Deflection of personal names in Romanian

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1 Introduction

Proper names can differ from common nouns with respect to phonology, morphosyntax, and graphematics. These formal differences are called dissociations (see Nübling 2005). An example of dissociation at the morphosyntactic level involves inflection. In some languages, proper names and common nouns exhibit distinct case paradigms, as in Sinyar (Boyeldieu 2019). In other languages, proper names display a smaller case paradigm than common nouns, as in German (see Table 1). Interestingly, in Old and Middle High German, personal names and common nouns had the same declension system. In Early New High German, however, personal names underwent deflection, a process which is still ongoing (Nübling 2012, Ackermann 2018). Deflection contributes to the onymic schema constancy, according to which the shape of proper names is preserved in order to enable their recognition and processing (Nübling 2005: 50–51). The need to retain the proper name body had an impact on the morphosyntax and graphematics of German (see Nübling 2017 for a comprehensive overview).

Table 1: Inflection of proper names and common nouns in German (Ackermann 2018: 19)

Case	Personal name			Common noun			
	Feminine	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Masculine strong	weak	Neuter
Nominative	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*
Accusative	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-(e)n*	*-Ø*
Dative	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-Ø, (-e)*	*-(e)n*	*-Ø, (-e)*
Genitive	*-s*	*-s*	*-s*	*-Ø*	*-(e)s*	*-(e)n, -(e)ns*	*-(e)s*

While deflection of proper names has been studied in German historical linguistics, it has not received much attention in Romance historical linguistics although instances of deflection have been described in the literature. For example, Adams (2013: 204–215) observes in non-standard Latin zero marking with foreign names (*Iassucthan*) and the use of the nominative with native names in prepositional phrases (*per Hessucus*). Old French is characterized by two case forms: the nominative (*cas sujet*) for the subject and the oblique (*cas régime*) for the remaining syntactic functions. In Old French, personal names and common nouns share the same declension system, as illustrated in Table 2 with the personal names *Charles* and *Marie* and the common nouns *chevalier* 'knight' and *dame* 'lady' (see Buridant 2000: 63–72 and GGHF 2020: 633–639 for details). The loss of this two-case distinction began in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Interestingly, personal names behave differently from common nouns in two respects. First, there is a tendency for personal names to continue the nominative (*Charles*, *Marie*) and for common nouns to continue the oblique (*chevalier*) (see Smith 2011: 283).[1] Second, personal names underwent deflection earlier than common nouns (Schøsler 2001: 172–176).

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[1] Note that *dame* 'lady' is invariable in the nominative and oblique singular. This is the case with feminine nouns ending in -*e*. Some of them are homophonous with personal names. However, they are not inflected in the same way. For example, the common noun *rose* 'rose' has *rose* both in the nominative and in the oblique while the personal name *Rose* 'Rose' has *Rose* in the nominative, but *Rosain* in the oblique (see Buridant 2000: 68 for more examples).

Table 2: Inflection of personal names and human common nouns in Old French

| Case | Personal name | | Human common noun | |
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
Nominative (*cas sujet*)	*Charle-(s)*	*Marie*	*chevalier-s*	*dame*
Oblique (*cas régime*)	*Charl-on*	*Mari-ien*	*chevalier*	*dame*

In Romanian, proper names differ from common nouns with respect to inflection. Tomescu (1998) gives a detailed account of gender, number, and case of proper names. Some reference grammars dedicate a whole chapter to proper names (Miron-Fulea, Dobrovie-Sorin & Ion Giurgea 2013, Sarlin 2014: 98–105) while others treat proper names and common nouns separately when dealing with the inflection of the definite article (Pop 1948: 135, 138–139, Gönczöl 2021: 45–46, Iliescu & Popovici 2013: 74–76, 85). Notwithstanding, the declension of personal names in Romanian has not been explained in terms of deflection, which gave rise to a dissociation between proper names and common nouns thereby contributing to the onymic schema constancy. The goal of this paper is to give a brief synchronic and diachronic account of deflection of personal names in Romanian.

2 Inflection of proper names and common nouns in Romanian

In order to compare the inflection of proper names and common nouns, I will concentrate on the declension of personal names (*Ion, Carmen*) and human common nouns (*băiat* 'boy', *fată* 'girl') in unmodified definite NPs in the singular (see Table 3). Romanian has an enclitic definite article, which agrees in gender, number, and case with the noun. In Romanian there are two case forms: the nominative-accusative and the genitive-dative. Masculine nouns take -*(u)l*, -*le*, or -*a* in the nominative (*băiatul* 'the boy') and -*(u)lui* in the genitive-dative (*băiatului* 'of/to the boy'), while feminine nouns take -*a* or -*ua* in the nominative (*fata* 'the girl') and -*i* in the genitive-dative (*fetei* 'of/to the girl'). The accusative can be formed either with the definite article as in the nominative (*Doctorul examinează băiatul* 'the doctor examines the boy') or without the definite article, but differentially marked and clitic doubled (*Doctorul îl examinează pe băiat* 'the doctor examines the boy').[2]

Table 3: Inflection of personal names and common nouns

| Case | Personal name | | Human common noun | |
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
Nominative	*Ion*	*Carmen*	*băiat-ul*	*fat-a*
Accusative	*pe Ion*	*pe Carmen*	*băiat-ul ~ pe băiat*	*fat-a ~ pe fată*
Genitive-Dative	*lui Ion*	*lui Carmen*	*băiat-ului*	*fete-i*

Personal names are characterized by the absence of inflectional endings. In the nominative-accusative, the definite article cannot be attached to masculine and feminine personal names (*Ion, Carmen*).[3] In the accusative, personal names are differentially marked and clitic doubled (*Doctorul îl examinează pe Ion* 'the doctor examines John'). Personal names, however, can take the definite article when they are employed as common nouns to metonymically designate

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[2] Note that human definite human direct objects are differentially marked by means of the preposition *pe* 'DOM', as in *pe băiat* 'DOM the boy' and *pe fată* 'DOM the girl', where article-drop in unmodified prepositional phrases applies (Mardale, Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea 2013: 536–540). One exception are inherently unique nouns such as *împărat* 'emperor', *rege* 'king', etc., which can optionally occur with the definite article, as in *pe împărat(ul)* 'DOM the emperor', *pe rege(le)* 'DOM the king', etc. (Pop 1948: 149, AR 2008: 77).

[3] One contentious issue is whether the ending -*a* of feminine personal names (*Maria*) and, to a lesser extent, the ending -*u* of masculine personal names (*Radu*) can be viewed as the nominative-accusative form of the definite article (see Miron-Fulea, Dobrovie-Sorin & Giurgea 2013: 721–725 for discussion).

the work of an artist, as illustrated by the personal name *Picasso* in (1) (Miron-Fulea, Dobrovie-Sorin & Ion Giurgea 2013: 743, Pană Dindelegan 2003: 279–280).

(1)   Metonymic use of the definite article (Pană Dindelegan 2003: 280)
       Piccaso-ul   mi-a   plăc-ut   mult.
       Picasso-DEF   1SG.DAT-3SG.AUX   like-PTCP   much
       'I liked the (painting by) Picasso a lot.'

In the genitive-dative, *lui* (spoken as [luj] or [lu]) is obligatory with masculine personal names (*lui Ion* 'of/to John') and with feminine personal names ending in consonant (*lui Carmen* 'of/to Carmen'). Feminine personal names ending in *-a* (*-ea*, *-ia*) take *lui* in casual style (*lui Maria* 'of/to Maria'), but *-i* in formal style (*Mariei* 'of/to Maria') (Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea & Farkas 2013: 13–14, 20, Miron-Fulea, Dobrovie-Sorin & Ion Giurgea 2013: 724, Pană Dindelegan 2003: 263–265). Interestingly, when feminine personal names ending in *-a* are inflected in the genitive-dative, they do not exhibit the morphophonological alternations typical of common nouns (Graur 1965: 136, Pană Dindelegan 2013: 271). For example, the common nouns *lampă* 'lamp', *seară* 'evening', and *floare* 'flower' show the stem alternation *a/ă*, *ea/e*, *oa/o* in the nominative-accusative and genitive-dative, respectively (see Table 4). This is not the case with the feminine personal names *Sanda*, *Leana*, and *Floarea*, which preserve their stem vowels in the paradigm. The avoidance of morphophonological alternations is in line with the onymic schema constancy.

Table 4: Stem of inflected feminine personal names and common nouns

Case	Personal name	Common noun
Nominative-Accusative	*Sanda, Leana, Floarea*	*lampa, seara, floarea*
Genitive-Dative	*Sandei, Leanei, Floarei*	*lămpii, serii, florii*

The form *lui* has been analysed as a "proprial article" (Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea & Farkas 2013: 14, Miron-Fulea, Dobrovie-Sorin & Ion Giurgea 2013: 725), which is used with personal names, kinship names with and without the suffixal possessive (*lui mama* 'of mom', *lui frate-meu* 'of my brother'), animal names (*lui Rex* 'of Rex'), months (*lui martie* 'of March'), letters (*lui a* 'of a'), and numbers (*lui trei* 'of three') (Dobrovie-Sorin, Giurgea & Farkas 2013: 14, Miron-Fulea, Dobrovie-Sorin & Ion Giurgea 2013: 725). In this respect, Romanian behaves differently from Istro-Romanian and Megleno-Romanian, where *lu* also occurs with common nouns.[4]

Old Romanian considerably differs from modern Romanian. First, masculine personal names are attested with the suffixed definite article, both in the nominative-accusative (*Radul* 'Radu') and in the genitive-dative (*Radului* 'of Radu') (Pană Dindelegan 2016: 292). As a result of deflection, which began in the sixteenth century, *Radul* and *Radului* gradually became *Radu* and *lui Radu*, respectively. The ending *-u* of personal names such as *Radu* is therefore a remnant of the definite article *-ul*, which is frequently found until the end of the nineteenth century (Pană Dindelegan 2013: 290). Second, the masculine and feminine genitive-dative endings *-lu(i)* and *-ei* (*-ii*) could also appear in proclitic position with personal names and inherently unique nouns such as *împărat* 'emperor', *voievod* 'voivode', etc. Thus, there were originally two proprial articles: *lu(i)* for the masculine (*lu Ștefan*) and *ei* (*ii, i, îi*) for the feminine (*ii Marie*). Coteanu (1969: 122–123) explains the development of the proclitic articles

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[4] More specifically, in Istro-Romanian, *lu* is employed for the genitive-dative of masculine nouns (*lu omu* 'of/to the man', but *le fete* 'of/to the girl') while in Megleno-Romanian it is employed for the genitive regardless of gender (*lu omu* 'of the man', *lu feata* 'of the girl') (Caragiu Marioțeanu 1975: 197–198, 276).

in terms of a means to preserve the proper name body. Finally, *lu(i)* expanded replacing the feminine form *ei* (see Pană Dindelegan 2016: 293–294 for details).

3 Conclusions

Romanian exhibits morphosyntactic dissociations between proper names and common nouns. More specifically, personal names differ from human common nouns with respect to declension. In the nominative-accusative, personal names are not inflected while in the genitive-dative they take the proprial article *lui*, with the exception of feminine personal names ending in -*a*, which can occur either with the proprial article or with the suffixed definite article depending on style. Inflected feminine personal names ending in -*a* lack morphophonological alternations typical of common nouns. The declension system of personal names began to be shaped in the sixteenth century as a result of deflection. Altogether, deflection and avoidance of morphophonological alternations contribute to the onymic schema constancy in Romanian. The inflection of personal names and human common nouns is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Inflection of personal names and human common nouns in Romanian

Case	Personal name		Human common noun	
	Masculine	**Feminine**	**Masculine**	**Feminine**
Nominative	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-(u)l, -le, -a*	*-a, -ua*
Accusative	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*(-ul), (-le), (-a)*	*(-a), (-ua)*
Genitive-Dative	*-Ø*	*-Ø, (-i)*	*-(u)lui*	*-i*

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