

**QUANTITATIVE METHODS TO DETERMINE THE  
SEMANTIC VALUES OF “FASHION”  
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ROMANIAN NOVEL  
(1845–1900)**

*Fashion and Apparel*

The Romanian etymon “modă”, translated into English as “fashion”, was first attested in *Anonymus Caransebesiensis, Dictionarium valachico-latinum*<sup>1</sup> – a manuscript in the Romanian language using Latin writing, dated in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to the *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: The Nineteenth Century*<sup>2</sup>, the term “modă” is used by Al. Pelimon in 1853, in the excerpt “young men with fashionable tails”<sup>3</sup>. The collocation “fashionable” (“de la mode”) is “an old French borrowing corresponding to tastes at a specific moment, used frequently at a given moment, modern”<sup>4</sup>.

At the lexical level, the sartorial terminology is deployed in the Romanian novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the hypernym “modă” (“fashion”) becomes a linguistic nucleus around which many layers of significance coagulate. This concept concentrates at a lexical level a universe that immortalizes, as in photography, different semantic levels revealing changes in the social, cultural, economic, and commercial life of the characters in the fictional discourse of the novels.

We prefer the delimitation *fashion in linguistics – fashion in apparel* because it illustrates the duality of the concepts that presume an oscillation between the meanings such as imitation – innovation, imitation – differentiation, transition – stability, archaic – modern, evanescence – permanence, predictable – unpredictable, versatile – stable, contingency – necessity, extrinsic – intrinsic. The complementarity of the concepts has at its core a subjective language of tastes and

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<sup>1</sup> See DLR – *Dicționarul limbii române [Dictionary of the Romanian Language]*, anastatic edition, vol. 9: M, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2010, p. 776.

<sup>2</sup> See Ștefan Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc: secolul al XIX-lea [The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: The Nineteenth Century]*, Sibiu, Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA, 2019, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/mdrr>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> See Al. Pelimon, *Hoții și Hagiul [The Thieves and the Haggler]*, 1853, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc*, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/1853-al-pelimon-hotii-si-hagiul/>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> See DLR, p. 777. Unless otherwise stated, the quotations are translated into English by the author of this paper.

preferences and of auctorial perceptions of the Romanian novels of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These perceptions are anchored in the social-cultural, economic, commercial, and temporal dimensions, very well represented in these Romanian novels.

Considering the first meaning in *Dicționarul limbii române* [*The Romanian Language Dictionary*], the term “modă” (“fashion”) could be slightly pleonastic because it is associated with

dress and the taste for a certain manner of dressing [...] A habit, a collective skill, specific to a certain moment, to a social medium. [...] (Specific) Taste generalizes preference for a certain way of dressing. [...] (Today, seldom; concrete) An object, especially an accessory of (female) dress to wear at a certain time. [...] (Old and regional) A model<sup>5</sup>.

That is why my approach is closer to the definition of the lexeme “modă” as employed by Lorența Popescu in her study *Moda feminină în vocabularul românesc. Secolul al XIX-lea* [*Female Fashion in the Romanian Vocabulary. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century*]: “European and international social phenomenon referring to a popular dressing style at a certain historical moment and in a certain space”<sup>6</sup>. In *Dicționar de neologisme* [*The Dictionary of Neologisms*], the denomination “modă” is equivalent to the feminine common noun “manieră” [“manner”] and secondly to the variable adjective “trecătoare” [“fleeting”]. We observe that this qualifying adjective has a nuanced connotation of ephemerality, highlighting a subjective perspective which involves the change according to “the tastes of the society”: “A fleeting manner of living, thinking, dressing, behaving, according to the tastes of a certain society”<sup>7</sup>. Alina Duduciuc mentions other usages for this term, as well as their equivalence in English: “taste”, “style”, “appearance”, “dress code”, “manner”<sup>8</sup>. In fact, for such an archilexeme it is quite hard to find a synonymous equivalent<sup>9</sup>. This means that this is a term whose definition is slippery, and it is as versatile and moody as tastes are.

*De gustibus non disputandum*, but we can perform a *semic analysis*<sup>10</sup> of the lexeme “modă” (“fashion”) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian novels. One can not

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 776-778.

<sup>6</sup> Lorența Popescu, *Moda feminină în vocabularul românesc. Secolul al XIX-lea* [*Female Fashion in the Romanian Vocabulary. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century*], București, Editura Academiei Române, 2015, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Florin Marcu, *Dicționar de neologisme* [*The Dictionary of Neologisms*], București, Editura Științifică, 1995, p. 210.

<sup>8</sup> Alina Duduciuc, *Sociologia modei: stil vestimentar și dezirabilitate socială* [*Sociology of Fashion: Clothing Style and Social Desirability*]. Foreword by Septimiu Chelcea, Iași, Institutul European, 2012, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> See Popescu, *Moda feminină*.

<sup>10</sup> Ion Coteanu, Lucia Wald (eds.), *Semantică și semiotică* [*Semantics and Semiotics*], București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1981, p. 275.

ignore the fact that fashion and dress also have social implications as “social conventions”<sup>11</sup>, and the lexicon of fashion in garments used in the Romanian novels, with all its terminology, embodies best the dynamic of the lexicon and the evolution of the Romanian language: “The lexicon is the most sensitive part of the changes imposed by social and cultural factors, types of behaviour, etc.”<sup>12</sup>.

The attempt to approximate the concept of fashion in relation to that of modernity is aided by the idea of novelty, of the changes produced in society. In sociology at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the classic ideas of Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon explain mob behaviour by the law of imitation and by contagion, fashion taking its source from the element of “imitation”: “Like animals, the human being is an imitator. To him, imitation is a necessity, on condition that imitation is at hand; in this imitation, fashion has its origin”<sup>13</sup>.

Furthermore, Matei Călinescu notes the terminological confusion between *fashion* and *modernity*:

The urge to modernize, in cultural terms, is often less concerned with scientific or epistemological questions (though overtly it may be) than with intellectual fashions (though it may indignantly condemn them). In this context, the terminological constellation modernity/modernism/modernization comes close to the false etymology of “modern” which derives it from *modus* (manner, fashion) and, in French, suggests the notion of a close kinship between “moderne” and “mode”<sup>14</sup>.

#### *The Concept of Fashion – A Practical Approach Using The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: The Nineteenth Century*

Our approach pursues the semantic quantitative analysis of the representations of “modă” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian literature as revealed by the 157 literary works included in *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel*. The quantitative analysis of the sartorial lexis, more exactly of the occurrences and co-occurrences of the lexeme “modă”, shows new insights: 46 domains of reference, thematic areas different from those mentioned in DLR, 36 new phraseologies with the constituent item “modă”, with semantic equivalences and excerpts from the corpus.

Thus, in the Romanian novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the concept of “modă” refers to the lexico-semantic fields which I will enumerate according to the distribution of data in the order of the occurrences. Most of them refer to apparel, time (the

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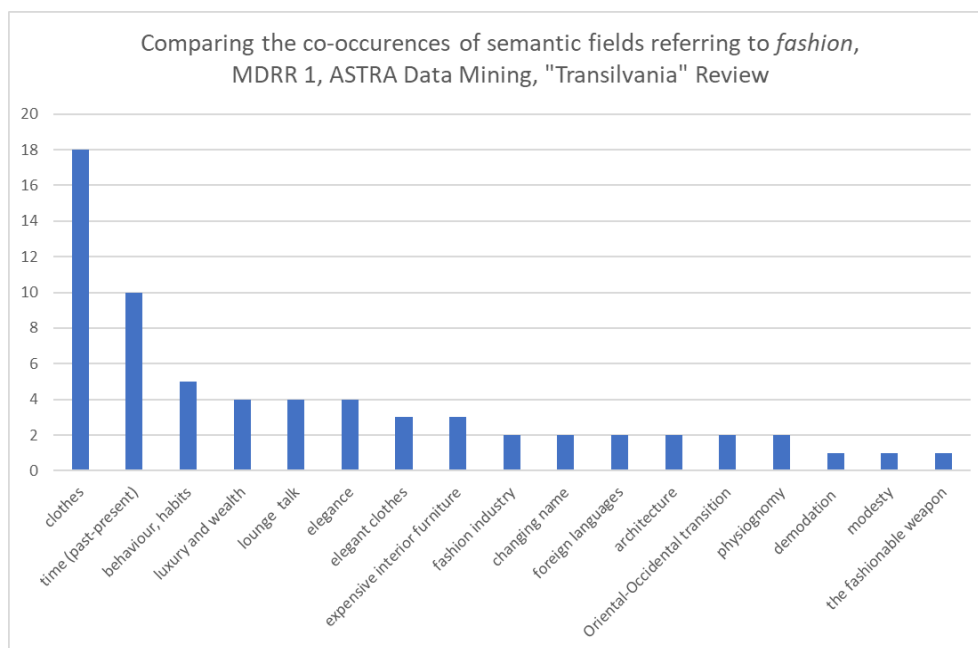
<sup>11</sup> Adina Nanu, *Artă, stil, costum [Art, Style, Costumes]*, București, Meridiane, 1976, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Coteanu, Wald, *Semantică și semiotică*, p. 276.

<sup>13</sup> Duduciuc, *Sociologia modei*, p. 74.

<sup>14</sup> Matei Călinescu, “Modernity, Modernism, Modernization: Variations on Modern Themes”, *symplokē*, 1, 1993, 1, p. 16.

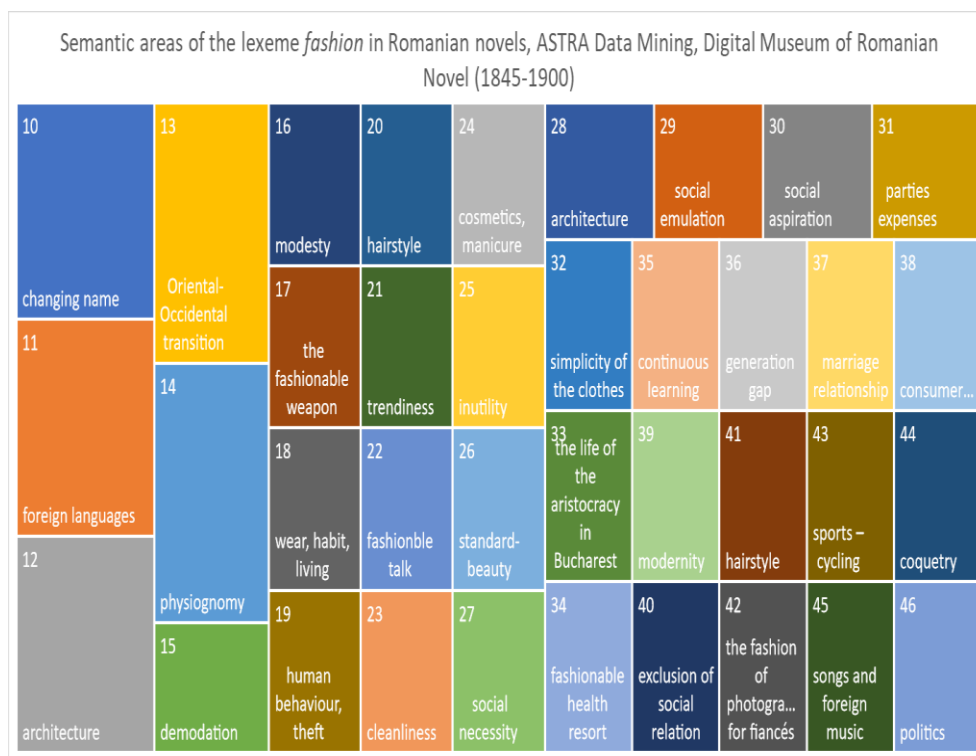
contrast past-present and tradition-modernity), the elegance of clothes, behaviour and habits, luxury and wealth, salon talk, expensive furniture, the fashion industry, changes in the family name, foreign languages, the Eastern-Western transition, architecture, and physiognomy. For the comparison of the semantic classes, see **Fig. 1**. The dynamism of the sartorial lexicon in the Romanian novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has provided new insights into the concept of fashion, which presents a colourful palette of different meanings. The lexicographic definition of these meanings imposes further reconstruction of their diverse connotations.



**Fig. 1.** Comparing the paradigms within the lexical field of fashion in *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: The Nineteenth Century (1845-1900)*

Starting from the archive of *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel*, I have investigated linguistic contexts that nuance and complete the lexicographic definition of “modă”. These referents are interesting because they are not recorded in the DLR. I have identified a lexical-semantic field with 31 thematic domains of singular occurrence in context. These semantic areas enrich and enlarge the lexical field of the concept of fashion in Romanian novels as follows: demodulation, modesty and simplicity of the clothes, the fashionable weapon, wear, habit, living, human behaviour, theft, hairstyle, cosmetics, manicure, trendiness, fashionable talk, cleanliness, uselessness, standard beauty, social necessity, emulation and social aspiration, architecture, parties expenditure, the life of the aristocracy in Bucharest, fashionable health resorts, learning, generation gap, marriage

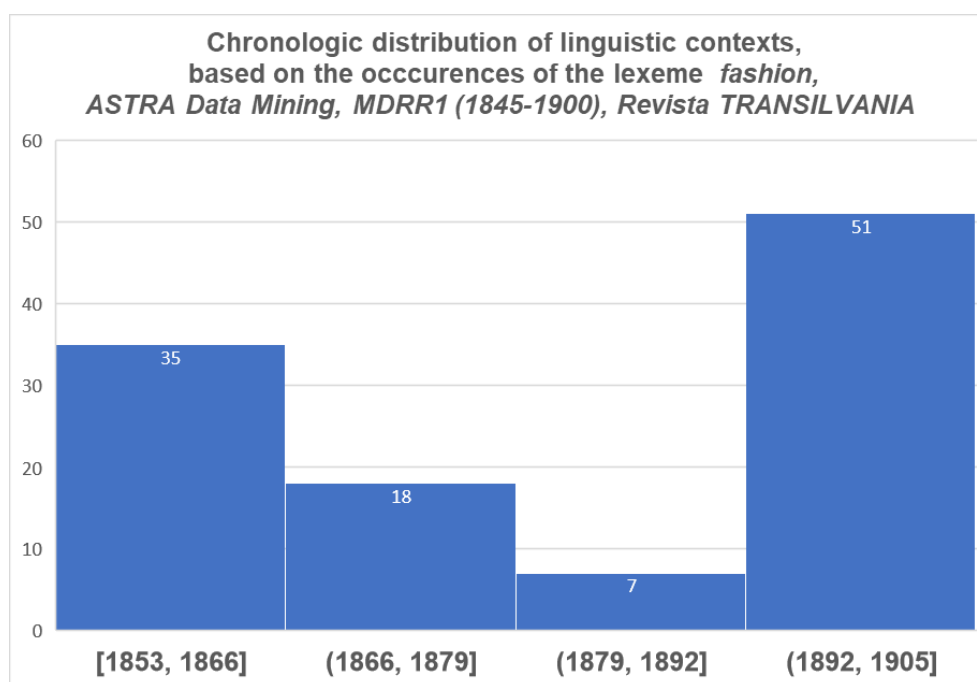
relationship, consum(er)ism, modernity, exclusion of social relations, the fashion of fiancés photography, sports (cycling), coquetry, songs and foreign music, politics. These semantic areas are illustrated in **Fig. 2**.



**Fig. 2.** The lexical field of the lexeme “modă” and its semantic areas in 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian novels

The lexeme “modă” is used more frequently towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, between 1892-1901, with 51 occurrences, almost 50% of the total. In the novels published between 1879-1892, the frequency of the lexeme is much lower, only 7 occurrences between 1866 and 1879, in 18 contexts, and between 1853-1866, there are 35 examples of contextual usage. Surprisingly, towards the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the lexeme “modă” has a larger scale of usage, unlike in the second half of the century. As expected, the novels published at the end of the century opened up the way towards modernity. The *fin de siècle* is marked by changes in mentality in the sense of modernization and emancipation. That is why the descriptive discourse of clothes and the lexicon referring to fashion is imbued by these complex social and cultural changes. As such, the linguistic phenomenon leads to renewal and continuous lexical transformation proven by the numerous phrases with the lexeme constituent “modă” identified in the discourse of the Romanian novels. The interrelation language-reality points out, once again, the dynamics and

the evolution of the vocabulary. The influence of “modă”, an element of the external reality of the fictional characters in the Romanian novels, tends to be reflected by the dialogic, narrative, and descriptive fictional discourse. The concept of “modă” offers an intertwining of semantic levels in the integralist sense of Eugenio Coșeriu<sup>15</sup>, that is the lexeme “modă” is part of a vast semantic network, identified and represented in **Fig. 3**.



**Fig. 3.** The chronological distribution of linguistic contexts based on the frequency of the fashion lexeme in Romanian novels

If the “modă” lexicon is seen as a linguistic phenomenon in the Romanian novels, so is “fashion”, a socio-cultural phenomenon. We can say that the latter reflects social and intellectual emancipation as well as the emergence of modernity, the influence of alterity, and a synchronisation with the external world. By performing a quantitative analysis – intended to be qualitative as well – on the digital archive of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian novels, I noticed the prevalence of the

<sup>15</sup> Eugenio Coșeriu, *Introducere în lingvistică [Introduction in Linguistics]*. Translated by Elena Ardeleanu and Eugenia Bojoga, foreword by Mircea Borcilă, Cluj, Echinoc, 1999, p. 58: “Languages constitute, to an extent, autonomous traditions, but at the same time, they are part of a complex network of facts and traditions of extralinguistic nature. Languages exist and develop as structural relationships, but in relation with other phenomena of spiritual and social order: language is intrinsic to social life, to civilization, to arts, thinking development, politics, etc.”.

usage of “modă” in the dialogic discourse of the characters. This states *in nuce* the effervescent substance of modernity and the character’s desire for social emancipation.

*Fashion and the Negative Connotations of Clothes*

As a result of performing a quantitative linguistic analysis using the subcorpus of 456 contexts for the usage of lexeme “modă”, I have found that 31 of the linguistic contexts offer negative connotations, which represents almost 67% of contexts with negative semantic value. Fashion is not accepted and not embraced by fictional characters, and this precaution is reflected even in the authorial attitude. Due to mentality, cultural education, axiological values, moral principles, and the difference between appearance and essence, the term “modă” attracts several negative connotations that can be associated with the following meanings:

- a. uselessness, ephemerality, fleeting illusions; superficiality; betrayal of expectations; caprices; (G. Baronzi, Ermali);
- b. bragging; frenzy of luxury; “the mania of elegant clothes, spending money on things of no positive value, on fashion and on deceitful appearances” (Pantazi Ghica);
- c. “pretensions to be part of the civilized Europe” (Alexandru Cantacuzino);
- d. removal of traditions, beliefs and customs (B.P. Hasdeu, Duiliu Zamfirescu);
- e. mottling by diversity and co-existence of styles, “amalgam of costumes”, the extreme contrast between old fashion and current fashion (Al Pelimon, Aurel Iorgulescu);
- f. desuetude, running out of fashion, old age (Duiliu Zamfirescu, Gh. Marinescu);
- g. the linguistic snobbery – boyars who have “forgotten the Romanian language” (Simeon Bălănescu);
- h. moral decay, selfishness, extravagance, immoral behaviour, enormous expenses on luxury, parties, gambling, balls, feasts, and fornication (Pantazi Ghica, Ermali, Aurel Iorgulescu, N. Rădulescu-Niger, Alexandru Antemireanu)
- i. fashion is capricious, tyrannical (Ermali), ruinous (Gh. Marinescu);
- j. the desire to emulate, to impress the elite, to win in relationships (Ermali, Theocar Alexi)

Upon comparing the novels digitized in *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel* with DCRR – *Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel*<sup>16</sup>, I noticed

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<sup>16</sup> DCRR – *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până la 1989* [*Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel from Its Origins to 1989*], București, Editura Academiei Române, 2004.

that a significant number of works featuring the idea of fashion tend, perhaps not coincidentally, to fall within the subgenre of the romance novel (Ermali, Theocar Alexi, Pantazi Ghica, Al. Pelimon, Aurel Iorgulescu). Thus, the effervescence of Western fashion represents a shift in human behaviour, moving the focus from pragmatism to superficiality, signalling a profound change that involves the abandonment of tradition and traditional beliefs. The transition from the old to the new is met with scepticism, as it signifies a departure from established customs, faith, and a way of life shaped by significant hardship.

The negative connotation is further emphasized by Al. Pelimon through his ironic and critical phrase – “not to be one of those who kneel at the altar of models”, which contrasts a simple, modest style of dress, one that has no connection to fashion, yet is paradoxically impoverished:

His clothes revealed that he was not one of those who kneel at the altar of fashion; in a simpler, but cleaner manner, he presented himself as a philosopher who, by claiming to cherish everything, hides his poverty and the truth that he lives by God’s mercy<sup>17</sup>.

Another negative aspect of “modă” is highlighted by Alecu Cantacuzino in the dialogue of the characters in *Serile de toamnă la țară* [*Autumn Evenings in the Countryside*], where the narrator ironically points out the Moldavian who claims westernization through fashion, merely by changing his attire. The transition from the Oriental dress, with *ishlic* and *kaftan*, to the European style is portrayed as an impossibility. The simultaneous curiosity about and resistance to the new reinforce the idea of the distinction between appearance and essence, as replacing the Oriental outfit with the Western one reflects a desire for recognition and acceptance in “Europa ținută” (civilized Europe)<sup>18</sup>.

In another novel, fashion is depicted as representing fleeting illusions, a form of futility. One character’s statement – “your merits will remain as a commodity that is not in demand or as a garment out of fashion” show the transience of achievements gained through career efforts, an analogy being drawn with the uselessness of a product that no longer appeals to anyone or a coat that has lost its originality<sup>19</sup>.

At the end of the nineteenth century, German clothes are the sign of a parvenu. The variety and diversity of styles, the “amalgam of dress styles”<sup>20</sup> gives rise to

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<sup>17</sup> Pelimon, *Hoții și Hagiul*.

<sup>18</sup> Alecu Cantacuzino, *Serile de toamnă la țară* [*Autumn Evenings in the Countryside*], 1855, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc*, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/1855-1973-alexandru-cantacuzino-serile-de-toamna-la-tara/>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> G. Barozzi, *Confidențele unui om de inimă* [*Confidences of a Good Hearted Man*], 1895, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc*, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/1895-g-baronzi-confesiunile-unui-om-de-inima/>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> A. Pelimon, *Catastrofa întâmplată boierilor în muntele Găvanul – 1821* [*The Catastrophe that Befell the Boyars on Mount Gavanul – 1821*], 1864, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului*



amazement. The transition from the Romanian folk costume to Western clothing is viewed ironically in the middle of the nineteenth century: “They made them throw their ancient national costume and put on foreign garments that can be called long tails and short minds”<sup>21</sup>.

After identifying, in the corpus of 157 novels, 36 phrases built with the basic term fashion, I tried to find a certain common denominator by dividing them chronologically, by the year of publication of the novels, as follows:

- a) mid-Nineteenth Century (1853–1868),
- b) the second half of the nineteenth century (1870–1881),
- c) late nineteenth Century (1881–1900).

After carrying out this periodization, I thought it necessary to classify the identified phrases, those constituted with the fashion lexical support, according to the criteria of positive semantic values (+) or negative semantic values (-). That is, I considered the antinomic semantic relations modern-obsolete, current-old, new-old, elegant-neglective. These dual semantic oppositions are implicit in the concept of fashion because, with Heraclitus’ aphorism in mind, fashion is subject to perpetual change, meaning that whatever is novel in the present is becoming obsolete fast, whatever is fashionable becomes old-fashioned, this continuous process of change obeying the inexorable laws of time.

The outcome of the research conducted this experiment was as anticipated, based on the hypothesis that, in the mid-nineteenth century, the concept of “modă” was synonymous with novelty, starting with the introduction of fashion in clothing, indicating what is modern and impressive in appearance<sup>22</sup>.

### *Conclusions*

The concept of “modă” has a wide lexical representation in the discourse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian novels, as proved by the 46 paradigms in the lexical field of “modă” and the 28 phrases in use. Starting with the last five decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fashion in clothing best reflects the mentalities, habits and behaviours of the characters who, out of a desire for social emulation or social emancipation, want to be fashionable. Fashion in clothing or appearance is associated with coquetry and social emancipation. Fashion best illustrates the East-West transition,

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Românesc, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/1864.-Al.-Pelimon-1821-1921-.pdf>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Ioan Dumitrescu, *Radu Buzescu*, 1858, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc*, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/1858-ioan-dumitrescu-radu-buzesku/>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>22</sup> See also Daiana Gărdan, *Între lumi. Romanul românesc în sistemul literar modern [Between Worlds. The Romanian Novel in the Modern Literary System]*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023.

even if the luxury, elegance and richness of apparel show the discrepancy of classes in the social hierarchy.

In Romanian novels, fashion is predominantly associated with negative connotations (about 67%), reflecting the characters' resistance to change. The latest trends are often linked to high costs, significant time spent on preparing outfits, shifting morals, and the idea of obsolescence.. The numerous paradigms within the lexical field of fashion reflect the interdisciplinarity of the fashion concept.

Additionally, I have examined those linguistic contexts that refine or expand the lexicographic definition of “modă”. Many of these instances are unique occurrences, which are particularly interesting as they reveal societal transformations both synchronically and diachronically. These contexts are absent from the DLR, such as the beauty standard, emulation and social aspiration, consumption/consumerism, social exclusion, generational conflict, marriage dynamics, sport (cycling), politics, and more.

Another prominent theme is the equation of “modă” with novelty. For instance, phrases incorporating the basic term “modă” from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (1853–1868), as they appear in the narrative, dialogic, and descriptive discourse of the novels by Al Pelimon, Em. Arghiropol, Pantazi Ghica, and Ioan M. Bujoreanu, effectively reflect the transfer of Western fashion into both the language and social life of the characters. I can even say that following trends is actively encouraged. Moreover, these phrases define the novelty of the concept of “modă” by using the relative superlative of superiority form of the adjective “new” – “the newest fashion” or the adjectival construction “the latest fashion”: “Sporea arrived dressed according to the newest Western fashion”<sup>23</sup>.

During this period of Romanian novel production, the phrases found in Al Pelimon's novels mirror the characters' desire for social emancipation. For example, many phrases carry a positive semantic value, linked to the “modă” of what is modern or current in clothing, but also civilized in the way of living, habits and attitude, as well as in civilized ways of living, habits, and attitudes. From the author's perspective, fashion is portrayed as an element of modernity in daily life, serving as a significant marker in itself. Notably, out of the 13 phrases used within the specified time frame (1853–1868), only two carry a negative semantic connotation. These are due to the presence of the negative particle “not being too fashionable” (indicating obsolescence) and “not going out of fashion” (referring to a persistent habit, particularly in the context of marital conflict).

One should not ignore the influence of the French “mode” since 1853. Al Pelimon's novel *The Thieves and the Haggler*, written in a transitional alphabet, mentions the important role the French have in introducing the fashionable ladies

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<sup>23</sup> Pelimon, *Catastrofa întâmplată boierilor*.

to the latest fashion in apparel. It is not so much imitation or loan that is the cause of the fashion phenomenon, as the fact that fashion is brought into fashion shops in the urban environment. The attitude reflected by the speech of both author and characters in the Romanian mid-century novel is that of searching and validating the novelty and trends in apparel. “The fashion of the time”, “the fashion of the day”, and “the latter fashion” are syntagma that do not refer to a well-defined external time sequence<sup>24</sup>.

Next in the chronology, the 6 phrases identified in the novels of Pelimon, N.D. Popescu and Nicolae D. Xenopol in the second half of the 19th century (1870–1881) have positive semantic values, which allows us to interpret them as an attitude of acceptance of fashion within the temporal historical frame (as in the historical episode about the ruler Matei Basarab), but also with extravagant episodes as identified in the expressive superlative “king of fashion”<sup>25</sup>.

The novels published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1881–1900) set up the most consistent uses of “modă”, with authors such as G. Baronzi, N. Rădulescu-Niger, Traian Demetrescu, Const. I. A. Notara, N.D. Popescu, Petru Vulcan, Gh. Marinescu, Al. Pelimon, Ermali, Alexandru Vlahuță, Simeon Bălănescu. Surprisingly, of the 16 phrases, 10 carry negative semantic values. The meanings coagulated around them are related to uselessness, obsolescence, the impression created by external appearance, the extreme concern for clothing, the costs of being fashionable. The quintessence of modernity in fashion is eloquently illustrated in phraseology. To enter the contest of fashion means to be very modern<sup>26</sup>.

I asked myself why 19 phrases with negative semantic values dominate the end-of-century novels. The answer I can provide, after consulting DCRR, is that examples with negative semantic values appear mostly in the so-called novels of manners. I can take as an example *Viorica* by Ermali, in which the antagonism between the main characters, Elena and Viorica, where the latter takes over the capital city, leading the kind of worldly life that leads to moral degradation. The character Viorica is concerned about popular morality, about what people will say, which explains the extreme interest the novel shows in “staying abreast of fashion and following it in all its extravagance”<sup>27</sup>. The concept of “modă” accumulates many negative meanings in this novel. In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romanian novels,

<sup>24</sup> See also Radu Vancu et al., “Temporalitatea internă a romanului românesc (1844–1932)” [“The Internal Temporality of the Romanian Novel (1844–1932)”], *Transilvania*, 2020, 10, pp. 22–32.

<sup>25</sup> Nicolae D. Xenopol, *Brazi și putregaiu. Moravuri provinciale române* [Fir Trees and Putrefaction. Romanian Provincial Manners], 1881, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc*, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/1880-1881-n-d-xenopolu-brazi-si-putregaiu/>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Gh. Marinescu, *Florea și Jeana*, 1898, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc*, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/1898-gh-marinescu-florea-si-jeana/>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Ermali, *Viorica*, 1898, in Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc*, <https://revistatransilvania.ro/1898-ermali-viorica/>. Accessed November 20, 2024.

fashion is capricious, it costs a lot and leads to moral degradation. I believe that the authorial attitude, critical to "modă", is a moralizing one, pointing the finger at the superficiality of an appearance acquired by "the irreproachable luster of the top hat and the fashionable tint of the gloves"<sup>28</sup>.

Last, but not least, the concept of "modă" in the Romanian novels of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century can be considered a linguistic and cultural indicator of modernity, imitation, import, transition and transnationalism.

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QUANTITATIVE METHODS TO DETERMINE THE SEMANTIC VALUES  
OF “FASHION” IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ROMANIAN NOVEL  
(1845–1900)  
(Abstract)

The purpose of this paper is to perform a semantic micro-analysis of the term “fashion” as it appears in the nineteenth-century Romanian novel. The research employs digital techniques and focuses on the corpus supplied by *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: The Nineteenth Century*. This study posits that the prevalent lexeme “fashion”, as manifested in both narrative and dialogical discourses, encapsulates the effervescent substance of modernity and reflects the character’s aspiration for social emancipation. Through a quantitative analysis of the frequency of the recurrent term “fashion” within a sub-corpus of 46 illustrative contextual excerpts, this study determines that the semantic associations of fashion predominantly evoke negative connotations. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that over 60% of the negative connotations associated with the concept of “fashion” are representative of the novels of manners.

*Keywords:* nineteenth-century Romanian novel, semantic analysis, fashion, novel subgenres, digital techniques.

METODE CANTITATIVE PENTRU DELIMITAREA VALORILOR  
SEMANTICE ALE „MODEI” ÎN ROMANUL ROMÂNESC DIN SECOLUL  
AL XIX-LEA (1845–1900)

(Rezumat)

Scopul acestei lucrări este de a efectua o micro-analiză semantică a termenului „modă” așa cum apare în romanul românesc din secolul al XIX-lea. Cercetarea folosește tehnici digitale și se concentrează pe corpus constituie de *ASTRA Data Mining: Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc din Secolul al XIX-lea (1845–1900)*. Acest studiu pornește de la ipoteza că lexemul „modă”, așa cum se manifestă atât în discursurile narative, cât și în cele dialogale, încapsulează substanța efervescentă a modernității și reflectă aspirația personajelor către emancipare socială. Printr-o analiză cantitativă a frecvenței termenului recurent „modă” în cadrul unui sub-corpus de 46 de fragmente contextuale ilustrative, acest studiu demonstrează că asociațiile semantice ale modei evocă predominant conotații negative. În plus, este de remarcat faptul că peste 60% dintre conotațiile negative asociate conceptului de „modă” sunt reprezentative pentru romanele de moravuri.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* romanul românesc din secolul al XIX-lea, analiză semantică, modă, subgenuri ale romanului, metode digitale.