

Book Reviews

Gabriella Erdélyi, (ed.), *Érzelmek és mostohák. Mozaik családok a régi Magyarországon (1500-1850) [Emotions and stepparents. Blended families in Old-Hungary]*, Budapest: HAS, Institute of History of the Research Centre for the Humanities, 2019.

The history of family has been discussed over and over from different perspectives by social and cultural historians, who seemed to be much preoccupied, especially regarding the late medieval and early modern times, with aspects such as continuity and change in family life. Emotions were of course present in this debate, and discussed mostly in the same terms, being perceived either as learned or innate. What was not, however, often discussed, is the importance of these feelings in much complicated (although quite common) family structures, such as stepfamilies. Remarriage or living in a blended family are aspects which received little attention. Therefore, this volume addresses a significant gap in the history of the early modern family. Since some chapters focus more heavily on emotions, the edited collection is not just a contribution to the history of the Hungarian family, but also to the study of emotional behavior, too. The book is the fourth volume of the Momentum "Integrating Families" Research Group lead by Gabriella Erdélyi.

The studies are arranged in three sections preceded by an introductory chapter, in which Gabriella Erdélyi tries to find links between the diverse articles and effectively fits them into the broader pattern of the volume. This first entry summarizes some early works for the study of Hungarian stepfamilies and outlines the theoretical approach to emotions history. This is probably the most theoretically engaged study of the volume, covering a wide range of methodological questions and subject matters addressed in the forthcoming studies.

The first section of articles gathers around family practices and material culture. The article of the art historian Orsolya Bubryák familiarizes the reader with the Hungarian inheritance law. The author studies the way valuables and goods (jewelries, silverware, furniture and textiles) were transmitted in Hungarian noble's testaments, trying to find out if emotions played any role in the way last wills deal with the personality of the testator. One might consider that testaments are a perfect source for studying emotions, but feelings are rarely present in these narratives. Instead of emotions we can read about expectations, Bubryák concluding that love in early modern times emerged from obedience: caring, obedient spouses and children were always more desirable than independent ones. The best

example to support her case are the 14 testaments written by Pál Esterházy. Besides the logical reasoning behind this constant rewriting (remarriages, deceased and new children), one can also depict the vulnerable emotional balance among the testator and his close-kin.

Dóra Mérai deals in her article with death, emotions and family in 16-17th-century Transylvania. The art historian and archeologist Mérai analyzes funeral monuments from the perspective of emotions, and although her inquiry is one of the most exciting studies from this volume, it is only loosely connected to the main topic of the book. She bases her analysis on Judith Butler's and Sarah Tarlow's theories, but makes no forced interpretation regarding funeral habits and their affective meaning, suggesting that we must be aware of how culturally determined feelings were in past centuries. Mérai suggests that the study of funeral culture reveals first of all collective attitudes towards death, responding to some already existing norms – be it religious or social.

PhD student Dalma Bódai signs a case study about a 16th-century female aristocrat, Erzsébet Czobor, the second wife of György Thurzó, presenting her as a mother and stepmother. The article processes a few hundred letters written to or by Erzsébet Czobor. Her correspondence concerns family and domestic matters; the author introduces her readers in this way not only into the private world of Czobor, but talks in general about the roles and obligations of females from this era. Czobor and Thurzó raised together seven daughters and one of the goals of this article is to reconstruct the emotional bonds between these family members, suggesting that correspondence became important after the marriage of the girls, written words replacing the role of oral communication. Bódai is very confident with the interpretation of her data, and therefore we have mixed feelings, since we would probably expect to read some about the theoretical dilemmas a researcher faces when analyzing the emotional content of early modern correspondence.

Gabriella Erdélyi's article explores even more the possibilities arising from the above-mentioned ego-documents. She analyzes the private correspondence and family life of the Esterházy family in the 17th century. She wants to find out in what measure feelings and expectations, or gender roles could be expressed through correspondence. She states from the beginning that she is interested in the performative perception of family and that she considers feelings as a form of action and communication, not necessarily as something abstract. Her theoretical presumptions are very easily supported by the archival material she selected for her article. The family history of the Esterházy family is a very good terrain to verify these hypotheses. The protagonists of the article, Krisztina Nyáry and Miklós Esterházy, are playing several family-roles during their lifetime, such as stepparents, then in-laws, since they married their stepchildren, fastening in this way the already existing vertical kinship ties with horizontal ties of marriage. After the marriage of their

children, the existing hierarchical relations among the family had different dynamics and this is one of the major topics discussed by Erdélyi. These kin-relations are mostly discussed through the correspondence of the Esterházy. The frequency of the letters, the formulas used, the handwriting, all these gain extraordinary meaning in Erdélyi's interpretation. The article suggests that in early modern families the roles assumed by each member were of utmost importance, and the affection among its members could change as many times as their status inside the family altered.

The entries in the second section examine family conflicts. The historian Eleonóra Géra offers the reader a fascinating micro-analysis about the three marriages of Eva Elisabetha Wittmann. This young girl from Vienna, at the suggestion of her family, made a very successful first alliance with an aggressive and much older widower from Buda. The extremely tensioned (and very well-documented) marriage was ended by the death of the husband, Johann Georg Unger. Wittmann, still in her thirties, married after a year of widowhood an influential German engineer called Johann Adam Dietz, who also died after a few years. Eva Elisabetha was still young by the time of her second widowhood, but most importantly, had a considerable financial background, so she made a third, and even more advantageous alliance with a noble, Johann Adam von Lichtenauer. By that time, she gained some reputation among the bourgeoisie elite from Buda, being perceived as *imperiosa mulier*, a female of her own will, powerful and persistent, who did not conform to the expectations society had toward widows. We consider that this 18th-century story offers much more than a simple case study, posing also as a good methodological reference. Géra repeatedly emphasizes that the history of family or emotions implies almost always more than one source category, from ego-documents to legal or ecclesiastical records. All these narrative traces must be taken in consideration, and even so the historian will not be able to find evidence about emotions in the household, since early modern documents suggest that romantic feelings were not that determining in the making of the family. Love could be a consequence of the marriage, but at the end what made a marriage successful was the harmony (social, economical, religious) of the couple.

The second article from this section deals with heartless mothers and evil stepmothers. The ethnologist PhD student Petra Bálint writes about emotions and their expressions in 18th-century Court Records. After presenting the difficulties one encounters while studying legal documents, the author also indicates the methodological framework used to decode her narratives. As many authors of this book, she also relies on Barbara Rosenwein, and tries to identify in the studied testimonies first the emotions young committers of infanticide felt after they were summoned before the Court, and then, in the second part of the article, how stepfamily members relate to each other. The author offers the reader several contradictory examples from the life of orphan

children. We can read about aggressive biological kin, about supportive communities and even murderer stepparents. Bálint concludes that for us, coming from a society that cherishes every aspect of childhood, it is hard to offer an objective analysis of the child-murderer females or evil parents. The author suggests that instead of making false assumptions about the emotional behavior our ancestors had, we should interpret our data in its own context.

The subject of the forthcoming study gathers around the legal conflicts of a certain bourgeois family. The historian Mónika Mátay offers us an exhaustive analysis on the trial records concerning the verbal and written testaments of a pig-slaughterer, Lajos Balázs. In the center of the article is the romantic friendship between Gábor Mester and Lajos Balázs, presented in contrast with the lack of emotions within the biological family. Balázs had no siblings, his father died, his mother could not fulfill her maternal obligations, his paternal aunt, Sára Balázs, was also distant to him. The main female character of the article is Zsuzsanna Tot, the mother of Balázs, who first disrespected the will of her son, leaving the lifelong friend Mester without the promised money, and second, sold the house of her dead husband, thus entering into conflict with her sister-in-law, Sára Balázs. In presenting the conflicts, Mátay unfolds the history of three generations, and the marriages of two, that of the grandparents and parents of Balázs, in order to introduce the reader into the core of the problem. We learn about decent widows, unfaithful wives and heartless mothers, about the shame and humiliation Balázs as a child experienced in the household of his notorious mother. At the end of this exciting investigation, which reveals the hard detective work the historian underwent, we get a better understanding of the problematic emotional background of this trial.

The last section of the volume contains two articles related to family spaces, identities and roles. Emese Gyimesi examines stepfamilies from the children's perspective. The female protagonist of the article is Júlia Szendrey, the widow of the national poet of Hungary, Sándor Petőfi. The article describes the relationship between Szendrey's children from her two marriages. The bond between the half-siblings is reconstructed with the help of their correspondence and their intellectual undertaking: a handwritten family newspaper. The letters are interpreted in a less conventional way, since Gyimesi is interested not in the emotional content of the narratives but in the description of the private and public spheres. The letter-writing and "publishing" children took great interest in the visualization of their experience. From their drawings the historian is able to reconstruct the interior of their home, the function of the spaces. The article is thus a very good attempt at "space-reading", and a good future reference for those interested in this field of historical study.

The literary historian Zsófia Kucserka writes about the perception of marriage and family models in the private and public writings of a 19th-

century female author, Etelka Slachta. The private diaries of Slachta had already been the subject of some interesting analyses, but Kucserka wanted to extend her research and to examine together the personal and public writings of this young female. Slachta started her writing career with translations, and mostly from French pamphlet literature. The young and by that time still unmarried girl liked to discuss topics regarding marriage, sometimes even arguing with the male skeptics who simply saw a husband-hunter in every female. Slachta is concerned about these ideas in her private writing too, but in contrast with the bohemian and ironic marriage-plays she translated or wrote, her diary suggests that she was more preoccupied with the duties she had to fulfill for her nation. According to the diary, Slachta had felt romantic love, but in both cases her sentiments were overwritten by her national feeling. She believed that the moral duty of a Hungarian intellectual female was to give birth to children and to educate them in a national spirit. In an era when historical works suggest that love invaded all spheres of life, a romantic young girl's private writing claims quite different things.

As a whole, this collection is a very important contribution to the field of family history. However, it is not always clear how representative these studies are for the emotions early modern Hungarian stepfamilies experienced; or if some of the authors integrated all of their sources in their articles and not just those which support their interests. Therefore, for a classical historian, the volume is in many aspects more than challenging. But despite their shortcomings, all of these articles offer a new and fresh perspective on the possibilities of historical research.

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Sándor Nagy, *“Engesztelhetetlen gyűlölet”. Válás Budapesten (1850-1914). [Unappeasable hatred, appeasable law. The role of lawmaking in the growth of divorce numbers in Budapest (1850-1914)]*, Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2018.

The process of modernization brought many social changes with itself, one of these being the rapid increase in the number of divorces in society. This phenomenon is usually explained through social and economic factors. The book that is the subject of this review does not call into question the importance of these factors, but wants to add a new one: a judicial factor, asking how legal regulation can prevent or increase the number of divorces in a certain society. The author of the book is Sándor Nagy, a historian and archivist, employee of the Budapest City Archives.

The volume focuses on Pest-Buda, later Budapest, between the years 1850-1914. The first chapter of the book starts by presenting and reviewing the statistics made by Tivadar Szél concerning the divorce rates in Budapest between 1873 and 1895. Tivadar Szél wants to prove that the rise of divorce rates can be brought in relation with the damaging effects of modernization, and with the too liberal civil law of 1895. The core of Szél's argument is that, according to his statistics, divorce was almost unknown in the early dualist Budapest, yet with the adoption of the civil law and the intense economic development of the Hungarian capital the number of divorces started growing rapidly. However, Szél based his statistics solely on church registers, which exclude Roman Catholics, since they were not allowed to divorce, but also excludes, or makes it hard to track those Catholics who converted to other religions, or were inherently part of other confessions. Their divorce cases were handled by state courts, or, as in the case of Unitarians, by the parish court in Cluj. Furthermore, Szél did not take into account the number of those who did not get married but divorced in Budapest, since their divorce was registered in the place where they were married.

Pointing out and taking into consideration these things, Nagy creates his own statistics based largely on all the documents that were amassed during divorce trials conducted by state and church courts. These statistics show that divorce was not unknown to the inhabitants of Budapest during the first decades of the dualist period, since there was a gradual, mostly uninterrupted growth of divorce numbers, which, however, compared to the other Hungarian towns or cities, was not that exceptional. Moreover, the divorce rate was much more significant in smaller urban settlements than in Budapest. The author categorizes divorce numbers by confessions and social classes. The rate of divorce was the lowest amongst Catholics, but it was also the one that grew the most significantly after 1895. As regarding social classes, the middle class scored the highest among the number of divorces; however, lower-class divorces also started increasing in number by the beginning of the 20th century. The increase in the number of divorces is almost constant, with slight abruptions. In order to explain why the number of broken marriages rose, Sándor Nagy relies on the theories of Philipp Roderick, Stephanie Coontz and William J. Goode. Roderick suggests that the increase in number of divorces had to be understood through the phenomenon of the working female, since many women, once they gained financial independence, chose to live alone, rather than in an unsuccessful marriage. On the other hand, Coontz attributes divorces to the spreading of the idea of romantic love and partnership, while Goode thinks that divorce is influenced by deterministic factors such as early marriage and remarriage. According to Nagy, none of these theories offer a reasonable explanation to the situation in Budapest.

In the second chapter, the author of the book presents the judicial changes that have taken place in 19th-century Hungary concerning marriage and divorce, thus hoping to find an explanation to the questions brought by the statistics of the first chapter. The first important law concerning divorce was decreed by Joseph II in 1786 in the so-called *Ehepatent*. This document allowed people of every confession except Roman Catholic to divorce, directing the matter of marital break-up from church courts to state courts. The patent was short-lived, being revoked after the death of Joseph II; however, some of its elements were kept: protestant divorces were handled by state courts, Catholics went back to church courts. The converted Catholics are again hard to trace, since the patent did not refer to them. Catholics who converted to another confession were allowed to divorce, this was formally recognized in a law adopted in 1844, which was revoked for a short time in the neoabsolutist era, but became a common practice in the dualist period.

Another heritage of the *Ehepatent* was the “marriage defender”, a person assigned to every couple in the middle of a divorce who had the duty to investigate if the causes of the divorce were serious. These regulations made the process of divorcing long and costly, thus for a long time, people did not risk to go through the hardships of it. But by the end of the 1880s, the role of the marriage defender became a formal one. The civil law of 1895 introduced the civil divorce, which left the church powerless in this matter, and introduced a new cause for divorce: intentional abandonment (without reasonable cause), which compared to previous accepted legal argumentation, that of unappeasable hatred, required even less formal proving. In addition, the new regulation had specific articles regarding the poor, which significantly increased the number of lower-class people who decided to divorce, since the state paid for a part of the process. In 1907, the judicial process got even faster, since it was no longer required to review the divorce case before its closure.

The next chapter shows the process by which divorce became fashionable among more and more segments of society. The rapid growth in number of these cases created several chaotic and absurd situations, as “state law” and “popular law” clashed, which constitutes the topic of the third and last chapter of the book. According to the author, just because there are no laws allowing people to divorce, or because people do not have access to or knowledge of these laws, it does not mean that they cannot develop informal ways of divorcing. The most commonly used unconventional form of partnership was the cohabitation in a conjugal relationship without being married. When one or both of the parties involved in this type of cohabitation are married to someone else, then we can perceive their life-choice as an informal way of divorcing and remarrying. Their legal situation was complicated by the appearance of children. Until the middle of the 19th

century, children born from these conjugal relations did not constitute a significant problem, as priests would usually just write in the church register the family name of the biological father next to the surname of the child, conferring in this way the newborn a façade of legitimacy. But in the early period of the dualist era, the state started punishing priests who did not ask for some kind of document that proved that the parents of the child were married, the consequences of this new practice being sometimes absurd. A child born from a mother who was previously married to someone else, and was still not divorced, would receive the family name of the first husband, not of the actual biological father. The only way to save the child from the stigma of bastard was to divorce, and to turn the cohabitation into a legitimate relationship in the eyes of the state. This is a good example of how law can influence social behavior, because the increasing number of “bastards” led more and more people to choose a formal way of ending their marriage. As a consequence of the high demand, the state also had to make the process of divorce easier.

The critical attitude with which the author treats his sources has to be noted, as it is exemplary. Sándor Nagy always tries to explain how the sources were created and which were the criteria by which state and church authorities gathered the information, thus the reader gets a clear idea of what that certain source can be used for. At the end of the volume, among the very rich bibliography, we can find a short documentary database too, which allows the reader to get a clearer picture on how the statistics were created. Therefore, we consider that this book is extremely helpful to researchers of the topic, as it offers a lot of new and useful information about divorce in modernity, but also provides a methodological basis for those who wish to do dive further into this subject.

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Alin Fumurescu, *Compromisul: o istorie politică și filozofică*, București: Humanitas, 2019.

Alin Fumurescu, Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at University of Houston, expressed his research interests in the history of ideas, medieval and modern political theory, political and self-representation, American political thought. He was the recipient of the American Political Science Association Leo Strauss Award for the best doctoral dissertation in political philosophy for 2013. The political scientist's connections with Romania remained strong, the proof is his collaboration

with different Romanian newspapers, but also the launch of his book in Romanian translation with a special preface.

The book we are focusing on is a valuable research regarding conceptual history, history of ideas, philosophy and political theory. Fumurescu wrote the first conceptual history of the notion of compromise, although he prefers the term *genealogy* instead of *history* because, following Michel Foucault, he considers that *genealogy* suggests a more unpredictable development. The author pays attention to the meaning continuities and changes concerning the concept of compromise, trying to place them in the appropriate historical context. Such an approach is supported by the fact that people live with meanings, and meanings are transmitted through words. And, depending on how we use certain words, it changes the way we relate to the world. Even more, we can ask ourselves whether or not reality can be constructed through words. Some thinkers believe there are make-up beliefs, but that does not imply the idea of falsehood. For example, Benedict Anderson considers that the nation is an imagined but not imaginary concept, which means that it becomes a reality.

Methodologically, the paper combines historical analysis of how compromise was used in everyday language and a quantitative study of the use of the term in both French and English between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, by analyzing famous texts from the history of political thought. The ignored history of compromise indicates differences in the assumptions we make about individuals and their relationships with the political sphere. Therefore, the author proves the connection between various uses of the term compromise and certain understandings of self-representation, political representation and contractualism. The whole effort of interpretation in the book is made mainly through the medieval dialectic of the individual and through the difference between the descending and ascending representation.

Fumurescu notices a great difference between the classical and the modern acceptance of the compromise. The example of the Aristotelian term *mesotes* shows the possibility that the practice of compromise preceded the appearance of the term. However, Aristotelian middle way corresponds to classical thinking, according to which man can only be understood in relation to others, and public life must be conducted in accordance with justice and must serve the development of virtues. In The Middle Ages, compromise proved to be a useful tool as *arbitratio* in the legal field, and *aselectio* within the structure of Church. Beginning with the second half of the sixteenth century and continuing throughout the seventeenth century, at the same time as the French became increasingly suspicious about compromise, the English embraced it as a virtue. In order to understand this split in the use of compromise, we are informed of the importance of the forgotten medieval dialectic between *forum internum* and *forum externum*.

The medieval man understood himself by virtue of the two forums: *forum internum*, which was considered the forum of freedom and authenticity and where the only judges were consciousness and divinity, and *forum externum*, which defined the individual by belonging to one or more communities, and, therefore, subjected him to the authority of this worldly community. Moreover, Christianity managed to familiarize the medieval man with the game between uniqueness and similarity connecting the two forums. As long as there was a balance between the two forums, he was not afraid of compromise, nor did he embrace it as a virtue.

The cleavage that appeared in the use of the term compromise starting with the second half of the sixteenth century had to do with the different ways of responding to the series of crises that had marked that period. On the French side, the increasing pressure on the *forum externum*, which was the consequence of the absolutist regime about to be born, amplified the distance between the two forums, until it made them detach from each other. The inner self has come to be regarded as the only site of uniqueness and authenticity, while the outer self has been reduced to a simple costume. Thus, one witnesses the development of a centripetal individualism, which helps us to understand why the French often used the term compromise with negative connotations. On the British side, the emphasis switched to *forum externum* and the equality of wills. The distance between the two forums narrowed until they became confused, giving birth to one-dimensional man. Therefore, there was no fear of compromise, and will-based contracts became the foundation of society and governance.

The paper explores the consequences of these different self-apprehensions of the individual in terms of different understandings of political representation. The author claims that, despite today's general consensus, representing 'the people' was not naturally assimilated with an ascending theory of representation. 'The people', understood as a whole, was apprehended in France as still higher than its representatives - kings, Estates, or Parlements. The idea of individuals willingly delegating their rights and authority to a representative remained for more than a century a peculiar British development.

This reading suggests that compromise seems like an appropriate policy approach for a pluralistic society. Nowadays, the man being convinced that there is no assumption of any objective truth or common interest proposes the compromise as a negative solution: to remove the violence caused by misunderstandings between us. Another fundamental problem raised by the concept of compromise in politics is the connection with morality. As John Morley noted at the end of the 19th century, transforming compromise from a useful political method, when wisely limited, to a principle of public life risks undermining the general moral sense. Since the issue of political compromise is closely linked to the problem of the relationship between

public and private, the way we understand civil society becomes essential, especially because it functions as a bridge between the two spheres. The Internet age has created opportunities for rethinking civil society and the self. On the one hand, the modern man is individualistic and unique because he can identify with any combination of associations. On the other hand, due to the lack of criteria for the way he chooses to identify himself, the individual no longer has a stable identity.

The book proposed for review stands out through the abundance of information regarding philosophical and political thinking as well as through the qualitative analysis. Alin Fumurescu investigates not only the etymology of the word compromise but the causes of its various shifts in meaning and the intellectual and practical consequences of those changes. His interpretation makes us understand that the availability or lack of disposition to make compromises is related not only to a certain way of understanding the political representation, but also to certain forms of self-representation.

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Lucian Boia, *De la Dacia Antică la Marea Unire, de la Maria Unire la România de azi*, Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2018.

As many people know, 2018 was the year that brought in front of us a lot of historical publications dedicated to the Centenary of the Great Union of the Romanians. Some of the written books present the events that happened during the First World War and after it. Others purpose was to expose some new opinions upon these facts, while the last but not the least is the category of books which intend to destroy the myths created about this important moment in the history of the Romanians. This third category also includes the book written by Lucian Boia, entitled *De la Dacia Antică la Marea Unire, de la Maria Unire la România de azi (From the Ancient Dacia to the Great Union, from the Great Union to today's Romania)*, published in 2018, at Humanitas Publishing House. It contains only one hundred pages, being more like an essay which exposes the author's discontent with the instrumentalization of the entire Romanian history, in order to serve for the moment of the Great Union. In the short foreword, Boia shows his disagreement with the anachronisms existing in historiography and with the attempt of the Romanian historians to unify the distant past of the Romanian territories.

The book is structured in seventeen short chapters, bringing in our attention the main problems of the Romanian historiography; among it's

pages, Boia mentions and even criticizes some of the greatest Romanian historians, such as Neagu Djuvara, Vasile Pârvan, or Ioan Bogdan. Even if, when reading the title, the book seems to be one dedicated to a very short presentation of the true Romanian past, devoid of myths, in reality, it's chapters are more like a harsh criticism of historiography and above the myths which are deforming the real history. Boia's pleading begins with a discussion about the ancient Dacia. He considers the idea of continuity between Dacia and Romania like a *dacian trap*, where Pârvan or Densușianu fell. The author considers that these historians made mistakes when they emphasized, in some cases, the exclusive dacic origins of the Romanians. In the end of the first chapter, Boia says that the unification of the territories inhabited by a majority of Romanians happened due to the natural right, not to the historical right which researchers are trying to accentuate.

Boia thinks that the most important problem of the Romanian historiography is the one referring to the continuity and the controversy with the Hungarians about the nation having primacy in Transylvania. He is citing Neagu Djuvara, who affirmed that the relevance of this problem is quite reduced, because today, no matter what, this land would still remain under Romanian administration, due to the majority of Romanians inhabiting it. Although, the author criticises Djuvara on exposing ten arguments in favour of Romanian continuity, after saying this problem has no importance for the current situation. I think that Djuvara only wanted to enumerate some arguments in order to present the historical truth, as he had seen it. Eventually, there are a lot of informations which the historians give details about, having no relevance for the present. In the end, what is the purpose of the historical research? I think it's more related to discovering and presenting the historical truth for those who are interested and less to the changing of the present different situations.

In the following chapters, Boia explains that before 20th century, there were not so many inhabitants of the Romanian Principates who had thought of their unification. He mentions, among others, the names of Dimitrie Cantemir, Grigore Ureche or Miron Costin who were, above all, Moldavians, not Romanians. Moreover, after the unification between Valachia and Moldova from 1859, Moldavians had more to lose than the Valachians; as a result, there had been even an anti-unionist movement in Moldova, which seems to have been sustained, among others, by Ion Creangă. Neither the Transylvanians were in perfect agreement with the ideas referring to the unification with Romania; Boia says they initially wanted the improvement of their situation by keeping their allegians to the Habsburg Monarchy.

The author minimalizes the contribution that the Romanian political elite brought for fulfilling the Romanian national ideals. Rather than that, he affirms that the external context was the one which determined the 1859th and 1918th unifications. Besides, he thinks that the Ottoman and Czarist

Empires had made the inhabitants from the two principates become closer, in order to group their forces. The individuality and authenticity of the Romanian character and traditions were also kept due to the Turkish domination, because it wasn't interested in the islamization of the Romanian Principates. The 1859th unification was the result of the Crimean War and the support of Napoleon the Third, as the 1918th unification was one of the effects of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which made Romanians from Transylvania look in Romania's direction. Even if it's true that the context always helped the events to take place, I think it's wrong to underestimate the role of the Romanians the way that Boia does, but also to overestimate it the way that other historians do.

Some other chapters of the book are dedicated to the description of the past and current situation of Bassarabia or Republic of Moldova. Boia takes advantage of this opportunity to express his attachment to Ernst Renan's theory, which says that *the nation is a daily plebiscite*. He brings into discussion the problem regarding the unification between Romania and Moldova, thinking that none of these countries are prepared enough for this act. Boia's opinion is that after the Great Union, Romanians weren't capable of making the most of the potential of their country, neither in the interwar period, whose prosperity he considers being only a myth. The communist era didn't help the country's development, and the years after the 1989th Revolution marked the longest transition from communism to democracy from the entire Central Europe. Moreover, Boia thinks that the totalitarian regime was, in some ways, part of the Romanians character and that's because even today, some of them miss those days. I consider that this judgement is quite groundless; this nostalgia is not a result of the „totalitarian spirit” of the Romanians, but it may be the effect of time passing, growing up and missing the childhood or youth. Moreover, people tend to minimize the negative aspects of the days that they miss.

In the last chapters of the book, Boia presents some negative records reached by Romania; he also criticises the political class and the occidental development of the country, based on the theory of *form without substance*. Boia regrets the advance of the european regionalism over nationalism and considers that it is also present in Transylvania, which is always a little bit different from the rest of the Romanian territories. The last chapter talks about the future, Boia preferring to insert some questions about the most important problems rising to the horizon.

The book written by Lucian Boia brings into discussion a lot of problems regarding the Romanian history and historiography. It also encourages the reader to study more, to look over the discussed subjects with higher attention and to have a different perspective over them. However, I consider that even if it is a quite easily to read book, Boia's essay has to be treated with precaution, because it has the disadvantage of criticizing and talking

about historiographical problems without offering detailed arguments to sustain the exposed opinions. So, after finishing this book, the reader risks to gain some beliefs which he is not able to sustain if he cannot deepen the knowledge over them, by studying some other publications, belonging to other historians.

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Ioan Bolovan, Luminița Dumănescu (eds.), *Intermarriage in Transylvania, 1895-2010*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017.

One cannot deny that globalization is one of the main characteristics of the world, at least beginning with the first Industrial Revolution. One of its consequences is the increasing number of mixed marriages or intermarriages, as the Industrial Revolution(s) facilitated the mobility of objects, ideas and people across the globe. The decision of entering such a marriage involves many difficulties from a psychological, social, linguistic and even from a political-national perspective. *How would I be perceived by my family and social group when deciding to marry a spouse of different ethnicity, religion/denomination or/and socio-economic status? What language will we use to communicate? What will be the identity of our children?* are some of the questions that appear when deciding to live your life along with a person of a different background. Many studies focus on these difficulties as they were felt by different social categories, usually immigrants. But how about the individuals from groups that are different in what concerns ethnicity or religion, but coexisted in the same place for many centuries? The book edited by Ioan Bolovan and Luminița Dumănescu, *Intermarriage in Transylvania, 1895-2010* tries to answer this question comprehensively, focusing on probably one of the best case-studies in Europe (i.e. Transylvania) and approaching the complexity of the intermarriages phenomenon from various angles.

In regards to the editors, Ioan Bolovan is a Romanian historian, university professor, vice-rector of Babeş-Bolyai University and correspondent member of the Romanian Academy. His research focus is historical demography and population studies, but also the political and social history of Transylvania during the long nineteenth century. He is also the founder and director of the Center for Population Studies in Cluj-Napoca, with which most of the authors of the works comprised in this book are affiliated. Luminița Dumănescu is senior researcher at the same institution. Her research interest lies with historical demography and population studies, with a focus on

women and children. In respect of the book, it is the result of the research undertaken within the framework of the research project „Mixed Marriages: Between an Exercise in Tolerance and a Modern Expression of Indifference“, supported by the Romanian National Council for Research. In the 210 pages, the book comprises an introduction and eleven studies related to the topic of intermarriage in Transylvania. A Table of Tables used in the studies, a Table of Figures and a general index, all placed at the end, complete the book.

Starting with a presentation of Transylvania's complex history and ethnical structure, the editors emphasize in the "Introduction" the main reasons making this region a worthy case study for intermarriages. Transylvania was and still is a place of coexistence of multiple ethnicities and denominations, which makes it ideal ground for studying the integration of cultural differences. The period taken into consideration adds further value to the study, as it is dominated by nationalism, which usually aggravated the conclusion of marriage contracts between two people with different identities. The "Introduction" also comprises a presentation of the historical literature on the topic, along with its shortcomings, a welcomed initiative, which also underlines the necessity of the research resulting in the present volume. Moreover, the editors made a clear point of view on the studying of mixed marriages phenomenon as a cornerstone for understanding how different cultures can mingle in a non-conflictual way. The summary at the end of the "Introduction" is meant to facilitate the understanding of the book's structure and to emphasize the methodology used overall, as the studies are connected to a great extent, functioning as chapters of a monograph, rather than a collection of papers.

The eleven studies presented in this book are thematically and methodologically grouped into two sections. The first one, titled "Mixed Marriages reflected in Historical Sources", opens with the study signed by Ioan Bolovan and Marius Eppel, which deals with how intermarriages were and are perceived, especially by churches, using the historical method, as well as sources covering the span of over a century (1895-2010). It makes a good start for understanding the context and the mentalities revolving around the idea of mixed marriages, as it emphasizes how the Churches approached this "problem", a fairly important matter, given that Churches had and still have an important influence on shaping the people's identity. Alongside ecclesiastical laws (and the practice) of Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Roman-Catholic, and Reformed churches, as well as the Mosaic religion too, there are also presented some statistical data for each denomination. The second study is complementary to the first, as Luminița Dumănescu makes an overview of the civil law on marriages, and implicitly intermarriages in Romania for the period between 1890 and 2010.

In the third study, Ioan Bolovan showcases how these legislations and practices of political and ecclesiastical institutions affected the everyday

reality of common people, by providing a quantitative analysis on the phenomenon of intermarriages in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th. The method used is, alongside analysis of the statistics, the comparison between denominations, and Hungary as a whole too. The changes are contextualized by the transformations in politics, economy, and society. The same focus is found in the next study, in which Bogdan Crăciun, Daniela Mârza, Mihaela Hărăguș, and Ioan Bolovan are showcasing the results for the interwar period, with its specific realities. The reason for a separate and quite generous in length study dealing with this period resides in the complex transformation that the Transylvanian society was facing – from the incorporation in Romania, who did not have experience in dealing with so many ethnic and religious groups, to the emergence of radical eugenics, racism, and other authoritarian ideas. The fifth study, by Mihaela Hărăguș, draws the attention of the reader towards the drives of the individuals involved in a mixed marriage during the last decades, as well as on more recent demographical statistics. In the sixth and last study of the first part, Daniela Mârza explains how the mental representations of different groups of individuals influenced the conclusion (or not) of mixed marriages along the time.

The second section, “Mixed Marriages in Contemporary Society”, focuses more on anthropological and sociological approach on the intermarriages nowadays. Using the interview as the main method of data gathering, and focusing on the urban area of Cluj-Napoca, this section comprises five studies that concentrate on specific aspects of the data collected. By using the information of individuals that are still living and presenting it as a “life-story”, this second part of the book makes the reader feel more close and aware to the matter of intermarriage not only of today but of the entire period covered in the first part of the book. The first study, written by Mihaela Hărăguș, showcases the factors that are influencing the option for intermarriage, identifying three main categories: the individual preferences, the social environment in which the individual grew up, and the marriage market. An important finding is that today, education and socioeconomic status are more important than ethnic similarities for the spouses who decide to conclude a mixed marriage. On the importance of the religion/denomination and ethnicity appurtenance in intermixed marriages, Marius Eppel comes with a more in-depth analysis. The main idea that comes out from his research is that even if religion and national sentiment still play a role in the life of individuals in the targeted area, the main goal is to create “a happy family” and to overcome the differences by compromising for the sake of this goal.

In the third study of this second part, Daniela Mârza deals with the problem of the language(s) in a mixed married couple. The other’s language, as the author emphasizes, is usually seen either as a gain for both partners

and the children, a way of being closer to each other, or as a negative outcome – identity loss, national rivalries, etc. In the end, after showcasing some factors in choosing what languages to be used in the life of a mixed family, Daniela Mârza stresses out that intermarriage is usually a success story “integrating and harmonizing cultural differences”. The following study, signed by Luminița Dumănescu, highlights how the lives of the children of a mixed couple are influenced by the differences between the parents. The identity, in all regards (ethnicity, language, and religion), of the children, in comparison to the act of marriage itself, is less influenced by the extended family and religious and ethnic community, being more a matter of parents’ decision, and later of the children themselves. The last study, authored by Viorela Telegdi-Csetri, deals with the practices used by the mixed couples in expressing their identity, stressing out that this display of identity takes place in the daily life of the couple in different ways. Last, but not least, the intensity of displaying identity differences is related to the intensity of the questioning of the couple’s life from the outside.

From an analytical point of view, this book encompasses in a far-reaching manner the complex matter of intermixed marriages, by means of an interdisciplinary approach. Aside from integrating methodologies from different disciplines, another strong point of this work would be the context used for studying this phenomenon – a time of multiple and radical changes and a place of multiculturalism. In what concerns the language used in the studies encompassed in this book, it is accessible even for an unspecialized reader, as it is not difficult to comprehend the points made throughout the pages and as the scientific concepts are usually explained. Moreover, the usage of the “life-story” approach brings the reader closer to the matter discussed, as he/she can see it from a more personal perspective. The presence of a bibliographical list at the end of each chapter is another positive aspect, as it facilitates further reading. Despite no obvious drawbacks, I believe a study with the main focus on the intermixed marriages in the communist period would have been also welcomed.

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Cristina Jelescu, Radu Crutzescu, Ioan C. Filitti (eds.), *Amintirile colonelului Lăcusteanu*, București: Humanitas, 2015.

The subsequent years of the 1848 Revolution in Wallachia and Moldavia offered us a series of memoirs and writings containing details about the significance of events during the revolutionary time. Many of them emphasized the positive impact of the Revolution and the main actors of it, but something was missing. The memoirs of Grigore Lăcusteanu emphasized the other part of the statement. In Transylvania we take benefit from John Page's, who brings accusations to the Romanians revolutionaries, however he doesn't convict the Revolution itself, considering he takes part of it next to the Hungarians. In Wallachia, starting with 1865 a manuscript, forbidden for a long time, builds a different atmosphere, from an anti-revolutionary point of view.

The memoirs of Grigore Lăcusteanu, published for the first time in 1934, captures every historian's attention when it comes to meeting an individual contemporary of that epoch with opposite ideals and political orientation. The book, reedited in 2015, reconstructs his genealogy and biography, sketching his military ascension and describes the changes occurred during the Revolution that affected him, the social sphere and the politics. Therefore, let see the strengths of this book, counterbalancing them with its weak points. Although the abundance of subjectivity in Lăcusteanu's work is clear, the notes are veritable sources of reconstructing the life marked by cholera, revolution and arrests. One aspect, nevertheless, is important to be underlined: the author doesn't offer us deformed images of his time, however he describes them from a better angle.

Details about the author are highlighted by Lăcusteanu himself and his reactions throughout the narration. It is obvious that the main reason for writing his memoirs is to perpetuate the virtues and nobility of his ancestors. Therefore, his character is so exceeding. He certainly shows attachment for his family, but he reserves an excessive special one for his son, Mișu. Through him, the Colonel succeeds to satisfy the so craved abilities he never fulfilled. A selfish gesture we might say, which helps him to be rewarded for the work invested in his son: 'I desired that Mișu, my only son and only heir of our family, to be proud bearing my name, so that I could be rewarded for my work and endeavor'. This act may be justified through the lost of the other son. It is interesting to follow Lăcusteanu's character, with choleric temper but sensitized among the loved ones. He takes us in his family circle, subjected to the cruel reality, when parents had to confront the death of their children, confessions we rarely meet in the literature of that time.

Born on March 1813, he is taught Greek, German, Russian, Latin and French at very young ages and at sixteen becomes a translator for a Russian general.

From this path on he remains fascinated by the army. His will to join it was fulfilled only in may 1830 when he obtained the rank of Second Lieutenant, reaching the rank of Colonel in 1853. Not once he appears to be conceited and loses his temper instantly: 'My anger increases (I was agile, violent to excess)'. Throughout his military career, he serves the Russian cause with such devotion, so the year of 1848 finds him against the revolutionary government.

Outside the family sphere, Lăcusteanu inevitably builds the social framework specific for the century: 'I was observing the Romanian aristocratic youth who was coming from abroad with different titles, and from one hundred of them barely one contributed to the society with solid and fundamental instruction and ninety nine were coming back specialized in vices and immorality'. A statement which could seem exaggerated, but consulting other opinion too, we clash into similarities. To sustain this, we will use Charles Lagau report, the French counselor in Wallachia: 'more boyars are sent to boarding schools in Vienne and Paris but they forget the essential they have learned, return to their old habits and end up being worse than those who did not leave the country at all'. And all these ascertainments were made on a background still devoted of meritocratic principles, a background condemned by the author, who sustained that the aristocracy is surrounded by a vicious govern and who eliminated the virtues. He portrays us a scene of the Council of Ministers, charged with preparing the new elections. An atmosphere soaked in competition, in promises about protection and bribe in exchange for some votes.

Tragic scenes left behind by the epidemics were described in other text too, but Lăcusteanu adds another with a terrifying picture of the victims fallen next to him during the 1831 cholera. Regarding the narration of the 1848 events in Wallachia, the Colonel seems to create a narrative thread in which he finds himself to be a hero arresting the revolutionaries, but ending up in the hands of a committee and being judged by it. With the revolutionary Constitution signing by Bibescu and his abdication, the army acknowledge the government and shortly after, when Heliade Rădulescu write a proclamation in which he demands the peasants to stop their land work, Odobescu next to Lăcusteanu turn against them all. The heroic image of our author is amplified because he, in comparison to Odobescu, did not sign a pact with the revolutionaries to become a dictator, act he considered to be a treason. After his arrest, he escape and takes the path to Braşov, leaving behind a chaos, until the entry of the foreign powers in the country. At the Russians arrival, all those who were part of the Revolution, were arrested, a hard task which also belonged to Lăcusteanu.

Mişu's critical state of health determines the father to ask the ruler for his retirement, but not before obtaining the rank of Colonel. He decides to enter the political field after he loses the only son he had, act which will only represent a distraction.

Lăcusteanu's memoirs are meticulously written, moreover, they might seem to be elaborated under a certain control of writing. He avoids details that might place him in a bad light, as he is confessing that some examples are reserved just for his wife because they will appear to be ridiculous, especially when his notes have an educational purpose.

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Diana Dumitru, *Vecini în vremuri de restrişte: stat, antisemitism și Holocaust în Basarabia și Transnistria*, Iași: Polirom, 2019.

This valuable book explores the circumstances of Jewish communities in Transnistria and Bessarabia during the tumultuous geopolitical changes that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. Through her interview-based research, Diana Dumitru has been trying to see what determined Bessarabian civilians to massacre their Jewish neighbours during the Holocaust, while Transnistrian civilians were rather inclined to risk their lives for saving their Jewish counterparts. It is a book that looks critically and comparatively at two different regions: one that carries massacres, and one that shows compassion. The main argument of the book is that the relatively short period of two decades, during which each region had different administrations, policies, and public discourses, had such a great impact upon the civilian population, that it drove one group to gruesomely dehumanise and murder their neighbours, and the other to acknowledge the victim and act with compassion. The first of its six chapters deals with the situation of the Jewish population during the Russian czarist empire, moving on, in the second and third chapter, to how Jews were perceived during the interwar period in Romanian Bessarabia, and in Soviet Transnistria respectively. In the fourth and fifth chapter, the author looks at the attitudes of civilians towards Bessarabian Jews during the Holocaust, and Transnistrian Jews during the Romanian occupation, leaving the sixth chapter for conclusions and remarks. The book also provides illustrations, an index of names, as well as an ample bibliography.

The author, Diana Dumitru, is Associate Professor at the Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University in Chişinău, teaching in the department of History and Social Sciences. As reflected in the book, her professional interest is mainly in the history of the Holocaust and the civilian interethnic relations between Jewish and non-Jewish groups. However, she does not limit her research to civilian interactions, as a large part of the book is, at the same time, an exemplification of complex relationships between the Jewish population and politicians, cultural élites, social élites, members of the military, and many

other actors. It also exemplifies anti-fascist reactions, attempts of social integration, and groups of politicians and civilians who actively fought against anti-Semitism.

The book makes a sort of social radiography of Transnistrian and Bessarabian societies. After the First World War, Romania acquired new territories and, along with that, new minority groups. On the one hand, the book suggests that discrimination against the Jewish population in Greater Romania increased because of a dysfunctional Romanian government that handled poorly the perceived issues with its minority groups. A multitude of factors contributed to the image of the Jew as the greatest enemy of the country, such as politics, nationalism, economy, and eugenics, to name a few. It also suggests that, because of the affiliation of some members of the Jewish community in Bessarabia with the Soviet communist ideology, after the First World War, Greater Romania feared that Jews were spreading revisionist ideas, and that it would lose Bessarabia to the USSR. The ideological fight of fascist Greater Romania with Soviet communism caught the Jewish population in the middle. The Romanian identity in Bessarabia seems to have been forced upon the civilians, during Romanian control over the area, and made the Jew its greatest enemy. She argues that the crimes committed by Bessarabian peasants against the Jewish community may have been "legitimised" by the long tradition of anti-Semitism, that blamed the Jews for all the shortcomings of the governing state. The dehumanisation of the Jews, which was done by their fellow citizens, went to such an extent that killing members of the Jewish community has become a casual act. Interviews with witnesses show a shocking inability of non-Jewish civilians to empathise with the victims, or even to consider them as human beings. It seems to be a fight for power, national supremacy, and identity crisis mixed with social panics that led to the stigmatisation of Bessarabian Jews, which, on the other hand, the author suggests, did not work the same in the Transnistrian territory. As opposed to the massacres voluntarily carried out by Bessarabians, the civilians in Transnistria were willing to risk their lives in order to save, feed, hide or even host Jewish children or adults.

Diana Dumitru argues that, after the October Revolution, the Jewish population in Transnistria was enjoying equal rights with the rest of the population, due to a minority integration program carried out by the Soviet state. Testimonies from both Jewish and non-Jewish groups in Transnistria demonstrate that, during the '20s and '30s, most of the population was not even aware of differences between ethnic groups. The book shows the great impact, whether direct or indirect, that a government can have on the population. Violent acts that were considered natural in the region of Bessarabia, were deemed outrageous in Transnistria. Without being apologetic about the Soviet regime, the author simply remarks the dichotomy between a state led by nationalism, where anti-Semitism is seen as a sign of

patriotism, and a state led by internationalism, where ethnicity and religion lose their traditional value, and stop deepening the cultural rift between different groups of people.

The topic of this ample and original work of social history corrects a great historiographic shortcoming in the Romanian literature about the Second World War, by acknowledging Romania's role in the European genocide of its Jewish population. In a historiography that largely ignores the negative in Romanian history, Diana Dumitru's book, as an honest, original and successful attempt of uncovering the darker parts of Romanian history, is a breath of fresh air. For example, in the fourth chapter, she rewrites a history that was long dominated by nationalistic views, ignorance or even negationism regarding Romania's anti-Semitic and genocidal past. It is a chapter that is meant to be disturbing, as it undeniably illustrates how the civilian population brutally and voluntarily unleashed its hatred towards their lifelong Jewish neighbours, through physical violence, rape, and gruesome murder. She offers a psychological profile of the civilians that participated in the massacre, which she describes as peasants of average social status or "ordinary men", literate, aged around 30, married with children, and sometimes assisted by their spouses. As the present-day Romanian nation is facing a strong revival of nationalistic ideas, and the literature is refusing to be critical about the country's past, this reading is suitable and even necessary for historians and non-historians alike. Perhaps the only weakness of her work is that, when she discusses interwar Romania, she focusses solely on Bessarabia. For someone new to this topic, the book might suggest that the Romanian interwar anti-Semitic legislation was adopted as a direct consequence of the country's relationship with Bessarabian Jews, whereas their case was very similar in many ways to that of Transylvanian Jews, and cannot be "held responsible" for all of the state's anti-Semitic actions.

The Bessarabian involvement in, respectively the Transnistrian resistance to the genocide was a result of different national identity formation processes carried out by either Romanians, or Soviets in the '20s and '30s. Throughout the book, Diana Dumitru diachronically explores these two opposite situations, and, by the end, she manages to demonstrate that the fate of the Jewish population in the two regions, and the interactions of non-Jewish civilians with Jewish civilians in the area during the Holocaust were highly subjected to external factors, such as official ideological policies adopted before and after the First World War, public discourses of Soviet and Romanian intellectuals, and economical consequences of the war.

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Ulrike Krampfl, *Les secrets des faux sorciers. Police, magie et escroquerie à Paris au XVIII^e*, Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2011.

The book of Ulrike Krampfl draws the readers' attention to a subject that is too little investigated by today's historians. French historiography is famous throughout the world also for its historiographic productions that discuss subjects like magic and sorcery. The majority of the French historians and anthropologists who are specialists in researching the phenomenon of magic asserted themselves especially between 1970 and 1980, and they focused particularly on the 17th century. With regard to the evolution of magic belief in Paris during the Age of Enlightenment – when it became obsolete, because it did not represent a “social custom” anymore, being replaced with alchemy – there are just a few research works as detailed as that of Ulrike Krampfl. Given the fact that this paper represents her doctoral thesis, the researcher at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales was granted the necessary time for studying and analyzing with remarkable accuracy the documents at Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, the *Archives de la Bastille* Fund, the National Library of France, *Manuscripts Occidentaux* Department, National Archives, the *Parlement de Paris*, *Affaires criminelles*, and the *Papiers des commissaires du Châtelet* Funds as well as a multitude of documentary editions, papers, studies, and articles.

While investigating a research territory marked by the mentality transformations that took place in French society during the 18th century, with the move from believing to knowing, the author discovered rich archive material issued by Paris Police and the legal authorities of those times. Although she had once started her quest after real sorcerers, while advancing with her research, Ulrike Krampfl realized the fact that she was in an era of fake sorcerers. Instead of encountering fantastic transformations and real magic formulas, she found quackery and a world lacking miracles. Moreover, the image of Paris resulting from the dossiers of the defendants accused of acts of magic and charlatanism has nothing to do with the brilliance promoted by some literary writings. The city is caught in the atmosphere of anxiety caused by crossing the passage from faith to reason; this can be concluded from the superstitions of the population, the appeal to the fantastic world, and the almost inquisitorial treatment of the police applied to the defendants. Thus, Krampfl's work presents a Parisian society at the dawn of the monopoly of Reason and the battle against superstitions, even if this was often made with the abuse exercised by the royal authorities.

The author depicts quite accurately the renewal of the police administration in 1667, when the General Lieutenancy under the leadership of René d'Argenson was established. It introduced an efficient program for combating the various forms of law infringement. The issue of “fake”

sorcerers, which is synonymous with a form of charlatanism, is found in the documents of the Police Archives of Paris until the end of the 18th century. Other than in these documents, in those issued by the legal authorities, the term is almost missing. In fact, sorcery trials had become rare mainly due to the legal measures taken by Louis XVI (1643-1715) in the second part of his reign. Here, we are referring especially to the Royal Edict of 1682, according to which sortilege and witchcraft were considered quackery.

The detailed and careful investigation of the case files pertaining to defendants accused of “fake magic science” provided the author with the opportunity to extract highly relevant information concerning the relation between genders and this kind of practices. Thus, while women were more inclined towards practicing divination and witchcraft, men preferred agreements and alchemy. Greatly interesting is the author’s cartographic reconstitution of 1700-1713 Paris, with indications concerning the places in which occult sciences were practiced. While magic was performed in the city’s outskirts and in the proximity to the forests (Mitry, Roissy, Sceaux, Anet, Melun, and Provins), alchemy was practiced near religious edifices or next to the main roads, probably also due to the necessity for providing a series of materials needed for the processes performed in the hope of obtaining gold. The author’s research work reveals the fact that towards the end of the 18th century, alchemy was increasingly preferred to magic, which raised the number of denunciations received by the police. Some alchemists were old sorcerers who speculated the raising interest of the population in obtaining the precious metal and discovering eternal youth.

Ulrike Krampfl’s work has the incontestable merit of introducing into circulation new facts, characters, and details discovered following important archive labor. Readers are attracted into 18th century Paris society, on the one hand, among aristocrats, clergy, judges, and policemen, and on the other hand, into the world of sorcerers, magicians, diviners, and alchemists. These two groups attract and exclude each other at the same time; they complete one another through the fascination they manifest for the culture of secret. Structured around a clear methodology, with passages revealing the scholarly aspect of and the enthusiasm for research, Ulrike Krampfl’s work recommends itself as a book that will remain a reference point in published historiography.

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Ángeles Caso, Sissi. *Biografía împărătesei Elisabeta de Austro-Ungaria*, București: Corint, 2014.

Ángeles Caso is a Spanish journalist, with a degree in Art History. She is also a translator and a writer. Ángeles Caso's work and cultural background should be taken into account: she worked as a journalist for *Panorama Regional* and for a variety of institutions like *Prince of Asturias Foundation*, or the *Institute Feijoo of 18th century studies*. Also, she worked in television at *Televisión Española* and *Cadena SER*. Besides the study dedicated to Sissi, she wrote *El peso de la sombras* (finalist at the Planeta Awards in 1994), *El mundo visto desde el cielo. El resto de la vida. Un largo silencio* (Fernando Lara award in 2000) and much more. In 2009 she won the Planeta award for the novel *Contra el viento*.

Of course, everybody heard about Elisabeth, the wife of emperor Franz-Joseph. You don't have to be a historian or a journalist in order to know who Sissi was. Nowadays, the majority knows her from the movie *Princess Sissi* (1955), starring Romy Schneider, or *Princess Sissi. The Animated Series*, which aired in 1997 on France 3 Channel. And for those of us who are really passionate about the Royal Families of the 19th century, there are lots of historical studies, biographies and memoirs about the life of Elisabeth. Authors like Brigitte Hamann, Egon Caesar Conte Corti, A. de Burgh, George Upton, Allison Pataki or Jean des Cars dedicated works regarding Sissi, some of them very well documented. Following this statement, a question occurs: where does Ángeles Caso's study stand?

Once we open the book, we see that we have to deal with three main parts. The first part of the study is dedicated to Sissi's life (approximately 80 pages of information). The second part is represented by a photo album and the third part contains a variety of poems written by the empress.

Some of the poems are written in a very liberal spirit whilst others tend to ridicule. Regarding the photo album, I have to say that the pictures did their work, giving you the opportunity to see the personages you've read about; Sissi's beauty was astonishing. There are many pictures and portraits representing the Royal Couple, their children, friends and also the city of Vienna. More than that, every picture has a meaning, being accompanied by text references. From this point of view, the three main parts of Ángeles Caso's study are in perfect harmony: the biography, followed by the photo album and then Sissi's poems, really completes the story, leaving you with a desire to know more about the empress.

In my opinion, the structure of the book and the way it was written can offer a perspective in understanding the complexity of Sissi's evolution through the years. I see this study as one which you can start with, if you want to catch a glimpse of Elisabeth's universe, or one you could take in

consideration if you are looking for material in order to undertake a detailed research about Sissi. However, I don't think that Ángeles Caso's book is a stand-alone one. It is well written, in the form of an intimate journal, but it's not necessarily a book for everyone because you have to know from before about the history and personages that are mentioned. Ángeles Caso's goal was to show us how Sissi felt during her life and that's why the book lacks in explanation and context in some parts. Although, the fact that the paper isn't full of historical details, creates a more relaxed lecture. For a more thorough study, I strongly recommend Brigitte Hamann's book, *Elisabeth. The Reluctant Empress*.

Right from the beginning of the study, Ángeles Caso points out that she is trying to show the *real* Sissi, a human being just like us. It's fascinating how the author presents Elisabeth's tormented soul and complex personality, always far away from Vienna and the Court. Like her father, she wanted to embrace the nature around her. A free spirit like her must have loved travelling. She was too liberal for her times; a true republican. She thought that marriage was a form of slavery. In the end, we see a carrying mother of four and a strong woman who didn't let others influence her decisions.

A. de Burgh, in her memoir about the empress, wrote: "When years hence, the historian will chronicle the events of the nineteenth century; he will have to record many tragedies which have befallen personages [...] and amongst the array of tragedies he will have to record the murder of a woman who, though occupying an exalted position, was essentially a friend of the people, and especially of the poor, the miserable and the suffering". Indeed, Sissi earned the privilege of not being forgotten. Although she was one of the faces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, she proved to be rather rebellious, stubborn and lonely, misunderstood by the society in which she lived in. Promised at a very young age (only sixteen) to Emperor Franz-Joseph, her cousin, she decided to face her destiny in her own way, but with the cost of being highly criticised, especially amongst the aristocratic class of Wien. Archiduchesse Sofia, the mother in law, wasn't a fan of her. Sissi was born on Christmas Night, year 1837, in München. Her childhood was humble, full of joy. Indeed, she grew up in an atypical family. Castle Possenhofen was her favourite place to be. Even after the marriage with Emperor Franz-Joseph, Sissi was nostalgic about the days when she was free. All of her life, she had to face with an unsuitable and hostile lifestyle.

One of the most important tasks in writing a biography is dosing the amount of subjectivity and also respecting the historical truth by not distort it with fiction. In this case, I think that Ángeles Caso wrote her study with great respect towards Sissi without judging. She made her research by using various studies, including biographies, memoirs, poems and correspondence. Also, she didn't focus only on Sissi, she did research on her family, children and friends too. Knowing Elisabeth's family, and her

connection with her father, especially when she was little, makes it more easy to understand why the empress had such a controversial personality. The author did her best to point out that Sissi was a complex and profound woman, skeptical and ironical to the bone. But most importantly, she was free. Franz-Joseph and the Habsburg dynasty weren't missed out in this study either. Ángeles Caso did her best in presenting us all the stages of Sissi's life: childhood, marriage, life at court, children, the political dramas and all of her travels.

The beautiful language the author uses makes you feel like the empress is speaking directly to you. The reader becomes a part of the story. Ángeles Caso's achievement is that she created a bridge between two worlds. Reading her book, you can see how passionate the author was about this subject. In a way, I think that Sissi inspired many generations and the fact that people are still looking up to her, makes it impossible not to appreciate the impact she had. Like I said in the beginning, Ángeles Caso's book deserves our truly attention. It's intimate style creates a bond between the reader and Sissi's personality. Although the author maintains, in general, her objectivity, we can't fail to notice that there are some passages in the book where she adopts a very protective attitude towards Sissi, especially the parts where she is trying to demystify all the myths about the empress. In the end, the message is clear: Sissi wasn't a failure neither in life nor in death.

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Marius Turda, Maria Sophia Quine, *Istorie și rasism: ideea de rasă de la Iluminism la Donald Trump*, Iași: Polirom, 2019.

Upon hearing the word "race", one might think of biological traits that distinguish between different types of people. However, *Historicizing Race*, by Marius Turda and Maria Sophia Quine, provides an in-depth analysis of how the concept of race passed through history, how it got transformed over the centuries, and what meaning it holds today. Fulfilling such aim was surely not an effortless task. To this day, the meaning of race is still being debated upon, and a large section of the population still believes that the classification of humans by race holds scientific proof. However, the authors have accepted the challenge to critically approach the concept, and they do this in relation to history, culture, nation, genealogy, and science, underlining that race is in fact much more complicated, that it goes beyond biology, and that it has had a central role in the process of European modernisation.

Marius Turda is Director of the Centre for Medical Humanities and Professor in 20th Century Central and Eastern European Biomedicine at Oxford Brookes University. He is teaching a course on the history of race and racism at Oxford Brookes University, with the purpose of familiarising students with the vast historical, sociological, philosophical, and anthropological background that contributed to the creation of the concept of race in the modern world. Maria Sophie Quine is Senior Fellow in the Centre for Medical Humanities at Oxford Brookes University. She taught a course on the science of evolution and the history of race at the Queen Mary University of London. Her desire was to familiarise students with these topics by using examples and new and captivating historical case studies. She also desired to bring a fresh take on political science, exploring the connections between the construction of race and nationalism.

During the 19th century, when modern nations were born, race gave certain ethnic groups a supposed blood right and entitlement to rule certain geographical areas. In Europe, race gave “white superior races” the “noble” mission of colonisation, which was thought to enhance “inferior” cultures and races. This was also a time when ambiguous concepts such as race and culture intertwined, and race took on a cultural dimension. It was the time when the “European race” became a landmark of culture, knowledge, institutions, and laws. Race became a notion of common knowledge, so much so that even critics of racial superiority still adhered to variants of race as superiority or inferiority factors. Theories about the decline of European civilisations emerged at the end of the 1800s and instilled a feeling of urgency in Europe, USA, and Latin America to save the white superior race. This implied a ban on blood mixing between white “superior” people and “inferior” races, followed by the theory and practice of sterilisation and euthanasia, later in the 20th century.

In *Historicizing Race*, the authors argue that nowadays we rarely find plain racism, that in time it has taken many forms, and that it acquired cultural and political meaning. This new type of covert racism has become a tool for 21st century political organisations when blaming the “Other” for all the problems a nation may face. The authors consider modern Europe to be the main location of the birth and export of racism, despite its existence in other parts of the world, which proves that racism is born not out of biological and physical differences, but out of a feeling of intellectual or national superiority. Thus, to better understand the complicated and multifaceted concept of race, they explore different contexts and traditions in which racism flourished and is still flourishing.

One could say that the book has segmented the concept of race in relation to history, culture, nation, genealogy, and science, using various European countries as case studies, and sometimes USA, Turkey, South

Africa, or Japan. The chronological framework of the book revolves around the 19th century, which was a pivotal moment in history, but is not limited to it. That is when the notion of race entered a new dimension and restricted its focus to nations dwelling within precise geographical frontiers, i.e. countries. When nations started to be seen as living organisms, the idea of race had to adapt to this new paradigm. While the authors state that the origins of racism are tightly related to white modern countries, they acknowledge that it was strongly present in other countries as well, such as Japan or Turkey. This suggests that the most violent form of racism has developed simultaneously with the feeling of national superiority, all over the world.

The book reiterates relatively familiar historical phenomena that led to the formation of nations and national racism, but it greatly contributes to and enriches the literature by explaining subtle mechanisms and identifying key players that led to these phenomena. Furthermore, while the general focus in European history is rather on the Centre or the West of the continent, *Historicizing Race* dedicates a great deal of pages to the history of race in Eastern Europe as well, exploring a new territory, with different political and social dynamics than other European countries. The book follows a logical structure and puts into perspective a long and rich history of ideas and thinkers of race, from five different angles, just as the titles of the chapters suggest.

For someone genuinely interested in this subject, the book's only weakness is that it is perhaps too concise. As stated in the title, the book writes a history of the concept of race from the Age of Enlightenment to the present, and records the changes that the concept has suffered along this period of approximately 300 years. A keen reader on the subject might have hoped for a lengthier book. Fortunately, the critical apparatus provides approximately 700 titles in the bibliography section, and an index of over 500 entries, for further reading. Thus, beyond its highly informative and eye-opening character, the book serves as a study tool for anyone interested in looking at European modernity from a different perspective.

The book concludes with some remarks on what was discussed in its five chapters. It also points at right-wing politicians in our days that are perpetuating the idea of race, are developing racist political programs, and give entitlement to violent racist movements. The resurgence of the idea of race in our societies has brought new changes to the concept, as European countries are reviving old national myths, in trying to reclaim their "lost glory". By looking at the concept of race historically, and at its relationship with philosophy, history, theories of culture and civilisation, science, and politics, the book makes racist concepts today be more easily identified and discredited in the public discourse. Now, when old nationalistic

rhetoric have re-emerged, this book is a necessary reading not only for students but also for professors of history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, genetics, political sciences and other fields, as it brings a fresh take on matters that are well entrenched into the public discourse, and can be dangerous if not tackled with.

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