

Book Reviews

The Infants' Bread. A Post-Tridentine Catechism from the Beginnings of Habsburg Transylvania.

By *Ovidiu Ghitta*.

Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012.

The movement of religious union between the Transylvanian Romanians and the Church of Rome and, hence, the founding of the Greek-Catholic Church in Transylvania was a prime topic of research in the Romanians' modern history. This should come as no surprise, given that the event in question was made responsible by placing the Romanians in a new spiritual-cultural matrix, more strongly connected to the civilization values of Western Europe. But the unanimity of opinions is far from prevailing among specialists in that chronological and thematic cut in history of the Principality of Transylvania. As any moment that generated so profound consequences in the long term, the entry of the Transylvanian Romanians under the authority of the Supreme Pontiff as well has raised countless historiographical controversies and disputes, many of them impregnated with religious partisanship or submitted to other political imperative not at all honorable.

Not all the historiographical constructs bear the burden of such a serious fault. After 1990, the renewing breath visible in some parts of historical writing took effect in the fields of ecclesiastical historiography as well. Such an impulse was needed, given that for four decades the veil of historiography silence has been placed over the Greek-Catholic Church, but not on the unfettered consciousness in the ideological commandments of the era. In the new context, the university city of Cluj became the research center of the Romanian Uniate Church's past, an institution that was reviving at the time, full of hope and ideals, after decades of clandestinity and suffering. In the "shadow" of some illustrious visionaries, a new generation of historians of the Church was appearing back then. No in any way, but driven by a daring enthusiasm, very appropriate for helping them to overcome prejudices and immobility of a society which was still adrift. Expanding their knowledge horizon as beneficiaries of internship documentation in the most representative European libraries and archives, the new generation of post December historiography representatives were quick to give their measure of their value. Personalities, institutions, cultural trends, the anthropological side of the religious life, relationships with confessional otherness, the essential moments less valued or even unknown, repression, the catacomb-like life after the Second World War, editing manuscripts – all these have been the subject of monographic research or of specific studies on the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church's past. By choosing to specialize in a historiographical field that apparently did not belong to anyone, the Greek-Catholic communities outside Transylvania, Professor Ghitta became

an excellent interpreter of the religious history of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the next. Thematically diverse, his work is distinguished in the contemporary historiography through a high capacity of permeating into the subjects that he approached, through a pronounced analytical dimension, focusing on multi-factor explanations, through nuances and scientific rigor, by treating the context the covered topics, and not at all unimportant for a historian, by the ease of attending multilingual sources and bibliographies. Considering that these qualities of the researcher are intertwined with the verbal elegance and intellectual refinement of an educator, we have the full portrait of Professor Ovidiu Ghitta, about whom we can say that he convincingly marked the Romanian historiography in the last quarter century.

The author's latest work fits the coordinates of the professional fields mentioned above. The topic is the exegesis on the catechism "The Infants' Bread", a text with a special profile in the catechetical literary landscape of the time. Appeared at the famous L'Harmattan publishing house, the book signed by Professor Ovidiu Ghitta brings again to attention controversial catechetical text authored by the Jesuit Barany László Pál which came to be used only by the newly founded Greek-Catholic community in Transylvania. We say "brings again" as the rare manuscript was found sporadically before in the attention of researchers and philologists particularly, who were interested in studying the Romanian language peculiarities, as they appear in the interpretation made at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Duma Ianăș. Even if it was not avoided by some historians, until now the text has not enjoyed such a thorough examination that explores the depths of its historical and theological meanings, as it happens in the work that we have in attention. It is Professor Ovidiu Ghitta's merit to propose the reinterpretation of this important text, designed to become a cultural good consumed within the young Greek-Catholic community in the Principality. Surpassing the phase of launching new hypotheses on the text, the author offers us a fascinating insight into the world of ideas, which he explores in all its main joints.

Structurally, the work consists of an introduction, eight chapters and an extensive summary in French. The introduction explains the interest that the Hungarian Jesuit's catechism has generated among researchers over time. We note the observation made by the author that only in the fifth decade of the last century the literary work began to capture the interest of historians, who were concerned by the respective cultural product more from the perspective of the history of the book and printing, which made a lot of the interpretative valences that the work allows to be neglected. The author aims to benefit from this possibility by submitting the text of the catechism to a new hermeneutic.

The first chapter deals with the attention given by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities directly involved in attracting the Romanians into the religious union with the Roman Church to the problem of spreading a catechetical work for the benefit of newly appeared Greek-Catholic community in the Principality. And the work signed by László Baranyi was neither the first nor the only work of its kind at the time. Professor Ovidiu Ghitta extensively comments upon the

motivation and significance of its publication precisely in the middle of the negotiations held by the Romanian clergy with the representatives of the Catholic Church of Bucovina, analyzing the filiation of ideas of the work, the ecclesiological subtleties found in its content, but also the physiognomy of identity that it had to impart to its readers or listeners. The short life that this instrument of religious education had at the time is understandable, the author considers, because of the professed doctrines of faith that were far from meeting the new requirements imposed by the dogmatic obedience of the Romanian Church to the Pope's authority. This was the main reason for which a new editorial project was initialized, to faithfully reflect, including the means of spreading the faith, the new assignation of the Romanian ecclesiastic members to the spiritual universe of the Catholic Church. The new cultural-religious product was to be consonant with the position of ecclesiological superiority that the Church, led by the Pope, arrogated in relation to the religious communities that wanted to enter into communion with it, which should have translate into abandoning all errors professed and adopting the Orthodoxy Roman faith. For the young denomination from Transylvania, this attitude of the Romanian side risked to encroach directly to the identity heritage of the Romanian Church, which contravened to the principles from which the religious dialogue between the two parties had begun in order to create an ecclesiastical union. The author analyzes with accuracy and competence the great changes of the Romanian ecclesiology that gave the Church led by the pontiff the status of "the true Church of Jesus Christ," the only one able to open the way of redemption for its believers, and how this redefinition of identity left its mark on the inter-ecclezial dialogue. The participation into the logic of confessionalisation one the confessional Churches appeared, namely those religious communities based on a profession of faith, meant for the Roman Church not only placing itself in a fierce competitive relationship, but also an effort to adapt, the rethink the strategy to transmit its own doctrines of faith. From this perspective, the catechism was to be the instrument in the service of building a solid religious education and forming a well defined religious identity. Hence the importance given, from the "birth certificate" of the Greek-Catholic Church of Transylvania, providing it with such an instrument, which should have separated it permanently from the "sins" of the past.

The second thematic unit focuses on the author of the catechism, the pater Baranyi László Pál. Professor Ovidiu Ghitta stops on his biography, on his formative path, and on the missions he had carried out in the Principality of Transylvania, in a time of rebirth for Catholicism in the region. The familiarity of the Hungarian Jesuit with the Romanian ecclesiastical elements, the Metropolitan court of Alba Iulia in particular, has made him prone to assuming the role of intermediary in the negotiation of religious union, as well as that of counselor of the Romanian Metropolitans, being the first to have the role of theologian, of supervisor and corrector of the Greek Catholic bishop's actions. Knowing all Baranyi's attributes, the more significant the opus written by him becomes, Professor Ghitta believes, for at least two reasons: first, by entering the

substrates of the work, in its articulations of ideas, one can explore the mental and spiritual universe of its creator; secondly, the analysis reveals the content of the profile of the “good Christian” that the Hungarian Jesuit wanted to instil through systematic religious education delivered from his catechism. Also in this chapter, Professor Ghitta questions the identity of the catechism’s translator, Duma Ianăș from Bărabanț. Without the possibility of recomposing his biography in detail, according to the author, what remains essential is the collaboration between the catechism’s author and its translator, which resulted in the arrival, in early 1702, of a new cultural product in the category of religious literature, into an altogether particular linguistic cut, as revealed by philological studies.

With the third chapter, the author enters in the analysis of the catechism’s text, beginning with the preface. We are witnessing an operation of dissecting each formula and phrase in their core meanings, after which the author insists upon explaining the double metaphor from the title of the catechism. It is envisaged that the bread is considered a word-image that refers, of course, to the Savior’s body, but also to denote the Christian teaching, vital to the faithful. The author slides toward decoding other food metaphors to describe the spiritual food needed by the faithful in connection with the age of their spiritual lives, metaphors found in the Pauline writings, in the decrees of the Council of Trent or in the mission program of the Jesuit order. The instrument of *nourishment* (m.i.) with the truths of faith was none other than the catechism. Professor Ovidiu Ghitta stresses the importance of this means of systematic religious education in the post-Trent period, indicating that the place for adopting the religious norm was the sacred space of the church, the priest assuming the role of repeatedly transmitting orally the content of the articles of faith. It is worth mentioning the remark that the author makes, analyzing the same preamble of the catechism, in terms of the polemical valences of the Hungarian Jesuit’s work, specifically the anti-Protestant connotations, anti heretical from a Catholic perspective.

The next chapter discusses the question of possible models that László Baranyi used to compose his catechism, and also the distinctive features which particularizes his work. The author believes that there is a direct, formal lineage, between the catechism of Petrus Canisius and the one written by the Hungarian Jesuit, particularly regarding the subdivision of the text, but, as well, there can be seen many aspects that makes Baranyi László's work move away from the one written in the sixteenth century by the Dutch Jesuit, which give it both originality and personality. Professor Ovidiu Ghitta warns us that we are not dealing with a mere imitation of the famous catechism of Canisius, but a work that stands out in language, writing, the emphasis on certain themes from the inventory of religious pedagogy, of analogies upon which he calls for creating powerful images that help to better fit the teachings of faith which were set. In addition to the style of each author, Professor Ovidiu Ghitta warns that a specific element of a catechetical work should also be the way it reflects the “spirit of the time” the broader context (cultural, religious, social and even political) in which

it can be framed. From this perspective, the Baranyi's catechism makes no mention the Transylvanian Romanians' religious union with the Church of Rome and the adaptation of the teachings of faith to the identity heritage with which the Romanians had conditioned the entry under the authority of the Pope is totally absent. From this point of view, Baranyi's work differs significantly from the catechism written at the time by Joseph de Camillis, the Greek-Catholic bishop from Upper Hungary, to whom Professor Ovidiu Ghitta has dedicated a thorough analysis in a distinct work.

The next thematic unit explores the fundamental qualities which the author of the book of Christian teaching attributes to the Church, the faith and the Pope. Professor Ghitta's analysis reveals that, when speaking about the Church, the Hungarian Jesuit relates simply to the coordinates defining the Roman Church without making the slightest allusion to any other ecclesial identity inside it. Regarding the Pope's responsibilities, the list may vex through its brevity. Things are not fundamentally any different in terms enumeration of the main attributes of faith, the author of the catechism having little interest in the specificity of the faith in the Catholic Church compared to other churches. All these features lead Professor Ghitta to the conclusion that the Hungarian Jesuit has folded his work exclusively on the identity profile of the Roman Catholic faithfuls, without taking into any account the particularities of the newcomers into the fold of the Pope's parishioners.

The sixth chapter enters more deeply into the ideas of the catechism, commenting firstly on the importance that its author gives to the awareness of the value of the Church's Tradition as a complementary source of divine revelation. Professor Ghitta emphasizes the anti-Protestant character of this recommendation, after which he begins commenting on the issues concerning the rites, to which the Hungarian pater attaches a major importance, focusing on the delimitation between those considered licit and illicit, from the perspective of the Church of course. In total, in four large sections of the catechism the author discusses such habits: in the one regarding the Decalogue, in the one in which he discusses the Sacraments, in the one concerning the Church's commandments and, finally, in the one dedicated to the sacramentals. Each practice of the two categories (allowed and disallowed) is widely commented by Professor Ovidiu Ghitta, the arguments brought by the catechism's author being dissected in theological, social or cultural substrates.

The analysis of the moral portrait made by pater Baranyi to the religious otherness and not only represents the topic of the seventh chapter of the book. Professor Ovidiu Ghitta makes an inventory accompanied by extensive comments of those social and religious categories which fall within the notion of sin, as stated by the moral rigors of the Hungarian Jesuit's catechism. They are the pagans, the Jews and bad people, the latter consisting of all those who have distanced themselves from the only communion which could bring them salvation, the communion with the Roman Church. In other words, this latter category covered the broad segments of heretics, whose moral fault is vehemently criticized in the catechism's page. The abundance of negative

examples that Baranyi's work offers is aimed at, Professor Ghitta believes, shaping by contrast the profile of the genuine Christian. Noteworthy in this case also is the silence of the catechetical speech towards the schismatics' category and the errors of their faith, in which we do not have to necessarily see a subtle strategy to spare that religious otherness, but the evidence of the strong anti-heretical colorations that the catechism assumes, believes his interpreter.

The last chapter of the book is a rather conclusive. The first finding is considering the model of religious education that the catechism proposed to disseminate among its users. From this perspective, we are dealing with a text that the perfectly fits the coordinates of the post-Trent religious pedagogy, Professor Ghitta believes, and judging by the emphasis on the moralizing side and the ritual aspects, one can assume that the people that Jesuit Baranyi's work was addressed to, were the beneficiaries of a rather rudimentary spiritual baggage, rooted in mimetic traditions and practices, generating in turn a religious and cultural identity. The second observation concerns the spiritual identity of Baranyi's book recipients. From this point of view, there is no doubt that the Hungarian Jesuit has designed his work for the use of Roman Catholic believers, which transpires in detail from its examination. A third and last observation refers to the way in which a work with such an identity profile could be recommended for the benefit of the faithful of the Greek-Catholic Church in Transylvania. The assumptions initiated by the author of the volume that I have presented are mainly two: either it was desired that, by the circulation of this catechism in the Greek-Catholic community the shaping of its identity coordinates meaning the approach as much as possible to the Roman Catholic paradigm, either the publication of the catechism was evidence of the author's pragmatic opportunism, which found the opportunity, who take advantage of Cardinal Kollonich's generosity who financed its printing.

Regardless of the reasons that were behind the emergence of the catechism authored by Baranyi László Pál, what is important is the resulting cultural product. The exegesis proposed by Professor Ovidiu Ghitta regarding it, offers very convincingly the demonstration of the generosity of ideas that it contains, but it is also an example of the high degree of complexity that its deep analysis implies. The comment proposed by Professor Ghitta makes the dense fog that enveloped the Hungarian Jesuit's work so far to dispel, a work that has received for the first time an interdisciplinary hermeneutic, both historical and theological, which fully potentiate its meanings. If we add to all this that Professor Ghitta's work takes the form of a writing of rare elegance and a high power of transmitting ideas, we are not wrong to say that we have a book which sets new standards in the historiography of the field.

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Vecchie e nuove élites nell'area danubiano-balcanica del XIX secolo.By *Rita Tolomeo* (ed).

Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011.

The present volume was published in 2011 at Rubbettino Publishing House, in Italian, under the direction of the historian Rita Tolomeo, Ph.D., a distinguished specialist in the modern history of Europe, professor at the Sapienza University in Rome, interested especially in the diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Russia. This book contains nine studies dedicated to the history of the elites in Central and South-Eastern Europe, which analyze the development of the intelligentsia in the Czech, Hungarian, Croatian, Romanian, Serbian, Macedonian and Albanian societies, from the fourth decade of the XIXth century until the beginning of the First World War. The historian Andrea Ciampani, Ph.D., professor at Libera Università Maria Ss Assunta (LUMSA) in Rome, wrote in the foreword of the volume that many Italian historians became interested in the history of the elites since 2009, which led to several international conferences and seminars dedicated to this field, organized in 2009 and 2010. The understanding of the interaction between social, economic and political factors in the modern age is considered to have a crucial role in understanding the history of the elites from Central and South-Eastern Europe, which also sheds a new light on the history of the many peoples who interacted in this region.

The first study was written by the historian Francesco Caccamo, Ph.D., professor at the Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti, who studied the development of the Czech intellectual and political elites from the XVIIIth century to the outbreak of the First World War. The Czech national revival was stimulated by the reforms of empress Maria Theresa (1740-1780) and emperor Joseph II (1780-1790), that led to the development of manufacturing in Bohemia and to the emergence of a Czech bourgeoisie, out of which clerks were recruited for the administration. Influenced by Romanticism and the Enlightenment, this bourgeoisie gained interest in the Czech language and their national features, which led to the elaboration of important writings and linguistic works, to the emergence of the Czech press and of the cultural associations, described in detail by the author. The study presents, in a synthetic manner, the formation of the Czech political elite and its development, from 1860 (when the Czech National Party was founded) to 1914.

In the second research, the historian Andrea Carteny, Ph.D., from Sapienza University, studied the supreme counts (*főispánok*) of Transylvania, from the point of view of their ethnicity, confession, education and social status. The paper is worthy due to the information offered about the institutional changes that occurred in Transylvania after the creation of Austria-Hungary in 1867, the administrative reforms and also about the social profile of these highly important clerks of the Dual Monarchy.

The third study, belonging to Egidio Ivetic, Ph.D., professor at the University of Padua, analyses the Croatian elites from Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia and Istria, focusing on their formation and also on their relationship with the

Hungarian authorities between 1867 and 1914. The author presented in a detailed way the connections which the elites had with politics, the cultural societies founded and the combat against the magyarization, which led to violent clashes like those of 1895 and 1903.

The next paper, written by the historian Ion Cârja, Ph.D., from the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, is dedicated to the Romanian ecclesiastical elites of Transylvania during the XIXth century, whose history, despite certain works that solve a few problems, is largely unknown. The author revealed that the ecclesiastical elites represented the Romanian nation during the XVIIIth century, fighting for its rights, and even though after the 1848 Revolution the laymen had taken control over certain aspects of the cultural and political life, the clergy and their leaders had an important role in the Romanian society of Transylvania. To prove these allegations, the historian presented the main events in the history of the two Romanian confessions during the XIXth century, the role of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Church in the education of the Transylvanian Romanians through the confessional schools and the religious press, and also the connections of the ecclesiastical elite with the Hungarian and Austrian authorities.

In the fifth study of the book, Antonio d'Alessandri, Ph.D., professor at the Roma Tre University, analyzed the formation of the liberal elite in Serbia in the second half of the XIXth century. After presenting the foreign influences on the political culture in Serbia, especially the French influence, the author concluded that although the liberals gained power in Serbia, they couldn't apply their ideas. In the long term, we can see that the liberals build the main institutions of the country and succeeded to legitimate the nation-state as a unique holder of the public-power.

The following paper was written by the historian and orientalist Giuseppe Cossuto, Ph.D., a researcher at the Turkish Studies institutes from Cluj-Napoca and Bucureşti, who presented a few aspects about the influence of the Western civilization on the Ottoman elites in the XIXth century, from a legislative (as proven by the numerous cultural contacts) and educational point of view, thus analyzing the way in which the modern education of the Western Europe was implemented in several educational institutions of the Ottoman Empire.

In the next article, Giacomo Brucciani, Ph.D., professor at the Sapienza University, presented a very detailed analysis on the morphology of the Bulgarian elites between 1879 and 1915. The author classified the Bulgarian political elite according to their political doctrines but also according their family economic condition, the education they received or the jobs they practiced. The cultural elite were analysed in a similar way and the author presented a few case studies about the main intellectuals that influenced the Bulgarian literature and critics.

The eighth study of this volume, written by Tatjana Krizman Malev, Ph.D., from the University of Trieste, presents the genesis of the national identity of the Macedonians, during the XIXth and XXth centuries, focusing both on the political

and ideological context and on the intellectuals that contributed to the development of this new identity.

The last paper, belonging to the philologist Blerina Suta, Ph.D., from the University of Elbasan (Albania), is a synthesis of Albanian history which focuses on the national movement, analyzing the role of the political and cultural elites in the fight for independence, but also their final failure in building a parliamentary democracy.

In the end of the book professor Rita Tolomeo made a few considerations regarding the history of the European elites in this part of the continent, emphasizing three common traits: they all made huge efforts to modernize their native societies and to rediscover the historical roots of their peoples; most of them have studied at important European universities, like those of Paris and Vienna and all of them developed policies in order to form citizens, based on the public schools and the national army. We consider that the studies presented here are very well documented from the scientific point of view, as the authors have a good knowledge of the languages needed to study the history of the peoples from this part of Europe. We hope that this book will be soon translated in Romanian, because many studies held in here shed a new light on the history of the Romanians, both from Transylvania and from the Romanian Principalities.

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„Deznădăjduită muiere n-au fost ca mine”.
Femei, onoare și păcat în Valahia secolului al XIX-lea.

By Nicoleta Roman.
București: Humanitas, 2016.

Nicoleta Roman's book is a more than welcome study in the small field of Romanian gender studies. This is the fifth volume published in the collection *History–Society–Civilization*, edited by Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu at the Humanitas Publishing House. Even though in the western academic field gender studies are almost half a century old, in the autochthonous space of academic research these concerns are somehow asymmetric and at border with feminism with whom they are often unpleasantly mistaken in Romanian academic field. The author is concerned to make a methodological framing of her own scientific approach right from the beginning of the book.

I wish I have had this book twenty years ago when I started to work on a gender topic, more precisely on the couple relation in the rural environment in Transylvania in 20th century. Consequently I had to resign myself to foreign bibliography partly mentioned by Nicoleta Roman in this volume for methodology and the framing of my own research.

Even if my concerns, as ethnologist are reserved to 20th century and contemporary period, a detailed research upon „what meant to be a woman in the Romanian 19th century: a mother, wife, a woman that astonishes community by sinning“ (p. 21) is useful both to an historian but also to a researcher of the present time for the simple reason – if there is a need for one – that we can discover the continuity or on the contrary the discontinuity of some aspects linked to the role and the image of the woman in Romanian society, through a comparative survey. Seeing things metonymically, it is all about our great-grandmothers and grandmothers! Their experiences, Nicoleta Roman’s book is proving have a power of a model, and the way they are presented and „built’ in the four parts of the book and one chapter of conclusions offers them a penetrating power in the environment of the readers interested in gender studies.

But what is this book talking about?

Obviously, about...women. And in fact not about all women but only about those that the author finds in the archive material represented by the juridical files. Thus the woman/women’s image starts form or we may say that is built around a *conflictual knot*: for their stories to be in those files, they must have had problems caused by the diverse situations well exemplified in the book: rape, divorce, inheritances, witchcraft, infanticide etc.

I will choose to talk only about few things picked up from the four parts of the book leaving to the readers to discover the rest of the micro-histories so well exposed in the book.

The first part, as the author tells us is presenting the woman starting from a macro-level using the sources of the epoch: „legislation, literature, folk calendars, *catagrafile* (old form of census) and travel stories“ (p. 25) thus giving shape to the frame of interpreting the archival material. In this part of the book we find that the woman’s „place“ in the society of the epoch is „built“ through different ways, we find that the church contribute fully to creating a negative image associated with sin, through her(woman’s) very own nature, transforming the man into a victim. In the subchapter „Law, Judgement and Judgers“ we find that the judging of a woman is made of a complex of characters that continuously pendulate between the domestic, community and official spaces. They all bring their contribution: family, neighbors, or the priest: „the elected villagers, the priest of the slum, *epistatul* (non-commissioned police officer), the teachers or all that were invested with responsibilities towards the community they were overseeing.“ (p. 57).

In the second part of the book the researchers’ lenses go even more towards detail by circumscribing the situations of orphan, widow or married woman and part of a local community in the spaces that represent her.

I find interesting the author’s choice to start this second part of her book with the two aspects somehow extra-ordinary of femininity: the widow and the orphan. Undoubtedly they are the ones more exposed to all sorts of problems and obviously they are in the state of transgressing the general customary laws: a woman should be: a daughter, a wife and a mother.

We have than rich references to a situation that today is just a „ritual“ or a „scene“ in the wedding ritual that during that time it was as real as it could be, with surprising results: the stealing of the bride in the wedding ritual today, a form of playing with the participants in the ceremony, it was one century ago a true stealing of bride with or without her consent, involving male or female seducers.

The pages referring to the couple reveal the problematic status of the newly wed inside the community that is its „melting“ in the „mass“ of community. The young woman moves in the in-laws' house and this change is bringing an alteration of her status: she becomes the subordinate of all members of her new family.

In the third part, Nicoleta Roman takes her research to a different level of analysis, the one of „Searching for women respectability“ (p. 25) and of the means she could get it: having a job be it of a midwife, nurse or servant, fact that is practically just an extension in the public space of a „natural destiny“ ascribed by society.

I like the subchapter referring to the midwife. We have here small fragments that build a real portrait of a midwife generally speaking with qualities and faults. We can also see how the midwives schools were founded and the characters involved in the process.

The stories of the real cases of midwifery show the degree of professionalism or on the contrary the „weaknesses“ of the midwives be they empirical or the ones who already got a diploma for it. But most of all we see how efforts are made to take the empirical midwife out of the picture of delivery in a Romania that is progressively medicalized.

The last part of the book entitled *The Wished Sin, The Paid Sin* is drawing up the multiple facets that compose the image of a generic feminine sin as a destabilizing social element: stealing, prostitution, witchcraft and the worst of all: infanticide.

I will stop only to the chapter „Come to Old Hag to Look After You, to Charm You Away“ where we see the involvement of church and the tolerance it has had towards the empirical healers, especially in the rural areas, proven by the ubiquitous formula ending the charms: „from me the charm, from God, the cure“ (p. 303). We can see also the continuity till nowadays of the idea that the cause of the illness has supernatural origin, an evil thought or an evil deed of the envious people around. We also learn that this magical medicine is of no interest to authorities if it does not produce victims. And we also see that there is a correlation between feminine and witchcraft pushing towards the idea that woman makes use of her negative side through magic.

The author's conclusions very nice and suggestively entitled *Women regarding Towards Another Half of a Century* compose a dense synthesis of a link of causality of the position and image between the women of this century with those of the following generations by pointing out the essential: „From the family towards the public space, this is the direction followed by a woman in getting a better place in society“ (p. 385).

We have through this book a great puzzle of the 19th century that composes the image of the woman of that time, where each piece is a small „gem” that has a beautiful story to tell.

The writing is clear, very careful to keep the local color of the epoch, that comes naturally through maintaining of terms as: *clucer* (Court Victualler), *jupân* (master), *vopsea* (the old for districts of Bucharest), *patalama* (certificate), words that discretely hold us in the atmosphere of the past century.

With a beautifully romantic cover, as a summary of the idea of „desperation” in the title, the book is mainly addressing to the scholars accustomed with the field of gender studies, students, professors, teachers and researchers, but also to researchers from border disciplines: ethnology, sociology, anthropology. It is definitely a book that fills a gap in the gender researches in Romanian historiography, and adds up successfully to those mentioned by the author in the *Argument*: „Ștefan Lemny, Șarolta Solcan, Violeta Barbu, Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, Alin Ciupală și Ionela Băluță”(p. 19).

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Junimismul și pasiunea moderației.

By Ioan Stanomir.

București: Humanitas, 2013.

Ioan Stanomir, one of the most important political scientists of Romania, is a well-known professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Bucharest University. His research interests focus on the history of the communist regime in Romania, the constitutional law, Romanian constitutional history and the conservative ideology. Until now, he wrote about the last mentioned subject several books: *Reacțiune și conservatorism: eseu asupra imaginarului politic eminescian* (Nemira, 2000), *A fi conservator* (with Laurențiu Vlad, Meridiane, 2002), *Conștiința conservatoare: preliminarii la un profil intelectual* (Nemira, 2004), *Spiritul conservator: de la Barbu Catargiu la Nicolae Iorga* (Curtea Veche, 2008).

The present volume, published in 2013 at the one of the most important Romanian publishing houses, is the last book written by professor Stanomir about the conservative ideology. It is dedicated to one of the most important cultural societies of XIXth century Romania, Junimea, founded in 1864 by Titu Maiorescu, Petre P. Carp, Theodor Rosetti, Vasile Pogor and Iacob Negruzzi, which marked the Romanian modern culture and also the Romanian politics. The author mentioned that he didn't want to write a political history of the Junimea society, but only to present its political ideology. He assumed in his essay a liberal-conservative position for his interpretation (pp. 9-10).

In the introduction of the book, professor Stanomir pleaded for a new understanding of conservatism, not only as an ideology focused on defending the interests of the ancient aristocracy, but as a vision on the human nature that is based on values opposite to 1789 radicalism. The ideology promoted by Junimea was liberal-conservative, which the author defined as an “ethos of equilibrium and caution” (p. 8).

In the first chapter the author commented several objectives of this society that derive not from its legal status, but from its history. The society was later considered by Titu Maiorescu, one of its founders, a “dream of a free intelligence” (p. 21). Its purpose was to discourage mediocrity and imposture and to cultivate instead a “pedagogy of measure and equilibrium” (p. 13). These objectives derived both from the education of the leaders, which studied abroad and possessed a cult for rigor, and also from their nostalgia after the political role of Moldavia, which was lost after the union of 1859.

The second chapter deals with the connection between Junimea, conservatism and moderation. As there are no systematic ideological texts written by the members of this society, we have to reconstruct their political ideas from others writings or from political speeches. An important political feature of the Junimea members was their obsession (clearly seen at Petre P. Carp and Titu Maiorescu) for a peaceful modernization of Romania that might avoid a bloody revolution, like in 1789. Following an idea of the political scientist Sanford Lakoff, Ioan Stanomir argues that these intellectuals are liberal-conservatives, along with an intellectual tradition that include Edmund Burke, François Guizot, Robert Peel and Alexis de Tocqueville. The liberal-conservatives accept civil liberties but refuse equality, are opened to reforms but reject unjustified innovation and agree with personal autonomy but stimulate organic solidarity. The Junimea members didn't trust the government to solve the most important problems of the Romanian society and considered that gradual evolution was better than a violent revolution. In the defense of the autonomy of a person, these intellectuals supported administrative decentralization. Ioan Stanomir considered that, from the point of view of their ideology, the Junimea society rejected the programs of the 1848 Revolution and focused on 1857, the year when, through the “Ad hoc” assemblies, the social classes came together and made a compromise.

In the third chapter professor Stanomir analyzed one of the most influential of Junimea's ideological legacies: the “theory of the forms without content”, a formula launched by Maiorescu in 1868, when he published a very important article about the condition of the Romanian culture. The important literary critic wanted to prove that imitating the institutions of the Western World won't bring automatically the western civilization to Romania. He was determined to fight against this illusion and sustained that modernization can last only if the evolution is gradual and “organic”, responding to the needs of the society. In a speech held in 1876, Maiorescu criticized the absence of a Romanian independent middle class. The Romanian bourgeoisie consisted of clerks, who strictly depended on the state and were preoccupied to multiply its institutions. A solution to this problem could come only from an educational reform, that

would give the young Romanians the possibility to obtain practical jobs. This view was shared by Petre P. Carp, an important Romanian statesman, who didn't accept democracy and criticized the desire of many Romanians to become state clerks. Other members of Junimea, like Theodor Rosetti and Mihai Eminescu, rejected the rapid modernization in the name of a romantic conservatism, considering that the country started to ignore its tradition and the statesmen separated from the real nation.

In the fourth chapter two important concepts of Junimea's ideology were analyzed: gradualism and particularity. The intellectuals who were part of this society considered that modernization should be gradual, cautious and must pay attention to the particularities of each nation. Their model was the English political regime and they were profoundly influenced by Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*. Vasile Pogor considered that the role of the government is to maintain order and prevent oppression. Titu Maiorescu and Petre P. Carp pleaded several times for decentralization and local government, because only this way the society will be truly modernized. Local autonomy was seen as a school which prepares citizens to implicate in the country's affairs. The universal vote was rejected because they considered it an instrument through which the government could gain a bigger influence on the population, because the peasants, who in that time represented 80% of Romania's population, were unprepared to assume a political role.

The last chapter of this essay is dedicated to Junimea's ideological heritage. Ioan Stanomir reaffirmed the similarities between the discourse of Carp, Maiorescu and the more renowned Edmund Burke, François Guizot and Alexis de Tocqueville. As a liberal-conservative himself, the author tried to explain the importance nowadays of an ideology which appeared in the XIXth century. Stanomir considers that Junimea promoted freedom, reason and moderation against other political religions and "after a century of wandering, the ideology of Junimea is part of a Romanian tradition of freedom which we can claim" (p. 133). Written from a liberal-conservative perspective, this essay tried to argue that the ideology promoted by Junimea, with its passion for moderation, could today help the Romanian intellectuals rediscover the true liberty and the path for a gradual and lasting modernization.

ANDREI FAUR
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Ideea de superioritate națională în Imperiul Austro-Ungar. 1880-1918

By *Marius Turda*.

Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2016.

Written by Marius Turda, *Ideea de superioritate națională în Imperiul Austro-Ungar 1880-1918* [*The Idea of National Superiority in the Austro-Hungarian Empire 1880-*

1918] can be considered, as most books belonging to the author, a referential work for researchers interested in Central European nationalism. The book represents the extended Romanian version of the first edition, entitled *The Idea of National Superiority in Central Europe 1880-1918*, published in 2005 by the prestigious American publishing house The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, and this second edition demonstrates that the researcher is mature and completely seduced by his line of research.

The author, professor of biomedicine history at Oxford Brookes University, has had an exceptional career path so far: graduate of the University of Bucharest, he completed his studies at Central European University, whose cosmopolitan atmosphere and competitive ambiance have definitely left their mark on him, and then he further developed his career in the Anglo-Saxon space. Moreover, given that he has intensively published articles and books at some of the most prestigious international journals and publishing houses, Marius Turda is today an established name in the international specialised literature, being at the same time one of the most renowned Romanian historians from abroad.

Ideea de superioritate națională în Imperiul Austro-Ungar 1880-1918 distinguishes itself through its originality, visible in terms of theme, as well as of methodology or structure. Thematically, the book is constructed by gradually reducing the analytical perspective in terms of geography: after reviewing the writings of nationalists from Western Europe, Turda goes on to present the opinions of Central European nationalists, namely the Hungarian and Romanian ones, the centre of gravity of his analysis. As a matter of fact, the project was conceived reversely, being initially narrower, but it was extended, as the author confesses, because of the impossibility of isolating the sources. Actually, the fact that ideas of national superiority cannot be isolated from the place, time and society that produced them has also had effects from a methodological viewpoint, as the author thus relied on an applied approach, namely contextual-intellectual history. Structurally, the book exceptionally combines what it suggests at a thematic and methodological level and, as a result, the author proves, throughout four consistent chapters, that both Hungarian and Romanian nationalisms cannot be fully understood without the perspectives of racial theories and of social Darwinism. Undoubtedly, by the variety of his sources and the way they are combined (at this level there is a substantial revision as compared to the first edition of the book), but also by the extraordinary effort put in detecting the way in which ideas elaborated in Occidental Europe have inspired Hungarian and Romanian nationalists, while emphasising how these ideas were critically perceived and adapted, Marius Turda innovates in what concerns the historiographical discourse and he concomitantly provides a complete bibliography of the subject and/or of complementary topics.

The first chapter of the book focuses on theories: racial ones, those of social Darwinism, but also theories of nationalism, the purpose being that of achieving "a racial investigation of national identity", as the author declares (p. 19). This type of analysis highlights the metamorphoses of the concept of race: although

this concept was initially perceived as a phenomenon completely non-malignant, as a category belonging to natural sciences and anthropology, gradually it started being incorporated into biological theories of national identity. Therefore, the key distinction, that between race and nation, which are complementary, but not synonymous terms, as the author points out, is needed in order to illustrate the central role that race played in formulating the idea of nation in the nineteenth century. The author's argument is that both terms, namely race and nation, are appropriate when discussing the concept of national superiority between 1880 and 1918 (p. 25). Specifically, the first chapter is devoted to the presentation of social-Darwinist and nationalist theories starting from the slogan of social Darwinism essentialised in the expression "survival of the fittest" (p. 38) and it highlights their influences both on nationalist vocabulary and on the definitions given to "nation" and "national identity".

The second chapter of the book revolves around the sociological theories of two of the thinkers with major contributions to the subject of race supremacy in history: Ludwig Gumplowicz and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. The two authors have defined the concepts of racial superiority and inferiority. The theory of Gumplowicz postulated, on the one hand, that the state can be created as a result of a racial conflict in which the superior race is victorious and, on the other hand, that national superiority is the inherent property of the superior race. Chamberlain brought three main arguments for the idea of national superiority: preeminence of the race, the concept of Teutonic racial superiority and the idea of the racial soul of the nation (p. 60). Affirming the idea of national superiority, Chamberlain considered that the superior race is embodied by the Teutons, the Aryan myth thus representing the central theme of his thinking, while he also developed a form of anti-Semitism, one dimension of his philosophy being the Manichean one, namely explaining the world in terms of the Hebrew - German opposition.

In an effort to investigate the ways in which racial thinking was adopted by Central European nationalists, the third chapter of the book focuses on cultural and historical theories of national superiority developed by Hungarian nationalism. Turda detects the genesis of these theories in the major transformations that occurred in Hungary at the beginning of the twentieth century: political instability and the intensification of the nationalist message (p. 74). By emphasizing the redefinition of *Natio Hungarica*, the medieval ideal of a Hungarian political nation, by the Generation of the Millennium (around the year 1900) as "liberalism of the people from the Lords", Turda reveals how racial thinking and social Darwinism gradually became sources of inspiration for promoting policies of assimilation and Magyarization. Moreover, by tracing the emergence of the idea of Hungarian national superiority, Turda highlights the various historical, legal, linguistic, ethnographic and literary arguments that formed its bases, consequently demonstrating the interdisciplinarity on which it was founded. Historical arguments, as for example the idea of state, came from such authors as Ágost Pulszky and Győző Concha whose theories are analyzed in detail in the book, while the ethnological ones, which had language at their

core, pertained to such authors as Pál Hunfalvy and Ármin Vámbéry, both postulating the need of linguistic and cultural revival. Literary arguments stemmed from literary critic Zsolt Beoth, whose work is also extensively analysed by Turda. All the above-mentioned authors have substantially contributed to the emergence of the idea of Hungarian national superiority and, concomitantly, to the birth of a new kind of Darwinian nationalism in Central Europe.

The fourth and last chapter of the book reviews several other Hungarian nationalists, analysing, in the end, nationalism and the idea of national superiority in the Romanian area, which occasions a thorough discussion of the work of a referential author in the field, namely A. C. Popovici. With regard to Hungarian nationalism, within this chapter the author mentions Ernő Balogh's theories, according to which the Hungarian race's superiority derived from its superior qualities, its most important feature in this respect being the fact that it was a "historic nation"; consequently non-Hungarians were inferior because they represented non-historic nations (p. 116). Gustav Beksics defined Hungarian national identity on biological bases and he "has enriched with two theories the discourse about the idea of national superiority in Central Europe between 1880 and 1918" (p. 126). The first of these theories is based on constitutional history, while the second reflects his ideas on the question of nationality in Hungary. Beksics considered that two elements were primary in race preservation: religion and the national concept; however, he also emphasised the contribution of women in preserving the purity of the race. Mihály Réz propounded three main ideas about Hungarian racial politics: 1. the exclusion of force in imposing superiority (Hungarian superiority should not be imposed by force), 2. the right to national self-preservation of both Hungarians and non-Hungarians (Hungarians and non-Hungarians alike had to defend their right to national existence), and 3. the superiority of the race which was stronger in competitions (in the struggle for existence the strongest race has always survived) (p. 132).

In what regards Romanian nationalism, A. C. Popovici developed a theory about national superiority partly in response to Hungarian theories (and thus implicitly rejecting the superiority of Hungarian culture and the need for assimilation and Magyarization) and partly as a demonstration of Romanian superiority. What Turda coins as amazing about this author is the critical transformation of ideas taken from other sources and their interpretation and adaptation to the Romanian area. In building his theory on Romanian national superiority, Popovici combined three types of arguments: the Dacian-Roman continuity theory, the assumption that the race with the strongest qualities (in his view the North-Germanic race) had the right to rule the world and craniology, Popovici claiming that Romanians belonged to the Northern European superior race. (p. 154).

Turda emphasises another very interesting phenomenon, namely that, in effect, in the two areas had in view two conflicting principles were emerging: the Hungarian idea of superiority, as it was outlined at the end of the nineteenth

century, was totally opposed to Romanian arguments that led to independence and to Transylvania's union with Romania in 1918.

The book's conclusions are drawn by making a series of comparisons with the interwar period, thus illustrating the mutations suffered by racial and Darwinist thinking. The author reveals the most significant differences between the two periods, the first of which being that in prewar years "the idea of superiority was based on the idea of nation and not on that of race" and that "racial thinking and social Darwinism have not functioned independently but in cooperation with nationalism" (p. 157). However, the situation changed dramatically after 1918, when national superiority was identified with race and the nation was regarded as a subordinate element of race. A second distinction is related to racial purity, given that, unlike the interwar period, the authors analyzed in this book have not supported this principle. What Turda highlights in the conclusions, consequently opening new registers of interpretation that go beyond the current historiographical paradigm, is that Romanians' desire to be separated from Austria-Hungary in 1918 was not a spontaneous idea, occurring in 1918 or 1914, but an event that had deeper roots and was merely unfolding at that time. Moreover, Turda also emphasises that the development of ethnic nationalism and national superiority theories that had taken place in a competitive manner between Romanian and Hungarian nationalisms has had a definite contribution to the Dual Monarchy's dissolution.

Marius Turda's book has several strengths: the theme's novelty, clarity of ideas, a logical train of thought, a coherent and rigorous analysis, the use of diverse and multiple sources, refinement of writing. Without any doubt, the book raises a series of questions, innovates with regard to historical discourse and, as already pointed out, surpasses the current historiographical paradigm. Nevertheless, we can mention a sensitive point, namely that the book does not address a wide audience, but, given its complexity, it is most definitely relevant only to a specialised public.

The author proves, once again, his propensity toward themes unexplored by Romanian researchers: the theme of national superiority was an outcast, at least in Romanian historiography, given that after the Second World War the term "race" and the associated analyses were compromised. Until the appearance of this book, the subject of national superiority represented a white spot in Romanian historiography, due to the degree of difficulty involved by the analysis and to other factors as well, apparently not being noteworthy of interest in researchers' eyes. Therefore, the author's option to publish his book in Cluj-Napoca at Argonaut publishing house is admirable, as in this way his work has become accessible to all Romanian specialists interested in this topic or in complementary ones.

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Fascism, Aviation and Mythical Modernity.

By *Fernando Esposito.*

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

For more than three quarters of a century conflicting paradigms, contradictory interpretations and mutually exclusive theoretical models have separately evolved, actively confronted or abruptly succeeded one other in the vibrant historiographical field of fascist studies, with common ground rarely to be reached. However, in spite of a long-standing tradition of intellectual debate in the course of which even the most basic definitions of the phenomenon could not be agreed upon by any significant margin in the scientific community, the academic landscape appears to have undergone yet another redefining shift in recent years, this time coming closer than ever before to what is commonly referred to nowadays as a “new consensus”.

While a considerable degree of ambiguity surrounds some of the basic assumptions on which this far-reaching view on fascism is founded and its epistemological, methodological and conceptual frameworks are still being perfected and refined, several of its fundamental assertions are now widely acknowledged as valid and productive. Among those, mostly (but not exclusively) inspired by Roger Griffin’s body of work, special attention has been given to fascism’s ideological focus on the projected national and anthropological revolution, to the palingenetic myth that lies at its core, as well as to its convoluted relation to modernity.

The last one of these major tenets gradually established by the new consensus as essential guidelines for present and future study is also the main focus of the hereby reviewed book, a compelling analysis set on exploring the controversial affinity between fascism and modernity, standing out as one of the most substantial additions to the field since Griffin’s seminal *Modernism and Fascism: A Sense of Beginning Under Mussolini and Hitler* was published a decade earlier. The author, Fernando Esposito, Lecturer at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, is a noticeable figure in the dynamic environment of contemporary fascist studies whose valuable contributions offer a profound insight into the deepest layers of fascist ideology as they set to systematically uncover the phenomenon’s intellectual roots.

That is precisely the purpose of *Fascism, Aviation and Mythical Modernity*, the most recent work through which Esposito engages in the challenging task of elaborating a conceptual nexus meant to serve as a deciphering mechanism for fascist thought, one that would implicitly shed new light on its origins. By bringing together the three distinct components mentioned in the title and by assembling them into a unique theoretical framework, the book presents itself as an engrossing, impressively documented and ultimately successful attempt at mapping out “the fascist blueprint for modernity”, with aviation discourse keenly utilized as the interpretative key, a symbolic epitome to be translated into

the physical embodiment of the monumental fascist ideal concerned with rechanneling the forces of history.

While conceiving the innovative schematic approach and the intricate conceptual network later employed in the course of the analysis, Esposito uses the opening section of the volume for a brief but well-informed critical presentation of the historiographical background of fascist studies from their earlier days to their most recent evolutions, thereby not only demonstrating an extensive knowledge of the complex dynamics of an ever changing academic field but also consolidating the premises of his work by placing them into proper academic context. Here the author relies on the consistent chronological taxonomy of German historian Sven Reichardt, who identifies a third period of comparative fascist studies still in progress. According to Reichardt's classification, this phase approximately began with the rising theoretical wave of the early 1990's, best illustrated through the emerging theories of Roger Griffin, which gained considerable momentum in the atmosphere of ideological realignment following the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War. Esposito envisions his own text as a product of this third stage proceeding to present day and now finding itself arguably reconfigured in the shape of the new consensus. It is a historiographical development for which, he rightly argues, the common denominators might not yet be fully formed, but their foundations—the turn towards cultural studies, the break with essentialist definitions, the growing contextualization and overcoming of national narratives, and, most importantly, the significant emphasis on reevaluating modernity as a way to understand fascism – are without a doubt already in place.

As far as the structure of the book is concerned, it is only natural, given the conceptual orientation of the approach, that its seemingly eclectic eight chapters (not including the introduction) are divided into three distinctive parts based on the significance attributed in each separate case to a particularly important term recurrent throughout the analysis – the notion of “order”. Esposito uses it in a sense closely related to that ascribed to the concept of *nomos* by ancient Greek philosophy, therefore associating it both with historical reality and mythical thought. Order is deemed as especially important when it comes to fascism's relation to modernity since the latter is claimed to have been perceived by the former as both an age of order-dissolution and one of order-generation, with this conviction having fueled the “need for meaning” connected to the worldview embraced by most fascists.

Here Esposito's research is visibly influenced by Griffin's framework (in turn inspired by theories derived from cultural anthropology, such as those formulated by Arnold van Gennep or Victor Turner) which weaves together the notions of fascism, modernity and modernism and reaches valuable ideological explanations through the meticulous study of their mutual interactions. Significantly, Griffin also makes extensive use of the concept of *nomos* and its counterpart – *anomie* – for the purpose of explaining the gradual radicalization process taking place within fascism. Drawing extensively on Griffin's

conclusions, Esposito convincingly formulates his own functional definition of fascism, one that emphasizes the “metapolitical” nature of the phenomenon, its transcendental aspirations, its anticipated metamorphosis of the nation, the people and ultimately human nature in its entirety, as well as its quest for establishing a mythical new order in the realm of social and political reality. Coming back to the structure of the book, it is precisely the interpretations given to this arduously desired order that determine its alignment, with each of the three main segments following autonomous but closely connected paths.

Part one, titled “Longing for Order”, comprises of two chapters in the course of which the myths that would later provide fascism with purpose are adequately contextualized and the lens of aviation discourse is firmly focused in order for it to provide an accurate image of modernity.

Firstly, the intellectual crisis of the *fin de siècle* and the prewar years is witnessed through the works of German art historian Aby Warburg, whose refined observations on the troubling transformation of the world around him and the bleak prospect of the decaying liberal thought allow Esposito to draw a clearer picture of the threats modernity brought along and fascism eventually came to acknowledge in its own interpretation of it.

Secondly, a vivid representation of the “suprahistorical” mission fascism would assume for itself, directly inspired by the fascinating impact of conquering the horizon through technical advancement, is revealed in the thought and actions of Gabrielle d’Annunzio, one of the most influential predecessors of Italian Fascism and an aviator himself, for whom flying was the ultimate means of overcoming the rigid constraints imposed on the individual, as well as on the national community.

Part two, “Fractured Order”, encompasses three chapters dealing mostly with the impact of the First World War, seen as a catalyst for the radical views that would later define fascist ideology as well as a mold for the most powerful modern myths of fascism, with aviation analyzed at length as an illustrative example. The experience of warfare and its shattering consequences metaphorically referred to in the title are interpreted both as a violent destruction and a belligerent reconstruction of *nomos*, perceived as such by the fascist vanguards themselves. The analysis then traces the socially constructed reevaluation of the individual in the aftermath of brutal physical confrontation through the portrayal of the hero-figure, epitomized by the aviator as one of the most remarkable protagonists of the war and the supreme “achiever of myth”. Afterwards, the focus turns towards the reimagining of the community and the emergence of the concomitantly inclusive and exclusive *Volksgemeinschaft* as the essential pillar of the world fascism planned to build with the tools of modernity.

Part three, “Eternal Order”, consists of two chapters offering a fitting closure to the account as a whole and reinforcing Esposito’s innovative conceptual nexus. The uncompromising implications of the palingenetic myth rising amidst the physical and metaphysical uncertainty of postwar *anomie* are revisited through the popular memoirs of Ernst Jünger, whose glorification of war as the

greatest of epiphanies as well as the essential impulse allowing the instatement of a regenerative order were received by most fascists as truthful testimonies announcing a new dawn. Finally, in the last chapter, the author delves farthest into the past by linking the perception of modernity within the substance of fascism, as reflected in the aviation discourse invoked throughout the book, to the most profound roots of fascist mythical thinking, going as back as the first rejections of “the Enlightenment project” (clearly distinguished, as suggested by Zygmunt Bauman, from “the project of modernity” itself) and the utopian aspirations of early Romanticism.

Insofar as it wishes to improve the historiographical perception of the fascist *Weltanschauung*, mainly but not exclusively in regard to myth and modernity, through the systematic exploration of the novel and previously insufficiently documented angle of aviation discourse, *Fascism, Aviation and Mythical Modernity* definitely sets an ambitious purpose for itself. However, by taking full advantage of the concept inventory and methodological instruments brought forward with the developing new consensus in fascist studies and by adding to them in the process of forging an original analytical framework, Esposito manages to achieve his goals in a compelling manner. To the extent that it further clarifies and expands the academic understanding of what one might dare to call “fascist modernity”, the hereby reviewed book can undoubtedly be considered a remarkable reference in the matter and an essential read.

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Not I. Memoirs of a German Childhood.

By Joachim Fest.

New York: Other Press, 2013.

In an essay published in 1999 concerning the complex relationship between historical and autobiographical writing, Jeremy D. Popkin convincingly argued, throughout the course of a thorough exploration of what he called the “autobiographical frontier”, that engaging in the challenging act of writing a memoir should be regarded as a necessary experience for every historian interested in viewing the past from a different, more intimate angle – through the lens of his own consciousness¹. Popkin’s statement is of particular significance when one comes across the hereby reviewed book, a memoir

¹ Jeremy D. Popkin, “Historians on the Autobiographical Frontier”, in *The American Historical Review*, June 1999, pp. 725-748.

accurately described by Herbert A. Arnold in the foreword to the American edition as “quite unusual [...] in several respects, yet [...] a memoir all the same”².

The author, a renowned name in Western historiography, hardly needs any proper introduction. Joachim Fest was one of the leading intellectual figures of the Federal Republic of Germany, who also enjoyed a remarkable career as a journalist in the post-war era. After initially working as broadcaster for the RIAS (Radio in the American Sector of Berlin), a position involving the extensive research and public presentation of different aspects of the National Socialist past of the country, Fest was eventually named chief editor of the North German Broadcasting Network. Later on, he briefly led an important political journal, *Panorama*, and afterwards became, for no less than two decades, the editor of the cultural section of the prestigious publication *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. A publicly engaged conservative critic of the cultural left, he found himself on the forefront of the *Historikerstreit* when the debate ensued, the strong stance he assumed being a faithful reflection of his long acquired beliefs, intellectual inclinations and firmly defined worldview. As a historian, he counted among the pioneers of National Socialism studies, proving a profound understanding of the phenomenon that had developed early on in his life, as he witnessed firsthand (and suffered on account of) both the tragic rise and the catastrophic demise of the Third Reich. The extensive research carried during his lengthy career covered a wide thematic spectrum and focused on issues such as the ideological foundations, functioning mechanisms, internal dynamics and competing power structures of National Socialism. Furthermore, his well-documented biographical accounts of key Nazi figures, including a highly acclaimed biography of Hitler (an international bestseller translated into more than twenty languages), provided a revelatory look behind the curtains of the infamous regime whose nature Fest unabatedly tried to comprehend and expose.

The captivating memoir hereby reviewed, an integral, albeit unique part of Fest’s impressive body of work, manages to bridge the gaps between his remarkable lifelong research and the early personal experiences that stood behind them. However, as mentioned before, the way in which this connection is drawn is rather atypical as far the autobiographical genre is concerned. Firstly, as the significant title of the book suggests – “Not I. Memoirs of a German Childhood” – the given time frame, mainly encompassing the author’s childhood, youth and early adulthood, is an unusual option for a man of Fest’s intellectual stature, whose choice to keep silent about his academic and public achievements as well as his active and productive involvement in the cultural life of postwar Germany certainly appears intriguing. Secondly, and perhaps even more surprisingly, one can make a compelling case about the author not being the main character of his own autobiography, with the narrative being consistently dominated by the uncompromising yet sensitive, wise yet troubled,

² Herbert A. Arnold, “Introduction”, in Joachim Fest, *Not I. Memoirs of a German Childhood*, Other Press, New York, 2013, p. xi.

stern yet affectionate figure of his father. Thirdly, as the author himself admits in the preface, his account rarely engages in “abstract reflections”, while at the same time not dispensing, either involuntarily or by choice, with the analytical style of the researcher, insofar as the vast majority of the chronologically presented and orderly depicted recollections might appear to the reader as logically rather than emotionally recomposed. Thus, even though Fest formally claims to sacrifice the method of the historian in favor of the freedom provided by the approach of the memoirist, for the most part the shadow of the former is more perceivable than the presence of the latter.

With that being said, none of the aforementioned aspects has a diminishing effect on the overall quality of the book. Quite the contrary, the author’s neat self-portrayal, the refined representations of the most important figures of his upbringing, the systematic description, with an implicit personal touch added to it, of the intricate sequence of events that defined the final half of the interwar years and then the war itself, as well as the constant shift between a comprehensive view on the historical forces involved in the violent molding of a disruptive new order and the valuable insight into their tremendous impact on the lives of regular people are all guarantees of a fascinating and instructive read.

From a structural standpoint the memoir is divided into eleven chapters (the preface and postscript not included) out of which only the last one, a brief retrospective overview of the previous ten, is set in the postwar era. Therefore, the most consistent part of the story deals almost exclusively with the time of the National Socialist rule, as the journey begins in the final years of the Weimar Republic, with the *Machtergreifung* (the Nazi seizure of power) in sight, and ends in the aftermath of Germany’s calamitous collapse at the end of the Second World War. From the very first pages of the book the reader is accustomed to the dark sense of anxious anticipation prevailing throughout the entire development of the narrative. The heavy atmosphere surrounding the gradual unraveling of events thus comes across as one of the most distinctive aspects of the memoir, easily detectable both in regard to the falling apart of the Weimar Republic under the blows of soaring political radicalism, profound economic dysfunctions, rising paramilitary violence and general state of social unrest throughout the country, as well as in relation to the strains brought on by the changing shape of the outer world to the quiet life of a conservative middle-class family, whose peaceful early years the author nostalgically recalls.

As Germany quickly becomes tragically unrecognizable and its citizens begin to look for strategies that would allow them to adapt to the unforeseeable circumstances they are confronted with under the iron rule of a new regime, the inquisitive Fest (only seven years old at the time of Hitler’s coming into power) finds a valuable moral compass in the figure of his father, who offers him a clear perspective, founded on strong democratic convictions, on the apparently confusing transition the nation undergoes. A conservative spirit, devoted to the Republic and unwilling to compromise with the new order, which he firmly rejects first and foremost on the basis of it being morally corrupt, Fest the elder,

deeply concerned with sheltering his family from the insidious ideological mechanisms of National Socialism, manages to provide his children with the appropriate tools in order for them to resist, at least in the realm of ethics, to the relentless assault of the malignant forces they are confronted with on a daily basis. It is he, a pious Catholic strongly relying on his faith even in his darkest hours, who one day asks young Joachim and his older brother to remember, and consider as a personal credo, an aphorism extracted from the Gospel of Matthew: "*Etiam si omnes, ego non*" – "Even if all others do, not I". The powerful effect these words proved to have on the author is easily discernible when one considers the title of his memoir.

However, the price to pay for the numerous acts of passive resistance this assertion inspired was definitely a heavy one. The entire progression of the narrative revolves around a succession of key episodes mostly connected, in one way or another, to different instances of persecution, varying from mundane incidents, like those related to the social rejection the children experienced during their school years for refusing to be integrated into the networks and structures of the regime, to more serious matters, such as Fest's father dismissal as headmaster of the school where he was teaching, as a direct result of his unwillingness to comply with certain constraints dictated from above. The tragic culmination of a long string of hardships and misfortunes came, as for millions of other Germans, with the final years of the war, when both Fest and his older brother Wolfgang were drafted and sent to fight the Allies on the Western Front. While the author himself was taken prisoner and spent several months in American captivity, his brother ended up dying in combat, his life having been absurdly sacrificed in the name of a cause he always dissociated himself from. As Fest admits, it was a loss his family was never able to recover from, a wound that could not be healed by the eventual end of the war and long expected demise of totalitarianism, nor by the troubled years of reconstruction or the reinstatement of democracy in Western Germany.

Amidst the "struggle for normalcy" that followed the literal ruin brought upon the German people by National Socialism, Fest began his prodigious career, even though there is scarcely any mention of his later work as a historian since the memoir abruptly ends in the uncertain atmosphere of the early postwar era. Only a couple of additional considerations are added in the final pages in regard to the fate of Germany half a century later, in the context of the country's reunification. As he proceeds to conclude the impressive recollection of a tumultuous past, Fest significantly and appropriately avoids to conjure a moment of spectacular revelation in retrospect. Undoubtedly, he draws the main tenets of his entire worldview from the lessons of the past, yet his perspective remains a very grounded one, dominated by what is cautiously referred to throughout the memoir as "skepticism", even though some may perceive it as outright pessimism.

Leaving the indications on the author's philosophical outlook on life aside, "Not I" is an important book, as well as a fascinating read, not just because it provides a remarkable instance of a reputed scholar successfully turning the

focus of his historical insight towards himself; instead, its higher value lies elsewhere. In the process of recomposing his own past, the remembrance of which is inseparable from the reconstruction of the greater historical context, Joachim Fest does not merely come forward with answers and explanations, findings and theories, but also raises, directly or implicitly, several meaningful questions. And while some are perhaps not meant to be answered, it is essential for them to be asked nonetheless.

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