Respect, fear, and loathing in early modern Eastern Europe: images of Poles and Hungarians in Romanian chronicles

Rosu, Felicia

Leidschrift
Historisch Tijdschrift

Artikel/Article: *Respect, fear, and loathing in early modern Eastern Europe: images of Poles and Hungarians in Romanian chronicles*
Auteur/Author: Felicia Roşu
Verschenen in/Appeared in: *Leidschrift*, 28.1 (Leiden 2013) 85-107
Titel uitgave: *Onbekend maakt onbemind. Negatieve karakterschetsen in de vroegmoderne tijd*

ISSN 0923-9146
E-ISSN 2210-5298

Leidschrift is een zelfstandig wetenschappelijk historisch tijdschrift, verbonden aan het Instituut voor geschiedenis van de Universiteit Leiden. *Leidschrift* verschijnt drie maal per jaar in de vorm van een themanummer en biedt hiermee al vijfentwintig jaar een podium voor levendige historiografische discussie.
Artikelen ouder dan 2 jaar zijn te downloaden van www.leidschrift.nl. Losse nummers kunnen per e-mail besteld worden. Het is ook mogelijk een jaarabonnement op *Leidschrift* te nemen. Zie www.leidschrift.nl voor meer informatie.

Leidschrift is an independent academic journal dealing with current historical debates and is linked to the Institute for History of Leiden University. *Leidschrift* appears tri-annually and each edition deals with a specific theme.
Articles older than two years can be downloaded from www.leidschrift.nl. Copies can be order by e-mail. It is also possible to order an yearly subscription. For more information visit www.leidschrift.nl.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*.

Secretariaat/ Secretariat:
Doelensteeg 16
2311 VL Leiden
The Netherlands
071-5277205
redactie@leidschrift.nl
www.leidschrift.nl

Respect, fear, and loathing in early modern Eastern Europe: images of Poles and Hungarians in Romanian chronicles

Felicia Roşu

'The Orient' was not invented by the West alone. East Europeans also participated in its construction, often – although not always – by trying to distance themselves from it.[1] Within the Romanian cultural space, this phenomenon was particularly striking in the second half of the nineteenth century, when historians, journalists, poets, novelists, and politicians became actively engaged in a process of nation- and state-building punctuated by the union of Moldavia and Wallachia (1859) and the break from the Ottoman Empire (1877-1878).[2]

Their efforts combined Wallachian, Moldavian, and Transylvanian elements into a modern Romanian identity that was not exactly novel yet displayed a historical coherence that had been lacking in previous centuries. They generally rejected Ottoman and Greek legacies by claiming unique autochthonous qualities or, more frequently, cultural kinship with the Latin West. Their results are still visible in mainstream historical narratives today,

[1] I am here using 'Eastern Europe' in its largest possible sense, including the Balkans, eastern Central Europe, and Russia (inasmuch as it was subsumed to this category from the eighteenth century to the end of the Cold War). On the 'invention' of East European identity (mostly seen as a West European construction), pioneering work has been done by Larry Wolff and Maria Todorova: L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford 1994) and M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (2nd edition; Oxford 2009).

[2] Following intense activism in the early 1800s and especially after 1848, the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were initially joined through a personal union in 1859, when voters in both countries elected the same candidate for their respective thrones. The political union was accomplished in 1861, when the two separate parliaments and governments were joined into one. Simultaneously, the Cyrillic alphabet that had been used until then was officially replaced with the Latin alphabet. The United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia eventually became 'Romania' in 1866, with the arrival of the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty on their common throne, and gained their independence from Ottoman suzerainty in 1877-1878. Transylvania was at that time part of the Austrian-Hungarian state, and it remained so until its disintegration at the end of WWI. In 1918, the Romanian kingdom incorporated it into its existing territories, with the backing of the Allied Powers and the support of its ethnic Romanian population.

which, next to the regional components mentioned above, combine national pride, victimization, and backwardness into an uneasy yet quite stable cocktail of identities, with which a majority of the Romanian population continues to identify.[3]

As in most other cases of nation-building, the (re)invention of the Romanian identity that took place in the nineteenth century presupposed mechanisms of cohesion and unification as well as dynamics of exclusion of and distinction from internal and external 'others'.[4] Xenophobia, in the strictest meaning of the word an unselective 'distaste for or hatred of foreigners in general', is only one of the most extreme forms of collective self-definition. Differentiated perceptions of internal and external alterity, including positive ones and those fuelled by specific, localized instances of 'politico-religious or economic rivalry', are much more common manifestations of the same phenomenon. They are equally valuable in determining the parameters of self- and hetero-perception, not as static concepts but as dynamic historical phenomena.[5]

The 'others' that have defined modern Romanian identity in the modern age include Turks, Tatars, Phanariots, 'imperials' (Habsburg or

[3] For Romanian mainstream historiography at the end of the twentieth century see: M.L. Murgescu, 'Memory in Romanian History: Textbooks in the 1990s' in: M. Todorova ed., *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (New York 2004) 339-354. For the concept of backwardness in East European historiography see: M. Todorova, 'The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism', *Slavic Review* 64.1 (2005) 140-164. For victimization in Romanian (but also Polish, Czech, and Hungarian) historiography see: K. Verdery, 'Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania', *Slavic Review* 52.2 (1993) 179-203.

[4] A.W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford 2003).

[5] For a strict definition of early modern xenophobia see: N. Goose, '"Xenophobia" in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England: An Epithet Too Far?' in: N. Goose and L. Luu eds., *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Brighton and Portland 2005) 110-135: 111-112. For self- and hetero-image in social psychology (which tends to have a rather static approach) see: G. Michaud, 'Architectures', *Ethno-psychologie: revue de psychologie des peuples* 2.3 (1971) 311-333: 313. For an overview of imagology, including its psychological, historical, and literary branches see: L.M. Iacob, 'Imagologia si ipostazele alterităţii: străini, minoritari, excluşi' [Imagology and the stances of alterity: foreigners, minorities, the exluded] in: A. Neculau and G. Ferréol eds., *Minoritari, marginali, excluşi* [Minorities, the marginalized, the excluded] (Iaşi 1996) 40-54. All translations in this article are mine.

Russian), Jews, 'Gypsies', and indeed Poles and Hungarians.[6] While most of these groups have served to identify Romanianness by opposition, either on account of essentialist differences or based on political and military imbalances, the Poles and Hungarians have had a curious place in Romanian historiography. They were Christian, but non-Orthodox; 'Latins', but still foreigners; allies, but masters nonetheless; neighbors, but invaders. Because of territorial rivalries, they were often put on a par with the Ottomans. For all of these reasons, they have occupied an uneasy spot within Romanian historiography, especially from the early nineteenth century onwards.[7]

According to Nicolae Bălcescu (1819-1852), one of the most visible figures in Romanian nationalist historiography, the Poles threatened the Moldavians in the same way the Hungarians threatened the Wallachians throughout the fourteenth century, only to become, in later centuries, their brethren under Ottoman and Habsburg yokes:

> In the first age of the principalities of Wallachia (…) and Moldavia (…) we see these states first threatened – as far as their nationality and their political existence are concerned – now by the Hungarians, now by the Poles. After several long struggles, their claims were crushed by the Romanians' valor (…) These battles weakened the strength of the Romanians, Hungarians, and Poles alike, and paved the way for their common downfall.[8]

The one positive feature that Poles and Hungarians have been sharing in Romanian modern historiography is their perceived Europeanness – an affiliation coveted by Romanian intellectuals, liberals and conservatives alike,

---

[6] For the recent reworking of Hungarians, Jews, and the Roma into Romanian xenophobic discourses see: L. Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest 2001) 153-188 and especially 170ff.

[7] See for instance M.L. Murgescu, *Între 'bunul creştin' şi 'bravul român'. Rolul şcolii primare în construirea identităţii naţionale româneşti (1831-1878)* [Between the 'good Christian' and the 'brave Romanian'. The role of primary schools in constructing Romanian national identity (1831-1878)] (Iaşi 1999); A.D. Segesten, *Myth, Identity, and Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Romanian and Serbian Textbooks* (Plymouth 2011).

[8] N. Bălcescu (1819-1852), *Românii supt Mihai-Voevod Viteazul* [The Romanians under Voivode Michael the Brave] (Bucharest 1982) 10, 20. For a twentieth-century reworking of Bălcescu's vision see: D. Deletant, 'Moldavia Between Hungary and Poland, 1347-1412', *The Slavonic and East European Review* 64.2 (1986) 189-211.

particularly from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. In cultural histories written at the turn of the twentieth century, Moldavia's and Wallachia's northern and western neighbors – including Transylvania – were portrayed as having partaken to 'western' culture since the Middle Ages, while the Romanians had fallen prey to 'oriental' currents that 'suffocated' them.[9] With a few conservative and moderate exceptions, looking to the West for models and distancing Romania from the South and East became commonplace at that time.[10] In that context, the transmission of Polish and Hungarian cultural models – particularly Latin literacy – mitigated for their sins.[11]

One of those sins was insufficient assistance offered to the Romanians against the Ottomans. Another was their attachment to bankrupt political models that had a supposedly damaging influence on the Romanian principalities:

> How did this country-ruining system of succession to the throne end up with the Romanians? We believe that it was determined by the circumstances that happened in Hungary and Poland, where, shortly after the founding of the Romanian countries, the old hereditary dynasties having died out, they ended up under elective or elective-hereditary reigns (. . .) In every country where hereditary reigns predominated, the royal power and, together with it, the idea of a state became stronger, as was the case in England, France, Spain, and Russia. On the contrary, wherever the elective system or its caricature, the elective-hereditary system, was established, the private interests of the dominant classes were privileged against the common interest, out of which came disunion and fights for the crown, the

[9] G. Ibrăileanu (1871-1936), 'Spiritul critic în cultura românească' [The critical spirit in Romanian culture] in: Idem, *Studii literare* [Literary studies] I (Bucharest 1979) 11-16 [Ibrăileanu's article was first published in 1908].

[10] The role played by Greek and Russian intermediaries in the dissemination of western models from the eighteenth century onward was acknowledged by some Romanian historians at the turn of the twentieth century, although without much enthusiasm. The image of modern Greeks, especially, is quite unflattering in pre-WWI Romanian historiography – almost as unflattering as that of the Ottomans. See especially Xenopol, *Istoria românilor* IV, 19-20; N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române în secolul al XVIII-lea (1688-1821)* [History of Romanian literature in the 18th century, 1688-1821] I (Bucharest 1969) 23-51.

[11] Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române*, 19, 20, 23, 51; I. Bogdan (1864-1919), *Scrieri alese* [Selected writings] (Bucharest 1968) 95.

> decay of state power, and eventually, according to what was written for each in the book of eternity, they either reverted to a better system, or disappeared from the face of the earth: which is what happened in Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Wallachia, and Moldavia.[12]

In time, the place of Poles and Hungarians in modern historiography underwent some shifts. If, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Wallachian and Moldavian histories criticized Poles and Hungarians in rather comparable terms, a century and a half later we find Hungarians as the central target of Romanian chauvinism, with the Poles becoming an increasingly discreet and unexplored presence, whose main historical fault had been arrogant selfishness rather than outright hostility.[13] Regardless of variations, the dominating image of Poles and Hungarians in modern historiography remains one that combines political resentment with cultural respect, resting firmly on a well-defined vision of the true nature and goals of the Romanian nation: on the one hand, independence from foreign powers; on the other, affiliation to a western culture based on Latin roots. The following sections will explore the early modern precedents of this vision.

Against initial claims by theorists such as Kedourie, Gellner, Hobsbawm, or Anderson, that the nation as we know it is a modern (and

---

[12] A.D. Xenopol (1847-1920), *Istoriaromânilor din DaciaTraiană* [History of Romanians in Trajan's Dacia] II (Bucharest 1986) 173-174.

[13] Here a difference should be made between mainstream historiography and academic scholarship. Pre-university history textbooks still refer to Poles and Hungarians in similarly negative terms, but, in Boia's groundbreaking study of Romanian postcommunist historical imagination, the Poles are hardly mentioned as an active 'other', while the Hungarians receive special attention next to the Jews and the Roma. See Boia, *History and Myth*, 170ff. The academic war between Romanian and Hungarian historians in the 1980s, which continued an earlier controversy over precedence in Transylvania, as well as the tensions between Romanians and the Hungarian-speaking population in Transylvania in the early 1990s explain the 'privileged' position of the Hungarians and the relative lack of attention given to the Poles at the end of the twentieth century. For the academic disputes of the 1980s see: Ş. Pascu and Ş. Ştefănescu eds., *The dangerous game of falsifying history: studies and articles* (Bucharest 1987) and L. Peter ed., *Historians and the History of Transylvania* (Boulder 1992). For an analysis of the clashes in the 1990s see: P. Roe, 'Misperception and ethnic conflict: Transylvania's societal security dilemma', *Review of International Studies* 28.1 (2002) 57-74.

essentially western) invention, a number of studies and reconsiderations have recently been proposed that uncover the pre-modern and non-western manifestations of nationalism, thus questioning the connection between national identity on the one hand, and modernization, industrialization, and more generally the 'West' on the other. The modern/early-modern division has been predominantly challenged in the English context, but also in the Dutch, Italian, and Spanish ones.[14] The orientalist dichotomy according to which nationalism was a theory belatedly imported from West to East has in turn been rejected on the grounds of *longue-durée* ('relative synchronicity') between the two halves of the European continent and generally between the West and the rest of the world.[15]

While recognizing the importance of transmission, diffusion, and synchronicity, this article leaves these issues aside and limits itself to addressing the periodization question (early modern versus modern nationalism). In short, I argue that Romanian early modern historical narratives display nationalist attitudes that share elements of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and political self-awareness with their modern counterparts, while being distinct from them. That, to my mind, justifies the usage of an enlarged concept of nationalism (as opposed to 'precursor to' or 'proto-nationalism') in the early modern context. My analysis adopts Gorski's 'genealogist' perspective, in which nationalism is seen as a collection of diverse temporal and spatial manifestations of the 'national category', rather than focusing on its modern expressions alone.[16]

---

[14] A few recent examples include P.S. Gorski, 'The Mosaic Moment: An Early Modernist Critique of Modernist Theories of Nationalism', *American Journal of Sociology* 105.5 (2000) 1428-1468; A.D. Smith, 'Nationalism in Early Modern Europe', *History and Theory* 44.3 (2005) 404-415; C. Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530-1580* (New York 2004); S. Jacobson, '"The Head and Heart of Spain": New Perspectives on Nationalism and Nationhood', *Social History* 29.3 (2004) 393-407; Goose and Luu, *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England*; D. Loewenstein and P. Stevens eds., *Early Modern Nationalism and Milton's England* (Toronto 2008); R.J. Pogorzelski, 'The "Reassurance of Fratricide" in the "Aeneid"', *The American Journal of Philology* 130.2 (2009) 261-289.

[15] Todorova, 'The Trap of Backwardness', 145, 147, 151, 158, 164. Here Todorova is predominantly concerned with questions of sequential development, transmission, and diffusion and does not directly question the 'intimate' link between modernity and nationalism. Ibidem, 149-151.

[16] Gorski, 'The Mosaic Moment', 1462.

My research shows that the Romanian 'people' – defined linguistically, ethnically, and religiously by reference to other nations in the area – was used as a unit of historical analysis as early as the sixteenth century and more commonly so from the middle of the seventeenth century onward. At the turn of the eighteenth century, at least two historians – one Moldavian and one Wallachian – defined the nation in political terms as well. My study does not propose to demonstrate the modernity of their perspectives, but rather to show that 'modernity' loses its explanatory power when nationalism is viewed within an enlarged temporal framework.

In researching this topic, I used textual analysis to examine over twenty Moldavian and Wallachian narratives written in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (sixteen of which are cited here).[17] The terminology used in this paper warrants some clarification. In the sources, 'Poles' and 'Poland' commonly refer to the ethnically Polish population of 1) the Polish Kingdom and 2) from 1569 onward, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. References to the Ruthenian and Lithuanian populations of the Commonwealth are self-explanatory and infrequent, as are references to post-partition Polish territories.

The term 'Hungarian' is more complex. It may refer to the dominant population of Transylvania, that of medieval Hungary, that of Royal Hungary under Habsburg control, or that of Hungarian territories under Ottoman control (after 1526). All these meanings are contained within the one name that was most frequently used by Romanian chroniclers – 'The Hungarian Country' – but, in reality, they most frequently referred to Transylvania, as may be deduced from the context of each occurrence of the term. In their references to Transylvania a few authors took pains to differentiate between 'Transylvanian' inhabitants in general and the three *nationes* that made up the Transylvanian Diet in the early modern period – Hungarian nobles, Saxon burghers, and Seckler border guards – occasionally mentioning the Romanian population as well. Most writers, however, continued to use the term 'Hungarian' in the generic sense described above.

[17] I excluded early modern Transylvanian histories from my study because they did not belong to the Romanian cultural space until the late eighteenth century, when the advent of the 'Transylvanian School' ushered in the modern period in Romanian historiography. For an overview of the Transylvanian School see: I. Chindriş, *Cultură şi societate în contextual şcolii Ardelene* [Culture and society in the context of the Transylvanian School] (Cluj-Napoca 2001).

Sixteenth-century national categories: religion, language, 'neam'

The earliest surviving Romanian chronicles depict the Polish and Hungarian medieval kingdoms (and their later heirlooms, Poland-Lithuania and Transylvania) as amorphous geographical places, little more than points of departure and arrival for the characters populating their stories.[18] Favorite destinations for temporary refugees or permanent exiles, the Polish and Hungarian 'countries' absorbed a steady flux of people across their borders. Migration flared up each time a conflict between rival factions displaced losers and crowned winners as new princes (*voivodes*) of Moldavia or Wallachia. Chroniclers mention this constant back-and-forth across boundaries repeatedly and dispassionately, which suggests that the phenomenon was a widespread, common occurrence. The writers themselves were occasional exiles. Several Moldavian chroniclers with well-documented biographies (the monk Eftimie, Miron Costin, Ion Neculce, Dimitrie Cantemir, Ianache Văcărescu) spent time on Polish, Transylvanian, Russian, or Ottoman territories, hiding from unfriendly voivodes or rival noble factions.[19] Yet, with a few notable exceptions, even the exiles' narratives contain minimal references to their temporary hosts.

The notable exceptions, for the sixteenth century, are the writings of three Moldavian clerics (Macarie, Eftimie, and Azarie) which are a source of colorful albeit uneven detail about Hungary and Poland. The Hungarians,

[18] The earliest was the 'Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia', written in Slavonic and dating back to the reign of Voivode Ştefancel Mare [Stephen the Great] (1457-1504). See P.P. Panaitescu, 'Introduction', in: P.P. Panaitescu ed., *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI* [The Slavo-Romanian chronicles of the 15th-16th centuries] (Bucharest 1959) v-xiv: xi. The oldest (available) Wallachian narratives were written in the Cyrillic alphabet but in Romanian and go no further back than the seventeenth century, although there is indication of earlier writings in Slavonic similar to those found in Moldavia.

[19] For early mentions of Moldavian exiles in the Polish kingdom see: 'Cronicalui Eftimie' [Efitimie's chronicle] in: Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 106-125: 122. Eftimie occupied the Orthodox bishopric of Bistriţa in 1572-1574, while in Transylvanian exile. N. Iorga, *Studiia supra Evului Mediu românesc* [Studies on the Romanian Middle Ages] (Bucharest 1984) 372-373. For numerous examples of nobles and princes taking refuge in 'The Hungarian Country' (Transylvania, in this case), see the work of later chronicler Constantin Cantacuzino in *Istoriia Ţărîi Rumâneşti* [The history of Wallachia], D. Mioc ed. (Bucharest 1991) passim. For a modern account of both phenomena see: Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române*, 19-23.

although ever present in their accounts, are rarely discussed, but the Poles receive more attention. Macarie, Orthodox bishop of Roman[20] from 1531 to 1558 and the author of a chronicle covering the period between 1504 and 1551, had strong anti-Polish and anti-Catholic views. His outspokenness may be explained by his official position within the Orthodox Church, in the context of increasing Catholic proselytizing in Moldavia. [21] His descriptions of events, although largely copied from older local sources, are frequently enriched with personal comments, rhetorical devices, and ethnic epithets that give special character to his chronicle:

> The Turks were joined by the Tatar forces with their beastly faces and [by] the Wallachian division leaders and, from the North, [by] the slow-minded ones [the Poles], with their short tunics and long legs; they overflowed like muddy waters (…) like a conceited whirl, they wanted to swallow Hotin with its strong walls and strong towers.[22]

In the context of the fateful battle of Mohács (1526) – won by the 'Turks' with 'perfidious tricks' – Macarie proposed an ethnic interpretation of the problems confronting the Hungarian kingdom in the first half of the sixteenth century. According to him, the double election of János Szapolyai and Ferdinand of Habsburg not only caused 'great disorder', but it also split the country along ethnic lines. Each elected king – one a Hungarian, the other a 'German' – was supported by those 'of his own people [*neam*] and language' – János by the Hungarians and Ferdinand by the 'Saxons' (a name used to designate the German population in Transylvania). When a Hungarian supported the German king, or a Saxon the Hungarian one, there was internal fighting within each 'neam', resulting in 'great catastrophe' in the realm.[23] Macarie sees the situation through a somewhat distorted Transylvanian lens. While the Transylvanian Saxons indeed supported, on and off, the Habsburg claims to the Hungarian throne, there is also ample evidence that shows a geographical, rather than an ethnic split

[20] A town in Moldavia.
[21] Deletant, 'Moldavia', 194.
[22] 'Cronica lui Macarie' [The Chronicle of Macarie] in: Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-romane*, 74-105: 98-99.
[23] Ibidem, 94.

within the Hungarian nobility of the kingdom, with the West generally supporting Ferdinand and the East (Transylvania included) János.[24]

Macarie was not the only one to see rifts and expect problems between Germans and Hungarians. Later chronicles mention the Saxons' repeated and unsuccessful attempts to 'liberate' themselves from Hungarian subjection in Transylvania.[25] Conversely, the Hungarians were said to have a general propensity to rise up against the 'Germans' in Habsburg Hungary – a perception certainly fueled by a series of Transylvanian revolts against the Habsburgs in late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[26]

Eftimie, a monk at the Putna monastery, rewrote a chronology of Moldavian events between 1541 and 1554 at the express request of the country's voivode, Alexandru Lăpuşneanu (r. 1552-1561, 1564-1568), who was not pleased with Macarie's earlier account. In Eftimie's version, the Polish presence is carefully rewritten in neutral tones. The change is surely due to the Polish help that Alexandru received in his bid for the Moldavian throne.[27] Sometime in 1574 Azarie, a former pupil of Macarie, started where his mentor left off and produced an account covering Moldavia's history from 1551 to 1574, completely ignoring Eftimie's work. Azarie criticized Alexandru's son, Bogdan IV (r. 1568-1572), for surrounding himself with Polish courtiers who, according to Azarie, were responsible for the depletion of the country's treasury. The monk's dislike of Poles was not based on financial arguments alone, but it also had religious and ethnic dimensions:

> After a little while, he attached to himself people of a different faith and tongue, Polish advisers, and he was [with them] and partied with them, and all princely treasures were scattered with a single word (...) on account of the impure and foul Poles. He did not take into

[24] For more details see: G. Barta and A. Mócsy eds., *History of Transylvania* I (Boulder 2001) 422ff, and T. Oborni, 'From Province to Principality: Continuity and Change in Transylvania in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century' in: I. Zombori ed., *Fight Against the Turk in Central-Europe in the First Half of the 16th Century* (Budapest 2004) 165-180.

[25] R. Popescu (1655-1729), *Istoriile domnilor Ţării Româneşti* [The histories of the voivodes of Wallachia], C. Grecescu ed. (Bucharest 1963) 11.

[26] I. Neculce (1672-after 1744), *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei* [Chronicle of the country of Moldavia], I. Iordan ed. (Bucharest 1959) 367.

[27] 'Cronica lui Eftimie', 122.

> account the bishops' words of good wisdom and he did not even want to set eyes on [his] well-wishing councilors.[28]

It is hard to say what exactly bothered Azarie about Bogdan's Polish connections – whether it was the lifestyle, the money squandering, or the fact that foreigners were favoured at court. Modern historians mention fears of Moldavia's Catholicization as well as a vassalage oath to King Zygmunt Augustus that included military and territorial terms that were unfavourable to Moldavia.[29]

Azarie, however, does not mention any of these factors, focusing instead on a detailed critical description of Bogdan's court, dominated, according to the monk, by evil doers who 'fed his heart with vices' and surrounded him with 'stupid youth' who only cared about games, tournaments, and jests, and to whom the young voivode offered fortunes at the expense of his country.[30] Xenophobia or pious disapproval of the frivolities of a Renaissance court? In this case, the two sentiments seem to overlap.

Poles and Hungarians as models: seventeenth-century Moldavian chronicles

In contrast to the opinions of modern historians on the subject, several seventeenth-century Moldavian authors saw limited monarchy as a tempting model for their country. This aspect is absent in Wallachian chronicles, although some sources indicate that the political elites of Wallachia did look to their northern neighbors for guidance now and then.[31] Yet it was only in seventeenth-century Moldavian historiography that Moldavia's legal system (or lack thereof) was deplored in explicit contrast with what some authors

[28] 'Cronica lui Azarie' [The chronicle of Azarie] in: Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-romane*, 126-151: 148.
[29] See Iorga, *Studii*, 328.
[30] 'Cronica lui Azarie', 148.
[31] For Wallachian appreciation of Transylvanian and Hungarian political models in 1595 and the 1830s see: C. Iordachi, 'The Ottoman Empire: Syncretic Nationalism and Citizenship in the Balkans' in: T. Baycroft and M. Hewitson eds., *What is a Nation? Europe, 1789-1914* (Oxford 2006) 138.

perceived as a better-ordered commonwealth – usually Poland-Lithuania, but sometimes Hungary as well.

In his history of Moldavia, Grigore Ureche (1590-1647) provided a scathing critique of his country's political and legal system, betraying an inferiority complex not unlike the the trope of backwardness common to many historians of the modern period:

> It is obvious that [Moldavia] was not founded by wise people, because neither the laws, nor the makeup of the country were tied with good customs, (…) on the contrary, the entire justice was left to the one on top, to judge however he sees fit, either well or badly (…) Everybody tries to agree with the voivode's will, regardless of whether it is useful or damaging to the country.

To this, Ureche suggestively added that 'the *szlachta* [Polish nobility] do not so much follow the king as they follow the laws – which they made themselves'. Ureche also praised the Hungarian system of justice, which, according to him, prevented the king from executing anybody unless he could prove it was a clear case of treason.[32]

Ureche's work was continued by Miron Costin (1633-1691), who grew up in Podolia and was educated at the Jesuit college in Bar. He became a member of the *szlachta* thanks to his father's services to the Commonwealth. Miron himself fought in the Polish army and developed good relations with Jan Sobieski before the latter became king of Poland-Lithuania (1674-1696). Costin was fluent in Polish – he wrote two of his works in that language – and had great admiration for the Polish-Lithuanian political system.[33]

Costin's writings are dominated by a sense of pessimism and doom on account of the Ottomans' increasing interference into Moldavia's internal affairs. He was probably the first Romanian historian who argued that Moldavia and 'the Polish Country' had had synchronous developments: in his opinion, the first half of the seventeenth century and especially the period around 1640 – when Moldavia flourished under Voivode Vasile

[32] G. Ureche, 'Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei, 1359-1595' [The chronicle of the Moldavian Country] in: T. Celac ed., *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei* (Chişinău 1990) 26, 58, 66.

[33] For an extensive overview of Costin's life and work see: Panaitescu's introduction and 'Commentaries, Versions, Interpolations, and Additions' in: M. Costin, *Opere* [Works], P.P. Panaitescu ed. (Bucharest 1958) 5-32, 337-446.

Lupu (1634-1653) and Poland-Lithuania was still unscathed by Chmielnicki's uprising (1648) and Swedish invasions (1655-1657) – was, in Costin's mind, their golden age. The two countries were 'happy together' and they had good commerce with one another; but 'even then it was obvious that the cup of God was close to changing'.[34]

More straightforward views are not to be found in Costin's historical writings, but rather in his letters and petitions. One document that has been generally attributed to Costin, although it does not bear his signature, is a petition sent by several Moldavian boyars to King Sobieski in 1684, inviting the Polish monarch to take over Moldavia and turn it into a Polish province as a way of protecting it against the Ottomans. The petition asks the Polish king 'not to give Moldavia to the Turks', and, in case that was unavoidable, to allow those Moldavian boyars loyal to the king to be accepted among the members of the Polish *szlachta*.[35]

Miron's son Nicolae (1660-1712) continued his father's work and reserved one chapter of his history for the common origins of the Slavs and the mythical foundation of the Polish kingdom; another one for the union of Poland and Lithuania; and another for the coronation customs of the Polish kings – a first in Romanian historiography.[36] Despite such interest in the Polish world, however, Nicolae offered little original reflection on this subject.

That is not the case with Ion Neculce (1672-1743), a Moldavian historian who did not exactly share Ureche's and the two Costins' admiration for Poland-Lithuania. Despite the fact that he also spent some time in the Commonwealth and was familiar with its political system, he did not seem impressed with the practice of electing kings, which in his mind was the equivalent of an auction, following which the throne went to the

[34] M. Costin, 'Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei' [The chronicle of the Moldavian Country] in: Celac, *Letopiseţul*, 120, 123.

[35] 'Jalba şi cererile domnilor boieri moldoveni, în numele întregii ţări, către prealuminatul şi nebiruitul, maiestatea sa regale Poloniei şi întregii republice, date la Zolkiev, anul 1684, luna iulie, ziua 25' [The petition and requests of the Moldavian boyars, in the name of the entire country, to His enlightened and invincible Majesty, the King of Poland, and to the entire Republic, given at Zolkiev, in the year 1684, the month of July, on the 25th day'] in: Costin, *Opere*, 333.

[36] N. Costin, *Letopisetul Tarii Moldovei de la zidirea lumii până la 1601 şi de la 1709 la 1711* [The Chronicle of the Country of Moldavia from the beginning of the world until 1601 and from 1709 to 1711] (Iaşi 1976) 70-72, 80, 138-143.

highest bidder. Although not deprived of nuance (elsewhere he praises the Polish troops for rebelling against their generals), Neculce's account includes themes commonly found in modern texts referring to Poland-Lithuania – a place admirable for its culture but not for the arrogance, disorderly conduct, and foolhardiness of its nobility.[37]

Sovereignty and religious nationalism

As on-and-off suzerains of Moldavia and Wallachia, Poland and Hungary were viewed as friends and allies by most early modern Romanian historians, for whom there seemed to be no great contradiction between vassalage and alliance. As the place of origin of both Wallachia's and Moldavia's half-mythical medieval founders, the suzerain status of 'The Hungarian Country' appears unquestioned in the first half of the fourteenth century. Later chronicles casually refer to communication with and military aid from Hungarian kings during that period.[38] The ties between Moldavia and Poland, established in the second half of the fourteenth century, came as a replacement of the Hungarian connection after the death of Hungarian King Louis I (r. 1342-1382), with some periods of overlap.[39] The earliest mentions of vassalage to Poland in Moldavian sources are rather ambiguous:

[37] Neculce, *Letopisetul*, 338, 419.

[38] Historians place the foundation of Wallachia in the 1290s or 1310s. The identity of the founder is uncertain, as sources mention both Radu Negru and the Basarab family, sometimes simultaneously. See for instance C. Cantacuzino, 'Istoria Ţării Rumâneşti de când au descălecat pravoslavnicii creştini', http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Istoria_%C8%9A%C4%83rii_Rum%C3%A2ne%C8%99ti_de_c%C3%A2nd_au_desc%C4%83lecat_pravoslavnicii_cre%C8%99tini, accessed 15 May 2011. Moldavia's beginnings are equally shrouded in mystery; chronicles place it in the mid-fourteenth century and generally suggest that the political entity that was to become Moldavia was originally a land grant from Hungarian kings Vladislav or Louis I. See for instance 'Cronica moldo-rusă' [The Moldavian-Russian chronicle] in: Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 152-161: 159-160.

[39] For a detailed analysis of Moldavia's position between Hungary and Poland in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century see: Deletant, 'Moldavia between Hungary and Poland'. For later periods and a focus on Poland, see Iorga, *Studii*, 310-330.

chronicles mention 'meetings'[40] and 'friendships'[41] between voivodes and Polish kings in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, without clear references to any hierarchy of power. Later oaths, however, are much better documented – for instance the pledge for fidelity and military assistance signed by Alexandru Lăpuşneanu in 1552 or that of his son, Bogdan, in 1569, although more balanced treaties were also concluded in the first half of the sixteenth century.[42]

In the eighteenth century – when vassalage to Poland and Hungary had become a distant memory – some historians began questioning the subject status of the two principalities toward Polish and Hungarian kings. Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), a pro-Russian and anti-Polish Moldavian voivode and historian, was the first to deny, in a work written in 1714, that Moldavia had ever been a true vassal of Poland, in a move that may indeed be labeled novel (inasmuch as it was not done in this manner before) and nationalist (inasmuch as it argued for sovereignty):

> During this time [of internal conflicts], whoever was luckier would grab the throne: the defeated rival would run away, if he could, to Transylvania or the Polish Country – countries where the voivodes usually owned lands – and there he waited for an opportunity to gather his forces and strengthen his party. From there it followed that Polish as well as Hungarian chroniclers – imitating one another – say that the Moldavian voivodes were their subjects, and they think that they can regard as subjection what was in fact, truth be told, nothing but friendship ties.[43]

---

[40] 'Letopiseţul anonim al Moldovei' [The anonymous chronicle of Moldavia] in: Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 1-21: 19.

[41] Axinte Uricariul (c. 1670-c. 1733), citing Polish sources, wrote that Moldavian voivode Alexandrucel Bun (1400-1432) died of chagrin because he lost his 'friendship' with King Władisław Jagełło. See A. Uricariul, *Cronica paralelă a Ţării Româneşti şi a Moldovei* [The parallel chronicle of Wallachia and Moldavia], G. Ştrempel ed. (Bucharest 1993) 31.

[42] E. de Hurmuzaki and I. Bogdan eds., *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* [Documents regarding the history of the Romanians] (Bucharest 1885) Supplement, vol. 1, 193-98, 263-265; vol. 2, part 3, 602-610, 732-738.

[43] D. Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei* [Description of Moldavia] (Bucharest 1986) 80. Gheorghe Şincai made a similar point in a work he wrote and published in the early 1800s see Gheorghe Şincai, *Cronica românilor* [The Chronicle of the Romanians] I, F. Fugariu ed. (Bucharest 1978) 84.

Precisely because of the assumption of friendship and alliance, Poles and Hungarians were often accused that they were not the Christian brothers that they should have been,[44] that they supported the 'wrong' voivodes,[45] or that they gave bad counsel to unwise ones. At times when Polish troops raided Moldavia, they were portrayed as just another pest afflicting the country, not much different from the Ottomans and Tatars. The campaigns of Kings Olbracht (1496), Sigismund I (around 1531), Chancellor Jan Zamoyski (1595), and the Polish armies under the command of King Jan Sobieski on their way to and from Vienna (1683) are only a few examples of such occurrences put by Romanian chroniclers in an unforgiving light.[46]

Old ties and a shared Christianity, regardless of confessional differences, were reason enough for soliciting and receiving assistance against the Ottomans – 'our common enemies'.[47] When confronted by the 'Turks', intra-Christian differences lost their importance. However, occasional conversions of voivodes to Catholicism or one of the Reformed churches was enough to poison the pen of certain chroniclers. 'Christendom' had real meaning only in a larger regional perspective that included the Ottoman threat, but without it, it did not have much value in and of itself. Despite occasional conversions, the Catholic and Reformed churches were generally regarded with distrust by most Moldavians and Wallachians.[48]

---

[44] Ureche, 'Letopiseţul', 51, 56.

[45] See Cantacuzino's take on the role of Hungarians, Poles, and Germans in the death of Michael the Brave in: 'Istoria Ţării Rumâneşti.

[46] 'Cronica lui Macarie', 97-98; Uricariul, *Cronica paralelă*, 185, 187; I. Neculce, 'Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei de la Dabija-Vodăpână la a doua domnie a lui Constantin Mavrocordat, 1661-1743' [The Chronicle of the country of Moldavia from Voivode Dabija to the second reign of Constantin Mavrocordat, 1661-1743] in: Celac, *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei*, 315. As seen above, Miron Costin was one of the few early modern historians to depict Jan Sobieski – his old protector from the times of his Polish exile – as a hero and a potential savior of Moldavia from the Ottoman yoke. Dimitrie Cantemir also admired the 'manliness' Sobieski displayed in his battles with the Ottomans see: D. Cantemir, *Hronicul vechimei a Romano-Moldo-Vlahilor* [The chronicle of the ancestry of the Romano-Moldo-Wallachians] I, S. Toma ed. (Bucharest 1981) 196.

[47] Cantacuzino, *Istoriia*, 114.

[48] See V. Ciobanu, 'Moldova în epoca Reformei. Contribuţie la istoria societăţii moldoveneşti în veacul al XVI-lea' [Moldavia at the time of the Reformation.

The phenomenon of confessional 'nationalization', usually seen as a consequence of the Reformation, seemed to occur in the eastern part of the continent as well.[49] The encounter between Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants turned religious differences into ethnic attributes. Wallachian historian Constantin Cantacuzino (1655-1716) sorrowfully reported that Voivode Mihnea I (r. 1508-1509) 'made friends with the Hungarians, who spun shrewd ruses around [him] (...) for the rejection of the Holy Spirit, (...) [a] heresy [in which] the whole Occident is rotting, together with magnificent Rome'.[50] Elsewhere, when writing about the conversions of some Transylvanian Romanians to Calvinism, Cantacuzino observed:

> Nowadays their government is Calvinist and, by serving the court, they became Calvinist and started calling themselves Hungarians as well. By changing their faith, they also changed their Romanian name.[51]

The connection between religion and the nation was thoroughly explored by autochtonist nationalists in the early part of the twentieth century, but, as Cantacuzino's writings show, that was not a modern trope, but one with early modern precedents.[52] This is not to say that Romanian historians consistently conflated religion and nation throughout the early modern period. A Moldavian author writing in 1627 about the establishment of the Orthodox metropolitan seat in the capital of Transylvania (1600) did not seem to see religion in national terms at all. The actors of his story are simply the Orthodox and the 'Latins'. Social positions are mentioned, but no ethnic, political or territorial identities are specified. It is perhaps no

Contribution to the history of Moldavian society in the sixteenth century], *Studii. Revista de istorie* [Studies. The journal of history] 11.4 (1958) 55-76.

[49] M.G. Müller, 'Protestant Confessionalisation and in the Towns of Royal Prussia and the Practice of Religious Toleration in Poland-Lithuania' in: O.P. Grell and B. Scribner eds., *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge 1996) 262-281: 263.

[50] Cantacuzino, 'Istoria Ţării Rumâneşti'.

[51] Cantacuzino, *Istoriia*, 96.

[52] An example of twentieth-century religious nationalism may be found in Vasile Pârvan (1882-1927) *Contribuţii epigrafice la istoria creştinismului daco-roman* [Epigraphic contributions to the history of Daco-Roman Christianity] (Bucharest 1911) http://www.unibuc.ro/CLASSICA/contribepigraf/index.htm, accessed 13 May 2011.

wonder that the author in question (Petru Movilă or Mohyla, 1596-1646) was an ecclesiastic who ended his days in Poland-Lithuania as Metropolitan of Kiev.[53]

Foundation myths: Transylvania and the Latin roots of the Romanian people

Beside Orthodoxy, what else was there behind the 'Romanian name' invoked by Cantacuzino? Moldavian chroniclers Grigore Ureche, Miron and Nicolae Costin, Dimitrie Cantemir, as well as Cantacuzino himself, adopted, remolded, and popularized a thesis according to which Romanians were descendants of Roman colonizers who had come to the region after the conquest of Dacia by Emperor Trajan in 106 C.E. Based on a selection of Roman, Polish, and Hungarian sources, they contended that the Roman withdrawal from Dacia under Emperor Aurelian (270-275) had not been complete. According to them, many of the colonizers stayed behind and weathered the nomadic invasions that followed by withdrawing to the Carpathian mountains. The descendants of those colonizers left their hideouts once the invasions stopped, and not only did they gradually populate inner Transylvania, they also spread to the East and South, founding the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.

Miron Costin introduced to Romanian historiography the idea that the Hungarians were successors of Attila's Huns. They conquered Transylvania and the population they found there, eventually incorporating

[53] Nephew and son to two Moldavian voivodes, Petru Movilă had to leave his native country after his branch of the family had an ill-fated struggle for the throne against his cousins. He settled in Kiev, where he established, in the 1630s, an academy that followed Jesuit models of education without overstepping the boundaries of the Orthodox Church. Movilă's academy exercised a noticeable influence on cultural and religious life in the region – an accomplishment that Romanian historians, both early modern and modern, acknowledged and praised. For Movilă's text cited above see: Iorga, *Studii*, 376-380. For Movilă's historical reputation see: Costin, 'Letopiseţul', 272; A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor* IV, 81; N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii românești. Introducere sintetică* [The history of Romanian literature. Introductory synthesis] (Chişinău 1998) 90, 99. For in-depth studies on Movilă's work see: I. Ševčenko, *The Many Worlds of Peter Mohyla* (Cambridge, MA 1985) and A. Jobert, *De Luther à Mohila. La Pologne dans la crise de la Chrétienté, 1517-1648* (Paris 1974).

it into the Hungarian kingdom. Costin maintained that the pre-Roman population (the Dacians) had been exterminated by the Romans, and that other latecomers (such as the Slavs) were of no significant importance for the ethnic makeup of the later Romanian people, whose ancestry was, according to him, purely Roman – as demonstrated by linguistic arguments that Costin adopted from other historians and expanded on his own.[54]

In light of these theories, which were readily adopted by later generations, subsequent Romanian historians felt increasingly compelled to question the reasons why Transylvania belonged to the Hungarian and not Romanian political sphere. Although Costin took pains to assert the ethnic connections between the Romanian-speaking populations of Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia, he still called them 'Wallachians' and 'Moldavians' more often than 'Romanians'. He did not seem to find it strange that Transylvania was, as he put it, 'under the Hungarians', nor did the lack of political and fiscal privileges for Transylvanian Romanians – mostly peasants – seem to preoccupy him.[55]

In his history of the 'Romano-Moldo-Wallachians' (1719-1722), Dimitrie Cantemir reaffirmed and refined the theory of Romanian continuity. He actively used the word 'Romanian', often as an adjective. Most importantly, in a statement that puts together ethnicity, territory, and state, hereferred to Moldavia and Wallachia as 'these two countries of *ours'*, which managed to keep their autonomy and territories intact, remaining 'steadfast' and never 'overstepping their boundaries'. They did so in spite of

[54] See especially 'Chronika ziem mołdawskich y multanskich' [The Chronicle of the lands of the Moldavians and Wallachians], known in Romanian literature as the 'Polish chronicle'; 'Historya polskimi rytmami o wołoskiey ziemi i mołtanskiey [The History of Moldavia and Wallachia in Polish verse], known as the 'Polish poem'; and 'De neamul moldovenilor, din ce ţară au ieşit strămoşii lor' [On the Moldavian people and the country from whence their ancestors came] in: Costin, *Opere*, 202-276. The Romanian myth of Roman pure ancestry resonates – but only to a certain degree – with the legend of Sarmatian conquest, according to which Polish nobles were the descendants of Sarmatian conquerors, who never mixed with and therefore remained racially distinct from the Slavic peasant populations they found at their arrival. Sarmatian mythology was quite popular in Poland-Lithuania in the seventeenth century. Z.J. Gasiorowski, 'The "Conquest" Theory of the Genesis of the Polish State', *Speculum* 30.4 (1955) 550-560; J. Tazbir, 'Polish National Consciousness in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 10.3&4 (1986) 316-335.

[55] Costin, 'Chronika ziem mołdawskich y multanskich', 207.

'bloody and *Romanian* wars with the Tatars, the Cossacks, the Hungarians, the Poles, and (…) their wolf enemies, the Turks'.[56] Cantemir seemed to admire the Hungarians on account of their 'powerful' medieval kingdom, whereas he perceived the Poles as 'unstable' in their internal politics. Nevertheless, both neighbors had provided precious help by preserving the past in their writings, which the Romanians may now use in order to fill the gaps left by their own sparse histories.[57]

Like Cantemir, Cantacuzino applauded the steadfastness of the Romanians – who managed to keep their lands, language, and remember their origins, despite successive invasions by 'a great part of Europe'.[58] He found, however, the theory of Romanian ethnic purity shakier. According to him, there was no such thing as a pure people or a pure language; all countries and all languages were impure.[59] Most importantly, Cantacuzino did not share Costin's and Cantemir's relative indifference toward the Hungarians. According to the Wallachian boyar, they had always been jealous of and hostile to the Romanians,

> all of whom they would have liked to submit to their yoke, if they could, just like they have already done to most of those who live in Transylvania nowadays, whom they made serfs.[60]

Here Cantacuzino's vision is close to the nationalist discourse of the Transylvanian School, which, a century later, was going to usher in a long period of anti-Hungarian militantism tightly related to the goal of emancipating the Romanian population in Transylvania. Customarily seen as the cradle of Romanian modern historiography, the Transylvanian historians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century did not, however, conceptualize in an entirely new fashion the relationship between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania – the central focus of

[56] Cantemir, *Hronicul* I, 89-90. The italics are mine.
[57] Ibidem, II: 51, 57-58; I: 153.
[58] Cantacuzino, *Istoriia*, 112.
[59] Ibidem, 99. The theory of ethnic purity was going to be adopted in the nineteenth century by Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817-1891) in 'Histoire de la Valachie, de la Moldavie et des Valaques transdanubiens. Tome premier: Histoire de la Dacie, des Valaques transdanubiens, et de la Valachie, 1241-1792' (first published 1837) in: M. Kogălniceanu, *Opere* [Works] II, *Scrieri istorice* [Historical writings] (Bucharest 1976) 67.
[60] Cantacuzino, *Istoriia*, 96.

Cantacuzino's analysis. In fact Cantacuzino went a little further than most of them by claiming that the Hungarians targeted for persecution and subjection not only the Transylvanian Romanians, but those who lived in Wallachia and Moldavia as well.

Concluding remarks

The 'threads' of Romanian nationalist discourse[61] – Orthodoxy, Latinity, victimization, the backwardness complex, and pan-Romanianness within the Moldavian-Wallachian-Transylvanian space – were not recent inventions. Early modern writings are rich in themes that invalidate the supposedly intrinsic connection between modernity and nationalism. Macarie, Azarie, Ureche, Miron Costin, and, above all, Cantacuzino and Cantemir were preoccupied with defining the Romanian nation and – especially in the case of the latter two – defending it from whatever they perceived as cultural, religious, and political threats. Their concerns are particularly visible in descriptions of events involving Moldavia's and Wallachia's closest European neighbors – the Poles and the Hungarians – who, as familiar 'others', presented them with the complex task of self-definition by both contrast and similarity.[62]

Despite the presence of many important nationalist themes in pre-modern historical accounts, there are at least two elements of modern Romanian nationalism that are absent (or cannot be easily verified) in the available sources: a) the idea of a pan-Romanian state; and b) the degree of absorption within the larger population of nationalist notions circulated by cultural elites.

There is no indication that the inclusion of all Romanians in one state was ever seriously conceived in nationalist terms before the nineteenth century. The much-celebrated, ill-fated, and short-lived personal union of Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania by Michael the Brave in 1600 had more to do with the conquering ambitions of a crusading warrior than with the 'age-long dream of the Romanian people'. Michael's own writings show no sign of nationalist goals, and his reception by the Moldavians and Transylvanian Romanians was mixed at best and hostile at worst. It was

[61] See Gorski, 'The Mosaic Moment', 1460.

[62] In this light, a thorough study of the Ottomans – the unfamiliar 'others' – in Romanian historiography would be equally enlightening.

only from the nineteenth century onward that Michael's actions were perceived as a national accomplishment.[63]

Moreover, it is difficult to determine how many Moldavians, Wallachians, and Transylvanians thought of themselves as Romanians, or to what extent they saw the differences between themselves and their neighbors in national terms. The texts examined above show the thinking patterns of their authors, but say little about the self and hetero perceptions of regular Moldavians and Wallachians. Considering the low literacy rates within the Romanian cultural space as late as the early twentieth century, it is probably safe to assume that the works of early modern historians had a rather limited impact on the general population. Even so, the question remains to what extent historians reflected the spirit of their times.[64] Alternative sources should be consulted for this purpose, especially those revealing the diffusion and reception patterns of the works examined here, although it should be noted that Wallachian and Moldavian early modern sources are remarkably scarce. Foreign travelogues may add some interesting information, although such sources usually say much more about their authors than about the subjects of their observations.[65]

Such distinctions between the modern and the early modern periods do not necessarily mean that early modern nationalism was not 'fully' developed or that modern nationalism completed a process that had been ongoing for several centuries. The similarities between discontiguous moments may be more easily understood if approached in their own right and within their own historical context, rather than as gestating seeds of the future. Despite obvious cultural transmission (A.D. Xenopol read Cantemir, who read Neculce, who read Costin, who read Macarie etc.), there is no obvious linear evolution from one author to the next, just like there is no

[63] Hurmuzaki, *Documente* XII, passim; Boia, *History and Myth*, 39-42.

[64] For the low literacy rates at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially in Moldavia and Wallachia see: I. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca and London 1995) 2.

[65] An extensive amount of foreign accounts has already been published in the series started by Maria Holban in 1968: M. Holban ed., *Călători străini despre ţările române* [Foreign travelers about the Romanian countries] (Bucharest 1968). For the unreliability of travelogues, see for instance C.D. van Strien, *British Travellers in Holland during the Stuart Period: Edward Browne and John Locke as Tourists in the United Provinces* (Amsterdam 1989); D.C. Gabbard, 'Gender Stereotyping in Early Modern Travel Writing on Holland', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 43.1, *The English Renaissance* (2003) 83-100.

continuous and self-evident thread tying together the bouts of English xenophobia or the episodes of Dutch nation-building.[66] The modern/early modern divide in the study of collective identities, images, and nationalisms should be discarded in favor of less teleological approaches.

[66] Gorski, 'The Mosaic Moment', 1461.