HAJDUK NOVELS IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROMANIAN FICTION: NOTES ON A SUB-GENRE

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Abstract: *In the context of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Romanian literature, hajduk novels and hajduk short fiction (novella, short-story, tale) are called to bring back a lost "epicness", to give back the hajduks their lost aura. But why did the Romanian readers need this remix? Was it for ideological reasons? Did the growing female readership influence the affluence of hajduk fiction? Could the hajduk novels have supplied the default of other important fiction sub-genres such as children or teenage literature? The present article supports the idea that, as a distinct fiction sub-genre, the hajduk novels convey a modern lifestyle, attached to new values such as the disengagement from material objects, the democratization of access to luxury goods and commodities, and the mobility of social classes. Clothing, leisure, eating/ drinking/ sleeping/ hygiene, work, military and forest/ nomad life, and ritual items that are mentioned in these novels can help us correlate the technical tendencies reflected in the making of objects to a particular ethnicity (Romanian).*
Key words: hajduk; folk ballads; novel sub-genre; corpus analysis; dissolution of epicness; mass literature

A few remarks on the richness of "genres" during the nineteenth century

Beside the apparent textual and para-textual tokens, there are historical and cultural arguments that support an integrated approach to hajduk novels, as a *sub-genre* of the Romanian nineteenth-century popular fiction. For the current analysis, the term "sub-genre" refers to a subdivision, to a set of works assembled according to shared conventions, literary devices, and literary purpose. As Wellek and Warren have shown, the nineteenth-century literature and its particular phenomena (chiefly, the development of popular print) not only changed the definition of the literary genre — from a normative to a descriptive understanding —, but also they opened it to various, short-lived hybridizations:

> "it seems preferable to say that the conception of the genre shifts in the nineteenth century, not that it — still less the practice of genre writing — disappears. With the vast widening of the audience in

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> the nineteenth century, there are more genres; and, with the more rapid diffusion through cheap printing, they are shorter-lived or pass through more rapid transitions. 'Genre' in the nineteenth century and in our own time suffers from the same difficulty as 'period': we are conscious of the quick changes in literary fashion — a new literary generation every ten years, rather than every fifty." (Wellek and Warren 1949: 242).

The American theorists stress on the fact that, leaving behind the normative restrictions, "the genres" become literary ephemera related to favored *topics*, to the public's fluctuating *tastes* and *moods*, to the *gender proportion* within general readership, to *the development of dedicated series* (e.g. *livre de poche*) and *to the specialization of publishers* (on what has been termed as "genre literature"). According to Wellek and Warren's assumption, variety is likely to be greater within literary traditions and societies engaged in an accelerated process of transition, for instance the transition from feudal to modern institutions occurred after the decline of the European empires in the Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The regional circulation of Hajduk novels

As already proven (Nikolova 2010, Bogdan 2011, Koliopoulos 1987, Hobsbawm 1959, Vrabie 1966), hajduk epic — both epic songs and derived literary works — is specific to the entire Balkan area, its regional spreading being favored by shared geographic, economic, social, and cultural conditions. The Bulgarian *haiduti/ hayduds*, the Serbian *hajduks*, the Greek *klephts*, the Albanian *kaçaks*, the Ukrainian Cossacks, the Croatian *uskoks*, and the Romanian *haiduci* (Bogdan 2011: 75-87, Bozanich 2017: 1-13, Gustafson 2017: 25-31) are known to have lived in the Balkan Mountains — Rodopi Mountains, Srena Gora, Stara Planina, Olympus Mountains, Romania Mountain in Bosnia (Gîrleanu 1969: 20-22), the Danube and the virgin forests as preferred settings for attacking and hiding, the Ottoman influence in the Central and South-Eastern Europe, the dissolution of old feudal privileges and, on account of modernization-waves coming from the West, the dissolution of old ways of life. At the same time, they champion a sort of "alternative economy" (Gustafson 2017: 5, 9) and a type of "paramilitary organization" (Bozanich 2017: 14-29). Authors such as the Serbians Sava Bolsulka, Miloš Crnjanski and Janko Veselinović, the Bulgarians Georgi Stoykov Rakovski, Orlin Vasiliev and Peyo Yavorov, the Hungarian Zsigmond Moricz, the Czech Ivan Olbracht, the Romanians Bucura Dumbravă and Panait Istrati, even the Turkish Yasar Kemal become widely known for their hajduk fiction.

Before them, nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century ethnographers such as Auguste Dozon (1875), Claude Fauriel (1824), Vuk

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Karadzic (1834), A. Chodzko (1879), Léo d'Orfer (1918), V. Alecsandri or G. Dem. Teodorescu not only collected a great stock of hajduk ballads they had found from Greece to Ukraine, but also "exported" them to the Western public in a translated and sometimes embellished version. As Elka Agoston Nikolova notices, numerous *haiduti* pieces have been drawn out from larger epic songs and turned into "floating fragments" that used to be sang at fairs and during military marches. The same remark on the ballads' dissolution into "floating fragments" and their re-cycling was made, at the turn of the twentieth century, by George Coşbuc (Coşbuc 1960: 227) and Barbu Delavrancea (Delavrancea 1963: 174-175). Nevertheless, the process of conversion — from anonymous ballads to authored literary works — is spurred by a perfect acclimatization of hajduk types to a rising popular culture, which leads to the establishment of "a national genre," *i.e* an original literary form that erupted and developed strictly only within the geographical and language boundaries of a nation.

Additionally, the presence of the *haiduti* female leaders (*vojvoda* are, as Nikolova proves, prevalent over men) in both epic songs and subsequent literature is an aspect which, although not confirmed by historical facts, indicates that hajduk epic and hajduk fiction incorporate a strong vector of modernization, an explicit challenge to the patriarchal society (Nikolova 2010: 458-459, Gîrleanu 1969: 34-35).

Pulp fiction in nineteenth-century Romania

In the case of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Romanian literature, the public's taste in reading hajduk fiction got even more ruling due to 3 determining factors: a. the massive publication of epic poetry — called "hajduk ballads" or "hajduk rhapsodies" and grouped under these labels — and its categorization done by G. Dem Teodorescu (Teodorescu 1985: 98-99, vol. 2); b. the emergence of original fiction (novels and short prose) and "genre-authors" who expand ballad "floating episodes" or simply embed large quotations from hajduk ballads into their "original" prose;[11] c. the circulation of Romanian translations from hajduk novels belonging to neighboring cultures, Serbian, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian. For instance, two

[11] A.D. Xenopol, *Foiletonul Voinţei Naţionale*, no. 356, 1 Oct. 1885, p. 2: „În deobşte aceste producţiuni sunt mai pe jos de mediocre şi cu toate acestea ele au un mare răsunet în poporul nostru. Este, pentru a zice astfel, singura literatură într-adevăr căutată. După cât am aflat, se vând pe an din aceste scrieri mii de exemplare şi de aceea numărul lor sporeşte pe zi ce merge. Este o clasă întreagă de oameni care le citeşte, pe care-i interesează, cărora le procură o adevărată petrecere intelectuală, oameni cari de altfel n-ar găsi nici o plăcere la citirea unor novele de alt gen, de altminteri bine alcătuite şi frumos stilizate. (...) Cum se face de haiducii sunt atât de iubiţi şi celebraţi în timpurile noastre? Noi credem că această reîntoarcere a minţii poporului către trecut, această interesare pentru suferinţele altui timp ce ne atinge de aproape, este un semn viu al iubirei de ţară ce se manifestează în el."

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translations of Sava Bosulka's hajduk novels are published in popular editions before 1920 (DRRT 2005: 321). Apparently, the transitions, transfers and alterations from folklore to mass literature occur in the same fashion as in Bulgaria (Nikolova 2010), Albania (Gustafson 2017), Greece (Koliopoulos 1987), Serbia (Bracewell 2003, Bogdan 2011, Bozanich 2017): epic songs go through a process of demythologization, the great deeds of archetypal heroes acquire a psychological determination, epic structures lose their "epicness" and eventually turn into descriptions (Coşbuc 1960: 228, Delavrancea 1963: 174-175), sub-urban love songs/*cântec de lume* (Vrabie 1969: 500-501) or ritual folk plays performed by teenagers in New Years' Eve (Nikolova 2010: 457-458, Eugen Barbu 1974: V-XVIII, Papadima 1968: 126, Papahagi: 216-221).

Consequently, *hajduk novels* and *hajduk short fiction* (novella, short-story, tale) are supposed to bring back the lost "epicness," to give back the hajduks their lost aura. But why did the nineteenth-century Romanian readers need this remix? Was it for ideological reasons? Did the growing female readership influence the affluence of hajduk fiction? Could the hajduk novels have supplied the default of other important fiction sub-genres such as children or teenage literature?

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It is highly probable that "the melodramatic imagination" and its "mode of excess", which are specific to all post-revolutionary societies (Peter Brooks 1976/ 1995: X) — and nineteenth-century Romania is, in fact, a society going through a perpetual revolution and change! — had determined the development of "the hajduk sub-genre" (Ioana Drăgan 2001, Ioan Popa 2014, Marian Barbu 2003). Set side by side with *city mysteries* and *historical novels* (also called "national romances/ novels"), the hajduk sub-genre seems to be chiefly hero-oriented. The entire epic matter wraps around the main character. In the case of Romanian popular fiction, the figures of "the national hajduks" Miu, Corbea, Jianu, Grozea, Ghiţă Cătănuţă, Codreanul, Bujor, etc. seem to be purposefully fashioned so as to differ from the figures of international hajduks such as Stanislav, Velcu, Novak, etc. who are also glorified by the Romanian folklore. Compared to their ballad forerunners, novel hajduks would reveal both positive and negative traits. Grafted on the rhapsodic archetypes of clear-cut good and evil, "the melodramatic imagination" brings in the open the "moral occult," in fact, the epic hero' secret soul, a world of instincts and emotions which has not been presumed by anyone until the publication of these popular novels.

Famous figures of Western outlaws (Rinaldo Rinaldini, Robin Hood, Karl Moor) exert only a mild influence on this type of hajduk fiction, Schiller's *Die Räuber*, Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, and Dumas' *Le Prince des voleurs* and *Robin Hood, le Proscrit* being translated only after 1920. The

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only exceptions are Adolf Sönderman's saga, *Rinaldi Rinaldini,* translated în 1892, Louis Boussenard's *The Hajduk of Macedonia* (1904), Pushkin's *The revenge of a Son, from a Russian Hajduk's Life* (1909), Henri Conti's *Crimes of Hajduk Boric* (1909) (DRRT 2005: 178, 201, 233, 263).

In his well-known book on "primitive rebels" and "social banditry," Eric Hobsbawn has noticed that the Balkan hajduks are quite special because they achieved "the most institutionalized and conscious form of social banditry," which signals the passage from the rural to the urban way of life (Hobsbawn 1959: 20). Hajduks voice "a popular discontent" (Bogdan 2011: 73-96, Gustafson 2017: 17) and, at the same time, prove themselves able to "institutionalize" an *alternative economy*, a type of *paramilitary organization*, a *democratically-validated leadership*, all in all, they institutionalize an *outlaw lifestyle* — that is, they bring to form, thus to expression, a specific way of living and being. In a 1972 article, Hobsbawn points at the fact that

> "the most apolitical (or 'quasi-political movement') of all bandits … are the Balkan hajduk. They were more removed from sedentary peasant communities, and had an established tradition of collective organisation" (Gustafson 2017, 26).

Accordingly, the hajduk is neither "a noble robber," nor "a terror-bringing avenger" (Hobsbawn 1972: 503-505). Perhaps it is useful to bring out the fact that, compared to Hobsbawn's approach to the hajduk's archetypal "primitiveness," the eminent ethnographer Gh. Vrabie considers that the distinction between "knight-hajduks" and "robber-hajduks" should still be in place (Vrabie 1969: 361-404).

As already mentioned, the hajduk figures act like magnetic centers that organize the epic and dramatic matter of a significant number of nineteenth-century Romanian novels. While *city mysteries* — and "mysteries" are spread throughout each and every Romanian city, from small to big, from Bucharest and Iaşi to Brăila and Giurgiu — show a language in expansion, able to use all available resources and while *the historical novels* show an identity built on facts, the hajduk novels show the public how the collective emotions can be disciplined through the agency of a charismatic figure. If rhetoric theory is kept as reference, the three main sub-genres — city mysteries, historical, and hajduk — stand for types of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* that fuel the mechanisms of literature by persuading the public to buy and publishers to print.

But the popularity and the strong topicality of the new "national" sub-genre can also be proven in quantitative terms.

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A Corpus of Hajduk Novels in the context of 19th-century Romanian Literature

Excepting CoRoLa, a Romanian corpus that has included literary entries — yet, only literary works published after 1945 (Tufiș 2018, Verginica Barbu Mititelu et alii 2017) — the Romanian corpora such as ROMBAC, ROCO, BABEL, SWARA provide resources that are fit almost exclusively for linguistic queries. Literary research has not drawn great benefits from these previous endeavors, as the history of ideas, genres, movements, communities, forms as well as the quantitative research of literary style(s) must be addressed with specific tools and methods (Schöch 2017, Eder 2016, Jockers 2012).

On the account of a long and difficult standardization process (Pană-Dindelegan 2016, Mancaș 2005, Gheție 2001), the Romanian literature published before 1945 has not received a focused treatment. As a matter of fact, the digitization of literary texts has been rather circumstantial and random. Currently, the literature collection of http://www.digibuc.ro/colectii/literatura-romana-c1330 counts only 4204 items, many of them travel accounts and poetry produced along five centuries.

Various attempts at organizing the data provided by *Dicţionarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până la 1989 (DCRR)* have pointed at the fact that the great bulk of not-digitized texts should be approached topically rather than monographically, by paying attention to prominent sub-generic clusters such as the ones previously mentioned: *city mysteries*, *historical novel* and *hajduk novel*. In case this forsaken literary patrimony will ever be made available in digital editable formats, one of the most engaging research questions would be if the corpus analysis supports the theoretical discrimination between the three sub-genres and if the hajduk novels are really any different from historical novels.

Going back to the figures provided by *DCRR*, I could notice that, between 1848 Revolution and the end of WWI, 627 Romanian novels were published, in either volume editions or press installments. At a closer look, one can notice that the number of compact volumes (**V novels**) exceeds the number of novels published exclusively as press installments (**I novels**) with approx. 11%: 350 **V novels** *vs* 277 **I novels**. Before their publication as volumes — back in those times, this should be regarded as a moment of individual consecration and of literary professionalization — some of these novels had already been introduced to readers as serials. In order to avoid overlapping, my counting of **I novels** reflects only the dictionary entries that, between 1850 and 1920, do not have a correspondent in the section of **V novels**.

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Among the 350 **V novels**, I could identify 41 "hajduk novels" representing 11.71% of the total number of volumes indexed by *DCRR*, which, in quantitative terms, proves the outstanding popularity of this narrative sub-genre. Extending my search to the repository of "Mihai Eminescu" library and browsing various cheap editions authored under the veil of anonymity or by genre-writers such as N.D. Popescu, G. Baronzi, P. Macri or Stefan (Th.) Stoenescu, my search of hajduk novels needed a surer guidance.

Consequently, I established several *markers* that could tell, from a relative distance, that a novel belongs to the hajduk sub-genre and not to the city mysteries or to the historical novel: *a. Titles* that contain occupation/ legendary names: *Iancu Jianu, Captain of Hajduks*; *Ioan Mândru, the Most Famous Capitain of Hajduks*; *Bostan, a Hajduk from the Other Bank of the Milcov River*; *Mina, the Hajduk Woman*, etc.; b. *Conflicts* (as they are summarized in the dictionary entries) correlated to social, economic and cultural *transitions* from rural to urban cultures, from feudal society to early capitalism, from despotism to democracy, from closed to open spaces/ the free nature. *E.g.*: the free hajduks *vs*. the Ottoman pashas/ Phanariote princes/ corrupted local boyars; the hajduks' cave/ forest/ mountains *vs.* the boyars' courts/ cities; humble inns/ monasteries vs. luxurious chamber palaces; c. *Insertions of folk hajduk ballads* within the novel structure as scenes of leisure when the captains of hajduks feast and listen to songs that praise their own legend; d. *Footnotes* indicating novel sources: folklore collections containing hajduk ballads/ drinking songs.

The preponderance of hajduk fiction as well as its strong markers enabled me to go further and reflect whether the hajduks' nomad lifestyle (favored objects, habits, community rituals) can also be perceived as a generic indicative. If ethnographers and historians already emphasized that the hajduks lived in quasi-military communities (always dressed in green for camouflage), that their way of validating leadership had always been democratic (even before democracy was brought to Romania by the young 1848 intelligentsia), that their social skills in international networking could only rival their strategic abilities (the gang is, most of the times, international because it gathers hajduks from the entire Balkan area), now it is literature's turn to check and validate if the hajduks engendered a literary form of their own.

Conclusions

In a predominantly agricultural and rural country such as the nineteenth-century Romania, novel hajduks — as well as their forerunners form the folk epic poems — act as an accelerator of modernization. Attached to a type of "primitive" individual freedom, they usher new values such as

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the disengagement from material objects, the democratization of access to luxury goods and commodities, and the mobility of social classes. Clothing, leisure, eating/ drinking/ sleeping/ hygiene, work, military and forest/ nomad life, and ritual items that are mentioned in these novels can help us correlate, in Leroi-Gourhan's way (Leroi-Gourhan 1973: 7-8), the technical tendencies reflected in the making of objects to a particular ethnicity.

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