

**MIHAIL EMINESCU, AN EXPONENT OF ROMANIAN ROMANTICISM**

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"A dream of mystery it was  
And sweet beyond compare  
And much too beautiful, because  
Grim death fell to its share.

I saw too much of saints in you  
Too little of an Eve  
That all the happiness I knew  
Should linger and not leave."

(Translated by Andrei Bantaş)

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The first chapter deals with a general view of Romanticism, its origin and contents. It shows the critics' ceaseless but unsuccessful struggle to give a more comprehensive definition of the term and the difficulty in describing this complex phenomenon emerging in opposition to Classicism in the last decades of the 18th century in the most advanced literatures of Europe. The following chapter - Romanian Enlightenment - illustrates the development of the Romanian language and literature in the period leading to the appearance of Eminescu's Romantic work. At the same time it explains why Romanian Romanticism acquired a strong national character. The description of Romanian pre-Romanticism and the beginning of Romanian Romanticism emphasises that, unlike Romanticism in other European countries, Romanian Romanticism went hand in hand with Classicism, which survived and played an important role in the progress of the Romanian language and culture.

After a short presentation of Eminescu's life, with biographical data, the character and formation of the poet's personality, as well as his environment and circumstances, there follows a detailed analysis of Eminescu's Romantic work, with an assessment of the

constituent elements of his poetry and prose and of his achievements. Among the Romantic themes and motifs that dominate Eminescu's works, Love and Nature are the most significant. Love and sorrow are two constant dimensions of his life which are reflected in his writings. For Eminescu, love is the triumph of feelings over reason. Fabulousness, dreams, passion, titanism and myth are the elements of Romantic style most frequently found in his works. His masterpiece 'The Evening Star' is the archetypal image of the poet which reveals the quintessence of his poetical creativity. The allegory of 'The Evening Star' is the drama of the genius who is not understood by terrestrial beings, but who is conscious of his immortalization through the force of his ideas, feelings and supreme achievements.

Eminescu's art of poetry and the influences in his work form another important part of this thesis. Among them history, the beauties of the poet's motherland, everyday life, the past, folklore and works by Romanian and foreign writers are the most conspicuous.

Eminescu is not only a great national poet. He is one of the great Romantic poets of the world. The art and beauty of his works establish his place among them, and 'The Evening Star' bears comparison with the best Romantic poems that exist.

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## CHAPTER 1

### ROMANTICISM

(Origin, definition, contents)

What is Romanticism? What is this tide which flows through literary history, reaching its high water mark in the early nineteenth century and flooding the literature of so many European countries? This question has tortured the minds of many eminent commentators who have tried unsuccessfully to define accurately and describe this complex phenomenon, so rich and varied in its achievements. So complex and shrouded in mystery is Romanticism that to the present day no-one has succeeded in giving it an unequivocal and comprehensive definition. Victor Hugo, himself a great Romantic and leader of the Romantic school of French literature, said that there were people who preferred to leave "à ce mot de romantique un certain vague fantastique et indéfinissable qui en redouble l'horreur" ("a certain indefinable and fantastic vagueness to this word, Romantic, thus redoubling its horror").<sup>1</sup>

In the same year, the Frenchmen Dupuis and Cotonet started to collect definitions and characterizations supplied by distinguished authorities, in the hope of

discovering what Romanticism is. After twelve years they had found so many and varied definitions that they ended in disillusionment. There was no lack of material. On the contrary, it was too plentiful, too involved, and even contradictory.

Paul Van Tieghem found more than 150 definitions given up to 1825, but none of them covered fully all the essential features of Romanticism. Paul Valéry, a French author, reaches the conclusion that he who tries to provide a definition of Romanticism lacks precision because the concept is incapable of being reduced to a single definition. Another warning was issued by E.B. Burgum in an article on Romanticism in 1941. He said that he who sought to define Romanticism was entering a hazardous occupation which claimed many victims.

But these warnings have not deterred critics in their ceaseless endeavours to give a definition of Romanticism. More than 100 years of struggle on the part of literary critics and professors of modern literature to find an adequate definition of Romanticism have increased the number and varieties of definitions so much that now it is enough to discourage anyone who would try to define Romanticism. The result is a confusion of terminology and ideas which has embarrassed and exasperated the specialists for more than a century.



Strangely, to put an end to the endless controversy about Romanticism, some came forward with the proposal that they should cease arguing about Romanticism as it did not exist as a literary phenomenon but only as a transition between Classicism and Realism. This theory cannot stand, as the force with which it developed, the value of the works it left in world literature and the consequences that flowed from it have been too obvious and too great to be overlooked. Following this scepticism about the Romantic movement, voices were heard which agreed that this phenomenon is a reality, that the main cause of the spiritual evils from which the nineteenth century suffered is something called Romanticism. The conclusion we can draw from this definition war is that Romanticism cannot be encompassed in a single clear and concise definition. All we can do is to give an extensive description of the phenomenon, pointing out its general features.

First of all, it is necessary to show the genesis and the associative processes through which the term 'romantic' passed and acquired its present diversity of connotations. One of the few certain things about the term is that it is one of the most perplexing, though fascinating, problems in semantics. From its origin until the early nineteenth century, the word 'romantic' came to have so many meanings that now it means everything or nothing. It no longer has any functional significance.

The Romanian professor Dumitru Popovici, referring to the term 'romantic', thinks that "it first had the sense of something picturesque (England 1659), and was then applied to a fictitious narrative belonging to the domain of imagination or even of fantasy (France 1675). In the realm of the French language and in the framework of French literature, the word underwent a large development, mainly in the eighteenth century, with the extension of the meaning and application of picturesque to the notion of landscape".<sup>2</sup>

Indeed it was in England that the word first became familiar and widely diffused. Its introduction has been called one of the most notable English contributions to European Romanticism. At first it was associated with the old romances, tales of chivalry, characterized by high flown sentiments, improbability, exaggeration, unreality, in short, elements diametrically opposed to a sober, rational view of life. Only later, in the early eighteenth century, did the word begin to acquire fresh meanings. It was applied to landscapes and other scenes in nature, often to describe the mountains, forests and wild places, commonly the setting for the old romances. By about the mid-eighteenth century it already carried a dual meaning: the original one suggesting the old romances and an elaboration that adumbrated its appeal to the imagination and feeling. This was the point at

which the term was again imported into France. It was used in 1776 by Le Tourneur in the preface of his translation of Shakespeare. While "pittoresque" expressed a visual attraction, "romantique" referred, above all, to the emotional response evoked by a scene. Rousseau in 1778 used the epithet "romantique" in the famous sentence at the opening of the second paragraph of the fifth 'promenade' of his 'Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire': "Les rives du lac de Bienne sont plus sauvages et romantiques que celles du lac de Genève". ("The shores of Lake Bienne are wilder and more romantic than those of Lake Geneva.")

This meaning of an emotional response was the main meaning of the word 'romantic' when, in 1798, it entered the Dictionary of the French Académie. Then, during the great aesthetic debates of the early nineteenth century, the word was given a multitude of different meanings.

For Mme de Staël, who extolled the Middle Ages, 'romantic' was virtually synonymous with Northern, mediaeval and Christian, as opposed to Southern, classical and pagan. For Victor Hugo and Stendhal, as for the majority of their generation, the primary antithesis was between 'romantic' and 'classical'.

But to the author of Cromwell and Hernani, 'romantic' was tantamount to the free, the picturesque, the grotesque. To Stendhal it signified quite simply 'modern' or 'contemporary'.

The term arrived in Germany from England with James Thomson's 'Seasons'. As in France, the neologism "romantisch" formed on the English analogy supplanted the older word "romanschaft" and was applied to wild landscape. It denoted a turn of mind that looked favourably on things of an imaginative and emotional kind. Its transference to the literary sphere is a relatively late occurrence, thought to date from Friedrich Schlegel's comments of 1797.

Vera Calin says: "the term 'romantic' was used with the most widespread endorsement as a description of modern literature in opposition to classical literature, by August Wilhelm Schlegel, who, together with his brother Friedrich Schlegel, formulated the theory of the new movement in Germany. August W. Schlegel did not invent the Classical-Romantic contrast but he devised the formulation that later achieved the greatest penetration. In his lectures delivered in 1798 at Jena, there is only a hint of the opposition between the two visions. In his lectures at Berlin between 1801 and 1807, 'Vorlesungen über Schöne Kunst

und Literatur' ('Lectures on belles lettres and art), and in those given at Vienna between 1809 and 1811, 'Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur' ('Lectures on dramatic art and literature'), the antinomy is proclaimed and the contrast is explained.<sup>3</sup>

Of course it is well known that the brilliant poet and thinker, Friedrich Schlegel, wrote 125 pages in explanation of the word 'romantic' and is held responsible for introducing the word into the literary context. But, for all his long explanation, he does not appear to have arrived at a definite meaning and there is no doubt that his writings are a source of muddle and misunderstanding. Throughout his theoretical pronouncements, the connotations of 'romantisch' fluctuate disconcertingly, not only from work to work but even within one and the same work. His brother August Wilhelm Schlegel used the word fairly consistently, in both the lectures mentioned above, to denote the spirit of modern art in contrast with ancient or classical art. The Schlegel brothers founded Atheneum, a literary and aesthetic periodical, published between 1798 and 1800 in Berlin, which was regarded as the public manifesto of the new Romantic movement.

A strange thing happened in England. Though the term originates in England, its appearance was followed by no arguments of the kind which took place in France and Germany. Except on two occasions, the English simply avoided the word 'romantic'. Wordsworth does not use the word 'romantic' in the Preface to his Lyrical Ballads, commonly regarded as the manifesto of the poetic revolution in England, although he is a remarkable romantic and expounds the new type of poetry, laying down his own poetic principles. Nor is the term to be found in Shelley's 'Defence of Poetry'. In fact the term was not applied to the English literature of the early nineteenth century at all. There was talk of the Lake School, the Satanic School, but not of the Romantic School. This reticence in the introduction of the term into the literary context is all the more surprising in view of the word's English origin. And yet it is in England that the first collection of real Romantic poems appeared. Lyrical Ballads, a volume of four poems by Coleridge, including the famous Ancient Mariner, and nineteen poems by Wordsworth, published in 1798, has been generally taken to mark the true beginning of the Romantic Movement.

As to Romanticism's paternity, some critics see Rousseau as its father. The American professor Kenneth Hopkins says that: "it appeared in prose as well as verse and in other arts besides. In France its apostle was Rousseau, but there no general

movement occurred until after the German and British revivals, which also in part stemmed from Rousseau".<sup>4</sup> Russell, Santayana and Alexandru Dima (referring to Romantic lyricism) think that the honour of paternity might be claimed by Immanuel Kant. Professor Babbit thinks that the earliest identifiable forebear was Francis Bacon. Professor Ker considered that it had its beginnings in the seventeenth century or a little earlier in such books as the *Arcadia* or the *Grand Cyrus*. Professor Grierson saw Plato as the first Romantic.

The majority of literary critics agree that Romanticism has two essential acceptations: one indicates the literary movement of the first half of the nineteenth century, known in Europe under the name of Romanticism; the second, seen from the social point of view, reveals an individualistic mood pervaded by passion, which has existed at all times, has been present in world literature of all epochs and will always remain. In this latter sense, we can identify it in the faithful Penelope's love for her husband Ulysses, who returned to his wife after twenty years' absence (*Homer: Odyssey*).

The same romantic mood is present in Virgil's greatest masterpiece *Aeneid*, in Dido's love for Aeneas, the queen and reputed founder of the city of Carthage, who slew herself on Aeneas' departure.

Romantic scenes and attitudes are to be found in Dante, Cervantes, in Shakespeare's works like Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest and the eighteenth sonnet, in Racine and La Fontaine, and even in some African tribal songs and dances, which contain clear romantic references.

Mr Edmund Gosse, an English poet and critic, considered Joseph Warton's youthful poem 'The Enthusiast', written in 1740, as the first clear manifestation of the Romantic Movement, the earliest expression of complete revolt against the classical attitude. The general theme of the poem is the superiority of nature to art.

All these works are somehow truly romantic, yet we cannot call them Romanticism because these sentimental displays were isolated cases. Only when such a mood becomes general, as happened in the early nineteenth century, does it become Romanticism.

In order to have a clearer picture of Romanticism, let us look at further characterizations and definitions. Stendhal believed that all the great writers were romantic in their day. He gave an interesting definition in 1823: "Le Romantisme est l'art de présenter aux peuples les oeuvres littéraires qui, dans l'état actuel de leurs croyances, sont susceptibles de leur donner le plus de plaisir possible. Le



classicisme, au contraire, leur présente la littérature qui donnait le plus grand plaisir possible à leurs arrière-grands-pères". ("Romanticism is the art of offering people the literary works likely to give them the greatest possible pleasure, having due regard to the habits and beliefs of their time. Classicism, on the other hand, offers them the literature that gave the greatest possible pleasure to their great-grandparents.")<sup>5</sup>

The Romanian professor D. Popovici believes that "Romanticism means the triumph of local values over classical or universal ones, the triumph of relative and individual values over the general values of Classicism; it means a tendency towards diversity in contrast with Classicism's aspiration towards unity. Romanticism has usually been defined in the context of Classicism and Realism. In relation to these two literary words, Romanticism is characterized as the literature of feeling and fantasy".<sup>6</sup>

The American professor Kenneth Hopkins finds Romanticism "a spontaneous international reaction against the established literary tradition based on Classicism and reason".<sup>7</sup>

Another useful characterization of Romanticism is given by C.D. Papastate: "Having emerged by the end of the eighteenth century, it develops and asserts itself in the first half of the following century, during the period of the disintegration of feudalism, the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie and revolutionary unrest. Offspring of the desire for freedom, either against the dogmatic rules of Classicism or against feudalism or against religious dogma, Romanticism is a European movement, simultaneously or successively present in Germany, England and France".<sup>8</sup>

In this way, the romantic writer, discontented with the objective world which is limited and constantly hostile, creates an ideal world corresponding to his own spiritual demands. He feels the need to make his escape into a boundless world of imagination, or the past, or the future, which are friendlier and more congenial. He develops an extraordinary imaginative sensitivity, mingling the grotesque with the sublime, sorrow with joy, hope with despair, calm with fury, love with hate. Lovers, for example, oscillate violently between emotional extremes. In this respect Alfred de Musset's 'Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle', crowned with acclaim by the French Academy, contains the quintessence of imaginative romantic art.

It contains a full measure of expressions of unrestrained freedom. In typical Romantic manner, inflamed passion overflows. Here are some examples:

- "What do you want of me?" I cried. "Leave me. I fear I shall kill you".
- "Very well, kill me!" she said. "I have deceived you, I have lied to you, I am an infamous wretch and I am miserable; but I love you, and I cannot live without you." I looked at her; how beautiful she was! Her body was quivering; her eyes were languid with love and moist with voluptuousness; her bosom was bare, her lips were burning. I raised her in my arms ...".<sup>9</sup>

The following excerpts reveal typical Romantic attitudes, full of contradictions, unrest and uncertainty:

"... my heart was suffering so that ever within me there was a man who laughed and a man who wept. It was a perpetual struggle between my head and my heart. My own amusements frequently caused me great pain and my deepest sorrows aroused a desire to burst into laughter".<sup>10</sup>

Or this text:

"... that mingling of strength and weakness, of joy and sorrow, of anxiety and sincerity, could not have been understood by an indifferent spectator. At times they appeared the happiest living creatures and the next moment the most unhappy".<sup>11</sup>

Romantics were to some extent estranged from high society; they rejected the conventional attitudes and mores of select and polite society and directed their sight to the everyday world of ordinary people. The whole generation of writers who belonged to the so-called Sturm and Drang School (storm and passion), like the brothers Schlegel, Tieck, Novalis, Herder, had a preference for folklore and the past, for the bizarre and the fantastic, for metaphysics and philosophical speculation, all undoubted features of Romanticism. Rousseau's call for a return to nature opened Herder's eyes to the beauty of folk poetry. The appreciation of folk poetry was given full expression in *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (1773), generally considered as the manifesto of the Sturm and Drang and to which Herder, as editor and theoretician, contributed two essays. He gave a hard blow to the literary rationalism of the Enlightenment by declaring folk poetry to be the only true poetry, and seeing it not as the product of rational thought processes but of ecstatic inspiration and intense emotion. As we shall see later, Romania's greatest Romantic poet, Eminescu, was very fond of folklore. We can also cite Wordsworth and Pushkin as great lovers of folklore.

All of them valued and recorded their own intimate experiences to a high degree. In Wordsworth these experiences and feelings have a moral value.

They all looked inside themselves, seeking the unusual emotions in their own lives. This uniqueness of individual experience drove each of them to spiritual loneliness. Shelley is the best example of spiritual loneliness. He seems to be more content amid the dead leaves, moonlit waters and ghosts than in the places where people gather. If Byron reveals the diablerie of Romanticism, Shelley shows its idealism. He was the prophet of liberty, equality, fraternity, ideas of the French Revolution, a passionate lover of man, and wrote in the hope of a regeneration of the world. He dreamed of a Golden Age. He refused to accept life as it is in reality.

All romantics had a deep interest in nature. Unlike the classical writers, they do not look on nature simply as a source of beautiful scenes, but as an educative and spiritual influence on life and as a place of refuge. The best examples of this tendency are Wordsworth, Shelley, Lamartine and Eminescu. Wordsworth is the prophet of nature and the apostle of simplicity, emphasising the worth of ordinary people. He finds man and nature as essentially complementary to each other, and the mind of man as the mirror of the most beautiful and intricate properties of nature. Nature, the individual, and human life in general are interrelated. And these are the main themes of his poems:

"On Man, on Nature, and on Human life  
Musing in solitude, I often perceive,  
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,  
Accompanied by feelings of delight ..."<sup>12</sup>

Shelley's natural descriptions prove how deeply he felt some of the aspects of nature. The harmonies of his verse seem at times like those we often hear among waters and woods. As the brook flows to the precipice, so does his feeling. As the valley alters its landscape, so does the sensation in his heart. The images which he employs in his poems are almost always insubstantial things, like winds, sounds, colours, waters, the image of a boat upon a moonlit sea, an ethereal form in a boat upon a lake. In a similar vein are Lamartine's poems of despair, the memory of Elvire entrusted to nature (Le Lac), death seen as liberation and consolation in nature (Insolement, Le Soir, Le Souvenir, L'Automne). His originality lies in the suggestion of emotion through natural imagery, widening out to the vision of the spiritual affinities between man, the universe and the divine.

Almost all the Romantic writers ignored the cult of reason, the main characteristic of Classicism and Enlightenment. Among them the German novelist E.T.A. Hoffman, S.T. Coleridge and Robert Southey excelled in creating tales of horror and the

supernatural, a world of magic and miracle. In Coleridge's works we find a charming land of dreams, with strange creatures, phantom ships, caverns, the sounds of unearthly instruments and haunted figures, darkness, all part of a world where magic reigns.

Some of the Romantics made the past live again. Sir Walter Scott was the first Romantic writer to do this, and became the father of the historical novel. In his works he used the Romantic resources of chivalry, warfare, pathos, sentiment and the glamour of an imaginary past. His works gained a great popularity in France and were taken as models by other European Romantics. Some French writers, inspired by Scott's novels, started to look for exciting events in their own history. The Waverley novels were a frequent topic of discussion in the literary salon or *cénacle*, especially among the young Romantics at the *Arsenal*, where the librarian and writer Charles Nodier acted as host and where Hugo, Vigny, Dumas, Balzac, Sainte-Beuve, Lamartine, Alfred de Musset and others were frequent guests. Historical works began to flourish. When 'Cromwell', a political play with a historical subject, appeared in 1827, it was accompanied by a preface that preached the gospel of Romanticism.

In fact it was the theorization of the romantic drama. In the same year Vigny, too, offered his theoretical analysis of Romanticism, in this case stressing the novel rather than the theatre. It took the form of a preface entitled: 'Réflexions sur la vérité dans l'Art', which Vigny wrote for a new edition of his historical novel 'Cinq-Mars'. It is interesting to observe that Vigny in his 'Cinq-Mars' (1826), Mérimée in his 'Chronique du règne de Charles IX' (1829), Victor Hugo in his 'Notre Dame de Paris' (1831), Alexandre Dumas in 'The Three Musketeers', notable for its imagination, exuberant vitality and chivalric spirit (1844), and others, imitated in some respect Scott's historical novel. Maybe Hugo's 'Notre Dame de Paris' is the closest to Scott's method of writing historical novels in its use of fictitious characters, symbols and a high degree of imagination. The poet Lamartine did not agree with the idea of writing historical novels. He said the historical novel was a lie, the most dangerous of all lies because it had history serving as a false witness for invention.

Now let us see what was the main change that took place in classical poetry as it developed into romantic poetry. The middle of the eighteenth century was a period of transition and experiment in poetic style and subjects, and it is important to know how the view of



poetry as a refined communication pleasing to educated ears is gradually abandoned. While Classicism displayed signs of disintegration under the gentle pressure of the Enlightenment, the new trend was appearing in the works of some writers of the mid and late eighteenth century, rightly considered as the Age of Sensibility or Pre-Romanticism. At the beginning, Pre-Romanticism had some points in common with the Enlightenment such as enthusiasm for Shakespeare and an increasing freedom of imagination. The new trend allowed sensivity to dethrone reason.

In England the moving scenes and the rhetorical speeches of Cibber's and Steele's plays demonstrate the change of taste and attitude. This change had its equivalent in France in the so-called *comédies larmoyantes* (tearful comedies) of La Chaussée, and in Germany in the emotional poetry of Klopstock. Mention should be made of the free expressions of sentiment found in the original, spontaneous and natural poetry of Thomson's 'Seasons', Young's 'Night Thoughts' and Macpherson's 'Poems of Ossian'. The new appeals to sentiment as well as the new means of expression are also present in such novels of the age as Richardson's 'Pamela' (1740) and 'Clarissa Harlow' (1747), Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' (1766), Rousseau's 'La Nouvelle Héloïse' (1761), Goethe's 'Die Leiden des

jungen Werthers' ('The Sufferings of Young Werther') (1774), Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey' (1778) and others.

It is clear that writers begin to show a stronger personal feeling and a passionate interest in the old, the odd and the unique. They point forward to a liberation of literature which culminates in a violent poetic revolution at the end of the century. Shifts in the view of nature and function of poetry proceed gradually and continuously. Before this period of transition, poetry was viewed as an imitation of human nature in general or ideal terms, deliberately synthesized or universalised for the dual purpose of pleasing and edifying. The test of a work of literature was the degree to which it communicated this imitation, with pleasure and edification, to its audience. Now we see the view prevail that poetry has as its major function the expression of the poet's emotions and that the relation of the poem to the poet is more significant than its relation to the audience. This movement develops in various ways throughout the century and indeed one can sometimes see a mimetic and expressive view of poetry held simultaneously by different people.

The literature of the latter part of the eighteenth century reflects not only the growth of poetic ideals but also a significant shift in taste and attitude taking place throughout Europe at the time. Of course new political and social ideals served to complicate this transformation. The French Revolution and its consequences, the Industrial Revolution in England, new ideas in psychology, metaphysics, philosophy and other sciences all played their part. Alfred de Musset, in his 'Confession of a Child of the Century', tells us clearly that: "All the evils of the present come from two causes: the people who have passed through 1793 and 1814 nurse wounds in their hearts. That which was is no more; what will be is not yet. Do not seek elsewhere the cause of our malady".<sup>13</sup>

Romanticism was not a movement without enemies. There were many writers and critics who reacted against the new theories of poetry and their manifestations, who tried to resist the spirit of the age in all the countries where the Romantic Movement developed. In England, for example, some of them opposed the theory of poetry articulated in Wordsworth's preface to his 'Lyrical Ballads' and Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria', and some even resorted to parody and ridicule of Wordsworth's simplicity or Byron's

'Weltschmerz'. But those who tried to resist the spirit of the age were defeated by it. Shelley wrote in the preface to 'Prometheus Unbound': "It (poetry) creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new ... Poets ... are, in one sense, the creators, and in another, the creations of the age. From this subjection, the loftiest do not escape".<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, Romanticism has been seen in very different ways: a fairy-tale way of writing, an imaginative and emotional disorder contrasted with Reason and Fact (the heart as opposed to the head), an intoxicating dream, the cult of instinct, liberalism in literature, the return to nature, the desire and illusion of beholding the infinite within the finite, or even a disease.

For the French it was 'le mal du siècle', that irremediable melancholy that the English call spleen and the Germans Weltschmerz. Anyway, Romanticism was a reality, a phenomenon which produced some of the greatest and the most beautiful works in European poetry and prose.

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## CHAPTER 2

### THE ROMANIAN ENLIGHTENMENT

#### A. THE TRANSYLVANIAN SCHOOL

In order to understand Romanian Romanticism, which presents some characteristics different from those of Romanticism in other countries, it becomes necessary to take account of the peculiar conditions that governed the development of Romanian language and literature in the later part of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th century.

We have to know why the literature of the Romanian Enlightenment and Romanticism, unlike that in other countries, acquired a strong national character. The short answer to this question is that the literature of that time was closely related to the history of the Romanian people; they influenced each other and both reflected the same trend: the permanent struggle for freedom, social justice and national unity and progress. All the writers show a deep concern with the fate of the Romanian language and people. George Cosbuc, himself a Transylvanian and one of the best appreciated Romanian poets, called them "the heart of their nation's heart". As we shall see in this chapter, history and literature are two inseparable

components of the Romanian Enlightenment. To ignore or to minimise the importance of the historical events would unavoidably lead to a total misunderstanding of the literature. Let us look first at the history of 18th century Transylvania in order to understand how it affected Romanian literature and gave a unique form to the Romanian Enlightenment.

For many centuries, long before the sovereign state of Romania came into being, the Romanians lived under cruel foreign domination. The worst was in Transylvania, the western part of today's Romania, where the Romanian movement and the struggle for a national identity were best represented. The Principality of Transylvania, part of the Habsburg domain (Austrian Empire), was inhabited until the First World War and after by four main groups of people: Romanians, Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers. The Saxons were the descendants of German colonists who came to Transylvania in the twelfth century. The Szeklers were a people remotely related to the Hungarians. The Romanians were the major ethnic group, more numerous than all the other groups added together and yet kept in intolerable conditions. They never had the rights of the other nationalities of Transylvania. After the 1437 uprising, an agreement by the three privileged peoples, the Hungarians, the

Saxons and the Szeklers, known as 'Unio Trium Nationum' (Union of Three Nations), consolidated their dominance over Transylvania, giving them all the rights and none to the Romanians who were considered "tolerated". The Romanians' Orthodox faith and Church were the strength that kept them united and preserved their national identity and language during the centuries of oppression. Persecution, discrimination and forced denationalisation, felt even by the humblest Romanians, strengthened their spiritual unity and assured their national survival. Keith Hitchins, Professor of History at the University of Illinois, who provided the first systematic survey and analysis of the Romanian movement and struggle for freedom, describes the Romanians' plight in the following way: "They were almost completely excluded from political life, for the overwhelming majority were peasants or, to be more exact, serfs, who, being subject in their public and private relations to the will of their landlords, were virtually without legal rights. Their personal freedom was so limited that they could not leave their landlord's estate, marry or take up a trade without his permission".<sup>1</sup> The Romanian serf, unlike the Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers, had also to pay a "tithe" to a Roman Catholic priest or a Protestant pastor, depending upon the religion of his landlord, instead of to his own Orthodox priest. In view of the

serf's numerous obligations to landlord, state and church, it is little wonder that the documents of the period referred to him as "misera plebs contribuens".<sup>2</sup>

In these conditions, as the Romanian population was unrepresented in the Diet, the Orthodox Church, "merely tolerated by the State, receiving no assistance from the State and even forbidden to collect the tithe from its own faithful, but obliged to contribute to the support of Roman Catholic priests and Protestant ministers",<sup>3</sup> played the most important role in their lives, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, uniting them in their struggle for existence. For generations, under heavy burdens and persecution, the Orthodox Church created a unique kind of relationship among the Romanians in Transylvania, educating them and exerting the greatest influence upon the Romanian national movement. Among the few Romanian intellectuals and political and cultural leaders, many were priests or sons of priests who never forgot that their sacred duty was to struggle for the political and social emancipation of the distressed Romanian people. One of these intellectuals was Ion Inochentie Clain, bishop of the Uniate Church from 1730 to 1751, who thought that by maintaining the Union with Rome, struck in 1700, the Romanians of Transylvania could achieve equality with the Hungarians



and Saxons. But his struggle for justice, equality and rights for his people was to last all his life and, despite his repeated appeals and 24 petitions submitted to the Court in Vienna during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa, his demands continued to be ignored. After being summoned to Vienna, where he pleaded in vain for Romanian rights, he went in desperation to Rome to ask for the Pope's support. This was the end of his struggle as he was never allowed to return to Transylvania and died in a monastery in Rome in 1768. Though he did not succeed in improving the plight of the Romanians, his struggle was not a complete failure. His followers regarded his endeavours as a worthy contribution to the national movement and built on the foundations he had laid. His nephew, Samuel Micu Klein (sometimes spelt Clein), Gheorghe Şincai, Petru Maior and others dedicated their lives to the same ideal and began to write about the origin of the Romanians and their language, and their right to live as free men in the land of Transylvania, the cradle of the Romanian people. Their main purposes were to awaken the national consciousness of the Romanians, to alleviate the causes of their misery and to voice their aspiration to political, social and cultural emancipation. Other leaders like Vasile Nicola, known by his nickname Horia, himself a serf to a Hungarian landowner, went to Vienna many times and presented the

grievances of the Romanians to the Austrian Emperor Joseph II. The Emperor himself went to Transylvania three times and showed such deep concern for the Romanians' situation that he wrote in one of his reports: "The Wallachian subjects (another name for Romanian), beyond all doubt the oldest and most numerous inhabitants of Transylvania, are so overwhelmed with injustice, be it by Hungarians or Saxons, and their existence is so pitiable that it is astonishing that all have not run away. I am not surprised that their houses are ramshackle; how can it be otherwise, when they are not sure of their possessions from one day to the next, and when they are daily and even hourly at the beck and call of their masters?". He tried to improve their condition but he met with the obstinacy of the Hungarian nobility who were very powerful and obstructed him. Horia, Cloșca and Crișan put themselves at the head of the serfs and a large-scale uprising broke out in 1784, but in the end it was suppressed and the leaders were broken on the rack and quartered. Yet, the Romanians did not give up their struggle. Young people who could study abroad like Samuel Micu, Petru Maior, Gheorghe Șincai and Ion Budai Deleanu, came back to their homeland and formed a cultural and political movement of the greatest proportions known as The Școala Ardeleană (The Transylvanian School). The Școala Ardeleană was the

liveliest expression of the Romanians' struggle in Transylvania for equality with the other peoples, for the propagation of their culture among the masses, for the awakening of national consciousness and for the perfection of the Romanian language. This is why the Școala Ardeleană is said to represent the Romanian Enlightenment. As the European Enlightenment stressed the necessity for the emancipation of man through culture and education and eulogized freedom and justice, it is not surprising that the educated Romanians of Transylvania enthusiastically embraced these concepts and applied them for the benefit of their oppressed compatriots. Thus the literary works of the Romanian Enlightenment took on a strongly nationalistic character. The ideas of the Enlightenment were picked up by the Romanians of Transylvania before their fellow countrymen in Moldavia and Wallacia. Strangely, while the western Enlightenment rejected history, looking upon it as something retrograde, proponents of the Romanian Enlightenment appreciated it as they discovered the past was superior to the present, mainly in the sense that their forefathers had not been subject to foreign domination. The most outstanding figure of the Transylvanian School was Samuel Micu Klein, who devoted all his life to the noble ideas of the Enlightenment.

The fact that he possessed a good knowledge of Latin, Hungarian, German, Italian and French, enabled him to study many manuscripts, documents and other foreign sources whose information he used in his work. Between 1800 and 1806 Micu wrote the four-volume work that was to be his crowning glory: 'Istoria, lucrurile și întâmplările Românilor' ('The History, Deeds and Events of the Romanians'). In it he sought to prove, among other things, the origin of the Romanian people and their continued presence in Dacia after the Romans withdrew their administration and army in 271 A.D. In short, Micu, as an innovator in linguistics, philosophy, and Romanian historiography, as a translator and as a man of letters in the spirit of the late 18th century, was an architect of the Romanian cultural revival.

One of the Transylvanian School's representatives who shared many of Micu Klein's passions for contributing to the cultural progress of his people and for the development of the Romanian language was Gheorghe Sincai. Many of his books were typical of the Enlightenment in Transylvania, such as 'Invățătura firască spre surparea superstițiilor norodului' ('Natural History as a Means of Eradicating Popular Superstitions'), in which he considered superstitions as an obstacle to people's spiritual and material progress and accordingly provided explanations of natural phenomena.

Șincai insisted on the use of the Roman alphabet and enriched the language by borrowing many words from Latin. Șincai had his manuscripts confiscated and was arrested and repeatedly accused of incitement to rebellion. Following these blows he was left in misery and died a tragic death.

Petru Maior, the third of the representatives of the Transylvanian School, devoted much of his time to his masterpiece: 'Istoria pentru începutul Românilor în Dacia' ('The History of the Origin of the Romanians in Dacia'). It represents a reply to those Hungarian historians who deny the origin of the Romanians and their right to live in Transylvania. This popular "History" exerted a great influence upon many generations of Romanians. Maior believed that the Romanian language derived from the Vulgar Latin of the Romans, with a Slavic influence which did not affect the basic texture of Romanian. Maior made a great contribution to the development of the Romanian language and to the theory of its origin. In this way Romania took another step in its progress towards becoming a literary language. Another great representative of the Romanian Enlightenment, regarded by some critics as the most notable, was Ion Budai Deleanu, also the son of a Uniate priest, who concentrated his efforts on Romanian history and

language. He reasserted the Latin origin of the Romanian people and language and the continuation of the Roman element in Dacia after 271 A.D. He observed that the only way in which the Romanians could improve their position would be to give up their nationality, their Romanian language and names, and become Hungarians. Because this belief was shared by a number of Deleanu's contemporaries, many Romanians in Transylvania can even today be found with Hungarian names.

In 'Temeiurile gramaticii românești' ('The Fundamentals of Romanian Grammar') he pleads for the adoption of Roman script instead of the Cyrillic alphabet, and in his vast dictionary he incorporates only those Romanian words in common use in all the Romanian provinces so that they could be understood and accepted by the whole nation. He did not consider words of Slavonic origin as "impurities" if they were in popular use, and he introduced many Latin and French words where the Romanian language had no equivalent. Ion Budai Deleanu was not only an historian and linguist. He was the first cultured poet to produce a noteworthy literary work, a heroic-comic-satiric epic entitled 'Țiganiada' ('The Gipsy Epic'), through which he introduced a new genre into the development of Romanian literature and proved for the first time that

Romanian had great poetic possibilities. 'Tiganiada' was the first prestigious work in Romanian literature, comparable with epics in world literature.

A doctor of medicine and a professor, Ioan Piuariu-Molnar was another luminary with a great interest in philology, the progress of the Romanian language and the culture of his people. His 'Economia stupilor' ('The Raising of Bees'), a work intended to popularise scientific knowledge, is a typical product of the Enlightenment. He was the first to seek permission to publish a newspaper in Romanian, but he was refused twice on the ground that it might disseminate the "dangerous ideas of the French Revolution among Romanians". So, at the very end of the 18th century, the Romanians were not allowed to have a newspaper. Like many Romanians of his time, he adopted the Hungarian name 'Molnar' in order to escape persecution. Yet he was arrested and imprisoned for his ideas. His collaborator and friend Radu Tempea also made efforts to endow the Romanian language with more order, in his 'Gramatica românească', in which he gave explanations in Romanian. The last representative of the Transylvanian School I shall mention, Paul Iorgovici, who travelled in many western countries including England, acquiring the ideas of the Enlightenment, is another Romanian man of letters who was arrested and imprisoned for his cultural activity and whose writings

were burnt. His main activity was also in the field of linguistics in pursuit of the most urgent mission of the Transylvanian School: the cultivation of language and through it the enlightenment of the people. He looked upon the language as a means of communication and as an expression of a people's development and accordingly urged the intellectuals to educate the common people, using a language that could be understood by everybody.

The Romanian Enlightenment in Transylvania continued long after the Transylvanian School through many learned men like George Barițiu, Timotei Cipariu, and others. George Barițiu, a prolific journalist, guide to the cultural domain and to education, historian and politician with progressive views, is considered to be the founder of the Romanian press in Transylvania.

Simion Barnuțiu, who lived and worked both in Transylvania and Moldavia, was one of the best Romanian orators of the 19th century, who recommended the removal of all non-Latin words from the Romanian language and their replacement by words from Latin.

Timotei Cipariu, philologist, writer and an unusual polyglot, who knew 12 languages, was one of the most outstanding personalities of Romanian culture in the middle of the 19th century. On his initiative, in



1847, there appeared the first Romanian newspaper printed with Latin letters, at Blaj, entitled 'Organul luminării' ('The Organ of Enlightenment'). He was one of the members of the commission that in 1861 established the official orthography in Transylvania. Passionately keen on improving the Romanian language, he has been looked upon as one of the founders of Romanian philology.

#### **B. THE ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE PRINCIPALITIES**

The Enlightenment ideas of the West also penetrated the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, though later than in Transylvania, whose literary movement itself had strong echoes in its sister Principalities. Owing to local circumstances, however, there is a great difference between the Transylvanian Enlightenment and that which took place in the Principalities. In Transylvania, the Romanians were not only oppressed and exploited, they were considered a "tolerated" people, and their status as the original and authentic holders of the territory they had lived in for millennia was denied. Their language, religion, traditions and their whole existence as a nation were in danger. In Wallachia and Moldavia, the Romanians, though under foreign oppression and exploitation, had never been denied the right to be masters of their homeland.

Mainly for this reason, the Enlightenment in these Principalities did not have the same strongly nationalist and militant character as in Transylvania.

In the second half of the 18th century, the ideas of the Enlightenment penetrated the Principalities both through the Greek language and by direct contacts with western literature. It was in the spirit of these new ideas, with their accent on reason and on the value of science, that education was reformed, first in Moldavia in 1766 and ten years later in Wallachia.

Also worthy of mention is the interest of Romanian intellectuals in ancient Greek and Roman culture. They also showed great interest in French literature. Contacts with western literature became more and more frequent and the thirst for political and scientific information increased. Nevertheless, no real artistic literature was created in the Principalities before 1780. After 1780 mention should be made of two important poets: Ioan Cantacuzino and Alecu Văcărescu. It does not mean that we should ignore other members of the Văcărescu family. Ioan Cantacuzino was the first Romanian poet with a printed volume of poems, published between 1792 and 1796 and entitled 'Poezii Noo' ('New Poems'). He also translated from Pope ('Essay of Man'), Young and Metastasio.

Ienăchiță Văcărescu (Alec Văcărescu's father) was the pioneer of modern Romanian lyricism (lyrical poetry). He was a poet, philologist and historian and one who wrote in his national language in a period dominated by writings in Greek. He contributed to the awakening of the national consciousness. An even more important part was played by his son Alec Văcărescu, a very cultured man and a passionate lyrical poet who was influenced by Petrarch's poetry. Alec Văcărescu's love poems broke the rules of Classicism more than those of Ioan Cantacuzino and are characterized by a profound sentimentalism. The works of these two poets seem to be the prelude to Romantic poetry. In fact even the tendencies of the translators around 1780 show the same trend towards sentimentalism. One of the greatest translators of the period was Alexandru Beldiman who translated 'Istoria lui Tarlo și a prietenilor săi' ('The History of Tarlo and His Friends') directly from French. In his translation, as in others, we can see sentimentalist or pre-Romantic ideas, such as the conviction that only solitude brings happiness, that the honest man finds his peace of mind by separating himself from other people, and the oscillations between duty and pleasure, virtue and sin. Beldiman translated another novel from French sentimentalist literature: 'Istoria lui Raimund' (in French 'Raymond et Marian') which glorifies the triumph of love of two young people in spite of all the

obstacles put their way by their wicked opponents. Alecu Văcărescu's son, Iancu Văcărescu, wrote poems pervaded by a rare sensitivity. He was obsessed by the idea of loneliness, by ruins and cemeteries, illustrating a new stage in the progress of Romanian literature towards Romanticism. His contemporary, Dinicu Golescu, a rich nobleman, translator and memorialist, based all his activity on his aspiration to promote the social and cultural regeneration of his country. His main work entitled 'Insemnare a Călătorii Mele' ('The Journal of My Journey') (1826), is the first traveller's diary in Romanian literature. It is characterized by its stylistic beauty, detailed information, naturalness, clarity and picturesque language.

Among all these promoters of Romanian literature and language, Gheorghe Lazăr emerges as the founder of national education in Wallachia. Like many others he came from Transylvania to escape persecution. His activity was based on the enlightened conception that backwardness and oppression could be ended by the spread of culture and knowledge in the Romanian language. He believed that there should be higher priorities than literature in the Romanian Principalities, the first of which should be to dissipate the darkness through the light of culture.

Another Transylvanian writer, philologist and literary guide, who became the most dedicated representative of the Enlightenment in Wallachia, was Ion Heliade Rădulescu. He was helped by Dinicu Golescu to publish 'Curierul Românesc' ('The Romanian Messenger'), the first periodical of long duration in Wallachia, a cultural journal with a large readership in all three Romanian Principalities. It first appeared in 1829, the year of one of the 12 invasions of Romanian territory by the Russians, and lasted up to 1848. He encouraged translations from western literature and published original poems. He was the first poet in Romanian literature who tried to achieve a Romantic panorama, and without doubt his works are one of the sources for Eminescu's poems.

In Moldavia, Veniamin Costache, Costache Conachi, Ionică Tăutu and Gheorghe Asachi are the most important enlightened personalities. Veniamin Costache, Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia, developed an intensive programme for the reorganisation of education. He set up schools, introduced Romanian language as a main subject, translated books and sent talented youths abroad to continue their studies, among them Gheorghe Asachi. His greatest concerns were to develop the Romanian language and enlighten the masses.

Costache Conachi, a remarkable poet, made Romanian language and education his patriotic preoccupation. His lyrical poems, full of sensualism, gave expression to the nobleman's mentality at the end of the 18th century, created a literary style and led to the christening of the period as 'The Conachi epoch'.

Another exponent of the Enlightenment in Moldavia was Ionică Tăutu, poet and translator, who contributed not only to the spread of enlightened ideas but also to the consolidation of pre-Romanticism in Moldavia. His refined lyrical verse, with its descriptions of ruins and its emphasis on sentimentalism, made him a forerunner of Romanticism in Moldavia.

Undoubtedly, however, the greatest figure of the Enlightenment in Moldavia was Gheorghe Asachi, a writer and cultural leader of Moldavia in the first half of the 19th century, whose parents had emigrated from Transylvania. His studies and travels abroad, especially in Italy where he gathered knowledge about the origin of the Romanian people and language and came across enlightened ideas and personalities, determined him to work for the emancipation of his nation. He began by translating from the pre-Romantics Young and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and little by little he became the primary agent in the development and stimulation of modern Romanian culture. He laid the

foundations of higher education in the national language and of the Romanian press and theatre, and in 1829 he edited 'Albina Românească', the first magazine in Moldavia. Generally, his numerous works reveal a mixture of Classicism, pre-Romanticism and Romanticism, in which Classicism remains predominant.

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## CHAPTER 3

### ROMANIAN PRE-ROMANTICISM

Pre-Romanticism refers to the period during the second half of the 18th century when Romanticism appeared, but without all its typical features, while Classicism dominated but no longer controlled the whole literary field. The term 'Pre-Romanticism' was invented to define that period of transition from Classicism to Romanticism.

After Paul Van Tieghem and André Monglond somehow officialised the use of the term 'Pre-Romanticism' in literary history, some critics accepted it, others contested its legitimacy. Originally, as Paul Van Tieghem popularised its meaning in the five volumes of his work "Le Prérromantisme, études d'histoire littéraire européenne", the term 'pre-Romanticism' comprised various reactions against the classical canons and the mentality of the Enlightenment, all of which had come to light in the second half of the 18th century and in which sensitivity was widely displayed. It is an agitated, turbulent and anarchical movement corresponding to the decline of Classicism and the beginnings of Romanticism. The turning point seems to have been Jean Jacques Rousseau's work which signalled the liberation of sources of inspiration from



the strict classical dogmas and instead promoted feeling and sentimentality. Pre-Romantics are looking forward to happiness in isolated places, far from people, on a deserted isle or in a remote, exotic and picturesque place, in the middle of nature, where their feelings and virtues correspond to natural law.

Jean Fabre and others reject "the artificial concept of Pre-Romanticism" because its features, chiefly sensitivity and sentimentality, have always existed to a certain extent. But, as the works of Rousseau illustrate, Pre-Romanticism appears as a real phenomenon based on reactions against Classicism and revealing sensitive poetry, the taste for rustic simplicity and everything that is natural, spontaneous and unfalsified.

So, the question is not so much about the word but about the phenomenon itself which in other literatures like Czechoslovak, Hungarian and Russian is called sentimentalism. What the critics cannot deny is the existence of this period of transition between Classicism and Romanticism, in which a new system tends to form, beside the prevalent rules of Classicism. In other words we can say that Pre-Romanticism is Romanticism both unemancipated and ambiguous. Here we can include James Thomson ('The Seasons'), Young

('Night Thoughts'), Ossian ('Elegies of Macpherson'), the sentimental novels of Richardson ('Pamela and Clarissa'), Rousseau ('La Nouvelle Heloise'), Gray ('Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'), Bernardin de Saint-Pierre ('Paul et Virginie'), Goethe ('Werther') and others.

In common with all the great literature of Europe, there was a period of transition before the Romantic Movement became firmly established in Romanian literature. Romanian Pre-Romanticism is even more confused and vague than that of Western countries. The period in which Romanian Pre-Romanticism appeared and developed cannot be stated precisely. More than anywhere else, Classicism, Enlightenment and Romanticism developed side by side in the Romanian Principalities. Some critics believe Pre-Romanticism in Romanian Principalities lasted until 1821 and after this became clear Romanticism. Others think it extended up to 1840.

Some researchers define Pre-Romanticism as a prelude to Romanticism but in a clumsy, timid and disorganised form. Though many critics deny it, we still have to recognise in Romanian literature, as we did in that of other countries, a similar period of transition from Classicism to Romanticism. As we progress towards

1821 we notice a certain change in Romanian literature, for example a stronger manifestation of sentimentality and an obvious return to nature. There is a tendency to explore the inner life of the individual, pronounced sensitivity and melancholy and the feeling of solitude, as well as disparate, unstable elements that appear and disappear in the literary realm. But none of the writers of the time can be classified as just Pre-Romantic. Their works were always a mixture of tendencies, though Alecu Văcărescu is tormented by violent passions and Nicolae and Iancu Văcărescu show a distinct refinement of sensitivity and a conspicuous capacity for emotional expression.

An important contribution to the emergence of Pre-Romanticism in Romanian literature was the translation of different western works at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. They were translations made with the aim of entertaining, enlightening and educating, or merely because someone financed them without them being needed in society. In a period of slow, small steps towards a national education and when the language had many shortcomings and limitations, such translations were regarded by the learned people of the time as patriotic acts. Between 1780 and 1820 among other translations there were 20 novels. Many of those translations were love stories that spread the taste for sentimentalism. To cite

only a few of them, Alexandru Beldiman translated 'Istoria lui Raimond și Mariana' ('Raymond and Marian') in 1801 and 'Oreste' in 1810, 'Istoria lui Tarlo și a prietenilor lui' ('The History of Tarlo and his Friends') in 1787. Ion Cantacuzino translated 'Intîmplările lui Ismin și Isminiei' ('Events of Ismin and Ismene') in 1794 and 'Numa Pompiliu' ('Numa Pompilius') in 1796. 'Istoria lui Tarlo și a prietenilor lui', a novel translated directly from the French, suggests that only isolation from people can bring happiness. It cannot be found among people because they are dishonest, wicked, envious and cunning. The world is dominated by evil and one can only find peace of mind by separating oneself from fellow humans. This attitude can be found later as a fundamental theme in Romanticism.

In the same way, 'Istoria lui Raimond si Mariana', a translation from the French sentimentalist literature, presents a history of passionate love that has a happy end after resisting and overcoming the wickedness of people. 'Intîmplările lui Ismin și Isminiei' also contains a Pre-Romantic atmosphere. The short story 'Istoria lui Maken povestire englezească de Baculard d'Arnaud' ('The History of Maken, English Story by Baculard d'Arnaud') translated in 1799 by I. Cantacuzino, is the story of an unhappy couple, in which even their own families were against their love.

All these translations propagate sentimentalism and the psychology of the Pre-Romantic hero who aspires after happiness far from people, in isolated places, as happens in 'Paul et Virginie' by Bernadin de Saint-Pierre. What surprises every researcher is the fact that none of the works of the great Pre-Romantic authors such as Young, Goethe, Rousseau, Ossian, Thomson or Gray was translated into Romanian in the period between 1780 and 1821, but were translated later. That implies that Pre-Romanticism in the Romanian Principalities came about through the translation of minor works rather than of those of the great Pre-Romantics.

However, this period between about 1780 and 1821 shows outstanding progress in the spiritual activity of the Romanian people. The opening to Western literature, either through works in other languages read by cultivated people or through translations read by a larger number of people, is a factor that contributed to the refinement of literary taste. At the same time, due to this direct contact with Western literature, more and more Romanian poets and writers make their own individual creations. Literature becomes a necessity for the preparation of an intellectual public and a higher standard of education.

During this period we find two more important authors, Alecu Văcărescu and Ioan Cantacuzino, whose works, though small, can give us an idea about the beginning of Romanian Pre-Romanticism. Both were cultured men who spoke other languages.

Alecu Văcărescu, the first son of the poet Ienăchiță Văcărescu, was a talented lyrical poet, influenced by Italian and French poets whose works he read in Greek. Petrarch was his favourite author. Like his father he wrote in his national language as well as in Greek, although at that time the Greek language was dominant in Romanian high society. His lyrical poems are almost entirely love poems, of homage and affection for a beloved woman whose portrait he tries to outline. He confesses in his verses the torments and the pleasures of love by sending messages and vows of everlasting love for her. The motifs are taken from the universal poetry of love like Anacreon, Sappho, Petrarch, Ronsard, Italian baroque, all combined with the lyrical poetry of Romanian folklore. We find in his poetry the contrasts of a love which either sets his soul on fire or freezes it.

There are elements in his poems that exceed gallant poetry through their expression of deep despair which did not exist in Romanian literature until then.

There is much more sincerity in the confession of love and it indicates an advanced attempt to liberate his lyrical poems from conventional restraints. The passionate tones found in his poems are the signs of an ardent temperament and sensitive soul. The signs of a new literary taste can also be seen in his poetry through his appreciation of solitude and exaggerated sentimentality. All these features announce a new type of literature, Pre-Romanticism. It is necessary to remark that both I. Cantacuzino in his preface ("Predoslovia") to his little volume, and Alecu Văcărescu in the preface to his manuscript 'Condicuței' ('Register'), underline the personal character of the poems, written for their own satisfaction. This fact appears as an emancipation of the individual's feelings, as a revolution against the tyranny of dogma. This also means that they were conscious that they offered something new, "unusual for the general taste" says Cantacuzino.

Alecu Văcărescu's verses in 'In flacăra care mă arz' ('In the flame that burns me') express his strong and personal feelings freely, an inconceivable act in Classicism:

"In flacăra care mă arz  
In loc de chinuri și necaz  
Găsesc tot mîngîiere  
Dulceață și plăcere."

("In the flame that burns me  
Instead of anguish and trouble  
I find lots of consolation  
Sweetness and pleasure.")

It is also interesting to observe that Alecu Văcărescu places nature on a very high level, almost equal to man, in one of his important poems entitled 'Foarte multă vaz placere' ('I see very much pleasure').

"Zic: c-o apă și-o verdeață  
Și un chip frumos la față  
Au fireasca lor putere  
Să mingîi o vedere."

("I say: a stream and a meadow  
And a lovely face of a girl  
Have an overwhelming power  
To delight a man's night.")

In another poem, 'Oglinda' ('The Mirror'), Alecu Văcărescu places his lover on an equal footing with divinity.



Nature becomes a common framework for his sentimentality, pleasure and dreams, as happens in Pre-Romanticism.

The other author, Ioan Cantacuzino, is the first Romanian poet with a published volume of poems: 'Poezii Noo' ('New Poems'). He detached himself from his contemporaries who were totally subordinate to neo-Greek literature by directing his preferences towards Western Pre-Romantic literature. He translated 'An Essay on Man' by A. Pope and many writings from French literature (from Montesquieu, Rousseau, Baculard d'Arnaud). At the confluence of Classicism and Pre-Romanticism his poems celebrate the pleasure of wine and love. His erotic poems are pastoral or sensuous, jubilant or provoking one to tears, interwoven with the poetry of nature. I. Cantacuzino is also the first translator of fables in verse in the Romanian language. He produced the first translation of the well-known fable 'La Cigale et la Fourmi' by La Fontaine. The influence of Western Pre-Romantic literature on Romanian writers was so great that, from then on, they would produce a new type of literature which could no longer be called Classical. Whatever we call this new tendency, Pre-Romanticism or Sentimentalism, it is a reality because it contains new elements contrary to or unknown in Classicism. The time limits of this new literary phenomenon are very difficult to establish.

As previously stated, some critics think it extends up to 1821, others believe it lasts up to 1840 or even further, disappearing or melting into Romanticism which was progressing rapidly.

After Alecu Văcărescu and I. Cantacuzino, in whose poems we found the first signs of Pre-Romanticism, we have to look at the work of other poets called Pre-Romantics by some critics.

Iancu Văcărescu, the son of Alecu Văcărescu, followed in his father's footsteps. His lyrical poems are full of sighs and distress or voluptuousness and sensual pleasures based on Horace's precept: "Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postere" ("Enjoy today the pleasures of the moment without concern for tomorrow or the future"). It urges people to take the present opportunity as nobody knows what will happen tomorrow. Contradictory impulses (of maximum joy and happiness or melancholy and despair) are part of the game played by the hearts of those who fall in love.

Costache Conachi is another poet of the period of transition we call Pre-Romanticism. We find in his poems the passion of a consuming love, detailed description of wild landscape and the typical sensitivity of the period. The majority of his works are erotic and elegiac poems. Let us look at the poem

entitled 'Jalaba mea' ('My complaint'). It is a love poem full of passion:

"Am văzut-o ... și îndată ca săgeata pe ascuns  
O simțire de iubire în inimă m-au pătruns ...  
Amîndoi într-o unire la acest lucru curat,  
Petreceam zilele noastre într-un gând și într-un sfat;  
N-aveam taină nici la gânduri, n-aveam lucru de ferit ...  
Ne mîngăiam necazuri, fericirea o-mpărteam,  
Totdeauna împreună, totdeauna ne doream ..."

("I saw her ... and at once the feeling of love  
Like an arrow pierced my heart ...  
Both of us united in this pure passion,  
Spent our days in total harmony;  
No secret thoughts, nothing to hide ...  
We shared our troubles and happy moments,  
Always together, we craved for each other.")

But this happiness and love begins to change little by little until they fill his heart with sorrow:

"Am iubit o muritoare și pe loc s-a prefăcut  
Bucuria în durere și iubirea în temut  
Am iubit-o pîn-la suflet și în nebunia mea  
Dumnezeu, noroc și lume pentru mine era ea."

("I loved an ordinary mortal but my joy  
Turned into sorrow and love into fear.  
I deeply loved her and in my madness  
She was all for me: God, luck and the whole world.")

Here we find a strange coincidence: C. Conachi makes his beloved woman the god of his life, an idea we met in one of Alecu Văcărescu's poems. Such an idea would have been unacceptable in Classicism. The poem finishes in deep desperation, that spiritual crisis typical of Pre-Romanticism:

"Iată parola cinstită: că de-acum cât voi trăi,  
Dintr-a tale muritoare pe alta n-oi mai iubi."

("This is what I say: as long as I live  
I will never love another mortal.")

Vasile Cîrlova, a colleague and friend of Grigore Alexandrescu, wrote first in Greek then in Romanian. His five poems were published by Heliade Rădulescu in 'Curierul Romanesc'. His lyricism foreshadows a Romantic tendency in advance of Heliade and Alexandrescu, a new orientation of sensitivity. In his poem 'Ruinurile Tîrgoviștei', Cîrlova breaks away from neoanacreontic poetry, by opposing it with a romantic hypostasis of the ego in an ample meditation on the theme of ruins, which penetrated Romanian

literature under the influence of Volney. This is the first Romanian elegy in the spirit of Lamartine in which sadness, undefined concern and loneliness are thrown into relief by contrast with the calm of nature. Through his meditations and romantic elegies he opens the way to a new kind of poetry even more clearly than his predecessors.

Another poet, Gh. Asachi, strongly influenced by Petrarch, wrote, among other works, lyrical poems in which we recognise Thomas Gray's melancholy of the graveyards as a clear Pre-Romantic feature. Like Alecu Văcărescu and C. Conachi, Asachi thinks nostalgically of past happy days he spent with his sweetheart in isolated corners of nature. He also deals with the motif of death in two of his poems: 'Mormîntul' and 'Primăvara', a motif that preoccupied almost all Romanian Pre-Romantics. Its origin is mediaeval and religious and suggests the idea of the meaninglessness of life, as expressed in the Latin words: "vanitas vanitatum, fortuna labilis".

Generally, we can say that Gh. Asachi's works show a mixture of Classicism and Pre-Romantic manifestations, in which Classicism still predominates.

In his first volume of poems, entitled 'Rost de poezii', Barbu Paris Mumuleanu included mainly erotic verses which, through their neoanacreontic accents and sentimentality, bear resemblance to Văcărescu's poetry. He adopted a contemplative attitude towards nature under the influence of Gray, Young and Thomson, and the inconstancy of man and the transient character of the universe are frequent motifs of his poems. These ideas seem to have influenced Eminescu in his poem 'Glossa'. There is a remarkable resemblance between 'Glossa' and one of Mumuleanu's poems entitled 'Vreimea' or 'Another Image'.

"Vreimea-nalță și ridică  
Vreimea face, vremea strică  
Vreimea suie și coboară  
Vreimea surpă și doboară."

("Time is rising and increasing,  
Time creates, time destroys.  
Time is climbing and descending,  
Time is ruining and degrading.")

Mumuleanu criticised the society of his time, and though he wanted it to reform, he was pessimistic about the efforts made by well-intentioned people trying to change its ways. This is one of the reasons why Eminescu called him "Mumulean glass cu durere" ("Mumulean a painful voice").

Mumuleanu, like Rousseau, rejects urban life, convinced that the towns are dens of corruption and vice, and that civilisation can only spoil and alienate the human soul. He prefers the simplicity and serenity of the countryside. The tranquility of the night, which very often inspires fear, is believed by Mumuleanu to be the proper environment for those who want to get away from people's wickedness and think and pray to God.

The motif of ruins in his poetry is meant to strengthen respect for the historical past and the virtues of the forefathers which can be moral examples to correct the present and future generations:

"Dator e oricare omul  
Patriei unde a nascut." (Patria.)

("Every man has a duty  
Towards the land where he was born.")

These Pre-Romantic motifs of ruins and night are present in the works of Grigore Alexandrescu and Heliade Rădulescu. They think night is the propitious setting for poetry and meditation.

Gr. Alexandrescu obtains an impressive effect in his poem 'Adio la Tîrgoviște' ('Goodbye at Tîrgoviște') by placing his ideas in the framework of a quiet night from the first stanza:

"In liniște, tăcere, văz lumea adormită,  
Ce uita-n timpul nopții necazuri și nevoi."

("In total silence I see the whole world asleep,  
Which during the night forgets hardships and troubles.")

A similar effect is obvious in another poem: 'Umbra  
lui Mircea la Cozia' ('The Shadow of Mircea at Cozia'):

"Dar a nopții neagră mantă peste dealuri se lățește  
La apus se adun norii, se întind ca un veșmînt ..."

("But the night's mantle is covering the hills.  
Clouds gather in the west, spreading like a garment.")

But night is not always quiet. Sometimes, as in  
'Așteptare' ('Waiting'), it is noisy, busy and  
surprising:

"Noaptea în aste locuri, n-are de loc tăcere,  
Totul se mișcă, umblă, dar toate sînt părere ..."

("Night in these places isn't quiet,  
Everything is moving, but everything is just illusion.")

In conclusion, night, like autumn and moon, was one of  
the favourite motifs in Pre-Romantic poetry.



Alexandru Hrisoverghi, another Pre-Romantic poet, apart from translating A. Dumas, Hugo, Lamartine and Schiller, wrote elegies and lyrics that contributed to the introduction of Romantic taste in Romanian literature. In his poem 'Ruinelor Cetății Neamțului', the only poem published during his short life, he deplored the moral decline of those who are indifferent to the vestiges of an heroic past.

Features and components of Pre-Romanticism abound in the works of all important writers of the period, like Gh. Asachi, Gr. Alexandrescu, Heliade Rădulescu, Cezar Boliac, Andrei Mureșan and many others. But there is no doubt that their works contain features of Classicism, Enlightenment and true Romanticism as well. The moral and ethical preoccupation is still strongly manifest. For example C. Negruzzi establishes a clear connection between the physical and moral beauty of a woman and stresses that love is a virtue if it is sincere and deeply felt:

"Ah, Amorul e virtute pentru cine-l prețuiește  
Pentru cel care îl simte și din inimă iubește ..."

(Melancolie)

("Ah, love is a virtue for the one who values it,  
For the one who loves from the bottom of his heart."

(Melancholy)

This combination of Enlightenment and Pre-Romantic dispositions and manners extends further than the subject of love, and the writers' significant interest comes to be in man as an exponent of nature. In brief, all the poets of this period cultivate a poetry of melancholy and sadness, of isolation and solitude. They sing of the ruins and graves and are deeply in love with nature. By exalting the primordality of feelings over reason and ideas, they inaugurated the reign of sensitivity in Romanian poetry. They created a new atmosphere in the literary field by breaking with the Classical dogmas and giving full expression to their thoughts and feelings. They developed the sentimental life of the individual and definitely enriched the Romanian language. In short, they prepared the literary ground for the impetuous Romantic Movement, for Eminescu's arrival.

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## CHAPTER 4

### A SHORT ACCOUNT OF EMINESCU'S LIFE

Eminescu's ancestry is not precisely known. There existed much speculation about his origin, a lot of suppositions, some of them almost legendary. He has been said to have been Turkish, Albanian, Persian, Swedish, Bulgarian, Ruthenian, Polish, Armenian or Servian amongst other possibilities, but there is no document, no precise proof to sustain any of these assumptions which range from the Baltic to the Caspian Sea. Eminescu's earliest known ancestor, Petrea Eminovici, lived in the 18th century in the village of Calinești in Suceava county. His son Vasile Iminovici, a peasant like his father, became a rich freeholder. Vasile's eldest son, Gheorghe Eminovici, born in 1812, fathered Mihai Eminescu and moved to the village of Ipotesti where he bought a large piece of land and lived there for the rest of his life. Gheorghe liked reading and learning and had legible and beautiful handwriting. While still young he got an administrative job on the estate of a group of rich landlords, among whom the most important was called Bals. Through hard work he acquired some large and productive properties; at the age of 28 he married Ralu (also known as Ralita or Raluca), the daughter of the high steward Jurașcu, of Joldești village, who gave the young married couple a sizeable fortune in money

and property. At this stage of his life, the Prince of Moldavia, Mihai Sturza, gave him the rank of 'căminar', a collector of duties on spirits.

Gheorghe spoke French, German, Polish, Russian and Hebrew. Gheorghe and his wife Raluca had eleven children, but a cruel destiny followed all of them, with some of them dying very young.

The first child was Șerban, born in 1841, who went to a secondary school in Cernăuți, then on to Vienna to study medicine. He fell ill with tuberculosis and died in 1874. The second child, Nicolae, like his brother Șerban, went to school in Cernăuți, then to Sibiu and Timișoara to study law, but without success. He became ill and, realising he was not able to earn his living, committed suicide by shooting himself. The third son was George, also called Iorgu, who followed a military career in Berlin where he was appreciated by his commanders for his military talent. Returning home to Ipotești on holiday, he also committed suicide like his brother Nicolae with whose death he was obsessed.

A sister born in 1845 and called Ruxandra died as a child, and then came Ilie who died of typhus. The sixth child in the family was a girl, Maria, who died at the age of seven. The seventh child was Mihai, the

poet, born on the 15th of January 1850, followed by two sisters, Aglae in 1852 and Harieta in 1854, then two other brothers, Matei born in 1856 and Vasile who died at the age of a year and a half.

Aglae lived to marry twice, then died of Basedow's disease. Harieta or Henrieta, described by Eminescu himself as a very intelligent woman with an extraordinary memory, though partially paralysed, proved to be a devoted sister to Mihai when he fell ill in 1887. She looked after him up to his death, and died only a few months after Mihai. The tenth child, Matei, born in 1856, became a pupil of the Polytechnic Institute of Prague, reached the rank of major in the Romanian army, lived in Turnul Severin and moved to Bistrița, where he died in 1929. With the exception of Matei, who had a long and satisfactory life, the story of the whole family was a tragedy.

Mihai Eminescu did not love his father, who tyrannised both his children and his wife, but adored his mother. This adoration can be seen in his poem 'O mamă' ('O mother'):

"O, mamă dulce mamă, din negura de vremi  
Pe freamătul de frunze la tine tu mă chemi;  
Deasupra criptei negre a sfântului mormânt  
Se scutură salcîmii de ploaie și de vînt ..."

Here is the English translation by P. Grimm:

"O Mother, sweetest Mother, thy calling voice so dear,  
Through time's dark mist resounding, in rustling  
leaves I hear;  
Where quietly thou sleepest, o'er thy most holy tomb,  
The wind now shakes the willows in heavy autumn's  
gloom."

She was a short woman, submissive, soft-hearted and quiet, who walked silently in the house with an air of resignation, working and doing her duties as mother of a large family, married to a man who believed that this was the only role for a woman. She died of cancer and was buried by her husband Gheorghe Eminovici, under the windows of the church in Ipotești. There is an inscription there saying: "Here lie the remains of God's servants Gheorghe and Ralita Eminovici in their everlasting sleep".<sup>1</sup>

Mihai was devastated by his mother's death. He would often go to her tomb which is overshadowed by locust trees and call her name. His childhood years, surrounded by wood, spring and river, his playmates and the patriarchal atmosphere of the village were strongly grafted on Eminescu's sensitivity. As in Creangă's case, Eminescu's childhood was shrouded in an

aura of fairy-tale. He frequently returned to the peaceful village to relive the past and to meditate. This demonstrates the indestructible link between his spirituality and nature and the people of his birth-place.

He went to the elementary school in Cernăuți and then on to the secondary school in the same town. He interrupted his studies to join a theatrical troupe of Vlădicescu, but the following year he decided to complete his education, and resumed his studies in Cernăuți. He lived in the house of the famous teacher Aron Pumnul where there was a vast library. There the young poet would find many books to read and he did so passionately. When Aron Pumnul died, in January 1866, Eminescu dedicated to him a poem 'La moartea lui Aron Pumnul' ('At the death of Aron Pumnul'), published in a commemorative brochure. After his debut he sent his poems to Iosif Vulcan who published them in his magazine 'Familia' in Pesta. Thus in February 1866 Josif Vulcan published his poem 'De-ași aveau ...' signed this time with Eminescu instead of Eminovici as Vulcan had decided to change his name.

During the summer of 1868 he journeyed to Blaj in Transylvania, the city "in which the sun of Romanianness rose". His novel 'Geniu pustiu', the

confessions of Toma Nour, a character whose physical and moral portrait retains many of the poet's features, reveals details about that journey when the poet discovered Transylvania and its people. From Blaj he went to Sibiu and then to Bucharest.

He became a member of the theatrical troupe of Pascaly and toured various Transylvanian towns, then Moldavia and Bucovina, where he stayed with his family. His father wanted him to study abroad, so he was sent to Vienna in the autumn of 1869. There he was attracted mainly to philosophy and law. Through his choice of courses we can see his preferences, and the way in which his studies complemented and supplemented his personality, enriching his knowledge and satisfying his curiosity. He did not limit himself to attending his courses but read as much as he could, from Kant, Spinoza, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Plato and others. In Vienna he befriended other Romanian students, among them the future writer Ion Slavici. From Vienna, Eminescu sent some of his poems such as 'Venera și madonă' and 'Epigonii' to the Romanian magazine 'Convorbiri literare' in Iași, which published them in 1870.

He returned to Romania without passing his exams.



He joined a literary society called 'Junimea' in Iași where, on 1st September, he gave the first public reading of his short story 'Sărmanul Dionis' and of the poem 'Egipetul'. They appeared in 'Convorbiri literare' in the same year and were followed by others. In a relatively short time Eminescu became well known and he contributed substantially to 'Convorbiri literare'. The literary critic Titu Maiorescu was the first to recognise his poetic talent and appreciate his intellect.

In November 1872, having decided to complete his studies, he enrolled in the University of Berlin. Junimea promised to help him. There he studied philosophy, law, history, economics and geography among other subjects. Maiorescu wrote to him urging him to take his doctorate so that he could take over a post of professor of philosophy at the University of Iași. But as before he failed to obtain the necessary qualifications.

In 1874 he left Berlin and, after travelling to various places, he returned to Iași where Maiorescu appointed him as Director of the Central Library. During that time he met Veronica Micle, a beautiful young lady towards whom the poet felt deep affection. As a result of personal conflicts he lost his post and Maiorescu again appointed him as inspector of schools in Iași and Vaslui districts.

He went from place to place inspecting schools and at the same time he researched the rural environment and folklore, enriching his knowledge of all the social strata, especially the peasantry which he considered to be the foundation of society and of the country's economy. While working as an inspector he made the acquaintance of Creangă with whom he was to maintain a close relationship. Later, having been dismissed from his post as inspector, he became editor and administrator of the paper 'Curierul de Iași', in which his short stories 'Cezara' and 'La aniversara' appeared. He did not settle there either and travelled to Bucharest where he began work for Lascăr Catargiu's paper called 'The Times'. There he met again Ion Slavici and Ion Luca Caragiale and renewed his friendship with them.

His contribution to 'The Times' lasted seven years, from 1877 to 1883. In this period he published articles in the spirit of the ideology of 'Junimea'. He analysed aspects of the political, economic and social life of the country. As a sound interpreter and polemicist he attacked bad organisation in the political, economic and social sphere, with honesty and talent.

In April 1883 he published his masterpiece 'Luceafărul' ('The Evening Star') in 'Almanahul

României june' ('The Almanac of Young Romania') in Vienna.

Editorial work at 'The Times', his passionate commitment to everything he did, and the hardships and deprivations of his life, exhausted him. His precarious financial situation did not allow him to set up a family. The long and dreadful tragedy of his family, plus other emotional influences and sufferings, overwhelmed him, and the first signs of insanity began to appear. In June 1883, the year of publication of 'Luceafărul', Eminescu had the first attack of madness. He was admitted to the 'Caritas' sanatorium, then he was sent by Maiorescu for treatment at 'Ober-Dobling' sanatorium in Vienna, where he made a temporary recovery. When Maiorescu visited him, Eminescu asked for the names of those who had helped him. Maiorescu answered by the very well known, warming and moving words:

"Well, Mr. Eminescu, are we strangers to you? Don't you know the love and, if I am allowed to use the proper word though it is stronger, admiration, often enthusiastic, that I and all the others in our literary circle have for you, for your poems, for the entire literary and political work of yours? It was a real explosion of love with which we, all your friends, contributed to the material demand of the situation.

"If it had been one of your own friends, and especially a friend of your high standing, would you not have done the same and given whatever you possessed, be that little or much, in order to help?"<sup>2</sup>

In 1886 Eminescu was admitted to the 'Mînaştirea Neamţului' mental asylum. His unhappy sister Harieta, herself partially paralysed, tried to help him through this difficult time of his life. It reminds of the English Romantic William Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy, who assisted her brother with an indescribable devotion. Again he recovered for a short time and again he was taken to a hospital, where he died on 15th June 1889.

The news spread quickly all over the country. Only now did people realise the true value of his work and how enormous the loss of such a great poet was. Many commented on his tragic destiny and the misery in which he lived all his life. Out of admiration for his genius and his work full of the greatest and most varied human feelings, out of compassion for his sufferings, people turned their anger and fury on the uncaring society and accused it of letting talented men die in misery and illness. Tudor Vianu describes it as a crisis in literary circles: "Public feeling overflows in the memory of the poet and gives it a

symbolic character. The soul of the country had not been pierced for a long time by such a deep crisis born of admiration, compassion and remorse."<sup>3</sup>

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## CHAPTER 5

### EMINESCU, A NATIONAL POET

In the literature of every nation there are periods when artistic creativity participates in the struggle for national progress and emancipation. Such periods have been known in French literature during the Revolution of 1789 and the decades before it, in the creation of the German spirit at the time of national unification, in American literature during the Independence struggle, and in Spanish writing during the resistance to Napoleon's invasion.

The idea of motherland or fatherland or homeland, the equivalent of French 'patrie', is characterized in writers' works by reference to the national, social, political and cultural environment in which they realised their identity and carried on their life and activity. This idea includes a territory, a language, a tradition and a history. Attempts to deny the essence, value and creative force of the idea of motherland, as in Pacuvius' slogan of ancient time: "Ubi bene, ibi patria" ("Where there is good, there is my motherland"), or in the Communist idea which proclaims internationalism instead of patriotism, have always been met with resistance or even violent rejection.

In preference, examples of love and sacrifice for the motherland have been praised and admired and even transformed into legend.

Theorized in Plato and Aristotle, evoked with veneration in Sallust, Tacitus, Caesar, Herodotus, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Schiller, Voltaire, Eminescu and so on, patriotism became a source of inspiration and motivation for people's consciousness. Horace, the Latin poet, addressed young people with the line: "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" ("It is sweet and pleasant to die for your motherland").

Wherever Romanticism came into being, it discovered folklore and added to the citizen the attributes of the patriot, creating national heroes and distinguished personalities fighting for national liberation and emancipation. Poets wrote verses which synthesized people's sufferings and aspirations, and mobilized them in the name of national ideals and interests. In such circumstances Rouget de Lisle wrote the 'Marseillaise', the national song of the French Republic, in 1792, and the Romanian poet Andrei Mureșanu wrote 'Deșteaptă-te române' ('Awake, son of Romania') in 1848. Maiorescu rightly considered that the 19th century should be named the century of the birth of nations.

For Maiorescu each people has a specific nature and a historic mission of its own, and the affirmation of these is possible only through some form of national state and a national literature and language. G. Ibraileanu thinks that the social almost always takes on the form of the national in Eminescu's work. This is correct, as patriotic feeling and attitude, together with hostility towards cosmopolitanism and demagogy, manifest themselves from the beginning to the end of all Eminescu's works. His first poems: 'La mormîntul lui Aron Pumnul', 'Ce-ți doresc eu ție dulce Românie', 'Din străinătate', 'La Bucovina', 'Juni corupți', and so on, reveal his desire for totally integrating his individual existence into that of his motherland and people. All are written to the eternal glory of his country. These first poems exemplify for Eminescu the *raison d'être* of Romanian literature, devoted service and responsibility to his country and his people.

Written in 1887, the poem 'Horia' foreshadows one of the central preoccupations of Eminescu's work, the glorification of the sacrifices made by his predecessors on the altar of national ascendancy, sacrifices that are usually in contrast with the lack of ideals of the present time. 'Horia' is transposed by Eminescu into mythology as a name entered in the consciousness of the Romanian land, a symbol of that perpetual longing for liberty, dignity and duty fulfilled.



Eminescu evokes and exalts the Middle Ages with the enthusiastic and brave voievodes raised from the peasant mass on merit, authors of great deeds. The most magnificent examples, Ștefan cel Mare and the Mușat family, were recorded in the epic poems of Eminescu: Mușat at war, Mușat in church, Mușat and the woods, the dream of a summer's night, Mușat's reign. In all these poems history is captured in the context of folklore. Ștefan is a brave and vigorous man, with a sleeveless steel coat and lamb fur cap, whom the woods and springs call to be their emperor. Both history and Romanian myth are part of Eminescu's poems. In 'Memento mori', for example, history combines with myth, demonstrating the origins and permanence of the nation.

There existed a mythical hypostatis of the Romanian people, when the people's destiny was deciphered by the priest Zamolxe (in English, Zalmoxis) who, according to legend, introduced civilisation and religious ideas about the immortality of the soul among his people, the Getae. Herodotus suspected that he was an indigenous Getan divinity. 'Memento mori' expresses the sadness of the man who is under the implacable will of destiny. According to Eminescu, the world is permanently under the wing of death, and historical epochs succeed one another invariably in concentric circles and are closed with the new circles, being the repetition of the previous one:

"Căci acelorași mijloace  
Se supun cîte există,  
Și de mii de ani încoace  
Lumea-i veselă și tristă;  
Alte măști aceeași piesă,  
Alte guri, aceeași gamă ..." (Glossa)

("For, to the same laws are yielding  
All that existence has had,  
And for many centuries  
The world has been gay and sad;  
Other masks repeat the play,  
Other mouths the same song jeer ..." (Glossa)  
(Translation by Dimitrie Cuclin.)

Beyond its fundamental character as a philosophical demonstration of the ephemeral nature of existence, 'Memento mori' represents the first successful outline of a national mythology constructed on the basis of historical information and folklore narrative. Before Eminescu, D. Cantemir, I. Budai Deleanu, Gh. Asachi and I. Heliade Rădulescu had attempted to achieve a similar result. We also find in 'Memento mori' an allegorical presentation of Roman rule in Dacia, the birth of the Romanian people and the invasion of the migratory people. It is obvious that Eminescu tried to cover in his work the entire history and geography of

the Romanian people. He lays emphasis in his poems on the period of the birth of the principalities of Wallachia and especially Moldavia with Dragoş Vodă and the generation of Musatins whose reign coincided with the most glorious time of the principality of Moldavia. Evidence of Eminescu's veneration of those times is the choice of Alexandru cel Bun's epoch (in 'Cugetările lui Dionis'), the evocation of Luca Arbore, and the reign of Ştefăniţă in the dramatic fragment called 'Mira'.

The past can act as a remote model on the Romanian people's aspiration towards progress and emancipation. Through its deeds, examples and personalities, it can prevent the present from committing the same mistakes. In Eminescu's work the past has a visionary aspect. First and foremost, grandiose images, that justify and ennoble the firm roots of the nation and have symbolic significance, form an emotional, invigorating and comprehensive picture of the resistance and triumphs of the nation in its struggle against every threat.

In fact Eminescu himself clarifies the relationship of past to present in his work. The desire for unity, for guidance of the creative drive of the Romanian people towards social progress and national solidarity through the elimination of unprincipled divergencies and disagreements, constitutes the essence of the 'Note on the planned meeting at Stephan the Great's grave'. This manifestation of generous and patriotic youth was

born of the awareness that "a meeting of Romanian students from everywhere could constitute more than a celebration of the glorification of our past ... We would think more seriously of the problems the future imposes".<sup>1</sup>

The intention of correcting the present on the basis of historical experience and aspiration to the future provided the substance of the antithesis of past and present in Eminescu's work. The present is conceived from history, the new imposes itself by reference to the past. With this reasoning Eminescu reveals his opposition to the epoch of Phanariot rulers and to some of the institutions that appeared after 1848 which he considered unsuitable adaptations, manifestations of the thirst for power and wealth of the corrupt groups unable or unwilling to understand the legitimate interests of the country. Here is the origin of the eulogy of the voivodes and the unwritten laws of the land, his contempt for the greedy rich and appreciation of the peasantry. The indispensable conditions for real progress are, in Eminescu's socio-political perception, assured by the existence of a stable state, managed firmly and intelligently, as during the reigns of Alexandru cel Bun, Mircea cel Bătrîn and Ștefan cel Mare. Thus his treatment of the present is characterized by a strong denial, as it is in the

creation of Maiorescu and Caragiale. If the past is used as a symbol and atmosphere, the present is dissected by Eminescu in all its details. He is sure that eventually all the difficulties and obstacles that stand in the way of the development of the Romanian people will be defeated. In this way Eminescu places his homeland and people under the sign of eternity. All these thoughts of Eminescu are communicated with intensity in his work, mainly in poems like 'Împărat și proletar', 'Odin și poetul', 'Juni Corupți', 'Glossa', 'Demonism', 'Intunericul și poetul', 'Viața', and 'Scrisori'. The following verses are a typical example of Eminescu's critique:

"Nu se nasc glorii pe stradă și la ușa cafenelei  
N-avem oameni ce se luptă cu retoricele sulii ...  
Panglicari în ale țării, care joacă ca pe funii,  
Măști cu toate de runume din comedia minciunii?"

(Scrisoarea iii)

("Do not glories spawn in gutters and over a glass  
of beer?  
Is there any dearth of jugglers apt to fight with  
poisoned speeches  
To the noisy approbation of the by-street knaves  
and leeches?  
Of funambulists in office, hawkers of the statesman's  
pie ...?")

(The Third Epistle)

Translated by Leon Lewițchi.

The contrast between history and contemporary reality, which provokes Eminescu to such virulent criticism, can be seen in his scrupulous examination of the major problems of the contemporary period:

"Au de patrie, virtute nu vorbește liberalul,  
De ai crede că viața-i e curată ca cristalul?" (Idem)

("Won't the liberal discourse on virtue, motherland  
so shrilly

That one feels inclined to reckon his life pure as  
is a lily?")

From this severe examination Eminescu draws conclusions of unquestionable educational value. Historical events are proof of the people's wisdom, and the historical personalities who represented them carry in their psychic and moral physiognomy the ideals of national unity, of abnegation and supreme sacrifice for the good of the nation, as Eminescu imagined it. The monumental image of the legendary old Dacia and its people who, through their character and motivation, reach sublime heights, is equalled only by the splendour and grandeur of their land of which they are an inseparable part. Eminescu's Dacism expresses the poet's conviction that the Romanian people had a Dacian structure which had been wiped out by foreign winds. The land had known a 'Golden Age' in Decebal's time, to which Eminescu grants a mythical value. He sees the birth of the Romanian people as part of the plan of the "great

genesis" and believes in the solidarity and durability of the Romanian nation:

"The Romanian stands his ground like a mountain of iron."

Eminescu evokes the national heroes, mainly those who bore with them the consciousness of the nation's continuity. They are: Decebal, Mircea, Ștefan, Petru, Rareș, Mihai Viteazul, Horia and so on. The myth is nourished with Romanian fairy-tales, songs and pastoral elements. Dacia is romantically likened to Valhalla, a place of honour and glory in German and Scandinavian mythology, the dwelling of the gods and heroes. Odin and his wife Frigg are replaced with Zalmoxis and Dochia, allegorical figures representing the joy of living and the indestructible unity between man and nature. The Roman occupation, though it had the character of an invasion that ruined this paradisiacal universe, endorsed under the will of the gods the creation of a new people, a synthesis of the great virtues and of man's triumph in his fight with destiny.

Dochia, in Eminescu's vision, is invested with the general features conferred by folklore to which he adds the historical meanings of Asachi's 'Dochia și Traian' plus echoes of both Greco-Latin and Northern mythology, all synthesized and localised by the poet. Dochia is

present in a plurality of suggestions in such poems as: 'Afară-i toamnă', 'S-a dus amorul', 'Luceafărul', 'Adio' and others, in which she is the personification of boundless nature, the empress of the woods who is waiting for the sound of Decebal's trumpet (in Muşatin şi codru).

Decebal is the ideal leader, devoted to his homeland and people to the extent of self-sacrifice, towards which, in his thirst for the absolute, Eminescu's genius leans so often. He (Decebal) is the hero of a long-planned epic in which the blonde goddess Dochia appeared.

From this world of historical legends and deeds, which through their drama and vigour satisfied the requirements of an epic, Eminescu selects symbols with philosophical value by which civic attitudes, virtues and political positions are represented. It has always been clear that Eminescu's sympathies are openly directed towards the personalities of Ştefan cel Mare and Mircea cel Bătrîn. The memory of Ştefan cel Mare is celebrated in 'Inchinare lui Ştefan Vodă', written in 1871, on the occasion of the festival at Putna, in 'Ştefan cel Mare' which is an outline of a hymn, in 'Doina', and in many political articles. In 'Muşatin şi codru' Ştefan is merged with the country itself, offspring of her body and blood.



We must also observe Eminescu's opinions concerning the need to remedy as quickly as possible a deficient public education system which prepared and produced clerks, solicitors and political errand boys, bent on getting rich overnight, but ignored the need to prepare young men for productive professions, a necessary condition for progress.

The poet is an excellent connoisseur of the country's history, and frequently, especially in his historical articles, resorts to arguments suggested by the experience of the past. He cites 'Invățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie' ('Neagoe Basarab's teachings to his son Teodosie') (in the article: 'Vremea strămoșilor noștri') and praises Matei Basarab and Vasile Lupu for their patriotism and careful management of their countries. Mihai Viteazul is admired even in his errors which the poet tries to justify, and Tudor Vladimirescu's revolution is seen as evidence of the thirst for national liberation (in: 'Ideile liberale și conservarea naționalității noastre', and 'Revendicările țărănești').

Eminescu's references to Șincai, Maior, Gh. Lazăr, Petrache Poenaru, Asachi, Heliade and especially to Nicolae Bălcescu (in the article: 'Bălcescu și urmașii lui') show the high emotion in which he holds them.

The Phanariot epoch is seen by Eminescu as a "long black night" and retrogression. Whenever Eminescu has the opportunity, the poet and the political thinker in him lash out through his pen at the overthrow of the ruler Al. I. Cuza by a monstrous coalition. The night of 11 February 1866, when the conspirators burst into the palace and forced him to sign his abdication, is attacked by Eminescu in extremely violent terms, of the kind also used by V. Alecsandri and Caragiale.

The worsening pauperization of the people, the mercantile and corrupt administration, the political scandals, the inhumane treatment meted out to the heroes of the Independence War left prey to misery and public charity, attracted Eminescu's violent opposition. This attests the profound involvement of Eminescu in the contemporary problems of the country. He wrote in his article 'The True Aristocracy': "The new, free and independent Romania, the new kingdom brought into being by the heroism of the Romanian people, has one small defect: it devours Romanians and gives birth instead to foreigners and false patriots".<sup>2</sup>

It is appropriate that we should remember the great and lasting interest of Eminescu in Transylvania, in the Romanian population's struggle for the national and social liberation of this age-old Romanian heartland and

for its unification with its sisters Moldavia and Wallachia. From this point of view the following poems of Eminescu are illustrative: 'Mureşan', 'Horia', the projected poems: 'Horiadele', 'Iancu', 'The Sound', the dramas 'Doja' and 'Horia', and especially the novel 'Geniu Pustiu' in whose pages we meet a directly expressed synthesis of Eminescu's national and patriotic beliefs: "Our people, I think, are of an empty, bitter and sceptical cosmopolitanism and, even more, they have the endearing habit of loving all that is foreign, of hating all that is Romanian. We have broken with the past, be it in language, be it in ideas, be it in our way of thinking; otherwise we could not appear in the eyes of Europe as a civilised nation ... You can find here historians who do not know history, men of letters and journalists who cannot write correctly, ministers who do not know how to govern, .... a shower of useless civil servants ... men to calculate how many years will pass before they come to power." Then he urges changes: "Change public opinion, give it a new direction ... a revolution of ideas in which the Romanian ideal should be more than human, full of genius and beauty, and finally be Romanian and again Romanian."<sup>3</sup>

As Eminescu defines himself: "I remain what I have always been, a romantic", and this truth is revealed by

his passion for natural history, folklore and nature, and for the "Catilinic" resolute men who devour themselves by living out their belief in their ideals. Examples of this tendency are, in the first place, the lyrical hero, namely Eminescu himself, Toma Nour, Horia, Mureșan, Decebal, the pleiad of those who laid the foundation of the modern Romanian state, evoked in his political articles, in Epigonii, the coriphaei of the Transylvanian School and the political, social and militant writers of the first half of the 19th century.

The publication 'Federation' of April 1870 inserted, under the pseudonym 'Varo', Eminescu's article: 'Să facem un congres' ('Let us hold a congress') which asserted plainly the rights of the Romanians in Transylvania and urged everybody to make common cause against national oppression. He thinks rights should not be begged for, they should be acquired and defended, and therefore "it is necessary for the soul of this old nation to work with her iron vigour ... unfortunately the Romanians do not trust their own powers. We are not yet convinced that power and salvation lie in ourselves".<sup>4</sup> In conclusion the national element and the patriotic attitude represent the framework of the entire creative output of Eminescu. Clad in artistic form, expressed directly and in categorical tones through poetry and political articles, Eminescu's militant and responsible attitude towards the Romanian people's fate

impresses through its contemporary significance. The profoundness of judgement and variety of problems tackled are an incontestable testimony to the poet's active involvement in his time. Criticisms abound and the violence of their tone sometimes reaches extreme limits, some regrettable xenophobic and nationalistic accents being explicable through the precarious national conditions in which the Romanian population of Transylvania lived under Austro-Hungarian domination.

The ideal of the homeland is lived by the poet at maximum intensity and it controls and subordinates all his other preoccupations. It is a homeland of real substance imbued, in its everlasting spirit, with a history which inspires confidence in the future, a landscape of rare natural beauty giving rise to moral dignity and a people endowed with the most distinguished qualities.

"Românu-n trecut mare, e mare-n viitor.

Și tu vrei ca poetul să fie trecător,

Pe-a țării sale țărături să n-aibă ce să cînte?

Dar nu-s culori destule în lume să-nveșmînte

A munților Carpatici sublime idealuri ..."

(Intunericul și poetul)

("The Romanian was great in the past  
and great will he be in the future.  
And you want the poet to be a passer-by  
Without having anything to say about his land?  
But aren't there enough colours to cover  
The sublime ideals of the Carpathian mountains ...?")  
( 'The Dark and the poet' )

Above anything else the strongest arguments that prove  
Eminescu's patriotism are his resplendent literary  
creation which is, without doubt, the climax of the  
Romanian artistic genius, and his genuine and constant  
care for his people and country.

His social and political conception was penetrated by a  
profound affection for and attachment to his country  
and countrymen: "I love this kind-hearted, tolerant  
and good-natured people ..."<sup>5</sup> said the poet in one of  
his speeches at a student gathering.

It is not surprising that, among his first poems,  
published when he was 17 years old, we find one, a true  
lyrical explosion of patriotism, passionately expressed  
in the following verse:

"Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie,  
Țara mea de glorie, țara mea de dor?  
Brațele nervoase, arma de tărie,  
La Trecut~~u~~-ți mare, mare viitor ..."

('Ce-ți doresc eu ție ...')

("What I wish you, homeland, sweet Romanian land,  
Land of peerless glory and bold aspiration:  
As your mightiest weapon strong and active hands,  
For your past, a future worthy of our nation ...")

('What I wish you, sweet Romanian land')

Translated by Andrei Bantaș.

From that moment the two temporal co-ordinates on which the patriotic ideal of the poet, formed spiritually in the cult of national history, would be projected, began to outline themselves: the past bravery of the nation and the future, morally compatible with the past. Between these two co-ordinates, past and future, the present is described as a degradation of the patriotic virtues, replaced now by hollow phrases, mere demagogical verbiage.

In Eminescu's conception, tradition represents the factor of conservation and active consolidation of the specific nationality of a people. Trying to defend the conservative party which through its 'junimist' wing wanted to appear progressive, Eminescu wrote:

"We endorse the opinion that the Romanian people could not develop into the Romanian people except by preserving its historical tradition as the foundation for its development".<sup>6</sup> Eminescu's assumption about progress in general is more explicit in his dispute with A.C. Rosetti's magazine 'The Romanian', in two articles published in 'The Times' of 6 May and 22-23 May 1881, under the title 'The historical development of Romania'. After defending himself against the interpretation that he had ever thought of proposing for Romania "a system that would revive the 17th century", the epoch of Matei Basarab, Eminescu was preoccupied with the need for an adequate socio-historic profile, giving as an example those states "with a historical past or which had in the course of hundreds of years developed their own judicial and administrative customs ... Customs without laws can manage everything, but laws without customs can do almost nothing".<sup>7</sup> Particularizing, Eminescu was thinking of England which at that time was really the most advanced country on the ladder of material civilization and of which even the junimist propagators of progressive conservatism were thinking.

Eminescu was always reminding the politicians and leaders of the time, in good faith, of the state of backwardness and the unutterable material and moral misery in which the Romanian people were living. In



another article in 'The Times' of 12 October 1882, entitled: 'Progresul real și fictiv' ('Real and fictitious progress') he wrote: "I wonder if this Romania isn't a true hell for its own people ... please tell us where else you can find so much illness, so low a standard of living as amongst the population of our country".<sup>8</sup> What we should gather from Eminescu's arguments until now is the lack of patriotism of those whom he accuses, primarily the liberal party of his time whose young men distorted the generous ideals of the revolutionaries of 1848, reducing them to a sort of caricature and "using them for their own mean interests". But his attitude towards Nicolae Bălcescu is thoroughly different in the article 'Bălcescu și urmașii săi' ('Bălcescu and his successors'), in 'The Times' of 24 November 1877, in which Bălcescu's work 'Istoria lui Mihai Vodă Viteazul' ('The history of Michael the brave') was announced. Eminescu asserts that even the book itself is the equivalent of "a cold breath over the dwarfs who pretended to share the feelings of a heart whose price they had never known ... consequently his (Balcescu's) enthusiasm warms us all as he is sincere, true, energetic and looks like having the determination of the ancient characters who amaze us all ... he would be horrified to see how liberty and enlightenment were faring in our land. He would see parliaments of blockhead puppets, universities in which professors are not able to write a correct sentence, journalists educated only up to the fourth class ...".<sup>9</sup>

In contrast with all those corrupt, wanton and false patriots about whom Eminescu says: "I-e ruşine omenirii să vă zică vouă oameni" ("mankind is ashamed to call you humans"), he places the image of the prince Mircea, an old man, unsophisticated in words and clothes, in violent opposition to the arrogant and haughty conduct of the Turkish sultan Bajazed the Lightning, who believed himself the representative of God on earth:

"Eu nu ți-aș dori vreodată să ajungi să ne cunoști,  
Nici ca Dunărea să-nece spumegînd a tale oști ...  
Impărați pe care lumea nu putea să-i mai încapă,  
Au venit și-n țara noastră de-au cerut pămînt și apă  
Și nu voi ca să mă laud, nici că voi să te-nspăimînt,  
Cum veniră se făcură toți o apă și-un pămînt."

('Scrisoarea iii')

("It's no wish of mine that ever you should get to  
know us well,  
Nor that the tumultuous Danube should with your  
drowned armies swell ...  
Emperors who thought too narrow for their needs the  
globe's four quarters  
Also visited this country to demand our land and waters.  
I am loath to boast, or fight you, but, note well,  
on coming round,  
They all got into great trouble and were levelled  
with the ground."

('The Third Epistle')

Translated by Leon Levițchi.

The description of the battle of Rovine, a pearl of Romanian poetry, contains a fundamental idea of Eminescu's historical and political convictions, that the glory of his country, the miracle of its people's resistance to so many enemies and misfortunes, is due to ordinary Romanians who love and defend their land. The unpretentious and plain prince, Mircea, answers the Sultan's threats with dignity and courage:

"Eu? Imi apăr sărăcia și nevoile și neamul  
Și de-aceea tot ce mișcă-n țara asta, rful, ramul,  
Mi-e prieten numai mie, iară ție dușman este,  
Dușmănit vei fi de toate, făr-a prinde chiar de veste;  
N-avem oști, dară iubirea de moșie e un zid  
Care nu se-nfiorează de-a ta faimă Baiazid."

('Scrisoarea iii')

("I? I just defend my poverty, and my troubles,  
and my folk ...  
So, what stirs here in this country, be it river,  
breeze, or oak,  
Is a staunch friend to me only and to you a deadly foe,  
And despite your unawareness everything but hate  
will show.  
Armies have we none, however, your great fame will  
not appall  
Our devotion to the homeland, for it is a sturdy wall.")

('The Third Epistle')

Translated by Leon Levitchi.

After describing the battle and enjoying the victory, the poet returns once again to his criticism of false patriots, dishonest demagogues and corrupt and ignorant folk, at the end of 'Scrisoarea iii'. The poet is so disgusted with them that he invokes the image of Vlad Ţepeş (Vlad the Impaler), the harsh but fair justice-maker, for an exemplary and radical solution:

"Cum nu vii tu, Ţepeş Doamne, ca punînd mîna pe ei,  
Să-i împarţi în două cete: în smintiţi şi în mişei,  
şi în două temniţi large cu de-a sila să-i aduni,  
Să dai foc la puşcărie şi la casa de nebuni."

('Scrisoarea iii')

("You must come, o dread Impaler, to confide them to  
your care,  
Split them into two partitions, here the fools, the  
rascals there,  
Shove them into two enclosures, from the broad  
daylight exile them,  
Then set fire to the prison and the lunatic asylum."

('The Third Epistle')

Translated by Leon Leviţchi.

In conclusion Mircea is the expression of consciousness of invincibility and unprovocative power. He embodies the will for freedom of people with long historic tradition and an unswerving determination.

Eminescu's conception of national sovereignty was unequivocally formulated when he was still a student, contributing to *Federatiunea* (Federation) in 1871, in his outstanding article: 'Să facem un congres' in which he stated: "Nobody else but the people themselves must be the masters here (in Austro-Hungary, an allusion to Transylvania) and to transfer their sovereignty to hands other than those of the people is a crime against them". From this we can conclude that national dignity for Eminescu constituted a major element of the foreign policy of every state, be it large or small. In another article: 'Politica noastră externă' ('Our foreign policy') of 6 March 1880 in 'The Times', Eminescu wrote: "Yes, because the moral dignity of the small state can be as important as that of the large, and to fight and die for the most sacred things of the human heart is as fair for the small as it is for the large".

To the great poet, besides labour, another factor in the civilisation of a people is culture. The spiritual activity of a people expressed in the creation of folklore and in the profoundly national works of highly cultivated men is an indication of social progress. Eminescu admires the sincerity of the work of past generations and its elevation of the collective ideal and service to the country, in contrast with the lack of resonance in the creation of the young, who just simulate patriotism behind which they hide their selfish individual interests:

"Iară noi? noi, epigonii? ... Simțiri reci,  
harfe zdrobite,  
Mici de zile, mari de patimi, inimi bătrâne, urâte,  
Măști rîzînde, puse bine pe-un caracter inimic;  
Dumnezeul nostru: umbra, patria noastră: o frază;  
In noi totul e spoială, totu-i lustru fără bază;  
Voi credeți în scrisul vostru, noi nu credem în nimic."

(Epigonii)

("And we, epigones, their offspring? Chilly feelings,  
broken harps,  
Too big-headed, too small-minded, impotent and worn-  
out hearts,  
Each a grinning mask adjusted aptly on a scurvy mind,  
All our Holy is a phantom and our homeland merely  
bluster,  
With us everything is varnish, everything but  
surface lustre.  
You believe in your own writings, we to all belief  
are blind.")

(Epigonii)

Translation by Leon Levițchi.

The past-present antithesis, based mainly on reference to the literary or historical past, is intended to shape another future and destiny for the Romanian people.

Eminescu's articles show him defining his own criteria of high social ethics, a patriotic and humane orientation in whose spirit he judges people and history and condemns the present. Eminescu proved to be one of the greatest journalists of his country through his talent and burning passion for a cause he considered both just and the most soul-uplifting of all, the cause of his people and country. He was not only a brilliant poet but also a profound thinker, constantly preoccupied with social and historical problems to which he dedicated himself with all the devotion of his journalistic profession. Eminescu's soul was charged with patriotic fervour increased by his extraordinary sensitivity to the events of his people's history and the geography of his country. His articles occupy a unique place in Romanian journalism beside his literary work. In fact they cannot be separated. Brought up in the cult of Romanian literature and of the treasure of national folklore, Eminescu attached great importance to linguistics both in the sphere of his artistic activity and outside it. This is another facet of his patriotism. The man who is rightly considered the master creator of Romanian literary language saw in the language of his people the crystallized form of its tradition and culture, in other words, an essential factor in the definition of the specific

national character: "Most people are not able to assimilate the supreme results of science; they have nothing to contribute; but everyone has and needs a spiritual treasure, a moral support in a world of misery and sorrow, and his treasure is preserved by his own language ... Only in his own language do the old teachings, the history of his forefathers, the joy and grief of his fellow men, go straight to his heart. Even if a language does not have the necessary development to express the supreme abstractions of the human mind, none is void of the concrete expression of feeling, and only in his own language does a man understand his heart completely"<sup>10</sup> From this point of view Eminescu admires the cultural contributions of previous writers:

"Văd poeți ce-au scris o limbă ca un fagure de miere:  
Cichindeal gură de aur, Mumulean glas cu durere, ..."  
( 'Epigonii' )

("Those were bards who used a language tuneful as a purling book:  
Cichindeal, the golden-mouthed, Mumulean, the sorrow's book." )  
( 'Epigonii' )

Translated by Leon Levițchi.



Eminescu's patriotism is a universe of fine feelings and thoughts, a grand projection of what his homeland and people could generate within the limits of their own national spirit. It can be demonstrated by many examples from his artistic work, including one of his greatest patriotic poems, 'Doina', which for nearly half a century has been banned and taken out of any book in the country by the Communist regime for being "chauvinistic" and "inciting people to disorder". In reality, 'Doina' was banned for the following reasons:

1. In his hatred against invading enemies, mainly from the East, the poet expressed his feelings in verses like:

"De la Nistru pîn'la Tisa  
Tot românul plînsu-mi-s-a  
Că nu mai poate străbate  
De-atîta străinătate."

("From the Dniester to the Tisza  
All Romanians complained  
That they cannot live in peace  
Because of the hateful foreigners."

('Doina')

2. He showed maximum contempt for traitors, those who become slaves of the invaders or occupiers and tyrannize their own people. Eminescu utters the worst possible imprecations against them, which were interpreted as fitting the Communist rulers:

"Cine-a îndrăgit străinii  
Mînca-i-ar inima cîinii,  
Mînca-i-ar casa pustia  
Și neamul nemernicia."

("Those who sell themselves to foreigners  
Have their heart eaten by dogs,  
Their house should be deserted  
And their family disgraced.")

('Doina')

3. The poem convincingly urges people to revolution in order to get rid of the foreign yoke and tyrants:

"Ștefane, Măria Ta,  
Tu la Putna nu mai sta, ...  
De-i suna a treia oară  
Toți dușmanii o să piară,  
Din hotară în hotară  
Indrăgi-i-ar ciorile  
Și Spînzurătorile."

("Steven, your Highness,  
Do not wait in Putna,  
Blowing your horn three times  
All the enemies will vanish,  
From one frontier to another  
Let them pray to the ravens,  
Send them to the gallows.")

('Doina')

The junimist critic Maiorescu who in the first phase of his thinking excluded patriotism from art and then changed his mind and eulogized the struggle for the protection of the national inheritance in Octavian Goga's poem 'Oltul', said: "Patriotism is a true and deep feeling, and being so, it can, in some circumstances, originate poetry".<sup>11</sup>

That is why he approved of patriotism in lyrical poetry and appreciated Eminescu's patriotic poems. Eugen Lovinescu, the interpreter of modern Romanian literature and critic for the literary magazine 'Sburătorul', who supported with great passion the specific values of the art of writing, in his 'Critice', was convinced that patriotic feeling could inspire aesthetic expression like any other feeling. He not only discusses the social function of poetry but he approves of the active role of the poet in society's life, and of his patriotism and indicates the direction of Romanian patriotic poetry as the transferring of a torch from one writer to another.

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## CHAPTER 6

### EMINESCU'S CONCEPT OF NATURE AND LOVE

Nature is a complex system of elements and phenomena, a controlling set of forces and principles in the world, often viewed as a creative guiding intelligence established for the regulation of the universe, sometimes personified as equivalent to God, natural law or universal order. The feeling for nature has appeared, has been consolidated and has progressed in harmony with the psychological development of mankind. Man has always prostrated himself before nature and loved it as a son loved his mother, feeling that he was part of it and a product of it.

The relation between man and nature, a consequence of millennia of interdependence between them, implies a wide variety of degrees of perception of nature which have evolved considerably from one epoch to another. Though the feeling for nature is an essentially psychological phenomenon, it is men of letters and landscape painters like Constable and Turner, rather than psychologists, who have dealt with it most extensively.

Every well known writer has referred to nature to the extent that he felt attracted to it, wondered at it and expressed his feelings for its beauty and grandeur. Shakespeare sees the feeling for nature as an affection, genuine and spontaneous:

"One touch of nature, makes the whole world kin,  
That all, with one consent, praise new-born gauds,  
Though they are made and modelled of things past,  
More laud than gilt o'er dusted."<sup>1</sup>

European Romanticism signalled a strong recrudescence of the feeling for nature through the elaborate vision of the works of Chateaubriand, V. Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Lamartine, J.J. Rousseau, W. Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Byron and Shelley. But, before all these, there were others in the 18th century who had prepared the way, like Thomas Warton, W. Thomson (the greatest poet of nature of his time with his famous 'The Seasons' which formed the basis of a school in England), Ewald von Kleist in Germany and Saint Lambert in France. The historical evolution of the feeling for nature, its continual diversification and refinement, brought out through the wide range of the human soul's reactions, can be traced through the varying landscapes which appear in literary works.

In Romanian literature the feeling for nature knew a particular variety and intensity integrated in the artistic expressions found in poems, novels, stories and travel writings. Thus we must mention, as examples, Eminescu, Macedonski, Alecu Russo, D. Golescu, Asachi Duiliu Zamfirescu, Ion Creangă, Vasile Alecsandri, and many others.

At the end of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century the images of nature were enriched and greatly refined from simple presentation of natural elements to the complex romantic landscape typified by the "état d'âme" (mood) of Amiel, pervading the inner values of the human soul. Infused with intense subjectivity, the feeling for nature would become an "alter ego" of the poet or the writer's spiritual state as happened in Eminescu's works, the culmination of its development.

Eminescu's radical process of subjectivization of nature accomplished and exceeded the old formula of "état d'âme". There is a double conversion in his works: to the incandescence of the feeling, but also to the strength of ideas by a deep, simultaneous action of sensitization and symbolization. The theme of nature in Eminescu's work does not represent a return to nature as some mistakenly believed.

In practice he never alienated himself from it. Nature, like love, is a fundamental element of Eminescu's creative work; it is ubiquitous and constantly converging with folklore. The landscape "état d'âme" occurring sporadically in the writing of the "pașoptiști" reaches its consummation with the higher value accorded to it by Eminescu. "The woods, the sea, the river, the moon" - remarks G. Călinescu - "are not phenomena but ideas, divinities".

Deeply touched by the realities of the Romanian landscape that he knew through his numerous wanderings in the country, Eminescu unveiled its combination of meanings and merits, some of them in new ways, others by taking over old echoes from lyrical folklore poetry. We trace the evolution of mythologies of the springs, of night or moonlight, of woods and water. Among these, Eminescu's treatment of the woods and water reaches heights whose value can hardly be compared with the achievements of previous literary works of the world.

Though Eminescu's prose includes the majority of elements and motifs of nature found in the Eminescian landscape, it does not attain the symbolical value and the profundity of expression existing in his poetry.

For example, the image of "codru" (woods) met episodically in his prose, is far from having the weight, the frequency and the multitude of meanings that are so conspicuous in his poetry between 1875 and 1883. But it is true that his prose contains, in its references to nature, striking and dreamlike images of the strange, the fantastic and the miraculous, of the escape into nature and the romantic desire to become one with it.

Escape into nature is one of the chief expressions of the Romantic dissatisfaction with and protest against the social constraints, conventionality, money worship and everything that damages or perverts the original human nature. Man's flight to nature as illustrated in Eminescu's poetry and prose is not an act of cowardice or recognition of his physical and spiritual powerlessness. It is neither a total defeat nor a surrender to the forces that overwhelm him. Eminescu leaves enough room for struggle, hope and aspiration towards a recovery of man's uncorrupted state. The flight into nature has a multivalent character; it has many different causes and consequences.

Therefore the motifs, a regular feature of Eminescu's Romanticism, is customary, always tending towards the same romantic aspiration, the primordial unity of man with nature, a harmonious communion which has been lost.



The alienation of man from nature generated the nostalgia for a return to it, therefore the escape into nature of the Romantics is an attempt to re-establish the lost connection with Mother Nature. This effort constituted the central preoccupation of the Romantic philosophers of nature in Germany whose influence is felt in Eminescu's work.

But the motif of escape into nature does not belong exclusively to Romanticism since all the great Romantics were preceded by Horace, Virgil and, even before them, the Alexandrian idyllic poetry. The Renaissance was the first movement to resume the forgotten motif of escape into nature and it then conveyed it to the Romantics. Eminescu took it over by creatively developing and enriching it. Nature is not only a protective environment and a place conducive to meditation and confession. Eminescu goes beyond these nuances. He gave to his vision of a regenerative nature an unsurpassed artistic brilliance and an exceptional sensory richness.

In this process of sensitization to the landscape, Eminescu achieved more than anybody before and reached a level that eliminates analogy with his predecessors. He captures the landscape, mainly the Moldavian one, in those particular features that make it unique, with

melancholy modulations that herald one of the most talented Romanian novelists, Mihail Sadoveanu. In the process of sensitization and subjectivization of nature, Eminescu's landscape assumes a certain state of mind accompanied by inner tensions that create an atmosphere of disquiet and emotion. Sometimes it involves philosophical ideas too, as in 'Avatarii faraonului Tla', where the originality of Eminescu's landscape is revealed by the leit-motif of the strenuous and unrelenting pursuit of eternal life and of the inevitability of death that becomes the tragedy of the human being unable to change destiny.

As a great story teller, Eminescu does not just observe reality: he recomposes and beautifies it. He gives it an air of novelty, greatness and durability, and infuses it with profound meaning. Nobody before Eminescu succeeded in describing reality so masterfully. There are many such descriptions in his poems and prose which form examples of beauty and competence in the Romanian art of illustration. But Eminescu the poet outshines Eminescu the prose writer:

"Doar izvoarele suspină,  
Pe cînd codru negru tace;  
Dorm și florile-n grădină  
Dormi în pace.

.....

Peste-a nopții feerie  
Se ridică mîndra lună,  
Totu-i vis și armonie  
Noapte bună."

('Somnoroase păsărele')

("Only springs are sighing deep,  
Silence rules and night-black wood;  
Even gardens are asleep.

Peace is good.

Over night's charmed fairy-tale,  
Proudly does the moon shed light;  
Dreams and harmony prevail,

So, good night.")

.....

(Translation by Andrei Bantaș.)

It can be said that the whole of nature is seen by  
Eminescu as being animated by a hidden demonic power  
that has its own inner life, full of energy and drama:

"Rîuri calde ca și sara apa-n arcuri o coboară  
Prăvălind-o purpurie peste scările de stînci;"

('Memento mori')

("Warm rivers like the evening carry their water  
Over the rocky steps.")

Eminescu is a painter of impressive, intense and disturbing landscapes, images and phenomena. These fit his spirit perfectly because they give his sense of fantasy the chance to venture into the unknown, to reveal what seems to be hidden beyond the appearance of reality. There his sense of fantasy discovers new things, new symbols and mysteries which Eminescu uses to recreate reality. Realism decreases and loses ground but, what realism loses, the poet's imagination and power of creativity gains.

But there is a difference in the way Eminescu composes his landscape between his first and second creative periods. In 'Melancolie' the landscape appears like an artistic construction, a refined and complex embodiment:

"Părea că printre nouri s-a fost deschis o poartă,  
Prin care trece albă regina nopții moartă.  
O, dormi, o, dormi în pace printre făclii o mie  
și în mormânt albastru și-n pânze argintie,  
In mausoleu-ți mîndru, al cerurilor arc,  
Tu adorat și dulce al nopților monarc."

("It seems a gate has opened between the clouds

forthright

And through it passes pearl-white the lifeless queen  
of night.

Oh, sleep, oh, sleep, in quiet, among a thousand stars  
Within your tomb of purple and in your silver vase  
Your stately mausoleum, the veils of heaven's vault  
You sweet, benighted monarch, whom we with love exalt.")

(Translation by Andrei Bantaş)

In 'Mai am un singur dor', the landscape is built up  
from impressions picked up directly from nature, true  
to life, unadorned and without any transfiguration:

"Şi nime-n urma mea  
Nu-mi plîngă la creştet,  
Doar toamna glas să dea  
Frunzişului veşted.  
Pe cînd cu zgomot cad  
Izvoarele-ntr-una,  
Alunece luna  
Prin vîrfuri lungi de brad."

("Behind me let no-one

Lament my death and weep;  
Let withered leaves alone  
Chant autumn dirges deep.

"While from the rock springs fall  
And moan and never stop,  
The moon will glide atop  
Of firs, so straight, so tall." )

(Translation by Leon Levițchi)

Eminescu's eroticism is based on harmless and natural innocence in the sense that his feelings for his beloved woman are genuine and strong, and there is nothing false or artificial in them. He dreams of a graceful, innocent woman who never shows malice, infidelity or pretence. But, as innocence is the sign of spiritual purity and simplicity, the sign of those who shunned social complexities and the degrading effect of civilization, Eminescu's idyll occurs in the framework of a pure nature as close as possible to Eden, as in the poem 'Floare albastră':

"Hai în codrul cu verdeață,  
Und-izvoare plîng în vale,  
Stîncă stă să se prăvăle  
In prăpastia mareață."

("Come, those woodlands are our bliss,  
Springs there in the valley weep,  
Rocks like falling as they peep  
Down into the great abyss.")

(Translated by Dimitrie Cuclin)

The woman who loves him responds with tenderness and appropriate fondness:

"Și de-a soarelui căldură  
Voi fi roșie ca mărul  
Mi-oi desface de-aur părul  
Să-ți astup cu dînsul gura."

("After to the sun I've sung  
Redeemed by its rays, I'll care  
To undo my golden hair  
And with it thy mouth I'd bung.")

(Ibidem)

In the same poem a few verses like:

"Grija noastră n-aib-o nime,  
Cui ce-i pasă că-mi ești drag?"

("Our care no-one shall rehearse:  
When but my heart thy thoughts fill.")

(Ibidem)

reveal Eminescu's constant obsession to free himself from any human presence around him which could disturb his happiness. He wants to be free like nature itself and under its protection, without any contact with other human beings or society. It is as if Eminescu

were saying: "Intimacy needs privacy and the peaceful shelter of nature".

A very similar image of a natural environment for his rendezvous is found in another poem, 'Dorința':

"Vino-n vale la izvorul  
Care tremură pe prund  
Unde prispa cea de brazde  
Crengi plecate o ascund."

("Oh, come to the wood, the fountain  
Bubbles on the pebbles round  
And the lowly-bending branches  
Hide a plot of terraced ground.")

(Translation by Leon Levițchi.)

The poem 'Dorința' contains a clear invitation to the wood. This invitation is adorned and enriched with a whole plan of happiness described in detail. Here we perceive Eminescu's sensual imagination in full flight towards the highest point of love. It is said that Eminescu worked very hard and very long on this poem before reaching its final form. In the end he abandoned many expressions and images, reducing the entire poem to 24 verses.



All the literary critics agree that 'Dorința' is one of Eminescu's immortal masterpieces. The poet's ecstasy, the hospitable wood which seems deeply absorbed in thought, and the flowers of the lime tree falling over the two lovers give a mystical meaning to their appointment. In 'Dorința' the dream of love is dominant while the obsession with death and suffering is almost totally removed. There is just one suggestion of this obsession, almost imperceptible, in the final verses, which the reader may not notice.

Eminescu sent a copy of this poem to the woman who inspired him with love at the time, Veronica Micle, in March 1876. She was happy to read it but, when a quarrel broke out between them in 1880, four years later, she sent it back, together with a collection of other poems he had dedicated to her. What is interesting and worth mentioning is that there is no conversation between the two lovers in the poem. Neither of them asks any questions. The whole range of superb images and expressions represents a multitude of dreams and desires that run through the poet's imagination from the beginning of the poem to the end.

There is a perfect harmony of feelings and thoughts between the two, a total understanding and agreement of tastes and preferences that make words

unnecessary. It illustrates the same romantic tendency of the poet towards ideal and perfect love. The idea that a perfect harmony of feelings and thoughts between two lovers makes words unnecessary can be found in other poems as well. For example in 'Pe aceeași ulicioară':

"Și lăsându-te la pieptu-mi,  
Nu știam ce-i pe pământ,  
Ne spuneam atât de multe  
Fără-a spune un cuvânt".

("Where you rested on my bosom  
Where, to blissful worlds transferred,  
We spoke volumes to each other  
Without uttering a word".)

(Translated by Leon Levițchi)

The same intention of creating an ideal image of an angelic, adorable woman can be traced in the poem 'Atât de fragedă'. The sweet and godly beauty of such a fairylike woman is in fact a projection of the poet's dream, a supreme achievement of a romantic disposition:

"Atît de fragedă, te-asemeni  
Cu floarea albă de cireș,  
Și ca un înger dintre oameni  
In calea vieții mele ieși.

Abia atingi covorul moale,  
Mătasa sună sub picior,  
Și de la creștet pîn-în poale  
Plutești ca visul de ușor ..."

("So fresh and frail you are, my love,  
You seem a snow-white cherry-flower  
And like an angel from above  
You cross my life's course at this hour.

Your steps on carpets fall like beams,  
Silk rustles softly under them,  
You float as airily as dreams,  
From lovely head to graceful hem ...")

(Translated by Andrei Bantaș)

The last verses of the poem express the poet's permanent obsession and fear of losing his idolized woman, be it through death, departure, abandonment or anything else. There is again a mystical, religious atmosphere in this poem. This beautiful woman who appears like an angel in his life, apparently through

destiny, is likened to the sacred image of the Virgin Mary. The poem was offered as a homage to Mrs. Mite Kremnitz in 1879. In fact it contains the story of his love for this married woman. Mite Kremnitz herself noted in her memoirs much valuable information relating to this poem. She recounts how one day, being alone with Eminescu, he succumbed to a spontaneous passion and kissed her. Then he began to read to her from 'Inferno' (by Dante) the episode in which Francesca da Rimini gave her lover a kiss. From that day, says Mite, everything changed between her and Eminescu. Because she loved her husband and child, she tried to avoid the poet. But one day he came to her, handed over a poem and said: "You have always wanted to have a poem from me. Here it is, but it's good for nothing".<sup>2</sup> That poem was 'Atît de fragedă'. Mrs. Mite Kremnitz read the poem and burst into tears. She was pleased and at the same time proud that it was she who had caused the poet to create the poem. But, because she was married, the poet's love for her was an impossible dream, a forbidden love. Now we can understand the sadness and despair of the poet in the second part of the poem. This poem of love caused Veronica Micle, who had broken off relations with Eminescu, to write a letter to him in order to express her disappointment and jealousy.

There is such superior, pure and profound feeling in this poem: "I was chased away from your soul where, perhaps, I introduced myself undeservedly".<sup>3</sup> Among other images of women, these two, Veronica Micle and Mite Kremnitz, played the most important role in Eminescu's love and creation. Veronica, it is true, was a beautiful woman, but we should not forget that the process of passionate transfiguration of love in Eminescu's creative art always tended to increase the beauty of those whom he loved. Led by his own burning feelings and his passionate, romantic nature, he could not but idealize or deify the woman he loved. Therefore Veronica and Mite are to a great extent the crystallization of Eminescu's passion which lent an additional charm to their natural and real beauty.

Mrs. Virginia Gruber, the daughter of Veronica Micle, wrote in her memoirs that her mother "was full of life, full of charm, beautiful, she danced expertly and had a superb voice. In the high society which she frequented, she always overshadowed all the other women because of her distinguished qualities."<sup>4</sup> After his move to Iași, everybody in the town knew that Eminescu was deeply infatuated with Veronica. It is believed that during that time all his love poems sang of his love for her as, by then, Eminescu's name was inseparably connected with Veronica's.

As we have noticed from our study up to this point, Eminescu was looking for a woman's love as a spiritual necessity and affection, the fulfilment of the needs of his superior soul. But because of this and of his ideal, perfect image of love, he could never find it in real life and society. Apparently, each time he started thinking that he had found true love, something occurred that disappointed him and ruined all his dreams. We know what followed: disillusionment, suffering. That is why many of his love poems finish in a sad or painful vein. There is always the same romantic discrepancy between poetic dreams and reality.

The conclusive evidence of this is what the poet himself once said about his feelings of love: "As far as I am concerned, though I did not fall in love many times ... I was deluding myself by confusing the desire for love with love itself, the desire to kneel in front of a beautiful woman pictured by my own imagination and feelings. But once it seemed to me that I really loved because I suffered enormously, probably because the one I loved did not want to take any notice of my love and hopes, born in my soul. What I found in that woman I do not know, I did not even want to think of it. I make no analysis, I only know one thing, and that I would have been able to give my whole life for her and, you see, this means

everything to me".<sup>5</sup> Although the poet tries to avoid the issue, we understand that he loved passionately and that his concept of an ideal love reaches the stage of self-sacrifice. For him, supreme sacrifice is part of perfect love. Many people believe it was good that some beloved women made him suffer as this caused him to create these brilliant masterpieces. If those women had easily requited his love by total love, the poet would not have suffered and his mind would have toppled their idealized images from the high pedestal of his feelings. Consequently he would not have written the poems he left for us. But Veronica Micle and Mite Kremnitz were not the only women he adored. When he moved to Bucharest, the capital of Romania, he fell in love with another woman, Cleopatra Peonaru, the daughter of a painter. She was not beautiful physically but she had high intellectual qualities that charmed and enthralled him. She lived in Cometei Street where there were a few poplars whose branches and leaves trembled in the evening breeze while Eminescu was wandering past her house, hoping to see his idol appearing at the window of her room. But she never appeared. These are the circumstances that inspired in Eminescu those magnificent verses in the poem 'Pe lângă plopul fără soț' ('Along the row of poplars odd'):

"La geamul tău ce strălucea  
Privii atît de des  
O lume toată-nțelegea  
Tu nu m-ai înțeles."

("I watched as often as I could  
Your windows, bright and grand;  
Whoever saw me understood  
You failed to understand.")

(Translated by Andrei Bantaș)

As there is no proof left by Eminescu that this poem was dedicated to Mrs. Cleopatra Poenaru, some critics think it might have been written for some other woman in his life.

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## CHAPTER 7

### EMINESCU'S PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES

Strongly anchored in "pașoptist" spirituality, Eminescu's poetic universe follows a platonist, cosmological model, at the beginning of his literary career. According to it the world of ideas is the only true reality and the material world is nothing but a sensitive and changing copy of the former. Eminescu implies this theory in his social and historical poems. It is explicitly presented in his poem 'Ondina':

"Idee,  
Pierdută-ntr-o palidă fee  
Din planul Genezei, ce-aleargă  
Nentreagă."

("Idea,  
Lost in a pale goddess  
In the plan of genesis which runs  
Uncompleted."

('Ondina')

In a later stage of Eminescu's poetry, the feeling of harmony between being (mainly human beings) and the universe is lost. It is a crisis of modern thinking which Eminescu explains through the loss of faith.

(In Epigonii, "Dumnezeu și om, O înțelepciune ai aripi de ceară".)

('Epigones', "God and Man", "O, Wisdom you have wax wings".)

This crisis is associated with a deep feeling of alienation, first defined in the poem 'Amicului F.I.':

"Viața mea curge uitînd izvorul".

("My life is running forgetting its course".)

("To my Friend F.I.)

In 'Dumnezeu și om':

"Ieri ai fost credința simplă însă sinceră, adîncă  
Impărat fuși omenirei, crezu-n tine era stîncă".

("Yesterday you were simple faith but sincere and deep,  
You were mankind's emperor, faith in you was like  
a rock".)

('God and Man')

The same idea is stressed in 'Melancolie':

"Credința zugrăvește icoanele-n biserici  
Și-n sufletu-mi pusese poveștile-i feerici".

("Faith remains on the icons in churches,  
It brought magical stories into my soul".)

('Melancholy')

In Eminescu's later work, the subject is no longer the alienation of romantics from this world, but the loss of the cosmic homeland: man's thinking can no longer discover the divine purpose of the world. On the contrary it discovers the absurdity of its existence. In this way the platonist model appears as an aspiration of poetic thinking meant to correct an absurd universe through a harmonious but elusive plan, as seen in the last variant of the dramatic poem 'Mureşanu'. This stage of Eminescu's creation is dominated by the image of the demon. But it is a demon whose revolt is directly proportional to a tormenting nostalgia for the lost paradise.

Eminescu's demon lost the consciousness of his immortality, and came to fear the law of his own material decay. In other words, Eminescu's demon discovers 'Time' as a fundamental evil which he tries to set right either by denying its reality or by creating other compensatory universes (by poetry, by action against the wrongs in the world, or by love).

In the last period of Eminescu's work, human thinking is felt to be in opposition to the universe. The platonist cosmological model is abandoned in favour of the generic one, derived from Immanuel Kant's philosophy. His teaching is contained in three books which have been translated into English as 'The Critique of Pure Reason', 'The Critique of Practical

Reason' and 'The Critique of Judgement'. The German philosopher examined the nature of reason which exists independently of experience. His conclusions are that there are three essential ideas: the soul as a thinking substance, the world as the totality of all phenomena and God as the absolute perfect being. Eminescu knew Kantian philosophy. According to the Kantian vision, the universe is seen as a plurality of worlds which are coming into being and dying perpetually as in the cosmological images in Eminescu's poem 'Luceafărul' ('The Evening Star'):

"Cînd valuri află un mormînt  
 Răsar în urmă valuri"

.....

"Din sînul veşnicului ieri  
 Trăieşte azi ce moare,  
 Un soare de s-ar stinge-n cer  
 S-aprînde iarăşi soare."

("When human waves run into graves  
 New waves spring from behind"

.....

"From the eternal yesterday  
 Drinks what today will drain,  
 And if a sun dies on the sky  
 A sun quickens again."

The silence of the cosmic spaces covered by Hyperion in his flight towards God impresses Eminescu:

"Dar un luceafăr răsărit  
Din liniștea uitării"  
.....

Then:

"E un adînc asemenea  
Uitării celei oarbe"

("But the Evening Star sprung from the calm  
Of oblivion")  
.....

Then:

("'Tis depth unknown, comparable  
To blind oblivion" )

The only similarity between Eminescu's conception of the universe and that of Kant is the idea of continuous genesis as opposed to the platonist stable universe. The vision of the death of the solar system becomes in Eminescu's poem 'Scrisoarea I' an image of the death of the entire universe. This incessant birth and death of worlds is not for Eminescu what it was for Kant: the proof of a perfect mechanism in the universe, governed by a divine intelligence. The divine becomes, in Eminescu's view, non-existence which tends to acquire a meaning in the framework of eternal rest.

For Eminescu, cosmology is not a scientific theory but a literary theme and a continuation of the mythology. But we should not believe that the poet is segmenting the line of time or establishing different epochs on it. While time is seen as a relative function, it would be absurd to give autonomy, however relative, to the fragments of time. It is true that we cannot speak of consistent thought by Eminescu in relation to this problem. The notion of historical time is often present in his work but, generally, genesis and mythology are thought of only as modalities of aesthetic time in poetry. Poetic time does not develop into historic determination. It exists in special forms established separately by each work. Therefore genesis and mythology must not be seen as closed phenomena. In the field of poetry they are actual values, organically incorporated in the structure of the poetic vision. Cosmology and mythology may be placed in the present, usually by changing them into symbols: "trecutul și viitorul numai o gândire-s" ("the past and the future exist only in our thinking"). Here it can be noticed that the poet confers on the past and future a symbolic function. They refer to the present so they are symbolic forms of the present.

The cosmological or mythological past is just the symbolic form of the present. Eminescu's poetry will always preserve a double valuable function of a given reality and of an unmasking of the "deep unknown". The relation between the poet's consciousness and the world as an illusion is breaking up, as happens in the poem 'Mortua est' ('She is dead'), in which the tragic human condition (death) becomes a problem without any solution. The poet draws his inspiration from the death of a young, beautiful girl. The meditation begins with references to the well-known truths about the threat of death that hangs over every creature in the world. Changing the tone for a moment, the poet is glad that his sweetheart will know another universe where love and hope are not illusory, and hatred, crime and other evils are completely excluded. But in the end the poet wonders if that new world of happiness and peace is not, in fact, the world of nothingness, of non-being. Here we find the essential features of Eminescu's philosophy when he was an adolescent. Everything is illusory. People are just dreams pursuing other dreams on their way to the grave. Reminding us of the Shakespearian words: "To be or not to be", Eminescu reaches a pessimistic conclusion:

"A fi? Nebunie tristă și goală;  
Urechea te minte și ochiul te-nșeală;  
Ce un secol ne zice, ceilalți o dezic  
Decît un vis searbăd, mai bine nimic."

("To be? O, sheer madness, both sad and futile;  
Your hearing is lying, your eyes will beguile;  
What one age has taught us, the other unteach  
Much rather than vain dreams, just nothing beseech.")

(Translation by Andrei Bantaș)

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EMINESCU'S POETIC ART

Writers have always used stylistic means in their works to give them more life and power.

One of the most frequent stylistic means met in literature is the epithet. It helps the writers' observations to bring to light the features, qualities or defects of things, beings or actions, and create in the mind of the reader the desired images, feelings and effects. But at the same time the frequency of the favourite epithets used by an author reflects like a mirror the spiritual image of the writer himself.

Studying the epithets used by a writer is one of the ways of knowing him, his literary talent, his feelings and attitude towards society and the world. In other words his epithets inform us both about the writer and about his work at the same time.

Like other poets, Eminescu made use of many and different epithets. In his poems written before 1869, Eminescu used many epithets that came from the indefinite participle (which in Romanian is called 'gerunziu'). For example: "turbarea lui fugindă",

"durerea lor mugindă", "rîzîndul tău delir" (in 'Amorul unei marmore'), "vibrînda a clopotelor jale", "cînturi răsunînde" (in 'La Mormîntul lui Aron Pumnul'), "cu a ei umbre suspinînde", "cu-a ei silfe șopotinde" (in 'Misterele unei nopți'), "acolo te așteaptă rîzînde zori" (in 'Ondina'), "privești fața mea pâlindă" (in 'Noaptea').

This type of epithet was in fashion in the period after 1848 because of the influence of the French language, and could be found to a greater or lesser degree in many of the poet's poems. One of those who used it before Eminescu was D. Bolintineanu. After 1869 this category of epithets disappeared from Eminescu's poems completely. Apparently it was dictated by the development of the Romanian language which began to reject this kind of epithet. It became incompatible with the way the language was structured.

Another peculiarity of Eminescu's epithets in his first creative period is his use of an adjective preceded by the adjectival article "cel, cea, cei, cele". Examples: "lacul cel verde", "norii cei albi", "dumbrava cea verde" (in 'Frumoasă-i').

Eminescu, in the same period, sometimes formed his epithets by placing the adjective in front of the noun: "trist mormîntul tău" (in 'La mormîntul lui Aron Pumnul'), "dulce chipul tău" (in 'Care-o fi în lume').

Another category of epithet in Eminescu's poems is that formed of a noun followed by a preposition like cu, în, de (with, in, of): "biserica în ruină" (in 'Melancolie'), "demon cu ochii mari" (in 'Venere și Madonă'). Many of the epithets in this category are those introduced by the preposition "de" ("of"): "sînu-i de crin" (in 'Frumoasă-i'), "candela de aur" (in 'Epigonii'), "prispa cea de brazde" (in 'Dorința'), "păr de aur" (in 'Călin'). Though such epithets (noun and preposition) can be found in all Eminescu's works, they are far fewer in the final creative period. For example in 'Luceafărul' we find only one: "mort cu ochii vii". There are also epithets made up of a noun in the genitive: "a iubirii primăvară" (in 'Epigonii'), "ale vieții valuri" (in 'Melancolie'). The most numerous epithets in Eminescu's poetic work are adverbial epithets: "desmiardă duios" (in 'Ondina'), "cîntînd vesel și ușor" (in 'De-ași avea'), "privește trist" (in 'Scrisoarea III'), "vine trist și gînditor" (in 'Luceafărul'), "să ne privim nesățios și dulce" (ib), "răsare luna liniștit și tremurînd pe ape" (ib).

Up to this point we have examined epithets expressed by one single word although in a sentence or in a complex construction. But Eminescu also used epithets formed of a whole sentence (a relative sentence). Thus instead of "apele sclipinde" ("shining waters"), Eminescu would say: "ape ce sclipesc fugind în ropot" ("the waters which shine while running impetuously"). There is a category of epithets that expresses a moral reality. It has the role of characterizing or bringing into relief the main features of a reality. The moral epithet has been placed in the larger group of evocative epithets. Here are a few examples: "visări misterioase" (in 'Din străinătate'), "suflet voios" (in 'Frumoasă-i'), "e guraliv și de nimic" (in 'Luceafărul'), "vom fi cumiți" (ib).

Eminescu also uses another method: the association of a physical epithet with a moral term. It is called "physical" because adjectives like sweet, bitter, cold, clean etc., express features of the physical world. Examples: "plînge amar" (in 'Speranța'), "simțire crudă" (in 'Despărțire'), "singuratice izvoare" (in 'Dorința'), "blînda batere de vînt" (ib). The poet uses this type of epithet on a grand scale to increase the value of his poems. In this way different elements of nature like landscapes and sound are animated and take on an inner life. Everything that

falls under the poet's senses is enriched by his expressions. No Romanian writer before Eminescu, nor any of his contemporaries, succeeded in using so many varied and elaborate epithets or in obtaining similar eloquent and intensified effects.

Then we meet the ornamental epithet, mainly in his early work. It was used very much in classical poetry and almost always by young poets whose powers of observation and representation of things and actions were not completely formed. It is more frequent in Eminescu's first poems than in the later ones. Examples: "visuri fericite" (in 'Din străinătate'), "falnica cunună" (in 'La Heliade'). We find the ornamental epithet even in his late work but it has another stylistic function. In this situation the ornamental epithet has a more general and philosophical character: "zgomote deșarte" (in 'Glossa'), "lumea-i veselă și tristă" (ib). Through these epithets the poet reaffirms his attitude towards different circumstances. We find them in the elegy entitled 'Mai am un singur dor', one of the best achievements of the Romanian literary language. In this poem Eminescu uses only generalizing and ornamental epithets. Examples: "somnul lin", "frunzișul veșted", "al mării aspru cînt".

In those poems in which Eminescu uses symbols or forms of Classicism like *Odă* and *Diana*, epithets never descend below the level of the highest generalization: "pururi tînăr", "ca pasărea Phoenix", "nepăsare tristă" (in '*Odă*'), "glasul tainic de izvor", "verdele covor" (in '*Diana*').

In contradistinction to the generalizing epithet, Eminescu also uses the individual epithet. It is based on a profound and specific observation of the poet. Through the individual epithet, realism, as a literary technique, penetrates his poetry. Some of the most evocative images of the poet are achieved with the help of the individual epithet which appears more frequently in his late work. Examples: "mîini subțiri și reci" (in '*Departa sunt de tine*'), "ochii mari bătînd închiși" (in '*Luceafărul*'). By using the individual epithet the poet demonstrates the power of his sensory perception, especially in the visual sense.

There are epithets in which Eminescu places two words beside each other for the first time in Romanian literature. For example: "iambii suitori, ... săltărețele dactile" (in '*Scrisoarea ii*'). They are epithets which point with amazing clarity to the way in which stressed and unstressed syllables succeed one another in a verse. Mihail Sadoveanu, a great

Romanian novelist, observed that with Eminescu "words which were separate and isolated from the beginning of our language, all of a sudden know each other and become engaged in a mysterious joyfulness".

Examples: "mucuri ostenite", an expression that suggests the image of candles which have burned almost completely and are on the point of dying out. Also "cu privirea-mpăroșată" (in 'The Third Epistle'), is a very rare epithet that indicates the look of a man who has thick, bushy eyebrows. But Eminescu never overused such epithets. On the contrary, even in the period of his poetical maturity he preferred a simple and natural language.

The antithetical epithets in Eminescu's poems constitute a very interesting association of words: "amoroasa dulce spaimă" (in 'Inger și demon'), "dulce jele" (in 'Călin'). Though they are rarely used, they appear more often when the poet expresses his feeling of love, a fact that highlights one of the typical emotions of the poet: "farmec dureros" (in 'Povestea teiului'), "ucigătoare visuri de plăcere" (in 'Iubind în taină').

We have noticed from our study up to this point that, as time advanced, he changed the quality of his epithets and began to use them more and more rarely.

Of course their frequency also depended on the genre of the poem. For example, in the satirical invective of the poem 'Scrisoarea iii' ('The Third Epistle'), or in the pastel existing in the poem 'Călin', epithets are still plentiful. But among the poems of maturity, especially those written after 'Luceafărul', there are poems of descriptive or erotic character, analogous to those loaded with epithets in the first creative period, in which Eminescu abandons the use of epithets almost totally. For example, there are only three epithets in 'Ce e amorul?' ('What is love?'): "um cuvînt șoptit pe jumătate", "o dulce strîngere de mîini" and "un pas făcut alene". There is only one epithet in 'Și dacă ...': "Incet să te apropii", and two epithets in 'De-or trece anii', used as predicatives: "al ei glas e armonie" and "in taina farmecelor sale e un nu știu ce și nu știu cum" which is a long epithetic construction in chain. There is only one in 'La mijloc de codru', a generalizing epithet: "trestia înaltă".

Eminescu charged his epithets with such great power of suggestion and characterization that, whenever a writer after him tried to use them or even something similar to them, he was told: "it sounds Eminescian". Eminescu is the poet who gave Romanian poetry the universal dimension which it lacked, through the epithets and representations of his imagination.



His poetry introduces the reader into a new and vast world in time and space, a world in which his spirit penetrates into even the most secret parts of the human soul and reaches the most profound and luminous conceptions of reason. His thinking explored the mysteries of nature and human intelligence, succeeding in discovering their general and eternal laws.

Now let us look at Eminescu's vocabulary. There are preferences, selections and fields from which the poet chose his words. On the other hand, there are changes in the vocabulary of any poet, according to the phases of his creative writing and the development of his taste and appreciation of words. No poet or writer uses the same words and expressions at the zenith of his poetic career as he did at the beginning of it. Therefore the language of a poet must be studied in its temporal development. It is impossible to consider a poet's vocabulary as an homogeneous and unaltered unity throughout the course of his life. Establishing the field of the basic word stock of the language, from which he gathered the words for his poems, is the best way of making a stylistic characterization of his poetic works. This way we also uncover the social world in which he moved and lived, his ideas, tendencies, sentimental life and culture.

Eminescu's artistic terminology reveals clearly the two great periods of his poetic creativity. If we consider the words used in two poems, 'Melancolie' and 'Mai am un singur dor', one falling in each period, we notice a great difference between them. In 'Melancolie' we find words like gate, tomb, mausoleum, vault (of the sky) etc. In 'Mai am un singur dor' we find: autumn, fallen leaves, springs, moon, and so on. The contrast between the two lexical series is obvious. In the first poem the architectonical terms contrived a monumental, grandiose landscape, while those in the second poem, being terms defining the natural world, produced a plain, real and unrefined landscape. That poem belongs to the later period when Eminescu relinquished sophisticated, stately words. The artistic eminence and richness of his poetic language demonstrated that Eminescu fully mastered the linguistic treasure, history, culture and folklore of his nation. Like all the great poets in the world, he re-evaluated the objective language of the Romanian people. He used and brought together the historic language of chronicles, the language of folklore and the existing literary language of his time. Popular

literature has always been a vast universe of inspiration for great poets and a true culture has its roots in it. He rarely employed words out of use and avoided unintelligible or confusing words. Tudor Viam says: "The Eminescian miracle lies in the fact that he produced a new and fresh language. The impression of freshness in Eminescu's language comes, first of all, from the usage he gave to the popular and familiar forms of the language, sometimes with Moldavian peculiarities ... he picked up words or associations of words which nobody before him dared to use".<sup>1</sup> But we have to point out that, though he extracted his sap and vigour from folklore, chronicles and popular language, he was still thirsty for the universal culture.

A rich folklore material has been found in Eminescu's manuscripts, in poems, stories and proverbs, all gathered by him or others. But he did not deal with it as V. Alecsandri did, who published a collection of popular poems. Folklore was for him and for all great poets after him, more than a source of inspiration, themes and images. It was a basic element in the

formulation and defining of his personality, a link with the oldest and most powerful tradition of the Romanian literature. Most of the folklore materials collected by Eminescu contain first of all lyrical poetry: love poems, peasant songs of social protest, party songs, outlaws' songs, songs of the woods, lamentations, imprecations, humorous and satirical extempore verse and others. The majority of these folkloric materials were picked up in Transylvania and Moldavia.

Eminescu is only in small measure a theoretician of art, though his work proves he meditated deeply upon artistic problems, and some forms of art attracted his attention for a long time. Nevertheless his works contain sufficient evidence of creative principles. First of all there is a letter written by Eminescu in Vienna and addressed to Iacob Negruzzi on 17th June 1870. The letter is meant to justify the poet's attitude in 'Epigonii', a poem which stirred up a heated discussion in 'Junimea'. Eminescu stated the reason for his admiration for the precursory writers,

saying that they demonstrated an indefinite confidence in their ideals and showed a sincere naivety. But Eminescu's contemporaries were no longer simple souls, they knew the circumstances around them, they were watching the "breath of the centuries" and therefore they were right to be discouraged and disappointed. Their writings were breathing the sweet but sickly atmosphere which the Germans were calling "Weltschmerz". As in Schopenhauer's philosophy, the theory of knowledge was the basis of Eminescu's pessimism.

On the same occasion (the letter mentioned above) Eminescu confesses that one of poetry's conditions is fantasy, considered to be the mother of images. Beside it there is reflection or meditation which, to a certain extent, plays the role of the skeleton in any work of art. That means that in the end it determines the form. With some writers fantasy predominates, with others reason. Eminescu thinks it is ideal that the two aptitudes work together in harmony. In this way one may attain perfection and the writer who achieves it is a genius. But, when it is discovered that the images are only a superficial game, or that they are not growing organically from the deep recesses of the spirit, then the sceptical distrust in one's own work appears. So, reason and fantasy and the necessity to make them work in harmony are the basic elements from which Eminescu's literary conception starts.

It should be noticed that there is a difference between Eminescu's view of genius and Schopenhauer's. Being characterized by harmony between reason and fantasy, the image of genius in Eminescu's opinion is somehow far from the real image of the typical romantic genius which was apocalyptic and extra-human. In Schopenhauer's concept a genius succeeds in eluding the domination of will and plunges himself into the contemplation of eternal ideas.

Eminescu reaffirms the genius's superiority over society on another occasion when an individual called Dimitrie Petrino attacked Aron Pumnul in a controversial article. The poet criticised Petrino and said: "genius in rags and tatters or in gilded clothes will always remain a genius"<sup>2</sup>. In other words a genius is self-confident and independent of social conditions in which he is predestined to live. The idea became firmer and more consistent in Eminescu's conception and in the end it was formulated in terms that remind us of Schopenhauer's belief: "genius doesn't know death and his name escapes oblivion, but, on earth, he is neither capable of making someone happy nor capable of being happy himself. He doesn't know death and he doesn't know luck either". The poet continues: "It seemed to me that 'The Evening Star' in the story resembles the

fate of the genius on earth, therefore I gave it that allegorical meaning".<sup>3</sup> In fact this conception has its origin in a Classical dogma which implies the dominance of harmony and reason and the isolation of genius from society. Starting from this, Eminescu developed his conception and approached Schopenhauer's philosophy which presented genius and society in antagonistic positions but gave genius an essential attribute, the contemplation of eternal ideas and the tendency towards the universal.

Another problem that preoccupied Eminescu is that of the relationship between nature and art. Art cannot isolate itself from nature without risking falling into a vacuum. Of course, not everything that is natural is beautiful too. The imitation of rough nature without subjection to any selection process, can lead to inadmissible forms of art such as realism, for example, against which superior spirits feel the need of a reaction. Nevertheless, deep knowledge of reality remains a precept permanently valid.

Romantic art has the approval of the Romanian poet but, beyond Romanticism and all the forms of art in the modern epoch, the poet still sees the clear sky of classical art. In ancient times art did not know bitterness and disgust. It was only an escape from

worries and pains. The Latin art of the Middle Ages manifested itself in the same way. Under the influence of philosophy, at first in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, artistic spirits discovered the contradiction existing between their ideas and the forms of civilization. Schopenhauer's criticism taught that man is doomed to live among institutions which seem to be corrupt and mendacious, a view that led to pessimism. The role of modern art was to heal the spirits of the illness of pessimism. This moral recovery was possible, first of all, through the cult of the ancient writers who were "full of truth, elegance and appropriate ideas",<sup>4</sup> destined to remain young forever.

For Eminescu there is an additional, miraculous source in modern times capable of rejuvenating the life-weary spirits and inspiring a new love of life and light. The wandering schoolboy who used to travel to Transylvania and Moldavia in order to gather folk songs and poems discovered the source: folklore. Folklore literature corresponded to the spiritual height of man.

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## CHAPTER 9

### FOLKLORE IN EMINESCU'S WORKS

In addition to Aron Pumnul's 'Lepturariul', folklore was for Eminescu the most important source of his poetic inspiration right from his first literary works. In his travelling through the Romanian provinces, he noted everything he heard, including poems, stories and riddles.

Among the papers he left, there are many popular poems which he collected. At the age of 24 he wrote to his girlfriend Veronica Micle: "The past has always fascinated me. Chronicles and folk songs form the material at present from which I draw my inspiration"<sup>1</sup>. This was true, as many of his works bear the stamp of folklore. This proves that the poet loved and valued popular productions, especially popular poems in which he discovered a great capacity for expression of every kind of feeling of the human soul in a simple but natural form. In the letter mentioned above, Eminescu wrote: "The charm of popular poetry lies in the fact that it is the shortest expression of feelings and thoughts ..."<sup>2</sup> Some of the popular poems collected by Eminescu were published after his death. During his life the poet did not publish folklore, but he

published original poems based on folklore, like Călin, and also popular poems, that he transformed and improved.

If we wanted to know the origins of this preoccupation of Eminescu, we should first return to the collective enthusiasm that motivated other writers and historians in the middle of the 19th century: Russo, Kogălniceanu, Alecsandri and others who made great efforts to collect evidence of the spiritual vitality of the nation and who recorded folk songs and popular ballads.

Eminescu followed the example of Anton Pann, Ispirescu and Alecsandri, whose first collection appeared in 1852, and Ion Creangă, the great storyteller. Of course, the collection of popular poems left by Eminescu in manuscript had its shortcomings. We would like to know where and when each poem was collected and the identity of the people who dictated them to the poet. But Eminescu, like Alecsandri, did not care about these things. He even transformed the texts he collected for artistic reasons, so they are no longer pure popular productions. However, we are not concerned with this problem in this chapter. We want only to establish which of his poems contain a structure inspired by popular lyrics.

Out of all the popular poems of Eminescu, 'Revedere' is, perhaps, the one in which the popular element has been best preserved. 'Revedere' is the first Eminescian poem written in the style and rhythm of folk songs:

"Codrule, codruțule,  
Ce mai faci, drăguțule  
Că de cînd nu ne-am văzut  
Multă vreme a trecut  
Și de cînd m-am depărtat,  
Multă vreme am îmblat".

("Forest, O my forest dear,  
What dost thou so lonesome here?  
For since I have seen thee last  
Many weary years have passed,  
And since I have gone away  
In the world I much did stray.")

('Revedere')

(Translated by P. Grimm)

This is a conversation between the poet and the woods. The poet addresses a question to the woods in six verses. The woods reply in twelve verses, and so on.

In this poem Eminescu expresses one of the constant themes of his lyricism: his worry about the passing of time. There is a clear opposition between man's transient life and the permanence of nature. From this point of view there is a great similarity between Eminescu's poem 'Revedere' and 'Le Lac' of Lamartine. It is an idea which Eminescu re-examines in 'Glossa'. The wood seems to possess the secret of everlasting life which, for the human being, remains an unsolvable problem, an impossible ideal. It implies a certain pessimism but there is an optimistic note as well because the woods have always been the friend of human beings. Man is not envious or jealous of the woods.

Other poems, which are related to each other, reveal the same powerful influence of the popular folk songs: 'Ce te legeni' and 'La mijloc de codru'. Part of one of them can be found in early versions of the other. We find these verses existing in both manuscripts of the two poems:

"Ce te legeni codrule  
Fără ploaie fără vînt  
Cu crengile la pămînt?"

("Forest, why swingest thou so?

The air's full of calm and dearth,

Thou bendest though to the earth.")

('Ce te legeni codrule')

(Translated by Dimitrie Cuclin.)

These poems demonstrate once more Eminescu's appreciation of popular literature. It is important to remark that in Eminescu's poems it is always the wood that speaks, not a single tree. The wood seems to be sad because time is flying and autumn makes its leaves fall; birds, mainly swallows, leave for other countries, and the wood remains alone with its melancholy.

It is clear that, to replace the wood's fear of being cut down by axes with fear of the passage of time, Eminescu introduced his own philosophy in the central idea of the popular theme:

"Dece nu m-ași legăna  
Dacă trece vremea mea  
Trec în stoluri rîndunele  
Ducînd gîndurile mele  
Și norocul meu cu ele."

("Why should I not be all swinging  
When my death's hour is now ringing?  
My nights grow, my days are sinking,  
And my foliage is slinking." )

(Ibidem.)

We meet the same folkloric theme in the poem entitled 'Călin'. It is a fairy-tale, with a very complex content, in which the poet preserved the popular tone, of simplicity and naivety. In conclusion, Eminescu's interest in folklore is based on the idea that "a lasting literature has to use people's language, tradition, customs and history".<sup>3</sup>

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LUCEAFĂRUL

So much has been written about this poem as both the greatest and most beautiful achievement of Romanian Romanticism and as the masterpiece of Eminescu, that any additional comments could appear to be superfluous. It is almost impossible for anyone to reveal new features or meanings of the poem. Distinguished literary personalities of many nationalities, including Romanians, have analysed the work in detail and with great competence. Among the renowned Romanian literary critics who have examined it are D. Caracostea (in 'Studii Eminesciene'), Perpessicius (in 'Opere' Vol. II) and G. Calinescu (in 'Opera lui Eminescu').

The poem has a mysterious depth from which we hear the voices of a few characters who play a love story. These voices are neither strange nor unknown to us. We have heard them speaking in almost the same way in many of Eminescu's other poems. We easily recognize them because of their tones, expressions and ideas. There have been a lot of interpretations and speculations about Eminescu's greatest masterpiece, 'The Evening Star'. Perhaps the best and most suitable for the general meaning of the poem is the

interpretation given by the poet himself, written on page 56 of the manuscript number 2275. Although I mentioned its main idea in the chapter on 'Eminescu's poetic art', I give it here in full: "In his description of a journey through the Romanian provinces, the German K. told the story of the evening star. This is the story (he means his poem) and the allegorical meaning I gave to it is that, if genius doesn't know death and his name escapes oblivion, but, on earth, he is neither capable of making someone happy nor capable of being happy himself. He doesn't know death and he doesn't know luck either"<sup>1</sup>. The German traveller K. was Richard Kunisch, who included in his memoirs two fairy-tales he heard in Romania. Both those fairy-tales were put into verse by Eminescu in his 'Fata în grădina de aur' ('The girl in the golden garden'), and 'Miron și frumoasa fără corp' ('Miron and the beauty without body'). The first fairy-tale inspired in Eminescu the ideas for his poem 'The Evening Star'. The poem is about a beautiful girl who is the daughter of an emperor, locked in a palace by her father, situated in the middle of a golden garden, so that nobody could see her or have any contact with her. The palace was guarded by a big dragon. Yet the son of another emperor, Florin, discovered the fate of the girl and killed the dragon that guarded the palace in order to contact her. However, a short



time before this, a demon (celestial spirit) had seen the girl, liked her, and transformed himself into a young man to ask her to go with him "to the neighbourhood of the sun". The girl told him she could not bear his brightness and that the neighbourhood of the sun would burn her, so he would have to become a mortal like her. While the demon went back to heaven to ask God for permission to become a mortal in order to be with the girl, she spent some time in Florin's arms. God showed the demon the infidelity of the girl. In the end the demon took revenge against the girl, killing her, and Florin died "of grief and longing for her".

Eminescu's poem 'Fata în grădina de aur' was conceived while he was in Berlin, between 1873 and 1874. The poem 'The Evening Star' (or, as it is entitled in Romanian, 'Luceafărul') was not begun before the end of 1880, and its final form appeared in April 1883 in Vienna, in a modest almanac for Romanian students published by the Association 'România jună'. Eminescu was, by then, 33 years old, and he himself had been a student in Vienna and a member of the Romanian Students' Association, eleven years earlier. Urged by natural feelings he answered the request of the new Romanian students in Vienna by sending them what he had on his work table at the time, 'The Evening Star'.

Eminescu used to read his poems in the prestigious literary circle 'Junimea', guided by the professor of philosophy and founder of literary criticism Titu Maiorescu; so he had read 'The Evening Star' in a pre-final form in April 1882 in one of the circle's sessions. Then he polished it up, removed some stanzas, discussed it in private with Titu Maiorescu, then he sent it to the students in Vienna in its final form, for publication. The magazine 'Convorbiri literare' reproduced that version, and at the end of 1883 Titu Maiorescu published it again.

'Luceafărul' is a long romantic poem in which the poet presents the theme of the destiny of a genius. Some men of letters, among them Bratescu Voinești, said the poem was referring to M. Eminescu's love for Veronica Micle. This opinion has been dismissed as a vulgar interpretation of a work of art that should not be taken for reality. Eminescu used the fairy-tale as a pretext to express allegorically the position of a genius in a hostile environment, among people who are not capable of rising to the level of his ideas and power of understanding. At the same time, there is no doubt that Eminescu uses the concepts of Schopenhauer's philosophy in relation to the idea of genius. According to Schopenhauer, a genius is ready to sacrifice his personal happiness for an objective goal. Ordinary people are dominated by will while

genius is dominated by intelligence and a permanent thirst for knowledge. 'The Evening Star', after falling in love with the beauty of a woman on earth, takes the form of a young man and descends into the human "narrow circle". But, realizing she is not able to understand him, he returns to his place in the sky forever. The mortals' admiration and longing for heavenly bodies constitute a familiar romantic motif. George Gordon Byron uses this motif in 'Cain', when the young woman Adah tells Lucifer she loves the morning star. In Eminescu's 'Luceafărul', the beautiful Cătălina, the daughter of an emperor, who lives in a castle near the sea, contemplates the evening star from the window of her room. Soon they fall in love with each other. The significance of this allegory is that terrestrials aspire to the absolute. The emperor's daughter is convinced that the evening star is a superior spirit who can become human. Therefore she asks it to come down to her:

"Cobori în jos, luceafăr blînd  
Alunecînd pe-o rază  
Pătrunde-n casă și în gînd  
Și viața-mi luminează."

("Descend, o mild Hyperion,  
Glide down upon a ray  
Into my home and thoughts anon  
And brighten up my way.")

(Translated by Leon Levițchi)

The evening star throws itself into the sea and reappears as a young man with golden hair and a pale complexion. He invites her to go with him and take a place in the sky as a shining star beside him. But because she cannot transcend her human condition she asks him to become a mortal like her. In the second part of the poem, the romance between Cătălina and Cătălin, a boy at the emperor's court, symbolises the superficial character of humans, and shows the fickle nature of their attitudes and feelings. The third part of the poem comprises the journey of the evening star through cosmic space and contains the conversation with the Demiurge. (Demiurge is a deity who, according to the philosophy of Plato, is the creator of the material universe.) During that dialogue, the evening star is called Hyperion and symbolises genius.

Genii, according to Eminescu, do not know space and time, while mortals are constantly under the influence of destiny which controls the whole of their lives:

"Ei doar au stele cu noroc  
Si prigoniri de soarte,  
Noi nu avem nici timp, nici loc,  
Si nu cunoaştem moarte."

("Or lucky stars or Fate's disgrace  
Are only humans' lot,  
While we have neither time nor place  
And death can strike us not."

(Translated by Leon Leviţchi)

Therefore, Hyperion's wish to become a mortal is refused, but not before he has been thoroughly convinced that the transformation he desires would have catastrophic results. The Demiurge tells him to look down on earth and see the girl for whom he wants to sacrifice his eternal life. At that moment she was enjoying the company of Cătălin:

"Hyperion vedea de sus  
Uimirea-n a lor faţă;  
Abia un braţ, pe gît i-a pus  
Şi ea l-a prins în braţe ..."

("Hyperion, in heaven, read  
Amaze upon their face;  
No sooner had he clasped her head  
Than she did him embrace ...")

(Ibidem)

The girl, Cătălina, all of a sudden remembers the evening star and begins to implore him, as before, to come down to her, but Hyperion, disgusted with what he saw, remains impassive in his place in the sky:

"Dar nu mai cade ca-n trecut  
In mări din tot înaltul:  
Ce-ți pasă ție, chip de lut,  
Dac-oi fi eu sau altul?  
Trăind în cercul vostru strîmt  
Norocul vă petrece,  
Ci eu în lumea mea mă simt  
Nemuritor și rece."

("Yet he no more, as yesterday,  
Falls down into the sea;  
What dost thou care, o shape of clay,  
If it is I or he?  
You live accompanied by weal  
In your all-narrow fold,  
Whilst in my boundless world I feel  
Both deathless and dead cold.")

(Ibidem)

This impressive denouement has not always been properly understood by all critics. In 1887, Dobrogeanu Gherea wrote an article in which he commented:

"As can be seen, the poet sympathizes with the evening star (that is Hyperion) and, perhaps, the poet and the evening star have something in common. But to us, as simple mortals, it seems that there is much bitterness and envy as well as pride in the evening star's response. Of course the evening star would have liked to be in Cătălin's position. His pride contains something similar to the attitude of the fox in the story, who was not able to reach the grapes so he consoled himself with the idea that they might be sour, unripe or rotten".<sup>2</sup> Dobrogeanu Gherea's interpretation is wrong. The evening star could not be envious of Cătălin's success in love or look maliciously at him, because it would contradict the idea of genius. Genius cannot be overwhelmed by vile or wicked human feelings. Titu Maiorescu was right in his article 'Eminescu și poeziile lui', published in 1889: "The words of happy or unhappy love cannot be applied to Eminescu as they are understood nowadays. No feminine individuality can captivate and keep him forever in her narrow-mindedness and imaginative, limited world. Like Leopardi in Aspasia, he did not see in the beloved woman anything but the imperfect copy of an unrealizable archetype. Whether the fortuitous copy loved him or deserted him, she still remained a copy, and he, with his impersonal melancholy, had to seek refuge in a world commensurate with him, the world of meditation and poetry".<sup>3</sup> This view is illustrated in the last verses of 'The Evening Star':

"Ce-ți pasă ție chip de lut  
Dac-oi fi eu sau altul?

Trăind in cercul vostru strîmt  
Norocul vă petrece  
Ci eu în lumea mea mă simt  
Nemuritor și rece."

("What matters thee, clod of dust, if  
'Tis me or someone else?

You live in your sphere's narrowness  
And luck rules over you,  
But in my steady world I feel  
Eternal, cold and true.")

(Translated by Dimitrie Cuclin)

What Măiorescu did not mention, or did not notice, was that the poet detested the pettiness and inferior way of life of people in our world which seems to be reduced to instincts. This opposition between instinct and reason or, as Schopenhauer conceived it, will as opposed to idea, is clearly expressed in Eminescu's 'Luceafărul' by the implacable contrast between Cătălina and Hyperion. They belonged to different worlds which were not compatible with each other. In Hyperion's attitude we have to see both



the poet's philosophical formation and the psychological and social circumstances at the time he wrote the poem. Eminescu, as a romantic poet, expressed a romantic attitude, that of the superior human being who was deeply resentful towards a society full of wrongs. It was a society where spiritual love, noble and sincere feelings, dignity and respect were no longer seen as high qualities of the human being. That is why Eminescu exposes immoral and false manners and refuses to accept society's way by secluding himself from society. 'Luceafărul' was written in the most troubled and agitated period of the poet's life. Veronica Micle broke her relations with him in 1880. Then his love for Cleopatra Poenaru was unrequited. Mite Kremnitz was a married woman. At the same time his job as the chief editor of 'The Times' was hard and exhausting. Consequently the isolation of Hyperion in the poem 'The Evening Star' could not be due simply to disappointment in his love for a woman. This interpretation is too reductive and unaware of the complexity of meaning exhibited in the poem. Hyperion disliked both the terrestrial nature of woman (unable to be faithful and stable) and the society in which, as the poet said in one of his letters, "the word is no longer a word and love is no longer love".<sup>4</sup> This is because everything had an ideal form in the poet's romantic imagination. He was always comparing imperfect things and beings in the real world with the perfect ones in his mind.

Eminescu expresses another interesting and true idea in another poem, related to 'The Evening Star', entitled 'Dacă iubești fără să speri' ('If you love without hoping'), a posthumous poem. He gives us to understand that suffering in love without hope stimulates feelings and intensifies the poet's creativity. In another poem called 'Și oare tot n-ați înțeles?' ('Have you not yet understood?'), the evening star appears as a symbol of the supreme artistic ideal. At the same time this poem reminds us of A. Macedonski's poem 'Noapte de Decembrie' ('December night'), a great poetic achievement that can be compared with 'Luceafărul'. Both contain the symbol of the same ideal: the absolute of poetry.

From a stylistic point of view, Eminescu's 'Luceafărul' is a combination of his ideas and feelings presented in the most simplified form possible; it is the most precise expression of Eminescu's soul and poetic art. There are four verses in each stanza, and each line of verse is written in iambs which contain eight and seven syllables respectively. Generally, the poem is a combination of folkloric and cultivated elements, a romantic fairy-tale with an allegorico-philosophical significance, written in verse.

Though Eminescu's poem is based on folkloric elements, it is no longer folkloric in its essence; it is a cultivated product as the poem transcends the limitations of this genre and consequently has a wider scope and a vast philosophical dimension. The poem is concerned with the strange attraction between two worlds totally opposed to each other in essence: human/heavenly, ephemeral/eternal. This motif of love between a human being and a star, terrestrial-celestial, has been identified by D. Caracostea as existing in all peoples' folklore, sometimes in the form of a relationship between a human and a deity.

Eminescu's manuscripts, which run to thousands of pages found after his death, include many versions of his poems, with notes and collections which constitute explicit evidence of the creative process of the greatest Romanian poet. When examining his manuscripts, one comprehends how scrupulously and hard he worked on his poems until they reached their final forms. The stylistic refinement and exigency, the beauty and immense energy of the selected motifs, brought together by his exceptional poetic talent, led to the creation of Eminescu's masterpiece, 'Luceafărul'.

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## CONCLUSIONS

An artist by vocation and spiritual formation, Eminescu has become the archetype of the poet in Romanian culture through a true revolution in the thinking about art and literary expression. For many of his predecessors and contemporaries, literature, especially poetry, was nothing other than the versification or conversion into prose of certain feelings or social or philosophical concepts and ideas. Eminescu discovers the metaphorical values of meditation, scenery, idyll etc. and thus his work is no longer a mere translation in verse or poetic prose of feelings, ideas or aspects of love, but a revelation of the poetic virtues of the contents. The appearance of Eminescu's poetry brought about a radical transformation in literary ideology and theory, it removed the confusion of values. For a long time Eminescu's poetry identified itself with love poetry, the poetry of terrestrial love, nature, and nostalgia for lunar and cosmic scenery. Only later it was discovered that his poetry was far more than that.

Lyrical by definition, Eminescu illustrated fully the erotic poetry of nature. He gave new dimensions to love and covered the whole range of human feelings. He expressed the joys and the pains of love.

He conferred on it undreamed of perspectives and transformed it into a condition of life and art. Eminescian love is the most abundant, ardent and varied in Romanian literature and one of the most original in world literature. It is not just song, it is meditation, heartrending drama, cosmic cataclysm, happiness and grief. As in his life and entire work, there is a dramatic character and tension in his love poetry, given by the irreconcilable conflict between his high ideals, his elevated conception of love and reality which contradicts them. The result of this confrontation is disappointment. Love, as the poet dreamed of it, was a never failing condition of spiritual life and literary creation, the shield against all misfortunes and evils, the beam of light in the dark of struggle for existence, that 'something' which unites souls and gives them aspiration for the sublime and for perfection. Therefore, Eminescu contemplates love in a different way from other poets. Vasile Alecsandri loves his woman but when she dies of tuberculosis, he is sad for a while and sheds a few tears, then he returns to normal, he laughs and is happy again. Eminescu is of an extraordinary gravity in such a situation. He makes a religion of love, as can be seen in his poems like 'Mortua est' ('She is dead'), 'Luceafărul' ('The evening star'), 'Pe lângă plopul fără soț' ('Along the row of poplars odd') and

others. Love becomes the poet's essential and superior life, romantic in its essence and at the same time human and terrestrial, an expression of the depth of his feelings and his spiritual needs.

Like all the great poets of the world, he places his love in cosmic perspectives, as it occurs in 'Luceafărul'. Love is often accompanied by sorrow. Love and sorrow are the two constant dimensions of the poet's life, and are conspicuously reflected in his writings. Eminescu sang love in all its plenitude as a shared and serene feeling or, more often, as a misunderstood one.

The poem 'Luceafărul' ('The evening star'), Eminescu's masterpiece, represents a synthesis of lyrical and philosophical potentiality, of his capacity to transpose his own drama onto the cosmic plan, a quintessence of the whole Eminescian poetry which suggests grandiose universes in the posthumous poems he left unfinished. In an atmosphere of cosmogonic fairy-tale, we discover the sad story of the poet himself.

'Luceafărul' is the symbol of incompatibility between genius and the environment in which he lives and of the conflict between his aspiration towards eternity and

the ephemeral. There appears to be an insurmountable wall between genius and the common people, the wall of lack of understanding. The beautiful and sensitive daughter of the emperor in the story of 'Luceafărul' perceives the difference between herself and the evening star to a certain extent, that is the sublime position of genius, and though she feels attracted to it, she ends up by living her existence according to the human standard, quickly falling in love with a page, an ordinary young man at her father's court. That means that the superior world of genius, of fantasy, dream and poetry, appears totally unusual and strange to the common world of humans, and therefore there is a rift between these two worlds. Eminescu was preoccupied with the idea of the deepening abyss between the two worlds - the world of genius symbolized by the evening star and the world of human beings personified by Cătălina.

Eminescu shows a clear attitude towards human love. He thinks it cannot be considered a stable and supreme value of life. The poet experienced it and always found himself in an impossible situation when he tried to achieve spiritual harmony in life, because his beloved woman could not understand him. In other words, the poem 'Luceafărul', which represents the summit of Eminescu's contemplative attitude and his

aesthetic expression, suggests that, in the world he lived in, he could not find the woman of his dreams whom he needed for his spiritual fulfilment. This way 'Luceafărul' is the poem whose main theme is the destiny of the man of genius. The problem is debated from Schopenhauer's point of view. The German philosopher's theory is that only genius can know the world profoundly because he is capable of getting out of the narrow sphere of subjectivity while the common people cannot.

The poem roused great emotions and debates among the members of the literary club 'Junimea'. No other poem in the whole work of Eminescu provoked so many interpretations and researches after his death. The explanation of this fact lies in the complexity of the material in the poem. Unfortunately the rapid success of the poem, especially among the young intellectuals of the time, was interwoven with painful news about the poet's illness. Two years earlier Eminescu had already shown some alarming signs. Just a few months after the publication of 'Luceafărul', in April 1883, a severe attack of madness put an end to his creative activity. He left everybody wondering how much he might have written if he had not died so young.



'Luceafărul' has proved to be, until today, the incontestable masterpiece of Romanian poetry and, it can be affirmed with all critical responsibility, is one of the works of great resistance in European Romanticism.

There are four main components in 'Luceafărul'. One is the fantastic story which Eminescu found in the thesaurus of the Romanian folklore. The second is the philosophical theme he borrowed from the universal culture. Then the Eminescian poetic talent and the Romanian language which facilitated the fusion of the first two.

The refuge of love in the middle of nature is no longer done for the sake of a special setting in Eminescu's poetry. It is done with the intention of isolating and protecting love from all adversities, wickedness and gossip, and placing it in a pure and favourable environment. Nature plays the role of a generous protector of love and it creates an atmosphere of intimacy and solitude for two where no spectator is supposed to be present. Nature and love are two inseparable issues in Eminescu's work and two great sources of inspiration. They are the most significant romantic themes that dominate Eminescu's poetry.

Eminescu's work can be explained by an exceptional native endowment, an unusual aspiration towards knowledge and a rare capacity for assimilation of cultural values. All these qualities are controlled by the consciousness of his vocation as a creator. The structure of his personality includes as basic elements the traditions, customs and mentality of his own people, imposing upon his work a national seal in the framework of its universal literary character. Obviously the poet absorbed the culture and familiarized himself with previous literature, national and universal, and formed a mental picture of the social, literary and artistic structures. He knew the great literary works of the world, oriental, classical, French, English, Italian and especially German. This knowledge contributed to the outlining and enriching of his intellectual horizons and to the extension of his universe of ideas and feelings. Through his studies in Vienna and Berlin and by direct reading he had acquired a good comprehension of the philosophical doctrines and principles of Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and the great philosophers of ancient times. Of these, Schopenhauer had the most consequential influence on him.

Eminescu was passionately engaged in the torrent of the political and social events because he was permanently preoccupied with the destiny of the Romanian people, in the name of justice and truth. His work shows clearly that he did not isolate himself in the world of poetry but that he descended into the arena of life and fought vigorously and with dedication for what he thought to be right, and this fact defined him as an apostle of the Romanian ideals of unity and liberty. Right from the start of his literary activity, the teenaged Eminescu expressed his love for his country, hoping that its future be worthy of its glorious past. An example of his strong and unfaltering patriotic feeling can be seen in the poem 'Ce-ți doresc eu ție dulce Românie' ('What I wish you sweet Romanian land') which is also an implicit appeal for the realisation of the dream of unity of all Romanian provinces. The national element and the patriotic attitude form the framework of Eminescian work. Wrapped in art's clothing, Eminescu's responsible attitude towards the fate of his country and people, both in poetry and prose, impresses by his accurate and profound judgements and by the variety of the problems he tackled. He operated only with two of the three dimensions of history: the past and the future, considering that the present was worthless, degrading and shameful.

It was said that Eminescu was a late Romantic. This is false. First of all, "Romanticism was not a sudden explosive phenomenon, it did not appear just once. It unfolded in successive waves over one hundred years, beginning from the end of the eighteenth century up to the end of the nineteenth century ... This way, French Romanticism can be regarded as late in comparison with English or German Romanticism. Eminescu in his turn wasn't an isolated or late Romantic at the time. He belonged to a whole contemporary Romanticism".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the greatest Portuguese Romantic poet, Antero de Quental, the greatest Brazilian Romantic Antonio de Castro Alves, and the Bulgarian Romantic Hristo Botev, were Eminescu's contemporaries. All of them integrated perfectly in the universal current of Romanticism. Victor Hugo's most brilliant work and the pillar of French Romanticism 'La Légende des Siècles' ('The Legend of the Centuries') was finished in 1883, the year when Eminescu's masterpiece 'Luceafărul' was published. This coincidence shows once more how wrong it is to describe Eminescu as a late Romantic. Moreover, even the zenith of French Romanticism could not equal the magnificence of Eminescu's 'Luceafărul'.

There are also at least two factors which place Eminescu above all the Romantic poets of the world:

Titanism and the motif of genius. "Titanic expression has been strongly illustrated in European Romanticism. It appeared with Jean Paul and Kleist in Germany, with Keats in England and with Hugo in France. Nevertheless when it is about titanism that is the inspiration related to great geneses and cosmic collapses, no Romantic reached the intensity, vastness and the grandeur of Eminescu. The motif of genius was illustrated by many Romantics like Byron, Vigny, Lermontov and later by the German philosopher Nietzsche. While with all of them genius is a man or a creature with human appearance, with Eminescu such a superiority is attributed to a natural element, a star, situated high in the celestial vault".<sup>2</sup>

No other Romanian writer has achieved in his work a more vast and deeper synthesis of attitudes and lyrical and philosophical values during such a short life than Eminescu. All of a sudden and unexpectedly Eminescu broke all the traditional patterns of poetry in which the general characteristic of the native spirit was only a superficial feature, too limited and localised. Through his work, Eminescu gave poetry a rich substance and a rare and complex form with universal depth and beauty. Eminescian Romanticism, a unique and unusual state of spirit, succeeded in changing and giving poetry new artistic forms with an expressive

force that cannot be compared to those that had existed before him. He is the poet who gave Romanian poetry the universal magnitude which it lacked through his distinguished epithets and representations of his imagination.

Eminescu's work is exceptional in its way; not only in Romanian literature but also in the whole world. It is universal and national at the same time. In other words the universal consciousness overlapped and merged with the national one. But when we say universal we refer to his poetry, not to his prose and articles in the newspapers which do not present a real literary value for the world outside Romanian boundaries. There are three factors that determine the universality of a literary work: the contents, the form, and the harmony. The content of Eminescu's most important poems contains universal themes, among them the most obvious are love, nature and the fate of the human being. As to the form of Eminescu's poems, though there are some mistakes, the rare rhymes, the simple and clear verse, the morphology and syntax prove he was a coryphaeus of the Romanian language. But where Eminescu is unsurpassable is in his suggestive style. Victor Hugo's suggestibility is great but Eminescu's is even greater. Yet, the most significant and vital factor in the universality of a

masterpiece **is** harmony. Without harmony the content is a simple spiritual matter and the form is a simple succession of grammatical words. Harmony gives the content and form force and brilliance. All the great poets of the world are distinguished by harmony, and Eminescu excels in it.

Titu Maiorescu, the professor of philosophy and Eminescu's protector, was the first to discover and understand his qualities of genius and the universality of his works. These facts, very well known nowadays, give the Romanian people the pride and assurance that their poet can rightly be counted among the greatest Romantic poets of the world. "What Eminescu was and what he became is the result of his inborn genius which was too powerful in his own being to be diverted from his way by any contact with the outside world. If he had been educated in Romania or France and not in Austria and Germany, maybe he would have inherited or acquired more or less wealth; he would have taken a higher position in the hierarchy of the state; he would have met other human figures in his sentimental life, but Eminescu would have remained the same, his fate would not have changed ... What characterized Eminescu's personality, first of all, was an overwhelming intelligence helped by an infallible memory ... the world in which he lived,

according to nature, was the world of general ideas almost exclusively".<sup>3</sup>

Being conscious of his spiritual value, when Romania's queen, a great admirer of his poems, wanted to confer on him a 'bene-merenti' distinction, he refused it categorically. On the occasion of this event Titu Maiorescu said: "He himself a king of human thinking, which other king could have honoured him? Eminescu was not interested in those things that could lure most people. He was not preoccupied with luxury, material situation, ambition or love for glory ... When he would bring us the latest poem he made, carefully polished, seeking always a form as close as possible to perfection, he would read it to us as if it was unknown to him. He never thought of publishing it. The publication was irrelevant to him. One of us had to take the manuscript from his hand and send it to the magazine 'Convorbiri literare' ('Literary discussions')".<sup>4</sup> This is one of the best descriptions of Eminescu's personality which fits perfectly with what we see of him in his work.

For the Romanian people and literature, Mihail Eminescu was, as Carlyle said: "A thunderbolt from the sky.



He appeared without a chain of harbingers to prepare his way". Truly Eminescu's appearance surprised everybody and the Romanian people welcomed him with utter astonishment. He cast a shadow over all poets before him, his contemporaries and the new generation of poets after him fell under the spell of his influence. Even today his spirit is present among poets. On the occasion of Eminescu's celebration at his tomb, the great Romanian literary critic George Calinescu said: "For us, the living Eminescu was born after the death of his body. Consequently it is not blood that runs in his veins but an unalterable spirit".<sup>5</sup>

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