mindset has been missing, the non-

<sup>51</sup> The term ‘means appreciation of and the wish to adopt everything that’s imported. This is something that defines young Romanians [...]. Culture is exported through celebrations, films and music. Most of these imports come from the US and are in English, therefore they “must” be good,’ sociologist Claudia Ghișoiu comments sarcastically. (See *Radio România Internațional*, ‘Romglish and Its Users’, 11 December 2013, paragraph 6).

<sup>52</sup> See Athu, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Feminized versions of ‘tennisman’ and ‘congressman’.

<sup>54</sup> Naomi Campbell is undoubtedly feminine, while the *-ul* added to her profession in Romanian is the definite article for masculine singular.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Remus Florescu, ‘Cum s-a schimbat poporul român în ultimul secol: de la spiritul de turmă la complexul de inferioritate’, *Adevărul*, 9 April 2014, paragraph 13.

<sup>56</sup> The two imply relentless self-criticism and hollow arrogance (oftentimes with mystic overtones), respectively – Queen Marie’s insights into her subjects’ psychology, quoted above, are thus partly confirmed.

<sup>57</sup> According to psychologist Daniel David, the study supervisor and Director of the Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Department (Babeș-Bolyai University). See Florescu, paragraphs 1 and 7-8.

conflictive accommodation of differences that their mentality has often blocked or downright rejected.

That 'acquisition' effectively equates with what psychotherapists call 'transference'. Traditionally defined as the 'adaptive ego function that emerges [...] in the context of [...] the involvement between patient and therapist,'<sup>58</sup> transference was later seen as 'an ongoing process by which we situate ourselves in our perceived present, an entirely unconscious process influenced by our historical expectations and histories [...], a mixing and transforming of the current context.'<sup>59</sup> Transference is arguably prompted by a need 'to find an extension and experience of our self through others,' to feel, even as adults, 'dynamically constituted, to a profound extent, through others', inasmuch as 'humans create ("find") themselves through others' and any 'psychological "self" is shaped out from an immersion with others.'<sup>60</sup>

Through this 'looking glass', by embracing 'Americanization' today Romanians may well be transforming their present by making sense of that past, the mid-1940s, when the Americans were coming, when English was on its way to allow for yet another 'hybridization' which, whether consciously or not, the national psyche needed for its next assimilationist intake, its next evolutionary step. History, thus, 'is being solved': at present, our English language choice correlates with our placement in a strategic position within NATO, along with peer 'subaltern' countries the proximity of which is reminiscent of the utopian 'Balkan Union' of the 1930s;<sup>61</sup> and it helps educate our youth to turn just as 'xenocentric' as to be able to approach reality sensibly, pragmatically and complex-free. So perhaps in the case of Romania foreign language learning ultimately reveals that country projects, too, may experience 'reincarnation'.

## Carrying Over

In this article a pattern was shown to exist in the case of Romania: a borderland nation and marginal culture historically poised between the East and the West evinces some postcolonial features such as subalternity and hybridity. It obtains the latter by internalizing the mentalities that go with the foreign languages it chooses to acquire. Thus, it repeatedly employs foreign languages as tools for both political progress (by importing/appropriating better structures and institutions, or forming safer and more rewarding alliances), and social evolution (by transference of more constructive attitudes or approaches).

<sup>58</sup> David Pincus, Walter J III Freeman and Arnold Modell, 'A Neurobiological Model of Perception. Considerations for Transference', *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 24.4 (2007): 623-4.

<sup>59</sup> Pincus, 630.

<sup>60</sup> Pincus et al, 635.

<sup>61</sup> Queen Marie was nicknamed at one point 'the Balkans' mother-in-law' on account of marrying her daughters off to the kings of Greece and Serbia, in an ambitious but failed attempt to put together a Balkan League. (See Pakula, 469.) The League project recalls a previous plan by WWI Polish General Jozef Pilsudski: called Intermarium, it was supposed to bring together into a sea-to-sea alliance of small nations Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Finland and the Baltic states. (See George Friedman, 'Geopolitical Journey, Part 2: Borderlands', *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, 3 June 2014, paragraph 10.) Intermarium has been recently resuscitated under the guise of an alliance of the 'buffer states' between aggressive Russia and the EU, made up of 'Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Azerbaijan, along with the other countries along the buffer line'. (See George Friedman, 'Borderlands: The New Strategic Landscape', *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, 6 May 2014, paragraph 20.) In the end, it has come down to a two-pillar NATO reinforcement, with Poland and Romania as 'the two European countries that matter the most'. (George Friedman, 'Borderlands: First Moves in Romania', *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, 27 May 2014, paragraph 2).

Is this a pattern which may hold true for other countries where second languages are popular, widespread and perceived equally sensitively? While that is for others to answer, the present article will end up asking one further question: if there indeed is transference in the linguistic, therefore cultural imports, where is the countertransference, its expectations, its grounds, its contents?

In the end, there is an ancient connection between ‘transfer’ and ‘metaphor’: they share the same root, Greek *pherein*: ‘to carry’. The prefixes make the difference, however little of it: ‘trans-’ and ‘meta-’, carrying-across and carrying-over. We are back to ‘Beyond’ in the ‘location of culture’. Its (re)generation may be, then, a matter of cultivating boundaries.

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## **Metafora limbilor străine. Geopolingvistică în cultura română**

În mod normal, o țară este definită drept o națiune-stat caracterizată printr-o cultură specifică întemeiată pe o limbă ce funcționează ca vehicul/garanție a identității naționale. Formula „o limbă este o cultură” pare să rezume statutul limbilor materne și/sau al celor oficiale, nu pe acela al limbilor străine (limba a doua sau limba a treia vorbite de vorbitori non-nativi), care sunt privite nu atât ca purtătoare de cultură precum cele oficiale, cât ca doar simple unelte tehnice sau profesionale. Articolul de față susține că, în contextul românesc, însușirea unei limbi non-materne a fost, în sine, un transfer cultural, încă din secolul al XVII-lea. Ipoteza de bază este că în România predilecția pentru o limbă străină sau alta a avut beneficii culturale (de exemplu, schimbarea mentalităților), a trasat orientări geopolitice (de exemplu, alianțe militare) și a oferit soluții terapeutice (pentru a ameliorarea psihicului național).