

Book Reviews

Laurențiu Vlad, *Istoria românești ale ideii de "Europa", secolele XVII-XXI (imagini, note, reflecții)*, Iași, Institutul European, 2021, 340 p.

Europe, and Romanian stances on the European paradigm seem to no longer represent today's topics of keen interest for Romanian readers with a penchant for history, unlike in the 1990s, when collections such as "The Construction of Europe" or "The Third Europe" were published by Polirom, and when authors such as Alexandru Duțu, Adrian Marino or Victor Neumann wrote about such issues. Notwithstanding all this, Professor Laurențiu Vlad from the Bucharest University has deliberately ignored this recent trend and, under the auspices of the European Institute, brought back to our attention the Romanian histories of the European idea, convincing us that they deserve to be further explored.

Laurențiu Vlad is an author who is well known to the public interested in modern Romanian history, particularly thanks to his works dedicated to topics such as the construction of national identity or the history of Romanian conservatism. His training as a historian, as well as his work as a professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest, has steered him to study the history of political ideas, mentalities and ideologies. In connection with the above-mentioned research directions, Laurențiu Vlad has researched, for several decades, the history of the European idea in the Romanian space, with a focus on the nineteenth century. He has published a significant series of studies and articles on this topic and taught university courses at the universities of Bucharest and Sibiu.

This year, the Bucharest University professor has brought this research interest to fruition by publishing a volume which, based on previous contributions, manages to provide an overview on the genesis, evolution and basic features of the European idea in the Romanian space. Even if we are not dealing with a complete and systematic history of the analyzed phenomenon, but (as the title of the study suggests) with a series of episodes that mark its evolution, the juxtaposition of the "histories" laid down in writing by the Bucharest-based professor outline an expressive mosaic of Europe as it was imagined by the Romanian scholars of the modern era. In keeping with the author's area of expertise, the focus of the work falls on the nineteenth century, with forays into the centuries that frame this period of genesis and consolidation of the European idea in Romanian culture.

The volume contains five chapters. The first is dedicated to the historiography of the subject (itself a fascinating research topic). The second discusses its prehistory, analyzing the image of Europe as it was envisioned by Romanian chroniclers of the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries. The third focuses on European echoes in the pages of *Albina Românească* (one of the first Romanian-language political and cultural periodicals), while the fourth examines the European references in the writings of Barbu Catargiu (an essential, albeit too little researched representative of Romanian conservatism). The fifth chapter explores the magazine *Ideea Europeană*, which made, in the interwar period, one of the first well-articulated efforts to promote the European (and pan-European) model in Romanian culture. What is also of great interest is the anthology of period texts on the history of the European idea offered by Laurențiu Vlad. The end of each chapter reproduces fragments from the most important historical sources that illustrate the subject.

For readers who have had the opportunity to watch “live” how this research topic has evolved over the last four to five decades (a category that also includes the author of this review), this volume offers a pleasant, colorful reading through nostalgic lenses. From the valuable analyses (some of which may seem surprising, in the context of that epoch) on the theme during the communist period, culminating with the rich production of the first decades after 1989 and continuing at a somewhat slower pace in recent years, the interest of Romanian authors for the symbolic relationship between the small country “at the mouths of the Danube” and “enlightened” Europe has not ceased to produce valuable works. The book authored by Laurențiu Vlad, a former student of Alexandru Duțu’s, carries on this tradition, standing as erudite proof of the fact that in Romania’s relationship with Europe the suffix “exit” has not yet managed to dislocate the prefix “enter”.

SORIN MITU

Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeș-Bolyai University
E-mail: sorinmitu2@yahoo.com

Angela Lumezeanu, *Infrastructuri digitale pentru istoria socială. Construirea bazelor de date istorice*, Cluj-Napoca, Mega, 2021,, 196 p.

The monograph by Angela Lumezeanu represents a recent addition to the Digital Humanities (DH) research trend developed at Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca during the 2010s by the scholars in the field of Humanities who are mostly but not exclusively historians. The author is a Junior Researcher at Babeş-Bolyai University, Centre for Population Studies and software engineer at “George Barițiu” History Institute of The Romanian Academy in Cluj-Napoca. She has a formal education in both History and Computer Science and has a solid experience working on DH projects, the best-known of which is the *Historical Population Database of Transylvania*.

The book under scrutiny in the present paper represents the translated published version of her doctoral dissertation (completed and defended in English) and an absolute novelty within the Romanian scientific environment. Its main aim is to provide a coherent overview to how historians approach and employ information technology, and in particular relational databases, to correct some of the most frequently encountered errors in their work, and to provide best practice models in this regard. Thus, Angela Lumezeanu’s work represents a milestone, as well as a guide for a research area still under development in Romania.

In addition to the introductory and the conclusive sections, the book is structured on four chapters, dealing with the topic from general to particular. The first chapter [*Bazele de date și cercetarea istorică: un instrument inovator* (p. 19-44)] provides an overview of how databases have been implemented in historical research since the second half of the last century. The author notes that the first use of quantitative means for storing data in historical research dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century, but it was not until the turn of the millennium that the digital approach triumphed. Historical databases are further divided into two categories: *source-oriented databases* and *method-oriented databases*. However, as the author underlines, there is no pure form of these two types and the two above-mentioned categories represent rather two theoretical poles, with the bulk of the databases filling the space between them.

The chapter also includes a presentation of the databases associated with the European Historical Population Samples Network (EHPS-Net), which was created in 2011 as an information and dissemination space for historians dealing with quantitative history. The historical databases briefly presented are the following: Swedish demographic databases (POPLINK, POPUM and FOLKNET), Norwegian Historical Population Register

(NHD), Integrated Microdata Series (IPUMS and NAPP), MOSAIC database, Karelia database (KATIHA), Scanian Economic Demographic (SEDD), Antwerp database - *COR, Hungarian Historical Demographic Database, Historical Sample of Netherlands, Historical Population Database of Transylvania (HPDT) and the aggregator tool Intermediate Data Structure (IDS). Angela Lumezeanu concludes the chapter by highlighting the common features of the above-mentioned databases: source orientation, relational nature, institutionalization and a long implementation time.

The second chapter [*Ce este o bază de date? Principii de bază ale funcționării bazelor de date* (p. 45-63)] focuses on the defining features of a database and on the latter's operating principles. In order to be considered a database, one or more datasets must, on the one hand, include data and the relationships between them, and on the other hand provide an easy way to access the stored data. Various types of databases are presented and their operating principles are also discussed.

The next two chapters follow two types of databases: source-oriented and method-oriented, starting from two research projects in which the author was involved: the Historical Population Database of Transylvania [*Bazele de date orientate către sursă. Historical Population Database of Transylvania* (p. 65-136)] and the Historical Data Grinder [*Bazele de date orientate către metodă. Modelul entitate-atribut-valoare și Historical Data Grinder* (p. 137-164)]. We must note a discernable disproportion between the two chapters, the one devoted to source-oriented databases being significantly ampler than the one devoted to method-oriented databases. However, the disproportion is partly due to the fact that the architecture of the source-oriented databases is more complex and they are more widespread than method-oriented databases.

In the analysis of source-oriented databases, the author mainly focuses on their sources - in particular, for the Historical Population Database of Transylvania, the parish registers. From 1895 onwards, parish registers, which have been preserved since 1638 in Transylvania, lose their official character in favor of civil registration. General information about each type of register is given, followed by an explanation of how different typologies of sources have been accommodated into the database.

Beyond the sources of the database, the three components of the database are considered in separate subchapters: the database of the sources, the standardized database and the relational database. While the database of the sources closely reproduces parish registers in four major tables, the standardized database contains logically inferred and standardized information. The relational database is the result of linking

data (*record linkage / entity resolution*) and merges entities that appear in multiple sources. Last but not least, the database also includes a publicly accessible interface.

The issues addressed in the chapter concerned with method-oriented databases are partly discussed in a previously published study.¹ In contrast to source-oriented databases, method-oriented databases start from a precise research question and are built accordingly. The model analyzed in this chapter is the *Entity-Attribute-Value model*, and its implementation is detailed using as a case study Historical Data Grinder, a tool from the prosopographical research field.

To conclude, the book by Angela Lumezeanu represents a landmark for Romanian historians dealing with the use of databases. It stands out due to the detailed information on historical databases, but especially due to the contextualization of two aforementioned tools developed in the Romanian research environment.

ALEXANDRU-AUGUSTIN HAIDUC

Ph.D. student, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

E-mail: haiduc_alexandru1996@yahoo.ro

Ágoston Berecz, *Empty Signs, Historical Imaginaries: The Entangled Nationalization of Names and Naming in a Late Habsburg Borderland*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2020, 350 p., 14 illus.

The last few years have marked a steady increase in the interest manifested by younger generations of historians in approaching some seemingly exhausted research topics in terms of sources and methods. One of these topics refers to the history of nationalism and nationalities from the multinational empires, for which there is a rich secondary bibliography, as well as multiple primary sources. However, contemporary historians are innovating and enriching the knowledge using some original sources, new methods or perspectives, far more detached from the nationalist fever that characterizes a significant part of the existing researches. Apparently, the names of people, towns and places, as well as the naming processes, do not have a close connection with the history of nationalism, which is why their study was not given much attention. However, Ágoston Berecz, in his most recent book, *Empty Signs, Historical Imaginaries: The Entangled Nationalization of Names and Naming in a Late Habsburg Borderland*, addresses the issue of

¹ Angela Lumezeanu, "A Database Model for Social History. Historical Data Grinder and the Transylvanian Society of the 19th and 20th Centuries", in *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XXVIII, no. 2, 2019, p. 100-111.

the processes through which the names and denominations had become part of the evolution of national policy and of nationalism in a multiethnic area of Europe: the provinces of Transylvania and Banat, during the nineteenth century. The result of his research is not only a source of useful information for researchers interested in this subject, but also the outcome of the new trend of historiography, characterized by approaching innovative sources and methods which are quite difficult to relate to the history of nationalities, in order to finally bring a fresh perspective upon some much researched topics.

The structure of the paper aims to achieve the research objectives that the author presents in the introduction. The first part, entitled *Peasants*, seeks to determine the extent to which the naming processes within the social category of peasantry have reflected the acquisition of a national identity. Therefore, Berecz establishes a relationship of equality between the naming processes and the censuses or other indicators that could provide information on the extent to which the peasantry was national, in the absence of direct sources on this issue. The second part of the paper, *Nationalisms*, focuses on the methods through which the nineteenth-century nationalists turned the names of people and places into symbols of memory, on the effects of popularizing these new meanings, and the way they reflected national ideals. The third part, entitled *The State*, presents how the governmental authorities have managed these naming processes, integrating them into the larger category of national policies. Finally, the whole work achieves another goal mentioned by the author, who wants to draw the attention to the significance of proper names, which are seen as carriers of ideological messages.

Each one of the three parts of the book contains three chapters dedicated to first names, family names or names of places. The first part is dedicated to peasantry's situation. Berecz reiterates and re-argues an idea increasingly more often mentioned by the recent years' historiography, according to which the nation was, in fact, built by the elites. As for the peasantry, ethnicity differences became significant during the nineteenth century, as a result of two processes: through the national activists' propaganda, the nationality overlapped the ethnicity, initially as a factor of social mobilization. Eventually, the ethnically diverse local communities were replaced by imagined, national communities. The Romanian national elites, for example, encouraged the adoption of Latin names among the peasantry, in order to argue the idea of Roman descent and the continuity of Romanians. One of the institutions by which this idea was promoted was the church, through its priests, who militated for the choice of Latin names, although this would have meant agreeing with the replacement of the traditional names, inspired by the Christian calendar. However,

especially at the beginning of the nation-building process, the peasants opted for the preservation of Christian names, as evidence of the persistence of medieval thought patterns; radically influenced by faith and religion, they were uncomfortable with the thought that their newborns would not be under the patronage of a saint.

Beyond the first name, the surname or the toponyms were not of much interest to the peasants, as they were to the national elites; the second part of the book focuses on this subject. Since the nineteenth century, for the national activists, every aspect of the naming process was an opportunity for promoting nationalism and for building the national identity. Beginning with the 1848 revolution, many of the Romanian national activists opted for the Latinization of their own names, either by adding the suffixes *u/iu* at the end (*Alduianu, Casianu*) or by adopting the system of three names, which characterized the Romans (*Ioan Axente Sever, Alexandru Papiu Ilarianu, August Treboniu Laurianu*). However, as proof of the fact that the codes of nationally appropriate behavior were nowhere clear-cut, lay the numerous references of the Romanian elites to the names of places, cities, still using the traditional, Hungarian terms.

The same process of nationalizing the names included the travel diaries, published by various members of the national movements, who gave national names to the various natural destinations, thus nationalizing the territories through which they traveled. The traditional, Romanian names of these places, mostly mountainous, also reflect the demographic distribution in the region. Hungarian nationalists have tried to Magyarize some of these place names. The Common Army was one of the institutions that kept its distance from these attempts, although some of the regiments were asked to use Hungarian toponyms over some places with Romanian majorities, otherwise known as Romanian. This is another argument that supports the idea that the army was “beyond nationalism”.

The third part of the work focuses on the measures taken by the state and the official authorities regarding the processes of naming, first names, family names or place names. The interests of the Hungarian state were often the same with those of the Hungarian national elites; this fact created various tensions between them, on the one side, and the national activists of Romanians and Saxons, on the other. By changing the toponyms, the Magyar nationalists wanted to draw the attention of the national minorities to the elements that differentiated them from the Hungarians. However, they overlooked the fact that, up to that point, the national identity was rather an extension of the local one, and the names of the places could serve as symbols of identity. One argument in favor of this hypothesis and the one regarding the existence of peasants’ attachment regarding the traditional symbols of the places is the resistance of some

Romanian citizens to the initiative of the Hungarian authorities over the disambiguation of the Magyar name of the village they were living in. Finally, changing the toponymy also reflects the struggle for authority or legitimation of power: the German versions were the result of Vienna's efforts to impose itself, the Hungarian version reflected the efforts of Budapest, and the Romanian versions, those of the Romanian national activists. In this matter, the Hungarians had the most important stakes: on the one hand, they wanted to show the Hungarian ethnic structure of the regions, and on the other hand, they wanted to prove that these regions were under Budapest's administration.

Berecz's book ends with a series of conclusions in which the author reiterates some of the issues already mentioned in the introduction. The results of Agoston Berecz's research are satisfying not only for the curiosities it identifies in the history of nationalities in Southeast Europe; they also draw the attention of researchers of local history, the Hungarian language system, etymology and of the history of names and naming processes. On the one hand, it can be a subject of macro-history, but on the other hand, it could also be a subject of micro-history by referring to many localities and communities of Transylvania and due to the use of various primary sources. The most important aspect, however, is that none of the subjects of historical research can ever be completely exhausted and explained, especially the history of the nationalities in areas as heterogeneous as Transylvania and Banat. The results of Berecz's work demonstrate that nationalism has penetrated all manifestations and actions of communities and its documentation is possible by addressing various types of historical sources.

FLORINA RAITA

Ph.D. student, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

E-mail: florina.raita97@gmail.com

Petronel Zahariuc, Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu (eds.), *160 de ani de la Unirea Principatelor: oameni, fapte și idei din domnia lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași, 2020), 666 p.

The latter half of the 19th century brought forth a new dimension with regards to the further development of the Danubian Principalities. Even though foreign historiography tends to gravitate in its analyses towards the reign of King Charles the 1st, the beginning of the "modern Romanian state" is placed at an earlier date. With the year 1859 comes the unification of the two separate states into one nuclear entity under the rule of prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866). An iconic moment, with a

plethora of ramifications and effects, both internal and external, the union truly marked the beginning of a new era. The historiography of his reign is a vast, but not an exhaustive one. The findings of new sources in the archives, the rapid development of technologies and methodologies applied to this area of study, or simply new interpretations of arguments already formulated, are of help in expanding not only the quantity, but also the quality of historical writing. The volume *160 de ani de la Unirea Principatelor: oamenii, fapte și idei din domnia lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza* can be placed in such coordinates. Being the written form of papers presented at a homonym symposium held in Iasi in 2019, the book honors the memory of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and his actions which aided the development of the unified Romanian state.

Regarding the editors, Petronel Zahariuc is a Romanian historian and university professor at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, the Faculty of History. His area of expertise lies mainly in the medieval and early modern Romanian history, the history of the Church, social history. He is a prolific researcher, having authored several books, articles, studies, collaborations in different volumes. For his PhD thesis, in 2005, he was awarded the “A.D.Xenopol” prize of the Romanian Academy. Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu is also a Romanian historian and lecturer at the same university as Petronel Zahariuc. His area of interest concerns diplomatic relations in the latter half of the 19th century, focusing on the case of Russia and Romania between 1878 and 1893, which was the topic of his PhD thesis. In 2019 he was the recipient of the “Nicolae Iorga” award offered by the Romanian Academy. Each of the editors has contributed to the present volume, with studies that stray a bit from their usual research interest, without diminishing the quality of their work.

Grouping several well-established Romanian historians and PhD students, alongside international names, the book manages to bring forth fresh theories, arguments, and presentations of diverse aspects of the period 1859-1866. In its 666 pages, the publication is comprised of a total of 22 studies, grouped in four big chapters: “People”, “Facts”, “Ideas”, and “Alexandru Ioan Cuza’s posterity”. The studies are not divided equally between the four, but the order follows a logical and thematical succession of events.

The book opens with Mihai Cojocariu’s study, “From the history of a night: Iasi, during the night of 3 to 4 January 1859”, which showcases the discussions, tensions that had happened on the night before the Moldavian election. With the use of memoirs as a primary source, the historian tries to highlight whether Cuza’s election was a premeditated action or a rather spontaneous one. The author considers that the real “mastermind” was

Anastasiu Panu, backing his arguments by correlating the remaining historical evidence.

The next two studies focus solely on the princely personality of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, analyzing his actions in different manners. First, Dumitru Vitcu, "Cuza Vodă- «an exemplary historical personality»", articulates a study that showcases the success of Cuza's reforms in their entirety. Next, Paul E. Michelson, "Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 1859-1866: A developmental assessment", applies a specific methodology in the survey of Cuza's reign. A distinguished American historian with a well-established background on Romanian studies in the modern period, using the theoretical model elaborated by Lucian W. Pye, his paper tries to find an answer to the following question: "How well did Romania do under Alexandru Ioan I in dealing with the problems of development?". Michelson chose to focus, due to spatial limitations, on the problem of Romanian national identity, the problem of establishing regime legitimacy, and the issue of political participation in the new Romanian state. On the first two fronts the Romanian prince is awarded a good evaluation by the author, the final one remaining lackluster, a truth that remains valid for the upcoming decades.

The next three studies focus on different personalities of the epoch. Ștefan S. Gorovei, "A Moldavian scholarship recipient in Turin (1860)", wishes to bring to the attention of other historians the existence of Petre Borș, one of the first Romanian students awarded a scholarship to facilitate his studies abroad, in Turin. Petronel Zahariuc signs the paper concerning the personality of Scarlat (Sofronie) Vârnav, titled "«Father Vârnav says yes! » New information concerning the biography of a Unionist: Scarlat (Sofronie) Vârnav". The author's aim is to further enrich the knowledge surrounding him, painting a chronological picture of his life, which captures the complexities of the character. The final study of the first big thematic group, is written by Ion I. Solcanu, "The «voyages» of Princess Elena Cuza to the Romanian Principalities and to Paris (1862-1863)". The author undertakes the task of revealing the itineraries and goals of Elena Cuza's voyages in the years 1862-1863. Making use of historical documents from the archives, correspondence between county officials and the press of the time, Ion I. Solcanu adds a new puzzle piece to the picture of the era.

The second section of the book shifts away from the people of the epoch, focusing more on the events that shaped it, with a special attention being given to the European context in the aftermath of the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Paris Peace Congress of 1856. Both events left Russia in an unfavorable position, an aspect which reflected in its future diplomatic relations with Romania, more so as the young state was fighting for the

international recognition of the union. Cristina Țurcan, "Notes on the instructions received by N. K. Giers around the time of the Union of the Romanian Principalities", opens this section with a case study on the instructions received by the newly appointed Russian consul in Bucharest from the Russian Foreign Affairs Minister, A. M. Gorceakov. The set of guidelines from the 16th of September 1858 constitutes, from the author's perspective, a landmark in the new approach of Russian diplomacy, an aspect very few have explored previously.

Eugen-Tudor Sclifos's study, "France, Russia and the *«fait accompli»* (January-February 1859)", is complementary to Cristina Țurcan's in both subject and analysis. The historian from Chișinău aims to capture, based on research done in the Russian archives, the shifting attitudes of Imperial Russia in its foreign affairs policy. The context this time moves to the years 1859-1860, relating to the way in which the Great Powers reacted to the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. Without a shadow of a doubt, Russia orchestrated her actions to obtain a positive and friendly outlook from France, by "wholeheartedly" supporting the union of the Principalities.

On the same topic, of Romania being caught in the machinations of the Great Powers on the diplomatic scene, the following two studies can be included: Gheorghe Cliveti, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza and Napoleon III during the difficult years, 1863-1865", and Ion Varta, "Contributions to the history of the Russian-Romanian diplomatic relations during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza". Professor Cliveti's paper illustrates the ways in which during the end of Cuza's reign there had been a subtle, but notable shift in the relationship between the Romanian prince and Napoleon the third of France. Moreso, it highlights the apprehension shown by the powers to the internal reforms system perpetuated, rather aggressively after 1864 by Cuza, and the ways in which such attitudes further impacted his demise in 1866. However, Ion Varta pays attention to the development of the relationship between Russia and Romania. A plus point of Varta's presentation lies in the fact that he addressed the thorny problem of the Romanian Orthodox church in the larger context on Russian Orthodoxy and the impact of the reforms concerning the clerical sphere initiated by Alexandru Ioan Cuza.

If one searches for studies that show how an internal matter is perceived and reinterpreted in the paradigm of the foreign countries, two very good analyses can be found in this volume. First, a researcher from the University of Roma Tre, Antonio D'Alessandri in "The fight for the Union of the Romanian Principalities and the Piedmont of Cavour", considers that Cavour's attitude was a direct result of the Kingdom of

Sardinia's own goals in resolving the "Italian question". Gheorghe Negru, a historian from Chişinău, in "The Union of the Romanian Principalities and the impact of this event on Bessarabia (the years 1860)", sets his sights on Bessarabia. A former province of Moldavia, it is interesting to see how the union of the two Romanian states had a twofold impact: on the alignment of the Romanian cultural and political movements in Bessarabia to the ones in Romania, and on the demeanor of the Russian administration. Overall, the context after the loss of the Crimean War, drove Imperial Russia to reform itself on the inside, starting with an aggressive russification policy of the different disparate provinces.

The second part of the publication ends with one of the editor's own works, "The Establishment and Organisation of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign and State Affairs (1862-1866)" by Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu. His study begins with three essential questions: which were the most important moments pre-1862 in the making of the Foreign Affairs ministry and how they influenced the further organization of it, what were the main legislative changes from 1862 up to 1866, and who were the people that helped build the ministry. By investigating these issues, he brings a great contribution to the study of the evolution of Romania's diplomatic legislation, which tends to focus on the period after 1878.

The penultimate part of the book contains the most thematically diverse studies. Bogdan Mateescu, "The agrarian issue during the Union year. A comparison between the obligations of the corvée labourers and the wealth and income of the corvée labourers", opens with a call to revive the study of the Romanian agrarian question with a new, more rigorous methodology. The author advises historians to begin focusing on points, such as the integration of geography, statistics in historical research. For the sources, he relied mainly on the population censuses of 1850 and 1860. Overall, Bogdan Mateescu puts into discussion a new and modern inquiry method, with the added plus of concentrating on its interdisciplinary applications. Nicoleta Roman in "The orphans of the reigning princes, the children of the nation. The feminine side of the 19th century", brings to the attention of the reader a lesser-known part of the Romanian society of the time, by focusing on the orphans of the epoch, and the ways in which women organized societies in order to offer help and support.

The following two papers, signed by Simion-Alexandru Gavriş and Bogdan Popa, talk about the press of the period. Simion-Alexandru Gavriş, in "A Iaşi based conservative newspaper: Viitorul (1861)", chose this particular newspaper due to its importance to the incipient conservator movement in Moldavia, being its only media outlet during the reign of Cuza. His study adds new prospects to the study of the media history of

the epoch. Bogdan Popa, "Cultural modernisation as a second effect. «The Press Act» of 1862 and the book trade in Romania", has a different approach, with the analysis of the law mentioned. Although the main objective of such a law was to control what was written in the press, the author's argument is centered around it helping propel the development of written culture in Romania. It managed to strengthen the relations between libraries, editors, and the authors. With these two studies, readers begin to understand that during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, reforms were not merely implemented at a high level, lacking concrete implications in the micro-zones of the community. They impacted all aspects of society, with durable results for the future reign of King Charles the 1st.

A similar approach is taken by Ioan-Augustin Guriță, "The law of the secularization of monastery wealth and the monastic establishment of Iași", who pieces together an important picture of the mechanisms implemented once the secularization law was proclaimed. As he admits in the beginning of the paper, his interest lied on the people chosen by Cuza to undertake the process of secularization in the monastical area of Iași. The subject of the modernization of society is predominant in the study of Vitalie Văratîc, "Jibreni: the project of the first Romanian harbour at the Black Sea in the second half of the 19th century". The last one of the "Ideas" chapter, the author summarizes the history of such a project, that ultimately never came into fruition.

The final section of the book, suggestively titled "The posterity of Alexandru Ioan Cuza", is comprised of studies that highlight the historiographical legacy of the Romanian ruler. Silvana Rachieru, "Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza in Constantinople: protocol dilemmas and places of memory in the official travels within the Ottoman capital (1860, 1864)", presents a compelling narrative concerning the remembrance in the collective memory of Cuza's two visits in Constantinople. Making use of the surviving artistic renditions of the event, combined with accounts of participants, the author analyses the ways in which prince Cuza was received by the sultan, comparing the two different occasions (1860 and 1864). Directly contradicting existent historiographical perceptions, she underlines the importance of understanding and acknowledging the reforms (*Tanzimat*) that reshaped the Ottoman Empire. It is naïve to talk about the antithesis of modern, European (Romania) and traditional, oriental (Turkey), which so often characterizes the relationship between the two states in the second half of the 19th century.

Mircea-Cristian Ghenghea, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza- the «tyrant» and the «immortal». Little-known images in the press of 1867 and 1908", preoccupies himself with the image of Alexandru Ioan Cuza in two main

sources: a calendar for the 11th of February 1867 (a year after his abdication) and an almanac from 1908. Both are, as the author rightfully underlines, means of propaganda, used either to bring out the negative (the calendar), or the positive (the almanac) traits of the ruler, by referring to the contrasting image of King Charles the 1st. The final paper, signed by Andi Mihalache, “The construction of the Romanian pantheon and the structuring of the modern Romanian space: the funerals and statification of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1873, 1912)”, is a study of the history of collective memory, of how the death of a political personality impacts his further legacy, applying this to the case of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, who died in exile in 1873.

This book brings paramount contributions to the historiographical landscape regarding the first ruler of unified Romania, Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866). It manages to compile different perspectives, themes, and approaches into a singular volume, that never once suffers from a lack of cohesion in speech, a remarkable aspect for such a large body of work. Basing their work on extensive study of archival documents, memoirs of the time, newspapers of the epoch, or other fruitful primary sources, each author presents their arguments in a concise, pertinent, and logical manner. The reader of such a volume, a researcher in its own right or not, can savor each page, despite the book’s monumental length, due to the wide array of well-written provocative topics.

ANTONIA-ANNAMARIA VARGA

*MA student, Faculty of History and Philosophy,
Babeş-Bolyai University*

E-mail: varga1antonia@gmail.com

Alexandru Lupeanu-Melin, *Evocări din viața Blajului*, Edited by Cristian Bădiliță in collaboration with Veronica Isăilă, Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 2020, 270 p.

The book *Evocations from Blaj's life* by Alexandru Lupeanu-Melin was published for the first time in 1937, but it was republished in 2020 by Cristian Bădiliță in collaboration with Veronica Isăilă. It was republished in 2020 as it was part of the *Mica Romă XII* Collection, which aims to bring lesser-known authors who have written about Blaj into public view.

Cristian Bădiliță is an essayist, theologian and contemporary poet. He studied at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest and theology in Madrid. He has authored many theological articles. Veronica Isăilă is a student of the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, at the

Faculty of Letters. She was the one who transcribed the text from the 1937 edition and added several explanatory notes.

The subject of the book is a compilation of texts that evoke the most remarkable moments and personalities of Blaj. It is a memoir because the author, Alexandru Lupeanu-Melin, drafted short stories from his own life, as well as stories about the events that had taken place in Blaj, events that outline the history and characteristics of the city. The book originally appeared on the occasion of the bicentennial of Blaj; it was compiled by collecting several articles published by Lupeanu-Melin in the *Unirea Poporului* newspaper. Many authors compared his style with that of Ion Creangă or Ioan Agârbiceanu, which is why, for the reader, it is a truly pleasant read. The purpose of the *princeps* edition was to provide the Blaj public a view on the importance of their city for the national culture and to offer them anecdotes about the past, which they would thus come to know in detail. The edition published in 2020 brings forth the works by lesser-known authors, works that nonetheless contributed to the formation of the historical past of the city of Blaj and its importance for national history.

The book is structured in the form of a collection of short stories, organized chronologically, written in an accessible manner, thus making the most popular events of Blaj easy to understand. The 37 stories are preceded by a prologue and the volume ends with a postface. The prologue is written by Ștefan Manciușea, who was a contemporary of Alexandru Lupeanu-Melin. He was a teacher, a geographer, and a Greek-Catholic priest from Blaj. He presents Lupeanu's activity within the associations and institutions where he worked. Thus, we come to know that Alexandru Lupeanu lived between 1887-1937, as well as additional information regarding the school he attended, his professions, namely that of a teacher, director of the Blaj Girls' High School, director of the Blaj Central Library, editor for many publications and founder of *Unirea Poporului* newspaper, and a member and president of major associations such as ASTRA. The postface is authored by Ioan Buzași, a literary historian from Blaj whose works investigate the literary past of this city, but also that of its important figures. It summarizes aspects of the author's life, but it also analyzes the importance of this book for the literature of Blaj.

Because of the fact that it is a collection of short stories that recount certain episodes from the lives of certain figures or from within the larger historical events, and it is not a scientific approach, we cannot talk about a certain methodology used in its elaboration. The style is literary, it uses an archaic language, characteristic to the region and period in which the book

was written. All these variables make it possible to integrate the book into the memoir genre.

The sources used are newspaper articles, in which Alexandru Lupeanu-Melin recounted his memories of his school years, the events of 1918 in which he took part, as well as several eulogies he had given for certain figures. He also used the memories that the priest Nicolae Coroiu from Bucium-Saşa left in a manuscript. The book does not differentiate between the memoirs of the priest (he is not even mentioned as a source of inspiration) and those of Lupeanu, the stories are written in the first-person singular from the author's perspective.

The book is an interesting read to those passionate about history and it offers new perspectives to those who desire to find out more about Blaj's past in the form of anecdotes, which are not recorded in other sources, and which show the specifics of this city. It begins chronologically (and it includes a legend) with the founding of Blaj by Ionochentie Micu Klain; it then speaks about the figures who marked Blaj's education and church life: about Timotei Cipariu, Ioan Fechetu Negruțiu, Augustin Bunea, Ioan Moldovan or Vasile Suci. About lesser-known events, about the Revolution of 1848 and about how the achievement of the Union of Romania in Blaj was seen. Other interesting stories depict the recounted events about what was happening in the lives of the students from Blaj, how they learned to pass on lessons even through plays during the summer holidays, the accommodation conditions and the habit of picking grapes, details that are truly little known. The book reveals the names of the first engravers from Blaj and the institutions of that time. The volume includes figures such as Rozalia Munteanu, who was the first Romanian teacher from Transylvania.

However, the book cannot be considered history, it is somewhere between history, memoir and literature, but it can be used to extract little known information about people and facts from that city, about the life of students before the Union of Romania. It is written with accents belonging to the romantic style, Lupeanu being known for his nationalism.

The 2020 edition is thus a welcomed publication, as it allows today's readers to easily read text that is difficult to understand because it uses archaic language, but also full of toponyms and figures that deserve to be explained. This republication answers these needs by providing all the necessary information.

My opinion is that *Evocations from the Life of Blaj*, the 2020 edition is worth reading by all those interested in the history of Transylvania, but also by those who want to know several beautiful stories about the

Romanians' past, having been written in a literary manner that is easier to understand due to the explanatory notes made by the editors. But we must not forget to apply a grid of objectivity because subjectivism is a major characteristic of this book.

MARIA-DENISA ȘERBĂNETE

MA student, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeș-Bolyai University

E-mail: serbanete_denisa14@yahoo.com