

# Romantic Historicism and the Rise of the Historical Novel in the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romanian Literature

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**Abstract:** This study explores the definitions and evolutionary trajectories of the novel and novella genres within Romanian literary theory and practice. It navigates through terminological overlaps and historical contexts, particularly focusing on the challenges inherent in defining the novella. Through an examination of Romanian literary history, the emergence of the novella is unraveled within the romantic historicist matrix and its successive transformation into a precursor of the novel during the 19th century. The thematic richness, stylistic diversity, and cultural significance of Romanian historical fiction are also explored, shedding light on their role in shaping cultural memory and historical consciousness. This research also describes the hybrid nature of Romanian historical novel, illustrating its evolution amidst socio-political and cultural upheavals, notably after the revolutionary period of 1848.

**Keywords:** *novel, novella, historicism, romanticism, historical fiction.*

## The Novel and the Novella

While the definition of the novel could be more efficiently achieved through correspondences with translated Western literature and through the selection and interpretation of intelligible theoretical texts, the case of the novella raises difficulties due to terminological overlaps and confusions that have assimilated it to the novelistic genre. Thus, the novella becomes one of the most difficult species to define and separate from the theoretical silhouette of the novel. In the Romanian context, the origins of both genres do not imply a clear awareness of the differences between them, and their generic individuality was annulled in theoretical vocabulary by an uncertain and oscillating terminological inventory. However, it is certain that both the novella and the novel, in addition to the common terms of *novel*, *romance*, *novella*, and *romanț*, also shared a late appearance, placing them in the lineage of poetry. The emergence of the novella also occurred within the matrix of romantic historicism, and the strategies of Romanian prose writers from the 19th century transformed it into an incipient form of the novel.

The short genre first developed in Moldova, and the appearance of the romantic novella also occurred within the realm of journalistic circulation. C. Negruzzi's short story, *Alexandru Lăpușeanu*, was first published in an issue of "Dacia literară" in 1840, from where it was taken up by the editorial staff of

the journal "Curierul de ambe sexe". Canonical short stories were part of the same feuilletonistic circuit followed by novels, involving certain narrative elaboration strategies to dose epic tension and gradate the evolution of the plot. In Wallachia, the short story that inaugurated the series of original writings belonging to this genre was Al. Odobescu's historical prose, *Mihnea Vodă cel Rău*, published in 1857 in "Românul". In 1860, *Doamna Chiajna* appeared in "Revista Carpaților". Originally, the origin of the Romanian novella is indissolubly linked to portraits of relatively obscure historical figures, an aspect that requires efforts of documentation. In Transylvania, "Foaia pentru minte, inimă și literatură" did not publish original novellas, but only translations of "historical fragments". However, the "Familia" journal published several original texts, and after 1870, with the novellas written by Slavici, the genre is considered to have reached the level of literary maturity.

The narrative structures upon which the historical novel is constructed perpetually relate to the long-analyzed distinction between the literary and the documentary, the historical and the artistic, formulating some questions pertaining to a possible writerly deontology. To what extent can the novelist's inventions and fidelity be credited or quantified compared to those of the biographer or historian? Undeniably, actions and events, whether real or fictional, bear the distorting effect of the author's subjectivity in a dosage determined by the specificity of the narrative. The rhetorical aplomb of the narratives of the Romantic era had complicated this distinction, with historical prose and artistic prose sharing enough common ground to blur, to a certain extent, the boundaries that separated them, Nicolae Bălcescu's historiography being an eloquent example of this aesthetic agreement. The documentary effort required by historical prose diminishes, to some extent, the unrestrained freedom of fantasy, a particularity that attracts to the genre the fame of an artificial literary form, meant exclusively to serve ideological purposes. The historical novel entails a more complex level of elaboration than the sentimental or mystery genres, as it aims to appeal to a cultivated audience with a taste for discovering national history. The historical novel has long been regarded as a significant literary form, offering readers a window into the past while simultaneously reflecting contemporary concerns and sensibilities.

In this programmatic article, we seek to explore the multifaceted nature of historical fiction, examining its thematic richness, stylistic diversity, and cultural significance. Historical fiction can be defined as a genre of literature that imaginatively reconstructs historical events, settings, and characters. Unlike traditional historical narratives, which adhere strictly to factual accuracy, historical fiction allows authors greater freedom to interpret the past creatively. At the heart of historical fiction lies a myriad of thematic elements that reflect the complexities of human experience across different historical periods. Themes such as power, identity, love, and conflict are often central to historical narratives, providing readers with insight into the social, political, and cultural dynamics of the past. In addition to its thematic richness, historical fiction is characterized by a diverse range of stylistic techniques and narrative devices. From vivid descriptions of historical settings to the nuanced portrayal of characters, authors employ various strategies to evoke the atmosphere and

ethos of a particular time and place. One of the most compelling aspects of historical fiction is its role in shaping cultural memory and fostering a sense of historical consciousness. Through the retelling of historical events and the reimagining of historical figures, authors contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the past and its significance for the present.

The incipient form of Romanian literary theory is criticism, another genre that was articulated later, which creates and fixes the terminological inventory used in reflecting on native literature. Aesthetic judgments, classifications, hierarchies, and generic delimitations fall, therefore, within the purview of literary criticism, which is also responsible for selecting the terms that define literary genres. The most frequent generic delimitation made by literary critics is that between poetry and prose, but Romanian writers do not insist on the existence of subgeneric classifications or species within the same genre. The comprehensive nature of early Romanian literary criticism addressed general cultural aspects, proposing norms that concerned literary language, the relationship between translations and the need for a national literature, alongside the sources that should inspire Romanian writers. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the programmatic articles of the magazines had a higher degree of generality and did not classify literary genres. After 1850, interest in the novel is also manifested in the editorial policy of publications. In 1855, the “România literară” journal lists among the genres that Romanian literature should develop, “national novels” (Ștefan 1958: 156). This call was emerging as a cultural summons for the advancement of a historical novel that would articulate the national past. The same publication will soon apply the desideratum stated in its pages, hosting the novels of Dimitrie Bolintineanu and Alecu Cantacuzino, *Manoil* and *Serile de vară la țară*. Novels, alongside drama, were the only texts usually given the generic name in the subtitle. Thus, the categorization of a text, whether short or long, as a novel or novella, was the result of authorial or editorial will. Since the terms did not possess denominative precision, their usage was arbitrary. However, literary forms precede the names attributed to them, and in Teodor Racoccea’s *Crestomaticul românesc* from 1820, translated short stories appear, but the recommendation on the cover describes them as a “collection of all kinds of stories and other deeds, drawn from authors of various languages” (Ștefan 1958: 157).

An equivalent term for the short story was “nuotate,” novelty notion that had a short life in the discourse of Romanian intellectuals, a result of the translation of the French word *nouvelle*, which circulated in parallel with the designation of novel. The use of the term “nuotate” presented ambiguity, as the notion designated both a literary prose text and novelty or news. The first attestation of the term appears in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1837, the “Curierul de ambe sexe” journal published C. Negruzzi’s short prose *Zoe*, subtitled “historical nuotate”. In the second edition of the journal, that of 1862, the initial subtitle was replaced with that of “historical novella”. The first subtitle, that of “nuotate”, may be due to the content of the text and the semantic similarity with the term “novelty” or “news,” phrases like “this very true story” being found in Negruzzi’s short prose. A verifiable event, declared as true, becomes the marker of a literary text classified as historical. “Curierul de

ambe sexe” includes, in the period 1835-1838, a section of “nuotăți,” listing titles of short stories from world literature. The term “nuotate” will circulate until the end of the first half of the century, when the designation of “novella”, with the variation “novelă”, will emerge as the winning notion defining a species. In 1847, the year I. Catina publishes his three-act drama *Zoe*, inspired by the Negruzian text, the designation of novella seems to be already fixed in Romanian theoretical circulation. Catina acknowledges his admiration for the “beautiful novella” written by C. Negruzzi, assigning it a different name from that which appeared in an earlier edition, as “historical nuotate”: “Reading your beautiful and deeply touching novel, so undeservedly neglected, has inspired me to write this drama.” Only the second edition of C. Negruzzi’s text, that of 1862, will consolidate its belonging to the species of historical short stories, marking and fixing in circulation a definitive term.

In the 1839 program of “Curierul românesc”, I. Heliade-Rădulescu communicates a literary event, namely the publication on Wednesdays and Saturdays of texts of various categories, “sciences, literature, arts, industry, voyages or travels, and nuotăți or stories.” In Heliade’s journalistic program, “nuotate” is a synonym for the novella, indicating a fictional text of small extent. Also in the “Curierul românesc” journal, in an issue from the same year, the table of contents reproduces, within the “nuotăți” section, the titles of several translated novellas. Interestingly, the term “nuotate” circulates exclusively in Wallachia, oscillating between the two significations: a narrative or a news item. The acceptance of the term “nuotate” as a diverse fact, an event, also acquires pejorative connotations in the discourse of Romanian writers, and a letter signed by Heliade-Rădulescu and addressed to C. Negruzzi admonishes the pressure to fuel, in the pages of “Curierul românesc”, the “curiosity of novelties enthusiasts.” (Ștefan 1958: 159).

The merging of the two meanings of the term “nuotate” is a process that repeats itself with the appearance of the neologism “novelă”, which initially carries the meaning of news. In 1814, Alexis Lazăr announced his intention to publish *Novellas* designed for Romanians, namely news crafted to stimulate their interest in recent events, and I. Heliade-Rădulescu censures that the extent of means presupposed by the “Curierul românesc” journal is reflected in journalistic practices, having the effect “to decide it only to satisfy novella enthusiasts.” (t.n.)<sup>1</sup> Only around 1840 does the term “novelă” begin to denote a literary species often confused with or assimilated to the novel. In 1839, the translation of a *physiological novella* by Emile Deschamps, *René Paul and Paul Renée*, is published in Iași. In the following year, *Dacia literară* announces the publication in a future issue of the romantic novella *Mihai Viteazul și boierul Brâncovan*. In the period 1840-1842, *Curierul de ambe sexe* publishes, in the translation of Gh. Stoica, *Fata neșătorului*, a text subtitled “historical novella.” It is certain that the notion of the short story will become fixed in Romanian theoretical vocabulary, and after 1850 it will cease to refer to news. In 1852, Gh. Asachi presents, in a short literary plea, the reasons why he has chosen to present the history of the founding of Moldova in the form of the novella *Dragoș*.

<sup>1</sup> Original text: „a-l hotărî decît numai spre mulțumirea iubitorilor de *novelle*”, (Ștefan 1958: 158).

### **Reflection on the Novel and the Beginnings of Romanian Literary Theory**

The novel represents a decisive test of national literary maturity, crystallized as evidence of the departure from the Latin language. Through etymological arguments, Ernst Robert Curtius connects the emergence of this genre with the Romance heritage, showing that terms such as *romanz* (Old French), *romance* (Spanish), or *romanzo* (Italian) were created by the Latin educated class precisely to designate all Romance languages, classified as a linguistic unit opposed to Latin. The Romance novel's etymology thus brings together the attributes of literature written or translated into Romance vernaculars, as words like *enromancier*, *romançar*, or *romanzare* denote the act of translating or writing books in national languages. These books, written in vernacular languages, will in turn be called *romanz*, *romant*, *roman*, *romanz*, *romance*, *romanzo*, terms derived from the Romance root. Curtius's demonstration also aims to consolidate the sense that the novel eventually acquires, as a popular genre elaborated in a vulgar language, the successor of Latin, in which true events are reflected:

In Old French, *romant*, *roman* means the «courtly romance in verse,» literally «popular book». In a retranslation into Latin, such a book could be called *romanticus* (supply liber). The words *romance* and *romantic* are therefore closely connected. In English and German eighteenth-century usage, *romantic* still means something «that could happen in a romance». (Curtius 2013: 32).

The rise of the novel into the native cultural environment brought with it the dissemination of meanings and the role it was meant to fulfill. Serving as a fresco of life, in its human and social dimension, the novel will fulfill a function of correcting morals, combating harmful remnants and retrograde vestiges, exercising an important critical force through its digressive nature (Olteanu 2023: 283-300). In the interpretation of I. Heliade-Rădulescu, the purpose of the novel is to perpetuate the descent of the epic into a national language, translating its contents into the language of the masses. The epic employs cultured languages, Latin and Greek, and thus constructs an imaginary elite mode, in harmony with classical principles, a feature that limits its accessibility. It is the novel, the succession of the epic that the task of explaining and facilitating the understanding of epic grandeur, pouring its message into a new literary form accessible to a wide audience falls upon. This vision of the new genre also occasions an original name, reflecting its origin, that of “myth-history” (Heliade-Rădulescu 1870). This concept, an alternative to that of the novel, designates “a species of fabulous history,” (Heliade-Rădulescu 1870: 13) marking the departure from the scientific, sober register, and the prevalence of historical accuracy in favor of fantasy. The temporal, cultural, social, and individual conditioning of the novel becomes relevant in this sense only in the manner in which it subordinates itself to fiction.

The term “novel,” which Heliade will use with the variation of *romanț*, would prove inappropriate from an etymological perspective, as it would refer to texts written exclusively in Romance languages and would strictly narrow

down the cultural field that could produce novels, delimiting a theoretical context in which the scholar's terminological intuition proves innovative. Through this attempt to select a term that reflects the descent of the species it denotes, Heliade advocates for conceptual clarity in defining literary forms. Resorting to examples from world literatures provides the publicist with examples of epics in prose, popular or vulgar, which would fit into the "mythological-historical" genre:

Modern literatures had prose epics such as Fenelon's *Telemachus*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, as well as the works of Walter Scott and other German and French authors of this mytho-historical genre, poorly termed romances, if they are not written in the uncultivated Latin language. (t.n.).<sup>2</sup>

As the author of a manual on poetics, Heliade-Rădulescu intuitively theorizes the specificity of the novel and its generic diversity, demonstrating that the aesthetic purpose of the new epic species is not inferior to that of the epic. Heliade-Rădulescu's theoretical awareness, attentive to European cultural trends, anticipates the rise in popularity of historical prose in the Romanian space, alongside the role of experimentation in native historical novels. These meditations, whether systematic as in the case of Heliade-Rădulescu or Mihail Kogălniceanu, or sporadic as in the case of translators such as Simeon Marcovici, on the evolution of literary forms, show that reflection on developing genres is synchronous with their writing.

### **The Romanian historical novel, a local form of *historical romance***

The historical romance, as a literary form that romanticizes historical episodes, relativizing the issue of documentary accuracy in favor of the artistic liberties of imagination, garnered public success in the 19th century through the effervescence of sensational narratives. The protean nature of the Romanian historical novel from its beginnings, which emerged with the importation of the historical romance recipe as crystallized around the figure of Walter Scott, appeared to literary historians as an expression of literary awkwardness and the lack of experience of 19th-century novelists. The shift of emphasis, first from Utilitarian, scientific readings to extraordinary stories, which carried the reading public through the most colorful, surprising, and improbable events, was relegated to the category of indicators of "popular" literature. What researchers overlooked, however, was that the multitude of details and the branching of the stories composed captivating atmospheric prose that hosted innovative lexical borrowings, counteracting the instability of the literary language, which could be attributed to the shortcomings of our early novelists' writings.

For Jerome de Groot, the historical novel must be understood both as a cultural-educational medium and as an activity of literary delight or easy entertainment. Through captivating narratives and vivid descriptions of historical

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<sup>2</sup> Original text: „Literaturile moderne avură epopee în proză ca *Telemah* al lui Fenelon, *Don Quixotie* al lui Cervantes, operele de asemenea genere ale lui Walterscott și altor autori germani și francezi sînt de generele acesta mithistoric, ce rău se zic romanțuri, dacă nu mai sînt scrise în limba necultă romană.” (Heliade-Rădulescu 1870: 14).

epochs, this literary genre promises readers the opportunity to immerse themselves in different centuries, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of historical contexts and of the social, cultural, and political dynamics associated with them. By combining factual elements with fiction strategies, the historical novel can effectively convey complex historical concepts, facilitating access to and identification with them for a wide audience. As a hybrid genre of the historical novel, the historical romance combines the original form of popular fiction, the romance, with a sparkling historical background, tracing both past events and branching love intrigues. The model of historical fiction proposed by Walter Scott manifests as a rational one, in which the clear sense of historical process represents the central element, and individual destinies infuse it with their effervescence. The individual identities of Walter Scott's heroes are strictly historically determined, and their freedom of action validates the supremacy of the laws of their time, a fact reflected in a certain discursive sobriety that strongly contrasts with the sentimental model created by Scott's successors. The romance will come to undermine historical accuracy in favor of self-sufficient past worlds, dominated by connections governed by attraction and seduction, introducing a less critical perspective on history:

Romance is a sub-genre in which sexual or romantic desire figures high, and has often been characterised as empty and conservative, in so far as it seems to sustain the dominant models of social ordering: family, heteronormative relationships and strictly defined gender roles. (De Groot 2010: 52).

It is certain that writers such as N. D. Popescu, Ioan Bujoreanu, George Baronzi, G. Rădulescu-Niger and others had intuited the magnetism that the historical novel with a melodramatic twist could exert. They understood that history is not a rigid process and that its interpretation (or distortion) through fictional strategies represents an important resource in diversifying and educating the taste of their audience. By dramatizing power relationships in a flamboyant fantastical framework, the Romanian historical romance, apriorically rejected by the canonical configuration, contains within itself a much richer literary universe than that included in the self-sufficient canon, as it is urged to invent ingenious stratagems on every page to maintain the reader's attention.

Sentimentalism is the thematic core of a historical romance, and love and desire form the grids through which history is filtered. Originally, the romance is articulated as a tonic and enduring debate between writers and readers on the subject of genre norms, attraction, and sexuality. Historical prose operates several mutations on this discursive core and begins to raise complex questions regarding the genre's status as a historical or natural category, and the impact of historical and cultural context on sexual identity and the manifestation of behaviors guided by eroticism. In early Romanian novels, desire often configures the social, historical, and political universe, adjudicating its role as the arbiter of fictional heroes' destinies:

Romance is the original form of popular fiction. Its primary function of wish-fulfilment is the characteristic element of narratives that propel the reader into a fantasy

world where a full and complete identity can be imagined. Yet romance is also the genre which has been taken least seriously in literary studies. (McCracken 1988: 77).

Historical fiction employing a romantic scenery regains its authority as an important literary form when its contribution to the ever-relevant debates about the meaning of history and its narratives is acknowledged. Historians and narrative theorists such as Hayden White, Paul Veyne, or E. J. Hobsbawm have drawn attention to the fact that both tradition and history are social constructs; they have been created, meaning they do not exist independently and outside of society, but are constantly reconfigured through interpretations. Therefore, both tradition and history are products of language.

### **The Hybridity of Romanian Historical Fiction**

For a theoretical understanding of historical fiction, one of the preferred options of literature in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a delimitation of the contents and categories used in its construction is required. Theoretical debates at the European level attempt to delineate the action and methods of realization of the two domains, historical and fictional, in evocative literature. Through the prism of neo-Hegelianism, Benedetto Croce will translate the relationship between literature and history into the sum of similarities and differences that scientific and fictional processing of life facts entail, emphasizing the effects felt at the level of epistemic textures (Croce 1921: 52).

The label of Romanticism gains, precisely in its culmination, the universality that could no longer be limited by the chronological axes of the evolution of the artistic domain, as it becomes the clear expression of an aesthetic attitude laden with lyricism and pathos, of progressive intentions and dreamy immersions. The antinomic attribute, that of classicism, becomes a correlative reality for what does not fit the romantic picture: impersonality, objectivity, the absence of pathetic effusions, a stage at which Romanian historical fiction will arrive after overcoming the impetuous, reactionary-legitimist tendencies of Romanticism.

The revolutionary moment generated the entire arsenal of ideology intensively exploited by the new epic species and consolidated literary voices under the banner of a common goal: creating a valuable native cultural heritage that would rise to the expectations of its creators. The echoes of revolutionary movements, traversed by the shivers of nationalism and by social-political principles such as justice, freedom, equality, and national unity, abound in the demands of the heroes of our first novels, especially in the tales of bandits, as the founders of Romanian novels are chosen, not coincidentally, from among the participants in the 1848 Revolution, with Dimitrie Bolintineanu being a relevant example. Militant-progressive objectives and fictional polemics with representatives of the old social hierarchies or with the exponents of oppression become instructive in this regard. The bitter invective against the vestiges of the Phanariote society with noble pretensions and the ascending class of parvenus, eager to obtain aristocratic privileges, is situated at the opposite pole of the discourse that praises nature, the village, culminating in the glorification of the pure Romanian ethnic spirit, in the name of which all rights hitherto silenced are demanded.



The capricious relationship established between literature and historical processes is circumscribed by the question of the historical authenticity of a literary work, its fidelity to the events' data, regardless of its formal classification in a genre or species. However, evocative historical literature establishes its specificity and artistic scope through continuous reference to the real event-historical dynamics, but also by fulfilling the aesthetic demands implied by each genre, thus subordinating itself to aesthetic categories and predetermined stylistic legitimacy. Literary orientations and currents, artistic and ideological ideals of writers, play a significant role in the way the past is exploited, but favoring a certain way of organizing lyrical, epic, or dramatic matter takes shape through the use of these categories. The symbiotic relationship between the different orbits of aesthetic values projected in literary works and the logic of social-historical processes is prominent and in ordering the moments of the novel's plot, attenuated or intensified by the specific techniques of each stage of the literary tradition's development, whether we refer to sentimental and sensational gesticulation, realistic descriptiveness, or naturalistic mechanics. The tensions and crises implied by the movements of historical processes entail a specific direction of conflict evolution captured within fictional frameworks, shaped, of course, by biographical factors as well.

In the first Romanian historical novels, the melodramatic scenario eclipses some of the descriptive sequences, shifting the focus from the successful illustration of life, history and social sequences, in its calm or combative paroxysm aspects, to the surprising episodes, marked by arbitrariness. In this regard, novelists adhere to genre schemes, counting on the effects of a well-established reception style, as "in the construction of the narrative plot, both the «sensational» novel, the melodramatic novella, or the adventurous tale accept, even cultivate, a great deal of arbitrariness, of improbability, subjecting it to a domestication treatment" (t.n.)<sup>3</sup>. Commonplaces increase predictability and fulfill reading expectations, concretized in "clues regarding classification into a certain genre, the system of characters, prominent themes, the position and manner of the narrator" (t.n.)<sup>4</sup>, elements of anticipation. Several passages anticipate the force of realistic scenes in the writings of Slavici and, later, in those of Rebreanu, but novelists like N. D. Popescu use romantic liberties to intensify dramatism.

The central characters of the Romanian historical novel from the long 19th century are characterized by their spiritual configuration and their penchant for reflexivity. Even characters whose roles are active and dynamic in the narrative, such as the hajduks or outlaws, exhibit meditative inclinations. The preoccupation with identity and the boundaries of self-awareness form an enduring motif upon which the novelist embroiders some of the recurring themes of his work, employing epic compositional techniques. The profound musings of the protagonists intertwine with the causal chains of historical events, often

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<sup>3</sup> Original text: „[...] în construcția tramei narative, atât «romanțul» de senzație, cât și novella melodramatică sau povestirea aventuroasă acceptă, ba chiar cultivă o doză mare de arbitrar, de neverosimil, supunând-o unui tratament de domesticire.” (Papadima 1999: 67).

<sup>4</sup> Original text: „[...] indiciile privind încadrarea într-un gen anumit, sistemul personajelor, teme proeminente, poziția și felul naratorului.” (Papadima 1999: 67).

perceived as adversarial. Uncontrollable occurrences, impervious to the characters' will, disrupt their spiritual manifestations, leading them to invoke and valorize these events in tense monologues. Epic moments are captured as snapshots wherein ideals, dreams, memories, suffering, and regret converge.

The dramatic and sentimental gestures through which the characters define themselves, either through their own dialogue or through the commentary of the character-narrator, align them closely with the melodramatic archetype of the hero. These characters possess the ability to materialize aspirations and ideals, imbuing them with tangible form. In *The Melodramatic Imagination*, Peter Brooks observes the plasticizing nature of melodramatic imagination, derived from theatrical excess: "Melodrama handles its feelings and ideas virtually as plastic entities, visual and tactile models held out for all to see and handle. Emotions are given a full acting-out, a full representation" (Brooks 1976: 41).

Since melodrama originates on stage, having its source in romantic plays, the transposition of dramatic techniques into Romanian texts brings with it an inventory of characteristic effects. The liberal nationalist perspective, entrenched by the thinking of the revolutionaries of 1848, stimulates the imagination of post-Revolutionary Romanian novelists, seduced by discourses about freedoms, inalienable rights, and the intellectual dignity of humanity. Tyranny and oppression form persistent refrains in the consciousness of heroes refractory to obedience and resignation:

Look me in the eyes and tell me: can I love the Turks, the Russians, or the Germans? [...] Beautiful and grand dreams did we fashion, a handful of youths born and raised by these elders whom you, and many others, deem devoid of love for their nation! From their blood, what sacred love of country arose in our hearts! What longing and what fervor to revive it, to illuminate it, and to exalt it, as it was and as it ought to be! And this love, these fervors, encompassed not only our dear Moldavia, but the entire nation, and dearer still, beyond the borders of two Principalities, beyond the boundaries of three empires! From all the ancestral land, now enslaved by the pagan Turk, the papist German, and the Orthodox Russian, reduced to servitude on three sides, and the fourth transformed into a caravanserai through which the barbarous armies of three great emperors pass, from this meager piece of flesh, protected until now only by the miracle of heaven and by the greed and envy of three mad dogs, we wanted, want, and will create a country more beautiful than any other, great and reunited, self-sustaining, capable of defending and governing itself, finally reborn after four centuries of suffering, in the light of the sun of justice, of freedom, and of brotherhood! (t.n.)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Original text: „Privește-mă în ochi și spune-mi: pot eu iubi pe turci, pe ruși sau pe nemți? [...] Frumoase și mărețe visuri mai făuream noi, o mână de tineri născuți și crescuți de bătrânii aceștia ce-ți par, ție și multora, ne iubitori de neam! Din sângele lor ce dragoste sfântă de țară a răsărit în inimile noastre! Ce dor și ce avânturi pentru a o redeștepta, pentru a o lumina și pentru a o reinălța, cum a fost și cum trebuie să fie! Și dragostea aceasta, avânturile acestea, nu cuprindeau numai Moldova noastră scumpă, ci neamul întreg și mai scump, peste hotarele a două Principate, peste granițele a trei împărății! Din toată moșia străbunilor, robită astăzi de turcul păgân, de neamțul și de ungurul papistaș, și de rusul ortodox, ajunsă roabă din trei părți, iar a patra prefăcută în caravanserai, prin care se perindă soldătimile barbare a trei mari împărați, din această bucată de carne macră, ferita până-acum numai prin minunea cerului și prin lăcomia și zavistea a trei dulăi turbați, am vrut, vrem și vom face o țară frumoasă cum n-a mai fost alta, mare și reîntregită, de sine stătătoare, în stare a se apăra și a se ocărui singură, renăscând, în sfârșit, după patru veacuri de suferințe, la lumina soarelui dreptății, al libertății și al înfrățirii!” (Moruzi, 1910: 67).

The assimilation of the revolutionary spirit is based on the axis of implicit moral guidelines, organically integrated into the aesthetic material. The mesmerizing universe of historical turmoil aims to outline a spectrum in which shadows and echoes of seductive urges to change the course of national destiny are captured, often proclaimed in the heroes' speeches.

The state of provisionality and instability of the fictional universe resides in expectant circumstances, through the provocation and anticipation of the consequences of actions and the invocations of heroes. Romantic conventionalism results from the adoption of romantic recipes and the use of sentimental-melodramatic novel ornamentation. In the volume *Reading for the Plot*, Peter Brooks explains the abundance of conflicts of this type, personal, political, or social, correlating them with the mutations that occur in the cultural horizon of a tumultuous century that had raised the edifice of reason and claimed what Hugo Friedrich called "empty transcendence":

The enormous narrative production of the nineteenth century may suggest an anxiety at the loss of providential plots: the plotting of the individual or social or institutional life story takes on new urgency when one no longer can look to a sacred masterplot that organizes and explains the world. (Brooks 1992: 20).

The emergence of such plots was prepared through a lengthy process of secularization, initiated by the Renaissance and amplified by the Enlightenment, which the Romantics transformed into a combative action against the unnatural order, unjust history, and corrupt institutions, which became familiar subjects, integral parts of the reader's literary competence. In the historical novel, historical reality and ideality become two domains placed in continuous aesthetic interaction and have as their space of manifestation the representations of epic poetry.

Historicism imposes itself as a preferred coordinate of romantic philosophy and literature due to increased compatibility with the evolutionary idea and with the interest in events that preceded and succeeded the years of the French Revolution. The deliberate artistic deindividualization advocated by the classics and the Enlightenment enters an impasse, and thinking oriented towards generality and timelessness loses the battle with romantic vitalism, picturesque, and dynamism. The new generation of artists demolishes the inert idol of uniformizing rigor and raises the temple of the new artistic religion of individuality. The aesthetic versatility of romantic historicism embraces and mixes all literary genres, dissipating the once-established boundaries between history, a scientific domain, a standard of reality, and literature, a realm of creative fantasy and unreality. The political, cultural, social, and philosophical implications of the artistic product will imprint clear aesthetic directions of an ideological-literary apostolate. The stylistic strategies called upon to support the rhetorical framework and the fiery thematic spectrum of the hybridity of the Romanian genre become widely circulated instruments, used by the entire array of romantic writers. The agglutination of genres and registers serve the same noble purposes of art as a mediator in the lives of peoples. Evocative literary works have a primary character of pleading that combines the grace of the ideal with the violence of actions or attitudes attempting to restructure unfortunate states of fact.

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