C. A. ROSETTI'S *JURNALUL MEU* – ASPECTS OF THE INTIMATE WRITING

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Abstract:
The diaristic formula advanced by C.A. Rosetti in *Jurnalul meu [My Diary]* brings forth aspects of a personality aspiring, in Romanticist vein, to develop itself by virtue of the real and literary patterns of patriotism, sacrificial devotion to the homeland, the poet as a citizen and revolutionary man, continually contested by the state of mind of a nascent Wallachian scholar tormented by *mal du siècle*, by idleness, by too great a passion for women, and by his desire to be acknowledged as a poet.

Keywords:
Literary patterns, patriotism, sacrificial calling, personal writing

Important aspects have already been pointed out with regard to C. A. Rosetti's diary. Such aspects are essential for the correct reception of a pioneering writing in Romanian literature – both through its being placed at the beginning of the history of the confessional writing in this literary space, and through its publication in an age (and a generation of writers) to which Adamism was not only a romantic attitude, but also a cultural obligation.

Jurnalul meu, written between the years 1844 and 1859[1], pinpoints and mirrors the tormented age and the man who lives in it, fully aware of his civic and moral-patriotic duty, ridden with sincere revolutionary impulses and authentic devotion to his country. To the same extent, it mirrors a complex and dilemmatic personality pained by contradictory drives, beaten by worries and family liabilities, always on the look-out for women, who wants to assert himself on the grand stage of history, but who also has to cope with financial issues and family drama. Against this complicated contextual and

[1] C. A. Rosetti, *Jurnalul meu*, 1974.

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temperamental background, C. A. Rosetti's human structure, of a Romanticist nature, is an explanation for the publication of the diary, which, according to Marin Bucur:

„*rezultă dintr-o nevoie interioară de mărturisire neliterară, neartificializată de convenții, de comunicarea tăcută în solitudinea gândurilor și sentimentelor, de proces-verbal al existenței proprii, de veșnica auto-analiză* (...)"[2] ["originates in an inner compulsion of non-literary confession, one that is not made artificial by conventions, by the quiet communication in the solitude of thoughts and feelings, by a record of his own existence, and by perpetual self-analysis"].

A dynamic human structure, vibrating to both internal and external stimuli, C. A. Rosetti, imbued with the compulsory Romanticist readings of the age and tailored as a Byronic hero (he actually translated *Manfred*, the famous poem written by the great British Romantic) transforms the diaristic writing into a sounding board for a number of *„lucruri ciudate, stări nebuloase, izbucniri nestăvilite ale tinereții, planuri iluzorii, ambiții deșarte, încântări cu nimicuri, simplificarea faptelor mari și exagerarea grotescă a unor mici evenimente"*[3], ["oddities, foggy states, unrestrained outbursts of youth, illusory plans, vain ambitions, excitement about trifles, simplification of great deeds and grotesque exaggeration of unimportant events"]. Thus, he constantly overlaps his private reality with the outer one, also effervescent with the needs, aspirations, dilemmas, failings and dramas of a young intellectual of the Romanian 19th century. The bookish nature of the diaristic self has been noticed and measured against the background of the *anti-rules* of the diary, by Eugen Simion, among others. In *Ficțiunea jurnalului intim*, the critic identifies the components and the spiritual-human architecture of a personality who acts on the history stage following the rules of the Romantic man, which gives birth, in writing, to *"un personaj complex, plin de bune intenții, puțin naiv și sentimental, instalat de tânăr în bolile veacului romantic*"[4] [a complex character, full of good intentions, a little naïve and

[2] Marin Bucur, Preface to C. A. Rosetti, *Jurnalul meu*, ed. cit., p. 7.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 12.
[4] Eugen Simion, 2018, vol. III, p. 106.

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sentimental, settled since his youth in the sicknesses of the Romantic century]. Touched by *mal du siècle*, the hero of the diaristic writing periodically displays *"crize mistice revoluționare"* [revolutionary mystical qualms], or the need for *"iubire absolută, mistică"* [absolute, mystical love], in perfect harmony with his growing interest in *"o grămadă de femei"* [lots of women]. He nurtures himself with readings from Lammenais – *Paroles d'un croyant*, André Chenier, George Sand, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, thus enhancing his exalted-romantic dimension and his nonconformist-revolutionary spirit.[5] What results is *"un personaj danubian în plină mistică romantică"* [a Danubian character in full Romanticist mystique], with *"variații umorale ce arată un caracter labil și un personaj care vrea să imite stilul epocii"*[6] [humour variations which depict an unstable nature and a character who wants to imitate the style of the age].

Similarly, Nicolae Manolescu notices the extrovert-romantic nature of the writer and scholar – a man of the citadel, a professional revolutionary with a dilemmatic structure, aiming to tone down his inner pulsions with the lucidity – or censorship – of the revolutionary man who considers himself mandated by a higher instance with a special political mission. It is exactly for this reason, Manolescu asserts:

„exaltările lui Rosetti amestecă în permanență motivațiile personale cu cele naționale sau sociale, într-un mod care astăzi poate să pară naiv și totodată convențional, nefiind însă altceva decât supunerea la clișeul romantic"[7] [Rosetti's exaltations permanently blend together the personal with the national or social motivations, in a manner that may seem naïve and conventional today, but that is just his submission to the Romantic cliché]. This cliché suits C. A. Rosetti perfectly – "*senzual și hedonist, dar înclinat spre procesul de conștiință*"[8] [sensual and hedonist, but prone to trials of conscience]. As a character in his diary, C. A. Rosetti multiplies himself in hypostases and dimensions of the self, as recorded almost on a daily basis by his writing, which outlines an erotic novel, one of filial love, a political novel

[5] *Ibidem*, pp. 105-108.
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 103.
[7] Nicolae Manolescu, 1990, p. 264.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 265.

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of the age[9] - due to an (apparently) contradictory architecture in which, as Manolescu believes,

„e neașteptat să vezi că sentimentalismul înalt romantic cedează de atâtea ori pasul, în jurnal, acestor observații mărunte pe teme cotidiene, de viață sufletească banală și anodină"[10] [it is unexpected to see that high Romantic sentimentalism makes room, so many times, to petty remarks on daily issues, of the banal and anodyne spiritual life.]

The character of C. A. Rosetti's diary is contradictorily romantic, sensitive and sentimental, hopelessly idealistic and unrestrainedly devoted to the cause of the revolution. In other words, the same problematic Romantic hero,

„exaltatul cu gesturi fastuoase, făcând din fiecare apariție în public un adevărat spectacol, apare în notațiile de aici ca un abulic, bonăvicios și lacrimogen, lăsându-se pradă unor chinuitoare frământări. O natură hipersensibilă și lucidă deopotrivă, analizându-se necruțător, în dorința de a se autoperfecționa. Auster până la puritanism, zbuciumatul lasă, din când în când, să i se întrevadă firea de un cotropitor senzualism"[11] [the exalted with pompous gestures, making a show of his every public outing, appears in these notes as an abulic, sallow and soupy man, fallen prey to painful torments. A hypersensitive and, at the same time, lucid nature, implacably self-analysing in view of self-perfecting. Austere as a Puritan, the tormented allows, here and there, the looming of his disposition of an overwhelming sensualism.]

With *avant la lettre* consideration to the *pseudo-rules* of diaristic writing, systematically outlined by Eugen Simion, young Rosetti builds up a text in which honesty uses the formal virtues of an exercise in style, uncomplicated and often telegraphic, perhaps tracing the syncopate stream of thoughts, interlarded with Romantic rhetorical figures whose authenticity cannot be doubted. Exaltations or lamentations transpose a state of mind in which the diarist is the first to firmly believe. On the first pages of the diary, *le mal du siècle* – compulsory as a Romanticist attitude assumed at the declarative level – is accompanied by stances of unrestrained praise of woman

[9] *Ibidem*, p. 265.
[10] *Ibidem*, p. 266.
[11] *Ibidem*, p. 686.

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(and of sanctioning her ingrate social condition), and also by the persistent mentioning of idleness. His fight with idleness proves to be one the themes of the diary, and also one of the more particular specific aspects, in the context of *Bildung*-type diaries, as it entails a will for self-formation constantly commented on, and often blocked by inaction. The effort and persistence in studying – because the diarist desperately wants to become *"un om doct*"[12] [a learned man] – are continuously undermined by the taste for worldliness and by the search for a woman corresponding to the personal ideal and to the Romantic model of femininity. Vain, on the other hand, and confident in the mission of an intellectual patriot, which he unconditionally assumes, Rosetti illustrates the contradictory structure, based on incompleteness, of the Romantic man. In his case, the purity-sinfulness dichotomy is nourished from the (in)voluntary aestheticisation of the protagonist's profile, in the way in which literature provides the well-known models and examples to the diarist:

„Și virtutea și cinstea sunt numai de negoț că-m plac. Ași dori însă mult ca să simț ne-ncetat o sfințenie adevărată în mine. Tot ce este nobil, tot ce este vrednic de Christ îmi place și sufletu meu o simpte foarte astă plăcere, căci orice văz, auz sau citesc mare îmi dă fiori.[13] [Both virtue and honesty are just for sale because I like them. But I'd rather feel true holiness within me. I like everything that is noble, that is worth of Christ, and my soul feels this pleasure plentifully, as I am thrilled by everything I see, hear or read.]

The family novel in which the diarist engages features a paragon of virtues and morality to which Rosetti constantly relates, although the effects are (almost) inexistent at a factual level, but productive, quantitatively and not only, in the discourse – the mother's image. Even after her death, she remains a moral filter perceived both as necessary and as an affective anchor by the diarist. Against this background, the mortgaging of the estate – owing to financial difficulties – stirs crises of conscience, pathetically described, as well as sincere remorse in the diarist's mind.

With maximum of simplification, Rosetti proposes, in his diary, a formulaic recipe of the behaviour of the Romantic (poet) guided by divine

[12] C. A. Rosetti, *ed. cit.,* p. 24.
[13] *Ibidem,* p. 33.

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inspiration, constrained by society and functioning, nonetheless, as a creator of genius, in an antithesis thusly illustrated:

„Șezând am zis că nimic [nu este] mai fericit decât poetu. Se pune la masă, ia condeiul, și mâna lui pe hârtie, trupul pe pământ iar sufletul lui în ceruri, în acele luni ce oamenii le zic fantastice, iar eu le cred că sunt în adevăr, trăiește de odată și viața de om și cea de înger, cu deosebire însă că în cea de pe pământ nu simte decât fericirea, decât bunul ei"[14] [Sitting, I said that nothing [was] happier than the poet. He sits at the table, grabs the quill, and his hand on paper, his body on earth, and his soul in heavens, in those worlds that people call fantastic, and I believe them to be true; he lives, at the same time, a human and an angel life, and he only feels the happiness and joy of the earthly existence.]

Of Rousseau inspiration – *„Ce-m folosește mie dacă natura ne-a dat iubire și dacă educația, pildele, etc. m-a făcut a nu putea a nu mă mai încrede să-m dau inima*?"[15] [What is the good of it if nature gave us love, and if education and moral pieces made me distrustful of opening my heart to anyone?] – the diarist's profile is built, at the same time, on the fear of death. Without competing against one another, the literary references and the real existence are inscribed in the same Romanticist paradigm to which the metaphysical thrill of death belongs. On the one hand, the Byronic model *(„și mormântul acela, de și Byron zice că nu e înfiorător, dar trebuie să mărturisim că nu prea e un alcov dumnezeesc dar însă nu știu ce fel este*"[16] – [and that grave that even Byron says that it is not frightful, but we must confess that it is hardly a godly alcove, but I don't know what kind it is], and on the other, the illness of a former lover, caused, naturally, by the poisonous love of the diarist, draw near the mother's coldness, for which the diarist pathetically blames himself:

„*Dureri, neodichne, moarte, iată fiii îmbrățișărilor mele*"[17] [Suffering, unrest, death – they are the children of my embraces.]

[14] *Ibidem*, pp. 39-40.
[15] *Ibidem*, p. 40.
[16] *Ibidem*, p. 48.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 49.

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Haunted by poetic élan, Rosetti associates, in good Romanticist tradition, the suffering with the poetic drive itself and the creative force with the affect – *„căci la mine geniul este în inimă, iar nu în cap*"[18] [because my genius is in my heart, not in my head]. Someplace else, he would like to write literature in order to communicate fundamental truths to the world, like Goethe did with *Faust*. The literary mirror in which he sees himself fills him with pride*:*

„*Am văzut toate durerile mele, dorințele mele, m-am mândrit, văzând că mă întâlnesc așa de mult cu un astfel de om, m-am aprins, ardeam a lua condeiul, mă întristai că nu poci, simți durere văzând că nu știu nimic și mă desnădăjdui văzând că în adevăr nu mă înșel când crez că nimic mai ticălos ca omul*"[19] [I saw all my pains, all my desires, I took pride seeing that I resembled such a man that much; I exalted, I was dying to grab the quill, I became sad because I wasn't able to, I felt pain seeing that I didn't know anything, and became desperate seeing that I wasn't indeed wrong in my belief that nothing was more vicious than man.]

The diary reflects, through the diarist's dynamic profile, the troublesome age of the 1848 Revolution and the humanitarian-romanticist ideas which roamed the entire Europe. The poet-citizen's calling and the writer's sacrificial-apostolic nature go hand in hand with the introduction to the context, to the rich opinions and even disputes between the young men that were studying in Paris before the revolution. The enthusiasm stirred by Edgar Quinet's support for the young Romanians kindled by the ideas that were agitating the French intelligentsia is next to the growing interest in Maria Grant and to the constant pecuniary concerns:

„*Cu toate acestea, m-am gândit adesea la Granta, până și la neputința de a o lua de soție, din pricina lipsii averii și a datoriilor mele, la neștiința mea, la dorința de a ști, dar la aceasta mă gândesc neîncetat."*[20] [Nevertheless, I have constantly thought about Granta, and about the impossibility to marry her because of my lack of wealth and my liabilities,

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 55.
[19] *Ibidem*, p. 57.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 64.

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and I have also thought about my lack of knowledge and the will to know, but then again, I am constantly thinking about these two.]

Fully aware of the value of his diary as a personal document, but also self-flattered by the spiritual contiguity with the vivid romantic models that he embraces, Rosetti proudly mentions his joining the Masonry as a second Secretary. Emblematic for the spiritual profile of the diarist, honest, after all, with himself and with the literature he nourishes with, is a series of notes dated December 13/25, 1844 – invocations addressing the divinity, in which he asks – by self-defining – for explanations for the romantic paradoxes/ antitheses that make him up. With a soul burdened by his mother's demise, by the memory of her agony, the diarist blames himself, cloaked in the rhetorical coat of a protagonist who calls God into account for his contradictory nature and for an implicit damnation which only brings suffering to those surrounding him:

„*Stăpâne! Cum ai pus în mie ăst amestic de sfinţenie şi de nesimţire?*"[21] [My Lord! How could you put in me this mixture of holiness and senselessness?]

It is well-known that creative force is essential for the Romantic man. The diarist is no exception, quite the contrary, he has no fear of ridiculousness and sincerely believes in his strengths as a poet, a belief supported (only) by his availability to write and by his special way of experiencing, in comparison with the prosaic, ordinary people: "*După multe cercetări, m-am asigurat în sfârşit că sunt şi încă că sunt un mare poet. Poate că nu o va zice nimini, poate că nu voi fi în stare niciodată să scriu nimic sau nimic mare (mă îndoiesc foarte însă) însă aceasta nu va opri de a mă şti eu că sunt"*[22] [After much consideration, I have finally convinced myself that I still am a great poet. Maybe no one will say it, maybe I'll never be able to write anything or anything great (of that I seriously doubt it), but this won't prevent me from knowing that I am.] His desire to assert himself as a poet, is accompanied, according to the model of Biedermeier Romanticism[23], by pedagogical

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 73.
[22] *Ibidem*, p. 86.
[23] Virgil Nemoianu, *Îmblânzirea romantismului*, 1998.

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intentions, to which his constantly active interest in women adds up. He has no interest in the marriage institution, which would suspend the Romantic man's need to project his aspirations onto a feminine ideal. In Rosetti's words:

„Eu urăsc căsătoria însă acum m-aşi însura dacă ar fi cu putinţă să iau de soţie orcâte femei voi vedea, căci toate îmi plac, fiindcă în toate găsesc câte un dar şi câte o nenorocire"[24] [I hate marriage, but now I'd get married if I could marry as many women I see, because I like them all, for in each one I find both a gift and a misfortune.] And the theme of death returns, associated again with the Romanticist model, by virtue of which the noble disease, tuberculosis, is called forth to ensure a condition for the inclusion in the paradigm: the untimely death. "*Am râs de mine, de ţara mea, de planurile ce-m făceam pentru fericirea ei, de răsplata ce socoteam că munca şi chinul meu vor avea. Iată răsplata; a scuipa sânge, a-m scuipa viaţa. Sunt la curiozitate să vedem acum cât de repede o să mă duc*"[25] [I laughed at myself, at my country, at the plans I had made for its happiness, at the reward that I thought I'd receive for my labour and pains. Here's my reward: blood-spitting, life-spitting. I'm curious now to see how quick my death will come.]

In other instances, the nostalgic memories of a beloved woman – other than Maria Grant, who will become his wife – stir sadness, conjure sceneries in which Venice, for example, is *poetic* in itself, or describe the *poetic* bouquets of ivy and cypress offered by Maria Grant. However, just a few pages away, the same memories synthetize (also simplifying) the thickly drawn portrait of the protagonist under whose scriptural mask is an agitated Rosetti:

„Nimic alt în toată această lume nu mă poate mulţumi, nu mă poate face să nu plâng ceasurile trecute, decât trei lucruri: a fi cu o femee ce iubesc şi mă iubeşte; a face versuri bune, sau a dormi mult şi bine. Femeea nu mă iubeşte, versuri nu ştiu să fac, nu poci şi nu am vreme să dorm"[26] [Nothing in this world can satisfy me, can make me not cry for the times past, except for three things: to be with a woman I love, and who loves me; to write good poetry and to sleep to my heart's content. No woman loves me, I don't know how to write poetry, I cannot and I don't have time to sleep.]

[24] *Ibidem*, p. 104.
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 116.
[26] *Ibidem*, p. 150.

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The attempts of imprinting a movement converging with the actions and ideas of the members of the Society of Romanian Students in Paris, whose spiritual patron was Lamartine, are to be found in his writing of a *Call to Romanians* or in his conversations with *young Brătianu*, whom Rosetti greatly admires, with Bălcescu, the Golescu brothers and others. They are embellished with rhetoric invocations to the homeland and to God, or with implicit calls to riot addressing the Romanian intelligentsia, openly assumed by the citizen-poet and justified by a profoundly patriotic profession of faith:

„*Ascultați glasul inimii, glasul nenorociților, glasul părinților voștri, glasul cel mult și eloquent al mormintelor, glasul lui Dumnezeu și al patriei și veți fi mântuiți"*[27] [Hear the voice of the heart, the voice of the wretched, the voice of your parents, the loud and eloquent voice of the graves, the voice of God and of your homeland, and you will find redemption.]

Amidst tribulations on marriage and poems praising the virtues of femininity and bemoaning the woman's social and human condition, there is also room for the conflict between generations and for the inherent revolt of the future journalist against censorship:

„Bătrânii corupți și staționari simpt că ideile lor slăbiră ca și trupurile lor, aud sbârnâirea ideilor celor noi și cugetul lor spunându-le cât sunt de culpabili, tremură îndoit mai mult de frică. Tinerii iarăși simpt într-înșii acea impulsi de primăvară, însă opriți pe deoparte de acei stejari bătrâni, ca o plantă nouă ce se încearcă să-și să-și scoață capu, la rădăcina uscată a stejarului, și pe de alta neavând nici la casele lor nici în școli, nici în adunare, de unde să ia scântea electrică a vieții, stau în paralizie ca planta ce nu are ploaie nici soare"[28] [The corrupt and retrograde old men feel that their ideas weakened just like their bodies, hear the buzzing of the new ideas and their conscience telling them how culpable they are, and doubly tremble with fear. The young men feel impulses of spring within themselves, but they are hindered on the one hand by those old oaks, as a new plant trying to sprout near the withered root of the oak, and on the other hand, by not having in their

[27] *Ibidem*, p. 177.
[28] *Ibidem*, p. 238.

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homes or schools or places of assembly that electrical spark of life, remaining paralysed as a plant that has neither rain, nor sun.]

Arrested, following the repression of the revolution, Rosetti and the other members of the acting government are transported on the Danube to Vidin, under Turkish warding, and imprisoned in a filthy and wretched fortified gaol. But the diarist mentions few aspects of this year of political tribulations and, although he reprimands himself, he skips over this naturally difficult period. He prefers to describe again the tribulations of his marriage – he sends his wife, alongside their children, to her mother, while he stays in his refuge in Paris, where, among revolutionary thoughts and ideas, he tries his hand at poetry. He also describes the conflicts among Romanian migrants to Paris – some of the young men there are, in fact, exiled – Heliade, Tell and Golescu self-appoint "caimacams of the émigrés", a petition to the great powers is designed, but the former revolutionaries are unable to reach an agreement in what its form is concerned.

Taking the blame for having neglected his wife and small children, the diarist notices, with Romanticist satisfaction, that he spits blood. The post-revolutionary disputes continue against this tormented family background; the text of the petition is changed in ways that he does not approve. All these events, both intimate and extimate, cohabitate on equal footing in the diaristic writing of C. A. Rosetti, who measures with an exclusively affective instrument the temperature of everything that happens in his existence, to which he aspires to confer a privileged status:

„A! d-ar triumfa revoluția și d-aș putea, o zi măcar, să fiu pentru patria mea o lumină, un cetățean adevărat, d-aș putea o zi măcar, să fac națiа română să binecuvânteze numele femeii acea ce plânse 30 de ani zi și noapte, (...)"[29] [Oh, if only the Revolution could triumph and if only I could be, for only one day at least, a light for my country, a genuine citizen, if only I could, for only one day at least, make the Romanian nation bless the name of that woman that has been crying day and night for 30 years.] He also declares that he is kindled by the spirit of an entire generation, for which he is, pathetically yet sincerely, ready to sacrifice. An unyielding republican, the diarist

[29] *Ibidem*, p. 300.

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embellishes his revolutionary élan – he writes articles and proofreads texts for *Republica română*, the journal of the young Romanian emigration in Paris – with laments on the material and family shortcomings.

The pleas for equality among men, among men and women, and for equal rights to education flow simultaneously with narratives about the children's diseases which pain his children and his wife, about his father's suffering and about the painful maternal memory, conjured as a moral point of reference and support. *Jurnalul meu* is concluded along the same lines of the concomitancy of the domestic aspects (Maria Grant is having her seventh child) and of the relevant or less relevant political events, measured against the scale of history.

All in all, *Jurnalul meu* combines the elements of a private life, made an *exemplum* by the explicit adherence of the diarist to the Romanticist patterns of the literary practice of the age, with a vivid chronicle of the events which bring the tormented, conflicting and contradictory social-political space of the Romanian Principalities during the 1848 Revolution and after its repression on the stage of grand history. Work of an aspiring writer with obvious ambitions, the implicit literariness of *Jurnalul meu* resides in the visible tension of sentiments, the elated stylistics and the honesty – mediated by writing, of course – which covers and justifies the text, all corroborating in a rhetoric network that can be perceived nowadays as a specific macrofigure, an argument of the aesthetic effect.

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