

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Constantin Schifirneț

*Modernitatea tendențială. Reflecții despre evoluția modernă a societății* [Tendential Modernity. Reflections about the Evolution of Modern Society], Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, 203 p.

The present reviewed volume constitutes an approach aggregating a corpus of works, articles or chapters dedicated to *tendential modernity* [see, in this regard, the textual versors which converge towards a scientifics dedicated to the selective phenomenon: *Forms without substance, a Romanian brand* (2007) *Tendential modernity and innovation* (2008), *The mass media and tendential modernity in the transition process from national society to European Community* (2009), *Europeanization of corporate social responsibilities in a society of tendential modernity* (2009), *Modernitatea tendențială* (2009), *Tendential modernity* (2012), *Mass-media, tendential modernity and Europeanization in the age of internet* (2014)] which recommend and invest their author with a double quality: that of approved reader of modernity marks (“modernity exist in any society, but its values and standards are not established universally in their entirety, but only as tendential universal processes”, p. 12); and also of conceptual craftsman of a brand – *tendential modernity* – with a potential of “generalization of analyses in the modern development of any society” (p. 13).

Modernity is accredited with a dynamics of its own (“modernity as a kind of evolution in societies and in areas with insufficient functioning economy”, p. 12) and is placed within the theoretical assumptions of tri-phased research directions; moreover, it is tendered with the vocation of universality (from the Romanian context to the European / global one), or the ability of semantic elasticization (“modernity is more of a trend than a record”, p. 15), and with the competent clarification of the implications of the trend – *tendential – tendentiality* notions, with predilection for the fixing of contexts and/or spatial individualization. The concept represents, for researcher and Professor Constantin Schifirneț, not only an opportunity for the recognition of a mythological/fetishistic term, of attachment to a theoretical model or to a particular reading applied to the “theory of modernity” and its cultural component, but also an argument for the acceptance of a modernization of modernity, by identifying the trajectories, principles and characteristics of a cultural – political program, and the social consequences thereof.

The key stake approach lies not only in settling the multiple experiences of modern societies, which decree the probabilistic effect of modernization (p. 40) or the fair measurement of the development and timing deficit of the process of modernization, but also plot a removal from the maze (*the path*), a request that the present volume accepts by a rethinking of the Theseus effect: Ariadne is spanning multiple threads, Constantin Schifirneț proposing the Daedalic model of modernity / modernization as a path “unconditionally leading to profound transformations in all the components of a society and in the thinking and behaviors of individuals. Tendential modernity can be equated with the failure of modernization, but also with the incorrect application of a model of modernization, responsible for the perpetuation of a state of underdevelopment” (p. 49).

Geared up in filling gaps and concerned about resolving a deficit of assertion / synchronization of the scientific-academic act, the initiative of publishing the volume *Tendential Modernity – Reflections on the Evolution of Modern Society*, by the Tritonic Publishing House, 2016, may be considered, in complete synchronicity with the Western insight atmosphere, as a prelude to the dialogue about modernity, a conversation [here] curated with Steven B. Smith, in *Modernity and Its Discontents. Making and Unmaking the Bourgeois from Machiavelli to Bellow*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, published in the same year, 2016.

Reporting to Stevensmith-ian textoids is able to offer the private framework which is based on recent determinations with respect to retrospective modernity: on the one hand, quizzing the Pol. Sc. Int. Rel., **XV**, 1, pp. 141–150, Bucharest, 2018.

concept of modernity itself (of reporting elements, the modern – modernity term distinction, the legitimacy of modernity, the temporal horizon, of rethinking both the modern project and the assertion “modernity represent a mentality”, confirming that, based on recent reconfiguration, “modernity seems to be less modern than we would have imagined”, notices Smith, pp. 5-6); and, on the other hand, a review of the double nature of modernity, through acceptance of the Enlightenment and the counter-Enlightenment not as two antagonistic movements, but as co-partners in a modern project (p. 20).

But the essential difference lies in the capacity of sociologist and exegete of philosophy, Constantin Schifirneț, to see more than a problem in modernity, to overcome his anchoring in the uniquely-bourgeois category, and especially to project the scheme, from the doubloon which Steven B. Smith proposes, into a triple process: first, to analyze the types of modernity, in order to precisely revive the landmarks of tendential modernity, recognizing not only the problematic nature of modernity but also its impossibility to illustrate the reality of a concept / movement / direction; second, accepting local or continental modernity as certifications of the complexity of the phenomenon, in order to extract the relevant features of tendentious modernity; the third process involves the re-composition of types of modernity with an appeal not to the duplication, but to the multiplication of analyses with impact on hierarchical names (*the first modernity* – H. Spencer, K. Marx, E. Durkheim, M. Weber; *the second modernity* – U. Beck; *regional modernity* – E. Dussel; *global modernity* – A. Dirlík, in explicit periodicities (*late modernity* – U. Beck ) or in dynamically related attributes associated with it (*reflexive modernity* – A. Giddens, U. Beck; *organized modernity* – P. Wagner; *liquid modernity* – Z. Bauman; *multiple modernities* – S.N. Eisenstadt, R. L. M. Lee; *compressed modernity* – Chang Kyung-Sup; *alternative modernities* – P. Gaonkar, G. Delanty; *varieties of modernity* – V. H. Schmidt).

The table, prepared and commented in detail (Schifirneț, pp. 51-52), re-enriches the complex image of the idea of modernity, interested in *polyformorphisms*, multifaceted, with the aim – not of potentiating the term with a denotative plus, but of delivering a useful concept, appropriate to the new situation – *tendential modernity* – “in the research of modernization deliberately implemented through public policy strategies in any society”; in the sense that “tendentiality hides, in fact, in the present state, possible developments not yet envisaged in the initial plan of modernization” (p. 156). A predominantly political phenomenon, deduced from the logics of social determinism of the space and context of society development, with implications in the slower or more accelerated rhythm of cultural-political modernization, “the concept of tendential modernity is necessary because it indicates the presence of elements that do not enter into a universal canon of modernity” (p. 157). Unsolicited yet by the modernity scheme (tendential modernity coexists with reflexive modernity or with a second modernity, and is associated with multiple modernities – p.158), “tendential modernity is the consequence of the duality of realities within societies undergoing modernization due to the capacity to universalize and globalize Western modernity” (pp. 160-161).

Explaining the option for naming and correlating the terms of a verifiable relationship, Constantin Schifirneț retraces *the path – concept*, benefitting from the capacity of preserving meanings, as either *a category* – for all modes of being, or *an argument* – with sense-transporting valences, in order to distinguish the signatory-argumentative *tendency* from *tendentiality* (*tendency* indicates the direction of development, signifies that a phenomenon manifests itself – p. 89; *tendentiality* supports the failure, the postponement, the “zigzagging of the tendency” – p. 90); agreeing that such a combination unleashes a particular verbal vocabulary – *tendential determinism, tendential logic, tendential predominance, tendential state, tendential dynamics* etc.

The properties of tendential modernity concern: the non-simultaneity of modernization processes; the lack of modernity in society; unfinished modernity; evolution guided by / through modernization projects; bold and inconsistent rhythm of development; subsistence economy; agrarianism; ruralization; high proportion of the peasantry; traditional social stratification; middle class in the minority; dominant positions of traditional occupations and predominance of agricultural jobs; informal rules in the relationship between institutions – citizens; inoperative bureaucracy; tendencies towards authoritarianism; incipient civil society; limited political participation; the dependence of the majority of the population on actions and decisions of the state and the individual of the group; the idea of collectivism (pp. 105-106).

By developing the equation which states that modernity and tendentiality are intrinsic to any society, Constantin Schifirneț presents, with arguments, a way of constructing personal structures of social, economic and political relations that create different standards of modernity, which are specific to the region / country. In fact, it accredits modernity with sense (despite its vulnerability/vulnerabilization), extensively deciding that “today’s world is modernly structured or tendentially modern” (p. 164), and thus reaffirming another facet of modernity in the Matei Călinescu’s way: *we are, in fact, the tendentials!*

*Viorella Manolache*

**Viorella Manolache, Ian Browne**

*Orwell – Intellectul anti-intelectual*, Bucharest, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale “Ion I. C. Brătianu” Publishing House, 2017, 303 p.

*Orwell – The Intellectual anti-intellectual* represents a successful approach assessing the various dimensions of a complex writer (utopian, liberal, socialist) whose works “endure” (Craig L. Carr, *Orwell, Politics, and Power*, Continuum, 2010) within a cultural space of great interest, where the artistic and political spheres meet.

The book is structured in two parts: “George Orwell’s retro-utopia (Viorella Manolache) and “Orwell – Satirical writer and socialist” (Ian Browne).

Under the sign of the “endurance of Orwell” we identify as foundation the endurance of the utopia itself, both in the artistic and political domains. Orwell’s work constitutes a particular political theory concerned mostly with the question of power closely related to a keen perception of the centrality, first, of the emotional dimension of propaganda as in *1984* and, second, of political analogy, in *Animal Farm*. The sensorial dimension of the contexts of propaganda is important, too, and the analysis mentions the obsession Orwell had for the sense of smell, and his “virtuosity of smell” (p. 36), which, in our view, in *1984*, not only succeeds to create a world of the organic, but it creates much more: a metaphor for the endangered and vanishing normality of a passing world of human spontaneity and surprise. Political analysis is ironically transferred toward “the ability to see whatever lies under your own nose” (p. 40).

Approaching another direction, namely that of the Orwell-from-the-Journals, the author of the first part shows that Orwell sustains with literary and cultural data, with explicit visual landmarks, with logical elements, but also with inconsistencies the analysis of propaganda.

Is Orwell postmodern? The first part of the volume offers various answers. The reader finds a postmodern Orwell engaged in the confrontation of the virtual with the real, and another one in the creative relation of this thinker to language (pp. 52-53) and to style, both seen as bearers of political causes and consequences. “Orwell is an author preoccupied with [a specific] metaphysics whose correlative sign is the political, with the mission of preserving and redefining the daily and tangible truth, as a part of the human experience” (p. 57). The human being becomes spoken by language.

The accent placed in the first part of this book methodically on fractures and discontinuities in the Orwellian works is hegemonic in the first part, signed by Viorella Manolache, and it represents a symptom of the strategies to conceal and retrieve utopia in various facets and aspects, for the most part, related somehow to a past which is endearingly lost, while pessimistically, the future is painted bleakly, having in store new and unimaginable sorts of evils (totalitarianism, World Wars, the crisis of rationalism). The world to come is opposed to the hedonistic utopias imagined by the former reformers; it is a realm for the arbitrariness of the human life, failing as keeper of human spirit, especially within a Bolshevik like context, where, as Panait Istrati, the writer and revolutionary, self-titled the “individualist-altruist”, watched by the Intelligence Service, cited by the author, here, in an extremely interesting parallel to Orwell, said “undoubtedly, the world of tomorrow will be the lower image of today’s world thinking itself as the best” (p. 101).

This is the reason why the Viorella Manolache speaks of retro-utopia: the implicit hidden behind the bleak visions of the future is that there is nothing worse than contesting the past, for this would be the contestation of existence. Even more, whoever controls the past controls the future,

and so, the totalitarian ideological control requires victories after victories on the very existence, on the self, reconstructed ideologically, *retro-topically* (Bauman), totalitarianism maiming both the self and the past by “impregnating the memory with selective amnesia” regulated ideologically (p. 127).

The second part of the volume, signed by Ian Browne, approaches the works of George Orwell thematically, and it describes them as having at their core the famous volume *1984* and the political analysis circumscribed to the notion of socialism, as understood by Orwell. *1984* was neither a prophecy, nor a close description of communism as present in the Soviet Union. In this work Ian Browne finds an evaluation of the nature of power and its relationships to language. Orwellian terminological creations such as *newspeak*, *doublethink*, *thoughtcrime* and *Thought Police* are perpetual presences within the intellectual discourse nowadays, returning in the present-day discourse to emphasize precisely this successful exercise of power via terminology, but also the successful control exercised by authority in terms of thought and speech found at the centre of ideological strategies, propagandistic strategies, and control mechanisms of power.

For Ian Browne Orwell arrives at the almost Nietzschean conclusion that the powerful people have the imperative to have power for its own sake, recognizing power only after its trail of suffering as in the following idea captured by James Burnham: “there is nothing outrageous in letting a few people die of starvation for governance reasons, but to let starve millions of people deliberately is a type of action attributed currently only to Gods” (p. 236).

The sub-chapter titled “The Aesthetics of Power” approaches power at Orwell as physical power, albeit grotesque and sadistic, at the same time a representation, provided repeatedly, constructing a dramaturgical cult of power emanating a typical aesthetics of the un-necessary cruelty in front of a helpless opponent. Here is the image of the totalitarian future: “If you want an image of the future imagine a boot crashing someone’s face – and this, forever” (p. 239).

As a critique of totalitarianism, it captured the main traits of totalitarianism, which could be identified as present in the Soviet Union, but also in other totalitarian regimes of the time and later on, for, “totalitarianism, if not fought against, could triumph anywhere” (p. 159). The second part offers a complex outline of the British socialism, with interesting correlations with the European socialism, in order to both contextualize Orwell’s socialism and present it in its specificity. Orwell is interpreted as implacable anti-communist, anti-capitalist and anti-social and political *status quo*: a socialist. For Orwell, socialism is an intellectual socialism and a moral creed in a fair social model which is not impossible to put in practice, or, not a utopian socialism away from reality.

We agree with researcher Ian Browne upon the paramount importance to recall, as Orwell did, the importance of writing as moral force, as a “generous fury” summoned to sanction injustice (and, in our view, as importantly, to sanction cruelty as a distress signal for totalitarianism).

Cătălin Ghiță (writer and linguist) appreciates the book as indispensable for the East-European intellectual and for the literary critic preoccupied with the dimension of the fictional utopia. As a success of the European political thought the book establishes the present-day relevance of the political writings of Orwell and it elucidates important dimensions of the totalitarian past (Sabina Fati, writer and journalist). For Nicolae Drăgușin (political theorist), the book represents an editorial moment favoured by a complementary investigation, one introducing more profoundly George Orwell in the Romanian culture (Viorella Manolache) and the other capitalizing upon the reverberations of the Orwellian works in the British culture (Ian Browne).

*Henrieta Anișoara Șerban*

### **Alex Mihai Stoenescu**

*Țiganiile din Europa și România. Un studiu imagologic*, Bucharest, RAO Publishing House, 2014, 446 p.

The Romanian research entitled *The Gypsies from Europe and Romania* conducted by Alex Mihai Stoenescu is a full-fledged imagological study and, as a consequence, it approaches mainly the causes and the functioning of the negative image projections associated to a specific European ethnic group – the gypsies – one with an ambiguous status, in general, a-national, extremely

fragmented and rather diverse, included in the European states and recognized either as minorities or due to the concentration on a territory (which is, accordingly to the case, temporary, or recent, for one cannot talk about a proper attachment to a territory), or administratively, or politically within a larger nationality.

Alex Mihai Stoenescu documented this book seriously and this is the reliable starting point of research. His interpretations leads the reader among the diverse images of the gypsies as they are “seen,” entertaining a variety of perspectives, through numerous means: 1. through the image efforts of the community, which describe their people as *Roma* (although the term *Rom* – from *Romani* language – in conformity with the dictionary, means *man*), just an equivalent for the term *tigani* conveyed by *Romani* language which is the translation for “Gypsy language”, the word for word translation of the Romanian equivalent phrase; 2. via the Romanian documents and the historical facts pre- and post- accession to the European Union, as minority integrated in the legal and institutional mechanisms of the country, but one-directionally from the state to the minority and not the other way around, and which enjoys in this respect the same rights and opportunities as the rest of the population; and 3. from the perspective of the European documents, which do not discriminate this population politically, but just indirectly and administratively, according to the possibilities, priorities and interests of the European destinations states of the emigration. The problems associated with this ethnic group are often explained through a specific behavior. The author states: “(...) in the past a certain behavior of gypsies became manifest, different from that of the Romanians, both perceived and represented negatively and which nowadays is allegedly changed. In other words when one affirms that ‘one behaves as a gypsy’ this concerns the manner in which the gypsies behaved in the past, that is, uncivilized, before the civilizing process of modernity, (creating) a discriminatory situation which is theoretically real, because the affirmation functions nowadays as a stereotype and prejudice toward the entire ethnic group. As following, the meaning of such an affirmation is in fact ‘one knows that the gypsies behave differently’ or ‘I have found out that the gypsies are this way’, which involves the biological and ethnical generalization. This cannot be admitted within the norms of the current life, by the sciences of Sociology and History.” (p. 10)

At least in Europe, indifferent that we call them *Roma* or not, the gypsies were and are, in terms of concrete reality the absolute *stranger*: from the physical appearance, to the mainly oral language (which is now on the verge of literature development, of the development of the modality of writing, of the phonetics, anyway of a sum of elements, aspects and norms that are to make the language transmissible and intelligible in the manner in which understand intelligibility and transmissibility, the European creators of laws and the sponsors of the concrete projects for the protection of the endangered languages), the lack of attachment to a territory and the yet missed assimilation of the concept of state, the difficulties in complying to its requirements, normative acts and laws and until the view on life and world. If one calls *Roma* this population as it desires, *Roma*, one only accomplishes to increase somewhat the content of alterity of this difficult social reality experienced by this specific population. Here there are, people who believe profoundly that they are born for freedom and for a happy life, and who, as well in general, as in the particular cases seem to succeed to enjoy the least the human freedoms and rights.

Is there a systematic racial and social discrimination of the gypsies? To discuss this central point of research the author approaches the necessary distinctions between what presupposes the term “racial” and what presupposes the term “racist”, and, which meanings are involved in the phrase “racial discrimination” and which by the term “racism”. The difficulties met in approaching the problem of the gypsies’ in Europe are generated as well by the amount and ambiguity of the legislation dedicated by the EU to this problem, a legislation found in conflict with the realities, practices, conveniences and the mentalities of the nations called to implement this legislation. (p. 17-18)

The phenomenon of the gypsy emigration is part of the multi-faced problem, often accompanied by measures that disguise discrimination, speculating to this end the spirit of the European legislation. Alex Mihai Stoenescu notices the continuity of the Western medieval negative image, typical for gypsies, who, for instance, distract people with the fortune-telling or with circus tricks to steal money or food. The author shows: “There is also a psychological background against which the discrepancy between norm and reality should be approached. In many EU member

states from the East, inclusively in Romania, the European legislation concerning the situation of the ethnic gypsies is seen as a form of imposition, which involves a necessary compromise for the access to the benefits of the organization, covered by concepts such as 'implementation', 'integration', or 'meeting the criteria'. This image becomes materialized, it does not remain a simple negative projection, because, in the mechanism of the democratic system through which the EU is functioning, as well the elected representatives as the national institutions are, within the process of political life, to conform to the sovereign will of their nations ('the people') and to the principle of majority. In other words, there where the mentality of the majority about the gypsy minority maintains the historical traits of the causes, a political candidate is conditioned by that mentality, by that concrete situation in relation to which she cannot adopt but one of two attitudes: she conforms to it or she criticizes it, attempting to make a European education to her electors." (p. 18) But the Romanian realities indicate that there are gypsy men and women elected mayors or national and European Parliament Members, contradicting the idea of the predominance of the prejudice and extremism.

The extremist manifestations in Romania are the exception from the rule. "The problem in itself is not one of the gypsy elites elected or proclaimed in an EU nation, but of the poor ethnic gypsy strata from a nation about which the EU legislation affirms that supports discriminatory appellatives and forms of behavior in current social life and discriminations of access to constitutional rights. This is a subject of controversy between the European legislation and historical research, because the effects of the mentality and the relations of the majority with the gypsy ethnic are not changed, despite the EU efforts, and we have to remind here, taking again the concrete example of Romania, that the phenomenon reappeared with all its behavioral aspects after the fall of the communist regime, although it was 'frozen for four decades and the communist political system, grounded in a strict ideology, functioned more effectively in the matter of fighting racial discrimination, on ethnic or economic criteria.'" (p. 22)

The legislation cannot correct mentality, though. The author shows: "'EU Strategy' to which we refer here (Resolution 92/2011) approaches the matters concerning the integration of the gypsy minority in the national majorities from the nations where these people have citizenship, as well as the integration of the gypsies, as ethnic minority, in what are nowadays the so-called host-countries and could be named at least theoretically by the phrase European Community. And we are bringing this clarification due to a series of concrete situations to which the EU Strategy attempts to answer, how it is, for instance, the practice of forced expulsion of the gypsies with Romanian citizenship from France to Romania, with the argument that the expulsion is made on juridical grounds (illegal stay, illegal station, the abusive occupation of public or private spaces, infractions), while the conviction of the gypsies in Romania for different infractions and their media attention are considered racial or social discriminations.'" (p. 65)

The discriminatory mentality proliferates in the West, see, for instance, the scandalous habit of the sports arenas of the West to cry at the Romanian football players: "Gypsies! Gypsies!" while the identity affirmations such as "We are Romanians!" or "We are not gypsies!" are considered "nationalist", for in the West, the nationalism of the others is considered xenophobia.

In this book image is a notion that includes the visual representation (for example, physiognomy, vesting style, and attitude), including though memorial perception, subjective and historical, constructed on incidents, folklore and socialization. In this respect, *the generalizations about an ethnic group are maintained to the fore of the gypsies's image.*

At December 22, 1989, the writer Corneliu Vadim Tudor accounted the perception of the gypsies that Ceaușescu was a Romanian. A Romanian communist journalist of Jewish origin declared that in the same evening that Ceaușescu was in fact a Tartar-Gypsy and not a Romanian. "Post-communist Romanian society was projected by the regime installed in the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1989 on the ideology of political fracture, in which were defined phantasms and diversions instead of the fighters in the name of the good (revolutionaries, democrats, pro-Europeans, pro-capitalists, etc.) and enemies of democracy (neo-communists, anti-Europeans, anti-capitalists, intelligence agents, 'informers' etc.), with an opportunistic purpose. The problem of the gypsies in Romania cannot be understood unless one considers the real social context in Romania, as it was projected in December 1989 and as it continues to this day, with small occasional amendments, as a general image." (p. 25)

The present research proves that the image of the gypsies has an increased complexity: it includes the heroism of the gypsy who does not steal although the opportunity presents itself, or the image of the likable gypsy, as was that created by the Romanian actor Jean Constantin, a particularly popular actor, cast only as a golden heart gypsy, but who occasionally relates to tiny thefts and misdemeanors (see the movies “Haiducii”, “Brigada diverse”, “Comisarul”), or the image of the accepted gypsy, seen with understanding, for the gypsies “have to live, too” and it is necessary the stand up of many more people against xenophobia and social discrimination. This complex image stays in stark contrast with the image of the operative tolerance of the Romanian Police to the minor infractions of the gypsies, or that of the tolerance generated by the tactical collaboration among the police officers and the petty criminals, involving less or no sanctioning, with the purpose of control and ensuring rapid sources of direct from these social strata, in the cases of serious crime, arresting the attention and interest of the majority, whenever it is not quite a corruption situation or it is not a question of the weakness of the part of the Romanian authorities.

In an interesting interpretative perspective, the author underlines a crucial idea: “In order to express concisely and at once to understand the evolution of the ‘gypsy problem’ in Europe during the last two decades we state that the idea of the formation of the European Union was not launched within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), by defining constitutive principles and criteria, but separately, as an initiative of a nucleus of Western states to which the other states were to adhere. As a consequence of this historical reality, ‘the gypsy problem’ was treated as a problem of those states which wanted to adhere, not as a general-European problem, which the reunited nations should commonly know and resolve. What is going on at the moment – the recognition of the general-European character of the gypsies’ problem – is an attempt to resolve it post-factum by the returning to the principles and criteria that were to be placed at the foundation of the European Union in OSCE, but not separately. It tends to exclude the discrepancies between the principles of the European legislation and their approximate and tedious application in the ‘gypsy problem’, either by a lax approach in the East, or in the form of the restrictive approach in the West.” (p. 110)

The very human communion, and not just the quality of the human communion, depends on the alleviation of the prejudice concerning the races. UNESCO expressed in the Declaration from 1978 the concern with racism. “*Mentioning with a profound disquietude* that racism, racial discrimination, colonialism and apartheid still persist in the world, in diverse forms, which include the preservation of the legislative principles and of the practices of the government and administrative apparatus which are not compatible with the principles of respect for the human rights, and they include also the preservation of the political and social structures, of the attitudes and of the positions marked by the sign of injustice and of the ignoring of human personality, these create insulation, depreciation and exploitation or forced assimilation of the members of the groups that are in a less favorable situation,” but, within the context of the dismantlement of the empires, Alex Mihai Stoenescu states, considering that Germany lost its colonies since 1920, the Great Britain renounced to the colonial empire since 1949 (for the *Commonwealth*), France gave up colonial empire (for *Communaute francaise*), and Italy lost any control on the very colony, Somalia, in 1960, the Declaration was considered a simple moral act, without juridical consequences. Unfortunately, this ignored Declaration is precisely the one which defines correctly the essential terms for the gypsy problem and it is precisely a Declaration ignored by the EU Treaty and by the European legislation approaching the gypsy problem.

Historical research identified the main negative image pillars, which are still generating negative images, projected on the gypsy ethnic group, generating cases of racial and social discrimination, the first pillar being the antisocial and nonconforming behavior with what was called the “European way of life,” defended to this day by the European citizens and by the European nations alike and the second pillar being the specific behavior, part of the concept of “traditional way of life” of the gypsies, a certain cultural background which was brought from India and preserved in its fundamental elements, but different when compared to the defining elements of the European civilization (Christian and modern). (p. 156) These dare contrasts between the two ways of life European (modern) and gypsy (traditional) indicate an increased probability for the perpetuation of the shortcomings in the resolution of the gypsy problem and of the negative image of this ethnic group in the near future.

*Henrieta Anișoara Șerban*

**Anca Ciuciu, Felicia Waldman**

*Personaje și povești din Bucureștiul sefard*, Noi Media Print, 2016, 144 p.

There was once a Spanish Street in Bucharest. A place where many residents were actually speaking a Castilian dialectal. It was the language of the Sephardic Jews (Ladino/ Judeo-Spanish), who arrived in the Romanian space on the Ottoman branch.

Following the 1492 expulsion edict, issued by the Catholic Kings Fernando de Aragón and Isabel de Castilla, many Sephardic Jews of Spanish rite fled to the Ottoman Empire, where the sultan Bayezid II guaranteed their security and freedom of worship. From here they migrated to the Balkan Peninsula (especially to Thessaloniki), and then passed to Wallachia and Moldavia.

The Sephardic community of yore was a small one (compared to that of the Ashkenazi Jews, who later came on the Poland branch), and today it is just a memory. Maps like the Papazoglu map from 1871, old pictures depicting the Cahal Grande synagogue in the Popescu's slum (the nowadays Unirii Square), etymologies of toponyms that do not easily reveal to everyone (Mămulari Street, for example) or the silent gravestones in the Sephardic cemetery are witness to their past.

Significant sequence in the Romanian history (even limiting to the role of Jewish bankers in the creation of the Romanian banking system), the Sephardic history in Bucharest has been retrieved to the scientific present by publishing the volume *Personaje și povești din Bucureștiul sefard/ Characters and stories from the Sephardic Bucharest* (Noi Media Print, 2016).

Released on February 1, 2017, at the Cervantes Institute in Bucharest, in the presence of their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Spain and Turkey in Bucharest – Ramiro Fernández Bachiller, respectively Osman Koray Ertaş – and the director of the Bucharest Museum, the historian Adrian Majuru, this volume is the result of the teamwork of the researchers Anca Ciuciu (Scientific secretary within the Center for the Study of Jewish History in Romania) and Felicia Waldman (Lecturer within the Hebrew Studies Center of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest) and comes after another success book: *Istorie și imagini din Bucureștiul evreiesc/ Stories and images from the Sephardic Bucharest* (Media Print, 2011).

*Personaje și povești din Bucureștiul sefard* brings not only the perfume of a past epoch, but also edited and unpublished documents: archive sources (Turkish Community Archives in Vienna, Archives of the Center for the Study of Jewish History in Romania), anthologies of historiographical texts and collections of documents (IMER – Sources and testimonies on Jews in Romania), memories and correspondence (Ángel Pulido Fernández, *Los israelitas españoles y el idioma castellano*, 1904), newspapers of that time (Romanian, French and British), as well as family archives.

Structured in seven chapters (*Itinerariu sefard: din Imperiul Otoman în Țările Române, Scrisori sefarde, Memoria străzilor care au dispărut, Povești comerciale de succes, Personalități ale Bucureștiului sefard, Istoria sefarzilor bucureșteni reflectată în The Jewish Chronicle, Proverbe sefarde*), illustrated with specially graphics, *Personaje și povești din Bucureștiul sefard* condenses 500 years of Spanish Jews history in the Romanian space.

According to the rabbi and historiographer of the community, Mayer Abraham Halevy (1900-1972), Sephardic history in Romanian Principalities began shortly after the ethnic group was displaced to the East. Merchants, middlemen, usurers, doctors, jewelers and other artificers settled here, and in 1730, persuaded by his counselor – the marano physician and diplomat Daniel de Fonseca, the Wallachian prince Nicolae Mavrocordat recognized as a self-standing entity the Sephardic community in Bucharest.

The volume points to the contribution of Sephardic families such as Halfon, Manoach, Bally etc. to the economic and cultural life of the capital; illustrates success stories such as the fabric store *La Papagal* from the Lipsicani area, *High-Life* store or *Alcalay* bookstore from Calea Victoriei etc. – businesses run by the members of the same Sephardic community; reviews the biography of Sephardic personalities merged into the Romanian culture – the doctor Nicolae Cajal, the editor Simon Benvenisti, the pianist Dan Mizrahy etc. Finally, through the selection of proverbs in ladino (from *Trezero Sefaradi*, Istanbul, 2006), the volume reminds us of the charm of a language that has perished with its people.

For this revitalization of the memory and exciting manner of reconstructing the history of the Sephardic community, *Personaje și povești din Bucureștiul sefard* appears to us both opportune and meritorious.

Carmen Burcea

### Henrieta Anișoara Șerban

*Forme simbolice și reprezentări ale fenomenelor socio-politice*, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale “Ion I. C. Brătianu” Publishing House, Bucharest, 2017, 390 p.

The volume *Symbolic forms and representations of socio-political phenomena* (2017) should be integrated in the follow-up thematic series of books of the author concerned with the relation of language with political reality, published in Romanian at the Institute of Political Science and International Relations “Ion I. C. Brătianu” Publishing House of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest: *Political Language in Democracy* (2006); *Paradigms of Difference in Communication Philosophy* (2007) and *Reforming Ideologies* (2010).

The present approach is individualized in the *constellation* completed by a mosaic method of interpretation, employed in the book in order *to read* and *to see*, in the articulatory sense, proposed by Deleuze, to think in images the series of suitable scores to support the relationship of the symbol and image with representation. This approach is meant to interpret the issues with philosophical-socio-political valences, but it is intended to preserve a reporting measure that is not trivial to chronology, linearity, hierarchy or order-at-all-costs. The result consists of a macroscopy (in agreement with Godard, a real image is an ensemble of images), summing up micro-evidences that converge both to the Wittgenstein’s act to point to the form as an indication and interpretation formula, as well as to understand configuring-cognitive logic and multi-modal, meaning-carrying functions of the symbol.

Well-balanced, the foreword texts converge to consider the approach as equivalent to an act of powerful creation, similar to a way of looking *into the constellation*, a formula to emphasize without emphasis, though a certain type of *symbolic superlative* (Alexandru Boboc, p. 10), ideologically ducted to fascination interval, within a *kaleidoscopic stretching of the arch over centuries and philosophical traditions* (Claudia Moscovici, pp. 11-12).

The working method overrides the adaptive and adaptable notional content of the adverbial interiority of the image (without giving up the value of the phrase “around the image”, p. 9), resorting to a series of strong nuances: such as *the terrible force* and *the greatness of the image* (p. 15), *the sublime of political power* (p. 118), *aura* (p. 122), *ideality* (p. 125), *fascination and incarnation* (pp. 17-18) – as well as representations which raise the triple sense of a reflex: “not anything represented by the image is similarly or equally magnificent as compared to the others, though these, the images or the representations of various types from the graphics, to the conceptual ones are all oriented towards a certain type of superlative, identified in the symbolic form” (p.15); “Contemporary societies gather around symbolic forms and representations, like primitive societies do, around the fire” (pp. 16-17); “Banal symbolic forms, representations or images do not exist” (p. 352). Only inside the image can be values and puzzles seen and interpreted, but especially when one approaches the alluvial, theoretical frames with flexible frames, maintaining the puzzle effect with the theory, in keeping with a certain logical rule “and ... but also” – Cassirer and Eliade and Lyotard and Durand and Bruckner and Barthes and Plato and Tuck and Locke and Tocqueville, but also Hegel and Baudrillard and Virillio and Zizek and Nemoianu and Bahtin and Neageo Basarab and Constantin Rădulescu-Motru and Michel Foucault and Lucian Blaga (*Argument*, pp. 15-43) supporters of a kind of text interferometry (ideas casting interfering shadows and virtual projections), but also constitutive nodes of the emblematic and graphical mandala which visually closes (or opens) each chapter.

Two necessary specifications are required to individualize the method and to contextualize the argument used.

The first is to enunciate, extrapolate and continuously redesign with sense the guiding hypothesis of the book: “the image conceptualizes and indicates all the forms and representations of graphic, auditory, artistic, architectural, conceptual, socio-political, mythical, etc.” (p. 15). “From the open perspective of the philosophy of ideal forms (...) the image as a symbolic form retains in it either vaguely or distortively the strong, value of the ideal form” (p. 41). Hence, setting the paraboloidal objective in the direction of the sphere of political philosophy (a field that “offers concepts, mental images-landmarks, interferences of cognitive and ethical spheres, knowledge and well-orientated orientations oriented towards contextualizing, completing or correcting prejudices, intuitions, opinions or common views and impressions”, p. 75), with an interest in the axiological terms as “imprisonment, lightness and immediate significance of the socio-political image”, and with the valences of “faithful reflection of the great values but also with fluidization effect, through the act of reevaluating the daily newspaper” (p. 74). In itself, the socio-political image will be equated with socio-political representation, but also with the additional “global state of socio-political reality” (p. 46).

The second harmonizes the theory of the image of the language, integrating in the discourse the meanings of language as a manifestation and as an expression of self and the relation to the world, “both centers of weight of the representative approach, of the crisis of representation”. Not by chance, the volume occurs against the backdrop and the background of the extension of the *endisms* – those that announce the death of representation – declaring that the *representation* exists / subsists – involved in dialogue with the interpretations of Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty or deconstructing the blurred, opaque of the representation, on the edge on which James Elkins glossed. Although condensed in a passage with signal valences, Rorty sets forth the Bergmanian linguistic turn, with resistance to preserving philosophy as an academic discipline, autonomous, as a distinct space, related to sociology, art or natural sciences – resonant to the Rortyanian elucidations (“we must give up the idea of a common shared and clearly defined structure that the users of the language master and then apply it according to the case”), p. 30, the volume itself is a plea in favor of representation, response variation submitted to the questionnaire on *The End of Representation?* (Stephen Neale, 2001). It is therefore re-appreciating the idea that one thing may represent another, that the idea and the language have, by virtue of their power, to represent reality, to constitute themselves, to organize themselves and to deliver as representations of reality.

The approach is, therefore, Elkinsian (2008), in the sense that it does not elude the boundaries of representation, but extends beyond the manifestations of closures / crashes / crises, through diverse landmarks unified by the register of common attributes; but it also distances itself from it by centralizing the metaphor, the way to read images, to speak and to master the language, to invent them, in equal doses, the material and the symbolic. Equally, he knows and diagnoses the immediate and immediate political symptomatology via Simon Tormey (2013), delimiting himself by the opinion expressed by the ability to perceive the *aura of the sacredness* and the *resistance of the mythical solution to the problem of coexistence* (pp. 122-124), precisely *there* where Tormey examines the *decline of the aura of representative politics* (given the collapse of old collective identities, the erosion of community membership, the proliferation of globalized capitalism, the weakening of parliaments as a result of the massive expansion of state executive powers, and the corporate-cross-border outsourcing of political decisions).

Decreeing, via proportional relation to the interpretation of the *forms* and the *symbolic* register, that *representation is well and alive*, the book *Symbolic forms and representations of socio-political phenomena* is an invitation for validation and accreditation of the Wittgensteinian statement, *The image is here!*, according to which the analysis provided in this book indicates the accompanying dictum which opens the research – the reading is required placed under the victorious sign of the image.

*Viorella Manolache*