

THE CONSTRUCTION OF EXOTICISM IN OLIVIA MANNING'S  
*BALKAN TRILOGY*  
– AN IMAGOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Olivia Manning's *Balkan Trilogy* was published in the 1960s, at a moment when interwar Romania was of little significance to an English-speaking world that no longer had direct access to the realities behind the Iron curtain. To the British imagination, this space, if it existed at all, evinces all the features of a dystopia, a lost world, a reverted paradise, now under the empire of dark forces.

Manning's reading of pre-communist Romania in the first two volumes of the Trilogy – *The Great Fortune* and *The Spoilt City* – can be viewed as an attempt to retrieve this space, at least at a symbolical level, by making it more palatable to the reading public through a conventional exploitation of its potential for exoticism. The paper explores the interplay of *autoimages* and *heteroimages* that allowed for a construction of the Romanian space within the economy of the novel, as well as the allocentric/ethnocentric nature of the resulting images of Romania and Romanians, since their place on the axes of ideology and utopia account for the level of exoticism that Romania was granted by the author. From the same perspective we shall also examine the consequences of the imaginary positioning of Romania as a frontier space *par excellence*.

The construction of the Other in Manning's novel can be understood in terms of Paul Ricoeur's (1996) organization of stereotypical heteroimages along the axes of ideology and utopia. Thus, the image of the other is *Utopian* when it is allocentric, Other-oriented – i.e. when the Romanian Other is seen as belonging to an alternative order, rich in potentialities denied to one's own group; however, aside from a marked exoticism, in Manning's reading the image of the Romanian Other is rather *Ideological*, ethnocentric and self-oriented, in the reading that Paul Ricoeur gives to these terms (1986:386). Utopian representations of otherness constitute the expression of all the potentialities of a group, unable to manifest within the existent order. Stereotypical representations of otherness, as a form of multiple and contradictory beliefs, admits *difference*, but simultaneously disavows or masks it.

Nonetheless, utopian or ideological representations of otherness, studied in context, depend on the pre-existing tradition, in terms of their degree of intelligibility for the reading public they are intended for.

As seen above, the Romanian space makes no exception, and the construction of exoticism in Manning's novel is directly connected to a superficial knowledge of the Romanian Other, doubled by a constant emphasis on the stereotypical features of the expected culture. At the same time the exoticism ascribed to the Romanian space evinces some recognizable features that render it less menacing and easier to accept by a British/Western reading public.

### **The land**

Throughout the *Balkan Trilogy*, coming into contact with the alien culture entails not only a stereotyping of the external realities, perceived as belonging to the space of the Other (the *hetero-stereotype* of the Romanians); the writer's own territory becomes a theme of stereotyped mental representations – the *auto-stereotype*, or auto-images – the images that a nation has of itself. (Other such studies have been done by Hugo Dyserinck on autostereotypes in texts by the Flemish Francophone authors M. Maeterlinck, E. Verhaeren, and G.Rodenbach.see Duțu 1986) My paper will therefore deal with the representation of the territory in accordance with the corresponding sets of imagotypes, paying special attention to the recurrence of stereotypes on the 'orientality' of the Balkans in the attributes ascribed to Romania and the Romanians, that are decisively relegated to the space of the Orient.

The device used in the literary shaping of the Romanian space is that of the exploratory journey in the unknown territory, a journey that enables Manning's characters to pose their assessing gaze on the new space, interpreting it and assimilating it from their own cultural perspective. The young Pringles, Guy and Harriet, are returning to Romania in the summer of 1939. Recently and rather hastily married, their journey into the Balkan space turns out to be both an internal and an external exploration. Getting to know the new territory goes in parallel with their discovery of each other in their new life as a married couple; at the same time, the interplay of image and reality, present in their dealings with the new culture, finds its correspondent in the contrast and differences between their expectations of each other and the somewhat less glamorous realities of life together.

It is young Harriet, a 22-year old British woman, who is the centre-consciousness of the story and the representations of the new space are filtered through her eyes, often biased by the cultural assumptions of the author.

From the very first pages the country is spatially located at the limits of civilized Europe, presented as a buffer zone between the barbarian Orient and the comfortably familiar Occident. This image of Romania as the ‘margin’, ‘the frontier’, the ‘contact zone’ between cultures, religions, ultimately races, can be found in other works dealing with the heteroimages of Romania circulating in the western space and it has become part of the Romanian autoimage – the image they have of themselves. In Sorin Alexandrescu’s book, *Identitate în ruptură* (2000:11-13) the Romanian cultural space is presented not as marginal, which is assumed to have been the norm, but as a space of interference, at the border of at least two pairs of distinct cultural realms – the East and the West, the Catholic and the Orthodox. Lucian Boia’s book *Romania* equally deals extensively with this image of Romania as borderland. Romania is “... a country only partially integrated into European civilization, a country of the *margins*, still characterized by a pronounced substrate of primitivism and a strange amalgam of modern urban life and rustic survivals. [...] The Romanian space presents itself as a *marginal* one. Throughout history it has always been on the edge of great political units and civilizations [...] whether in relation to Russia, Germany and Austria or Turkey, the Romanians have always been on the *margins* and now they stand on the *margin* of the European Union, as candidates whose chances of being integrated into the European construct remain uncertain” (Boia 2001:9-12) (my emphasis). In this case we could say that the meta-image of Romanians (i.e. the image that Romanians imagine that others have of them) corresponds – or at least is comfortably close – to existing autoimages (the image Romanians have of themselves) and heteroimages (the image of Romanians as visible in works originating in other cultural spaces).

The *topos* of the frontier, of the exotic borderline, porous yet dividing, is central to the creation of Manning’s Romania. In addition to that, an Oriental precedent is assumed in Manning’s description of this country, which she clearly includes from the very beginning in the imaginary space of the Orient. This ‘inherited’ Orient, which she borrows from the western mechanism of construction of exoticism is paralleled by the corresponding stereotypes and constitutes the reference point in her description of the new space. As Boia (2001:9) puts it, “[t]he Romanian space represents, for the West, the first circle of otherness: sufficiently close for the curious configurations and disturbing forms of behaviour which Westerners find there to be highlighted all the more strongly.” In Manning’s first two volumes of the *Balkan Trilogy* this disquieting view of the space of the Other is visible from the first chapter, when, at the window of her compartment, Harriet takes in the landscape – alluring yet dangerously wild:

“A pine forest came down to the edge of the track: the light of the carriages rippled over the bordering trees. As she gazed out into the dark heart of the forest, she began to see small moving lights. For an instant a grey dog-shape skirted the rail, then returned to darkness. The lights, she realized, were the eyes of beasts. She drew her head in and closed the window” (14)“.

The ‘civilized’ space and the wild space of the new territory, the train and the landscape, respectively, are thus juxtaposed, while their relation of mutual isolation and exclusion is symbolic for the whole approach that is to be used in the rest of the book. The method Manning chose to render the novelty of this ‘edge of Europe’ less threatening is that of connecting it to known elements of the familiar world the Pringles belonged to – the West, but also to their accepted version of exoticism – a romanticized Orient with its age-long accepted characteristics: “its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability” (Said 1978:206). To use Said’s terms, Manning’s Oriental Romania is a “locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption” (idem). But, if Said’s Orient is viewed as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress, Manning’s Romania, as a contact zone, is situated halfway between the East and the West, while her otherness is best appropriated by appealing to known parameters.

Thus, the new is understood by referring to known and accepted forms of otherness and of difference, a mechanism which contributes to the process of rendering the new space familiar, it is in fact a domestication of the exotic, as Said terms it (Said 1978:60) – i.e. by assimilating, by analogy with other areas of experience felt to be already understood and familiar (White 1978:5). For instance, Bucharest is, (albeit with an ironic undertone) “the Paris of the East” (30), “the edge of Europe, a region in which [Yakimov] already smelt the Orient.” (16), an unsafe country, because “[t]hese Balkan countries are wild” and, as one of the non-Romanians says, “[t]hey have dangerous wild beasts” (99). Romania is an uncivilized legacy of the Ottoman Empire where the lack of safety is due both to its geo-political location (the unstable, seething, dangerous Balkans), but also to the intrinsic wild character of its fauna and climate.

The stereotypes are complemented by more ‘objective’ arguments in favour of Romania’s historical and cultural allegiances to the Orient, such as the remark by Clarence (another member of the British legation), who argues that, “[i]f Romania had been as long under the Austrians as she was under the Turks, she might be civilized by now” (88).

The myth of an ‘Oriental’ Romania, situated at the frontier of Europe emerges again in Manning’s book, precisely because ‘Oriental’ is the key term

in defining the Romanian imaginary space. A contact zone of the Orient of Turkey and of the darker, less understood Orient of Russia, Romania, or at least Manning's Bucharest, vacillates between images of sensuous decadence and mystical effusions. Picturesque figures, such as that of the Skopit *trasura* driver, illustrate the barbarous, wild streak of the Romanian spirit (30), while the indolence and the lasciviousness of Bucharest women, the general passivity of the people, and the colourful accounts of the streets and local customs seem to allude to the conventional feminine representations of Orient in western literature (Said 1978: 206ff).

Even the architecture of the place is presented as offering a direct connection to the Eastern part of Europe: "The market area around the river had a flavour more of the East than of the West. Guy had brought her here and shown her the houses, built in the style of Louis XIII, once the mansions of Turkish and Phanariot officials, now doss-houses where the poor slept twenty and thirty to a room" (122).

Yet, as mentioned earlier, this new space, an exotic blend of East and West, is befriended by being reduced to smaller, recognizable units; thus, the centre of Bucharest life is the British legation, while the language is just like Italian (16); the peasants, viewed as mere ethnographic artefacts, are rendered familiar by alluding to their Roman cultural legacy, a legacy that is nonetheless presented as dying in front of the unifying wave of western influences:

"Newly arrived in the city, the men were still in tight frieze trousers, short jackets and pointed caps – a style of dress that dated back to Roman times. The women wore embroidered blouses and fan pleated skirts of colours that were richer and more subtle than those worn by the gypsies. As soon as they could afford it, they would throw off these tokens of their simplicity and rig themselves out in city drab" (64).

This territory at the edge of Europe is one torn apart by climactic contrasts that parallel the two Orients at work in the shaping of the Romanian image. The weather is a mixture of extremes – melting hot in summer, freezing cold in winter; the Northern *crivăţ*, a hint at the Russian winter not too far away, opposes the scorching sun of the South, whose destructive power exposes men and plants alike to its relentless torture. It is an unbearably cold, unbearably hot climate that provides the backdrop against which the events in the novel unfold. "With late November came the *crivăţ*, a frost-hard wind that blew from Siberia straight into the open mouth of the Moldavian plain. Later it would bring the snow, but for the moment it was merely a threat and a discomfort that each day grew a little sharper" (107). In the summer, the city turns into a climatic hell: "Everything seemed to give off heat. Harriet half

expected the canna lilies, in great beds of sulphur, cadmium and read, to roar like a furnace” (63).

Oriental elements in the good Romantic and pre-Romantic tradition, dominate the description of the people and of the mores: sensuality, terror, sublimity, idyllic scenes, picturesque decadence, such as the profusion of nobility titles and the decadent parties organized by Princess Teodorescu. The colourful market scenes combine with the ubiquitous crowds of beggars and gypsy flower sellers to create an un-Western background, verging on the exotic. Sexual permissiveness and the passivity associated with Romanian women are constantly alluded to, either indirectly in an anecdotal form, or directly, through the example of Sophie, or of the two princesses, Mimi and Lulie. As Harriet is informed on the very day of her arrival, Romanian morality “is based not on not doing, but on not recognizing what is being done” (38).

Similarly, the oriental stereotype of lasciviousness and loose morality is played on when the behaviour of Romanian young girls and the local secrets of the institution of marriage are explained to Harriet by another British official: “[T]hese Romanian homes are hot-beds of scandal and gossip. It’s all very Oriental. The pretence of innocence is to keep their price up. They develop early and they’re married off early, usually to some rich old lecher whose only interest is in the girl’s virginity. When that’s over and done with, they divorce. The girl sets up her own establishment and having the status of divorcee, she is free to do what she chooses.” The stereotype is further illustrated in the anecdote Inchcape offers his company: “But surely you’ve heard the story of the Romanian walking with his German friend down Calea Victoriei – the Romanian naming the price of every woman they meet? ‘Good heavens,’ says the German, ‘are there no honest women here?’ ‘Certainly,’ replies the Romanian, ‘but – *very expensive!*’” (39).

Another defining trait for this representation of Romanian as a superficially western-shaped Orient is the abundance of food. A cornucopia of cheap food available everywhere, Manning’s Bucharest life revolves around parties, terraces, restaurants, and is punctuated by snacks of various sizes and natures. Wild and uncivilized, inhabited by gregarious, fun loving crowds, this land of plenty is from the first chapter dominated by the recurrent image of the abundant and accessible food supplies. Food is cheap, food is everywhere, as a natural pendant to the child-like image of the inhabitants whom nature itself seems to be protecting from the harsh realities of life: “The heart of the display was a rosy bouquet of roasts, chops, steaks and fillets, frilled round with a froth of cauliflower. Heaped extravagantly about the centre were aubergines as big as melons, baskets of artichokes, small coral carrots, mushrooms, mountain raspberries, apricots, peaches, apples and grapes. On one side there

were French cheeses; on the other tins of caviar, grey river fish in powdered ice, and lobsters and crayfish groping in dark waters. The poultry and game lay unsorted on the ground” (32). The Romanian space, therefore, a metaphor of culinary abundance, offers itself to the consummation of the western gaze – both figuratively and literally. It is passively awaiting the organizing hand of the Other, just as the Romanians are said to let the foreigners run the country for them. The direct connection between representations of Romanians as a passive crowd and the physical abundance of the land, rich yet unexploited is hinted at, constantly, throughout the novel. And yet this savage abundance can at times be perceived as menacing (although no parallel allusion at a possible outbreak of violence from the Romanians seems to ever be likely to happen). Thus, when seeing a handcart of melons of all sizes at the entrance of the Cișmigiu Park, Harriet feels oddly disquieted. “I’ve never seen so many before.’ ‘That is Romania,’ said Guy. Repelled by their profusion, she had an odd fancy that, gathered there in a flashing mass of yellow and gold, the melons were not really inert, but hiding a pullulating craftiness that might, if unchecked, one day take over the world” (62).

### **The people**

The Bucharest of Manning’s novel is inhabited by two distinct crowds, standing for two distinct worlds: the impoverished yet colorful peasantry and the arrogant snobbish middle class. Between these two realms there are meteoric appearances of sketchy members of the old aristocracy, such as Princess Teodorescu, Princess Mimi and Princess Lulie, charming, broke, willing to trade their nobility for money, and constantly presented as looking for someone interested in the trade.

As a general feature, Manning’s Romanians are always seen from afar, not really explained, with no direct insight into their psychology; usually they are part of a larger group – clients of a café or restaurant, students in an amphitheatre, passers-by strolling along Calea Victoriei. The collective element – the crowd – is dominant; in the street, in front of the royal palace, at the market, the silent crowd surrounding the dead Captain’s body, the audience present at the play staged by Guy.

Within this shapeless mass, however, Harriet distinguishes some better shaped subgroups: the beggars, ubiquitous, aggressive and repulsive, or the groups of peasants encountered in the Cismigiu garden or wandering in the street; the peasants are merely touches of local colour, exotic, quaint, not clearly differentiated from their background. As time goes by, this impover-

ished crowd is perceived by Harriet to be in a disquieting contrast with the image she had had of them prior to her arrival in Romania:

“Before she left England, she had read books written by travellers in Rumania who had given a picture of a rollicking, open-hearted, happy, healthy peasantry, full of music and generous hospitality. They were, it was true, mad about music. Music was their only outlet. They made themselves drunk on it. As for the rest, she had seen nothing of it. The peasants in this city were starved, frightened figures, scrawny with pellagra, wandering about in a search for work or making a half-hearted attempt to beg”(123).

The few characters that are individualized are not representative of the Romanians as a group, and they aspire to a British-like status: Sophie, who wanted to marry Guy and ends up marrying Clarence, in order to get a British passport; the Druckers, and the Kleins, families of Romanian Jews, somewhat marginalized by the good Romanians; Bella Nicolescu’s husband, a mere accessory to an English lady who committed the eccentricity of marrying a native.

This gregarious fun-loving, snobbish and childish crowd – again the stereotype of the child-like attributes ascribed to the primitive, uncivilized individual – is an eclectic mingling of several races, an ethnic mosaic reminiscent of an Oriental bazaar: “They’re not all Rumanians, said Guy. There are a great many stateless Jews; and there are, of course, Hungarians, Germans and Slavs” (27). The so called ‘real Romanians’ are however an exclusive caste, not willing to mix with outsiders. Bella Nicolescu, the British closest to the real life of the Romanians – through her marriage with a Romanian officer – describes them as “snobby” and confesses that “[t]he real Romanians never mix with foreigners” (141).

Facing this double mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, Harriet Pringle has to deal with her own inability to seize the various degrees of difference at work in a world she can only grasp superficially. Yet her reading of it betrays her own cultural bias:

“Harriet was reminded of Doamna Flohr’s claim that the exclusiveness of the Jews was the exclusiveness of the excluded. What, she wanted to know, had the Romanians to be snobbish about? She said: “They must suffer from some profound sense of inferiority.” Such an idea was new and strange to Bella. She looked bewildered as she asked: ‘But what are they inferior to?’ ‘Why, to us, of course; to the foreigners and the Jews who run the country for them because they are too lazy to run it for themselves” (142).



Here we are dealing with a reversal of the negative imagotype of the foreigners rejected by ‘the real Romanians’, and its interpretation as proof of a positive feature, automatically situated on a superior hierarchical position, in terms of culture and civilization. Those whom the ‘real Romanians’ reject are those who are in fact their superiors, and by rejecting them the Romanians would in fact be trying to avoid a direct confrontation with their own autostereotypes of laziness and inferiority.

This comprehensive ethnic mosaic is scattered with exotic cameos, such as that of the lascivious young wife of Drucker, a Romanian “undulating with an Oriental languor” (99), of Florica the gipsy singer, or that of the *Skopit trăsură* driver, presented by Guy as “one of the sights of the city” (30), and whose story of religious self-mutilation shocks Harriet. “She gazed in wonder at the vast velvet backside of the eunuch before her, then she gazed out at the dark reaches of the Muntenia plain, on which the city stood like a bride-cake on a plate. ‘A barbarous country’, she said” (30).

The colourful collective character that is the Romanian crowd is dealt with on a double level; on the one hand, there is the local level, where Romanian customs and lifestyle are analyzed from the outside and contrasted against that of the British characters. Thus, the set of unwritten ‘laws of the land’ — such as the distribution of the sidewalk (26-7) or the formal ‘interdiction’ of ladies to do grocery shopping for themselves are pictured as ludicrous cultural barriers to be trespassed by nonconformist, liberal-minded British women.

“Though leisurely, the Rumanians were ruthless in their determination to keep on the pavement. Only peasants or servants could be seen walking in the road.[...] Guy, too temperate, and Harriet, too light boned, for the fray, were easily thrust out to the kerb, where Guy gripped Harriet’s elbow to keep her from slipping into the gutter. She broke from him saying. ‘I’ll walk in the road. I’m not a Rumanian. I can do what I like” (27).

On the other hand, at a larger level, that of the seething conflict in Europe, the Romanians as a people are viewed as merely secondary elements in an equation that is being solved elsewhere. As Mary Louise Pratt (1995) puts it in an article about the experience of marginality in colonial societies, in Manning’s novel too one feels that “history is taking place elsewhere”, even if Romania is not a colonial country on the margin of a clearly delimited Metropolis. Not only the individual characters are sketchy; the strategies of the Romanian government are also dealt with only cursorily. Their role in the destiny of their country is constantly overemphasized to be close to nil. Victims of the decision of an arbitrary king, of a game played in Russia,

Britain or Germany, the motley, noisy Romanian crowd is helpless like a child, gathering hopefully, and then resentfully, around the all-knowing British, supposed to have beset their colonial benevolence over them. The reaction of the crowd upon the announcement of the ultimatum given by the Russians to Bucharest is telling in this respect.

“Hearing English spoken, an elderly man leapt up from a nearby table and reminded everyone that Britain had guaranteed Romania. Now that Romania was menaced, what were the British going to do? ‘Nothing, nothing,’ he screamed in rage. ‘They are finished,’ [...] Harriet looked uneasily about her. When, ten months before, she had first arrived in Bucharest, the British here had been respected, now, on the losing side, they were respected no longer. She half feared actual attack – but no attack came. A certain sentiment, even affection, persisted for the once great, protecting power which was believed to be doomed.” (293).

Even the protection from the German – and to a certain extent, Russian – armies is provided not by valiant Romanian troops ready to fight to their death in the defence of their homeland, but by natural obstacles that in the end will only delay, not stop the invaders; thus, throughout the first volume Harriet repeatedly assesses the security provided by the snow-laden mountains north of the Capital, while the (temporary) security offered by climate and relief is repeatedly mentioned by various characters in the book.

Manning’s construction of Romanian is clearly marked by colonial attributes, yet it is not clear whose colony the country actually is. Naturally enough, Harriet is content to see that pro-British attitudes are prevalent throughout the Nazi-menaced Bucharest, as a confirmation of the British auto-stereotypes – nobility, dignity, love of justice. The relationship between the two cultures is a clearly hierarchical one, the dynamics center/periphery being maintained throughout the process of image construction in the novel. Thus, one example would be the image that the Romanians have of the British: as Bella’s Romanian husband argues: “[w]e know here that to be English is to be honest. You do things to your own disadvantage because you know them to be right. That is remarkable, I can tell you. So we love you [...] We envy you. You are a great, rich nation. We think you despise us but we love you nevertheless” (534). And it is, paradoxically, this alleged admiration for the British that is given as one quite likely explanation for the fate of the country in the war; the Romanian helplessness in front of the events is nonetheless repeatedly mentioned by the various speakers and commentators, like for instance in the dialogue between Harriet and David, a Secret Service officer, following the ultimatum:

“‘But are the Rumanians bound to accept this?’ ‘What else can they do?’ David asked. ‘The terms were dictated by Ribbentrop and Ciano. The Romanians were told that if they did not accept, their country would immediately be occupied by German, Hungarian and Russian troops’. ‘The Romanians might fight’, said Harriet. [...] ‘A war between Rumania and Germany would be like the life of primitive man; nasty brutish and short.’ ‘Why are the Romanians being treated this way?’ ‘They must be asking that themselves. I suppose they’re made to pay for their old friendship with Britain” (419).

## Conclusion

Even if Romania was not properly speaking a colony, and even if, geographically and culturally, it was not part of what is currently understood as the Orient, the construction of Romanian exoticism in Manning’s *Balkan Trilogy* corresponds to Said’s coordinates of Oriental exoticism in general: eccentricity, backwardness, silent indifference, feminine penetrability, malleability. It is significant to analyze how these strategies of domestication of otherness in Manning’s work follow these older patterns of the colonial construction of exoticism in the Western literary tradition.

Thus, the territory of Romania is from the first pages included in the imaginary realm of the Orient, yet Romanian exoticism is of a particular blend, reconciling the sensuality of the classical Romantic Orient with the mythical religiousness and the superstitions of a ‘primitive’ people. But, as the action unfolds, and as the characters get to know the new territory better, a process of domestication of this exoticism takes place. For instance, series of similarities are found and emphasized in the construction of the Romanian autoimages, that symbolically connect this space to the Western culture in terms of language, customs, institutions. Nonetheless, the hierarchical assumptions structuring Manning’s discourse on Romanian otherness can still be identified within the text. Passive and enthralling, a land of plenty inhabited by a passive, fun-loving, gregarious people whose attributes often verge on the child-like representations of the primitives in colonial texts, Romania is a space open to all influences and to all interventions. From the larger political drama going on elsewhere, but on whose outcome the collective destiny of the country depended, and to narrower domestic events, such as the Captain’s murder or the abdication of the king, the Romanians are helpless, consistently out of touch with the direct events, merely witnessing the writing of history by someone else. The crowd, a recurrent motif in Manning’s *Balkan Trilogy*, though colourful and picturesque, remains a passive element, in consonance

with the larger feminine attributes ascribed to the Romanian space in general. From sensuality to promiscuity, from passion for music and life to a child-like dependence on outside support, Manning's Romanians are sketchy, decorative, endearing. They move freely, but almost exclusively in groups, among the landmarks of exoticism and of familiarity with which Manning punctuates her narrative – derelict Pahanariot buildings, churches, open air restaurants, or the official buildings, the English Bar, the Royal palace. The country itself, a wild land, with wild beasts, a barbarous country with barbarous customs, a territory torn between Siberian winters and canicular summers, awaiting the arrival of the German troops, or of the Russian troops, totally defenceless but for the natural obstacle offered by the Carpathians during winter is an open space, the frontier par excellence, the acculturated and acculturable contact area between the East and the West, clearly belonging to neither realm, yet recognizably familiar to both.

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