CARMEN BLAGA

TEMESWAR

Paradigms and crisis in early Romanian modernity

From the two-headed eagle to the hole in the flag

While reading Slavoj Zizek's *Tarrying With the Negative*, one cannot help being struck by the philosopher's considering the image of the Romanian flag with the Communist emblem cut out by the 1989 revolutionaries as an emblem of what might be called pure negativity:

The most sublime image that emerged in the political upheavals of the last years – and the term "sublime" is to be conceived here in the strictest Kantian sense – was undoubtedly the unique picture from the time of the violent overthrow of Ceauşescu in Romania: the rebels waving the national flag with the red star, the Communist symbol, cut out, so that instead of the symbol standing for the organizing principle of the national life, there was nothing but a hole in its center. It is difficult to imagine a more salient index of the "open" character of a historical situation "in its becoming", as Kierkegaard would have put it, of that intermediate phase when the former Master Signifier, although it has already lost the hegemonical power, has not yet been replaced by a new one. (Zizek 1995: 1)

Not only is Zizek's perception of the symbolical meaning very accurate, but, to us Romanians, it is even more significant, as it recalls another image from a previous revolution, an image every Romanian school child is familiar with from the ordinary history books. A group of lean gentlemen wearing their smart Western suits and (to my eyes) fancy top hats, sternly striding from the right to the left of an indistinct, pale background and waving the national flag with the emblem of the Bassarabs, a two-headed eagle. It was happening in 1848, the year of the pan-European revolution against "l'ancien régime", when in one of the provinces of future Romania[1] the ascending middle class outlook included not only human rights and the restructuring of economy on industrial, free market grounds, but also the centering of political life around the national values symbolized by the arms of the Royal House that had done so much to preserve the country's independence, to develop its culture through out the Middle Ages and up to the 17th century. Those stern, lean gentlemen in smart Western suits had studied in Paris, Viena, Berlin, or Rome, were familiar with Michelet, Garibaldi, Herbart, Herder, and had become aware of their national identity in the archives and libraries of the Western world rather than in their Turkified and Phanariotized country.[2] The two-headed eagle holding a Christian cross in one of its beaks was raised against the symbols of that Oriental world in which the Romanians would rather see a hindrance in the way of their progress than a source of cultural richness, which nevertheless it had been

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

under certain aspects. But all that belonged to a world that Romanians were anxious to break free form, especially after the 1789 French revolution, which had first been mentioned in a Romanian political document in 1804[3]. For the coming decades, the want for novelty [i.e., opening toward the Western world, i.e., another acculturation] would become one of the key words and would be adopted as a political slogan by the sixth decade of the 19th century, at the end of which Vallachia and Moldavia united to form the core of the modern Romanian state. Up to World War I, Romania would undergo a process of modern institutionalization, would found its industrial units and banks, would build its railroads and enlarge its ports, but would also become subject to the paradoxes of modernity like all the other modern nations. And like in all the other nations, literature and the visual arts were to offer space for meditation, hypothesis-making and creation of new possible worlds in contrast with the actual world[4], whose paradoxes were or seemed to be insoluble.

If the two-headed eagle may very well represent the paradox of a nation looking ahead to its future at the very same time as it reconsidered (with a nostalgic or a critical eye) its history it stands for more, as far as literature is concerned. The head trends of Tradition, the outward Realism and the self-centered Romanticism, each corresponding to one of the basic meanings of mimesis[5], came to be challenged by Modernist poetics infused with a clear dynamic spirit shortly after their crystallization as aesthetic matrices for literary creation in the national language. It was as if the two heads of the eagle had turned to nibble at each other up to the point of mutual consumption. Up to the point of leaving a hole in the flag.

Socially speaking, the hole in the flag can only represent a momentary combination of events: more or less legitimately, a Master Signifier will supplant the rejected one in the best interest of society. Aesthetically speaking, the conversion that the Modernists tended to operate consisted in rendering permanent the void that replaced the Master Signifier of literary Tradition, in their raising of discontinuity to an absolute value. Trying to see how the Romanian context prepared such artists as Tristan Tzara, Constantin Brâncuşi, Eugene Ionesco and others to become chief figures of European Avant-garde literary and visual art schools offers the opportunity for a challenging excursus through a complex cultural space.

Clues and landmarks

The issue of the number of acculturation processes the Romanian people has undergone and especially of the extent to which they had been effective, has long been discussed by literary historians and critics, by sociologists and cultural anthropologists. A thorough analysis of this subject actually exceeds the regular dimensions of a scientific paper. However, it should be pointed out that the issue of Romanian Modernity and literary Modernism has generally been treated as an acculturation, either by its advocates (among which Eugen Lovinescu was the chief figure in the early 20th century) or by its opponents (the conservative circles grouped around the *Junimea* [Youth], *Sămănătorul* [The Sower], and later *Gândirea* [Thought] magazines). Actually, for a century and a half this debate, put in terms of national specificity versus internationalization of culture, has remained

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

open. It has aroused passions, unbridled rivalry manifest in press polemics, led the writers to group around distinct literary ideologies supported by distinct literary clubs and magazines.[6]

If the variety of standpoints and the complexity of the issue largely contributed to its remaining a subject open to Romanian specialists exclusively, another factor with the same effect was the eclectic ideological climate of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its repercussions on the literary ideologies make the consecrated terms of the Western theory of literature partly inoperable in the Romanian context. On the other hand, the specific terms used by the Romanian specialists of the field with reference to their national literature and attitude towards culture are meaningless to the foreign research scientists. Therefore, re-opening a debate so old and difficult is not simply a matter of erudition or synthesis, but always a trial. A trial, in the first place, on account of the difficulty to bring into accord the terminology previously used.

A first topic to approach is that of the mental matrix any acculturation is supposed to modify. Why, in the case of Romania, one cannot help remarking that the mental matrix that the Western modernity was opposed to was not by far homogeneous. It is generally referred to as 'romanitate orientală' [Eastern Romance language and/or culture], an idiom expressing both our appurtenance to the Romance family of languages and culture, and its peculiarity. This peculiarity is seen as opposed to Western Romance languages, but also to the Catholic, and later the secularized, rationalistic outlooks upon the world or history, with their respective symbolic networks functioning in ideology and visual imagery. This peculiarity is, in itself, the result of a previous synthesis having occurred during the Middle Ages, through the epochs at which Byzantium had undertaken the imperial ideals formerly represented by Rome.

After the conquest of the Eastern Empire of the Palaeologues by the Ottomans (1453), some elements of the Byzantine mindscape passed on to the Turks and blended with Muslim ideas and/or images that spread all over the Balkans to be absorbed or rejected by the local cultural communities (Iorga 1933: 158, Russo 1939: 505). Therefore the concept of national Romanian specificity cannot be interpreted in terms of ethnic-cultural homogeneity ("pureness"), but only in those of mental synthesis including, among others, certain Oriental components. In fact a reputed historian, Dinu C. Giurescu, recommends "the complex civilization of South-Eastern European peoples" to be considered "in the light of the dialectical 'unity in variety' principle" (Giurescu 1964: 359).

While analyzing the Oriental components of Romanian literature, Constantin Ciopraga points out that "[w]ith most Romanian writers, 'Balkan mentality', as expression of an ethical attitude, rather involves rejection than emotional adhesion, rather brings about irony directed against a second-rate life style seen as a mixture of triviality and foul temptations." (Ciopraga 1973: 114) Yet, further on, when considering the meanings of 'Balkanism' as applicable to some other, mostly Moldavian (such as Sadoveanu), writers, Ciopraga retains "the blend of refinement, passivity, and decadence" of Byzantine source, appearing "in a super-reality in which straightforward sense is supplanted by the poetry of remoteness, by a timeless, immaterial, sumptuous or decadent, fantastic universe of essences." (Ciopraga 1973: 115)

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

Three years after Ciopraga, Mircea Muthu distinguishes between balcanitate ['Balkan mindscape'], by which he understands "the mindscape of an essentially Mediterranean civilization to which the alluvial forms of a few other transitory cultures were added through slow sedimentation" (Muthu 1976: 28), and balcanism ['Balkanism'], that is, "a [trend in] literary art which recoups and 'redeems' – under the sign of tragedy or parody – a dramatic national history, thus rendering the feeling of our permanence in time and space". (Muthu 1976: 21)

Obviously, in this sentence, which chiefly refers to the early 20th century writers and their propensity to ignore the synthesis of cultural elements that had already been achieved in the Romanian nation along the 2000 years of its history, Ciopraga's note above resumes the point of view of the "Modernists". However, in the author's own opinion, the term 'Balkanism' covers several, more or less distinct notions whose implications and shades of meaning it displays.

One should distinguish between the Balkanism of folklore, first signaled out by Odobescu in the poetic 'echoes' from the Pindus [mountains] that were being softly heard in the Carpathians, and an anxious Balkanism, a chimerical, absolute-seeking one, as seen in Master Manole's longing for beauty (a motif endowed with strong autochthonous notes in Romania), on the other hand between the jovial Nasr-al-Din-like ['nastratinesc'] Balkanism of Anton Pann, and, finally, a kind of Balkanism which materialized in outward forms... (Ciopraga 1973: 113)

Thus in Ciopraga, 'Balkanism' covers both the meaning of appurtenance to the cultural community of the Balkan peoples (which Muthu designs by 'Balkanness'), and that of a style (Muthu says more: 'a literary trend' comparable to Classicism, Romanticism etc.) manifested in the images induced by literary texts, as well as in the visual arts. To these Constantin Ciopraga adds a pragmatic ('action') component, reflected in the lexical borrowings enriching the sphere of everyday-life vocabulary: clothing, table and leisure accessories, individual and/or social actions. This author's description very well reflects the textual character of the civilization referred to the fact that the latter's intricacy and overlapping of levels is transposed as such into a definition having a synthetic character.

On the contrary, Mircea Muthu prefers an analytical approach of the textual Romanian civilization of the Middle Ages and subsequent centuries. This allows him to reveal the multiple sources of the Romanian synthesis in detail and to follow the stages that the Eastern Romance area has witnessed along the last thousand years.

Nevertheless, the views of the two scientists agree upon the basic outlines of the traditional Romanian mindscape. By the mid-nineteenth century there were in Romania at least two mental matrices of the traditional, Balkan type: the folklore matrix, characterizing the country life, and the learned one, characteristic of city life. However, beyond this (normal, in fact, under those social circumstances) partition of cultural subsystems, Mircea Muthu discovers a split having the importance and proportions of arch-structural duality, inherent to Byzantine culture. The Byzantine inheritance transmitted to the Romanians through the 4th – 7th and 10th – 13th centuries was deeply marked by these multiple oppositions.

The two-headed eagle – that emblem of the Byzantine Empire adopted by Neagoe Bassarab, the learned prince of 16th century Vallachia – was the symbol of this basic duality in Byzantine society, which was represented by the State and the

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

Church, two parallel organizations which would both bow over the body of the nation with majesty and concern.

"**Byzantium after Byzantium**" **and the two heads of the eagle**

In one of his chief books about Romanian history, *Bizanț după Bizanț*, Nicolae Iorga pointed out that, due to the continuity of relationships between the Romanian provinces and Byzantium, after the Muslim conquest of Constantinople, the spirit of the Empire continued to exist in the form of three elements: the ideal of a Constantinopolitan throne, the Serbian dynasty, and the Vallachian monarchy (1972: 82). It is, therefore, clear why Neagoe Bassarab, "the all-pious lord, the great prince and master and autocrat" (as Gabriel Protos described him) had adopted an emblem so eloquent of the former empire's duality. In a case like this, one cannot refer to this phenomenon as 'acculturation', because the Byzantine social and political dualism was only the expression in organizational terms of a deeper dualism characteristic of the South-east-European mental matrix, that researchers like Louis Bréhier (1924) or Charles Diehl (1969) did not fail to note in their studies on Byzantine culture and art, and which is notable in the folklore of the neighbouring nations as well.

This dualism fundamentally resides in the theological outlook on the world relying on the Christian duality between the body and the spirit, further leading to those between the sacred and the profane, the religious and the lay. It coagulated and revealed itself in culture as a double, learned and folk tradition, while in the visual arts it is manifest in the opposition between the hieratism of the icon and the quasi-naturalism of emotional, dramatic painting (Diehl 1969: 150).

During the Middle Ages, a fusion of the opposing concepts has been noticed to have occurred in the Christian philosophy of the Byzantine area, leading to what was called 'Christian Humanism' (Meyendorff 1959). Its roots were found in the ancient conception on the double, divine and human nature of Christ, and in the influences of Averroes' post-Aristotelianism. The cultural paradox underlying the epoch's debate on the basic dogmas of Christianity led Theophilos Corydaleos to formulate his 'theory of the double truth' in the early 17th century. This theory – by which "the intellectual relationships between the East and the West [of Europe] were resumed"(Tsourkas 1967: 211) – was spread by the Greek teachers of the 17th and 18th centuries throughout the Balkan area, reaching far beyond the Danube.

Under the circumstances, the Southeastern European cultures were prepared by the former Christian Humanism to adopt a dialectical view on the world in terms of which oppositions were interpreted as theoretical moments of actual synthesis, and the concept of 'complementary entities' was becoming an acceptable one. The Romanian provinces witnessed this process occur pretty early, as Petre Lucaciu points out: "the Aristotelian theory of categories was part of the intellectual patrimony of the learned Romanians as early as the 14th and 15th centuries" (1970: 39). This was a fact that must have favoured their contamination with the contemporary Western humanism (Muthu 1976: 81).

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

Dualistic literary myths

The dualistic arch-structure of thought is observed in the Romanian myths and literary motifs as well, whether they are developed in folklore or in learned fiction. In a later comparative approach of Southeastern European literatures, Mircea Muthu shows that the basic myths present in these participate of the same dualism and correlate symbols of totemic, underworld-mythological and bookish origin. (Muthu 1986: 13) Given the various sources of such symbols relating to different epochs and types of human organization, Muthu's research is directed towards individualizing the deeper, mental roots of the dual model in Romanian culture. A survey of the Romanian ethnologists' studies regarding the phenomenon (Buhociu 1979, Cretu 1980) leads him to the conclusion that the type of civilization having developed in Ancient, pre-Roman, Dacia continued after the Roman acculturation of the Carpathian-Danubian area, which explains the coexistence of anthropomorphous symbols with vegetal, mineral and animal ones at an early stage of this area's culture.

After the break between the pastoral and the agrarian, the sense of continuity of the universe was lost and the archaic culture rapidly split into folklore and city, then élite culture. Two aspects are to be mentioned in this context. One is that "the contact of myth with city life only occurred after the crystallization of its dual structure" (Muthu 1986: 16). The other refers to the fact that the origins of fictionalization may be found in an ethical shift. A leap was taken from "the idea of man's unity with the cosmos", proper of folklore (Crețu 1980: 52), to the awareness of a gap between nature and culture, leading to "man's propensity to associate his own moral concepts with animals, [which] amplifies the scope of this [fictional – our note, C.B.] world, making it ever more fictitious" (Muthu 1986: 16). Later on, the identification of country life with 'nature' and of city life with 'culture' would bring about the creation of the estrangement song, a thematic subspecies of the folklore lamentation ('doina'), as well as the rise of an intense, though often hazy, unconscious feeling of guilt experienced by the early Modern intellectuals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Thus, the so-called 'native balance' of the Romanian spirit, which seems to characterize our civilization and, especially, literature at a bird's eye view, only projects into the absolute an ideal (i.e., mental) synthetic model of what is "the permanence of a state of crisis, set up in the folklore creation and resumed by the learned artists" throughout our history (Muthu 1986: 16).

Elharekietul Berekiet

As early as the 17th century, the learned Romanian literature witnessed the apex of this synthesis within the boundaries of the paradigm of Tradition. It was carried out by a prince educated in Istanbul (the former Constantinople protected by the two-headed eagle), but nonetheless familiar with Western European culture thanks to his extraordinary foreign language proficiency and his chance to learn in an, after all, cosmopolitan centre as Istanbul. It was Dimitrie Cantemir (1673 – 1723), a writer of genius but a failed politician who, defeated at Stănileşti in 1711, exiled

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

himself at the Court of Peter the Great in Russia. There he raised his son, Antioch (1708 – 1744), who was to become Russia's ambassador to England and France, as well as one of the chief representatives of Russian Classicism.

In spite of the greater literary interest of his other works, it is beneficial to the progress of this study to consider Dimitrie Cantemir's Incrementa atque decrementa aulae ottomanicae ["Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire"][7]. The author's notes and comments allow us to specify the effects of the Turkish influence on the literatures of Southeastern Europe, especially on ours. That enables the researcher to better envisage the basis for the future relationships they entered into with the bourgeois-modern (Călinescu 1995: 46-47) Western cultures.

In this connection it is important to remember that the model of the Western sequence of literary trends, from Neoclassicism through 'High' and 'Biedermeyer' Romanticism to the late 19th century Post-Romanticism, is only applicable cum grano salis to the 'peripheral' areas of the Continent. While considering the passage from Romanticism to Modernism and further to Surrealism in the 'peripheral' areas including Greece and Romania, Victor Ivanovici points out in the first place that "the 'peripheral' literatures are unable to overcome the Neoclassical aesthetics on their own: therefore, […] they need a spur from outside […]" (Ivanovici 1996: 67). This is generally what the Western models provided them with, but it should be clear that professional artists would not have followed such models, however bright, for the pure and simple sake of imitation. The less so in cultural areas in which and at such epochs when the written word is thought to express a deep and strong belief it is worth living (or dying) for. And it was the case with the Southeastern European countries from the late 18th century through the 1880's, when in this part of the world developing a national culture made sense as an act of political resistance.

Under the circumstances, it is only legitimate to ask oneself whether the 'Turkified' and 'Phanariotized' provinces of Southern and Eastern Romania were somehow prepared to receive and, of course, select elements from the Western models so as to found their national literatures as components of modern European culture. Well, Cantemir's work as an Oriental scientist is very helpful to this end.

A basic dualism strikes the anthropologist when he comes to understand from Cantemir's notes that the Muslim belief in Providence coexisted with the idea that 'Elharekietul Berekiet', which is to say, 'movement is happiness' (Cantemir 1876: 197, note 52). Mircea Muthu interprets this as a basis for "the Oriental's perhaps unconscious propensity towards inner freedom which is, of course, but illusory as long as the shell of deeply rooted prejudice origin-ating in the *Koran* lore cannot be broken" (Muthu 1976: 77).

Nevertheless, real dynamism was proper of the Turks as both warriors and businessmen. They must have set, along with the Greeks, a good example for the Romanians to follow in business at least, so well that by 1774 the Romanian sellers of agrarian products had become strong enough to impose, among other things, the liberalization of commercial exchanges in their favour, upon the Ottoman Empire, at Kuciuk-Kainargi. (Pătrăşcanu 1969: 18 sq.) It is also true that, in the last decades of the 19th century, such dynamism was to appear to the more lucid Romanian wits of the epoch more as a source of 'Brownian movement' than as a spur towards progress. But, whatever the interpretation, the need for

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

movement and variety was a fact in 19th century Romania and it could not have derived from the centripetal movement towards the 'totemic ancestor' or 'underworld wizard' of folklore that Mircea Muthu rightfully mentions as figures of a tragic myth.

No less paradoxical than the idea of movement within predestination are the importance conceded to the person, to one's individual uniqueness, and the idea that personal value stands above birth (Cantemir 1876: I, 58, n. 29). Nothing is closer to the mentality of the daring, industrious, self-centered Western middle class hero than this appraisal of the human being, which imposed itself in the Balkans too, on the background of the previous Christian acknowledgement of the body (with Gregorios Palamas) and the diffusion of hesychasm.

Historically speaking, these paradoxes gave way to two successive leading attitudes.

The first attitude was one favourable to Balkan co-operation and can be described as openness within the Balkan community. It arose from both historical experience and cultural creations that blended to generate a climate of co-operation of the rising Balkan nations against the Ottoman Empire under the cultural and political leadership of Greeks. (Cornea 1972: 63, Muthu 1976: 102-108) The century-long economic, cultural and political relationships in which the three Romanian provinces were engaged in spite of their autonomy and/or appurtenance to different states and régimes showed that co-operation was possible beyond state borders. At the moment when the Greek Etheria was founded, its political goals involved the Romanian provinces insofar as the restoration of the former multinational, orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire was conceived to be carried out on the territory of Vallachia and Moldavia. Besides, the revolutionary movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu (1821), aiming at the Romanians' national emancipation, arose with the outspoken support of the then leaders of the Etheria. The split between Vladimirescu and Etheria was caused, among other factors, by the different outlooks upon a key-issue: the political statute of the Romanians among the Balkan nations. This compels us to consider the cultural factors involved in the dialectics of Romanian political thought, which were less obvious in the 1821 revolutionary process but would become so in the subse-quent years. Such cultural factors fostered the emergence of a new attitude, favour-able to the 'grammatical' organization of a nation-centered society, whose immediate correlative was the aspiration towards independence.

The political frustrations arising from the political statute of the Romanian provinces[8] through the 16th – 18th centuries created an intense need for compensations, which could be only cultural in nature. (Alexandrescu 1999: 21) Whilst the idea that «a federative system would have been highly characteristic of early Christianity and, generaly speaking, of the Orthodox Christian Church» (Tomoioagă 1971: 236) may have been used by the Church as an argument to preserve the status-quo, the lay historians and politicians developed what may be called the three basic cultural myths of pre-Modern Romania. As Sorin Alexandrescu points out, this phrase should not be understood as referring to the inconsistency of these so-called 'myths' with historical facts, but to their constituting the cultural support for future political attitudes finally resulting in action (Alexandrescu 1999: 22). These three ideas forming the hard core of Romania's

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

cultural movements from the 16th century through the present are: the Latin origins of the Romanians and their language, their unity and continuous historical presence on both sides of the Carpatian Mountains, and the independence of their ancestors. The mental pattern involved in this project is clearly based on the self-centering of the nation, on the decision to severe the links with the oppressive Master-Signifiers identified in Romania's geopolitical neighbourhood (the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires), which entailed two simultaneous consequences. One was the need for cultural emancipation from the Balkan influences, the other was the opening towards the Enlightenment values, which are obvious enough in the interest that the rising middle class showed in the social and political innovations brought about by the 1789 French revolution. A later (19th century) cultural creation is represented by theories. Although they are the result of now secularized thought upon society and in spite of their claim at rationalistic foundations, they show the extent to which the earlier cultural creations had been assimilated to true facts usable as arguments for or against the matters in hand. So is Ion Heliade Rădulescu's *Equilibru între anthitesi sau spiritul şi materia* [*Balancing Antitheses, or Spirit and Substance*], construed on the concept of an eternally dual arch-structure of reality (involving political reality as well) which would resolve in metaphysical synthesis. Heliade's theory is politically relevant in that it urged the Balkan nations to carry out that synthesis by founding a federation (under the Ottomans as political guides!) [9] apt to contribute to the social and moral regeneration of Eastern, and eventually, Western Europe. The deficient logical model underlying Heliade's view of antithetic units as non-interfering monads, which made no dialectics possible, was not only the result of previous local cultural myths, but also of his deep knowledge of Middle-East dualistic doctrines. Anyway, at the time when it appeared (1859-1869), the author's conservatism and attempt at reconciliation with the Ottomans were deemed as obsolete, half-hearted positions. After 1845, Nicolae Bălcescu's studies of the Ottoman laws concerning the Romanians (*Drepturile românilor către Inalta Poartă*, 1848) and Romania's revolutionary movements (*Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor*, 1850), to say nothing of his analysis of the economic question of the Lower-Danube provinces (*Question économique des Principautés Danubiennes*, 1850), had made it clear that the Romanian provinces needed to re-organize themselves on clear-cut grammatical bases (a constitutional régime), capitalistic economic foundations, to unite and win their political independence if they were to survive. 'Breakage', 'separation' became the leading concepts of middle class political attitude towards the Balkan – Ottoman past around 1848, and they were to remain so for nearly two decades, after which a new set of more complex slogans was to define the end-century official discourse. From institutional modernity through artistic Modernism, 'breakage' and 'separation' were not only the key-concepts, but also the outcome of a dynamic conjuncture bringing about the gradual atomization of the Romanian political class around the year 1900.

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

Notes

(1) This is not to say that Vallachia (the Southern part of nowadays Romania) was the only Romanian principality in which the economic background and the middle class mentalities would foster the institutionalization of capitalism. The 1848 revolution burst out in all three of Romanian provinces, which were, at that time, separated and politically dominated by the Ottomans (Moldavia and Vallachia) and by the Habsburgs (Transsylvania). We are referring here to but one of these because the image in question represents the Vallachian rebels of 1848.
(2) In his *Istoria literaturii române in secolul al XVIII-lea* [*History of 18th Century Romanian Literature*) Nicolae Iorga presented the Turkish and Phanar influences upon the late 17th and 18th century Romanian writers in terms of outlook, attitude, and style. More recently, this debate has been reopened by historians like A.D. Xenopol, Demostene Russo (1939), Al. Elian (1958), Dinu C. Giurescu (1964) etc., while the issue of the Byzantine, Balkan and Western influences on Romanian culture was treated by Mihail Kogălniceanu, Titu Maiorescu, Garabet Ibrăileanu before World War I, then by Eugen Lovinescu (1924-1926), Pompiliu Eliade (1939), P.P. Panaitescu (1969), Corina Nicolescu (1971), Constantin Ciopraga (1973), Răzvan Theodorescu (1974), Mircea Muthu (1976, 1986), etc.
(3) Significantly, it was an appeal for political democratization made by representatives of the gentry to the then prince of Moldavia, followed in 1821 by the revolt of the Vallachians lead by Tudor Vladimirescu in alliance with the Greek 'Etheria', then in 1822 by the project of a democratic Constitution construed under the reign of Ion Alexandru Sturdza (Ornea 1972: 87-88).
(4) In a quite recent debate on possible worlds, Jaakko Hintikka pointed out that in logic possible worlds are interesting only as part of a semantic game, but never in themselves, on account of their being void. “A semantic game is not played on a single model, but on a model space on which proper alternation relations are defined.” (Hintikka 1989: 58) In literature, as Umberto Eco shows, one has never to do with void possible worlds, but only with “furnished” ones (1996: 223). In “furnishing” the worlds of fiction, one uses perception-based mental images, which may subsequently be modified by reduction, decomposition, agglutination etc. (Kosslyn 1989). Whether one admits it or not, the main reference point in this game is one’s mental construct of “the actual world” against which the construction of any fictional world is a reaction. We find this implication as early as in Aristotle, who points out that the image of the world obtained by mimesis may result more beautiful or uglier than the perceived image of the actual world (Poetics, 1448 a, 2).
(5) Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz identifies two basic meanings in the ancient Greek authors: one refers to “copying the appearances of things” and the other denotes “symbolizing the dynamics of the soul” (Tatarkiewicz 1973: III, 227).
(6) Z. Ornea (1972) gives details in this connection.
(7) The work has been available in English since 1735, in French since 1743, and in German since 1747, on account of its being one of the first works of erudition regarding the Ottoman history and culture.
(8) While Vallachia and Moldavia were neither independent states, nor vassals of

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

the Ottoman Empire (Alexandrescu 1999: 20), Transylvania was part of the Habsburg Empire. In Transylvania, Romanians were not officially recognized as an ethnic group and were not granted the right to use their mother tongue in the institutions of the state and in education.
(9) Heliade saw in the Ottomans a people of fierce but honest warriors able to balance the Byzantine propensity at intrigue and corruption.

References

Alexandrescu, Sorin (1999): *Privind înapoi*, *modernitatea*, Bucureşti: Univers.
Aristotel (1957): *Poetica*, Biblioteca Filozofică sub îngrjirea acad. C.I. Gulian.
Bréhier, Louis (1924): *L' art byzantin,* Paris, apud Muthu 1976: 33.
Ciopraga, Constantin (1973): *Personalitatea literaturii române*. Iaşi: Junimea.
Cornea, Paul (1972): *Originile romantismului românesc*, Bucureşti: Minerva.
Cretu, Vasile Tudor (1980): *Ethosul folcloric – sistem deschis,* Timişoara: Facla.
Hintikka, Jaakko (1989): "Exploring Possible Worlds". In: Sture, Allen (ed.): *Possible Worlds in Humanities, Arts and Sciences. Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 65***. Berlin: De Gruyter.**
Iorga, Nicolae (1933): *Generalități cu privire la studiile istorice*, apud Muthu, Mircea (1976: 30).
Iorga, Nicolae (1972): *Bizanț după Bizanț*. Bucureşti: Editura enciclopedică română.
Ivanovici, Victor (1996): Suprarealism si "suprarealisme". Grecia, România, Țările hispanice. Timişoara: Hestia.
Kosslyn, Stephen Michael (1989): Le immagini nella mente. Creare e utilizzare immagini mentali**. Firenze: Giunti.**
Muthu, Mircea (1976): Literatura română şi spiritul sud-est european. **Bucureşti: Minerva**.
Ornea, Zigu (1972): Studii şi cercetări**.** Lovinescu**,** Gherea**,** Stere**,** Ibrăileanu**,** Xenopol**,** Sadoveanu**,** Panu**,** Lucrețiu Pătrăşcanu**. Bucureşti: Eminescu.**
Russo, Demostene (1939): "Elenizmul în România". In: *Studii istorice greco-romane*, 2nd vol., Bucuresti.
Tatarkiweicz, Wladislaw (1973): *Mimesis*. In: *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
Tsourkas, Cléobule (1967): Les débuts de l'enseignement philosophique et de la libre pensée dans les Balkans. La vie et l'oeuvre de Théophile Corydalée**. Thésalonique: Institute for Balkan Studies. Apud Muthu 1976: 60-61.**

Zusammenfassung

Vorliegende Arbeit setzt sich zum Ziel, einige Elemente der weitverbreiteten Mentalität im rumänischen Raum aus historischer Perspektive darzustellen, einer Perspektive, die sich ausschließlich auf die Zeitspanne des Übergangs vom Mittelalter zur Moderne bezieht. Dabei handelt es sich um eine Periode von ungefähr 300 Jahren, in der sich die rumänische Mentalität als eine Komponente

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)

der süd-östlichen Kultur Europas (genauer gesagt des Balkans) erwiesen hat. In dieser Periode kommt es zu einer Synthese und Differenzierung der rumänischen Kultur im balkanischen Kontext. Außerdem wird die Existenz einiger polaren Mentalitätsstrukturen hervorgehoben, die den balkanischen Kulturen und somit auch der rumänischen Kultur eigen sind. Diese Strukturen beeinflussen die Rezeption der westlichen Moderne positiv, so daß ein Gebilde von Darstellungen und Werten entsteht, das ebenfalls als polare, ja sogar paradoxale Struktur organisiert ist. Dabei werden die von historischen und literarischen Quellen bestätigten orientalischen Einflüsse in Betracht gezogen. Was wir hervorheben wollen, ist die Tatsache, daß die Moderne nicht ausschließlich "importiert" wurde, sondern daß ein günstiges Milieu als Voraussetzung zur Aufnahme der Moderne schon existiert hat. Diese als Katalysatoren wirkenden Faktoren haben zu einer Beschleunigung der Verbreitung der modernen Mentalität in allen Bereichen des sozialen Lebens beigetragen.

BDD-A13204 © 2001 Mirton Verlag
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:12 UTC)