

# SOCIETY FOR ROMANIAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER



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The Society for Romanian Studies

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## *from the President*



**Roland Clark**  
**SRS President**

The world has changed considerably in the past few months, with every country that SRS members call home being rocked by COVID-19-related illness and deaths, lockdowns, and travel restrictions. With the spectre of a second wave on the horizon, we have decided to postpone the 2021 SRS conference until summer 2022, when it will be held in Timișoara, hosted by the West University of Timișoara and the Timișoara Art Museum. Preparations for the conference are already underway, so keep an eye out for further information as it becomes available. Hopefully you

have already noticed the call for applications for the 2020 SRS Graduate Student Essay Prize, which once again promises to be a high-quality competition.

This issue of the SRS Newsletter represents a sustained reflection on how the pandemic has impacted Romanian Studies. It begins with Letters from Lockdown, in which Maria Bucur (USA), Stefano Bottoni (Italy), Oana-Valentina Suci (Romania), and Petru Negură (Moldova) talk about how their lives, research, and teaching has been affected. Leah Valtin-Erwin then interviews Raul Cârstocea (UK) and R. Chris Davis (USA), asking about their very different strategies and experiences of teaching online at short notice. Péter Berta, the author of *Materializing Difference: Consumer Culture, Politics, and Ethnicity among Romanian Roma* (2019), reports on the crisis in Crăciunești, where he did his fieldwork, showing how the virus has exacerbated existing ethnic, economic, and social problems. Jonathan Stillo brings his skills as a medical anthropologist to bear in an analysis of the Romanian medical system and its preparedness to combat COVID-19. As many of us turn to teaching and researching online, the SRS has assembled a one-of-its-kind list of some of the best digitized resources currently available to students and scholars, including open access journals, digitized library and archive collections, and other digital collections. The list is accompanied by an interview with Julie Dawson, director of a new archival survey of Jewish-history related material in the regions of Transylvania and Bukovina. Dawson has spent the past six years cataloging archives related to Jewish communities in large parts of Romania, presenting her findings in a state-of-the-art digital resource which will be invaluable for students and scholars planning future research on Romanian Jewish history and culture. Sadly, we end this issue with the obituaries of two people who have shaped Romanian Studies in unique ways - Vintilă Mihăilescu and Robert Levy. Both will be sorely missed.

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# From the President

*cont'd.*

While remaining alert to the ways our world continues to change, we are also looking to the future. Congratulations to Diana Dumitru, Irina Livezeanu, Dragoș Petrescu, and Mihaela Șerban on their recent election to the SRS Board, and thanks to Gerard Weber (chair), Alexandra Chiriac, and Rodica Milena Zaharia for serving as this year's committee judging the 2020 SRS Graduate Student Essay Prize. We also have a brand new committee looking into establishing partnerships with specialist Romanian Studies journals as a way of helping us promote cutting edge research in the field. Marius Wamsiedel (chair), Petru Negură, Anca Șincan, and Cristian Tileagă are all serving on this committee. Finally, a new SRS website is just around the corner and should be launched in June 2020, together with a revamped payment system and information about all of the organization's activities. Despite the disruption, the SRS has a great deal on its plate for 2020 and greatly appreciates your continued involvement and support.

## Announcements

**Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović** and **Mircea Măran** published *Biserica Ortodoxă Română din Banatul Iugoslav în perioadă interbelică (1918-1941)* with Cluj University Press in 2019.

**Adriana Lazăr's** doctoral thesis *Les revues roumaines d'avant-garde au défi du réseau international* was published online. It can be viewed and downloaded [here](#).

**Christian Norocel's** co-edited volume, *Nostalgia and Hope: Intersections between Politics of Culture, Welfare, and Migration in Europe*, was published by Springer in 2020. The volume includes chapters on Romania by Norocel and **Radu Cinpoș** as well as **Alexandra Ana**.

**Alex Tipei** has accepted a tenure-track position at the University of Montreal, the largest Francophone institution in the world, beginning this fall. She will be teaching in the Department of History and the International Studies Program. She hopes that her first semester will be face-to-face and plans to develop a course on Romanian history down the road.

# 12th Annual SRS Graduate Student Essay Prize

## Twelfth Annual Graduate Student Essay Prize

We are pleased to announce the **Twelfth Annual Graduate Student Essay Prize competition** for an outstanding unpublished essay or thesis chapter. The submitted single-author work must be written in English by a graduate student in any social science or humanities discipline on a Romanian or Moldovan subject, broadly and inclusively understood.

The 2020 prize consists of \$250 plus an individual, one-year membership to SRS that includes a subscription to the journal, valued at \$75. The second-place award of honorable mention includes a one-year subscription to the journal.

The competition is open to current MA and doctoral students or to those who defended dissertations in the academic year 2019–2020. The submitted work should have been completed during the 2018–19 academic year. If the essay is a dissertation chapter, it should be accompanied by the dissertation abstract and table of contents. Expanded versions of conference papers are also acceptable if accompanied by a description of the panel and the candidate's conference paper proposal. Candidates should clearly indicate the format of the essay submitted. Essays/chapters should be up to 10,000 words double-spaced, including citations.

Candidates should clearly indicate their institutional affiliation. Include as well your current e-mail and postal addresses so that you may be contacted. Questions can be directed to the chair of the committee, Gerard Weber, at Gerard.Weber@bcc.cuny.edu. Please send a copy of the essay, any accompanying documentation (as both Word and PDF please) and an updated CV to Gerard.Weber@bcc.cuny.edu

Applicants are not required to be members of SRS in order to apply.

**Deadline for submissions is 15 July 2020. The winners will be announced on 1 November 2020.**

### **SRS Essay Prize Committee Members:**

**Gerard Weber** (Chair)  
Department of Social Sciences  
Bronx Community College  
City University of New York  
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**Alexandra Chiriac**  
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More information can be found [here](#).

# Letters from Lockdown

We asked scholars to reflect on life in lockdown and how the pandemic has impacted their professional lives in different parts of the world.

## MY COVID SABBATICAL

**Maria Bucur-Deckard**

**John W. Hill Professor, Department of History, Department of Gender Studies  
Indiana University**

“ I don’t mean to brag, but after growing up in Bucharest and travelling between Romania and the United States for 35 years, in January 2020 I felt completely prepared for my sabbatical trip there. I knew what it meant to use public transportation in the winter between Băneasa and Piața Romană. I knew what sorts of long johns and socks to wear to stay comfortable both in freezing weather and in the overheated reading rooms of the National Archives across from Cișmigiu. I knew where to find my favorite foods, what cab companies are not reliable, where to find a good swimming pool, and what open market had the best cheese from Sibiu.

But this has been like no other sabbatical. As I plowed my way through thousands of pages of archival and published materials with my trusted phone, I also started to observe people becoming more uncomfortable on their daily morning commute—stuck together on a bus that became a living petri dish for COVID. The high schoolers riding the bus were nonchalant, but everyone else started eying others and trying to secure some distance, when none was available. I was also living with friends who are in the target age group for increased vulnerability to COVID, so my own decisions had to become more thoughtful of the danger I posed to them. But I had no choice with regard to my research: the institutions where I spent most of my waking hours were filled with people I didn’t know and couldn’t check, most of them not wearing any protective gear. I have never felt such anxiety walking into an archive. Any door, table, or other surface I touched had also been touched by several hundred other people, some of them coughing next to me.

In the meantime, my wonderful co-author Mihaela Miroiu had arranged a tour throughout Romania to launch our translated book, *Birth of Democratic Citizenship*, in Sibiu, Cluj, Hunedoara, and Bucharest. This series of events sent me away from the main focus of my research, but brought me closer to another set of relevant documents in Hunedoara. However, my main focus there was to promote the book in person, by being present in front of large audiences breathing closely together, and through interviews on radio and television. Mihaela cracked jokes about us being COVID free at the beginning of each event. They sounded a lot more lighthearted back then, at the end of February, than they do now.



Book launch with Mihaela Miroiu in Bucharest, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

continued →

# Letters from Lockdown

*cont'd.*

My sabbatical was cut short on March 10<sup>th</sup>, when I came to understand that most commercial air travel to the United States would be severely curtailed and when all institutions in which I was doing research closed down indefinitely. I spent a few more days trying to figure out whether air travel then was safer or more dangerous than it might become later, and I finally decided to return to the United States when it became apparent that my presence at home was necessary in order to take care of my family. When I left my country of birth to join my family in my country of choice, Mihaela looked at me and said with enormous sadness in her voice: “I don’t know if we will see each other again.” I thought it was a ridiculous statement. How would it be possible for us not to see each other again? How could I possibly imagine never returning to Romania to see the places and people I love, to walk the streets where I first fell in love and then witnessed the 1989 Revolution? Today, after 2 months of lockdown and no clear end in sight, I am beginning to feel the same way as Mihaela: I don’t know if I will see Romania again. And I have no words to describe the sadness that fills me when I think that. Because I can’t utter it out loud.”



Celebrating Alex Tipei’s new position at University of Montreal in the Heathrow Airport on our way to Chicago, also with Roberto Jimenez. Photo by the Romanian waiter who was hoping to make it back home but was stuck in London.

**Stefano Bottoni**  
Senior Lecturer, Department of History  
University of Florence

## FROM BUDAPEST

“ I am academically based in Florence, while my family is in Budapest and my parents in Bologna. Thus, the pandemic had a disruptive impact on the daily routine of a frequent flyer. When the Italian lockdown came into effect in early March, I got stuck at my parents’ flat and spent many depressing days, feeling lost in the global madness I was part of. For transborder commuters like myself, COVID-19 was more than a health issue. It forced me to reshape my life strategy. And what surprised me the most as a historian was my ability to rapidly adapt to the unprecedented challenge. I could not help thinking that the shocking processes I had been routinely studying for 20 years – Sovietization, stalinist machine power, or the end of communist rule in Romania – might have sparked quite similar adaptive reactions from those affected. It was fascinating to observe and also *feel* how fast and smoothly we could change attitudes after going under pressure. Before March 2020, I could have never imagined spending entire weeks at home, cleaning the house on Saturday, or lecturing online to my students (not to mention online staff meetings, which spare me hours of travel and a significant ecological footprint). All of these happened, and I feel that, after all, COVID-19 holds a strong message for us: do not live faster than you can afford and learn to enjoy everything you are allowed to do. So I have now much more quality time to read my students’ papers and prepare my online meetings, and my fellow students also seem more receptive than usual. Because we all know how difficult the situation is, and we all do our best to overcome it. I wish we could save this empathy and mutual goodwill for the better times to come.”



# Letters from Lockdown

*cont'd.*

**Bucharest, March 15<sup>th</sup> 2020 –  
still counting...**

**Oana-Valentina Suciu**  
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science,  
University of Bucharest



“What will I remember from this strange period? The smell of disinfectants all over the place. Doing my best to breathe under the surgical mask. The weekly brief shopping trip to the neighbourhood supermarket. The worried looks of the few people met in the street. Crossing on the other side of the road when spotting another person coming my way. The urban silence reminding me of the last years of communism, when almost all cars were grounded due to the gas shortages. The sound of the sirens from the ambulances, speeding towards the ER (I live close to the main emergency hospital in Bucharest). The joy of hearing the voice of a neighbour child playing with one of the parents for 15 minutes in the inner garden of the building. The pleasure of listening to the song of the blackbirds in the same garden. The daily phone conversations with my parents (whom I didn’t get to visit for over two months). The food and other goods deliveries. The care provided by my next-door neighbours, Ligia and Dragoş. Our conversations in front of the apartments, with the mandatory two meters between us (“la portiță”). The smile on my face each time I was asked by many friends if there is anything that I need. The new meaning of the question “How are you?” (“Cum ești? Ești bine?”) The ingenious memes and cartoons invading the social networks, making fun of the situation, but actually lifting our spirits. Following the civic engagement of thousands of people in a huge effort of helping those in need. Criticizing the politicians. The speed with which my students adapted to the online teaching. Their hard work and good quality humour, which probably forged, ironically, a closer connection among themselves and with me. Working on the online admission process for the faculty. Learning Moodle. Organizing, on April 24<sup>th</sup>, a public reading commemorating the Armenian Genocide and the intensity of the feelings crossing the screen throughout that evening. Reading the news. Reading my students papers and proposals. The tens of daily emails and messages. Being tired but satisfied when classes went well. My cat, Pupulină, being promoted to “teaching assistant” – that is, if she keeps popping up on screen. Finding out about my students’ pets. Watching some cool political thrillers. Reading good fiction. Finally deciding to invest in a pick-up. Listening to old tapes and LPs. Trying to take the whole situation for what it is. And, after all, tomorrow is another day.”

## Moldova Against Coronavirus: State's Weaknesses and Society's Forms of Solidarity

Petru Negură

Lecturer, Free International University of Moldova  
Researcher, The Centre for Sociology and Social Psychology  
Institute for Legal, Political and Sociological Research



“The COVID-19 pandemic revealed, as in a drop of water, a series of weaknesses of the Moldovan society, but also unsuspected strengths.

The crisis reveals the low “social capital” of Moldovan society. Confidence in politicians and state authorities has now reached its lowest levels (according to a poll, 60% of respondents do not trust any politician). The low confidence in the political establishment led to very low trust in the official interpretation of the events in the context of the pandemic and at the same time to a wide adherence to conspiracy scenarios. According to the same opinion poll, half of the respondents would admit that “the [COVID-19] virus is no more dangerous than common flu and everything is done intentionally to destroy the economy.” Government and opposition politicians, as well as the politically engaged press, try to exploit events politically and geopolitically, especially with regard to foreign aid. The measures of “social distancing” went hand in hand with the increase of social distance (perception of social difference) towards certain groups and especially towards returning Moldovans.

The pandemic caught the state completely unprepared, as the authorities themselves confessed, bringing to the fore a weak and inefficient health system. Society has shown itself quite atomized and distrustful during the virus, often opposing state action in this regard. Unlike many Asian countries, but like other European countries, Moldova has not experienced a pandemic of similar proportions in recent decades. The WHO itself predicted an explosion in the number of people infected with COVID-19 to more than 30,000 cases by mid-April (12 times more than there were, in reality, with about 2,000 infected people in mid-April, and more than 7,000 confirmed cases and 250 deaths by May 25). The panic that arose at the beginning gave way to widespread distrust, frustration and dissatisfaction.

Deeply embedded within kinship and friendship networks, most Moldovans experienced the quarantine as a form of violence against their psychosocial nature. It is not surprising, therefore, that the partial lifting of the restrictions, with the end of the state of emergency, on May 15, caused an outbreak of resocialization and released some social pressure, with uncertain effects on the curve of COVID-19 infections, growing steadily so far.

The pandemic also provoked, at least in Chişinău, manifestations of solidarity that a few would have suspected before. Several restaurant chains have offered, since the first days of the quarantine, free lunches to medical staff in hospitals and clinics. Taxi and private drivers volunteered to transport doctors to and from work. A grassroots group, self-titled “Together Against COVID-19,” mobilized hundreds of volunteers through Facebook to help the elderly and other vulnerable people with food packages. Another informal group called the “Blue Hut” (metaphor of the sky as a roof), raised an impressive amount of money in record time through a crowdfunding campaign on the Internet to ensure homeless people with food and basic products after the interruption of the soup kitchens’ activity. Lunches were partially offered by two large restaurant chains in Chisinau.

The ongoing crisis will certainly provide food for thought to decision-makers, but also to civil society leaders, especially on the resilience of society and capacity of state institutions to intervene effectively and synergistically, in crises and in daily life.”

# Teaching Online

*An interview with Raul Cârstocea about the sudden transition to remote instruction and the challenges of research in lockdown.*

**Please tell us about yourself and your professional background.**

I am a historian of modern and contemporary Romania, with research interests that cover Jewish history, anti-Semitism, nationalism, fascism, and the Holocaust, and, more broadly, state formation and nation-building processes in 19th and 20th century Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe and their consequences for minority groups. I hold a PhD from University College London (UCL), where I also worked as a Teaching Fellow. Prior to my current post at Leicester, I was a Lecturer in European Studies and Senior Research Associate at the European Centre for Minority Issues at the University of Flensburg, Germany and held research fellowships at the Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena, the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg, the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies.



**Dr. Raul Cârstocea**  
**Lecturer, Department of History**  
**University of Leicester**

**Where do you teach at present? What courses do you teach? How would you characterize the student body you work with and the educational environment in which you teach?**

I am a Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Leicester and a member of the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies there. I teach a range of courses, from first-year introductory modules on modern European history, through second-year historiography modules, to more specialized courses (for example, I teach one on class in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany and England as well as a module I designed on empires and nations in Central and Eastern Europe, 1848-1918). I also teach a postgraduate course on the Holocaust and genocide, and, perhaps of particular importance for SRS, a first-year optional course I designed on the Holocaust in Romania. I really enjoy teaching at Leicester, and I've had great experiences so far co-teaching with colleagues on a number of courses. The students are a bit less international than I am used to, having taught at UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) and for the European Studies programme at the University of Flensburg – which, as the only English-language programme in a German university, attracts a large number of international students (in 2018-19, when I left, I had students from all continents except Australia). In Leicester, the majority of students are British but, since I teach the European history modules, those who take them have an interest in a broader history than just that of Britain. As for those who choose a course on the Holocaust in Romania (which, much to my surprise, was over-enrolled last term), I think their intellectual curiosity speaks for itself.

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**When did you transition to teaching online? How would you characterize that transition? What major obstacles have you encountered?**

I transitioned to teaching online on March 13th, when the University of Leicester decided to cancel all face-to-face teaching activities. There was a lot of confusion initially, as that week there had been rumors regarding a possible transition online, followed by some indications from the university that this might happen, news of other universities switching to online teaching in the course of that week, and then the eventual announcement at the end of the day on Friday March 13th that the decision was made. The situation was further complicated by the fact that we were just coming out of a long period of industrial action, which meant that classes had been cancelled or rescheduled. My personal circumstances also made this more complicated, as my family is currently living in Germany, so I was frantically watching the news about lockdowns and borders closing, trying to prevent being stuck in the UK, away from my family, for an indefinite period. I eventually booked my flight and left the next morning, on Saturday 14 March, so this was a very rushed departure, with minimum preparation, as you can imagine. That said, I was lucky, and I am very pleased with the University of Leicester's response: it cancelled face-to-face activities early, anticipating the government response, which instituted a lockdown in the UK only on the 23rd of March. Not only do I think this helped contain the spread of SARS-CoV-2 on campus, but also, on a personal note, March 23rd would have been too late for me to reach my family, as Germany had already closed its borders to non-citizens by then.

I had never taught online before, so there was a lot to learn very quickly. We use a recording system for lecture capture at the University of Leicester, so covering lectures was relatively easy, as in some instances we could use or adapt recorded lectures from previous years, and recording them is in any case straightforward, as PowerPoint presentations with a voice-over. The more difficult part involved the online seminars, where I was really keen to hold the remaining meetings, especially since the course on the Holocaust in Romania, which I had designed, was exclusively seminar-based. As the second term at the University of Leicester (and in most UK universities) ended at the end of March this year, we were lucky once again, because there were only two weeks left of teaching. Colleagues at my former university in Germany, where the summer semester started in mid-March, had to cover an entire semester with online delivery, for example.

Since I had never done this before and was not familiar with the technology, the first days involved frantic efforts to familiarise myself with it and learn just what I could and could not do online. Once again the University of Leicester has been amazing in its response: training sessions were provided (I attended several of them, one even twice), we were given a lot of background information on online teaching, and there was a huge effort from IT Services and other Professional Services to ensure that we get up to speed with online delivery. This is truly remarkable, considering that the university instituted a complete closure of the campus over the week of March 16th-20th and many members of staff provided these trainings were themselves working remotely, etc.

I was, of course, afraid of glitches in the technology, that things would not work as they did in the trainings, but they did, and I had several successful classes, including the more interactive seminar sessions. Student online attendance was good (not quite as impressive as it had been in the course of the term, but great under the circumstances, especially since many students were themselves travelling home), there was participation from their side (so the seminars did not turn into lecture sessions, as I initially feared), the fact I could share my screen meant I could do all the things I normally do in class (use a PPT, show images and film clips, do exercises where I could divide the students in smaller groups, etc.), so overall things worked.

There was one thing that didn't work, despite great support I got from both Library and IT Services, namely showing a film I had planned to show in the last session of the course on the Holocaust in Romania (Radu Jude's *I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians*), which would then be concluded by a discussion. Showing it on my screen slowed down the connection, and the quality of both video and audio on the 'receiving' side was very bad, so I had to give it up eventually. I showed students instead a few YouTube clips from the film with English subtitles (two trailers and two short excerpts available online), and those worked absolutely fine. I think the film could have been digitised by IT Services and showed online, but with the campus closure this could not be done. This is the one major obstacle I encountered and couldn't really solve.

That said, of course the experience is different, and poorer, than in-class interaction. Students were eager to participate, but nowhere near the usual enthusiasm I was used to in my classes. There was perhaps also the general atmosphere of sadness and worry that came with the pandemic and the lockdown that was partly responsible for it, but, if you asked my honest opinion, I don't think face-to-face teaching can ever be replaced by online delivery – not if we want to keep the same quality or level of direct engagement, especially in seminars. It's fine as a crisis solution, but I worry if this becomes institutionalized in the future. Following those weeks of actual teaching, student contact in the current term is limited to online sessions using a variety of software, and these one-on-one sessions work fairly well, although I would say much better for the more confident postgraduate students (especially PhDs) than for undergraduates.

**In what ways does this crisis impact fields such as Romanian studies, Eastern European studies, history of the Holocaust, etc.? What do you expect to be the long-term consequences of this crisis for education in these fields?**

I would say that there is a major difference between Romanian or Eastern European studies and Holocaust studies in this respect. In Holocaust studies, the number of primary resources that have been digitised and are (in many cases freely) available online is impressive, thanks mostly to the work of two major institutions, Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, but also that of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) and numerous others. Even for a 'niche' subject such as the Holocaust in Romania, there is no shortage of primary sources available online, many or most in English translation, varying from documents to oral testimonies, in various media, etc.

This is most certainly not the case when it comes to Romanian studies (or East European studies more generally), where the lack of digitised material is – with few exceptions, things are a bit better when it comes to the Soviet Union, for example – well, notorious. As such, if this crisis becomes prolonged, I think it is bound to hit these fields especially hard, certainly much harder than others where primary source material is more readily available online. For comparison, in the UK, the National Archives recently made all their digital collections freely available online, and while students might complain that 'not all records are digitised', there are surely a lot more than they would be in a country like Romania. Even with all the goodwill of the management of the Central Historical National Archives in Romania (and I think there has been goodwill for more than a decade), such institutions lack the capacity to replicate such gestures. Maybe (and, as someone who is not based in Romania and only gets to visit for archival trips, I dare hope) this will send a signal about the importance of digitisation to these institutions.

As for online teaching on these topics, I can't really say on the basis of only two weeks' experience, and I am personally still hoping that the next academic year (or autumn term) won't be an exclusively online one, but I fear more of the same applies. While I am now more worried about sources (as we are in the middle of examinations, and students are writing essays and dissertations), I fear that interest for such 'niche' or 'specialized' subjects (in UK universities at least) might decrease in a context of exclusively online teaching: and of course the relative dearth of online material feeds into that as well.

# Teaching Online

An interview with R. Chris Davis about his experiences with remote instruction.

**Please tell us about yourself and your professional background.**

I'm from Houston, Texas. I first traveled to Romania as a US Peace Corps volunteer in summer of 2000. I taught English for two years at a Hungarian-language high school in Sfântu-Gheorghe, Transylvania. After completing my Peace Corps service, I studied at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, where I earned an MA in Cultural Studies. I continued my graduate work at the University of Oxford, St Antony's College, where I earned an MSt in Historical Research and a PhD in Modern History. While working on my PhD, I lived mainly in Bucharest and, for a spell, in Cluj-Napoca. During this time, I received generous grants from the Romanian Cultural Institute and New Europe College, where I was an international fellow. I also taught as a visiting lecturer at Romania's National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, in Bucharest, and worked as a consultant and editor for a number of research projects and working groups in East Central Europe, including the European Network for Research and Cooperation on Roma (Gypsy) issues. My scholarship has been supported by Fulbright, American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) grants and fellowships. Since 2013, I have served as the book reviews editor for H-Romania, an H-Net (Humanities & Social Sciences Online) network. I've also been an active member of SRS, having served on the Graduate Student Essay committee and on the SRS board itself.



**R. Chris Davis**  
**Professor, Department of History**  
**Lone Star College-Kingwood**

My current research interests include the cultures and histories of Central and Eastern Europe, with a focus on minorities, religion, and identity in Romania and Hungary. I also have an interest in oral history and film studies. My first book, *Hungarian Religion, Romanian Blood: A Minority's Struggle for National Belonging, 1920–45*, was published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 2019. It received an ASEES First-Book Subvention Award. My wife is Romanian and my kids are dual citizens. We travel pretty regularly to Romania to visit extended family, which gives me the opportunity to conduct research and see old friends.

**Where do you teach at present? What courses do you teach? How would you characterize the student body you work with and the educational environment in which you teach?**

Currently, I am a Professor of History at Lone Star College–Kingwood, in Houston, where I teach Humanities, World History, and US History. The student body consists mainly of undergraduates from the Houston area. The college itself might be considered a “commuter college,” though it has a beautiful campus with state-of-the-art facilities and offers a range of programs and degree plans. Several years ago, I created a Center for Local & Oral History. Most of the history taught at my college centers on American History, so I've had to adapt quite a bit of my research and teaching. I've been pleasantly surprised at how my training in European history has benefited my understanding and teaching of American history, and vice versa.

**When did you transition to teaching online? How would you characterize that transition? What major obstacles have you encountered?**

My college has actually been a pioneer in distance learning, offering online courses in a range of disciplines since the early 2000s (and even before then offered remote learning in various modalities). The faculty and administration quickly understood the growth potential not just for tuition dollars but also for student access and student success.

continued →



# Teaching Online

Full-time workers, stay-at-home parents, and those whose work, family, or personal schedules require travel or irregular hours have benefited enormously from taking classes partly or entirely online, and offering an online option enables scheduling flexibility not only for students but also for faculty. The more recent, and sudden, transition to online teaching and learning due to the impact of COVID-19 has presented a host of new challenges. For me, personally, the transition has been relatively smooth. But it's a steep learning curve for students and faculty who lack experience. I'd say the major obstacles have less to do with creating course content and more to do with the delivery and presentation. The little tips, reminders, and feedback that come naturally when speaking to students in the classroom actually have to be formulated for the virtual classroom. I think consistency is the key. Information that is easily conveyed in a classroom setting or one-on-one during office hours can be easily overlooked in lengthy emails, announcements, assignment instructions, and recorded lectures. But for all the downsides of not meeting face-to-face, there are a lot of upsides. For example, online discussion boards are a great way to involve those very capable students who rarely speak in class due to social anxiety. E-books, digitized primary sources, streamed films and videos, and especially podcasts are fantastic ways to deliver content and facilitate engagement. They can also mitigate the high costs of textbooks and other course materials. It's really just a matter of reconceptualizing the classroom. When integrated effectively, new technologies can invigorate lecture materials and exams and reach students in more visually and aurally arresting ways.

**In what ways does this crisis impact fields such as Romanian studies, Eastern European studies, or religious and minority studies? What do you expect to be the long-term consequences of this crisis for education in these fields?**

It's difficult to say, at this point, how the crisis will impact the field of Romanian studies and Eastern European studies. Academia around the globe was already experiencing layoffs, hiring freezes, and budget cuts. The crisis has only exacerbated the problem. I fear disciplines and topics that deal with Romania and Eastern Europe – now considered “niche” outside the region – will receive even less attention and support. Conversely, if the cost of education can somehow be streamlined with the transition to online, then perhaps these fields could be revitalized in the US and other parts of Europe. Just think of the value-added costs to the end product that is a university education (especially in the US): dormitories, building maintenance and cleaning, groundskeeping, cafeterias, photocopy machines, book depositories, even sports/exercise facilities and other amenities. Let's not forget all those semi-used faculty offices (a lot of faculty already prefer to grade, prep, write, and research off campus, usually from home). Many students prioritize finishing their degree over reveling in the “college experience,” as wonderful as that can be.

With the transition to online, one could foresee the economic feasibility of, say, hiring a UK-based Romanian scholar to teach a small seminar in the US, with lectures and meetings through Zoom and coursework through any number of online Learning Management Systems. Such a seminar would have been impossible due to lack of student interest and/or faculty expertise on that particular campus, especially when competing for classroom space and time slots. The expansion of online teaching and learning might also increase the opportunities for international students, avoiding burdensome (and costly) student visas and host-country work restrictions. Imagine the possibilities for visiting fellows, guest lecturers, and postdocs. Imagine the broadening of access to research and research materials, including journals, databases, and archives. Imagine collaborating in the humanities the way that tech companies have done for years in their respective industries, building new and innovative partnerships across borders, for common goals. Reimagine “publication.” This is not to say that libraries and classrooms and computer labs – and, not least, cafes – can all go by the wayside. Or that human interaction is overrated (it's not). But the digitization of education can lead to the democratization of education. And that's a good thing. So too is spending a little less time inside the physical and mental confines of academia, and a little more time with nature, neighbors, and family.

# Notes from the Field

Péter Berta reflects on the impact of COVID-19 for the Roma community with whom he conducted fieldwork for his recently published book.

## **Ethnicizing a Pandemic: COVID-19, Culture Blaming, and Romanian Roma**

Since the appearance of the coronavirus pandemic in Europe, numerous news reports and analyses have drawn attention to the critical and often hopeless situation caused by the social, economic, and political consequences of the pandemic for Europe's most defenseless and vulnerable social groups, and above all for many Roma local communities. These analyses highlight, since the outbreak of the pandemic, (a) how and why nationalist, xenophobic, and anti-migrant sentiments and hate-speech directed at the Roma have strengthened; (b) how the Roma have become – even more frequently than previously – the targets and victims of racist aggression, collective victimization, and ethnic scapegoating; and (c) why there has been a significant increase in the number of conflicts between the Roma and the majority societies/local authorities. (See, for example, Blasco and Camacho 2020; Costache 2020; Matache and Bhabha 2020; Pfohman and Hackl 2020; Szocioblog 2020; World News 2020.) Some reports have set out in detail the ideologies, practices, and mechanisms whereby mass and social media discourses link Roma ethnicity and culture to the spread of COVID-19 and the health threat represented by the latter – positioning the Roma and their culture as though they were the cause of the local appearance of the pandemic (Blasco and Camacho 2020; Costache 2020; Matache and Bhabha 2020). As Costache (2020) convincingly argues, this line of reasoning is based on power and structural inequalities adversely affecting the Roma and that have long been present, at the same time contributing to the reproduction and deepening of those inequalities. One group of reports and analyses shows how it is basically impossible for many Roma living in extreme poverty and in segregated neighborhoods to respect the social distancing measures, while the unavoidable need to leave their homes often leads to the emergence of interethnic conflicts. The majority of such Roma families (a) find themselves entirely without income (their livelihood comes primarily from the informal sector); (b) do not have sufficient reserves of money or food; (c) have only limited or no access to social benefits; (d) come up against obstacles when seeking health care assistance; (e) are often deprived of clean water and other basic services; and (f) live together with several generations in cramped conditions in their homes. (See, for example, Blasco and Camacho 2020; Costache 2020; Matache and Bhabha 2020; Pfohman and Hackl 2020; Szocioblog 2020; World News 2020.)



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The main location of my fieldwork – Crăciunești<sup>1</sup>, a commune in Mureș County, Romania – attracted a great deal of attention from the media and the authorities at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic as it became an epidemiological hotspot. According to official figures for April 15th, out of the 246 coronavirus cases identified in Mureș County, 76 (31%) were in Crăciunești, and 7 (44%) of the 16 deaths in Mureș County were from that settlement. (Unfortunately, both figures have risen since then.) According to my Gabor Roma acquaintances there, all of the deceased and persons identified as infected in Crăciunești were Gabor Roma. The great majority of those infected and the persons who died lived in the center of the commune, that is, in Big Village.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A commune is the lowest level of administrative subdivision in Romania. Crăciunești is a commune composed of eight villages. Its administrative center is a village also called Crăciunești. According to the 2011 census data, a total of 110 Romanians, 2827 Hungarians and 1086 Roma lived in the eight settlements.

<sup>2</sup>Since the commune and the settlement serving as its center have the same name, all further references made to the commune center as a separate settlement will use the (informal) name Big Village in place of Crăciunești. In 2011, the ethnic population of Big Village was 11 Romanians, 233 Hungarians, and 479 Roma.



# Notes from the Field

*cont'd.*

Since the pandemic appeared in Crăciunești on March 24th, numerous newspaper articles in both Romanian and Hungarian and TV reports covered the local events (see, for example, Maszol.ro 2020; Mures.Ro 2020; Népszerűség 2020; PressHub 2020; Sóvidék Televízió 2020) and have attempted to identify the reasons for the rapid spread of the pandemic in the settlement.

This special interest has been due in part to these catastrophic figures, and in part to the fact that on April 7th nine local authority employees were placed in quarantine at home. The settlement was placed under strict official control for a long period and the movements of local residents were closely checked.

The dominant local narrative dealing with the causes of the rapid spread of the pandemic regarded the starting point to have been a Gabor Roma funeral held in March in Big Village – arguing that most of the local residents who later fell ill had been present at the event. This narrative was based on negative ethnic hetero-stereotypes often attributed to Roma such as “rejection of norm-following”, or the lack of “self-discipline”, “hygienic culture”, and “sense of responsibility”. According to comments on the settlement’s Facebook page, several local non-Roma thought that the Gabor Roma were affected by the pandemic more than the average mainly because of the “backwardness” of their “ethnic culture”, “life style”, and “mentality”.

Not infrequently, the discursive strategies of culture blaming, essentialization, and ethnicization were intertwined with the anti-migrant rhetoric used by some Central European governments as a political and ideological weapon, creating the impression that the large number of COVID-19 cases among the local Gabor Roma were due to their ethnic culture together with the transnational economic migration characteristic of their population. (Many Gabor Roma acquired income from intermediate trade carried out abroad.) Some of the posted social media comments went even further, suggesting that the Roma returning from abroad represent a significant health threat for the non-Roma living in their environment. It should be noted that in the case of Romanian citizens returning from regions of Europe severely affected by the pandemic, the Romanian media reports rarely mentioned the health risks and responsibility arising from transnational migration in connection with the non-Roma – while in the case of the Roma it was raised with striking frequency.

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, the mayor of Crăciunești gave a number of interviews to the media in which he consistently avoided overt use of ethnic categories used to name the local Roma. Instead, he resorted mainly to discursive strategies making covert reference to ethnic hetero-stereotypes on the intensity and dynamics of social life among the Gabor Roma, thereby expressing the view that the Gabor Roma were responsible for the local appearance of the pandemic. This can be seen, among others, in the following interview excerpts: in Big Village, “a group of people with kinship ties were negligent, and the virus infection spread among them” (Népszerűség 2020); “a group with family ties held some kind of celebration and failed to pay sufficient attention to the martial law decree. Many people came together in the same space, and as a result, where they were together, they infected each other, because many of them had come home from abroad. [...] This [the viral infection] is present at certain points of a web of kinship. So it is present in Big Village and in settlement X [X = one of the settlements in the vicinity of Big Village with a large number of Gabor Roma, many of whom were infected]. We have also heard news from Y [Y = a district of the nearby county seat inhabited by a large number of Gabor Roma, many of whom had tested positive for coronavirus], it is more than likely that there was a kinship gathering there too. There is perhaps something in common here: X, Big Village, and Y” (Sóvidék Televízió 2020).

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# Notes from the Field

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In these interview excerpts, rather than openly naming ethnicity, the categories of “kinship” and “intense social life” became the essence or indexes of the Gabor Roma ethnic population – the expressions “group of people with kinship ties”, “group with family ties”, “certain points of a web of kinship” and “kinship gathering” are striking examples of this practice. However, the last of the interview excerpts also refers to the Gabor Roma in a different way – by identifying the names of certain settlements with the Gabor Roma communities living there, that is, by covertly ethnicizing/racializing the names of those settlements. This strategy is based on the regional knowledge that, besides Big Village, a large number of Gabor Roma also live in Y district and X settlement, they are linked by kinship ties, and many of them were infected by the coronavirus. To make it even easier for those hearing the interview to identify the settlement names with the Gabor Roma, the mayor also projects the dominant Big Village narrative on the spread of the pandemic onto the district of the nearby county seat (“it is more than likely that there was a kinship gathering there too”), then emphasizes the similarity between the three settlements: “there is perhaps something in common here: [the names of the three settlements]”. In the context of the interview it is obvious that the source of the similarity (“something in common”) is the fact that the incidence of coronavirus infection is much higher than average in the Gabor Roma communities of the three settlements.

The coincidence between the ethnic boundary within Big Village and the epidemiological boundary created by the local spread of COVID-19 undoubtedly offered the possibility for the revival of negative ethnic hetero-stereotypes regarding the Gabor Roma and hostility towards them because it created the false appearance that those stereotypes are well-founded, thereby contributing to their reproduction and an increase in the explaining power attributed to them. Although there were few obvious signs of this, interethnic relations between the local Gabor Roma and the Hungarians became more tense – many of my Roma acquaintances reported a partial deterioration of neighborly contacts, a significant loss of interethnic trust, a strengthening of ethnically-based suspicion, scapegoating, and stigmatization of the Roma; in addition many of them complained about the lack of interethnic solidarity, and the fact that they received only very little help from the local authorities. Members of both ethnic populations monitored and analyzed more intensively and sensitively than usual the opinions and reactions from the ethnic others regarding coronavirus infection. This was the case for social media comments, interviews published in the daily papers, and impressions obtained from personal encounter situations.

According to my Gabor Roma acquaintances, the interethnic tension reached a peak in early April when one of the non-Roma administrators of Big Village’s Facebook page shared a mobile phone photo of a printed text. The text was official information issued by the Department of Epidemiological Surveillance and Control of Communicable Disease (Târgu Mureş) on the persons under official observation because of coronavirus infection on April 2nd 2020 in Târgu Mureş. In my Roma acquaintances’ opinion, every single one of the persons named was a Gabor Roma – the list specified the names of the Gabor Roma persons who had tested positive for coronavirus, their place of residence, age, and the names and ages of those in the households involved who were in home quarantine on that day as family members of the infected persons. (78 of the persons listed on the page had “Gabor” as surname, and a further two had surnames widely found among the Gabor Roma.)

The publication of this information aroused great indignation and serious concern among the local Roma, in part because they felt it to be misleading and stigmatizing that the patients and family members on the list were exclusively Gabor Roma, even though non-Roma had also been infected. And moreover, because the data published, especially the home addresses, made the Gabor Roma afflicted by COVID-19 defenseless targets for nationalist, anti-Roma anger, and aggression, creating a possibility for the eruption of open interethnic conflicts.

Many indignant local Roma added their comments to the post, expressing incomprehension, hurt, and anger, and demanding that any data published on the viral infection give a realistic reflection of the ethnic composition of the group of patients. In response to the mass protests, the administrator removed the page concerned the next day and apologized to the local Roma.

The fact that so far the interethnic tensions and anger evoked by the spread of Covid-19 have not led to open conflict in Big Village (unlike in numerous other settlements in Romania), in my opinion, is due to several mutually-reinforcing circumstances. One is that today in Big Village, Roma constitute the majority society – many of them have a similar or higher standard of living than their non-Roma neighbors and substantial purchasing power, as well as an extensive local and regional social network among the non-Roma. Moreover, since the Gabor Roma have been present in this settlement in large numbers for a long while, a varied and successful range of mechanisms serving for the management of interethnic relationships, differences, and conflicts has been developed and effectively helps to preserve the stability of interethnic trust and solidarity. And finally, it is undoubtedly a factor contributing to the durability of interethnic tolerance that the Hungarians living in Big Village and the wider region have “dual (historical) experience” of the nature and inner dynamics of majority-minority power relations – they have both their own experiences of the advantages and disadvantages offered by the majority position, as well as the opportunities and limitations arising from the minority position.

As the analyses of how and why COVID-19 becomes ethnicized and racialized convincingly demonstrate, the coronavirus „is not the great equalizer” (Costache 2020) or, in other words, it „is not the great leveller; it most definitely does not treat everybody the same” (Blasco – Camacho 2020).

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# Notes from the Field

*Jonathan Stillo illuminates the implications and realities of COVID19 for Romanian medicine.*

## **What can Romania's tuberculosis crisis tell us about its readiness to deal with Covid-19?**

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the world hard. And as things worsened, I sat worried sick about Romania, a place which, over the past twenty years, has become as much a part of me as my own country, and which, if my research has taught me anything, is not ready for a pandemic.

Almost ten years ago, early in my research on tuberculosis (TB) in Romania, I described TB as a symbol of Romania's broader crisis of public health (Stillo, 2011). At the time, denial and blaming the victim were commonplace, even though treatment outcomes in Romania for people diagnosed with drug-resistant TB were the worst in the entire world (World Health Organization, 2011). In those years of research, I held the hands of people who died alone, I watched medical staff weep for the loss of people that they were desperately trying to save, and ultimately saw that, save for a lucky few, the patients who told me their hopes and dreams in hundreds of interviews would fall victim to a curable disease. Initially, I was led to believe that the main factor that led to these tragic outcomes was that many patients were poor and, therefore, unable to access medical services. But it was not primarily patients' poverty that killed them. It was the system itself. In those years, as the lack of diagnostic equipment (including drug-susceptibility testing) and of required antibiotics condemned thousands of Romanians to death from a curable disease, doctors told me they lacked the tools necessary to do their jobs—that they knew what was wrong, but the system prevented them from fixing it. Romania's health system has been underfunded since socialist times and remains one of the most inadequately funded in Europe.

This lack of funding and the mismanagement thereof also contribute to a serious imbalance between where people in Romania live (about 45% in rural areas) and where health services are available (mostly in urban areas). This imbalance forces people to delay treatment seeking and disproportionately burdens the poorest and most vulnerable. Worse still, it leads some to choose whatever treatment is available locally, even if the services they really need are far away in the city.

Politics is at the heart of Romania's health crisis. In the last 25 years, there have been 27 Ministers of Health. As power shifts back and forth between political parties, new political appointees fill posts, not just within the Ministry, but in every hospital and public health department across the country. This churn has created a chaotic environment where, despite most people's good intentions, real progress is impossible. I have worked closely with people from most major political parties, as well as from the short-lived post-Colectiv technocratic government, and I can attest that most of them were genuinely trying to improve things. However, their tenures were far too short for them to accomplish what they hoped and they knew that the major changes that are needed would be too politically unpopular in the short term to happen.

It is with these things in mind that I now turn to COVID-19 in Romania. As of mid-May, Romania has reported about 17,000 cases and 1,100 deaths (Johns Hopkins, 2020). Part of me wants to believe that these numbers are low (compared to countries like Italy and Spain) thanks to the Romanian government's efforts to slow the spread of this virus. It is true that Romania rapidly and aggressively implemented travel limitations and business closures early in the pandemic, but what about the hundreds of thousands of people who had traveled back from Italy, Spain, Germany and other European Union countries? And what about internal migrants who work in agriculture and construction and who often travel hundreds of kilometers from their home villages? With international and domestic travel being so common in Romania, how can we know that the disease is not still spreading at the community level under the radar of Romania's public health system and in places where diagnostic testing is not scaled up?



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# Notes from the Field

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Having watched people with TB waiting months and sometimes years for proper diagnosis (a situation that has improved but is still not fixed), it seems likely that there are people with COVID-19 who may be missed as well. But even if they are tested, who will do the contact tracing—the labor-intensive work that, even under normal circumstances, Romania’s public health services struggle to do?

Romania’s health resources are not only limited but also unevenly distributed. As we saw early on, Bucharest and Suceava counties became hotspots of COVID-19, but for quite different reasons. While Bucharest has seen a lot of cases because it is the most densely populated city in Romania, the virus has flourished in Suceava because of the county’s inadequate health resources. As the disease spreads, the public health resources that have been in short supply for decades will need to be mustered and delivered.

This is a tall order, especially given the troubling reports from medical staff protesting their lack of personal protective equipment (PPE). Romania’s hospital infrastructure is aging and many emergency and pulmonary hospitals lack modern ventilation systems and even rudimentary (but important) infection control measures such as layouts that ensure proper patient flow so that people who are potentially sick with infectious diseases do not put other patients, the staff, or their families at risk. But these issues are not limited to the oldest hospitals. Just this past October, I stood in a recently renovated hospital in a small town and met with the pulmonologist there in her office. It was the same office where she saw patients and where she and her colleagues input data into the computer system, read X-rays, and kept all patient records. She, her colleagues, and so many other Romanian medical staff face great risk. The source of that risk is not just a novel coronavirus, but the same decades-long health system neglect that turned curable TB into a “socially incurable” disease (Stillo 2012, Stillo 2020).

There is a great danger in Romania that the disease will spread and local health infrastructure will be overwhelmed. There is also a danger that, like TB, the poorest and most vulnerable people, including those living in rural places, will delay seeking treatment, which could lead to further community spread as well as to COVID-19 deaths that may never be classified as such.

But what if something good could come out of all of this? I hope that out of this crisis comes real transformative change leading to a health system which exists in the service of all people and which is judged by how well it reaches the most vulnerable—including older people in rural places, the poor, the homeless, and people with disabilities. The expert in me knows that there are many political, economic, and social barriers to this change, but the optimist in me hopes that this crisis will inspire decision makers in Romania to opt for transformative change. It is possible. I thought it might happen after *Colectiv*, but maybe now is the time?

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# Digital Resources

For scholars confined to their homes and countries, SRS has collected recommendations for resources available online.

## Open-Access Journals

[Echinox Journal](#) A biannual academic journal in world and comparative literature, dedicated to the study of the social, historical, cultural, religious, literary, and arts imaginaries.

[Metacritic Journal](#) An online publication for academic research, publishing papers in English and Romanian on comparative studies, including digital and posthuman studies, literary studies, cultural studies, including social and gender studies; media and film studies, literary criticism and theory, cultural poetics.

[Philobiblon](#) The biannual peer reviewed academic journal of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca, published in June and December. Philobiblon encourages multidisciplinary studies in various fields of the humanities and deals with subjects in the areas of (including, but not limited to) history, history of culture, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, anthropology, sociology, literary theory and criticism, linguistics, art history, and library and information science.

[Revista Transilvania](#) This journal publishes work in various fields related to the humanities, the sciences of literature, and the history of social, economic, cultural and political thought, philosophy, and religion.

## Library and Archive Collections

[National Digital Library](#) (Romania) The National Digital Library comprises the digital collections of the National Library of Romania, organized by themes or by events. It currently includes collections of manuscripts, periodicals, old and rare books, illustrated postcards, maps, sheet music, exlibris, stamps, drawings, engravings, correspondence, military documents, and more.

[National Digital Library](#) (Moldova) See the following page for an overview of BND Moldavica.

[Transilvanica Digital Library](#) A collection of scanned periodicals and other documents by authors of Transylvanian origin or written or published in Transylvania.

[The Digital Library of the “Lucian Blaga” Central University Library Cluj](#) The digital library of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca comprises books, manuscripts, serials, and iconographic material.

[Biblioteca virtuală „Ion Mincu”](#) The online catalog and virtual library of full-text electronic publications including the main architecture and urbanism journals of the early 20th century.

[Biblioteca Virtuală](#) (Biblioteca Județeană Neamț) This is a collection of digitized books from Polirom, Humanitas, and SNSPA.

[National Archives](#) The growing digital collection of the National Archives, the result of numerous completed and ongoing projects to digitize archival documents.

## Digital Collections

[Arhivei Etnologice a Muzeului Țăranului Român](#) The digitisation project of the Romanian Peasant Museum in Bucharest.

[Making the History of 1989](#) A collection of documents, interviews, and other resources pertaining to the collapse of the communist regimes in 1989.

[Hidden Galleries](#) Highlighted in the last issue of the SRS newsletter, this collection presents visual and textual materials relating to the creative practices and material culture of the religious underground within the archives of the secret police in Central and Eastern Europe.

[Camera Arhiva](#) This collection contains digitized communist-era print publications.

[Publicații Baptiste](#) A digital collection of books and newspapers on the history of Romanian Baptists

# BND Moldavica

The [National Library of the Republic of Moldova](#) in Chişinău offers digital content for users through [Bibliotecii Naţionale Digitale \(BND\) Moldavica](#).



**MOLDAVICA**  
BIBLIOTECA NAȚIONALĂ DIGITALĂ

Moldavica contains approximately 6500 digital resources and 870,000 digitized pages. It contains digital copies of documents from eight categories of patrimonial publications from National Library funds: manuscripts, rare and old books, periodic national old publications, maps, postcards, Ex Libris. The collection includes digital forms of the first printed book on Moldavian territory, the 1643 Romanian Book of Learning (*Carte Românească de Învățătură*).

**Manuscripts** This collection includes original manuscripts, copies, photocopies in Romanian, old Slavonic, and Russian from the 15th-20th centuries This collection can be accessed [here](#).

**Old and Rare Books** This collection consists of patrimonial documents of national importance collected via the “Memoria Moldovei” project. This includes books printed with Slavonic characters as well as using the ‘transition alphabet’, Latin, and Russian. The collection can be accessed [here](#).

**Periodicals** This collection includes printed documents from the “Memoria Moldovei” program such as scientific and church magazines and other periodic publications which contains information based on historical reconstructions of the social, cultural and economical life of the country. The information is mostly in Romanian. The collection can be accessed [here](#).

**Postcards** This collection hold postcards which reflect quondam images of Chişinău. It comprises 36 views edited mostly by editorial house A. Wolkenberg, which holds the monopoly in editing graphic documents from the 1880s to the 1920s. This collection can be accessed [here](#).

**Maps** This collection contains old maps and atlases from the National Library of the Republic of Moldova representing diverse geographical areas of the world and edited by prominent editors including A. Ortelius, I. Castaldo, G. Mercator, and W. Lazius. The collection also includes maps edited by the Vienna Cartographic Institute and Weimar Geographic Institute and maps and atlases made by Russian authors (18th-19th centuries). This collection can be accessed [here](#).

**Ex-libris** The National Library owns an incredible collection of ex-libris for books of different genres preserved in the Old and Rare Book Collection. Another collection of ex libris consists of donations from well-known creators of this graphic genre : Valeriu Herța, Leonid Nikitin, African Usov, Antoseac Arcadie, Baci Nicolae, Kravcenko Vladimir, and others. The subject of this collection it is very varied : portraits of personalities from political, cultural life of the time, landscapes, scenes from social life, writers and their work, anniversaries and commemorations. This collection can be accessed [here](#).

**Printed Music** This digital collection of printed music covers religious texts, edited in the 20th century, from the repertoire of Moldovan composers such as Gavriil Musicescu, Mihail Berezovschi, and Eusebie Mandicevschi. The collection is formed by religious musical prints, songs that were sung at church celebrations and monasteries with one voice or a chore. This collection can be accessed [here](#).

**Tiraspol-Balta Collection**: This collection reflects editorial production from the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, founded in 1924 in the left of the Dniester River. The vast majority of the books were edited at the Moldavian State publishing House and cover areas as agriculture and medicine, both in Romanian and Russian. This collection can be accessed [here](#).

# Archival Survey of Transylvania and Bukovina

An interview with Julie Dawson, director of a new archival survey of Jewish-history related material in the regions of Transylvania and Bukovina

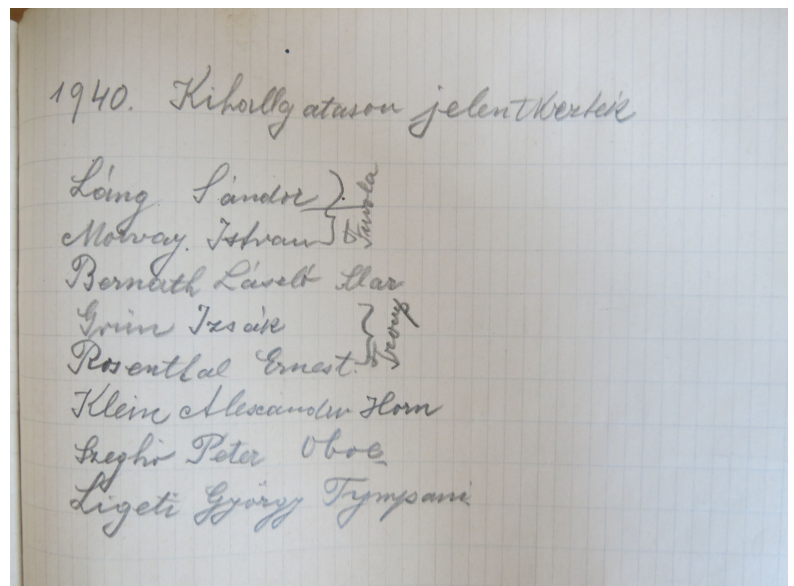
Tell us a bit about yourself and your professional background.

I have rather diverse professional experience; my undergraduate degrees are in German and Ethnomusicology and I moved to Berlin with a Fulbright in Ethnomusicology, then stayed on working as a translator through most of my twenties. In 2007, I moved to Romania as a Peace Corps volunteer and since then have spent between 5-6 years in Romania and Moldova, initially as an elementary school teacher with Peace Corps and since 2010 as a researcher and project supervisor. Beginning in 2010, I was employed as an archivist at the [Leo Baeck Institute](#) (New York/Berlin) and in 2012 wrote the first grant, under that institute, to begin the JBAT project. Initially envisioned as a one-year project, it was extended twice and ended up running for six years, concluding in 2019. While working in New York, I completed a Master's in Jewish Studies at Columbia and Certificate in East Central European Studies at the Harriman Institute of Columbia, then relocated with my husband to Vienna to better accommodate the travel required by the JBAT project. We now have two children who spent a lot of time on the road with us crisscrossing Transylvania and love ciorbă. With the JBAT project winding up, I have been able to return to academia and am currently writing my dissertation at the Institute for Contemporary History of the University of Vienna, examining a set of post-war diaries discovered in a Transylvanian synagogue, written by a young woman originally from Bukovina and a Transnistrian survivor.



**What is the JBAT Archival Survey?**  
**How did it come about and what are its goals?**  
**Who was involved?**

From the start, the JBAT (Jewish Bukovina And Transylvania) Archival Survey's overarching aim was to stimulate new research in Jewish history of Transylvania and Bukovina, both locally and at international levels, by means of facilitating access to archival material. This was to be accomplished by creating an online catalogue of archival holdings related to Jewish history. The catalogue would provide collection- and (sometimes) item-level descriptions, language, dates, repository information, and so forth—a common data set for online catalogues, but as most researchers active in Romanian archives are aware, comprehensive online archival descriptions are rare, to say the least.



Attendance sheet for the Cluj Goldmark Jewish Philharmonic, with Györgi Ligeti (the later avant garde composer) playing timpani as a young man. Source: Cluj Jewish Community Collection; Series V; Box G-10; Archives of the Jewish Community of Cluj

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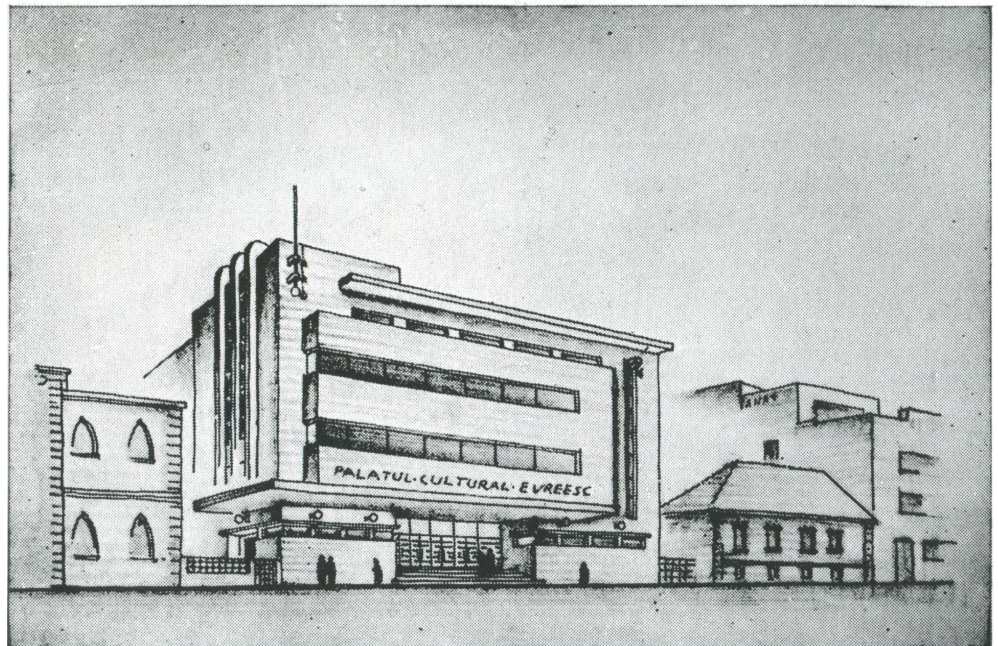
# Archival Survey of Transylvania and Bukovina

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The roots of the project go back to my days as a teacher in Sighișoara, when I began to explore the Jewish communities of the southern Transylvanian region (the Saxon towns) and realized that almost nothing had been written about these communities. I became interested in what appeared to be an intriguing diversity of Transylvanian Jewish experience, while at the same time perplexed by the monothematic interpretation in most scholarship, defining Transylvanian Jews almost exclusively as Magyarized. Evidence in the archives seemed to point to a far more complex reality. I had also discovered the Jewish community archives of Mediaș in the women's balcony of that synagogue and was pursuing funding opportunities to process the material. This led directly to my position as an archivist at Leo Baeck Institute and, in 2012, I was approached by the Yerusha Project of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe: they were beginning a new grant program to survey archives in Eastern Europe. A proposed project, however, should not be for one collection, but rather cover an entire region. Thus, since Leo Baeck Institute's focus is on German-speaking Jewish communities, we decided to focus the survey on the National Archive branches in Bukovina and

southern Transylvania. After the first year, indeed within the first few months, it became clear that there was no shortage of material and that the project should be extended. The region was also extended, northwards towards Cluj, and westward to include the Banat; this was the second phase of the project. Finally, in the third phase, the funders suggested we focus exclusively on material that might be held by extant Jewish communities today. So in the final two years of the project we moved away from the National Archives and instead surveyed and processed archival material

held by Jewish communities in "greater" Transylvania, including Maramureș and down through the Banat. This portion of the project had its own set of significant challenges, but also particular rewards as we were able to view – and hopefully preserve – archival material which may otherwise have been lost and which almost certainly has not been known to scholars until now.



Zincograph of an architect's rendering of a "Jewish Cultural Palace". Date unknown (early post-war?). Source: Cluj Jewish Community Zincograph Collection; Box Z-1, 2; Archives of the Jewish Community of Cluj

## Whom is this archival guide meant to serve?

The archival guide is intended both for a local and international audience. The website is bilingual, English and Romanian – though some of the Romanian translations are still in process, as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Initially, we hoped the website would be used as a tool by local schools or educators interested in learning more about local Jewish history. I am not sure that is a realistic expectation, but I certainly do hope it will aid researchers inside and outside of Romania in planning their research trips as well as simply stimulating interest in Jewish history of the region. Examination of Jewish experience in Romania is still starkly underrepresented as compared to many other regions in Central and Eastern Europe.

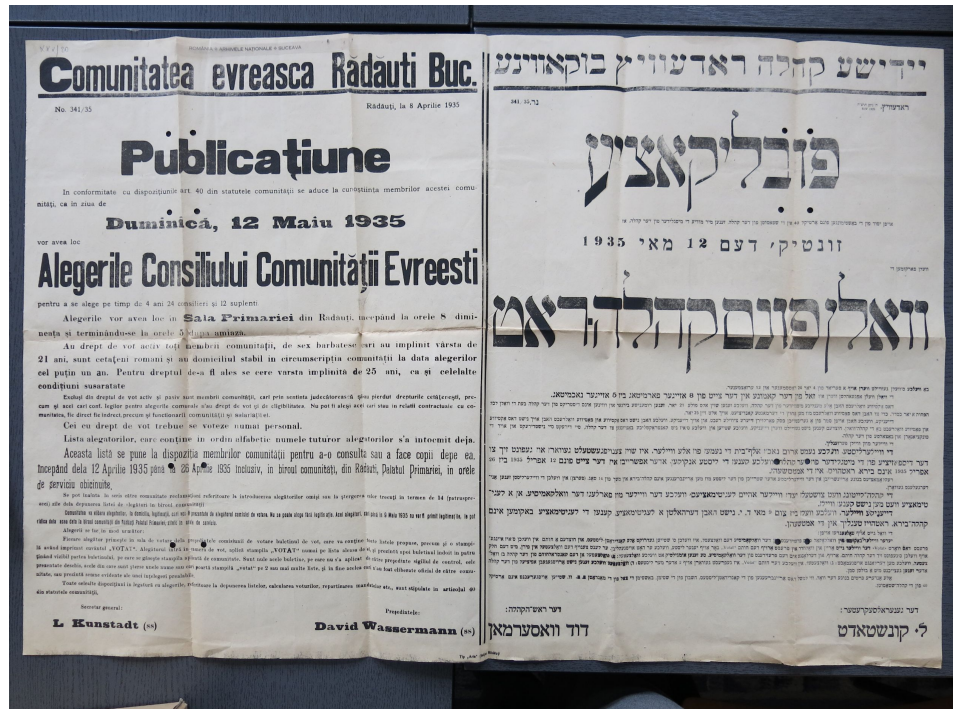
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# Archival Survey of Transylvania and Bukovina *cont'd.*

Did you encounter any unanticipated obstacles while building the survey? What unexpected leads shaped the project as it unfolded?

Plenty! Defining what material is relevant to Jewish history can be subjective – and it changes from region to region. In Bukovina, with its large Jewish population, almost any given folder could have contents

related in some way to a Jewish individual. Does that make it “relevant”? What should be included and what should not, since the entire archive cannot be included. In Sibiu and Braşov, the opposite was sometimes the case. With their smaller Jewish populations, we had to really hunt for material related to the Jewish population. The selection of material inevitably reflects, to an extent, the interests and knowledge of the surveying researcher; I think this is unavoidable. We were also working under time constraints, spending only a matter of months at each repository, only so much material can be viewed during that time. We tried to prioritize the collections but of course there is no way to go through all the material held by a national archival branch in the course of a few months, so I am sure items of interest were overlooked. The reception by and cooperation from archival staff also varied from county to county.



Election poster for the Radăuți Jewish community, 1935. Source: Colecția de Documente; număr curent 49, fond 35, inventar nr. 508, pachetul XXX, 20 ; Arhivele Naționale ale României, Direcția Județeană Suceava

The largest shift in project focus was the final phase, as explained above, which redirected our work to unknown and unofficial “collections” held by Jewish communities themselves. This part of the project had its own set of challenges, not least logistical ones related to delivery of supplies, travel complications (once my train was stuck on the tracks for hours due to snow), and a speedy processing of material which was largely unknown in advance. I am very grateful to the presidents and staff of the communities, almost all of whom were very cooperative and helpful – the work would have been impossible without their support. I also had two excellent assistants, Nagyi Orsolya of Cluj-Napoca and Alexandra Toma of Mediaş, who assisted me in processing the community material, I could not have done it without their aid. The website itself was built and is maintained by my colleague at Leo Baeck, Chris Bentley. Finally, we were greatly supported by our funders and honored to have participated in the Yerusha Project, which is a digital humanities initiative by the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe to create an extensive online hub of information on European Jewish archival heritage. The results of the Yerusha Project, which included many research institutes across Europe, will be available online shortly.

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# Archival Survey of Transylvania and Bukovina

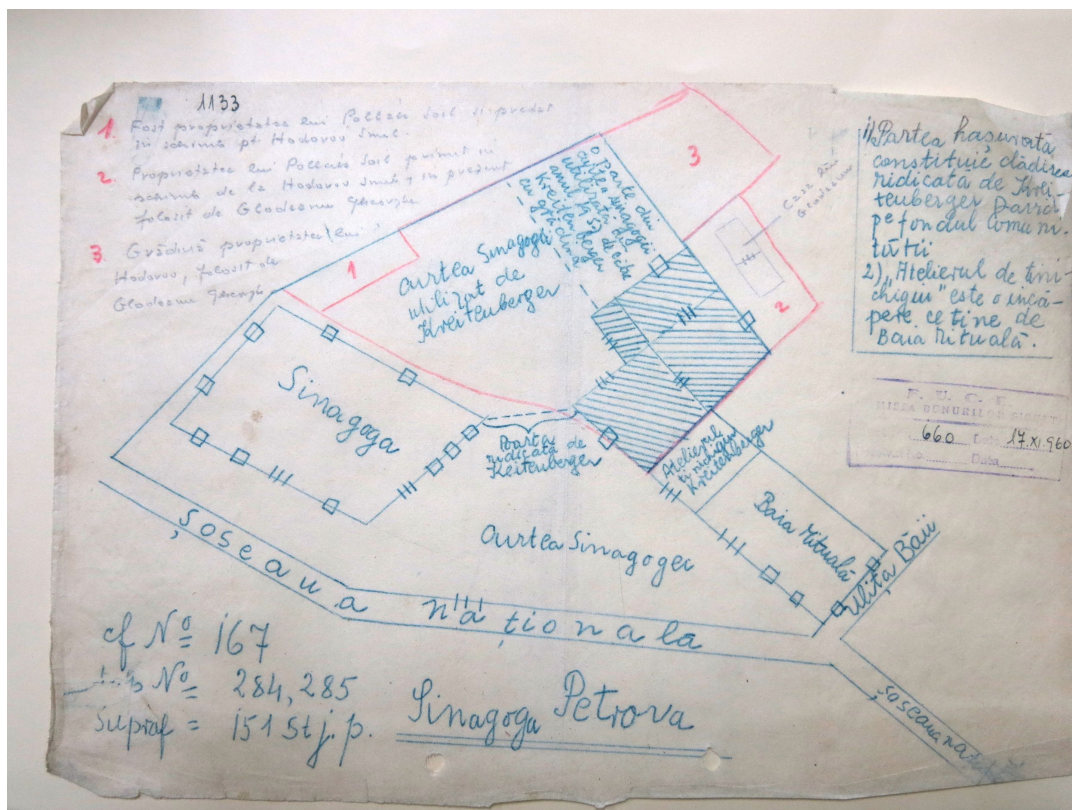
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How might this survey benefit scholars in the present moment, when access to archives is extremely limited?

Unfortunately, the project was not a digitization project, though it is a first and vital step in that direction. You cannot digitize without knowing what is there and having it properly organized and described. To my knowledge there is interest and an effort underway to see the Jewish community collections, in particular, digitized in the future. A select group of documents were digitized, including the [civil record books in Sibiu](#), the [art](#) and [zinograph](#) collections found in the Cluj synagogue, [a 500-page minutes book from the Medias community](#), and a handful of other items. At the present moment, the catalogue can help researchers know what sources are available in order to plan for the post-Covid period. The finding aids for the Jewish communities ([Alba Iulia](#), [Arad](#), [Caransebeș](#), [Cluj](#), [Deva](#), [Lugoj](#), [Medias](#), [Satu Mare](#), [Sighet](#), [Târgu Mureș](#)) give folder-level titles and dates and have series descriptions, these could be particularly helpful for young scholars on the lookout for new projects. A few of those finding aids are not online yet but will be within the next month or so, delayed due to the crisis. The contents of these community collections vary widely from a few register books to almost intact holdings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the post-war period (Arad and Lugoj). Most collections, however, are fragmented and war-time material is particularly scarce. Nevertheless, I personally thought of countless potential research projects which could be derived from this material!

## Final thoughts?

The catalogue is still being updated and we are a bit behind due to the current crisis. We are also constantly tweaking it for improved useability and, of course, discovering errors. Feedback and tips are welcome as are recommendations for new entries. In this case, please make sure you have data for all the fields that appear as we generally will not publish incomplete entries. For suggestions or questions, please contact me at [jdawson@lbi.cjh.org](mailto:jdawson@lbi.cjh.org)



Sketch depicting the location of the synagogue and other Jewish community buildings in the village of Petrova, Maramureș, post-war. Source: Sighetu Marmăției Jewish Community Collection; Series II; Box 11; Folder 3; Archives of the Sighetu Marmăției Jewish Community



# Obituary: Vintilă Mihăilescu

Ionuț Butoi pays tribute to the late Vintilă Mihăilescu (May 23, 1951 – March 22, 2020).

## IN MEMORIAM



One of the most important Romanian anthropologists, social psychologist and well-known public intellectual, Vintilă Mihăilescu died on March 22 at the age of 69 of an incurable disease. In a defining way for his scientific personality, Vintilă managed to write, under precarious health conditions, an anthropological analysis of the hospital experience in his last years of life (*În căutarea corpului regăsit. O ego-analiză a spitalului*, Polirom, 2019). This ego-analysis is typical for his profile as a researcher: exploring pressing issues of the

Romanian daily life from an empathic, inquisitive, innovative perspective and by highlighting functions, mechanisms and social meanings of the social facts that otherwise go unnoticed as commonplaces of public perception. As in other of his writings, his anthropological exploration of the hospital experience is accompanied by psychological introspection, the biography thus becoming a study in understanding society.

Mihăilescu obtained a bachelor's degree (1974) and a doctorate in psychology (1993) at the University of Bucharest. The doctoral thesis, „Ungureni și pămînteni. O analiză etnopsihologică”, was published in the autobiographical volume *Fascinația diferenței. Anii de ucenicie ai unui antropolog* (Paideia, 1999 și Trei, 2014). His career as a researcher, but also as a publicist, began in communist Romania, and he remained a marginal figure until 1989. He was a researcher in social psychology and anthropology at the National Institute of Gerontology and Geriatrics in Bucharest (1974-1978), and then at the Francisc Rainer Center of Anthropology of the Romanian Academy (1979-2002). His career as a university teacher began in 1991, as a lecturer at the Faculty of Sociology, Psychology and Pedagogy of the University of Bucharest. Since 2000, he was a university professor at the National School of Political Science (SNSPA), the coordinator of the Master's Program in Anthropology, head of the Department of Sociology and director of the Doctoral School of SNSPA. He was a visiting professor at universities in Germany, Hungary, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and elsewhere. He coordinated or led numerous research grants, collaborating with institutions such as the Institute for Human Sciences (Vienna), the World Bank, and the European Union (under the PHARE programs). He was a permanent contributor to the weekly *Dilema Veche* and director of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant (2005-2010).

He was par excellence a field anthropologist and social psychologist, extracting his data both for his scientific publications and for his public interventions in “everyday life”. A team player, a good pedagogue and student trainer, he stood out through his inspired and inspiring approach of rural communities, urban ethnography, daily events, the sociology of transition, and more.

He represented one of the few links between the tradition of the interwar sociology and the post-communist anthropology. In this regard, he stood out through his critical thinking that placed him, in the Romanian post-communist intellectual field, between the ethnicist-protocronist current that updated the interwar autochthonism and the modernizing-demystifying trend that took over the synchronistic heritage. Mihăilescu warned about the ideological contamination of the Romanian ethnology, related to a cultural project of building the nation, advocating for the "critical liberation from the national ideology" of ethnology and for its reconstruction within the frame of social anthropology ("*Antropologie și ideologie*", *Revista de cercetări sociale*, nr. 3/1997).

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# Obituary: Vintilă Mihăilescu

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At the same time, he pleaded for overcoming the polarization between modernists and traditionalists, seeing this as a regressive cultural phenomenon that falsifies social problems and gives birth to mythology in both directions (*idem*). A significant project in this regard was the volume *De ce este România astfel? Avataturile excepționalismului românesc* (Polirom, 2017), where he was a coordinator. As he pointed out, the underlying common ground of the two specific polarities (autochthonous / protochronist / nationalist vs. modernist / synchronist / westernizer) is the discursive structure of exceptionalism, that produces diametrically opposed ideological orientations. From this point of view, Mihăilescu's anthropology was particularly important for the foreign researcher who tries to understand, on the one hand, the Romanian intellectual landscape, and on the other hand the social realities of this peripheral country – located at the outskirts of the capitalist system.

Perhaps the most significant lines that he wrote are those through which he himself sought to characterize his approach: “The anthropologist is in a permanent relationship of gift and counter-gift, in which what is offered as a price is something of his own being and that of his interlocutor” (*Fascinația diferenței. Anii de ucenicie ai unui antropolog. Ediție revăzută și adăugită*, Trei, 2014). And: “From a very early age I have been afraid of death, which made me live in anguish this death of communication which is the Difference, with its scandalous version which is Death itself and which ends any kind of communication. I have never been able to understand, in fact, how it is possible that two people cannot understand each other, much less the fact that this communion can disappear, at some point, completely. My surprise did not diminish, paradoxically, when I discovered that, nevertheless, people can understand each other. In short, if I were to give a name to this deep obsession that seems to have ordered, to some extent, my “anthropological” wandering, I would say that it can be summed up in a double perplexity: *Why the hell do people not understand each other?* and, at the same time, *How in the name of God do people manage to get along with each other?*” Mihăilescu reformulates the double perplexity, in the same writing: “How can the Difference be thought?” Rejecting “Difference” as a substance / essence, Mihăilescu was concerned with its production mechanisms and its morphological dynamism.

Vintilă Mihăilescu was one of the most fertile social observers of everyday life, of de-trivialization and de-mythization of the seemingly self-evident. Illustrative are, in this regard, titles such as *Socio-hai-hui prin arhipelagul România*, (Polirom, 2006), *Cotidianul văzut de aproape. Etnografii urbane*, (Polirom, 2010), *Scutecele nașunii și hainele împăratului. Note de antropologie publică*, (Polirom, 2013), and *Povestea maidanezului Leușu. Despre noua ordine domestică și criza omului*, (Cartier, 2013). His public interventions have always brought necessary critical nuances and deconstructions of dominant negative discourses and stereotypes. The Romanian cultural life was considerably enriched through his activity and work and poorer after his premature death.

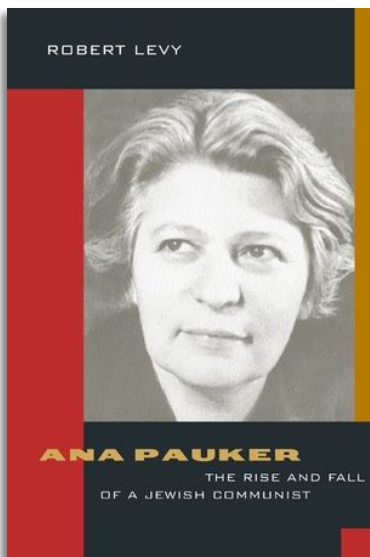
**Ionuț Butoi**  
Lecturer, Department of Cultural  
Anthropology and Communication  
University of Bucharest

# Obituary: Robert Levy

Gail Kligman and Virgiliu Țârău remember Robert Levy (January 1, 1957 - May 12, 2020).

On May 14<sup>th</sup>, Leah Valtin-Erwin, the editor of the SRS Newsletter, sent me a then incomprehensible email, inviting me to write an obituary for Dr. Robert Levy. I was incredulous. Bob and I had spoken at length just a few days earlier as we regularly did after Los Angeles went into lockdown and visiting was precluded. Surely, this was a case of mistaken identity. Alas, it was not. Bob died of a heart attack on May 12<sup>th</sup>.

I met Bob in the mid-1990s, not long after I joined UCLA's sociology department and Bob returned from his doctoral research in Romania. I served as the outside member of his dissertation committee, which led to an enduring collegial and personal friendship. I recall when Bob first stated that Ana Pauker was opposed to forced collectivization; aware of her reputation as the Iron Lady, I was highly skeptical and asked him to show me the documents. Bob arrived, not only with the particular ones in question, but also with several additional boxes. Admittedly to my surprise, the documents supported his claim. Many of the others given to him were clearly an attempt to pacify his dogged pursuit of archival materials at a time when the archives were largely inaccessible. These files contained a treasure trove of information, for example, about the implementation of collectivization across Romania, but not about Ana Pauker; her file still remained unavailable to him. With Bob present, I called Katherine Verdery to share various choice quotes from the multitude of documents he had brought over. Little did we know at that time that Bob's materials would later be instrumental in the multi-disciplinary project we co-directed on the collectivization campaign, a project in which he participated.\*



The book that resulted from Bob's dissertation, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist Leader* (University of California Press, 2001), became a fundamental text that transformed aspects of the historiography of Romania's early communist period, especially Pauker's opposition to forced collectivization and her more tempered resistance to the trial of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. Bob also discussed Pauker's complex relationship to her Jewish heritage, which as a devoted communist, she eschewed; nevertheless, she actively facilitated Jewish emigration to Israel. Editura Polirom published *Gloria și decăderea Anei Pauker* in 2002, sparking both praise and debate. Polirom reissued a revised second edition in 2016 as part of its 25th anniversary publications. Bob's book also inspired works in other media: Radu Gabrea's 2016 documentary, *Împărăteasa roșie. Viața și Aventurile Anei Pauker* (*The Red Empress: The Life and Adventures of Ana Pauker*) in which Bob is among those interviewed, and Mihai Lukács' theater production, *Cultul Personalității* (*Personality Cult*), which the Teatru Guivlipen debuted in 2018. Bob's work is well known among scholars

of and in Romania, of communism, and Eastern Europe. Perhaps less well known to many aware of the significance of his scholarly contributions, and even though he was a gifted researcher and teacher, Bob suffered the bitter injustice of never having held a regular academic position. Bob's life was filled with professional and personal challenges that often seemed insurmountable. In addition to his marginalization in academia, he struggled with health problems, being among the 3% of long-time survivors of HIV; this year marked his thirty-fourth.

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# Obituary: Robert Levy

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In spite of many challenges, Bob created a meaningful life that deeply touched those with whom he interacted as tutor and teacher (whether for Bar/Bat Mitzvah mentoring at Wilshire Boulevard Temple Religious School, SAT training at a Korean school, or at various Jewish institutions in LA such as the Academy for Jewish Religion CA ), and as colleague, friend, community or family member. Bob was a gentle, caring soul and a profoundly generous man. He was much loved in all of the diverse communities in which he passionately engaged.

His loss has echoed across our community of scholars, here and abroad. Vladimir Tismăneanu posted a tribute on his Facebook page, noting that Bob was a “brilliant interpreter of East European communism, in general, and of the Romanian case, in particular...He was a real Mensch.” Radu Ioanid, upon reading that post, called me from Israel in disbelief, hoping I would not confirm what he had read. Stela Brătescu, Ana Pauker’s granddaughter, wrote in a poignant message to a close mutual friend: “dearest [Bob], savior of my grandmother’s memory...on behalf of my parents and myself, please convey to his parents that we will always be grateful to Bob, for whom we cared so much.”

Whenever Bob came over for dinner, he first always requested that we share a “pahar de palincă” (a glass of my best double-distilled, homemade brandy). Upon confirming the reality of his death, I lit a candle and raised a glass in his honor. Dumnezeu să-l ierte, să-i odihneasca sufletul. May his memory be a blessing!

**Gail Kligman**  
**Distinguished Professor, Department of Sociology**  
**University of California, Los Angeles**

\* “The First Wave of the Collectivization Campaign: Central Policies and their Regional Implementation (1945-1953). In C. Iordachi and D. Dobrinu (eds.), *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949-1962*. Budapest and New York: Central University Press, 27-48.

*Not long after I learned of Bob’s wholly unanticipated death, I called my friend and colleague, Virgiliu Țărău, Professor of History at Babeș-Bolyai University and former Vice-President of the Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, to share this unwelcome news. He readily agreed to my request that he send a tribute in Bob’s memory. As an historian well versed in the period about which Bob wrote, his contribution is fitting.*

*Virgiliu Țărău’s discussion of Robert Levy’s impact on the field can be found on the following page.*



# Obituary: Robert Levy

*cont'd.*

## IN MEMORIAM

Robert Levy, author of *Ana Pauker, The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, the Romanian archives of the communist period were basically closed to scholars and the general public. Few historians succeeded in gaining access. Bob Levy, however, was one of those fortunate—and persistent—enough to see some of the documents he relentlessly sought. He came to Bucharest many times to read in the archives and conduct interviews with key figures who could shed light on his Ph.D. subject, the political biography of Ana Pauker. Again, I emphasize that entering the archives in those years was not an easy task. I still remember Bob running up the stairs of the main building of the National Archives in Bucharest, imploring the Director in an excited, loud voice to give him permission to read Ana Pauker's personal file. He continued his pursuit until he eventually succeeded in acquiring the files he needed. His efforts certainly paid off: he wrote an outstanding book, which today is not only the best political biography of Ana Pauker, but a seminal contribution to the history of the Romanian Communist Party as well. In my view, Bob Levy's book made at least three major contributions. His work offers:

- a nuanced, dynamic and fluid picture of the internal competition within the leadership of the RCP after the Second World War, overcoming what had been a static Cold War perspective. Bob recognized that Pauker was full of contradictions: she was faithful and devoted to Stalin, yet she also questioned the solutions that late Stalinism advanced to further the communist revolution in Romania. In that regard, Bob's analysis of Pauker's role in the collectivization process illuminates the ideological tensions within the group that led Romania at the beginning of the fifties.
- an excellent critical inquiry of the documents that the communist authorities produced. Even though Bob Levy wrote at the beginning of the archival revolution in Eastern Europe, he had the foresight to understand that the quality and specificity of the communist texts had to be meticulously evaluated. He discussed the penal interrogations at length, exposing the instrumental construction that undermined their veracity; he also turned his critical eye to Party investigations and oral interviews, concluding that the historical record can only be established if all sources are carefully cross-checked and their claims corroborated.
- a complex account of Ana Pauker's transition from the height of her power in the Communist Party (1945-1947), to her marginalization (1948-1949), and her ultimate downfall and exclusion from the circles of power (1952). Bob's book does not absolve Ana Pauker for her role in the communist revolution, promoting and sustaining the terror and repressive policies that the Romanian Communist Party inflicted upon Romanian society in the late forties and early fifties. He explored Pauker's ambiguous and opportunistic position in relation to the Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu case and her stances on the collectivization policies. He also addressed how Pauker, with the support of Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu, successfully confronted Gheorghiu-Dej in the Political Bureau, a crucial contribution to her ouster and punishment in the summer of 1952.

Virtually twenty years after its publication, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist*, remains both a critical text in Romania's historiography and the best political biography of Ana Pauker. The lasting impact of Bob Levy's book is a fitting tribute to his memory and intellectual legacy.

**Virgiliu Țărău**  
**Professor, Department of History**  
**Babeș-Bolyai University**

**Vice President, National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS), 2007-18**

# Journal of Romanian Studies

The **Journal of Romanian Studies**, the biannual, peer-reviewed journal of the SRS, is pleased to announce the release of its Spring 2020 edition. This issue includes articles on (trans)national justice and the judiciary by Vladimir Solonari and Cynthia M. Horne. Petru Negură and Delia Popescu consider nationalism in philosophical and pedagogical contexts. Alexandra Chiriac, Brindusa Armanca, and incoming editor Peter Gross discuss avant-garde performance and contemporary mass media. This issue also includes book reviews by Emanuel Copilaş and Dana S. Trif.

Members receive a complimentary electronic subscription to the journal. If you are interested in taking out an individual or institutional subscription, please write to the publisher at [subscription@ibidem.eu](mailto:subscription@ibidem.eu).

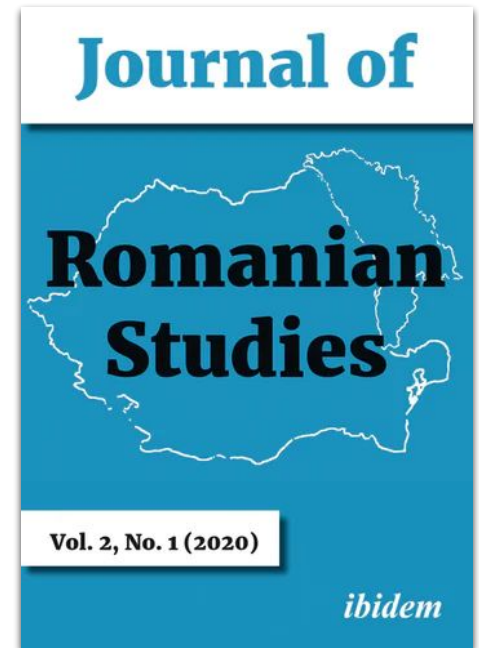
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The Journal of Romanian Studies seeks submissions for its Spring 2021 issue. The editors will consider:

- original research articles (of up to 10,000 words, including bibliography)
- review articles (of up to 3,000 words, commenting on 2-3 books on a common theme)
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Please include a title, a 200-word abstract, the text of the article, and a bibliography. Double space your article and abstract, and do not include your name and affiliation anywhere. Note that we will consider only manuscripts that are not under review elsewhere. To this effect, your email should clearly state that your manuscript is not under review with other journals. Please send all submissions to [romanian.studies.journal@gmail.com](mailto:romanian.studies.journal@gmail.com). They will be considered on a rolling basis.



The biannual, peer-reviewed Journal of Romanian Studies, jointly developed by The Society for Romanian Studies and ibidem Press, examines critical issues in Romanian studies, linking work in that field to wider theoretical debates and issues of current relevance, and serving as a forum for junior and senior scholars. The journal also presents articles that connect Romania and Moldova comparatively with other states and their ethnic majorities and minorities, and with other groups by investigating the challenges of migration and globalization and the impact of the European Union.

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Books in the SRS Romanian Studies series are about Romania and/or Moldova and the populations living on these territories, or with the Romanian and Moldovan diasporas and cultures. Manuscripts should have primarily an academic profile, and a disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary focus, drawing on history, political science, sociology, anthropology, law, economics, linguistics, literature, art history, or other fields. They should be based on sound and rigorous scholarly analysis, and include references and bibliography. We prefer contributions that are free of jargon and thus more likely to appeal to a wide audience. All proposals, manuscripts, and books offered for translation will be carefully reviewed for publication in the series.

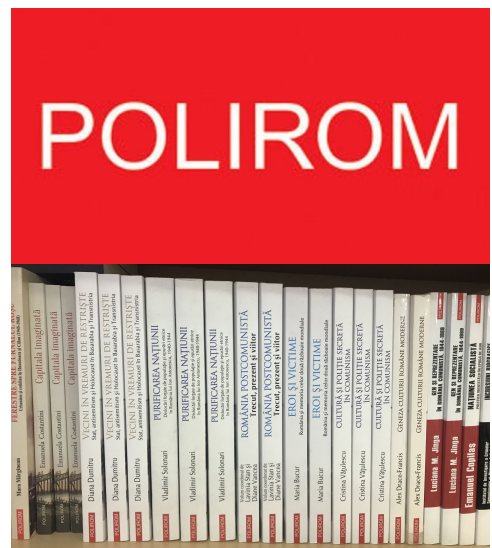
### Titles published in the series to date in reverse chronological order are:

- Maria Bucur, *Eroi și victime. România și memoria celor două războaie mondiale* (2019)
  - Diana Dumitru, *Vecini în vremuri de restriște. Stat, antisemitism și Holocaust în Basarabia și Transnistria* (2019)
  - Cristina Vățulescu, *Cultură și poliție secretă în comunism* (2018)
  - Lavinia Stan și Diane Vancea, coord., *România postcomunistă: trecut, prezent, viitor* (2017)
  - Alex Drace-Francis, *Geneza culturii române moderne. Instituțiile scrisului și dezvoltarea identității naționale, 1700-1900* (2016)
  - Vladimir Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii: dislocări forțate de populație și epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu, 1940-1944* (2015)
  - Roland Clark, *Sfântă tinerețe legionară. Activismul fascist în România interbelică* (2015)
- WINNER OF THE 2017 SRS BOOK AWARD



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The Society for Romanian Studies



# SRS-Polirom Book Series

cont'd.

## FORTHCOMING

Cristian Cercel's *Romania and the Quest for European Identity: Philo-Germanism without Germans* (Routledge, 2019) is being translated into Romanian by the author himself.

“Exploring the largely positive representations of Romanian Germans predominating in post-1989 Romanian society, this book shows that the underlying reasons for German prestige are strongly connected with Romania’s endeavors to become European. [...] Cercel argues that representations of Germans in Romania, descendants of twelfth-century and eighteenth-century colonists, become actually a symbolic resource for asserting but also questioning Romania’s European identity. Such representations link Romania’s much-desired European belonging with German presence, whilst German absence is interpreted as a sign of veering away from Europe. Investigating this case of discursive "self-colonization" and this apparent symbolic embrace of the German Other in Romania, the book offers a critical study of the discourses associated with Romania’s postcommunist "Europeanization" to contribute a better understanding of contemporary West-East relationships in the European context.”

(from the publisher’s web page)

**Cristian Cercel** is currently a researcher with the Institute for Social Movements at Ruhr University Bochum. He has a BA in European Studies (University of Bucharest), an MA in Nationalism Studies (Central European University), and a PhD in Politics (Durham University). Before his current appointment, he held research positions and fellowships at several institutions, including New Europe College (Bucharest), the Centre for Contemporary German Culture at Swansea University, and the Centre for Advanced Study (Sofia). He has published in refereed academic journals such as *Nationalities Papers*, *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, and *History and Memory*. He is also active as a translator from German and Italian into Romanian.



More information about Dr. Cercel is available [here](#).



## PROSPECTIVE AUTHORS

If you plan to submit a manuscript for the SRS-Polirom book series or if you have a general interest in the series, we encourage you to contact the editors.

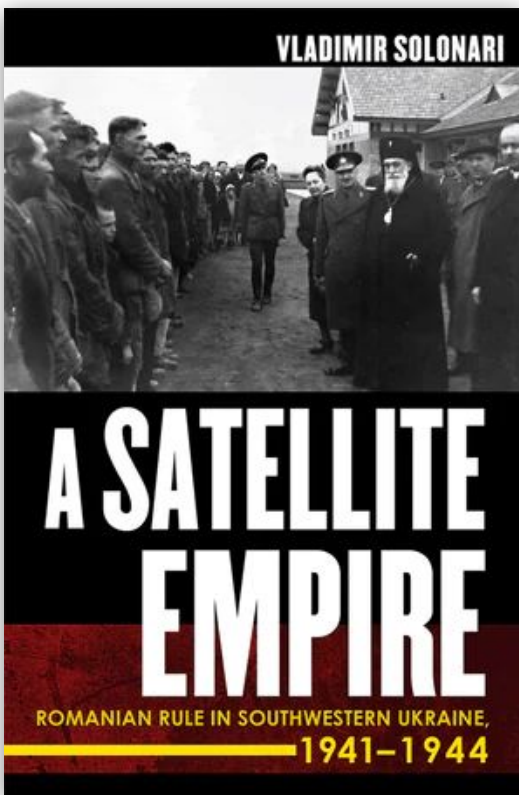
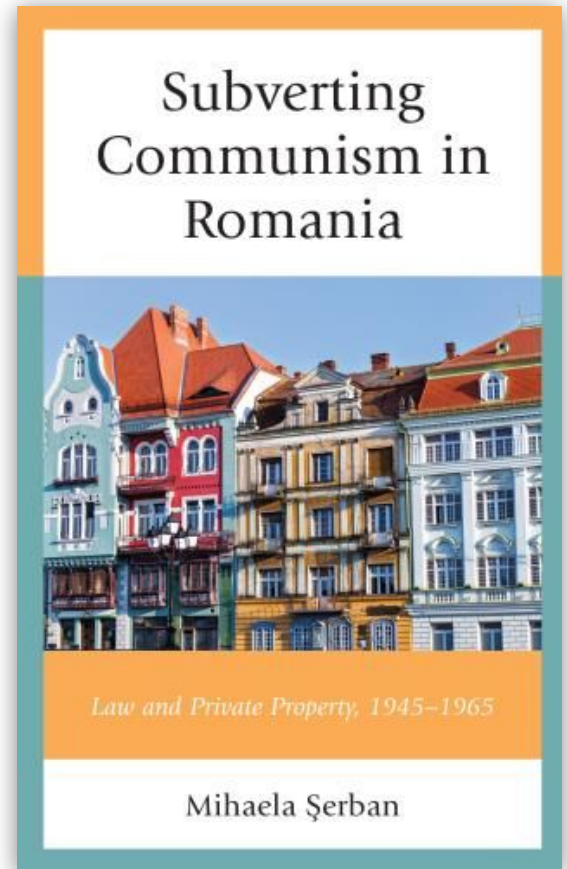


# Featured Books

## *Subverting Communism in Romania: Law and Private Property 1945–1965*

by Mihaela Șerban (Lexington Books, 2019)

*Subverting Communism in Romania* explores the role of law in everyday life and as a mechanism for social change during early communism in Romania. Mihaela Șerban focuses on the regime's attempts to extinguish private property in housing through housing nationalization and expropriation. This study of early communist law illustrates that law is never just an instrument of state power, particularly over the long term and from a ground up perspective. Even during its most totalitarian phase, communist law enjoyed a certain level of autonomy at the most granular level and consequently was simultaneously a space of state power and resistance to power. The book draws from archives recently made available in Romania, which have opened up new perspectives for understanding a mundane yet crucial part of the modern human experience: one's home and the institution of private property that often sustains it.



## *A Satellite Empire in Romania: Romanian Rule in Southwestern Ukraine, 1941–1944*

by Vladimir Solonari (Cornell University Press, 2019)

*Satellite Empire* is an in-depth investigation of the political and social history of the area in southwestern Ukraine under Romanian occupation during World War II. Transnistria was the only occupied Soviet territory administered by a power other than Nazi Germany, a reward for Romanian participation in Operation Barbarossa.

Vladimir Solonari's invaluable contribution to World War II history focuses on three main aspects of Romanian rule of Transnistria: with fascinating insights from recently opened archives, Solonari examines the conquest and delimitation of the region, the Romanian administration of the new territory, and how locals responded to the occupation. What did Romania want from the conquest? The first section of the book analyzes Romanian policy aims and its participation in the invasion of the USSR. Solonari then traces how

Romanian administrators attempted, in contradictory and inconsistent ways, to make Transnistria "Romanian" and "civilized" while simultaneously using it as a dumping ground for 150,000 Jews and 20,000 Roma deported from a racially cleansed Romania. The author shows that the imperatives of total war eventually prioritized economic exploitation of the region over any other aims the Romanians may have had. In the final section, he uncovers local responses in terms of collaboration and resistance, in particular exploring relationships with the local Christian population, which initially welcomed the occupiers as liberators from Soviet oppression but eventually became hostile to them. Ever increasing hostility towards the occupying regime buoyed the numbers and efficacy of pro-Soviet resistance groups.

# Featured Books

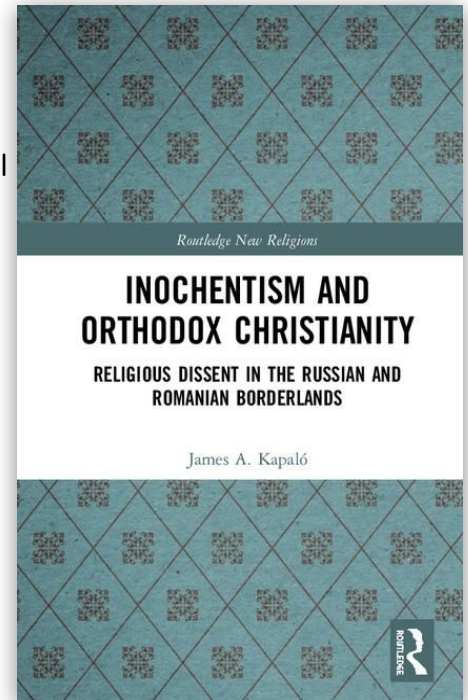
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## *Inochentism and Orthodox Christianity Religious Dissent in the Russian and Romanian Borderlands*

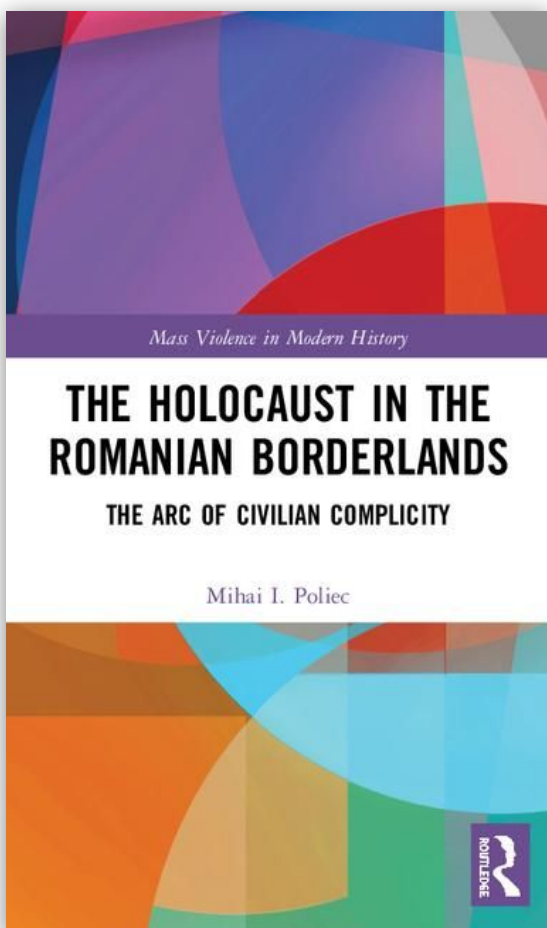
by James A. Kapaló, (Routledge, 2019)

This book explores the history and evolution of Inochentism, a controversial new religious movement that emerged in the Russian and Romanian borderlands of what is now Moldova and Ukraine in the context of the Russian revolutionary period. Inochentism centres around the charismatic preaching of Inochentie, a monk of the Orthodox Church, who inspired an apocalyptic movement that was soon labelled heretical by the Orthodox Church and persecuted as socially and politically subversive by Soviet and Romanian state authorities.

*Inochentism and Orthodox Christianity* charts the emergence and development of Inochentism through the twentieth century based on hagiographies, oral testimonies, press reports, state legislation and a wealth of previously unstudied police and secret police archival material. Focusing on the role that religious persecution and social marginalization played in the transformation of this understudied and much vilified group, the author explores a series of counter-narratives that challenge the mainstream historiography of the movement and highlight the significance of the concept of 'liminality' in relation to the study of new religious movements and Orthodoxy.



This book constitutes a systematic historical study of an Eastern European 'home-grown' religious movement taking a 'grass-roots' approach to the problem of minority religious identities in twentieth century Eastern Europe. Consequently, it will be of great interest to scholars of new religions movements, religious history and Russian and Eastern European studies.



## *The Holocaust in the Romanian Borderlands: The Arc of Civilian Complicity*

by Mihai I. Poliec (Routledge, 2019)

This volume examines the changing role which ordinary members of society played in the state-sponsored persecution of the Jews in Bukovina and Bessarabia, both during the summer of 1941, when Romania joined the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, and beyond. It establishes different patterns of civilian complicity and discusses the significance of the phenomenon in the context of the exterminatory campaign pursued by the Romanian military authorities against the Jews living in the borderlands.

# Featured Books

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## Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities

*The Making of Romanian  
Citizenship, c. 1750–1918*

Constantin Iordachi



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## *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, c. 1750–1918*

by Constantin Iordachi (Brill, 2019)

This book documents the making of Romanian citizenship from 1750 to 1918 as a series of acts of national self-determination by the Romanians, as well as the emancipation of subordinated gender, social, and ethno-religious groups. It focuses on the progression of a sum of transnational “questions” that were at the heart of North-Atlantic, European, and local politics during the long nineteenth century, concerning the status of peasants, women, Greeks, Jews, Roma, Armenians, Muslims, and Dobrudjans. The analysis emphasizes the fusion between nationalism and liberalism, and the emancipatory impact national-liberalism had on the transition from the Old Regime to the modern order of the nation-state. While emphasizing liberalism's many achievements, the study critically scrutinizes the liberal doctrine of legal-political “capacity” and the dark side of nationalism, marked by tendencies toward exclusion. It highlights the challenges nascent liberal democracies face in the process of consolidation and the enduring appeal of illiberalism in periods of upheaval, represented mainly by nativism. The book's innovative interdisciplinary approach to citizenship in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Balkans and the richness of the sources employed, appeal to a diverse readership.

## *Ambiguous Transitions: Gender, the State, and Everyday Life in Socialist and Postsocialist Romania*

by Jill Massino (Berghahn Books, 2019)

Focusing on youth, family, work, and consumption, *Ambiguous Transitions* analyzes the interplay between gender and citizenship postwar Romania. By juxtaposing official sources with oral histories and socialist policies with everyday practices, Jill Massino illuminates the gendered dimensions of socialist modernization and its complex effects on women's roles, relationships, and identities. Analyzing women as subjects and agents, the book examines how they negotiated the challenges that arose as Romanian society modernized, even as it clung to traditional ideas about gender. Massino concludes by exploring the ambiguities of postsocialism, highlighting how the legacies of the past have shaped politics and women's lived experiences since 1989.

## AMBIGUOUS TRANSITIONS

*Gender, the State, and Everyday Life  
in Socialist and Postsocialist Romania*



JILL MASSINO

# Featured Books

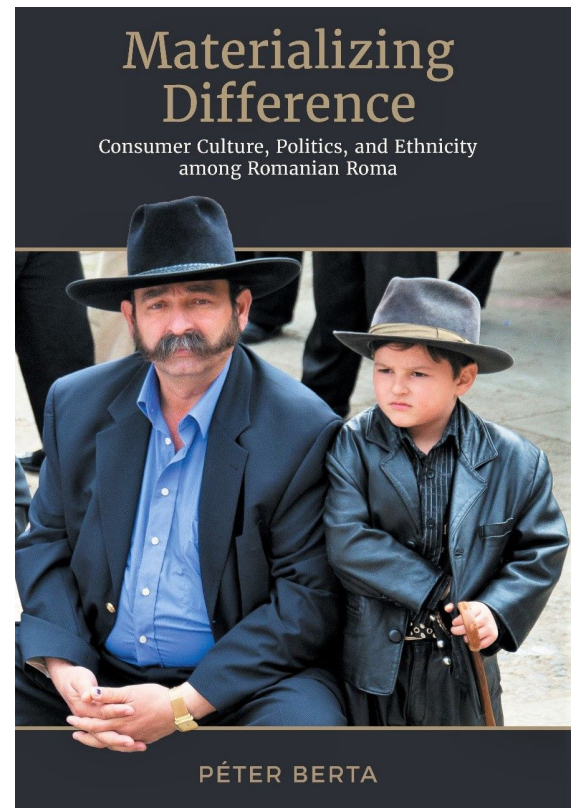
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## Materializing Difference: Consumer Culture, Politics, and Ethnicity among Romanian Roma

by Péter Berta (University of Toronto Press, 2019)

How do objects mediate human relationships? In what ways do they possess social and political agency? What role does material culture – luxury consumption, as well as commodity aesthetics, biographies, and ownership histories – play in the production of social and political identities, differences, and hierarchies? How do (informal) consumer subcultures of collectors organize and manage themselves? Drawing on theories from anthropology and sociology, specifically material culture, consumption, museum, ethnicity, and post-socialist studies, *Materializing Difference* addresses these questions via analysis of the practices and ideologies connected to Gabor Roma beakers and roofed tankards made of antique silver. The consumer subculture organized around these objects – defined as ethnicized and gendered prestige goods by the Gabor Roma living in Romania – is a contemporary, second-hand culture based on patina-oriented consumption.

*Materializing Difference* reveals the inner dynamics of the complex relationships and interactions between objects (silver beakers and roofed tankards) and subjects (Romanian Roma) and investigates how these relationships and interactions contribute to the construction, materialization, and reformulation of social, economic, and political identities, boundaries, and differences. It also discusses how, after 1989, the political transformation in Romania led to the emergence of a new, post-socialist consumer sensitivity among the Gabor Roma, and how this sensitivity reshaped the pre-regime-change patterns, meanings, and value preferences of luxury consumption.



## Materializing Difference

Consumer Culture, Politics, and Ethnicity among Romanian Roma

PÉTER BERTA

## H-Romania



[H-Romania](#) is now in its sixth year of operation, with over 300 subscribers to the network. We publish book reviews in all social science and humanities fields related to Romanian Studies, operate a discussion forum, host links to research and teaching

resources, and disseminate a variety of announcements and calls for papers/applications. While we are happy with our progress thus far, we still have room to grow and improve. We want to encourage SRS members to join H-Romania and publicize the network across the broad field of Romanian Studies. Please feel free to contribute postings and announcements, notify us of any recently published books and calls for papers/applications in your field, and volunteer to review books and report on conferences. And please follow us @HNet\_Romania on Twitter.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to invite new network and book-review editors. Please contact Chris Davis at [R.Chris.Davis@LoneStar.edu](mailto:R.Chris.Davis@LoneStar.edu) if you are interested in joining the H-Romania editorial team.

# SRS Membership

SRS uses member dues to help with monetary prizes for outstanding publications and to budget and pay for the cost of future conferences. In addition, members play a vital role in the Society by supporting our membership program, submitting manuscripts for the new scholarly Journal of Romanian Studies, proposing nominations for the prizes, and voting for officers and Board members.



Contributions from lifetime members are most welcome. In addition, organizational sponsors and patrons may be approved by the Board on a case by case basis. Member organizations do not have a vote but their support will be acknowledged by SRS, including linking to organizational web sites.

You may renew your membership or join SRS via Paypal or credit card on our [website](#).

We also accept dues via mail. Please send mailed dues and/or donations directly by check (made out to The Society for Romanian Studies) to:

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## About SRS

The Society for Romanian Studies is an international interdisciplinary academic organization based in the US and dedicated to promoting research and critical studies on all aspects of the culture and society of the diverse peoples connected to Romania and Moldova. The SRS is generally recognized as the major professional organization for North American scholars concerned with Romania and Moldova. It is affiliated with the South East European Studies Association (SEESA); the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES); the American Political Science Association (APSA); the American Historical Association (AHA); the Balkan History Association (BHA); and the Romanian Studies Association of America (RSAA). More information about the SRS, including current officers, the national board, and membership information, can be found on the SRS website. If you have any recent activities to report (publications, conferences organized, etc.) please email such information to the Newsletter Editor, Leah Valtin-Erwin ([lvaltin@iu.edu](mailto:lvaltin@iu.edu)).