I am writing for those who are wandering, those who are suffering and waiting. I am writing for the shadows of men lurking amidst the melancholy of Paris and the fogs of London. I am sending them this rejuvenating message from the homeland.

Michelet, *Légendes démocratiques du nord*, 1853–4

In the summer of 1853, in the new atmosphere of war-mongering and heightened anti-Russian feeling, and braving the dikta of imperial censorship against the French opposition’s work, the republican *Le Siècle* serialised Michelet’s “Madame Rosetti. Révolution valaque en 1848” on 12, 13 and 14 July 1853. Around the same time, the *Revue de Paris* (led by the philo-Romanian Louis Ulbach) published fragments of Michelet’s *History of the Revolution*. Thus, Marie Rosetti’s name was embedded between the names of Charlotte Corday (15 July) and Danton (15 August) in a symbolic revolutionary continuum across time and European borders. Michelet’s portrait of her was more than a circumstantial deference to the Romanians’ need for and construction of their own symbolic, Marianne-like figure. One can read in it the accumulated experience of shared hardship and marginalisation, an experience which had cemented what otherwise would have been perhaps an unlikely alliance between the famous historian and the unknown exiled revolutionaries from the margins of Europe. Life with the Rosettis in Nantes had added personal poignancy – and perhaps a hint of impossible romance between the historian and Marie – to what otherwise could have sounded like mere literary flattery: “No-one wears with more grace the rags of democratic poverty. No-one knows better than her how to soften poverty for those dear to her. Admirable in danger, she was no less admirable in the course of a lengthy exile, full of hardship, pain and deprivation. But who would not be oblivious to them by her side? Admirable mystery of modern solidarity! It is the closeness of a stranger, of an adoptive daughter of Romania, which

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358 Michelet, *Légendes*, 211 and 238.
brings the Romanian exile closer to his own homeland, to its living genius and its warm hearth.”

Beyond the glorification of Marie as revolutionary heroine, Michelet attempted to gain public attention for the “unfortunate Romania”, the “sacrificed nation”, a country which, like Poland and Hungary, had in the course of history “defended and preserved” the West against the “Tartar deluge, the Turkish armies and the Russians.” But, while Poland and Hungary had “at least reaped the glory of their sufferings, and their names had resounded all over the world”, the “peoples of the Danube had hardly enjoyed any attention from Europe.” Now, Michelet wrote, Europe was about to witness a new “execution” of Romania by the occupying Russian armies. Addressing an international readership recently moved to tears by Harriet Beecher-Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Michelet was unafraid to compare the Tsar’s treatment of his own subjects and the Russian protection of the Romanian Principalities with black slavery: “Charitable people, you who have just shed so many tender tears over the fate of the blacks, you sensitive souls, lady readers saddened by the fate of good old Uncle Tom, have you not saved one single tear for the white race? Do you not know that in Russia, in Romania, and across the entire East of Europe, there are sixty million people even more unfortunate than the blacks?”

By channeling their appeal to the world on behalf of their nation, the Master was thus finally paying a debt of friendship to his Romanian disciples. Charles Alexandre, a republican deputy and Lamartine’s private secretary, wrote to Athénaïs Michelet on 23 July 1853, congratulating her husband on the publication of “Madame Rosetti”. “This fiery story inflames one’s heart and puts us all to shame, pale, nervous dreamers of the Orient that we are”, Alexandre wrote, alluding to the now obsolete romantic Orientalism of Lamartine’s generation.

Emboldened by public declarations made by Napoleon III against Russia’s expansionist drive in South-East Europe and her occupation of the Romanian Principalities on 3 July, previously reluctant publishers now thought that the right moment had come to bring out Michelet’s ‘Wallachian’ writings in a single volume. The republican editor Bry

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360 Ibid., 212.
361 Ibid., 236.
362 Ibid., 236–7.