Dimitrie Bolintineanu as the Creator of Sentimental Romantic Novel

Ludmila BRANIŞTE*

Key-words: *epistolary novel, lyric and sentimental substance, conventionalism and artificiality, social documentary, aesthetic maturity*

The most widespread way of literary expression which is rightfully believed to be "giving the measure for the competitiveness of a literature" (Cornea 1995: 98) is the novel, this "literary Nile", due to its ability to adapt itself to the most diverse social-historical structures and spiritualities; thus, the novel is not only a well-defined genre or kind of literature. The pages of our study are devoted to the Romanian 19th century since it can be described *through* and *for* the novel. By means of adding the criteria of morphologic character to the historical ones, one can discover "the spirituality of the 19th century which penetrated into the core of the novel and in its narrative principles"[1]. A century of the novel – as well as its whole history – appears as "the development of several *types* of the new novel in interference through an antecedent" (Olteanu 1977: 17) [italics by L.B.]. The present article is concentrated upon one "development" of the novel types – the lyric romantic novel, which introduces the romantic hero with his unique dispositions. As far as Romanticism is concerned, the novel becomes the favourite type of discourse by means of which "thinking descended from the philosophic heaven to the ground of practical life" (Bédier, Hazard 1924: 148). The innovating conception of Romanticism upon the relation between man and society, man and man, human passion and bitter reality of life gave an impetus not only to the social novel, the novel of manners, but also the sentimental one, that of psychological intentions which nurtures the psychological character of the novel which has long existed in the modern novel, the subjective novel of the analytical type rather than the novelistic intrigues, as it used to be in the preceding centuries. The characters of the romantic novel, far from the conventionalism and sketchiness of the classicism, are alive, dramatic and picturesque, with individual, distinct and specific features, with some peculiar particularities, manias, obsessions and tics. These characters are independent, free of the author's omniscient care or the obligations imposed by composition; they live their own life and express themselves according to their temperamental structure in both introversive and extroversive ways. Thus, the romantic characters are lonely and integrated in a

* "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania.

[1] For more details, see also Olteanu (1977), Popovici (1972).

„Philologica Jassyensia", An X, Nr. 1 (19), 2014, Supliment, p. 285–297.

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

community, melancholic, enthusiastic, angelic and diabolic, tragic and grotesque. The romantic hero begins to look at himself and to express himself. The interest for his own individuality and intimacy leads to egoism – a fundamental concept of the romantic lyrics and novel introduced by Stendhal. Revealing the depths of the soul as the depository of reflections, feelings and fertile impulses is followed by the appearance of another coordinate of the romantic character: the world of his aspirations opposed by the obliging social order, which leads to the rebellion against the oppressing force and the temerarious dream to face it (the way it was done by the exceptional heroes of Byron's and Eminescu's poetry and Schiller's drama). Not infrequently, the character manages to adapt himself through the amorality of the exterior world and the social bourgeois order; then the novel builds up a psychological and social category of a parvenu which populates not only the realistic novel of manners, but also the romantic one. On the other hand, there is a defeated character with his excessive sensibility and passive individualism. He becomes estranged: "the self-estrangement because of the society and the estrangement from the society because of some peculiarities of individual structure"[2]. In this case, the novel depicts a category opposite to parvenu – a hero unable to put up with himself in various ways.

One of these heroes belonging to the Romanian romantic novel of the second half of the 19th century makes the object of this study. Manoil, the main hero of the eponymous novel by Dimitrie Bolintineanu, opens the typology of the romantic hero in the Romanian prose of the 19th century. He is the first one in a long range of characters who leads to the renewal and the reassessment of Homo fictus in the Romanian novel. The first variant of the novel *Manoil*, according to its author, was written in 1831, in the special circumstances of his existence as he was a revolutionary and participated in the revolution of 1848 in Muntenia. After its failure, Bolintineanu, like other patriots, chooses the politic exile. He leaves Transilvania, where he arrives together with Nicolae Bălcescu and Cezar Bolliac, for Constantinopol and then for Paris, where he is involved in an intense activity among the exiled Romanian revolutionaries. Having decided to return home, he travels along Danube waiting in Orşova, Cladova and Rusciuc for "the doors of the Motherland" to open for those who were obliged to leave for "foreign lands"[3]. Bolintineanu spends a month in Rusciuc, waiting for the letter from his sister, Ecaterina, as well as for the permission to head to Bucureşti. However, the ruler of the country, Ştirbei Vodă, does not allow him to see the place where "our eyes saw the sun for the first time". Here, in Rusciuc, he writes the novel *Manoil* in its first version. "This book was written in exile", as he declares in the introduction to the revised version of the novel, published in his newspaper "Dâmboviţa", in 1870, in Rusciuc, upon his return from Paris,

> almost a month passed waiting for my sister Ecaterina to come in order to see her. But the ruler of the country Ştirbei did not give his permission. I leave for

[2] For more details on the history of the literary character see also Perez (1979), Popa (1969), Battaglia (1976).

[3] Bolintineanu discusses his dwellings across foreign lands in his volume *Călătorii pe Dunăre şi în Bulgaria.*

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

> Constantinopol where I used to read the novel passing the evenings in the pleasant company gathered by Mr Ghica in his gracious quarters on Bosphorus […]. However, the whole book was published in Iaşi by the poet Sion which added his personality in the book[4] (*apud* Vârgolici 1985: 145-146).

It was read in Ion Ghica's house, "bey of Samos" at that time; the completed manuscript is sent to George Sion in Iaşi to be published. In February, 1852, the fragments of the novel by Dimitrie Bolintineanu appear in the first issue of Vasile Alecsandri's magazine "România literară", together with the article *Răzvan-Vodă* by Nicolae Bălcescu. The issue was confiscated by the censor because of the presence of these two texts belonging to exiled authors. The author of the novel wrote to his friend A. Zane: "I sent you a small brochure that did not pass in Moldova on June 2, 1852, because Bălcescu wrote for it under the name of Conrad Albrecht, and me under the name of Valentin"[5] (*apud* Vârgolici 1985: 147).

The devoted George Sion continues to make efforts to publish the novel; after the magazine "România literară" was closed, he decided to bring it out in a separate volume. In "Moldova's newspaper"[6] he eulogistically presents the novel with the view of prompting the readers' interest. "A national novel, a piece of writing which provides us with the image of our society the way it is and, while entertaining us, shapes our hearts and prevents us from the sins that we often commit by means of examples […], he, as a poet, poured a lot from the cup of his illusions and affections in this work; this makes this work of verbal art even more interesting"[7] (Sion 1853: 41).

Before publishing the novel in a separate volume, it was brought out in "România literară", the magazine which Vasile Alecsandri managed to edit, in 1855. The novel appears in a separate volume in the same year, 1855: *Manoil*, a national novel, Iaşi, Romanian-French publishing house.

Dimitrie Bolintineanu's novel did not receive a lot of positive reviews from its contemporaries. It was believed to have "a pompous style, false and unnatural characters and far-fetched circumstances", as I. Nădejde mentions in his work, *The history of the Romanian language and literature* (Nădejde 1886: 445). N. Iorga regarded "sleeping Manoil" as the "masterpiece of boredom and declamation" (Iorga 1890: 13). G. Ibrăileanu, considering both novels written by Dimitrie Bolintineanu – *Manoil* and *Elena*, is the first reviewer who calls them romantic novels interesting due to their documentary value ("in them we see Bolintineanu since he is a lyric

[4] The Romanian version: „aproape o lună, aşteptând să vie sora mea Ecaterina să o văz. Dar domnul ţării Ştirbei nu permise. Plec spre Constantinopol, unde petrecând serile în plăcută societate la d-l Ion Ghica, în graţiosul său lăcaş pe Bosfor, cetii acest roman […]. Cartea însă se publică la Iaşi întreagă, prin Sion poetul, care adaogă personalitatea sa în carte".

[5] The Romanian version: „Ţi-am trimes o mică broşură ce s-a oprit la Moldova la 2 iunie 1852, din pricină că a scris într-însul Bălcescu subt numele de Conrad Albrecht şi eu subt numele de Valentin".

[6] In N^{o} 11, 5 February, 1853: 41.

[7] The Romanian version: „Un roman naţional, o scriere care să ne puie sub ochi societatea noastră aşa cum este, şi care desfătându-ne totodată să ne formeze inimile şi să ne abată prin exemple de la viciurile în care adeseori ne vedem căzuţi […], el, ca poet, au vărsat mai mult din cupa iluziilor şi a afecţiunilor sale în opera aceasta; şi cu atâta mai mult uvrajul este mai interesant".

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

poet even in his novels") and, first and foremost, due to "the knowledge which helps him to reveal the evolution of the feminine psychology"[8]. The novel was later appreciated by other reviewers, too. The majority of them, following a vulgar and outdated sociologism and social critics discovering "social, political and historical documents" in them (P.V. Haneş, Cezar Petrescu, George Ivaşcu). His merit of being the leader in a difficult genre had to be acknowledged. Dimitrie Popovici, Şerban Cioculescu, Ion Rotaru, Ştefan Cazimir, Teodor Vârgolici, Mircea Zaciu, Paul Cornea, etc. draw attention to the "merits of the undertaking" and actually contributed to the promotion of the genius.

Manoil is an epistolary novel with the same lyric-sentimental essence of the Romanian prose of the pre-romantic and early romantic epochs of the West. Jean-Jacques Rousseau with the novel *The New Heloise*, René Chateaubriand with *René*, Wolfgang Goethe with *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, and George Sand with *Indiana* and *Lelia* nurtured the sentimental novel demanded by the public with a great success. There can hardly be any doubts that it was the epistolary novel by Goethe that served as the model for the Romanian writer (he mentions him in the text of the novel); he read either its French version (since he mastered the French language), or its Romanian translation made by Gavril Munteanu in 1842. Manoil, surely, is not an original character; however, he is not a simple imitation of Goethe's character. Its relation to the German model as well as the distance between these two pieces of verbal art were mentioned in works on the Romanian literary history and critics long ago. It was done by Mauriciu Flügel after some years after publishing the novel, in 1863, in an article which came out in the magazine "Buciumul"[9] with the title *Manoil by Mr Bolintineanu in comparison to Werther by Goethe, a German classic* (*Manoil de d-nu D. Bolintineanu, în comparaţiune cu Werther de Goethe, clasic german*). Bringing together the two novels – the first attempt of a comparative study – the author of the article rightfully claims that Bolintineanu's work is original.

> Manoil, as he writes, is Goethe's famous Werther; there cannot be any doubt that it was provoked by this German piece of verbal art. We say *provoked*, but no way *imitated* [italics by L.B.]. Manoil and Werther are two parallel lines that eternally follow their way, each of them separately, and they are never united. Mr Bolintineanu had read *Werther* and, like everyone, he felt excited. Profiting by this emulation, he began writing a Romanian *Werther*. Surprisingly enough! Whereas Mr Bolintineanu owes the soul described in *Manoil* to the famous writer Goethe and cannot help admiring the beauty of this work well-known across Europe, he is not deceived by the great authority of this poet and, instead of imitating, he creates an original work[10] (Vârgolici 1985: 39).

[8] In his course *The history of modern Romanian literature, Alecsandri's epoch*, taught at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Iaşi, the academic year 1910-1911. The course which had long circulated in a lithograph form, was included in vol. 8 of *Works* by G. Ibrăileanu (critical edition by Rodica Rotaru and Alexandru Piru, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1979).

[9] N^{o} 90, 27 August, 1863: 359; and N^{o} 94 of September 2, 1863: 375.

[10] The Romanian version: „Manoil, scrie el, este celebrul Werther al lui Goethe şi fără îndoială provocat prin lectura acestei opere germane. Zicem *provocat* iară nicidecum *imitat* [italics by L.B.].

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

The differences between the two novels begin with their epic character. Goethe limits himself to describing love, whereas the Romanian writer gives little attention to the erotic element, even though love remains the main motive of the core around which the narration is deployed. The characterology of the heroes is also different. Those from *Werther* are beyond any blame: they are noble, pure and respectable. Bolintineanu's heroes are far from having pure spirits and moral nobleness of Goethe's characters. "All characters are contaminated with doubtful morals. Manoil himself becomes weaker and weaker and, at the same time, guiltier and less worthy of our interest" (Vârgolici 1985: 40). The objectives of the two novels also differ: Goethe's aim was purely artistic, as well as subjective, whereas Bolintineanu's goal was a moral one since the Romanians needed virtue rather than art.

We should also bear in mind that the author of the article, proclaiming the originality of the Romanian novel, does not avoid its artistic defects. "The description of characters lacks purity and precision; it is insecure, uncertain and rather faded […], the development of the characters" being "even improbable and lack psychological depth", whereas "the person's actions are not always motivated and the chain of events is rather arbitrary, so that we can hardly foresee their logical sequence" (*Ibidem*: 41). These well-grounded observations will always remain on the list of critical assessments as far as artistic defects of Bolintineanu's novel are concerned.

The opinions similar to those offered by Mauriciu Flügel and expressed after 1863 can be found in the works of all the commentators of the novel *Manoil.* In 1901 Ovid Densuşianu acknowledges that in the Romanian literature there is "the same romanticism as in *Werther*", the same "romantic ending of that time, but at the same time we cannot say – and this has been stated since 1863 – that Manoil is a copy, an imitation of the German writer's novel" (Densușianu 1901: 479). The relations between *Manoil* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* are studied in detail by Ion Gherghel in a substantial work *Goethe in the Romanian literature* written in 1931; here the emphasis is still placed upon the originality of the Romanian writer: "Apart from the motive of agitation caused by love (a painful delight in torturing his own soul), apart from some pessimist ideas about earthly and heavenly life present in both works, apart from the choice of the epistolary form, everything is actually different" (Gherghel 1931: 36). This "everything is different" is discussed in minute detail:

> In Goethe's novel: a skilful description of sufferings and unhappy love; in Bolintineanu's novel: a demonstration of the omnipotence of a woman's love which kills and heals, abases and rises, ruins and rescues. The heroes of both authors commit sins in different ways: Werther's love is concentrated upon one single woman,

Manoil şi Werther sunt ca două linii paralele care în eternitate urmează drumul lor, fiecare în parte, şi niciodată nu se unesc. Dl Bolintineanu a citit *Werther* şi, ca toată lumea, el s-a simţit mişcat. Profitând dară de această emulaţiune, el s-a apucat a scrie un *Werther* român. Lucru surprinzător! Pe când d-nu Bolintineanu îndatorează sufletul tratat în *Manoil* celebrului autor Goethe, pe când el nu poate a se opri de a admira frumuseţea acestei opere cunoscută în toată Europa, el nu este nicidecum amăgit prin autoritatea cea mare a acestui poet şi în loc de a face o imitaţiune el creează un original".

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

> whereas Manoil is loved by many and, in his turn, shares his love among quite a few women. Goethe's hero is lead to death by the constancy of his sentiment purified in the fire of art; Bolintineanu's hero indulges himself in the waves of love which emit both the disastrous witchcraft of destruction and the rescuing power of healing. Werther remains a pure character, a decent man, with all the weakness in managing his affects. Manoil is an indecisive person, a kind of sentimental marionette […] he never controls himself, he is always controlled by others, especially by women […]. In Goethe's novel: nearly no intrigue, but, at the same time, a skilful and comprehensive description of the human soul tormented by love. In Bolintineanu's novel: a chain of childish intrigues (Gherghel 1931: 43).

Ion Roman believes that there are more differences than similarities between the heroes of the novels under discussion; he mentions this in his exegesis "Goethean echoes in the Romanian culture". Manoil is a character with Wertherian features ("he has a psychology obviously calqued from that of Werther") that are clearly reflected in his spiritual tribulations, in the way he externalizes his sensitiveness, in his opinion about human existence, as well as in a powerful natural feeling which he experiences. However, these do not shape the general idea of the novel. D. Bolintineanu directs "the evolution of intense passions towards other outcomes, thus forming an obvious discrepancy with Goethe's novel." The conclusion here is categorical: "In *Manoil* the theme, the sentimental experience of the main character, the general atmosphere, and an accentuated trend towards social critics are the result of a fantasy and an independent attitude" (Roman 1980: 34).

These severe and up-to-date critical observations are bound to appear in all reviews that will be written about the novel *Manoil*. We dwelt upon them at some length since they form the basis of our attempt to look more closely and comment upon the first epistolary sentimental novel of our national literature which introduces a romantic character and demonstrates some of its typical models of behaviour.

Manoil is the son of boyar (he does not reveal his origins in the letters for his friend B.), an orphan, and a poor poet. He is alone in this world: "a sad thing is a lonely man in the world", melancholic, devastated by black thoughts (including those of the suicide); he cannot love: "How can I love! Oh, no! It is my destiny not to experience love". He is "unfortunate", almost damned: "without wealth, without name, left beyond the laws of the society"; he also experiences the moments of despair raised by the questions on existence to which he fails to find an answer.

> My hear is a bitter desert… I would like to die!... Nothing keeps me here, on earth!... What do you think about sould? Men are too unhappy to die here; their capabilities are too high to have the same destiny as a reptile!... Sometimes I experience the moments when my soul is fascinated by a heavenly disintegration… Ah! I would like so much, lulled by the luminous dream of the heart, not to go down to the peasant house to which I am bound!… but… I still remain in the world… sweet dreams go away and the reality looks at me grinning!... At least allow me to believe that there is another life, the serenity of which can hardly be disturbed! Where lies are unknown, where love is eternal… between ourselves, who can prove that the soul is immortal?... Oh, books… This is the beginning of my sufferings (Bolintineanu 1993: 31).

Manoil compensates his frustration by means of imagination ("Oh, books!...") rather than by actions. The features of the character are Wertherian; thus, like

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

Goethe's hero, he displays a ritual behaviour with the corresponding gestures, not always clearly motivated, as it is in *Werther*. His good fortune puts him into a boyar society, in the wealthy house of N. Colescu. "Today I have found my private life, my family... since you should know that my family is here. Mr N. Colescu loves me as if I were his own child; the women indulge me... Smărăndiţa, the wife of Mr N. Colescu calls me *her favourite poet*... and often *her child*!" (italics by the author of the letter) (Bolintineanu 1993: 32).

Manoil aspires to having a family: "I did not know what happiness is experienced by those who have a family: my father had died before I was born; my mother had died before I began exploring the world: I lived and grew up until this age as if I were a child fallen down from the moon" (*Ibidem*). Manoil is an intellectual unadapted to the current situation because of the transfer in social classes. Even though he was accepted and tolerated in Colescu's house, he feels that he is an intruder since he has neither wealth, nor social status. "Manoil! A man that is not capable of doing anything apart from verse and does not have anything apart from it", according to an aristocratic woman he fell in love with, "which hardly suits me as far as nobility and wealth are concerned". His aspiration to having a family is, at the same time, an aspiration to gain a certain social rank. N. Manolescu's opinion (which we support) should by all means be adduced here:

> Manoil declares himself an orphan: is it only in the meaning, which is clearly seen in his letter, that he lost his parents so early? I suppose there is one more meaning of which Manoil was not able to be fully aware – that of lacking a noble name, inheritance and the family's coat of arms. The problem here is a sociological one: a bourgeois feels like an orphan as compared to a nobleman since the parents of the former are obscure from the point of view of the society. Being accepted to a family becomes equal to being of a family; the meaning of kinship is confused with that of class. In the majority of cases the superficial motive conceals the deep one (Manolescu 2009: 85).

Even though the character has an identity in the society he enters and exhibits his intellectual status of a poet with a "Stendhalian arrogance", he is finally assimilated by the world which he blames as a patriot and an expert on the rural world. The fact that in the end he ends up imitating a wicked boyar lacking humaneness, Alexandru C. is another proof that Manoil experiences a feeling opposite to the final frustration. In his relations with those of high social status, there is a circular model of a back and forth movement: returning to the world which he once lost when his parents died demonstrates mimetism rather than unadaptedness.

Manoil feels good in the society in which he was adopted; he reads poetry, discusses literature and politics, and courts young and beautiful women. The description of female beauty occupies a considerable space on the pages of Manoil's letters; however, this is performed in a trivial way, with a large number of dots and exclamation marks. Smărăndiţa, the boyar N. Colescu's wife

> has twenty five years and represents a type of beauty; without exaggeration, a rare beauty which resembles a flower melancholically bending in the morning of her life… Zoe is Smărăndiţa's niece: a fifteen year old child resembling her aunt, but glittering with youth. You would liken her to a rose bud which remains unnoticed by butterflies; Mărioara is a friend of Smărăndiţa's: a daughter of an important boyar,

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

she is 18-20 years old, not very beautiful but nice like the month of May!... her words sound like a sublime music… (Bolintineanu 1993: 49).

Zoe loves Manoil, but he loves Mărioara and thinks that she shares his feelings. Being a liar and having an affair with the cynical Alexandru C., she writes letters in order to compromise her rivals. Finally, she ends up as an "invincible" prostitute – the way she is called in high-society salons. Like in Goethe's novel, the erotic motive is used here: Werther's love is concentrated upon one single woman, and the description of his sufferings and unhappiness in love is performed by an inspired master. Manoil is loved by a number of women and gives his love to quite a few of them; in this way the author was able to demonstrate that love of a single woman brings "the fall and the rise of a man", kills and heals, destroys and saves. The structure of Bolintineanu's novel is wholly built up around the idea mentioned in the text: "a man can become both bad and good because of a woman". Through a great number of women that act on the pages of the novel leading the narration, Bolintineanu anticipates the appearance of Duiliu Zamfirescu's novel; moreover, sketching jealousy within the domain of love psychology (this innovation was appreciated in Şerban Cioculescu's review – Cioculescu, Streinu, Vianu 1971: III) opens a series of the romance novels of the 20th century. Disappointed by the first love, Manoil leaves for Paris in order to "complete his studies" ("ca să-şi complecte învăţăturile") and to forget. On his return, he is an absolutely changed person; he dedicates himself to sins and ends up being perfectly cynic and pervert. He imagines himself a fatal seducer ("I will make my aunt a Norma and my niece an Adalgiţă"), convinced that "marriage is good for grocers and professors" ("că măritagiul e bun pentru bacali şi pentru dascăli"). Being satiated, he plays cards all day long, loses his fortune, as well as Zoe, to a cheat general, is accused of a crime he had not committed and is discharged. Finally, the author manipulating his character according to his will settles him down and marries him to Zoe: "you would say that she is a fifteen year old girl; his heart became so purified and noble near this woman! It is true that a woman can do both a demon and an angel of a man – anything she wants" (Bolintineanu 1993: 89). "This thesis, generally typical of romanticism, is structured in D. Bolintineanu's novel in the coordinates of the Romanian romanticism, in the direction of active ideas of the national progress and social justice"[11] (Vârgolici 2005: 20).

The novel ends in an unexpected and hardly plausible way, even though the hero's behaviour was controversial and amotivational throughout the novel. A well-behaved Manoil free of the evil in which he used to live corresponded to the readers' taste, as well as to the principle of morality which had long been dominating in the Romanian novel of the 19th century. The idea of Manoil's rehabilitation through a woman is the reason why Marian Barbu characterizes Dimitrie Bolintineanu's novel as a mystery novel – an incorrect opinion since the

[11] The Romanian version: „Această teză, specifică romantismului, în general, este însă structurată, în romanul lui D. Bolintineanu, pe coordonatele proprii romantismului românesc, pe direcţia ideilor active, de progres naţional şi dreptate socială".

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

moral rehabilitation of a man through a woman is a characteristic feature of sentimental novels rather than mystery novels (Barbu 1981: 143).

The ending of D. Bolintineanu's novel ("romanţei" lui D. Bolintineanu) is also unexpected from another point of view. In all the letters Manoil is a hero and a narrator since, even though he describes himself and his numerous random states, he also observes the events that occur around him as well as the reactions of other characters written down either in the moment they happened, or immediately after. In this case, Manoil – the hero – meets the narrator. Its continuous presence makes the character meditate less about his inner life – as a character of a confessing nature – and be more interested in the things that surround him – it is actually a feature of a novel's narrator. The last letter does not belong to Manoil; it is anonymous: "Manoil is married. Zoe loves him. They live in the country. You cannot imagine such a change!... and especially how much happiness there is in this family" (Bolintineanu 1993: 88). The letter indicates "the change produced with the character-narrator – their separation – the beginning of the evolution even more accentuated in the novels written after 1860" (Mănucă 1988: 71 ff).

The presence of a letter – a literary convention in a romantic sentimental novel – is not aimed at individualizing a character; its goal is to justify and give reasons for an increasing number of events and episodes which make the narration more complicated. Manoil lacks a distinct personality. Bolintineanu has no authentic analytical faculties. The author depicts a large number of situations and states of spirit; however, he does not penetrate deeply enough in order to describe what happens in his hero's soul. The categorical is on the first place; the narrator is interested in the closest type rather than by a specific difference. A character is still at the level of species, not persons. The lack of psychological penetration into the main character leads to conventionalism and artificiality; a subjective motivation of actions, which are conducted by mechanic springs and adduces other characters which act at the general level of the category they belong to (Smărăndiţa – a good wife, N. Colescu – an ideal husband, Mărioara – a fatal woman, Zoe – a simple woman, etc.) is destructed.

As far as creating an atmosphere is concerned, the author seems to be more talented. Switching the action in various settings, he genuinely describes the world of salons ("he has an unquestionable inclination for the life of high society" – Călinescu 1982: 241), the life of a boyar house and rural life (Tudora episode). Accentuating strong contrasts, the dynamism of the narration increases, as well as that of motion and deepening the tones (from the melodramatic to the virulent ones). A social document present in the novel attracted the attention of all critics; some of them tended to exaggerate insisting on the polemic attitude of the author to the "high class" blamed for the way it judges gypsy villains and oppressed and humiliated peasants, thus arriving at the conclusion that it is a realist novel[12]. Actually, the description of the manners of that time is present in all lyric and romantic novels as a direct expression of sentimentalism characteristic of this type of novelistic fiction. Writers, with their abundant lyricism, are touched by unfortunate people.

[12] See also Ştefănescu (1951).

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

The novel also abounds in the descriptions of nature – another "invariant" of the sentimental novel.

> I am writing to you from my room, says Manoil to the receiver of his letters, the windows of which overlook the garden […]. A sweet scent of flowers and the river is entering the room and fascinating me! The stars are twinkling happily in the clear space of the sky […]. The nightingale is singing at my windows accompanied by the sweet murmur of the river and springs […][13] (Bolintineanu 1993: 8);

or

> […] the place where we stopped was crowned with a green birch-grove. There were some tops of the mountains rising here and there; they resembled black pyramids. From here our eyes got lost in quite a few small details and wandered in the darkness of valleys whitened by streams. Even farther, a cliff covered by snow and lost in haze was the lonely nest of falcons […]. In the depths of the gloomy woods crowning the hill where we were staying there was a transparent cascade of water coming from a forest… (*Ibidem*: 19).

A scholar from Iaşi, Dan Mănucă, believes that the landscape descriptions present in the novel of that time are "one of the definitive factors of the narrative model" (plus a pastor including a rich rustic element) adopted by our writers, "a narrative, united, round and approximately well united combination" (Mănucă 1988: 30) (the appearance of the Romanian novel presupposed imitation, adaptation and assimilation of foreign models, as well as the sublimation masked in tradition and ethnic primary structure – Axinte 2010: 13). This easily followed and described model also belongs to Bolintineanu.

Incapable to directly approach and speculate on the psychological process of his romantic hero, the writer describes him from the outside: he portrays him physically – the portray occupying much room in his prose, – he attentively follows the ceremonial of attitudes, gestures and words. The presentation of a character is a "behaviouristic" ("comportistă") one. Sometimes he makes him face other characters or reveal his features by showing the way he behaves in different situations; these artistic means, however, do not eliminate the inconsistency of a clear pre-existent image of a human being. The narrator makes his hero talk in an exalted way. Both Manoil as a hero in his "romantic" speech and Manoil-narrator are talkative. Everything is expressed by words: feelings, observations and actions; "a talk" in general (a "non-stop bla bla" – Manolescu 2009: 88) for nothing. There are also quite a few tender emotions; a prolonged undamped sentimentalism is searched in order to produce an immediate effect upon the readers' sensitiveness. The lyricism of the narration is typical of sentimental novels: it is well-known that Bolintineanu, in the fruitfulness of his creation, was always fascinated by the spontaneity with which he used words and images (Marcu 2011: 37). In what

[13] The Romanian version: „Îţi scriu din camera mea, îi spune Manoil receptorului scrisorilor sale, ce dă asupra grădinei […]. Dulcele profum al florilor şi al râului intră în cameră şi mă îmbată! Stelele sclipesc voioase în spaţiul curat al cerului […]. Privighetoarea cântă la ferestrile mele, îngânată de dulcea murmură a râului şi a şipotelor […]".

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

follows we shall adduce some interesting observations made by Ştefan Cazimir on the issue of the relation between speech and silence in the romantic novel:

> If it is true that "a novel is born at the opposite side of the Romanian imagination: from autobiography" (G. Picon), it is simultaneously understood that only the romantic cult of self lead the evolution of the new genre to the interior life. Confession prose, originating from Rousseau's works and represented by such experts as Chateaubriand and Alfred de Musset, did the first notable steps in the direction indicated above. The deepening of the psychological questioning presupposes another stage of literature which knows *the price of silence* [italics by L.B.]; characters that remain silent is its real subject. The interior world can be appreciated only in case of the interruption of communication caused by retreating into oneself and assuming some non-transferable dilemmas. It should be mentioned in this connection that romanticism conquered vast territories which implied interior dimension, but not the language which would make it more profound. Romantic silence is a false silence. The romantic hero remains silent only to listen to his silence and to gather them in a resonance space of his love discourse which transforms uncertainness into antitheses, nostalgias into appeals and complaints into rhythmical clauses. Applying these ideas to the novel *Manoil*, the author of the study rightfully underlines that, unfortunately, the rhetoric declamation is not late to be heard, covering a weak voice of confession (Cazimir 1975: 258).

The well-balanced and nuanced vision of artistic writing will be reached later, when the Romanian novel enters another age – the mature one. Age maturity will also mean aesthetic maturity.

In the epoch of the early autochthonous novel, Dimitrie Bolintineanu's attempt was an attempt to explore the inner dimension of the romantic hero, transforming inner life – in line with the romantic cult of "self" – from a hypothesis into a sensitive reality, which is also encouraged by the epistolary form of the narration which contributes to the access to the inner space of a person. Even though it lacks shape, the writer brings the first image of a romantic hero in our literature; this hero is melancholic, lonely and anxious, capable of actions driven by jealousy, and, at least partially, in discord with the outer world which opposes his aspirations. He cannot remain silent yet. His inner dimension has a strident sonority; it is highly controversial. Later on, however, through a long literary tradition the discourse of the romantic hero will discover "the price of silence".

Bibliography

Axinte 2010: Şerban Axinte, *Apariţia romanului românesc. Puncte de vedere*, in "Philologica Jassyensia", VI, 1 (11), 2010 – http://www.philologica-jassyensia.ro/upload/VI_1_Axinte.pdf.

Barbu 1981: Marian Barbu, *Romanul de mistere în literatura română*, Craiova, Editura Scrisul Românesc.

Battaglia 1976: Salvatore Battaglia, *Mitologia personajului*, translation by Alexandru George, Bucureşti, Editura Univers.

Bédier, Hazard 1924: Joseph Bédier, Paul Hazard, *Histoire de la littérature française illustrée*, vol. II, Paris, Larousse.

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

Bolintineanu 1993: Dimitrie Bolintineanu, *Manoil. Elena.* An examined edition, preface and curiculum vitae by Teodor Vârgolici, Bucureşti, Editura Gramar.
Cazimir 1975: Ştefan Cazimir, *Dimensiunea interioară, un aspect al evoluţiei romanului românesc*, in "Limbă şi literatură", II, 258.
Călinescu 1982: G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*, the 2nd revised and completed edition, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva.
Cioculescu, Streinu, Vianu 1971: Şerban Cioculescu, Vladimir Streinu, Tudor Vianu, *Istoria literaturii române moderne*, Bucureşti, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică.
Cornea 1995: Paul Cornea, *Romanul românesc de început*, in *Semnele vremii*, Bucureşti, Editura Eminescu.
Densușianu 1901: Ovid Densușianu, *Literatura română, 1830-1900* (a university course stenographed by Henri Stahl).
Gherghel 1931: Dan Gherghel, *Goethe în literatura română*, Bucureşti, Imprimeria Naţională.
Iorga 1890: Nicolae Iorga, *De ce n-avem roman*, in "Lupta", VII, 1090, 13.
Manolescu 2008: Nicolae Manolescu, *Istoria critică a literaturii române*, Piteşti, Editura Paralela 45.
Manolescu 2009: Nicolae Manolescu, *Orfanul şi familia*, in *Arca lui Noe*, Bucureşti, Editura Gramar.
Marcu 2011: Mădălina Marcu, *Dimitrie Bolintineanu – viaţa şi activitatea literară*, Craiova, Editura Else.
Mănucă 1988: Dan Mănucă, *Romanul epocii*, in *Lectură şi interpretare*, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva.
Nădejde 1886: Ioan Nădejde, *Istoria limbii şi literaturii române*, Iaşi, Editura Fraţii Şaraga.
Olteanu 1977: Tudor Olteanu, *Morfologia romanului european în secolul al XIX-lea*, Bucureşti, Editura Univers.
Perez 1979: Hertha Perez, *Ipostaze ale personajului în roman*, Iaşi, Editura Junimea.
Pop 2007: Ion Pop (coord.), *Dicţionar analitic de opere literare româneşti*, vol. I (A-M), Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă.
Popa 1969: Marian Popa, *Homo fictus. Structuri şi ipostaze*, Bucureşti, Editura pentru Literatură.
Popovici 1972: D. Popovici, *Literatura română în epoca luminilor*, in *Studii literare*, vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia.
Roman 1980: Ion Roman, *Ecouri goetheene în cultura română*, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva.
Sion 1853: George Sion, *Manoel sau Căderea şi înălţarea omului prin femeie*, in "Gazeta de Moldavia", 11, 5 februarie, 41.
Ştefănescu 1951: Al.I. Ştefănescu, *Studiu introductiv*, in Dimitrie Bolintineanu, *Opere*, Bucureşti, Editura de Stat.
Vârgolici 1985: Teodor Vârgolici, *Aspecte ale romanului românesc din secolul al XIX-lea*, Bucureşti, Editura Eminescu.
Vârgolici 2005: Teodor Vârgolici, *150 de ani de la apariţia lui* Manoil, in "România literară", 48, 19 octombrie, 20; http://www.romlit.ro/150_de_ani_de_la_aparitia_lui_manoil.

Dimitrie Bolintineanu as the Creator of Sentimental Romantic Novel

It is generally assumed that a century of novel is a time interval. This research focuses upon the Romanian literature of the 19th century in general and upon the way it centres around the genre of novel in particular. The present article deals with lyric romantic novels. Manoil – the main character of Dimitrie Bolintineanu's novel, entitled after his name – is the

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)

head of a long chain of characters, which will lead to a renewal and a redimensioning of *homo fictus* in Romanian novels. *Manoil* is an epistolary novel with the same lyric and sentimental substance as that of the Romanian prose of the preromantic and early Romantic epoch. In the age of the pioneering autochthonous novel, D. Bolintineanu makes an effort to transform the inner life of the main character from a hypothesis into a sensible reality. The writer introduces the first image of a melancholy character, lonely and anxious, capable of jealousy and finding himself – at least for some time – in a discord with nature which contests his aspirations (even if this image lacks relief) to the Romanian literature. This character has not so far been able to keep silent. His inner dimension is converted into phrases with strident sonority, thus demonstrating its contradictory temper. The discourse of the Romantic character will discover, in the course of literary elaboration, the price of silence.

BDD-A8068 © 2014 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-14 00:04:05 UTC)