

## ON "THE FABRICK OF THE TONGUE". LANGUAGE METAPHORS USED TO ADVOCATE DESCRIPTIVISM/PRESRIPTIVISM IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN DICTIONARIES

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Article history: Received 28 October 2022; Revised 6 February 2023; Accepted 15 February 2023;  
Available online 27 March 2023; Available print 31 March 2023.

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**ABSTRACT.** *On "The Fabrick of the Tongue". Language Metaphors Used to Advocate Descriptivism/Prescriptivism in English and Romanian Dictionaries.*

There has been considerable scholarly interest in the relationship between language and national identity. The topic is vast and multi-faceted, but in this paper we are especially interested in the manner in which the perceived interdependence between 'mother tongue' and 'fatherland' has often prompted policies intended to protect the former, and therefore the latter, of whatever was regarded as harmful influence. In particular, we intend to survey some lexicographical work undertaken in Great Britain and (what is now) Romania between the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to compare decisions on prescriptivism or descriptivism in dictionaries, and the reasons behind them. While some background information will be necessary, our main focus will be the language metaphors which lexicographers and other people who brought a contribution to dictionary making resorted to in order to support their arguments in favour of or against prescriptivism/descriptivism.

**Keywords:** *language metaphor, lexicography, dictionary, descriptivism, prescriptivism, purism*

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**REZUMAT. Despre „țesătura limbii”. Metafore prin care se promovează descriptivismul/prescriptivismul în câteva dicționare englezești și românești.**

Relația dintre limbă și identitatea națională a făcut obiectul a numeroase cercetări. Subiectul este unul vast și complex, însă în contribuția de față ne propunem să acordăm atenție în special modului în care legătura care a fost stabilită între „limba maternă” și „pământul strămoșesc” a avut drept consecință (și) instituirea unor politici lingvistice menite să o protejeze pe prima (și, prin implicație, pe cel de al doilea) de orice influență considerată dăunătoare. Mai precis, ne propunem să trecem în revistă câteva dicționare elaborate în Marea Britanie și în România între mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea și începutul secolului al XX-lea pentru a compara maniera în care lucrările respective se poziționează în chestiunea descriptivismului /prescriptivismului în lexicografie. Câteva date privind contextul istoric și cultural vor fi necesare, însă cea mai mare parte a articolului de față va fi dedicată inventarierii și analizei metaforelor de care s-au servit lexicografii, dar și alți specialiști care au avut un cuvânt important de spus în alcătuirea lexicoanelor, pentru a-și susține argumentele în favoarea sau împotriva descriptivismului /prescriptivismului.

*Cuvinte-cheie: metaforă despre limbă, lexicografie, dicționar, descriptivism, prescriptivism, purism*

There has been considerable recent scholarly interest in the relationship between language and national identity. Substantial research has been done on the manner in which, especially after the emergence of modern nationalism in many parts of Europe, language increasingly came to be perceived as a key marker of group (ethnic/national) identity, prodigious efforts being therefore put into promoting and ‘perfecting’ it. The topic is vast and multi-faceted, but in this paper we are especially interested in the manner in which the perceived interdependence between ‘mother tongue’ and ‘fatherland’ has often prompted policies intended to protect the former, and therefore the latter, of whatever was regarded as harmful influence. In particular, we intend to survey some lexicographical work undertaken in Great Britain and (what is now) Romania between the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to compare decisions on prescriptivism or descriptivism in dictionaries, and the reasons behind them. While some background information will be necessary, our main focus will be the language metaphors which lexicographers and other people involved in dictionary making resorted to in order to support their arguments in favour of or against prescriptivism /descriptivism. Without going so far as to claim that “all of our concepts of language are in fact metaphorically constructed”, we do believe – and hope to be able to indicate by some examples – that “just as we can search for metaphors ‘in’ language, if we

wish to pin down what we mean by language we must search for it 'in' metaphors" (Underhill 2011, 15).

When Samuel Johnson started work on his *Dictionary of the English Language* (first published in 1755), he and his contemporaries were vividly aware that other continental nations had established academies (Accademia della Crusca, l'Académie française) with the specific purpose of regulating their respective languages by the help of authoritative and prescriptive dictionaries (Hitchings 2005). British feeling on the matter was divided. While some (Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope, for example) thought that setting up an English Academy would be highly desirable and beneficial, others, among whom Johnson himself, felt that British love of freedom, which could "never wish to see dependance multiplied" (Johnson 1755, n.p.), was incompatible with any regulating body in matters of language (Hitchings 2005, Reddick 2009). Under the circumstances, Johnson's *Dictionary* – an individual endeavour of considerable magnitude and, as it turned out, prestige – came rather conveniently to fill in a philological as well as a patriotic gap (DeMaria 1986, Hitchings 2005).

It has been argued that there is a marked difference between the *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* which Johnson wrote in 1747, before the inception of the dictionary, and the *Preface* which, eight years later, was to introduce the finished work. In the latter, it is claimed, the author "has renounced his more narrowly prescriptive notions", having understood "the importance of descriptive lexicography" (Hitchings 2005, 204). While this is in some sense true, the difference may be one of degree rather than principle. In the *Plan*, as well as the *Preface*, Johnson's "chief intent [...] is to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of the English idiom" (Johnson 1747, n.p.); in the former, as in the latter, this endeavour (and more prominently its regulative end) is, on the other hand, regarded as daunting and perhaps doomed to remain wishful thinking: "to correct the language of nations by books of grammar, and amend their manners by discourses of morality, may be tasks equally difficult; yet as it is unavoidable to wish, it is natural likewise to hope" (Johnson 1747, n.p.). That being said, Johnson's optimism that the "mutability" of the English language could successfully be slowed down is perhaps stronger in the *Plan* than in the *Preface*. The language metaphors that he deploys seem to testify to this.

The dominant metaphor in the *Plan* equates words with human beings. Some "are naturalized [...] others still continue aliens, and are rather auxiliaries than subjects"; some live close to home, but one "may wander from the tropic to the frozen zone" in search of other "progenitors of our speech" (Johnson 1747, n.p.). Overall, a language is like a people whom the lexicographer, a valiant conqueror (though plagued by a sense of hubris), sets out to (begin to) subdue:

When I survey the Plan which I have laid before you, I cannot [...] but confess, that I am frightened at its extent, and, like the soldiers of Cæsar, look on Britain as a new world, which it is almost madness to invade. But

I hope, that though I should not complete the conquest, I shall at least discover the coast, civilize part of the inhabitants, and make it easy for some other adventurer to proceed farther, to reduce them wholly to subjection, and settle them under laws (Johnson 1747, n.p.).

The one mineral metaphor in the *Plan* is most telling for Johnson's ideal project: rather than the words of the language being obedient subjects to be settled under laws, it would be better still if they were atoms, so that they "might obtain the firmness and immutability of the primogenial and constituent particles of matter" (Johnson 1747, n.p.). Who, Johnson exclaims, "can forbear to wish" this? However, languages have but the destiny of people: over time, we are told, they become enfeebled and decay; therefore immutability "is a privilege which words are scarcely to expect; for, like their author, when they are not gaining strength, they are generally losing it" (Johnson 1747, n.p.).

Johnson is not the only one to believe that language change means language degradation. This view is frequently expressed by his contemporaries (DeMaria 1986, 168-169), the widespread perception being that "linguistic change is inevitable and inevitably bad" (DeMaria 1986, 168). Therefore, in the *Preface* to his *Dictionary* Johnson acknowledges the right of his readers to expect of his work "that it should fix our language, and put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto been suffered to make in it without opposition" (Johnson 1755, n.p.). However, he defends himself against charges of having failed to meet this goal by resorting once again to the metaphor *words are people*. Just as "men grow old and die at a certain time one after another", so too words, which are but "the daughters of earth", cannot be "secure[d] [...] from corruption and decay" (Johnson 1755, n.p.). This elegiac note is struck time and again in the *Preface*. It is yet appropriate that, just as measures are taken to protect and prolong human life, efforts should be put into ensuring language a long and dignified life: "If the changes that we fear be thus irresistible [...] It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure. Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot be ultimately defeated" (Johnson 1755, n.p.). In the case of English, one particularly effective intervention is the return to the masters of style – for Johnson, in principle, from Philip Sidney to Restoration authors although, in fact, he does cite occasionally earlier or later sources (Hitchings 2005, Reddick 2009) – from whose writings spring "the wells of English undefiled". Undefiled, in particular, by an unwelcome "Gallick" influence as a consequence of which English departed "from its original Teutonick character"; its purity, therefore, needs to be restored by emulation of earlier writings and speech, as well as a careful selection of acceptable borrowings, "only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with our native idioms" (Johnson 1755, n.p.).

In the concluding section of his *Preface*, Johnson makes it clear that his endeavour was essentially one meant to enhance the glory of Britain: "In hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to be immortal, I have devoted this book, the labour of years, to the honour of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology, without a contest, to the nations of the continent" (Johnson 1755, n.p.). About a hundred years later, in the wake of the emergence of "Romantic linguistic nationalism" (Turner 2014, 128) as well as of some new high profile continental dictionaries, "the honour of the country" seems once more to be at stake. There is talk of compiling a new lexicon, based on historical principles and more comprehensive than all previous ones, in the undertaking of which "one might almost say the national honour of England is engaged" – therefore, philologist F. Max Müller continues, "no effort should be spared to make the work as perfect as possible, and at all events no unworthy rival of the French Dictionary recently published by Littré, or the German Dictionary undertaken by the Brothers Grimm" (quoted in Mugglestone 2000a, 5).

Very much in the air is J. G. Herder's pronouncement "that the language of each people – or race, or nation: terms still interchangeable – expressed in its vocabulary and structure that nation's distinctive sensibilities and ways of thinking. Language, that is, articulated a people's unique identity – or [...] its spiritual essence" (Turner 2014, 127). More specifically, claims Richard C. Trench (archbishop and philologist whose contribution to the beginnings of *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, later known as the OED, was consequential as well as multi-faceted), "a clear, a strong, an harmonious, a noble language [...] bears witness to corresponding merits in those that speak it, to clearness of mental vision, to strength, to harmony, to nobleness in them that have gradually formed and shaped it to be the utterance of their inmost life and being" (Trench 1859, n.p.). The care of the national language thus becomes of paramount importance for the very survival and prosperity of the nation: "may we hope to be", Trench exhorts in the same work, "guardians of its purity, and not corrupters of it". One would expect that preserving the purity of English would involve somehow leaving out whatever was felt to be "impure". The decision on this point, however, did not prove easy. In the preparatory stages of the OED opinions were repeatedly heard both in favour of and against prescriptivism, often in connection with one's preferred metaphorical understanding of language.

With respect to this last aspect, a marked partiality of Victorian writers for organic metaphors has already been noticed (Weaver 2015). Indeed, the language is often seen as a living organism: it grows, it develops, it is, as once again R. Trench puts it, "a tree in which the vital sap is circulating yet, ascending from the roots into the branches; and as this works, new leaves are continually being put forth by it, old are dying and dropping away" (Trench 1859, n.p.). Geological metaphors – equally frequent and reflecting the latest developments in the natural sciences (Brewer 2007, Weaver 2015) – also testify to growth,

although past growth, now recorded in the “strata” of the language. Recalling Emerson’s claim that language is “fossil poetry”, Trench elaborates:

[...] he evidently means that just as in some fossil, curious and beautiful shapes of vegetable or animal life, the graceful fern or the finely vertebrated lizard, such as now, it may be, have been extinct for thousands of years, are permanently bound up with the stone, and rescued from that perishing which would else have been their portion, – so in words are beautiful thoughts and images, the imagination and the feeling of past ages, [...] there are these, which might so easily have perished too, preserved and made safe for ever (Trench 1858, n.p.).

If for Johnson any language has “a natural tendency to degeneration” (Johnson 1755, n.p.) from a former state of excellence and each lexicographer’s duty is to attempt to slow down the process, Victorian philologists schooled in Romantic thought often celebrate organic growth (and its past record); one’s duty, therefore, is to tend to the healthy growth of one’s language.

An important condition for healthy development is, of course, the presence of healthy roots. As Weaver argues, “the metaphor of roots was especially powerful as a bulwark against a number of anxieties” (Weaver 2015, 338) since it promised firmness and stability in an increasingly changing world. Max Müller gives voice to an opinion that was not singular: “All words [...] whether in English or in Sanskrit [...] must in the last instance be traced back, by means of definite phonetic laws, to [...] roots. These roots stand like barriers between the chaos and the cosmos of human speech” (quoted in Weaver 2015, 339). In terms of their symbolic value, however, not all roots are equal. In the case of English, favoured by far are the Anglo-Saxon. While concerns were voiced before about the danger which loanwords from French, Latin or Greek might pose to “Teutonic” English, it was in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that “interest in both Anglo-Saxon history and language expanded greatly [...] as they came to be seen as vital to English national identity” (Weaver 2015, 336). It is now felt that the Anglo-Saxon is the “essentially national element in the language” (Trench, 1859, n.p.). If English is likened to a body, “all its joints, its whole articulation, its sinews and its ligaments [...] are exclusively Saxon” (Trench, 1859, n.p.); if to a building, “the Latin may contribute its tale of bricks, yea, of goodly and polished hewn stones, [...]; but the mortar, with all that holds and binds the different parts of it together, and constitutes them into a house, is Saxon throughout” (Trench, 1859, n.p.). The Latin segment of the vocabulary is not, however, to be dismissed lightly. While German linguistic nationalism, through the voice of J. G. Fichte, claims that the superiority of German over other languages (and implicitly of the Germans over other nations) derives from its purity, as it remained unadulterated by foreign elements (Edwards 2009), Trench’s own patriotism compels him to a different conclusion. Precisely because it welcomed

the right loanwords, English (like Britain) holds a uniquely advantageous position and may be destined for a great future:

It would be difficult not to believe, even if many outward signs said not the same, that great things are in store for the one language of Europe which thus serves as connecting link between the North and the South, between the languages spoken by the Teutonic nations of the North and by the Romance nations of the South; which holds on to and partakes of both (Trench, 1859, n.p.).

Whatever promises the future had in store, it could be argued that the present itself was glorious enough. Britain was at the peak of its Empire might and "English was already on its way to becoming a world language" (Brewer 2007, 112). However, this very prominence brought about particular dangers. As J. H. Marsden warned, "in the extremities of this wide empire the purity and precision of the language itself are likely to be corrupted and lost" (quoted in Brewer 2007, 113). The admonition also reflected the qualms of other contemporaries when confronted with the intention voiced by the members of the Philological Society in their *Proposal for a Publication of a New English Dictionary* and, previously, by Trench in his lectures *On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries*. All these early contributors to the destiny of the OED argued that, "in accordance with the dictates of the new philology", the dictionary should include *all* the words of the language and linguistic usage should "be registered rather than reformed or purified" (Mugglestone 2000b, 189). In the event, this ideal of inclusiveness could not be achieved, but the OED managed to strike a balance between prevalent descriptivism and some degree of prescriptivism (Mugglestone 2000b). However, at the time of its inception it was again to language metaphors that the proponents of each course of action resorted in order to make their case.

For F. J. Furnivall, the second editor of the OED, the words of English are like the people of England, all of whom deserve a place in the nation: "we have set ourselves to form a National Portrait Gallery, not only of the worthiest, but of all the members, of the race of English words which is to form the dominant speech of the world [...] Fling our doors wide! all, all, not one, but all, must enter" (quoted in Brewer 2007, 111). For H. H. Gibbs, a friend of J. Murray's, words may be like people, but, he argues, not all people should be welcomed into one's home:

It is well – very well – to fix the first entry of a word into the language; but you must be quite sure it *has* entered [...] and is not a mere vagrant knocking at the door & who will be deservedly sent about his business [...] If you must honour such words [...] by taking notice of them, in case they should ultimately creep into the language [...] you should have a separate limbo to which to relegate them – a hot one, I should suggest (quoted in Brewer 2007, 120).

James A. H. Murray himself, long-time primary editor of the OED, on whom decisions concerning the inclusion/exclusion of some words often rested, chose a different set of metaphors in order to describe the fluid borders of English:

That vast aggregate of words and phrases which constitute the Vocabulary of English-speaking men presents, to the mind that endeavours to grasp it as a definite whole, the aspect of one of those nebulous masses familiar to the astronomer, in which a clear and unmistakable nucleus shades off on all sides, through zones of decreasing brightness, to a dim marginal film that seems to end nowhere, but lose itself imperceptibly in the surrounding darkness (Murray 1888/1969, 59). Or, in the language of the natural sciences so dear to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in its constitution it may be compared to one of those natural groups of the zoologist or botanist, wherein typical species forming the characteristic nucleus of the order, are linked on every side to other species, in which the typical character is less and less distinctly apparent, till it fades away in an outer fringe of aberrant forms, which merge imperceptibly in various surrounding orders, and whose own position is ambiguous and uncertain. For the convenience of classification, the naturalist may draw the line, which bounds a class or order, outside or inside of a particular form; but Nature has drawn it nowhere (Murray 1888/1969, 59-60).

An accomplished scholar with a “shrewd understanding of language” (Brewer 2007, 117) and a committed descriptivist, Murray thus attempted to explain why, despite everyone’s best efforts, neither full comprehensiveness nor full consistency could be achieved in a work of such magnitude: for the OED some “limits were unavoidable, whether determined on practical grounds [...] or theoretical ones [...] [or] for reasons of taste, or morality, or legality” (Brewer 2007, 119-120).

Published between 1873 and 1877 A. T. Laurian and I. C. Massim’s *Dicționarul limbei române (Dictionary of the Romanian Language)* represents the chief lexicographical flowering of Latinate purism in Romanian philology. It comes rather late in the day, at a time when consistent endorsement of the movement was only to be found among the members of the newly established Romanian Academic Society (soon to become the Romanian Academy and soon to actually discontinue its support for the etymological and Latinized spelling and vocabulary cleansing advocated by Laurian and Massim; Macrea 1969). Its ideological roots are to be traced back, however, more than a hundred years before to the so-called Transylvanian School (Școala Ardeleană). It was its leaders who (often coming from the ranks of the Romanian Uniate Church and educated in Western universities), struggling to obtain for Uniate Romanians the status of *natio* which the Magyars, the Szekelers and the Saxons living in Transylvania already had, “look[ed] for the legitimization of their political claims in the sphere of the Latinate culture” (Kamusella 2009, 207). In particular, they restated the linguistic argument that Romanian was a Romance language

in terms that were more explicitly favourable to the political ends they envisaged: (1) there was a direct link between the Romanian language then spoken in Transylvania and the ancient Latin language, although the former had been spoiled by the ravages of time and polluted by contact with other languages, and (2) there was a direct link between the (Transylvanian) Romanians and the Romans who had conquered Dacia in 106 A.D., the former being the legitimate political heirs of the latter. It is in this context that the project of the "ideological reconstruction of the language" (Mitu 1997) emerges, in the form of (various degrees of) Latinate purism, first in Transylvania, later to be embraced by a number of scholars from Moldavia and Walachia. Similar processes are well documented and are not specific to the Romanian context: "once language has been deemed the most central and most sacred girder of identity, [...] strenuous attempts will be made to assert its primacy, to differentiate it from other forms and to protect it" (Edwards 2009, 12).

For dictionary compilers, protection usually involves a prescriptive approach, and Laurian and Massim are certainly not shy about their regulative intentions. So much so that the words of Romanian which are believed to be of non-Latin origin – whose usage should therefore be discontinued – are not included in the two volume work, but relegated to an independently published *Glossariu*. Language metaphors abound in *Prefatione*, the preface to the dictionary, most often harnessed to support the same regulative approach. Romanian is "a living and organic entity, which grows from a small number of roots just as a lush, magnificent tree grows from a tiny seed sown in the soil"<sup>3</sup> (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], viii). However, care must be taken to protect the happy development of the language by making sure that the Latin roots remain pure and unadulterated. All external influences (i.e. all non-Latin loanwords) must be carefully avoided since "enlarging and enriching a language by foreign borrowings is [...] as contrary to its nature as it would be to the nature of a plant or an animal" (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], viii). Indeed, "the language which has had the misfortune to be infested and more or less smothered by foreign words is, like a plant infested by parasites, prevented from growing naturally and doomed to languish" (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], viii).

In terms of another often reiterated metaphorical conceptualisation, words are like people. They have a legal and social status, hence they can be granted or denied "Romanian citizenship" (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], ix) and can even be conferred – "on condition that they have a pure Latin origin" – "an undisputed nobility title" (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], xxi). On the contrary in the case of other words, the "foreigners" which leech on the national language and "suck and drain the most vital vein of its life" (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], viii), "banishment" is the right and necessary course of action.

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<sup>3</sup> All translations from Romanian are ours.

Probably the crowning metaphor of the preface, in terms of its intended emotional impact, is the representation of Romanian as a female figure. The conceptualization is not new (French, for example, has also been regarded as “an object of veneration and desire”, “as a mistress, imperious in her capacity to command her disciple-lover” – Underhill 2011, 173), but Laurian and Massim lay a peculiar emphasis. Far from being an empowered and demanding mistress, Romanian is a damsel in distress, an unfortunate maiden whose body is covered by “blows” and “wounds” (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], viii), whose “lovely face” bears the marks of contact with too numerous “foreigners”; however, she is no ordinary maiden but “a noble and graceful Roman virgin” (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], viii). If the Romanians would only direct strenuous efforts towards the purification and felicitous development of their language, future editions of the dictionary would be able “to present a more and more faithful image of the daughter of eternal Rome whom her mother had placed in the valleys of the old Danube” (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], xxvi). Once recovering its pristine purity, Romanian would finally be able to fulfil its glorious destiny: “to protect and spread to Eastern realms the lights of civilisation” (Laurian, Massim 1871 [1873], xxvi).

While the fascination exerted by the representation of Romanian as “the daughter of Latin” was to last for a long time, all concrete efforts to engineer the language by reforming its spelling or cleansing its vocabulary of non-Latin words would come to an end soon after the publication of Laurian and Massim’s dictionary, partly as a consequence of the cold reception it was met with (Macrea 1969). Over the span of the 19<sup>th</sup> century national self-perception underwent slow changes. A significant impulse towards revaluing the people and traditions of the land came from some Moldavian writers associated with the review *Dacia literară* (1840), but foreign accounts of the country and its inhabitants contributed as well. E. Quinet’s words about the Romanian peasant and his language, namely that “it is under the peasant’s reedy roof, in listening to his plaint, his *doinas*, that [the Romanians] seek to rediscover the true imprint of their ancestral language, not altered or disfigured by the neologisms of the large towns” (quoted in Drace-Francis 2013, 33), would soon be echoed by local writers. While initially “perhaps it was inevitably more natural for a Western author to focus on the figure of the peasant as a symbol of purity and simplicity”, this representation did correspond to an emergent self-definition among members of the Romanian intelligentsia and “the peasant as the bearer of the ‘ancestral imprint’ would at a later time become firmly entrenched in the local literary imagination” (Drace-Francis 2013, 33).

Likewise, the understanding of how the national language should present itself changes. While there is general agreement that Romanian needed a standardized form, support for a scholarly variety that was to be largely artificially engineered to resemble Latin as much as possible is replaced by an

indorsement of the vernacular. The standardization of the language, it is now argued, should be based on a selection of words from the main dialects (with much precedence given to the Wallachian dialect) and on the language of the old religious books and chronicles. In symbolic terms (to be found in countless 19<sup>th</sup> century writings), it is now the "sweet", "old", "undefiled" language of the "people", which becomes the "language of our forefathers" and deserves appreciation and protection. The change is also reflected by institutional decisions. The Romanian Academy commissions B. P. Hasdeu to compile a new dictionary the title of which is telling enough, although difficult to render faithfully into English: *Etymologicum Magnum Romaniae. Dicționarul limbei istorice și poporane a românilor*. The Romanian language which the new dictionary is to record, and establish as standard, is "the historical language of the (ordinary) people". In the preface to his work, the familiar motif of the interdependence between language and national identity is indicated by Hasdeu in the metaphorical terms of the "national portrait gallery": "in its language, a nation regards itself as in a long gallery of portraits from different ages, some perhaps somewhat damaged by time or circumstances, but in which the nation still fully recognizes its specificity" (Hasdeu 1887, XVIII).

In the event, Hasdeu is unable to complete the project, and finally the responsibility to publish a multi-volume historical dictionary of Romanian under the aegis of the Romanian Academy is taken over by Sextil Pușcariu, the primary editor of *Dicționarul limbii române* (DA, as the dictionary came to be known). Pușcariu is a scholar educated in the spirit of modern philology and is, therefore, inclined to inclusiveness and descriptiveness. He believes that "from a linguistic point of view, any word ever recorded in writing is important" (Pușcariu 1913, XI) and worthy of lexicographic attention. On the other hand, he knows he is to work under rather severe constraints: the historical dictionary of the Romanian language has long been overdue, so he is pressed for time; also, he has only limited resources available (not enough citations excerpted, not enough co-editors). Hence, setting limits to the 'compass of the vocabulary' is necessary, but these are not to be influenced by "non-scientific considerations such as a subjective-aesthetic classification of words [...] or patriotic preferences" (Pușcariu 1913, XII). In principle, DA is to reflect a descriptive and impartial approach to language – and this will actually be the case to a large degree.

However, as Pușcariu himself points out, a definitive criterion for the inclusion/exclusion of words in a dictionary is difficult to find, all the more so when the language to be recorded does not yet have a written standardized form but is in the process of establishing one, while at the same time receiving an affluence of Romance (especially French) borrowings. It is this last aspect that Pușcariu and his co-editors regard as somehow problematic and with reference to it they reintroduce the language of prescriptiveness. Recent loanwords are, of course, a challenge for any lexicographer because he/she does not know whether they will ultimately remain in the language or not.

However, Pușcariu's reference to this situation is not neutral, but loaded with symbolic weight: "our present-day standard written language, which follows our old traditions and gathers riches from the endless treasure of the people's oral language, has not yet managed to counterbalance the influence of Gallophiles" (Pușcariu 1913, XV). Therefore, dictionary compilers should aim to leave out those new borrowings – "foreign adornments" (Pușcariu 1913, XV) – which, in their estimation, attempt to replace an already existent native word. The well-established metaphorical conceptualization *words are human beings* presents itself handily once more: old Romanian words are legitimate citizens, whereas "ephemeral neologisms which the ordinary people borrow from the language of the educated classes" will not finally be "granted citizenship" (Pușcariu 1913, XVII) and should not be entered the dictionary. Recent loanwords are "newcomers" which have "usurped" (Pușcariu 1913, XVI) the rights of old native words, a situation which needs to be rectified because only the latter "convey the genius of our tongue" (Pușcariu 1913, XVI). By re-learning to use them, if necessary, "we shall be able to show how one can express in a truly Romanian fashion many ideas which today, all too hastily, we clothe in vestments borrowed from abroad" (Pușcariu 1913, XL).

Some of our conclusions confirm the findings of previous, more comprehensive, studies: language prescriptiveness tends to be the norm in older dictionaries, while in more recent ones, a prevalent descriptive tendency coexists with some degree of prescriptivism (Cowie 2009). Typically dictionary compilers' efforts to regulate language by means of purist policies are motivated by patriotic reasons, as it is understood that perfecting the language (or preserving its "perfection") means ensuring the prosperity of the nation (Mitu 1997, Edwards 2009, Kamusella 2009). One difference can be noticed, in this regard, between languages with a long tradition of excellence in writing and early standardization, such as English, and languages with a much more recent written tradition and late standardization, such as Romanian. In the former case, a perceived age of excellence of the language is hallmarked and all further change is regarded as "degradation", to be slowed down as much as possible (see, for example, Johnson's *Dictionary*). On the contrary, if the language never had an attested 'golden age', then great symbolic weight is attached either to an originary 'mother' language, usually highly prestigious, which the 'daughter' language should be made to resemble as much as possible (see Laurian and Massim's dictionary) or to a vernacular variety which is believed to epitomize national identity ("the language of the people" endorsed by Hasdeu and Pușcariu).

Metaphors have been a frequent ingredient in lexicographic discourse on language until quite recent times. Indeed,

linguistic purists justify the need to protect their language by attributing certain inherent values or properties to it, such as character or spirit (*Sprachegeist*, *Sprachgenius*) which contains certain values (manly, rational,

warm), and which are likened to living organisms (young, growing, blossoming, dying languages). Such metaphors are used to explain the perceived superiority of one's language (Langer, Nesse 2012, 622).

As we hope to have indicated, other metaphors are used to warn about perceived threats to one's language, or to advise on its perceived 'proper' development. Some metaphors seem to retain a permanent appeal (for example, *words are people* in the prefaces to both English and Romanian dictionaries), others may be more closely associated with a given time and country (for instance, geological metaphors used by British lexicographers in the wake of the emergence of Darwin's theory of evolution). Sometimes the same basic metaphorical conceptualization (*words are people*) can be developed to serve opposing ends: both prescriptive action (words which are granted or denied citizenship, words which are members of the family vs. vagrants, faithful friends vs. traitors) and descriptive policies (the national portrait gallery). While perhaps less appealing to modern sensitivities (more inclined to dispassionate descriptivism in both lexicographic theory and practice), all these language metaphors which earlier lexicographers and others reflecting on language and dictionaries felt they needed to resort to were believed, in different ways, to "stand like barriers between the chaos and the cosmos of human speech".

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