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# LANGUAGE: BORDERS, IDENTITIES AND UTOPIAS

## Balkan Cases

*I against my brother  
I and my brother against our cousin  
I, my brother and our cousin against the  
neighbors,  
All of us against the foreigner*

Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*, 1988  
(Cf. Woolf 1996)

### **Introduction: Mapping the Field**

The Balkans, whose northern and western borders are still being disputed in terms of identity reasons and claims, represents an interesting constellation of languages. Greek and Turkish, which have nothing in common, share a common border, and both have common borders with the diverse family of Slavic languages, which, in turn, shares borders with the Romance idiom of Romania and the separate Albanian, whose origin and affiliation is still not clear. Although linguistics may use the term “Balkan language community”, the differences may be more important than the similarities.

Such a simple mapping does not contribute much since differences and similarities are much more complicated than the draft of spatial arrangements. This paper will consider how some Balkan languages have become “languages” in terms of modern standards and the means of their representation. This will necessitate consideration of the discursive formats of linguistics itself. Moreover, standard languages are not a “purely” linguistic issue. They derive arguments and interpretations from linguistics by means ranging from sociolinguistics to sociology; dialectology to anthropology; history of language to political history; language developments to literary history and theory. Cultural studies also proves

very important as it gives birth to different identity readings of language problems (postcolonial, ecological, gender, etc.), as well as “language imagologies” or cultural histories of language (e.g., Bailey 1991, Knowles, 1997).

This field is described with a plethora of terms, the appropriateness of which being a matter of specialized linguistic debate: “standard language”, “codified/normalized language”, “national language”, “literary language”, etc.<sup>1</sup> The basic features of the “standard language” concept can be summarized as follows: a standard is a thoroughly modern concept; it is always written, urban, socially polyvalent, institutionalized, canceling any kinds of dialect, or social, or individual varieties; it always creates an image of “the whole” (a set of territorial, national, social, cultural, and historical patterns of “the whole” by means of an *unity-plus-continuity* design). Ideologies underlie it, and it emits ideologies. Up-to-date linguistic discourses describe it in terms of “ideology”, “institution”, “power”, and “authority” – e.g., *Eloquence and Power* (Joseph 1987), *Language and Power* (Fairclough 1989), *Ideologies of Language* (Joseph and Taylor 1990), *Language as Ideology* (Hodge and Kress, 1993), *Authority in Language* (Milroy and Milroy 1985), etc. As for the concept of “national language”, we shall presume here that it is a standard/codified/normalized language with an ethnic name – the latter often being crucial in the Balkans – and for this reason we will pay special attention to the policies of naming.

J. E. Joseph’s *Eloquence and Power* (1987), a brilliant investigation that we shall refer to often, asserts that standard languages are always achieved by means of interaction and acculturation and that their histories have “largely been written in terms of nationalism” (Joseph 1997, 43-57). This framework is quite relevant to the Balkans and sufficiently broad. However, we shall concentrate here on nineteenth to twentieth century Balkan standardization processes<sup>2</sup> with special focus on the historical, cultural, and political effects of neighborhood and isolation syndromes that lead to special “language questions”, language battles and wars contesting and multiplying languages. Although they can be witnessed further afield and not only in the Balkans, negative connotations have already produced a parallelism of meanings – in the words of Louis-Jean Calvet, “the neologism ‘babelization’, which means the multiplication of languages on a particular territory, is the linguistic equivalent of the term ‘balkanization’ for states” (Calvet 1998, 19).

However, language identities produce not only spatial but also temporal developments, and this is perhaps a worthy point of departure.

## Old and New: The Victory of Vernaculars

Language standards emerge in different times and within different political doctrines, yet every standard finds its basic reasons in a controversy of allurements and emancipation experienced in relation to some other culturally and/or politically superpositioned language (e.g., Latin and Greek, French and Latin, English and French, Czech and Latin and German, Bulgarian and Greek, etc.) This is a chain of echoes of echoes. We can follow the consecutively spreading waves and series of standards but we also face a gamut of enchanted circles in the European circulation of echoing standards.

The latter originates from the strange relation between “old” and “new” in the standardization of the “self”. In antiquity, classical Latin borrowed standard-making<sup>3</sup> devices from classical Greek; while many centuries later, a radical reverse was to be witnessed in the furious nationalist debates surrounding Modern Greek which appeared to have learned their basic lessons from the furious debates surrounding Modern Italian.

The relations between “old” and “new” proved to be basic and founding in the emergence of modern Balkan language standards. In most cases, as in the western European tradition, they were haunted by a flair for language decline, sunset, dispersion, and corruption of the new offspring when compared to the ancient Golden age<sup>4</sup> “in accordance with the mythology of a Golden Age and subsequent decadence” (Joseph 1987, 126). Differences, however, appear in territorially neighboring nationalist solutions of the “old-or-new” problem. The modern Greeks, in keeping the notion of supremacy of ancient classical Greek and echoing the *megali idea* of continuity, still maintain the tension of the co-existing Katharevusa and Demotic (this once led to a real battle that resulted in two deaths and many wounded at a famous demonstration in Athens following publication of the Gospels in Demotic in 1901). On the other hand, modern Turkish nationalism created a language policy that split with classical Arabic heritage by replacing the Arabic alphabet with the Latin and eliminating Arabisms from the vocabulary, etc. (Lewis 1968, 401-443).

The idea of a mutilated and disfigured modern idiom penetrated the writings of the Bulgarian “Church-Slavonic” school that aimed to revive of the old noble language in the first half of the nineteenth century. This school defined the new spoken vernacular as the rather unworthy progeny of the old “mother” (always naming the old language “a mother”): “a vulgar and mean language... a lecherous language” (Neophit Rilski,

1835), “a disgusting language” (Hristaki Pavlovich, 1837; for both cf. Hranova 2000, 336). As for Romanian, in his 1787 grammar *Ienăchiță Văcărescu* considered his contemporary language to have been damaged considerably since emperor Trajan conquered Dacia and degenerated.<sup>5</sup>

The battle between the “classical” and the “vernacular”, the “old” and the “new”, was the cause of severe competition between equal Romantic values – the Romantic thought claimed the value of being ancient (the older, the better); the Romantic thought claimed the value of being popular, shared, “of the people”. This tore apart the homogeneity of “the Romantic spirit” and caused long-lasting traumas that had to be overcome by means of Romantic cultural instruments. This can also be considered an enchanted circle, a circulation of controversies in one and the same romantic body, for modern Balkan cultures (at least the Slavic ones) do not in fact possess a framework of values different from that of the Romantic. The major device used to settle the trauma in the design of glory was the interpreting of the *unity* of the popular vernacular within the regime of *continuity* of “old” and “new”. This was to colonize times past retrospectively and respell them in terms of nationalism and project modernity as eternity.

This is to claim, as mainstream Bulgarian linguistics still does, that Old Slavonic is in fact Old Bulgarian (though, the Macedonian scholars of the second half of the twentieth century maintain that it is Old Macedonian) despite the fact that no documents or manuscripts, or the masterpieces from the Golden Age of old Bulgarian literature (i.e., old Bulgarian, as it was deliberately promoted by the Bulgarian state as a matter of state policy) ever named the language as “Bulgarian”, writing only “Slavic”. People living and writing in the tenth century in a powerful state that had a clear name did not see the necessity to name the language by an ethnic or state name – something unbearable to the nationalist mind that still maintains the strange claim that they wrote “Slavic” but meant “Bulgarian”. This is to lament, as Văcărescu did in his Romanian grammar, that the Roman colonists of Dacia Traiana evidently had with them no single professor of grammar to take care of language purity and protect the language from influences and degeneration (the idea of language purity is also a modern invention). Serbian linguist P. Ivić also comments that the monks using Church Slavonic “usually did not borrow Greek words, but rather replaced them with calques, obviously out of respect for the ideal of purity in language” (Ivić 1995).



Thus, we have a Bulgarian medieval literature that never used its ethnic/state name to identify its language in the glorious ninth to tenth centuries; Latin colonists missing a professor in Latin grammar; and Serbian monks unaware of any language purity. It is, therefore, hard at times to make ancient or medieval biases immediately obey modern nationalist imperatives. Perhaps because of these details or perhaps for other more practical social reasons, the notion of the “old” lost ground. The “old” proved to be supreme, though was never socially victorious. The “new”, being illiterate, peasant-like, “disgusting” and “degenerative”, took over and won the battle for modern standards.

It was Joshua Fishman who formulated “the vernacular as the medium of nationalism”; vernaculars are needed as representative “in order to secure the modern political-operational stability and participation without which ultimate socio-cultural integration cannot come to pass” (Fishman 1973, 155, 157). In the nineteenth century southeastern milieu we find striking examples of neglecting the role of the elite and institutions in the promotion of the vernacular, as in the following Bulgarian example.

In 1866, the prominent Revival writer and political journalist Petko Slaveyikov published a text in the *Gajda* newspaper entitled “Learning for Common Uses”. Although always available in his collected writings, the text has never been the focus of the Bulgarian inquiry despite containing an amazing project for a perfect Bulgarian language:

... The craftsman, as well as the peasant, must speak pure Bulgarian, unlike some most-wisely-articulate teachers and monks [...] he must speak comprehensibly and clearly, that is to use neither foreign words, nor colloquial ones spoken at the market-place, nor to Slavic allurements and temptations to succumb [...] That is to use neither old and new literary words, nor foreign ones, while we have old-standing pure Bulgarian words put in use. To understand how unpleasant and ridiculous we are while using without any need old and rusty or new and foreign words, let us imagine a man who is walking with one foot in a hobnailed boot, and the other one in a ragged sandal (Cf. Hranova 2000, 276).

The project quickly does away with at least two great schools of thought of the Revival debate concerned with the basic source of the standard Bulgarian language: the “Church-Slavonic” school that promotes the case of St. Cyril’s language revelation and resurrection, and the “Slavo-Bulgarian” school that supports a general adjustment of the Bulgarian

language such that it take account of the linguistic features common to the whole Slavic plethora. These are mockingly and disapprovingly called “most-wisely-articulate<sup>6</sup> teachers and monks” and “Slavic allurements”. This assessment is quite understandable for Petko Slaveykov was an adept of the third (and victorious) school, the “New-Bulgarian” school, which declared the spoken vernacular language of the common people a basic source of standardization.

However, the image of the vernacular spoken language of the peasants and craftsmen is extremely fantastic. It is supposed to have come to its enlightened ruler – the linguist, the scholar, and the man of letters – directly from the peasants’ and craftsmen’s speech and to come with a thesaurus, whose contents obeyed following requirements: they are neither foreign, nor Slavic; neither literary, nor colloquial (“spoken at the market-place”), and neither old, nor new.

There is no such a language. The method of exclusion does not allow for inclusion of any available lexical source. The language is caught in a process of switching off its currency and reaching the point zero of any speech. Slaveykov imagines an ideal language capable only of silence under the imperatives of such an ideal project. In fact, he designs the architecture of an empty treasury-thesaurus: the emptier, the more precious. In other words, this is the case of the radical surgeon making the most radical glossotomy ever seen. It is also the most paradoxical in that it implies amputation of the tongue in order to improve speech.

Slaveykov’s imagination also denies existence of an institution capable of performing a linguistic project. His writings contain many statements that define the Bulgarian schools as failures, bad social agents of the Bulgarian language, as in the following quotation which says it clearly and unequivocally:

... Any craftsman or peasant can learn to speak properly not at school but only in a conversation with the others by hearing and recognizing every pure Bulgarian word... (*ibid.*, 276)

Here, what seems a restricting and paradoxical glossotomy turns into a social utopia. The only reliable “institution” happens to be interaction within everyday speech, the spontaneous chatting of the common people, who are most likely illiterate. However, the meta-language is imagined as a superego of the colloquial discourse. The craftsman and the peasant are supposed to be meta-linguists of higher standing when compared to a

sophisticated scholar today. They are thought to be able to reflect on any item of idiom, while using it practically, and be capable of differentiating between procedures that lead to the right choice of the proper word at any given second in the currency of the oral speech. To expand Slaveykov's imagination, they appear as walking libraries full of different and thick oral vocabularies, all of which are opened and closed simultaneously and leafed through and again.

Of course, this systematic "library" was not ready-made. It was neither written, nor did it exist in oral form in the Balkan context of the nineteenth century. Though victorious, the vernaculars faced at least two major problems. First, as standard language was based on a chosen dialect, it was to base the modern on the pre-modern par excellence. It is tantamount to the general paradox of nationalism articulated by Ernest Gellner as a relation between society and community: "This is the deep paradox of nationalism: it is a phenomenon of *Gesellschaft*, but it is obliged to use and invoke the imagery of *Gemeinschaft*" (Gellner 1998, 24). Secondly, the vernaculars had to face their own multitude, as Fishman puts it, "a socially, regionally, and experientially differentiated *continuum of vernaculars*" (Fishman 1973, 155).

The latter led to choices that in most cases were politically painful, especially in that it refers to kindred idioms. M. Ignatieff proposes a reliable methodological link between the Freudian concept of "minor differences" to the initiations of neighboring nationalisms in Southeastern Europe (Ignatieff 1996). Although typologically similar, particular cases prove to be different though they design and justify the very same differences.

### **The Bulgarian-Macedonian Case: The Unsuccessful Synecdoche**

Monk Paisy of Khilandar's 1762 "Slavo-Bulgarian History" is today declared a starting point of the Bulgarian Revival thought and literary cannon. The text represents a strong defense of the Bulgarian "kin", "language", and the medieval glory of the Bulgarian tsardoms, turned rhetorically against the Fanariot politics and those Bulgarians who follow the Greek cultural influence. The following words by Paisy from the preface of the History are the most famous:

But some people [...] turn to a foreign culture and a foreign language, and they neglect their Bulgarian language and learn to read and speak Greek instead and they deem it shameful to call themselves Bulgarians. Oh, you unreasonable and foolish men! Why are you ashamed to call yourselves Bulgarians, why do you not read and speak your own language?" (*Paisy of Khilandar*, 1762, 11).

Father Paisy never reflects on language itself and never formulates any language problem. He simply uses the very term "language" in the grammatical singular form, unconsciously opening the door to a great and positive linguistic utopia. Implicitly, Paisy defines the most simple and most important utopian notion: the Bulgarian language is undisputedly present, there is no need for it to be projected, *it exists, it is*, and the unreasonable and foolish men have only to read and speak it.

This was, however, far from the real literary and linguistic practice of that time. The Bulgarian men of letters of the beginning of the nineteenth century met the equally existing alternative statuses of Bulgarian language. For this reason, the polemical object was radically replaced. Paisy considered the Bulgarian language as non-problematic, only the speaking people being problematic, and this led to the vocative rhetoric: "*Oh, you unreasonable and foolish men...*", while the scholars from the first half of the nineteenth century included in their writings vocatives to the already problematic image of the language: "*Oh, you, language, lecherous and uncontrolled! Is there any other language with so much lechery and discrepancy within itself?*" (Neophit Rilski, 1835); "*Oh, you, language, made by God... Oh, poor language! Strive boldly, language, strive boldly...*" (cf. Hranova 2000, 256).

The utopian singular form of "language" met actual multitudes at each point and level of the language gamut. After the decline of the "Church-Slavonic" and "Slavo-Bulgarian" schools, the "New Bulgarian School" remained the only winner on the battlefield in the mid-nineteenth century.

However, the victors encountered the same problem as their opponents – they were striving for a new, spoken, and living vernacular to be the basis of the standard, and they had to face the actual multitude of the living dialects with their corresponding diversities and different potentials for defining cultural and political identity. Seen in general, the so-called "Eastern speech" won the battle for the standard, which means the speech of the Eastern and central regions of the up-to-date territory of Bulgaria.

There is no sufficiently scientific explanation that explains the reason why the “Eastern speech” was considered sufficiently legitimate to represent the notion of the “Bulgarian” in general. It was not the speech of a capital (to ensure institutions, centralization, unity, etc.) for, being part of the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria had no capital and did not become a state until 1878. Rather it was a choice of the accustomed discourse since the majority of the most influential intellectuals of the time happened to have been born in the eastern and central parts (these being the hidden *gemeinschaftige* arguments of *Gesellschaft*). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Boyan Penev, a prominent professor in literary history at Sofia University, provided the following, rather arrogant answer to the question: “the Eastern speech has the right of dominance in the literary language, for there lives the most intelligent part of the nation” (Cf. Hranova 2000, 305). Incidentally, Penev’s consideration is quite similar to what John Joseph is saying today: “The network of factors determining which of the dialects within a language emerges as synecdochic is so complex [...] One thing is constant: it is the people with power and prestige who determine the prestigious dialect” (Joseph 1987, 58-59).<sup>7</sup>

However, the ability of “the Eastern-central” to represent “Bulgaria as a whole” ended in failure – it was an unsuccessful synecdoche, or it was not a synecdoche at all. That implied – no more, no less – the loss of Macedonia, for in the framework of the strong romantic belief that nation means a coincidence of language and territory, there is no place for the figurative action of the synecdoche. In such a framework the *pars pro toto* choice turns into a simple partition of combating localities.

This was the gloomy story of the permanent debates between the “eastern” and the “western” speaking and writing intellectuals – both having no independent state or states, and no institutionalized language or languages, both declaring and sharing a Bulgarian national identity, and half of them present today in both Bulgarian and Macedonian literary curricula (in Bulgarian because they declared a Bulgarian national identity; in Macedonian because they wrote using the features of the Western speech). Instead the debates were unconscious of any political backgrounds; they were always held in terms of aesthetics; there was no clear distinction between linguistic arguments such as “beautiful”, “correct”, “initial”, and “pure”, etc. It was a story of permanent scandals, denunciations, and offences in terms of the style of writing and its merits.

Two important things happened in the early 1870’s. Firstly, Marin Drinov’s text “On the New Bulgarian Alphabet” (1870) was published as

part of the program of “The Bulgarian Literary Society”, later renamed “Bulgarian Academy of Sciences”. The text summarized all previous activities, again confirming the “Eastern-central speech” as a core of the Bulgarian language standard, and proposed the general framework of the standard. The concomitant emergence of intuitions meant that the very choice might have dangerous political consequences. In 1871, Petko Slaveykov, a prominent Revival author and political journalist (and also a champion of the “Eastern dialect”) wrote the following:

The Macedonian question clearly revealed itself in the press... There are differences in the dialects of all European nations, and even much greater than ours, yet no European nation had come to the idea of breaking its language into many dialects and literatures. They have chosen some middle way and have adopted it in the schools. This is what we had to do. We had to choose some middle dialect understandable in all districts, and teach our children in it. That will be right, reasonable and useful, for it will keep the unity of our nation (Cf. Hranova 2000, 306).

It was already too late for the idea of “a middle dialect” because the whole debate had been permanently spelled out in the clear binary opposition of “Eastern” and “Western”. As O. M. Tomić points out, “the Macedonian dialects might well have been integrated in a common Bulgaro-Macedonian standard (which might have even been called Bulgarian), but the codifiers of Bulgarian failed to consider this possibility” (Tomić 1992, 449).

Thus, the problem existed before the interference of the “great forces”, though they contributed to the split in a manner so radical that, tragically, it was unexpected on both sides. In a two month period the great forces proposed two territorial images of the central Balkan region (the San-Stefano and Berlin treaties in 1878) that were so radically different that their cataclysm caused at least three Balkan wars subsequently. As the 1878 Berlin treaty on Bulgaria and Macedonia had been shaped politically in quite a different way, this contributed to a clearer language split.

Krste Misirkov, today hailed as the founding father of the Macedonian standard language, published his 1903 book *On the Macedonian Matter* in Sofia. Misirkov once said “we, the Macedonians, are Bulgarians, and we are more Bulgarian than the Bulgarians in Bulgaria themselves”, however he clearly defined a separate Macedonian ethnic identity (today the paradox is overcome simply – the “Bulgarian” claims of Misirkov are

quoted in bold letters in Bulgaria, and never quoted in Macedonia; his Macedonian claims being, of course, quoted in Macedonia, and skipped in Bulgaria). Misirkov rejected the “aesthetic” arguments while choosing a dialect, and proposed the arguments of the choice to be practical and political. Thus, he argued, the central Macedonian dialect would be most convincing for its foundation was sufficiently distant territorially from both Bulgaria and Serbia:

All our scientific and literary forces have to group around the central Macedonian speech... The aesthetic features of a given dialect have never played an important role while lifting it up to the status of a literary language. It is so, because practical considerations always gain the upper hand over aesthetic ones, and because the latter are relevant and subjective [...] On one hand the central districts are of great historical importance for Macedonia, on the other hand, they are equally distant both from Serbian and Bulgarian language centers, thus constituting in themselves a Macedonian language center (Misirkov 1903, 140-141).

However, Misirkov’s ideas were not put into practice until 1944 when the Macedonian standard language was officially declared.

To repeat, the *pars pro toto* representation proved unsuccessful, the “synecdochic choice of a dialect” proved not to be synecdochic at all in the South-Slavic non-institutional imagery of “the whole”. The major figurative failed and the different dialects and localities remained simply different.

The famous differentiation of Heinz Kloss between *Abstand* and *Ausbau* languages (*Abstand* having an inherent structural autonomy, and *Ausbau* established by developing differences from closely related languages – see also Joseph 1987, Clyne 1992) does not explain much in the cases of the dialect choice and the workability of the synecdoche. Although the latter seems to be intrinsic to *Ausbau* patterns (the Slavic ones being important examples), it also proves crucial to a typical *Abstand* case, such as the Albanian. In his 1989 monograph Arshi Pipa considered the two major Albanian dialects – Gheg and Tosk – as politically opposite. Consequently, the choice of the Tosk as the basis of the standard can be explained as a communist decision, with the standard Albanian being qualified as a “Marrist-Stalinist concoction” (Pipa 1989, xii-xiii). It causes the author to predict the Tosk/Gheg split as even being the cause of “splitting the nation apart” (*ibid.*, xiv). Moreover, in his preface, Pipa

declares that what sensitized him to the question of language in Albania was the Croatian question of language.

### **The Serbian-Croatian Case: the Unsuccessful Metonymy**

We may consider that the synecdoche in the Bulgarian-Macedonian case failed because the *Gemeinschaft* argument (dialect, territorial extract, localism) happened to be separate and sufficiently “small”, and thus not able to represent the *Gesellschaft* imagery of “the whole”. However, the opposite version also failed in the modern South-Slavic world. A linguistic *Gemeinschaft* territorially greater than any national *Gesellschaft* also proved unsuccessful, this being the Serbian-Croatian case.

The early nineteenth century developments in Serbia and Croatia also justified the victory of the vernacular as a basis for the standard language. The great Serbian linguist Vuk Karadžić fought the battle that rejected the Church-Slavonic inheritance in favor of the living vernacular, and proposed a new phonetic orthography that replaced the etymological. His *Serbian dictionary*, with an appended grammar published in Vienna 1818, became one of the major works of Slavic philology. At the same time, the Illyrian movement emerged in Croatia, led by great the Croatian linguist and reformer of orthography Ljudevit Gay, and claimed the political, linguistic, and spiritual unity of the South Slavs. The name “Illyria” had to overcome ethnic and regional names and define a common area of the South Slavs, from Slovenia to the Black Sea. (Nowadays, the very name “Illyrian”, even in Medieval and Renaissance documents and texts, is sometimes directly “translated”/replaced with “Croatian” in Croatia and “Serbian” in Serbia.) Being under threat of Germanization and Hungarization, and simultaneously obeying the will of the Habsburg Empire in respect of a common administrative language, the different South Slavs arrived at a common standard from different political and cultural points of view. In 1950, the Serb Vuk Karadžić, the Slovene Franz Miklošič, and several Croatian writers (the great Ivan Mažuranić among them) signed the so-called “Vienna agreement” which defined the framework of the common standard. (Nowadays the Vienna Agreement is interpreted as if “the Croats adopted Vuk [Karadžić]’s ideas and language” in Serbia, and in Croatia it is considered a non-important and non-influential private initiative of several Slavic intellectuals.) However, the powerful Zagreb philological school (called “the Croatian Vukovians”,



the adherents of Vuk Karadžić) promoted institutionally the idea of a common standard based on a common dialect in the second half of the nineteenth century.

There are several major dialects spoken from Slovenia to Serbia, the most important of which being the “Štokavian”, “Kajkavian” and “Čakavian” (representing the different words for “what” – i.e. “što”, “kaj”, and “ča”), each of which also has sub-dialects of the “je”, “e” and “i” types (“jekavian”, “ekavian, and “ikavian”, respectively). The Vienna agreement promoted the Štokavian dialect for several basic reasons: it was the most widespread; it was considered to be the most related to the Old Slavonic and a bearer of a remarkable folklore tradition; the glorious literature of Dubrovnik was also written in Štokavian.

The text of the Vienna Agreement did not mention the name of the common standard language based on the Štokavian dialect, and thus undermined the whole situation, causing problems that lasted 150 years in a permanent Romantic context, according to which language was a symbol/mirror/embodiment of the national soul and thus also needed a national name. Vuk initially claimed the Štokavian as Serbian; however no ethnic name was fixed in the Vienna Agreement signed by Vuk himself. Political developments supported unification and the interwar Kingdom and the postwar republic of Yugoslavia did not give reasons for a language split, though they allowed for the emergence of a strange mess of names put in a different political order: “Serbo-Croatian”<sup>8</sup>, “Croato-Serbian”, “Serbian or Croatian”, “Croatian or Serbian”. Titles such as “A grammar/dictionary of Serbian or Croatian language” (published in Belgrade) and “A grammar/dictionary of Croatian or Serbian language” (published in Zagreb) were innumerable from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. The Vienna agreement was followed by declarations, agreements, etc. targeting different claims in different times and political contexts:

### **The Vienna Agreement, 1850:**

*We, the subscribers, being aware that one nation must have one literature and being aware of the sorrowful disunity of our writings, not only in the letters, but also in language and orthography, decided to meet and talk together in order to do as much as possible for arranging and unifying our literature...*

### **Governmental Decree: On the Croatian Language, Its Purity and Spelling, 1941:**

Article 1. The language spoken by Croats... is the primary and peculiar language of the Croatian people, and therefore not identical with any other language, nor it is a dialect of any other language, nor related to any other nation's common language. That is why it is called the "Croatian language". [...] Article 7: In the Croatian language people should write by word root spelling, not by phonetic spelling...

### **The Novi Sad Agreement, 1954:**

The vernacular language of Serbs, Croats, and Montenegrins is one and the same language. Therefore, the literary language, which has emerged on this basis, is one and the same, too, and has developed around two main centers, Belgrade and Zagreb...

### **Declaration on the Name and Position of the Croatian Literary Language, 1967:**

It is an initial right of a nation to name its language by its own name [...] in Yugoslavia Croatian literary language has been suppressed and downgraded in the unequal position of a local dialect [...] The imprecise name "Serbo-Croatian", respectively "Croato-Serbian" leads to that the two names are taken as synonyms<sup>9</sup>, not as foundations of the equality of Serbian and Croatian...

### **Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1984:**

In any case, the Serbs in Croatia are otherwise exposed to a sophisticated and quite effective policy of assimilation. One component of this policy is [...] the imposition of an official language that bears the name of another nation (Croatia), thus giving concrete shape to national inequality. A constitutional provision has made this language obligatory for the Serbs in Croatia, and nationalistically inclined Croatian linguists are distancing it systematically and by well-organized actions from the language used in the other republics of the Serbo-Croatian language area, and this is helping to weaken the ties binding the Serbs in Croatia to other Serbs...

### **Speech on the Serbian Language, 1998:**

The language borders of the Serbian language (Štokavian dialect) justify the ethnic borders of the Serbian nation. This language is called also Slovene, Slavoserbian,

Illyrian, Dalmatian, Dubrovnician, Bosnian, Slavonian, Croatian, “our language”, etc. [...] The Jekavian pronunciation variant of the Serbian literary language in the redaction of Vuk Karadžić is adopted in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Croatia, and the Croats used in their own interest to double the name of the Serbian language (the so-called “Croatian or Serbian language”) [...] The so-called Croatian literary language is a Zagreb variant of the Serbian literary language...

Although politically different, the typology of claims seems quite clear. Agreements are made on the notion of “oneness” and “sameness” (“one nation must have one literature”, 1850; “one and the same language”, 1954) while the opposite claims target the idea of an independent and separate language (“not identical with any other language” in the 1941 Decree of the Ustasha government; “an initial right of a nation to name its language by its own name” in the dissident anticommunist 1967 Declaration). The amazing and dangerous Serbian “Speech” in 1998 that was signed by fifteen linguists and writers in Belgrade claims absolute equality between the Štokavian dialect and the Serbian language in general, and this is also an ethnic and territorial consideration (“the ethnic borders of the Serbian nation”).<sup>10</sup>

Offensive and defensive claims, aggression and martyrological discourse are always present and always change places in these debates. They also echo with readers and collections published to prove the permanent aggression of the Serbs or the separatist hysteria of the Croats, such as, for example, *Greater Serbia from Ideology to Aggression* (in English, Zagreb: Croatian Information Centre, 1992) or *Historija hrvatske hysterije* ([History of Croatian Hysteria], Beograd: Strucna knjiga, 1992). Both give way to what Adam Michnik observed in the Serbian-Croatian conflict: “Croatian nationalism produced an enemy image of a primitive and cruel Serbian occupier, an Asiatic barbarian. Serbian nationalism produced an enemy image of Croats as a fascist and murderous people” (Michnik 1996, 17).

Within the discourse of oppression and suppression typical for the South Slavic language we can expect a typological solidarity of the suppressed; however, this is not that easy to find it. The Croatian declaration of 1967 maintained that Serbian downgraded not only Croatian, but also Slovenian and Macedonian, although the Constitution guaranteed their equality. However, we have the following statement by Croatian linguist B. Franolić:

... political circumstances brought about in August 1944 the recognition by the Yugoslav authorities of a separate Macedonian official standard language, although the speakers of Bulgarian and Macedonian dialects would certainly be considered by linguists to constitute a single linguistic community [...] Thus, a more or less preliterate Macedonian dialect was raised, for political reasons, to the status of a standard language whereas Croatian, which has a highly standardized form and a flourishing literature, with five hundred years of literary tradition, is being downgraded to the status of a dialectized language... (Franolić 1988, 22).

So the Macedonians had not only to suffer Bulgarian contestations of their standard language, Greek contestations of the name of their language and nation, and Ottoman and Serbian political domination throughout the nineteenth and up to twentieth century; evidently they also had to survive Croatian cultural superiority.

It would not be accurate today to consider the Serbian-Croatian case only in terms of a binary opposition. Although Serbian and Croatian are the main actors in this conflict, the indistinct and sometimes controversial inertia of the split forges ahead. The general framework of the 1995 Dayton agreement states that it is made in the Bosnian, Croatian, English and Serbian languages, each text being equally authentic. This statement officially legitimizes a Bosnian language, though the 1995 postwar constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina avoids defining any “national” or “official” language. On the other hand, article 9 of the 1992 Montenegrin constitution affirms that “in Montenegro Serbian language of the iekavian dialect will be the official language”. Concomitantly, there were claims about the independence of Montenegro; to quote here only the title of the 1993 monograph “Crnogorski jezik” [Montenegrin language] by Vojislav Nikcevic, which repeats the paradigmatic arguments of language separation: “It is socio-linguistically, ethnically, and culturally a separate language [...] Because this language was created by Montenegrin people, the only possible name for it is *Montenegrin* just as other Slavic languages are named after the people who speak them”.<sup>11</sup>

All this makes linguists wonder about the number of languages. Peter Hill considers this to be “a rather uncomfortable situation in Slavonic linguistics: it is debatable how many Slavonic languages there are” (Hill 1988, 24). There are also characteristic titles and investigations, such as Serbian linguist R. Bugarski’s “Counting Languages in the Balkans: The Strange Arithmetic of Serbo-Croatian” (Bugarski 2001) or Croatian linguist

D. Škiljan's chapter "Od jedan do četiri" [From One to Four] (Škiljan 2002).

The "counting languages" syndrome finds its culmination in a quite neutral case, politically speaking. On being asked officially by different cultural institutions to explain how to identify works written in Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian in order to classify them according to appropriate language indexes, the Library of Congress delivered a paper concerning the guidelines of identification entitled "Identification of Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian (Preliminary Draft)". This 2002 document available on the Library of Congress website and "compiled from staff at the Library of Congress" proves to be a simple failure of taxonomic design. Here we will quote some of its items with no further comment:

[...]

**Script:**

Works in the Cyrillic alphabet are probably Serbian. Works in the Roman alphabet may be Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian.

**Ethnicity of author:**

If the author is identified as Croatian, then the language is probably Croatian. If the author is identified as Serbian or Montenegrin, then the language is probably Serbian. If the author is identified as Bosnian Muslim, then the language is probably Bosnian.

**Place of publication:**

Works published in Croatia are probably Croatian, unless published by an organization having Serbian interests. Works published in Serbia or Montenegro are probably Serbian. Works published in Bosnia may be Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian.

**Publisher or issuing body:**

If the publisher or issuing body clearly represents the interests or opinions of a particular ethnic group, then the work is probably written in the language of that group.

**Content:**

In some cases the content of the publication may be used as a guide to determining the language. Example: works on Orthodox Church doctrines are probably in Serbian.<sup>12</sup>

The gloomy story of South Slavic agreements, disagreements, decrees, declarations and competitions finds no consolation or solution in any possible peace-making discourse because all Romantic discourses seem already to have been thoroughly exploited and exhausted (that of unity

and that of emancipation; that of being suppressed, and that of being used and abused, that of being “national”, and that of being in the framework of “brotherhood”). However, the core of the problem remains the name of the language and its relevance to the ethnic name of the nation, as well as the territory of the chosen dialect in reference to the territory of the state with their never coinciding borders. For this reason no powerful trope and no figurative in general is capable of carrying out the task of identity and representation. Choosing a dialect (“the Eastern speech”) proved an unsuccessful synecdoche in the Bulgarian-Macedonian case; Choosing the Štokavian dialect with its enormous territory in the Serbian-Croatian case proved an unsuccessful metonymy, a metonymy with no name, always contested by different ethnic names. The paradox described by Gellner turns into a crisis: while *Gesellschaft* speaks *Gemeinshaft*, the same *Gemeinschaft* undermines its foundations and arguments while being spoken.

There also exist scientific attempts to avoid metonymies and to name the language simply in non-national terms. The Croatian linguist Dalibor Brozović proposes the following:

As, however, it is necessary for the central South Slavonic diasystem to have a name for the purpose of different linguistic disciplines, primarily genetic linguistics, as well as for some other purpose (ethnology, anthropology, statistics, encyclopedias, etc.) it could be named in a neutral and descriptive manner as the “Central South Slavonic Language” [...] As it has been more than a century and a half since no standard idiom based on a dialect other than *neoshtokavian* has been used, this abstract language can be named “Standard Neoshtokavian”. This is its only indisputable quality” (Brozović 1992, 357).

Although considered scientifically indisputable, there is no chance of such a naming being able to penetrate all public and popular everyday identifications; as the author points out, “materialized national variants of abstract standard languages are in the functional sense equal to concrete standard languages” (*ibid.*, 359). It is obvious to the public and even to the politically involved linguists that such names cannot find social ground. Their formulation cannot avoid the presence of “materialized”, “national”, “functional”, and “concrete” implementations. In this sense, after being expelled through the door, the competing metonymies come back through the window always to inhabit the space of language.

## Battles in the Nature/Culture Framework

Romanticism designed not only nationalist but also non-nationalist linguistic projects. In general, non-nationalist decisions lost the battle because they relied on proceedings that can always be considered effects of language planning and deliberate engineering which is enough to be estimated as “artificial”. The Illyrian project of Ljudevit Gaj relied on this:

In Illyria there can be only one literary language; let us not search for it in one place, or in one state, but in entire great Illyria. The Germans constructed their language from all the dialects of entire Germany; and the Italians traced their sweet speech from all the dialects of entire Italy. Our dictionary is entire Illyria. In that great garden there are everywhere most beautiful flowers. Let us gather everything that is best in one wreath, and this popular wreath of ours will never wither” (Gaj, 1836, cf. Banac 1990, 42).

Incidentally, the Bulgarian father Paisy of Khilandar had a very similar vision of the Old Slavic in 1762: “They [St. Cyril and St. Methodius] gathered the most beautiful words from all Slavic speeches and put them together”.

Such great utopias are in fact utopias in their non-nationalist Illyrian or Old Slavic versions, as well as in their nationalist (Italian or German) versions (as in that the strong belief that Dante made Italian out of all dialects in the *Divine Comedy*, or that Luther made the same of German in his translation of the Bible, are successfully demystified by present-day linguistics). Nowadays we can call such projects “Esperantist proceedings” as they reject continuity in achieving unity by acts of gathering and putting together. Again Romanticism means to claim it as non-natural, and this is the main argument of the 1850 Vienna Agreement (and perhaps a possible reason why Ljudevit Gaj did not sign):

We have acknowledged that it is not worth constructing by a mixture such a speech, which does not exist among the people, but we must choose one speech to be a literary language [...] because each mixture, which is a human performance would be worse than any of the popular dialects, which are a performance of God [...] In case somebody dislikes this dialect [the chosen [tokavian dialect] let him write in any of the other dialects, as he wishes, anything but mixing them, anything but building a language, which does not exist among the people.

The Romantic practice actually relied on something very natural, just as a single living dialect is. However, again within Romantic practice, the very act of standardizing the living dialect brings with it the negative connotations of artificiality. As J. Joseph points out: “in the common vernacular belief system of Western culture, language standards are not recognized as man-made constructs” (Joseph, 1987, 125); V. Lehmann focuses “on the anonymity of linguistic processes in the formation of the standard language” (Lehmann 1988, 138). The first to use the term “standard” negatively in the sense of “artificial” is thought to be the German linguist Max Müller in 1862:

What we are accustomed to call languages, the literary idioms of Greece, and Rome, and India, of Italy, France, and Spain, must be considered as artificial, rather than as natural forms of speech. The real and natural life of language is in its dialects (cf. Joseph 1987, 9).

Here Romantic thought finds itself at an impasse – modern society and pre-modern community are both extremely important and valuable, but in the case of the *Gesellschaft* language facet being generally “artificial”, and the *Gemeinschaft* facet being generally “natural”, how can they be reconciled? To put it briefly, the linguistic discourses have developed powerful argumentative and rhetoric strategies of different kinds to represent the national standard language as a natural phenomenon – this is the great endeavor to dress Leibnitz in the clothes of Herder.

The extreme point of such considerations is to assess nationalist and non-nationalist projects in general in terms of naturalness or artificiality. In the year 2000, the following was written by a Macedonian linguist:

I like to divide the cultural activists of the Bulgarian and Macedonian communities into the following groups: nationalists and hegemonists on the Bulgarian side, and nationalists and cosmopolitans on the Macedonian side [...] Nationalists from both sides gained the victory taking the side of the natural decision (Spasov 2000, 45).

This means that nationalism is declared a natural phenomenon in general.

The social visibility of standardization proceedings is a great obstacle to the image of naturalness – the more visible, the more paroxysmal. Social visibility brings to the stage public plots, institutions and cultural actors, thus proving obstructive to the anonymity of nature. The Serbian-



Croatian case is very prolific in agreements, disagreements, and declarations, and this made Croatian linguist Vlado Gotovac (a great enemy of the Vienna agreement) scream out in 1969: "... our philology could never have been anything else but a permanent servant of politics... Signings and contestations of agreements - this is the whole history of our philology. A political, diplomatic history!" The social visibility of the standardizing proceedings in Skopje is also the core of the Bulgarian denunciation of the Macedonian language:

The emergence of the so-called "Macedonian literary language" is a unique phenomenon [...] having nothing in common with the normal inception and evolution of original languages on the continent. Unlike them, the "Macedonian language" was compiled artificially by a group of people: 1) on a fixed date in the recent past; 2) on a fixed place; and 3) by way of a particular degree. On Aug. 2, 1944 [...] at the first session of the Antifascist Assembly of the People's Liberation of Macedonia (AAPLM), a decree was endorsed about an official language, which had to immediately be triggered into effect. Several months later - again via administrative methods - this "language" was accomplished and endorsed through voting by 10 teachers, 1 poet, and 1 politician (AAPLM representative) at a sitting in the Skopje municipality from Nov. 27 to Dec. 3, 1944" (Kočev, Kronsteiner, Alexandrov 1994, 25).

The Macedonian answered this accusation in the following:

The construction of the fundamental norm of Bulgarian literary language is very dramatic [...] the stabilization of the basic norm of Bulgarian literary language is full of painful quakes and birth-pains [...] Macedonian literary language is the newest and the youngest in the family of Slavic languages [...] the Macedonians are called an artificial nation with an artificial language created "on a fixed date, on a fixed place, and by way of a particular decree". Is it possible, for instance, a construction of a norm on a non-fixed date, non-fixed place, and without a decree (a political will)? [...] The quick stabilization of Macedonian literary standard is the best evidence that this standard originates from the spirit of Macedonian language and culture (Vangelov, 2000, 85, 88, 90).

As is clear, quite opposite arguments may be used to defend one most important subject – the natural character of language. Bulgarians find it natural to have a standard made up by dozens of scholars with competing ideas over more than fifty years (this ensures the anonymous and natural

development of the standard, there is no single founding father, no date and no single founding document). From the Macedonian point of view this is not natural and shows only the incoherence of Bulgarian language and its non-organic "birth-pains", contrary to the Macedonian standard, which is organic and sufficiently natural to emerge from its framework by itself in a period of three days, and so on.

The Bulgarian-Macedonian competition in terms of naturalness is not a counterpart of the Serbian-Croatian case, for there nature is a great obstacle in identifying the two languages as separate and sufficiently different. The main symbol of language nature – the living Štokavian dialect – is a common and basic ingredient of the standards. That is why Croatian linguists have undertaken the opposite, which is a culmination of Romantic paradoxes – they claim culture to be the true identity of language. The differences are argued in perfect cultural binary oppositions: different cultural centers (Zagreb and Belgrade), the Latin script and Cyrillic script, and two corresponding orthographies, etc. (Franić 1988, 13). Miro Kačić added to this that Croatian has kept to its own tradition, while Serbian broke with its own tradition during the standardization proceedings (Kačić 1997, 38), the different religious contexts – Catholic and Orthodox – and the fact that Croatian and Serbian experienced different borrowings (Czech, Italian and German in Croatian; Turkish, Greek and "Balkan" in Serbian (*ibid.*, 52). In the latter argument we have the general West-East axiological connotations acting at full strength. Kačić's discourse culminates in the term "civilization", a "Croatian civilization" (no more, no less) being different from the Serbian one. The living natural Štokavian dialect as a common basis of the two standards is simply an obstacle in the formulating of the binary oppositions. Thus, a great reverse was made, aiming towards the formula: "The general Croatian literary language is an artificial linguistic idiom" (*ibid.*, 66). The author is not afraid of the term "artificial" for he finds nature and essence in another set of arguments: "The differences and similarities between Croatian and other languages are not important in determining its identity [...] A literary language is basically a language, but it is general and national in its cultural and civilizational superstructure. Therefore, it cannot be said that the two literary languages are identical" (*ibid.*, 63, 67). This means that the concerns of the Vienna agreement for a natural basis of the standard are radically reversed in the suggestion that language culture is much more important than language nature, that culture is the truest

nature, that the basis of the standard is not, in fact, the dialect, but – as Kačić involves the classical Marxist term – “civilizational superstructure”.

Although the Bulgarian-Macedonian case spells out its conflict in the terms of “Eastern speech” and “Western speech” both are considered by themselves equally “Eastern” in the general context of European geography. The Serbian-Croatian case reveals the opposite bias: it activates the “East-West” settlements in the regime of their inherited ideological and axiological shortages and benefits. Thus the East-West axiological matrix of linguistic designs also penetrates the territory of the Štokavian dialect. The present-day official Croatian statement about the chosen dialect is the following: “The Neoštokavian-Jekavian dialect basis of the Croatian standard language contains only Western-Neoštokavian-Jekavian features of the Jekavian and Ikavian dialects” (Babić, Brošević, Pavičić 1991, 33). We can naively inquire as to the location of the border between the western and the eastern features of the Štokavian dialect, and the answer is given in the 1997 monograph by Miro Kačić: “The border dividing western and eastern Štokavian variants followed the Danube and later the river Drina” (Kačić 1997, 66).

Being a river, the Drina looks like a natural border and for this reason it might be taken as an argument for natural differences. However, every dialect map shows the Drina flowing through a compact and great area of the Neoštokavian-jekavian dialect. Though evidently not a “natural” (dialect) border, the Drina proves to be a radically cultural and political one.

The Danube and Drina<sup>13</sup> rivers when considered dialect borders appear really amazing, fantastic, and even fascinating, for this is the same crucial border chosen by Emperor Theodosius the Great to signify the division of Rome into two empires – Western and Eastern – in the fourth century. Since then, the Drina River has clearly divided everything into “eastern” and “western” parts distributing also the powerful political and cultural connotations of the West and the East in general. It seems that Emperor Theodosius had resolved everything in the region, even the border within the Štokavijan-jekavian dialect.

All this may lead to rather gloomy and uncertain conclusions. Both Bulgarian-Macedonian and Serbian-Croatian cases seem quite similar because the main problem and the starting point of all debates refer to the right of a nation to identify itself and its own language. However, the two cases prove to be clearly opposite in the nature-culture framework.

In the Bulgarian-Macedonian case we have one common pre-state and pre-modern century-long culture within the borders of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the nineteenth century, and two dialects. In the Serbian-Croatian case we have one dialect and two cultures. If culture is taken as a reliable measurement unit, then Bulgarian and Macedonian are one and the same language, while Serbian and Croatian are two different languages. If nature (the dialect) is taken as a reliable measurement unit, then Bulgarian and Macedonian are two different languages, while Serbian and Croatian are one and the same. Clearly, not only tropes fail, but also arithmetic.

The nature-culture framework seems flexible enough to bear all furious argumentative storms and survive all quakes in which nature and culture are mixing and changing places at any given moment in the debate. Each is capable of turning into a common predicate of opposite subjects in the major dichotomist statements, and vice versa; they are capable of tearing to pieces any single subject by applying to it quite opposite predicates. This way, both natural and cultural measurement units prove unreliable and incapable of producing any clarifying typology in the cases of minor differences.

### **Neighborhood and Isolation: “From a Land Far Away”**

The synecdoche and metonymy we used in the above paragraphs to format the Bulgarian-Macedonian and Serbian-Croatian language cases of minor differences seem to work here as spatial figures. They always refer to never coinciding borders of dialects and languages, languages and nations, nations and territories, political realities and desiderata. Such boundaries are intrinsic to kindred languages and territorial neighborhoods. The Balkans, however, also provide an example of language isolation, and this is the Romanian case.

The only Romance language on the peninsula proves to be different enough from all its neighboring languages (Slavic and Hungarian). There exists an extremely popular Romanian saying, which refers directly to the identification of the “self” – it defines Romania as “a Latin island surrounded by the Slav sea”. Such self-estimation, of course, invokes defensive rhetoric and a strong belief in the great merits of the far distant kindred civilization. As the Romanian poet Octavian Goga put it: “that they are of an imperial race / from a land far away” (Cf. Boia 2001, 177).

To be alone, isolated<sup>14</sup>, and far from the cradle in one's everyday consciousness, this, figuratively, is also the story of Robinson Crusoe, and, as we know, that is a story of success in preserving identity and building a world out of relics, cultural memories and practical skills.

The isolation syndrome makes the synecdoche work successfully. Differences between Romanian dialects appear almost invisible when compared to the neighboring Slavic and Hungarian languages; the dialects belong to one and the same (and sufficiently isolated) Romance language identity, and, furthermore, the major dialects are territorially displaced on the Balkans, and non-coinciding with the present day territory of Romania: "l'aroumain, le megleno-roumain et l'istro-roumain forment des groupes disséminés dans la Péninsule Balkanique et en Istrie" (Rosetti 1973, 19). This fact was used by Romanian nationalist historiography to argue the greater territorial origin of Romanian nation and language, as in P. P. Panaitescu's 1943 textbook on Romanian history, controversially reprinted in 1990 – "... the area where the Romanian folk was formed is the lower Danube valley, on both sides of the river, the whole of Dacia Traiana, and the two Moesias (Bulgaria and Serbia)..." (Cf. Boia 2001, 118-119). The territorial distance of the dialects was not only a resource of nationalist imagery; it also kept these dialects from being a real alternative in the choice of the Daco-Romanian dialect for the standardized and representative of the modern notion of Romanian language. The distant dialects were not capable of a social rivalry with that of the dominating Daco-Romanian, even in the territorial framework of the synecdoche, and it is for this reason that the synecdoche proved successful in general.

As the representatives of the distant dialects were not striving for separate nations nothing prevented the distance from also playing a general unifying role, i.e., to formulate the dialects as belonging to one and the same language – "Le dacoromain, l'istroromain, le mégléno-roumain et l'aroumain... ont formé à l'origine une seule langue, issue du latin oriental..." (Rosetti 1973, 78). It is also noteworthy that all the names of dialects contain the general construction "...-Romanian", which suggests too strongly that they belong to one and the same language identity. Of course, it is by no means competitions that always appear to define the speakers of the distant dialects, and in particular the Aromanian speakers, as "the truest Romanians"<sup>15</sup>, and to underline the cultural superiority of the standardized and perfected Daco-Romanian when compared to the distant dialects that remained simply "Balkan" – "Comparé à l'aroumain,

parlé au sud du Danube, le dacoromain se trouve à un degré d'évolution plus avancé et, à commencer par le 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, il a acquis un aspect 'européen'..." (Rosetti 1973, 51).

Identification of the Romanian language in general is dependant to a great extent on the isolation syndrome. Grammarians of the second half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century claimed the Romance character of Romanian, and the restoration of its Latin stock was much infected by borrowings from its non-Latin neighbors. The Transylvanian school (Gh. Sincai, S. Micu-Klein, and P. Maior) defined the Latin character of the language and its unity in the different regions and principalities. The linguistic engineering of the Transylvanian school aimed at replacing Slavic, Turkish, and "Balkan" borrowings with neologisms coined from Latin stock. This tendency also culminated in the official extermination of the Cyrillic alphabet in 1860 and its replacement with the Latin. All these were, in fact, acts of identity-building, which continued to penetrate Romanian linguistic discourse until recent decades.

Since the Slavs and Slavic influence could not receive much negative connotation in the communist decades (for obvious reasons) linguists performed interesting algorithmic and rhetoric moves to make the "island" and the "sea" comfortable to each. A. Graur, for instance, is prone paradoxically to define the Slavic influence as an instrument by which the Romanian language in certain points becomes more Latin than other Romance languages:

Summing up the new features which distinguish the Romanian noun from that of other Romance languages, it shall be first noted that Slavonic influence has not affected morphemes except in the case of the vocative, then, that it generally estranged Romanian from the other Romance languages, while maintaining it near enough to Latin, which might seem paradoxical. Slavonic, which is in general more synthetic than Romance, has caused Romanian to preserve more faithfully than Western Romance the Latin syntactic structure: declension survivals, the neuter gender, etc. (Graur 1967, 29)

Being spoken in the East of Europe and surrounded by non-Romance languages, Rumanian has undergone influences on their part, in the first place on the part of Slav languages, which has partly ended in the paradoxical result that it has preserved its Latin character better than the other Romance languages. (Graur 1963, 123)

Such discourse<sup>16</sup> takes advantage even of the misreading: if a Romanian is not able to read properly the etymological writing of French, this means only that Romanian has proved itself more Latin than the French even at the level of oral articulation:

Taking into consideration the fact that French makes use of an etymological writing which, in almost all cases, brings the form of the word near to its Latin origin, the Rumanians started from the French writings, reading it, however, as if it were Rumanian, which once more brought the word near to its Latin basis. (Graur 1963, 71-72)

Although doubtful from a “purely” linguistic point of view, such considerations have success in terms of identity confirming formulae. From such a perspective, even the alternatives fail, and passionate choices of details are not of great importance. While commenting on Ienăchiță Văcărescu’s 1787 statements, D. Popovici wrote: “Si nos ancêtres avaient eu un professeur de grammaire, nous parlerions tous aujourd’hui le latin **ou** l’italien qui parlaient les conquérants roumaines qui firent souche en Dacie” (Popovici 1945, 163). “Latin **or** Italian” is an expression, which stultifies the great alternative “old or new”, the same one, which penetrates the language battles of the Slavs and proves itself most acute in the Greek case of language identification and standardization. Such a perspective also stultifies another major opposition, i.e. that between nature and culture in the facet of borrowings and coinages:

There has been a fairly strong trend which pleaded for the transformation of the new words, trying to make them correspond with what they would have been if they had been borrowed [...] If we leave aside the function words which are all inherited from Latin **or** formed in Romanian itself from words inherited from Latin [...] it is often difficult for an untrained eye to ascertain that they are neologisms and not inherited words [...] In these and in many other similar cases there is no means to radically distinguish what is inherited from what is borrowed, which proves that the words borrowed from an old form of the same language must not be looked upon as being utterly foreign. (Graur 1967, 54-61)

“There is no mean to radically distinguish,” implies that not only are the minor differences unimportant. The great differences – such as those between language culture and language nature (“formed or inherited”), between old and new, classic and vernacular (“Latin or Italian”), and

between the “own” and the “foreign” (“Latin or Romanian”) – also do not make sense. The “or” formula of the Serbian-Croatian case written on the front cover of many a grammar book and dictionary – “Serbian *or* Croatian/Croatian *or* Serbian language” – was, in fact, a formula of a language synonymy which proved traumatic and unable to distinguish separate and autonomous identities. The Romanian case, on the contrary, insists on the possibility of the synonymy – the more synonymous to the Latin, the better. In the identity proceedings, neighborhoods cannot make the result “Slavic in general”, however isolation can provide a good reason for the major “Latin/Romance in general” statement. The positive synonymy is also an instrument of the successful metonymy – metonymy requires an emphasis on similarity to maintain its own figurative power and to consistently concentrate on the name of Rome in the identity building political and cultural proceedings. This is to have Rome in the ethnic and state name (“Romania” and “Romanian” successfully replacing the local names of the principalities of the nineteenth century), in the identification of the language and in the names of the distant dialects; however, it also means the placing of the Capitoline she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus in the center of Piața Romana in Bucharest.

Thus, neighborhoods give ground to a focus on differences while isolation gives ground to a focus on distant similarities. The neighbors are foreign enough to call forth defensive linguistic rhetoric and acts of purism and exterminations of Slavic borrowings in the Romanian vocabulary. The distant “Latin in general” is the major kinship notion and object of identification. Distance provides a purely utopian perspective, making the Latin emerge “as a whole”, making both synecdoche and metonymy successful in their identity actions though utopically neglecting the real controversies in the territorial neighborhoods of the Romance family itself. The Romanian formula “Latin or Italian” is blind to the cultural battles between classical Latin and Italian vernaculars in Renaissance Italy which posed the famous *Questione della lingua*; it is also blind to the strong level of language competition between the Romance (French-Italian) neighbors, etc. In the course of the non-scientific game “let us imagine”, we may admit that if Romania were to find itself in the real geographic territory of the basic Romance family, Ienăchiță Văcărescu would not be longing for any professor of Latin grammar to keep the language of Traian’s colonists proper and pure. He would in fact be defending the Romanian against the Latin in some imaginary Romanian version of Sperone Speroni’s 1542 *Dialogo delle lingue* or its



French counterpart Joachim du Bellay's 1549 *Défense et illustration de la Langue Française*.

In this way the isolation syndrome produces almost idyllic results in terms of achieving language identity. The utopian perspective does not deny Romanian changing debates in the identity proceedings or their changing political contexts, however, it ensures a useful and practical coherence of the language image. Nevertheless, Romanian isolation and the utopia-making distance from the Romance family is not lacking a territorial Romance neighborhood that actually cancels out the achievements of isolation and gives way to a typically painful example of minor differences, that being the Romanian-Moldavian case.

Romania and Moldova have had changing historical and territorial patterns of "sameness" and "otherness". Being an independent principality and then a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, part of tsarist Russia after 1812, part of Romania after 1918, a Soviet Republic after 1940, and, finally, an independent state after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moldova had also always been an object of controversial language policies. As for the Soviet period, there were several stages of language policy, as listed in the following by M. Bruchis: an attempt to create an alternative idiom to Romanian in Moldova, firstly by means of Russification and conversion to a Slavic language (which actually failed), and secondly by changing attempts to create a theory of an independent Moldavian language (Bruchis 1982). Incidentally, the concept of an independent language inserts creates a plural form ("Daco-Romance languages", "East Romance idioms", "East Romance literatures") in the stable kernel of the isolation syndrome, thus converting the very syndrome to a syndrome of factionalism, the most accustomed effect of neighborhood.

In this respect, even the peaceful Romanian arrangement of the dialect/language references proved problematic. In the 1950s, following Soviet linguistics, A. Graur asserted "the thesis that only those idioms that were subordinated to a national language could be called dialects", and this "laid the foundation for a stormy and prolonged debate among Romanian linguists" because "although Graur's thesis was founded in general on his survey of certain acts of the Romanian, Aromanian, Istroromanian, and Meglenoromanian idioms [...], it was completely clear from the very beginning that it had a direct relationship to that idiom of South-East Europe, that was called in late 1951 by the Russian Romanist Shishmarev 'the national language of the Moldavian SSR'..." (Bruchis 1982, 149). Thereafter, all expected implications of neighboring minor differences

could be witnessed: a contested literary cannon with classic writers available in both Romanian and Moldavian literatures; falsifying replacement of terms in old texts; flexibility of linguistic and non-linguistic arguments, charges of oppression, artificiality, etc.

This makes the Romanian-Moldavian case all too similar to the Bulgarian-Macedonian or Serbian-Croatian cases in terms of the facet of linguistic arithmetic whose major question is “one and the same, or two separate languages (nations)”. These similarities are already articulated in the course of analogies: T. Căraș interprets Michael Ignatieff’s naming of minor differences – “the Cain and Abel syndrome” – as thoroughly applicable to the Romanian-Moldavian case (Căraș 2003, 46-47), though Ignatieff in fact started with reference to the Serbian-Croatian case (Ignatieff 1996, 222-226). The Bulgarian-Macedonian case also fits the analogy:

Western observers have now begun to wonder why the notion of a Moldovan ethnos seems to have outlived its creator. To a certain extent, asking why Moldovans have not embraced their ostensible Romanian identity is like asking why Macedonians do not think of themselves as Bulgarians. It is true that language spoken in Bucharest and Chișinău differ only slightly and that in its written form there is virtually nothing to distinguish Romanian from what is once again termed Moldovan. But it is equally true that linguistic and cultural similarities can push nations apart as much as bring them together. (Charles King, 1995, c.f. Căraș 2003, 59)

Although being armaments in the gadgetry of analogies, the similarities between the Slavic and the Romance cases of minor differences must also leave space for some distinctions which might be seen as important.

M. Bruchis, who clearly shares the idea that there is no separate Moldavian language from Romanian, ends his investigation with the conclusion that the 1970s demonstrate a deepening split between the literary and the conversational forms of the East Prut Romance idiom. The written language, even in the writings of the champions of the independent Moldavian language, happens to be proper standard Romanian, while the conversational idiom is qualified as a “degraded Russo-Ukraino-Moldavian jargon” (Bruchis 1982, 301). The “conversational” is no more positively connoted, and the main argument of the Romantic linguistics prizing the “spoken” and “living” (“vernacular”, respectively) clearly collapses or at least happens to be

forgotten while qualifying the splitting idioms. Here we may admit the hidden action of the isolation syndrome – the “conversational” happens to be “degraded” not only because it is different from the standard but simply because it is not considered sufficiently Romance; it is some part of the Latin island jagged and disfigured by the Slav sea, and the ingredients of this conversational form – “Russo-Ukraino-Moldavian” (whatever the latter may mean) – are claimed, in fact, as foreign in the sense of language affiliation.

Another major difference appears in the fact that unlike the Bulgarian-Macedonian or the Serbian-Croatian case, the Romanian-Moldavian case has not yet been politically resolved and settled finally. T. Cărauş carefully investigates the different identity discourses available in post-communist Moldova. This is an identity still in dispute and still undergoing rapid polar changes in the official political formulae of the changing governments – an official act declaring the “Romanian-Moldavian linguistic identity” (1989) and adoption of the Romanian national anthem “Deşteaptă-te române” (1990); afterwards, a new Parliament elected in 1994 declared the Moldavian language a state language (1994) and a new national anthem – “Limba noastră” – was adopted in 1995 (Cărauş 2003, 36-37). We cannot judge or predict developments and tendencies still in progress, all the more so because the social and political mobility of up-to-date identity formulae prove most interesting. However, we may dare to assume the very mobility as an effect of the simultaneously intersecting controversies of both isolation and neighborhood syndromes, and this makes the East Romance case of minor differences vary to a certain extent in comparison to the Slavic.

Finally, the mid 1990s developments provide a very interesting Moldavian example of language identification – that of declaring the Moldavian language a state language, and the choosing of the poem “Limba noastră” (“Our Language”) to be the text of the national anthem signifies an official claim on language as a primary source of national identity. However, the author of “Our Language”, poet Alexei Mateevici (1888-1917), is present in both the Romanian and Moldavian literary canons. The text demonstrates the classic rhetorical makeup of language glorification available in many different national literatures: “A treasure is our tongue.../ ...A burning flame is our tongue.../ ...Our tongue is made of songs.../... Uttered by our forefathers.../... Our tongue is holy...” Although linked by governmental means to the concept of Moldavian in 1995, the text itself never identifies the blessed language by any direct

ethnic or national term (“Romanian” or “Moldavian”)<sup>17</sup>; it simply repeats the term “our” over and over again.

Thus, “our language” denies any direct manipulative replacement by any kind of identifying terms, but also permits their silent implementation by a collective or individual reading. “Our” leaves a figurative empty space for the emergence of a possible synecdoche, metonymy, etc. dwelling on identity proceedings. Moreover, its emptiness of identifying terms combined with the integrating rhetorical power of the possessive pronoun maintains the tense liberty of all mobile identity formulae that still have not chosen a single social and political settlement of contesting, dividing, conquering, or sharing the “our” of language.

### **In Lieu of a Conclusion**

It is clear that no impartial concepts or rules are workable in an ad hoc way that can scientifically legalize identity claims, battles, and desiderata. Although achieved by acculturation processes and reciprocal influences, standard languages have neither a common and universal justifier, nor an equal social, institutional or temporal matrix. There is no immanent standard, though each national standard seems to have an “immanent” set of instruments to form it. Although epistemologically equal, they engrave splitting arguments and effects always spelt out in terms of victory, failure, oppression, and defense of identity. That is why perhaps the only acceptable answer to the regular question as to whether “x and y are one and the same language, or two different ones” (answer acceptable in the sense of non-involvement in political passions and championships) may nowadays be of the kind: to investigate how the changing “yes” and/or “no” answers have been made and achieved in different times and contexts. However, such a bias often happens to talk at cross-purposes with algorithms considered “purely” linguistic.

This is so because the borders of the different fields also perceive different borders and areas in the course of mapping languages in the Balkans. If faithful to the closed perspective of specialized knowledge, a dialectologist will be clear-sighted about the dialect borders; a sociolinguist sensitive to the social mobility of language borders; a linguistic engineer always aiming at changing the latter; a political historian concentrating on state borders and their historical changes and also on the overlapping and/or intersecting borders of different imperial

legacies; even physical geography might be involved insofar as rivers (the Drina, the Dniester) can be considered language borders (not to mention all kinds of strongly symbolic borders between religions, cultures, policies, alphabets, orthographies, etc.). In the nationalist dream all these borders must thoroughly coincide in order to produce clear, indisputable, homological, and tautological contours of the “self”; but since they actually never coincide either temporally or spatially, nationalism is always in combat. The existing alternative is to politically legislate the difference between the borders in the notion of citizenship as in the well-known Swiss case:

The relative lack of language conflict in Switzerland is due to the fact that the political and administrative borders on one hand, and the linguistic and the religious borders on the other, do not always neatly coincide [...] From this follows this thesis: cultural variety will not normally endanger the inner cohesion of a state, provided the political and cultural borders do not coincide. (Alematt 2002, 347-348).

To investigate national language standards, however, means to investigate nationalisms for, remembering Joseph’s thesis, the history of standard languages has “largely been written in terms of nationalism”. It means also that the researcher has to investigate the very patterns of striving for border coincidences, while keeping in mind the different systems of borders defined by specialized disciplinary approaches. As the arguments of the different disciplines can hardly agree and in most cases multiply the borders and controversies by methodological means, a possible interdisciplinary (culturalist) approach inevitably faces the whole of the thick bars of the intersecting and dispersing borders in terms of their current ideological mobility; this is also to presume the Balkans as a space which has borders more visible than its areas.

Although linguistics seems to guide the whole interdisciplinary field that refers to language (the argumentative strata of sociology, anthropology, political history, literary history, cultural history), it proves helpless in answering several simple but crucial questions: 1) What is the difference between a language and a dialect and how is this difference determined? (the answer of French philosopher Roger Garaudy – “A language is a dialect which possesses an army and a navy” – has become a popular saying among up-to-date linguists); 2) What measurement unit is used to measure language (dialect) differences or similarities, and which

set of linguistic features shaped by the quantity/quality framework proves sufficient to “objectively” formulate differences or similarities and the “sameness” or “otherness” of languages, respectively? (linguistics can count and measure differences/similarities, however it can never formulate “objectively” their critical mass, i.e., define an objective and generally valid measurement unit); 3) Where and what is the border between language nature and language culture? (a question to which there is actually no answer and for which reason each of them is able to argue or refute the opposite by fording the accustomed correlations).

Finally, it is for this reason that we are tempted to remember a fascinating proposal concerning the name of the discipline that was newly emerging in nineteenth century humanities. Linguist Max Müller wrote the following in 1862:

Its very name is still unsettled, and the various titles that have been given to it in England, France and Germany are so vague and varying that they have led to the most confused ideas among the public at large as to the real object of the new science [...] In France it has received the convenient but somewhat barbarous name of *linguistique*. If we must have a name for our science, we might derive it either from *mythos*, word, or from *logos*, speech. But the title of Mythology is already occupied. (Cf. Crowley 1990, 38)

It is noteworthy that although never denoting the field of linguistics, mythology is still capable of connoting it.

## NOTES

- 1 "Codified" (or "normalized") language invokes existing language rules embodied in grammars and dictionaries and promoted by institutions (the practical relations between "standard" and "codified" most often face the problem which is first, thus giving birth to typical chicken-and-egg algorithms). "Literary language" happens to be sometimes a synonym of all above, sometimes it means something entirely different – a "language of literature", a literary discourse, an artistic idiom; the latter paradoxically manifests the standard through its derivations being a realm of styles.
- 2 This paper cannot focus on very important issues such as vocabularies, initiatives of purism, and neologist activities in the formation of language identities.
- 3 J. Joseph points out that as for ancient written languages "to term them standard in the sense that is familiar from modern languages is essentially metaphorical" (Joseph 1987, 20) insofar as language standard is a thoroughly modern concept.
- 4 The invention of the Indo-European linguistics happened to strike a mortal political blow to the idea of ancient superiority in the West-European tradition: "With regard to language, a revolution began in 1786 with Sir William Jones's thesis of the relationship of Sanskrit to Greek and Latin. In the face of evidence that the language of "black Indians" represented an older strain of the supreme classical languages, and was endowed with not just an alphabet but a literature and a grammatical tradition, how could one maintain that language was originally perfect? And what of England's justification of her imperialism on the grounds of bringing civilization where it did not previously exist?" (Joseph 1987, 8).
- 5 "...elle [la grammaire] signale de plus la lente dégénérescence du latin en Dacie et lutte enfin pour l'introduction du néologisme rendu nécessaire par le progrès culturel" (Popovici 1945, 167).
- 6 The original term – "mudroslovesnejshi" – is undoubtedly ironic and pejorative in Slaveykov's discourse.
- 7 In Joseph's consideration "gradually the dominant dialect may change from first among equals to first among unequals. It may even give its name to the regional dialect as a whole, a process for which I have borrowed the rhetorical term SYNECDOCHE. Once a dialect has achieved this level of dominance, it is a short step for people both within and outside the region to consider it to be the dialect proper [...] In European usage, the 'dialect proper' comes to be called the language"(Joseph 1987, 1-2). Here we shall use the figure of the synecdoche in a broader sense: even not "giving its name" (in our case, just "eastern"), the dominant dialect should prove its ability to represent "the whole" in order to instrumentally act as a synecdoche.
- 8 M. Moguš identifies the first use of the term as follows: "Pero Budmani was among the first followers of Vuk and Daničić [...] He published his grammar

of Serbo-Croatian (*Grammatica della lingua serbo-croata*, Vienna 1867) based upon the model of Daničić's *Mala srpska gramatica* (A short Serbian grammar), in which the syntagm "Serbo-Croatian" was used for the first time" (Moguš 1995, 198).

9 With all our political respect to the statements of the 1967 Declaration we should remember here the many titles of the type "Croatian or Serbian", "Serbian or Croatian", in which the "or" formula defines namely the meaning of synonymy.

10 For the access to this document I am personally indebted to Ana Antia.

11 Cf. <http://www.montenegro.org/language.html>

12 Cf. <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/serb.html>

13 We find the Drina river also as a Romanian language border: "Le roumain était parlé sur un vaste territoire nord et sud danubien, formé, dans sa partie méridionale, par le bassin occidental de la Drina, au sud de Skopje, le sud-ouest de la Bulgarie, la région riveraine du Danube..." (Rosetti 1973, 50).

14 The sense of isolation is now critically analyzed and interpreted from different and interdisciplinary viewpoints in: *Insula. Despre izolare și limite în spațiul imaginar. Colocviu interdisciplinar*. Volum coordonat de Lucian Boia, Anca Oroveanu, Simona Corlan-Ioan. Bucharest: Colegiul Noua Europă, 1995.

15 I am indebted to Corina Sîrbu for these data, as well as for the information on the newer attempts of the Aromanian communities to acquire the status of a language, and a common orthography.

16 It is clearly a shared discourse; see also: "Un sujet parlant roumain est incapable de comprendre un texte rédigé en latin, sans l'aide de travaux d'initiation. D'autre part le roumain est, à plus d'un titre, plus rapproché du latin que les langues romanes occidentales..." (Rosetti 1973, 178)

17 Metaphors and special references that might be considered initially Romanian (or Moldavian, respectively) in Mateevici's poem are not visible to the non-specialized foreigner's eye, especially in the English translation. That is why we (rather imprecisely) pay attention here only to the lack of a direct ethnic/national name to identify the notion of "our".



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