

CLIO ÎN OGINDIRI DE SINE

Academicianului Alexandru Zub

Omagiu

Volum editat de

Gheorghe Cliveti

Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași

2014

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THE ORIGINS OF THE ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN HISTORISM

“... măcar că de la Râm ne tragem...” (Grigore Ureche)¹

“Iară nu sintă vrémile supt cîrma omului, ce bietul om supt vrémi.” (Miron Costin)²

“The image of the scholar withdrawn in the silence of his study, far from the passions which agitate society, trying to decipher the meaning of history *sine ira et studio*, is more of an aspiration than a reality. The [Romanian] historian has always been the son of the fortress to whose destiny his work is bound.” (Al. Zub)³

I. Introduction

“Eastern Europe shares in considerable measure the historical mode of thinking about itself,” Henry Roberts once observed. Thus “its self-perception is, in part at least, provided by its historical awareness and a tradition of historiography, that is, the past as organized and interpreted by the historian.”⁴ In a similar vein, Hugh Seton-Watson wrote

...from some experience I am fairly sure of one thing: in the Danube countries, national history, or if you like historical mythology, is something about which not only professors of history but also working men and women, in factories and

¹ Grigore Ureche, *Letopiseșul Tării Moldovei până la Aron Vodă (1359-1595)*. Întocmit după Gregorie Ureche Vornicul. *Istratie Logofătul și alții de Simion Dascălul*, edited by Constantin Giurescu, București, SOCEC, 1916, p. 7.

² Miron Costin, *Letopiseșul Tării Moldovei de la Aron Vodă încoace*, in idem, *Opere*, critical edition by P. P. Panaitescu, București, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958, p. 144.

³ Al. Zub, *Biruit-au gândul (note despre istorismul românesc)*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1983, p. 32-33.

⁴ Henry L. Roberts, *Eastern Europe and the Historian*, in idem, *Eastern Europe: Political, Revolution, and Diplomacy*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1970, p. 4.

farms, feel bitterly. Attacks on it create a smoldering resentment which does not die out and can easily turn into a flame.⁵

Why have history and historiography had such an important (perhaps overly important) impact on Romanian civilization and culture? The answer to this lies in the general significance of intellectual traditions. According to Edward Shils,

Intellectual work is sustained by and transmits a complex tradition which persists through changes in the structure of the intellectual class. In these traditions, the most vital ones are the standards and rules in the light of which achievement is striven for and assessed and the substantive beliefs and symbols which constitute the heritage of valid achievement. It is by the participation in these traditions of perception, appreciation, and expression, and the affirmation of the importance of performing in the modes accredited by these traditions, that the intellectual is defined...⁶

Definition, validation, affirmation, and legitimization for those who adhere to the standards and rules are powerful and seductive forces, and take on a life of their own as part of national/cultural traditions. What follows suggests that one of the principal reasons why Romanian culture is so strongly impacted by history can be found in the origins of Romanian historiographical tradition itself, what Roberts' called "the past as organized and interpreted by the historian." We see that

In Romanian culture, the writing of history has played a significant role. Divided by the boundaries of many states, the Romanians became convinced of the need to study history, not only to demonstrate their common origins and their immovable continuity in the lands in which they lived. This theme – of origins and continuity – appears very early in Romanian historiography and constitutes up to the present a major problem, perhaps the most important one, in the preoccupations of our historians.⁷

Let's find out how and why.

⁵ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The "Sick Heart" of Modern Europe: The Problem of the Danubian Lands*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1975, p. 70. Interestingly, both Roberts and Seton-Watson spent time in Romania, were deeply versed in Romanian culture and civilization, and wrote movingly about the Romanians.

⁶ Edward A. Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers: Some Perspectives for Comparative Analysis*, in "Comparative Studies in Society and History", Vol. 1 (1958), p. 15-16.

⁷ Lucian Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, București, Universitatea din București, 1976, p. 3.

II. It all starts at the beginning⁸

The origins of the modern Romanian historiographical tradition date back to the 17th century. At this time, the Romanian populations of South East Europe were mainly spread out over three political entities (often referred to below simply as the Romanian lands): the Principalities of Moldova and Muntenia, and Transylvania.⁹ Though they were under the domination of the Ottoman Empire, Moldova and Muntenia maintained a precarious but real autonomy.¹⁰ “Divided by the boundaries of many states, the Romanians became convinced of the need to study history, not only to demonstrate their common origins and their immovable continuity in the lands in which they lived.”¹¹

Unlike the Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians, the two Romanian principalities were not swallowed up by the Empire and had a considerable degree of independent internal development.¹² The third area, Transylvania,¹³ had been under Hungarian control until 1526, was an autonomous principality under Ottoman rule from 1541, and then taken over by the Habsburg Monarchy in 1691. Throughout, political arrangements in Transylvania recognized only the political rights of the three “historic nations” – Magyars, Saxons, and Szecklers – to the exclusion of the majority Romanian population.

In addition to political dispersion and suppression, substantial Romanian literature in the Romanian language only appeared in the 17th century.¹⁴ Prior to this, literary works, including those historical in nature, were written “in the

⁸ General surveys of Romanian historiography used in this paper include Pompiliu Teodor’s anthological approach, *Evoluția gândirii istorice românești*, Cluj, Editura Dacia, 1970; Boia’s textbook treatment *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, 1976; and Frederick Kellogg’s *A History of Romanian Historical Writing*, Bakersfield CA, Charles Schlacks, Jr. Publisher, 1990; revised Romanian edition, 1996. Also helpful was Ștefan Ștefănescu (ed.), *Enciclopedia istoriografiei românești*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1978.

⁹ For a survey, see Paul E. Michelson, *Romania (History)*, in Richard Frucht (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Eastern Europe from the Congress of Vienna to the Fall of Communism*, New York, Garland Publishing, 2000, p. 667-669.

¹⁰ For useful discussions of why Moldova and Muntenia remained separate and independent, see P. P. Panaiteanu, *De ce au fost Țara Românească și Moldova țări separate?*, in idem, *Interpretări românești. Studii de istorie economică și socială*, București, Editura Universul, 1947, p. 131-148, and *De ce n’au cucerit turcii țările române?*, in Panaiteanu, *Interpretări românești*, p. 149-159.

¹¹ Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 3.

¹² See Șerban Papacostea, *Tratatele Țării Românești și Moldovei cu Imperiul Otoman în secolele XIV-XVI. Ficțiune politică și realitate istorică*, in Nicolae Edroiu, Aurel Răduțiu, and Pompiliu Teodor (eds.), *Stat, societate, națiune. Interpretări istorice*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1982, p. 93-106; and Mihai Maxim, *Le statut des Pays Roumains envers la Porte Ottomane aux XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, in “Revue Roumaine d’Histoire”, Vol. 24 (1985), p. 29-50.

¹³ For convenience, “Transylvania” is used as a rough short hand for the areas west of the Carpathians, including the former Dacia, Transylvania itself, Maramureș, eastern Hungary (the *Partium*), and the Banat.

¹⁴ This story is told in P. P. Panaiteanu, *Începuturile și biruința scrisului în limba română*, București, Editura Academiei, 1965.

languages of culture, Latin or Slavonic," the former in Transylvania, the latter in the Principalities.¹⁵ All this began to change in the 17th century.¹⁶

The first of the truly significant Romanian historical writers were the Moldovan humanist chroniclers Grigore Ureche (1590-1647) and Miron Costin (1633-1691), whose work began the development of historical writing per se in the Romanian lands. Both were partly educated in Poland, where they came into contact with Western humanist ideas;¹⁷ both were deeply involved in the political affairs of the day and held high administrative appointments (which hindered their work immensely and led to the untimely death of Costin); and both for the first time were Romanian writers who wrote their major works in Romanian.¹⁸ Their works "often had a militant political character, becoming an instrument of ideological action,"¹⁹ foreshadowing the Historian Militant motif in Romanian historical writing.²⁰

¹⁵ Teodor, *Evoluția gândirii istorice românești*, p. xii-xiii; and Ioan Bogdan, *Istoriografia română și problemele ei actuale*, București, Carol Göbl, 1905, p. 4 ff. Bogdan argues that the impact of this on Romanian cultural development is sometimes exaggerated.

¹⁶ In addition to the historiographical works cited above, for the early Romanian writers of history, one should start with N. Iorga's idiosyncratic *Istoria literaturii românești*, 2nd, revised edition, two volumes (București: Pavel Suru, 1925-1926; first edition 1901). Other works include G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române dela origini până în prezent*, București, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, 1941; N. Cartojan, *Istoria literaturii române vechi*, Vol. II, București, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, 1942; George Ivașcu, *Istoria literaturii române*, Vol. I, București, Editura Științifică, 1969; Nicolae Manolescu, *Istoria critică a literaturii române. 5 secole de literatură*, Pitești, Editura Paralela 45, 2008; three works by P. P. Panaiteescu: *Influența polonă în opera și personalitatea cronicarilor Grigore Ureche și Miron Costin*, in "Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice", Seria III, Vol. 4 (1925), p. 149-372, *Biruința scrisului*, 1965, and *Contribuții la istoria culturii românești*, edited by Silvia Panaiteescu, București, Editura Minerva, 1979; Alexandru Duțu, *Sinteză și originalitate în cultura română (1650-1848)*, București, Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1972; Eugen Negrici, *Narațiunea în cronicile lui Gr. Ureche și Miron Costin*, București, Editura Minerva, 1972; G. G. Ursu, *Memorialistică în opera cronicarilor*, București, Editura Minerva, 1972; and I. C. Chițimia, *Probleme de bază ale literaturii române vechi*, București, Editura Academiei, 1972. For the chroniclers generally, see the pioneering work of Constantin Giurescu, a significant portion of which is collected and discussed with extensive notes in Constantin Giurescu, *Studii de istorie*, edited by Dinu C. Giurescu, București, Editura Eminescu, 1993.

¹⁷ See Donald R. Kelley, *Faces of History. Historical Inquiry from Herodotus to Herder*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998, p. 130 ff. On humanism in the Romanian lands, see Alexandru Duțu, *Romanian Humanists and European Culture. A Contribution to Comparative Cultural History*, revised edition, București, Editura Academiei, 1977.

¹⁸ Alexandru Duțu makes the useful and interesting observation that "A factor of cultural unity, the Romanian language, asserted itself in the 17th and 18th centuries as the literary language," which then became itself a vehicle for promoting national consciousness and the development of Romanian historical writing (Duțu, *Însemnări despre formarea culturii noastre naționale*, in his *Explorări în istoria literaturii române*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1969, p. 21).

¹⁹ Teodor, *Evoluția gândirii istorice românești*, p. xix. Compare Duțu, *Sinteză și originalitate*, 1972, p. 167: "Through their militant character, the works of the Romanian Enlightenment scholars hold a unique place in European literature."

²⁰ According to Tudor Vianu, *Asupra caracterelor specifice ale literaturii române*, in idem, *Opere*, Vol. 3, edited by Matei Călinescu, Gelu Ionescu, and Cornelia Botez, București, Editura

Ureche was still mostly a chronicler,²¹ but insisted on verifying his sources. His *Letopisul Ţării Moldovei până la Aron Vodă (1359-1595)*, written in the 1640s, was the first work written in colloquial Romanian for Romanians.²² It emphasized the unity of the Romanian people (who were found in Moldova and Muntenia as well as in parts of ancient Dacia – that is, Transylvania, composed of “Țara Ungurească”, Ardeal, and Maramureş), and argued that they “all were descended from Rome.”²³ Furthermore, though the Romanian language had an intermixture of words from neighboring languages, it, too, had its origins in Rome.²⁴ Ureche also had a “gift” for drawing moral portraits.²⁵ In the end, Grigore Ureche can be described as “the creator of truly national Romanian historiography, fundamentally different from that in Slavonic dress...”²⁶

Miron Costin,²⁷ son of a highly ranked noble family, was better educated and, as a diplomat, more widely travelled than Ureche. He emphasized that the chronicler had to be objective, first hand sources were vital, and took what might be called a multi-disciplinary approach to history, using literary study,

Minerva, 1973, p. 461, one of the characteristics of Romanian literature, which flowed out of the developments under consideration here, was “its militant national and social quality. The most striking attitude of Romanian writers is their combative posture...” There are a number of suggestive ideas in this essay.

²¹ Panaiteescu, *Influența polonă*, p. 81-82, argues that Ureche was not influenced enough by humanism to have moved out of the chronicler-precursor group, but this is not generally accepted. See Adolf Armbruster, *Romanitatea românilor. Istoria unei idei*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1972, p. 183 ff., and Dumitru Velciu, *Grigore Ureche*, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1979, p. 333 ff. This kind of debate is not atypical for transitional cultural figures.

²² There are many excellent editions of in addition to the first scholarly edition by Constantin Giurescu published in 1916, including Constantin C. Giurescu (Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 1943, 3rd edition); P. P. Panaiteescu (Bucureşti, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1958, 2nd edition); and Liviu Onu (Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică, 1967). All of the latter have extensive introductions. See also I. Minea, *Din istoria culturii românești. Lecții tinute la Universitatea din Iași, Partea I: Cultura moldovenească în prima jumătate a sec. XVII. Locul cronicii lui Ureche în istoria culturii române*, Iaşi, Ing. Gr. Bejan, 1935; and Gheorghe Bobană, *Grigore Ureche*, Chişinău, Editura Basarabia, 1991.

²³ Ureche, *Letopisul Ţării Moldovei*, 1916, p. 110-112. Panaiteescu, *Biruința scrisului*, p. 209, identifies a stress on the Roman-ness of the Romanians as a hallmark of Romanian humanism.

²⁴ “...măcar că de la Râm ne tragem și cu a lor cuvinte ni-s amestecate...” (Ureche, *Letopisul Ţării Moldovei*, 1916, p. 7).

²⁵ Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii*, p. 21.

²⁶ Armbruster, *Romanitatea*, p. 185.

²⁷ On Costin, in addition to the extensive introductions by Panaiteescu and Onu to Costin’s works cited below, see Ion I. Nistor, *Miron Costin. Viața și opera*, in “Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice”, Seria III, Vol. 24 (1941-1942), p. 283-304; Dumitru Velciu, *Miron Costin. Interpretări și comentarii*, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1973; Enache Puju, *Viața și opera lui Miron Costin*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1975; Mircea Scarlat, *Introducere în opera lui Miron Costin*, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1976; and Dumitru Velciu, *Miron Costin. Raporturile literare cu contemporanii și posteritatea sa istoriografică*, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1995.

philology, archaeology, and anthropology. By stressing the importance of analysis, he went beyond the chroniclers. He spent time in all of the Romanian lands and was convinced that the people he met there shared the same language and the same origins, as he argued in *De neamul moldovenilor. Din ce țară au eșit strămoșii lor.*²⁸ His argument, consciously following the path broken by Ureche, was that “The beginning of these countries and of the Moldovan and Muntenian people, as well as those in the Hungarian lands with the name Romanian” was their descent from Trajan and the Romans. Not only that, they were unified in both their origins and their language. Demonstration of the Latinity of the Romanians was found in the language and in the name “Romanian” itself.²⁹ Also significant were Costin’s efforts to place the development of the Romanians in a larger, European context.³⁰

Miron Costin’s perspectives on the early development of the Romanians are nicely encapsulated in two seldom considered works, his 1670s *Cronica polonă*,³¹ and his 1684 *Poema polonă*,³² which made many of the same points as the later *De neamul moldovenilor* but for a Polish audience.³³ In the former, Costin explicitly seeks to fill the gap left by Ureche’s chronicle, which only starts with the “second founding” of Moldova by Dragoș of Maramureș, by describing the “first founding” of Dacoromania by Trajan. It is from the first founding that the Romanian people have their beginning, their language, and their name.

After a withdrawal into the mountains when the Romans left Dacia, the indigenous Romanian populations came down into Muntenia under Prince Radu Negru and Moldova under Prince Dragoș in what Costin labelled the second founding. Though Moldova and Muntenia were separate politically, their people were always called “romanus” or Romanians, and when asked if they spoke Moldovan, their reply was always “I speak Romanian.” Further, the names that European writers gave the Romanians were always a variant of what these writers called the Italians. The Romanian language’s affinities with Latin

²⁸ Miron Costin, *De neamul moldovenilor. Din ce țară au eșit strămoșii lor.* edited by C. Giurescu, București, SOCEC, 1914. He also continued Ureche’s chronicle from 1595 to 1661; see Miron Costin, *Letopisețul Tării Moldovei de la Aron Vodă încoace*, in loc. cit., p. 41-201. Panaitescu dates *De neamul moldovenilor* between 1686 and 1691 (p. 408) and *Letopisețul* a bit earlier, possibly sometime after 1675 (p. 357-358). For other editions of Costin, see Miron Costin, *Letopisețul Tării Moldovei de la Aron Vodă încoace*, critical edition edited by P. P. Panaitescu, București, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, 1944, and Miron Costin, *Opere alese*, edited with an introductory study by Liviu Onu, București, Editura Științifică, 1967.

²⁹ Costin, *De neamul moldovenilor*, p. 3-4.

³⁰ See e.g. Costin, *De neamul moldovenilor*, p. 7-8, where he engages the work of Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini and others in debate.

³¹ Costin, *Cronica polonă*, in Costin, *Opere*, 1958, p. 202-217; commentary, p. 369-374. The geographical detail of this piece make it an obvious precursor to Cantemir’s *Descrierea Moldovei*, p. 369.

³² Costin, *Poema polonă*, in Costin, *Opere*, 1958, p. 218-240; commentary, p. 375-383. This work is a typical humanist genre writing.

³³ The *Poema* is addressed to John III Sobieski of Poland (1629-1696).

were discussed and a chart or glossary showing identical terms in the two languages was featured.

In the second piece, Costin's wish was to satisfy John III Sobieski's curiosity about "small countries", in this case about Moldova and Muntenia, whose "Romanian inhabitants are descended from Italy". Who were the Moldovans, the Muntenians, and the residents of old Dacia? They were the Romanians, who, because of their very name, were of undoubted Roman origins. Various arguments from the "Cronica" were repeated, including the claim that Romanians had preserved their Roman language heritage.

These arguments became central postulates of the standard model followed by most subsequent Romanian historiography. The 17th century had opened up the wider European culture to Romanian historical writers, who, to their astonishment, had found that European humanist writers were talking about the Romanians, their obvious Roman/Latin origins and their Romanic language.³⁴ "In the first stage of Romanian humanism, reason reflecting chiefly on the historical destiny of the Romanian people... made mental excursions into the 'outer' world and subjected it to the scrutiny of their reason."³⁵

Ureche and Costin wrote the first real historical writings in Romanian, Ureche drew attention to Romanian origins and the Romanian language, and Costin "linked humble Moldova with proud Rome."³⁶ Though printing presses were functioning in the Romanian lands by the 17th century, the fact that most of the aforementioned chronicles were available only in manuscript might seem to have been an impediment to their influence.³⁷ However, manuscript versions appear to have been fairly widely circulated and their basic ideas were well known.³⁸

Ureche and Costin were followed by lesser writers – Miron's son Nicolae Costin (1660-1712) and Ion Neculce (1672-1745) – who ended the line of Moldovan humanist historical writers. And though there were Muntenian chroniclers, the influence of humanism was much less felt in an area that looked eastward to Constantinople, and the degree of politicization of their work was

³⁴ Tudor Vianu, *Receptarea antichității în literatura română*, in his *Opere*, Vol. 11, edited by George Gană, București, Editura Minerva, 1983, p. 258.

³⁵ Alexandru Duțu, *European intellectual Movements and Modernization of Romanian Culture*, revised edition, București, Editura Academiei, 1981, p. 15.

³⁶ Teodor, *Evoluția gândirii istorice românești*, p. xxii.

³⁷ See Dennis Deletant, *A survey of Romanian presses and printing in the sixteenth century*, in idem, *Studies in Romanian History*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1991, p. 116-130; idem, *Romanian presses and printing in the seventeenth century (I, II)*, in idem, *Studies*, p. 131-185; and Alexandru Duțu, *The Printed Word in South East Europe*, in his *Political Models and National Identities in "Orthodox Europe"*, București, Babel Publishing House, 1998, p. 37-53.

³⁸ Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 34. And when the 17th century writers were published in the 19th century on the initiative of Mihail Kogălniceanu in his collection of *Letopisețele Tării Moldovei*, and by Nicolae Bălcescu and A. T. Laurian in "Magazin istoric pentru Dacia", they were just in time to be part of the transition in Romanian historical writing from the *belles lettres* to professionalized history.

much higher. They contributed to the expansion of Romanian historical writing, but in less significant ways than the Moldovans.³⁹

The final phase in the story of the origins of Romanian historical tradition was that of the late Baroque generation erudite, the scholar/savant.⁴⁰ The key figures here were the Muntenian Constantin (Stolnicul) Cantacuzino (1640-1716)⁴¹ and the Moldovan Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723).⁴² The theses established by Ureche, Costin, and others were inspirational and foundational to their work. Both were influenced by the 17th and 18th century European erudite tradition exemplified by Mabillon and Muratori.⁴³ On the other hand, as Boia points out, they differed from their Western counterparts in two ways: they were heavily involved in the politics of their day – Cantacuzino was the *de facto* chief minister of foreign affairs for Muntenia between 1688-1716;⁴⁴ Cantemir was twice Prince of Moldova – which robbed them of time for their scholarly pursuits, because of their need to focus on contemporary events.⁴⁵ It will be

³⁹ Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ See Dan Horia Mazilu, *Barocul în literatura română din secolul al XVII-lea*, București, Editura Minerva, 1976; Alexandru Duțu, *Barocul în cultura română*, in his *Modele, imagini, priveliști. Incursioni în cultura europeană modernă*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1979, p. 155-165; and Alexandru Duțu, *Humanisme, Baroque, Lumières: L'exemple roumain*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984.

⁴¹ N. Iorga was the pathbreaker with his introduction to Constantin Cantacuzino, *Operele lui Constantin Cantacuzino*, edited by N. Iorga, București, Editura Minerva, 1901, p. i-xliv, and *Istoria literaturii românești*, 1926, Vol. II, p. 185 ff. See further Eugen Stănescu, *Valoarea istorică și literară a cronicelor muntene*, in *Cronicarii muntene*, edited by Mihail Gregorian, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1961, Vol. I, p. v-xccvi; Ion Ionașcu, *Din viața și din activitatea stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino (1640-1716)*, in "Studii. Revistă de Istorie", Vol. 19 (1966), p. 633-650; Corneliu Dima Drăgan and Livia Bacărău, *Constantin Cantacuzino stolnicul*, București, Editura Albatros, 1970; Virgil Cândea, *Stolnicul între contemporani*, București, Editura Științifică, 1971; and Radu Ștefan Ciobanu, *Pe urmele Stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino*, București, Editura Sport-Turism, 1982.

⁴² See N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii românești*, 1926, Vol. II: *De la 1688 la 1790*; I. Minea, *Despre Dimitrie Cantemir. Omul – scriitorul – domnitorul*, Iași, Viata Românească, 1926; P. P. Panaiteanu, *Dimitrie Cantemir. Viața și opera*, București, Editura Academiei, 1958; Petru Vaida, *Dimitrie Cantemir și umanismul*, București, Editura Minerva, 1972; Constantin Șerban, *Démètre Cantemir dans l'historiographie roumaine et étrangère*, in "Revue Roumaine d'Histoire", Vol. 13 (1973), p. 919-945; *300 de ani de la nașterea lui Dimitrie Cantemir*, București, Editura Academiei, 1974; Suzana-Carmen Dumitrescu (ed.), *Dimitrie Cantemir interpretat de...*, București, Editura Eminescu, 1977; Mihai Berza, *Activitatea istoriografică a lui Dimitrie Cantemir*, in idem, *Pentru o istorie a vechii culturi românești. Culegere de studii*, edited by Andrei Pippidi, București, Editura Eminescu, 1985, p. 150-167; Frederick Kellogg, *Dimitrie Cantemir: Historical Scholar and Architect*, in Lucian Boia (ed.), *Études d'historiographie*, București, Universitatea din București, 1985, p. 103-108; Ecaterina Tarârlungă, *Dimitrie Cantemir: Contribuții documentare la un portret*, București, Editura Minerva, 1989; Stefan Lemny, *Les Cantemir: l'aventure européenne d'une famille princière au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Editions Complexes, 2009, and two works under the assiduous editorship of Andrei Eșanu: *Dinastia Cantemireștilor sec. XVII-XVIII*, Chișinău, Editura Știință, 2008, and *Neamul Cantemireștilor. Bibliografie*, Chișinău, Pontos, 2010.

⁴³ Cp. Kelley, *Faces of History*, p. 218 ff., and Paul Hazard, *The European Mind: The Critical Years*, translated by J. Lewis May 1680-1715, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1953.

⁴⁴ Constantin Șerban, *Constantin Cantacuzino (1640-1716)*, in *Diplomați iluștri*, Vol. II.

⁴⁵ Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 35-36.

obvious that they shared these characteristics with Ureche and Costin. They could be considered the first Romanian historians as such, using the then modern standards of documentation, making certain that they included all possible foreign and domestic resources, and going beyond merely chronicling happenings. They were no longer just narrators: they discussed problems and asked critical questions. In other words, they were self-aware, which is one of the marks of the post-chronicler.

Cantacuzino, scion of an influential Muntenian noble family, studied at the University of Padova and Constantinople and travelled widely (including Germany, France, and England). He was reported to have the largest personal library in the Romanian lands.⁴⁶ He worked with the translation of the great Bucureşti Bible of 1688,⁴⁷ published the first Romanian map of Muntenia in 1700,⁴⁸ and wrote a *Istoria Ţării Româneşti*, the only substantial work which he left behind.⁴⁹ The “predoslovie” of the *Istoria* contains what might be called, according to Pompiliu Teodor, the first systematic considerations of historical method and philosophy in Romanian. *Stolnicul* “didn’t tell history, he argued it,” thus promoting the “spiritual critic” in Romanian historiography.⁵⁰ Cantacuzino was also the first Romanian historian to do really critical study of his sources, which included not only Romanian works, but Latin, Greek, and Byzantine ones as well. His work tended to be more idea oriented than simply event oriented. Typically, Cantacuzino’s history only managed to cover the first part of the history of the Romanians, that is from the Dacians to the Romans to the Fifth century AD. The by-now well-worn trail was followed on the Roman origin of the Romanians, their common Latin-based language, and their continuity from the end of Roman rule to the Medieval emergence of the Principalities. “Romanians from Ardeal, Moldovans, and those from this land [Muntenia] are all one people, all one language.”⁵¹ One new argument was a reference to the absence of any evidence for the complete transfer of the Latin population out of Dacia when the Roman rule was withdrawn.⁵²

⁴⁶ See Mario Ruffini, *Biblioteca stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino*, translated by D. D. Panaiteanu and Titus Pârvulescu, Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1973.

⁴⁷ A copy is in the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington IN.

⁴⁸ The map is 132 cm long by 64 cm wide, or approximately 4'3" by 2'1" and was printed in 1700 at Padova. See Constantin C. Giurescu, *Harta Stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino. O descriere a Munteniei la 1700*, in “Revista istorică română”, Vol. 13 (1943), Nr. 1, p. 1-29. A copy is in the British Museum.

⁴⁹ In full: Constantin Cantacuzino, *Istoria Ţării Rumâneşti, întru care se coprinde numele el cel dintâi, și cine au fost lăcuitorii ei atunci și apoi cine a mai descăldat și cine au stăpânit până și în vremile de acu s-au tras și stă*, edited by N. Cartojan and Dan Simonescu, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 1944.

⁵⁰ See Teodor, *Evoluția gândirii istorice românești*, p. 34.

⁵¹ Constantin Cantacuzino, *Istoria Ţării Româneşti*, Chișinău, Editura Litera, 1998, p. 57.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 64 ff. The impact of his work on his contemporaries is uncertain, given that it was unfinished, was not signed, and was not published until 1853 (Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 42).

Dimitrie Cantemir's career was much shorter than that of Cantacuzino's, but he "succeeded in producing a body of work which not only put him on the first level of Romanian culture in the 17th-18th centuries, but also won him a well-deserved place in European culture."⁵³ His father was elected Prince of Moldova from 1685 to 1693, possibly because his "supporters" thought he would be a weak and pliable ruler (it is not clear who was deceiving whom in this case). Constantin Cantemir was illiterate, but he was determined that his son would have a good education, including at the Orthodox Patriarchate's Academy in Constantinople. Dimitrie was proficient in numerous European and non-European languages (including Turkish, Persian, and Arabic), was the first Romanian Orientalist,⁵⁴ and approached his work from a multi-disciplinary perspective.⁵⁵ Cantemir was implicitly trusted by the Ottomans because of his lengthy sojourn in Constantinople (he spent 22 years there) and his deep familiarity with the Turkish language and culture.

When examining Cantemir's work, Boia cautions us, we must recognize that "Cantemir the historian cannot be understood without understanding Cantemir the politician."⁵⁶ This, of course, is equally true for his predecessors discussed above. His approach to history was that it should be informative and educational, that it should be based on firsthand testimony, and that it should be critically argued.⁵⁷ His book *Descrierea Moldovei* was written in 1716 for the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences to which he had been elected in 1714.⁵⁸ In terms of the problem under consideration here, *Descrierea* was a personally-motivated affirmation of the independence of Moldova based on its ancient origins, its continuity from Rome, and the unity of its language.⁵⁹ (Interestingly,

⁵³ Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 43. It is probably not necessary to note that Cantemir was a polymath *sui generis* figure in Romanian cultural history.

⁵⁴ His work was cited, among others, by Voltaire, Gibbon, Byron, and Hugo. Cf. Mihai Goboglu, *Démètre Cantemir, orientaliste*, in "Studia et Acta Orientalia", Vol. 3 (1961-1962), p. 129-160; Alexandru Duțu, *Dimitrie Cantemir, a Historian of South-East European and Oriental Civilisation*, in "Revue Roumaine d'Histoire", Vol. 13 (1974), p. 31-42; and Stela Toma, *Prefață*, in Dimitrie Cantemir, *Hronicul vechimii a romano-moldo-vlahilor*, Selected text edited by Stela Toma, București, Editura Albatros, 1981, p. xxi.

⁵⁵ See Berza, *Activitatea istoriografică a lui Dimitrie Cantemir*, loc. cit., p. 162 ff. This, according to Berza, was why Cantemir's work surpassed that of Ureche, Costin, and Cantacuzino.

⁵⁶ Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 49. Compare p. 48: "Not only the historian, but also the Prince of Moldova is expressed through his pen." See also Mihai Berza, *Dimitrie Cantemir – omul politic și istoricul*, in idem, *Pentru o istorie a vechii culturi românești*, p. 140-149.

⁵⁷ Kellogg, *Dimitrie Cantemir: Historical Scholar and Architect*, loc. cit., p. 106. He was also the first Romanian historian to use footnotes.

⁵⁸ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descriptio antiqui et hodierni status Moldaviae / Descrierea stării de odinioară și de astăzi a Moldovei*, critical edition edited by Dan Slușanschi, București, Institutul Cultural Român, 2006, with parallel Latin and Romanian texts. See also Emil Pop, *Dimitrie Cantemir și Academia din Berlin*, in "Studii. Revistă de Istorie", Vol. 22 (1969), p. 825-847.

⁵⁹ Linked to the *Descrierea* is Cantemir's now famous 1737 map of Moldova, published in Holland in a direct emulation of Cantacuzino's 1700 map of Muntenia. See G. Vâlsan, *Harta Moldovei de Dimitrie Cantemir*, in "Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice", Seria III, Vol. 46 (1927), p. 193-212 with two annexes; G. Vâlsan, *Opera geografică a principelui*

it appears unlikely that Cantemir was acquainted with Cantacuzino's work. This might show that the ideas of Ureche, Costin, and Cantacuzino were already, so to speak, in the air.)⁶⁰

In 1717-1723, Cantemir wrote the first part of a *Hronicul vechimeei a romano-moldo-vlahilor*, covering the history of the Romanians from Roman times to the appearance of the medieval principalities.⁶¹ As was the case with other influential works in the early Romanian historical writing tradition, this work was not published until considerably later (1835-1836), but its ideas were widely circulated and known orally and in manuscript form.⁶² Its principal themes dealt, as Cantemir's predecessors had, with the origins, unity, and continuity of the Romanians, but there were several differences with these works, including his own *Descrierea*. Deriving his information from over 150 sources in more than a dozen languages, Cantemir went further than Costin by arguing that the Romans had exterminated the Dacians, meaning that the Romanians were descended solely from the Romans, not the Dacians;⁶³ that post-Roman invaders did not have much impact on the indigenous Romanians,⁶⁴ and that the Roman/Romanian populations had not retreated to the mountains, but only to the forests and more remote plains areas, and then only for brief periods of time.⁶⁵ He also intended to write about all of the Romanians, not just the Moldovans or the Muntenians; this task was not completed. Lastly, Cantemir's version of origins reached all the way back to the Greeks since they were the heirs of the Roman Empire, which in turn was the heir of the Greeks. This

Dimitrie Cantemir, in *Lucrările Institutului de Geografie al Universității din Cluj*, Vol. 2 (1924-1925), p. 3-20; and P. P. Panaiteescu, *Contribuții la opera geografică a lui Dimitrie Cantemir*, in "Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice", Seria III, Vol. 8 (1927-1928), p. 175-188 with one annex.

⁶⁰ Berza, *Activitatea istoriografică a lui Dimitrie Cantemir*, p. 161.

⁶¹ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Hronicul vechimeei a romano-moldo-vlahilor*, two volumes, edited by Stela Toma, București, Editura Minerva, 1999-2000. The second part, which was to cover the history of the Romanian lands from the 13th-14th centuries to the present, went unwritten. His *Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, completed in 1717 and intended for the Berlin Academy, but never published, was a kind of preliminary draft. It appeared for the first time in Cantemir, *Opere complete*, critical edition edited by Virgil Cândea, Vol. 9, Tomul I: *De antiquis et hodiernis moldaviae nominibus și Historia Moldo-Vlachica*, edited by Dan Slușanschi, București, Editura Academiei, 1983.

⁶² As a matter of fact, the majority of Cantemir's writings were not published until after his death. However, his son, Antioh, was Russian ambassador in London and Paris, so his *Istoria creșterii și descreșterii Imperiului Otoman*, also written for the Berlin Academy and finished in 1716, was published in English in 1734-35, French in 1743, and German in 1745. It made Cantemir renowned in Western Europe and was the standard reference on the Ottoman Empire until the 1820s. See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Dimitrie Cantemir's Ottoman History and its Reception in England*, in "Revue Roumaine d'Histoire", Vol. 24 (1985), p. 51-66. The Latin manuscript is in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, Cambridge MA.

⁶³ Cantemir, *Hronicul*, 1981, p. 9-10. On the view of Dacians in the 17th century and following, see Ovidia Babu-Buznea, *Dacii în conștiința româncilor noștri*, București, Editura Minerva, 1979.

⁶⁴ Cantemir, *Hronicul*, 1981, p. 39ff.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 174ff. He also rejected the "empty Dacia" argument, p. 100 ff.

meant that “the Romanians represented an uninterrupted tradition of civilization, finding themselves located through their very existence, on the principal highway of human civilization.”⁶⁶ Thus, the Romanians were significant not only in Southeastern Europe: they were an essential part of world history as well. And “By stressing the unity and continuity of the Romanian people in southeastern Europe, Cantemir laid the foundations for the nationalist school of historiography, a school that has dominated Romanian historical letters from the 18th century to the present.”⁶⁷

Cantemir alternated on the throne of Moldova at intervals with his brother, Antioh, but spent a good deal of his time scheming to replace Constantin Brâncoveanu (Prince from 1688-1714) on the Muntenian throne. He ascended to the Moldovan throne with Ottoman help in 1710 as a Russo-Turkish war loomed; he had all along planned to join the Russian side in the war. A disastrous alliance with Peter the Great of Russia led to defeat at Stânileşti in 1711, flight into exile in Russia for the rest of his short life (where he was a member of the Russian Senate and an advisor to Peter the Great in addition to his writing),⁶⁸ and the installation of an Ottoman-controlled Fanariot regime in Moldova. Five years later, with the execution of Stolnicul Cantacuzino and his son, Ştefan (Prince of Muntenia, 1714-1716), by the Turks, the Fanariots were handed the throne of Muntenia as well. Though the Romanian Principalities retained their theoretical autonomy, they were subject to greatly increased financial predations and the cultural balance swung decisively for more than a century to Byzantine and Orthodoxy influenced Greek schooling and approaches. It is interesting that just as the Romanian historical tradition emerged, the autonomy of the Romanian Principalities was in jeopardy. This situation, coupled with the unsatisfactory circumstances of the Transylvanian Romanians contributed to the scholar-patriot, militant nature of Romanian historiography.

Cantemir’s *Hronicul* “brought to a close the heroic phase” of Romanian historical writing in which Romanian scholars had worked out the basic theses concerning their origins and distant past.⁶⁹ Romanian historians had completed the transition from humanist perspectives *vis à vis* the past to an erudite, savant approach. The *Hronicul* would now go on to inspire the efforts of the 18th century Scoala Ardeleană; by 1730, it was in the hands of Transylvanian scholars.⁷⁰ It “thus, was the tie which linked our older historiography with the beginnings of our modern historical writing.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ Berza, *Activitatea istoriografică a lui Dimitrie Cantemir*, p. 164.

⁶⁷ Kellogg, *Dimitrie Cantemir: Historical Scholar and Architect*, loc. cit., p. 106.

⁶⁸ See Ştefan Ciobanu, *Dimitrie Cantemir în Rusia*, in “Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Literare”, Seria III, Vol. 2 (1924), p. 382-548; and P. P. Panaiteanu, *Le prince Démètre Cantemir et le mouvement intellectuel russe sous Pierre le Grande*, in “Revue des Études Slaves”, Vol. 6 (1926), p. 245-262.

⁶⁹ Berza, *Activitatea istoriografică a lui Dimitrie Cantemir*, p. 161.

⁷⁰ Toma, *Prefață*, in Cantemir, *Hronicul*, 1981, p. xxi-xxii.

⁷¹ Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 57.

The center of gravity of Romanian historical writing now shifted from the Principalities to the third Romanian land, Transylvania. Ironically, the Habsburg attempt to hive off the Transylvanian Romanians religiously from their compatriots in the Principalities backfired. As young Transylvanian scholars and future clerics were sent to Vienna and, especially, Rome to study, they encountered even more evidence for the Roman origins of the Romanian people and language and sparked the Transylvanian Romanian cultural revival of the mid-18th and early 19th centuries with the work of what came to be known as the Școala Ardeleană. But that is another story.

Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin, Stolnicul Constantin Cantacuzino, and Prince Dimitrie Cantemir, and others had argued that Romanian was a Latin language and therefore connected to European languages of culture, not just a primitive local language, and they did this in Romanian. Through their work over two centuries, the Latinity of Romanian and the Romanians, their continuity with the Romans, and the resulting cultural unity of the politically-dispersed Romanian people became core commitments of modern Romanian historical writing virtually from the outset.⁷²

III. Romanian historism or Costin's quandry

Romanian historiography had clearly left the realm of the chroniclers by the 1720s. In addition, however, to developing some of the tools and methods of early modern historiography, preparing the ground for moving Romanian historical writing to the next stage in its development, and establishing the modern Romanian historiographical tradition, there were other consequences with long run impacts on Romanian history.

One consequence of the development that we have been following is what Alexandru Zub has labelled as “Romanian historism.”⁷³ Zub’s *Biruit-au gândul*,

⁷² Panaiteanu, *Biruința scrisului*, p. 210-211; Velciu, *Ureche*, p. 337. On the themes, see Dimitre Onciu, *Opere complete*, Vol. I: *Originea Principatelor Române*, critical edition edited by Aurelian Sacerdoteanu, București, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, 1946; Nicolae Stoicescu, *Continuitatea românilor. Privire istoriografică, istoricul problemei, dovezile continuuității*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980, English edition 1983; Nicolae Stoicescu, *Unitatea românilor în evul mediu*, București, Editura Academiei, 1983, English edition, *The Age-Old Factors of Romanian Unity* 1986; Paul E. Michelson, *Unity and Continuity in Romanian History*, in “Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism”, Vol. 8 (1981), Bibliography, p. 29-69, *Romania*, in Gale Stokes (ed.), *Nationalism in the Balkans*, New York, Garland Press, 1984, p. 31-67, and *Themes in Modern and Contemporary Romanian Historiography*, in Stanislav J. Kirschbaum (ed.), *East European History. Selected Papers of the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, Columbus OH, Slavica Publishers, 1988, p. 27-40; Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2001, p. 33-39 on problems, and p. 83-151, on origins, continuity, and unity; and Aurel Pop, *Istoria, adevărul și miturile*, Editura Enciclopedică, 2002, p. 93-182, on the same three topics.

⁷³ It must be stressed that this is something quite different from and should not be confused with the “historicism” that dominated German historical thinking in the 19th and 20th centuries, which was “the tendency to interpret the whole of reality... in historical, that is to say, relative

though published as a collection of essays published or written at various times, is in fact an acute and dense analysis of the “cearta pentru istorie,” beginning with an argument which might be called “Costin’s Quandry”. The conflict between “civic passion and intellectual scruple” plagued Miron Costin, who struggled with the dilemma “originating in the confrontation of the need to elaborate the origins of the Romanian people with the pressing and unforgiving duties of the day,” in other words, how to reconcile the duties of the true scholar on the one hand and the call of civic responsibilities (in this case, political) on the other.⁷⁴ This was and is a real problem. “The dilemma appears insoluble because the historian needs to conduct himself as a scholar at the same time that exterior factors can undermine his objectivity.”⁷⁵ Costin wound up trying to do both, hoping that patriotism and scholarship could be combined: “biruit-au gândul.”

All of the key contributors to the story of the origins of Romanian history writing told above – Ureche, Costin, Cantacuzino, Cantemir – were cut from the same cloth: “scholars and men of action... deeply involved in the social and political life of their time.”⁷⁶ They were, thus, both participants in history – the makers of history – as well as being students of the past – the writers of history.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, given the Romanians’ geographical position, identified by Ureche as “being in the path of all evils,”⁷⁸ and given human nature, the activist impulse often wound up triumphing over the scholarly one.⁷⁹

Alexandru Duțu has cogently labelled this the philosopher-patriot or scholar-patriot tradition.⁸⁰ The philosopher-patriot cannot afford to sit in the archives calmly marshaling evidence for a monograph; he is deeply involved in the life and survival of his society. The “philosopher-patriot”, of course, suggests counterparts: the historian-patriot, the geographer-patriot, the

terms. The emphasis centered upon the idea of change itself, and everything, including ethics and religion, was subjected to an analysis on the basis of a logic not of being, but of becoming.” (Hayden V. White, *Translator’s Introduction on History and Historicism*, in Carlo Antoni, *From History to Sociology. The Transition in German Historical Thinking*, translated by Hayden V. White, London, Merlin Press, 1962, p. xvii). Emphasis in the original. See also Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, München, R. Oldenbourg, 1936, 4th edition, 1965; English translation 1972.

⁷⁴ See the overview by Zub, *Biruit-au gândul*, p. 11-14. On Romanian humanism and civic spirit, see Duțu, *Modernization of Romanian Culture*, p. 15: the Romanian “humanists’ keen interest in social and political matters lent a dominant feature to Romanian humanism – its civic spirit...”.

⁷⁵ Zub, *Biruit-au gândul*, p. 26.

⁷⁶ Duțu, *Romanian Humanists*, p. 8.

⁷⁷ Elsewhere, Zub suggests a paradox by quoting both Bismarck (“The main thing is to make history, not to write it.”) and Oscar Wilde (“Anybody can make history, but only a great man can write it.”) See Al. Zub, *A scrie și a face istorie (Istoriografia română postpașoptistă)*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1981, p. 11.

⁷⁸ “...sfînd în calea răutăților” (Ureche, *Letopiseul Tării Moldovei*, 1916, p. 8).

⁷⁹ The impact of power-holding on people, so trenchantly identified by Lord Acton, cannot be overemphasized: “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Lord Acton to Mandell Creighton, Cannes, April 5, 1887, *Acton-Creighton Correspondence*, in Lord Acton, *Selected Writings of Lord Acton*, Vol. II: *Essays in the Study and Writing of History*, edited by J. Rufus Fears, Indianapolis, Liberty Classics, 1985, p. 383.

⁸⁰ Duțu, *Modernization of Romanian Culture*, p. 47-74.

economist-patriot, the sociologist-patriot, and so forth. In the end, for these hyphenated patriot-scholars the line between scholarship and national advocacy was not always clear. “Intersecting interests” give way to the assimilation of the philosopher by the patriot, with dire consequences for the long run.⁸¹

Indeed, the “beginnings of the Romanian national movement is strongly linked to the development of [Romanian] historical science, which constituted an important weapon [*armă de luptă*] in support of the aspirations of the Romanian people.”⁸²

Zub concedes that “the struggle of Romanian scholars, particularly historians, to re-cover collective dignity... preceded and always accompanied the defensive efforts of our people, projecting it into history and fostering thereby the rise of of national militantism,” though “it would be a mistake to believe that geopolitically motivated militarism was the only impulse and notable manifestation of Romanian historiography.”⁸³ In the end, he is hopeful that “civic duty and the exigencies of the discipline” could be reconciled as long as the ethical dimension is stressed. The “establishment of the truth depends on the historian, and the historian is ‘under the times’. It is a difficult but not impossible task.”⁸⁴ The story of 19th and 20th century historiography shows that this is problematic at best.

The exhortation of Julien Benda’s *La trahison des clercs* is relevant here.⁸⁵ Benda explored what happens when intellectuals are seduced by politics and political passions (particularly national passions), citing especially the German school of history (e.g., Mommsen, Treitschke, and others).⁸⁶ Benda’s argument was that the job of the intellectual is to place scholarship above state and nation, to constructively critique the morals and ethos of society, and to be impartial in analysis.⁸⁷ To put the state, nation, or party first, to seek power rather than holding it accountable, to be a partisan rather than a disinterested observer, to exchange intellectual integrity for political and/or material advantage were acts that Benda categorized as the “treason of the intellectuals.” The result he

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 71-73.

⁸² Boia, *Evoluția istoriografiei române*, p. 3, which further notes that Romanian national development “has its roots deeply embedded in history.”

⁸³ Zub, *Biruit-ai gândul*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 32-34. In *A scrie...*, p. 12, Zub observes that “the historiography of the 19th century... evolved particularly under the stars of the political and had to reflect contemporary struggles, the same ‘cares and haggling’ which led M. Costin to lament and which seem somehow inherent in historical writing.”

⁸⁵ J. Benda, *La trahison des clercs*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1928. Helpfully, there is a Romanian edition, *Trădarea cărturarilor* (București, Editura Humanitas, 1993), with an illuminating preface by Andrei Pippidi. Pippidi may be a bit pessimistic when he sees but a single example in Interwar Romanian culture of Benda’s scholarly ideal – Paul Zarifopol – but they were rare in South Eastern Europe... and elsewhere.

⁸⁶ Benda, *Trădarea*, p. 63-79.

⁸⁷ Criticism and disagreement is not a sign of impiety or animus. There are encouraging signs that Romanian historiography and culture are beginning to see this. In fact, this should be the essence of the “Spiritual critic.”

foresaw in 1928 was "the organized slaughter of nations or classes."⁸⁸ Appallingly, he turned out to be right.

The late modernization of the Romanians also encouraged historism. Tudor Vianu wrote that in the 19th century, Romanian

culture found itself in an interesting process of rational adaptation... centuries old traditional forces weakened, at a certain moment because of... an entire series of economic and political conditions through which the country needed to pass at a certain stage of its development... It was then that this preoccupation appeared in our literature about who we are, thinking about Romanian culture and its purposes.⁸⁹

History, or rather historism, was a key element in this preoccupation. National regeneration went hand in hand with historiographical regeneration as "the effort of a nation to escape servitude" led to an "obsession for recuperation."⁹⁰

Why these preoccupations, this stretching of historiography beyond its limits, this apparent conviction that everything can and must be unravelled and justified by history? A further explanation can be found in Hugh Seton-Watson's discussion of three types of developmental processes in modern European history. These are: "State and nation may grow up together, at approximately equal pace; a state may be formed before there is a nation; and a nation may come into existence before a state... The best-known cases of the third type of process were first seen in the Balkans and the Danubian lands, and this accounts for the view that there has been something 'special' about national movements in Eastern Europe... Nationalism in search of a state," he concludes, "has brought much trouble to the human race, but it cannot be ascribed to a specifically east European form of original sin."⁹¹

Boia concurs: "The path taken by Romanian society in the nineteenth century can be summed up in terms of three great problems, which also had a decisive impact on the relationship of the Romanians to their own past."⁹² These were 1) the national idea; 2) the problem of the modernization/Westernization of Romanian society; and 3) Romanian choices of Western models, which led to a Westernizer/nativist debate.

The problem of modernization unfortunately also led to the primacy of the political and political nationalism.⁹³ As the Romanian nation emerged, historism

⁸⁸ Benda, *Trădarea*, p. 183.

⁸⁹ Tudor Vianu, *Filosofia culturii*, 2nd edition, Bucuresti, Editura Publicom, 1945, p. 287. For some stimulating comments on Romanian culture, modernization, and politics, see Daniel Barbu, *Modernizarea*, in his *Șapte teme de politică românească*, București, Antet, 1997, p. 17 ff. Also useful are the articles in the theme volume *Modernizarea în spațiul românesc* of "Xenopoliana", Vol. 6 (1998), Nr. 1-2.

⁹⁰ Zub, *A scrie...*, p. 8-9.

⁹¹ Hugh Seton-Watson, *On Trying to be a Historian of Eastern Europe*, in Dennis Deletant and Harry Hanak (eds.), *Historians as Nation-Builders. Central and South-East Europe*, London, Macmillan, 1988, p. 10-11.

⁹² Boia, *History and Myth*, p. 33-39.

⁹³ Zub, *A scrie...*, p. 9.

played a key role politically and Romanian national and nationalist arguments were substantially history-based.⁹⁴ Even internal political argument tended to focus on historical issues.⁹⁵ Defense of the nation and historiography were intimately entwined, and though the thrust of these arguments differed from one region of Romania to another, they nourished each other. National heroes served distinctly political purposes, such as Mihai Viteazul for the Muntenians, Ștefan cel Mare for the Moldovans, and Decebal and the Daco-Romanians for the Transylvanians.⁹⁶

This, in part, is what R. W. Seton-Watson, was talking about in his seminal 1922 University of London inaugural address on *The Historian as a Political Force in Central Europe*.⁹⁷ The historians of Central Europe played the major role as the “political driving force” which carried the emerging nations of the area in the 19th century. Indeed, “the historical tradition was to play an absolutely decisive part, to rescue whole nations from oblivion and eventually to present the new generation of schoolboys with a radically different map.”⁹⁸

However, historians in politics have had a number of serious drawbacks in Eastern Europe (and elsewhere),⁹⁹ including dividing the world into those who are true to their nationality and those who are not, those who are friends of a nationality and those who are its enemies; creating an “alliance between history and politics”, with intellectuals often serving as catpaws for devious governments and politicians; and fostering cultural systems that were becoming more and more dependent on the state for support.¹⁰⁰ In 1922, this might not have looked to be a very grave problem; soon it would come time to pay the piper.

The result, as Robert R. King wrote, is a situation in which “national consciousness is closely linked with history in Eastern Europe, and therefore takes on emotional and patriotic overtones... Few areas are as history-minded...”

⁹⁴ Cf. Ștefan Lemny, *Originea și cristalizarea ideii de patrie în cultura română*, București, Editura Minerva, 1986.

⁹⁵ See Boia, *History and Myth*, p. 31 ff. for examples.

⁹⁶ See Sorin Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la românii ardeleni*, București, Humanitas, 1997.

⁹⁷ R. W. Seton-Watson, *The Historian as a Political Force in Central Europe*, London, School of Slavonic Studies/Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1922.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 21-22, 27.

⁹⁹ Edward Shils’ work on the general ineffectiveness of intellectuals in politics is another ramification that cannot be pursued here. See, *inter alia*, Edward A. Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers, and Other Essays*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972. The bottom line is that intellectuals qua intellectuals are inherently incapacitated politically.

¹⁰⁰ Seton-Watson, *The Historian as a Political Force*, p. 22-27. He notes that “Treitschke certainly did more than any other man to poison the wells of historical science in Germany and to give currency to the seductive but immoral motto, ‘My country, right or wrong...’” (p. 26) For further discussion, see my *The Historian as a Political Force in Central Europe: R. W. Seton-Watson’s 1922 Inaugural Address*, in Mihai Iacobescu, Gheorghe Cliveti, and Dinu Balan (eds.), *Slujind-o pe Clio. In Honorem Dumitru Vitcu*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 2010, p. 321-334.

history is perhaps the most important foundation stone of national consciousness; the past is not a subject for harmless small talk.”¹⁰¹

Henry L. Roberts, in dealing with what he calls three “almost obsessive preoccupations in Eastern European historiography: the question of origins, of continuity, and of Eastern Europe’s connection with Western Europe”¹⁰² – all of which were present in Romanian culture as we have seen – draws two conclusions which are of significance for us here. Firstly, these questions are not unique to Eastern Europe, but “somehow seem more vexing in Eastern Europe”; and, secondly, East European historiography seems to ask “history and historical evidence [to] carry a burden of meaning which is intrinsically beyond them.”¹⁰³

Historiographical tradition, late modernization, and the intersection of the national, the nation, and politics do a good deal to explain Romanian historism. But explanation is not a justification for disregarding excesses and flaws. Nor will good intentions any longer provide exoneration. Now is the time to make aspirations realities, not to make excuses. Let us recognize that Romanian national development made it difficult, if not impossible, for the scholar to perch benignly in his or her ivory tower. But let us also recognize that the time may have come for scholars to renounce politics and the temptations of power as well as the activist allurements in Costin’s Quandry. “Perhaps we can try,” Lucian Boia writes, “not to forget history, but to be a little less obsessed with it... We cannot remain prisoners of the past.”¹⁰⁴

In the end, however well-intentioned, Romanian scholars not only adopted political passions, they also brought these passions into their scholarly work. This has colored and marred their work as they become the servants of their political passions rather than of truth.¹⁰⁵ Passions are fine for poets, but not for scholars. The result can be an abandonment the historian’s calling, praising power rather than speaking to it prophetically, abandoning the universal and the just for the particular, the practical, and a cult of success.¹⁰⁶ A truly Weberian *wertfrei* may be unachievable, but it is a goal that should be striven for nevertheless.

¹⁰¹ Robert R. King, *Minorities under Communism. Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 171.

¹⁰² Roberts, *Eastern Europe...*, p. 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 5 ff.

¹⁰⁴ Boia, *History and Myth*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ Benda, *Trădarea*, p. 80-88.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 88 ff.