Projections of Romania in Anglophone Travel Books in the Period between 1850 and 1940

Drd. Andi Sâsâiac
Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași

Résumé : *Le but de cet article est d'illustrer l'image de la Roumanie projetée dans les écrits de voyage anglophones, dans le contexte historique de la période entre 1850 et 1940. L'image que la Roumanie a à l'étranger représente un sujet de plus en plus à la mode à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du pays, bien que l'intérêt des occidentaux ne soit pas strictement lié aux dernières décennies. Ce qui est récent est la prise de conscience que les Roumains commencent à développer dans leur mentalité collective, à l'égard de l'opinion des Occidentaux. Les images sont créées par les gens, et leur émergence est le résultat d'un long processus auquel plusieurs participants adhèrent. Pendant longtemps, l'idée était que les écrits de voyage reflétant les images de la Roumanie avaient des destinataires étrangers, et les réalités décrites étaient déjà familiers aux Roumains. Aujourd'hui ce type de perception est en train de changer. L'intérêt des Occidentaux pour la Roumanie doit être examiné dans le cadre des relations internationales de différentes époques de l'histoire. Les relations de pouvoir jouent un rôle actif dans la représentation d'une culture, dans la sélection des textes qui seront publiés, contribuant ainsi à la construction textuelle des images.*

Mots-clés : *image nationale, écrits de voyage, relations internationales*

Introduction

The image that Romania has abroad represents, especially from a journalistic perspective, a more and more fashionable topic both inside the country and outside it. The reason for this international attention that Romania is getting could be due to its having reached a democratic system after the collapse of communism twenty-five years ago. To this historic event, there should be added its (no less historic) adhesion to the European Union. Both these factors have contributed to the westerners' "discovery" of this close enough, yet "exotic" place. However, as will be seen, the westerners' interest in this "different" country is not at all strictly related to the last two or three decades. What is indeed recent, on the other hand, is the self-awareness that Romanians are starting to develop, with regard to the westerners' opinions, appreciative or deprecatory as they may be.

One should bear in mind that, according to the sufficient evidence that can be found in the literature on the topic, it is not a superior or divine force that enables a person or a group to be regarded in a certain way. Images are created by people, and their emergence is not spontaneous, but the result of a long process to which several participants adhere. However, research on the topic of the evolution of Romania's image, as it is reflected in travel books, is currently scarce[1]. For a long time, the idea was that such writings had different (foreign) addressees, and the realities described were already familiar to the Romanians anyway. Nowadays this kind of perception is gradually changing, and this change is explainable through the irreversible process of globalization, that makes Romanians have closer cultural, economic and political ties with other countries. Nonetheless, the westerners' interest in Romania, which, as previously mentioned, is actually not that recent, should be considered within the framework of the international relations of various times in history. As in the case of translation, as Munday [2009:16] observes, power relations play an active role in representing a culture, its effects including the texts that are to be published. Power relations thus contribute to the textual construction of images and are probably the cause of certain fluctuations in textual representations of Romania in travel writing. Therefore, our historical survey on the evolution of the images of Romania in English travel writing would be insufficient if approached outside the political or economic contexts of the time the books were written, published, or when their action took place. The period on which this paper focuses is that between 1850 and 1940. The period covers the beginning of a sustained approach on Romania undertaken by English-speaking travel writers, up to the time interval between the two World Wars, which comprises the most positive representations of the country in western travel writing. Since our analysis deals with images of Romania that come from English language books, I consider it appropriate to relate it to western historical perspectives. Of course, Romanian sources are not to be disregarded the same as the media coverage of Romania in different historical circumstances could also be a useful source of information.

1. Projections of Romania in travel books in the Modern Era

Deletant [in Beller and Leerssen, 2007:223] affirms that the Romanian image was bland until the late nineteenth century. The premises of modern Romania (the development of the Romanian language and the

widening of the national consciousness that was at first only shared by a few scholars) materialized no earlier than the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British consul William Wilkinson published *An account of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820). This book, to which N. Iorga [1981: 468-474] pays much attention, portrays the peasants as being patient and resigned in front of the tough despotic conditions they had to face. Wilkinson talks about their terrible living conditions and about the superstitions that not even the priests (sometimes poorly educated themselves) could overcome. The 1800s brought a series of crucial events in the life of Romanians. First, there was the Revolution of 1821 (considered by Samuelson [1882:106] as a revolt, although Seton-Watson [1934: 161] acknowledges it as a revolution), which is regarded both by Romanian and foreign historians as a national movement and an intellectual regeneration. Second, the outbreak of the 1848 revolutions (in Habsburg Transylvania, as well as in Moldavia and Wallachia, which were under Russian protectorate at the time) seemed to promise the Romanian (now secular) elite the speedy fulfillment of their (national) aspirations [Hitchins, 2003:79]. As Seton-Watson [1934:185] observes, the 1848 events prove that the French culture and ideas infiltrated to the remote European cities of Bucharest and Iasi, and were met with great and sincere sympathy by the West. The subsequent Union of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859, under the rule of Prince Alexander John Cuza received much attention, as it was strongly supported by France and met with great skepticism by Britain, which wanted to maintain the post-Crimean War status-quo. The positive attitude that France had towards the (nascent) Romania is illustrated by the appreciable series of French scholars, diplomats and artists that, as N. Iorga [1881: 515-600] shows, visited the territories during that period. Britain's skepticism appears to explain Samuelson's criticism towards Cuza, which is not shared, for instance, by Seton-Watson, Deletant or Hitchins: "*the Prince, who enriched himself at the expense of a still suffering country, sought by every means to obtain absolute rule, and led an openly immoral life*" [1882: 111]. Prince Charles's accession to the throne of Romania seems to have improved Britain's attitude towards Romania, which obtained, in 1878, its independence from the Ottoman Empire, "*to a large extent through English instrumentality, and it is satisfactory to reflect that, so far, the blood and money of England have not flowed in vain*" [Samuelson, 1882:3], although Hitchins [1994:52] mentions the disappointment that Romanian officials suffered because of *"France and England's indifference*", while Seton-Watson [1934:288] states that, indeed, *"the London Government was completely*

indifferent" in relation with the Romanian cause. It is true that Romania played an important role in reducing the Ottoman influence in Eastern Europe, a fact which was convergent with England's interest and was therefore, at least diplomatically, supported.

The pronouncing of Romania as a kingdom and of Charles as King of Romania (1881) attracted even more attention from the British. Only one year later, James Samuelson published his book, *Roumania Past and Present*. Vesna Goldsworthy [1998:54] observes that the founding of new kingdoms in South-eastern Europe had attracted the attention of the British towards these remote places, as the new royal houses offered easily comprehensible, yet bright images. The introduction of monarchy represented a means of assuring the "Europeanisation". Moreover, besides Queen Mary of Romania (1875-1938), the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, there weren't any other British royals in the Balkans. It is also worth mentioning that, according to Lăcătuşu [2000: 208], it was in the nineteenth century that Romanian literary works were translated and published in England (e.g. *Doine – or the National Songs or Legends of Romania* by E.C. Granville Murray - 1854, *Roumanian Anthology* by Henry Stanley, or *Roumanian Fairy Tales and Legends* by E.B. Mawr – 1881). There were several other nineteenth century travel accounts mentioning Romania, such as the one of William Beatty Kingston (1837-1900), who published *A Wanderer's Notes* (1888) in London. He dedicated two of the book's eleven chapters to his stay in Romania. As a journalist working for *Daily Telegraph*, Beatty Kingston came to Romania to advocate the cause of the Jews who were allegedly being oppressed. According to his own testimony, he was tolerably familiar with the Romanian language and personally known to the statesmen then in power in Bucharest [1888: 2]. His journey started in 1874, before the Romanian Independence and Kingdom. Since he uses the first person narrative, mentions toponyms and insists on his personal acquaintance with Romanian officials, Beatty Kingston's book represents a form of modern travel writing. He is favorable to the visible progress that has been made since the coronation of Prince Charles:

> Every object that met my sight, except the face of the country itself, had suffered a manifest change for the better; the peasants were decently clothed instead of being picturesquely draped in sordid rags; even the gypsies, the grown-up ones, at least were considerably less naked than they had been in the good old days [1888: 4].

Such clear, direct statements regarding the image of the country and its people are expressed in comparison to the author's previous visit, thus the motif of return, specific to travel writing, is also present. Unlike Samuelson, the author is favorable to Cuza, criticizing the coalition that took him out of power. All in all, the book is appreciative of the newly founded Romanian monarchy, in accordance with the journalist's assumed relationship with Romanian politicians.

A less favorable but no less important contribution to the development of Romania's image is James Samuelson's *Romania Past and Present (1882)* itself. Although it can hardly be considered a travel book (since there is no narrative and all aspects are presented as facts), it does feature a real journey to Romania (as the many pictures would also suggest) and it does bring forward images of Romania. In its first part, it describes the main Romanian cities and their inhabitants. As previously mentioned, there is little information about the writer, but the book (which nevertheless contains documented, trustworthy data), can be easily suspected of British propaganda. We have already seen that Samuelson (unlike Beatty Kingston or contemporary Western historians) criticizes the Romanian leaders whose policies contradicted that of Britain in those times; he also supports their political opponents. On the other hand, the author repeatedly mentions that there was direct British involvement in Romania's national achievements, without, however, elaborating on the topic. There must have been, nevertheless, some economic relations between Romania and Britain (the type of relations that are usually politically favored), since Samuelson seems to have precise facts and figures, such as those referring to the city of Iasi:

> Jassy is picturesquely situated at an altitude of more than 1000 feet above the sea-level, on the railway from Pascani (Galatz-Cernowitz) to Kischeneff in Russia. The number of its inhabitants is uncertain, probably about 75,000, and includes a large proportion of Jews, who monopolise the trade and banking business of the place. It stands upon three eminences, and its principal streets have been paved by contract with a London firm at a cost of 200,000 pounds [1882: 39].

The dichotomous Oriental / Western elements that Samuelson observes in the Romanian culture are also found in the travel books on Romania from the twentieth century. Samuelson displays a clearly Eurocentric perspective and associates the Oriental element with "savagery", whereas the Western component represents civilization (in other words, the optimum orientation

for Romania's own interest). The "absorbing interest" that, according to Samuelson, England has for Romania, is explained by the author in terms of power relations. He considers Romania a formidable barrier against the aggressions of stronger powers and, through its southern border on the Danube, a potential actor in England's trade with the East.

Samuelson's book can be considered as a follow-up to James Ozanne's *Three Years in Roumania* (1878), a very similar book in terms of content and structure, yet written in a more personal manner. The image of the Romanians that he provides is most favorable:

> They are kindly and hospitable, pleasant company and devoted heart and soul to their country and to the memoirs of a once glorious past. Nor are the elements of progress lacking to them. They are, without exception, the most promising of the Christian races of the East (p. 227).

The overall image that Romania gained in the nineteenth century travel books is that of sensible modernization, although the level of mass education and the standards of living in the rural zone (which accounted for most of the country) was still precarious. Nevertheless, the prospects for future development are presented as being encouraging[2].

2. Early twentieth century Romania in western travel books

The twentieth century represents a period of great change in the way people lived, as a result of shifts in politics, ideology, society, economy, culture etc. The media have also developed in a manner never seen before and made the world knowledge more widely available. The period settled the settings of two world wars, the polarization between the Communist block and the Western democracies, the fall of Communism and, on the whole, brought major changes in the world's political maps. Since it is necessary to also consider the internal struggles (a list which is by no means comprehensive of such blows would include the peasants' revolt in 1907, the political and economic crises from the inter-war period, the brutal repression against the anti-communists, the break out of communism and the subsequent transition, all favored by the international context), it would be no exaggeration to say that the twentieth century was the most tumultuous in the history of Romania. It is the period that provides the most numerous travel books on Romania, and also the period

in which the travel novel takes shape as a literary species. Since the twentieth century features events that represent turning points in world history, it is appropriate to analyze the travel books on Romania within the context of the historical events that were closest to their publication.

2.1. The First World War

After two years of neutrality, Romania entered the First World War as an ally of the Triple Entente (France, the United Kingdom and Russia). It seems that, even before entering the war, Romania had been offered considerable financial aid from the Great Britain, which engaged itself in massive imports of Romanian cereal crops [thus paying, through the Bank of England, an anticipation of 10.000.000£, according to Seton-Watson, 1934: 415], consequently preventing the opposite side from making the purchase. As Lăcătuşu [2000: 204] notices, this was a profoundly political act; moreover, Britain provided the Romanian army with modern warfare material. On the 17th August 1916, Romania signed the Treaty of Alliance and was to declare war to Austria-Hungary, with the subsequent right to annex territories inhabited by Romanians. Cultural relations with Britain also developed considerably that period, thanks to a firm lobby made in England by The Association of Romanian University Professors [Lăcătuşu, 2000: 204], which led to the foundation of *The English – Romanian Society* in August 1917.

Two travel books on Romania were published right after the First World War and the Great Romanian Union in 1918: Ethel Pantazzi's*Roumania in Light and Shadow (1920)* and Maude Parkinson's *Twenty Years in Roumania (1919)*, both considered to be 'friendly' by the Romanian philologists of the time.

According to Parkinson [1919: 5], Romania represents a country in which she spent many of the happiest years of her life. The English governess's work (which is mentioned, later on, by other travelers, too) resumes the (developing) motif of Romania as a dichotomous space between East and West. Without necessarily considering her findings as being negative, Parkinson describes a rather stationary society, resisting the Western development model (with the exception of the French manners and trends) and indicates Orthodoxy as a fundamental feature of the Romanian identity. She also speaks of the Romanian (unusual, exotic) table habits, in which lunch and dinner are copious in what she calls a *breakfastless country* [1919: 57]. Parkinson alternates her personal Romanian

experience (in which she idyllically presents, among other things, the customs and traditions from the rural zones using obvious rhetorical devices meant to exoticize, or labels the Orthodox baptism as being cruel), with almost theoretical considerations related to Romania's state organization. The author strongly supports the Romanian cause during the First World War:

> Everyone, I should think, would be fully aware by now of the aims which decided Roumania to intervene in the late war. To regain Transylvania and see it incorporated in Roumania has always been the ardent desire of every Romanian [1919: 251].

She gives the example of a professor whom she personally met, who had to leave the Hungarian Transylvania because of his political views.

A Canadian whose husband, a high-ranked Romanian naval officer fought in the First World War, Pantazzi spent no less than ten years in Romania, between 1909 and 1919. While going further with presenting the East-West dichotomy of Romania ("*In one aspect it is Occidental, Parisian, elegant; in another, Oriental, provincial and picturesquely squalid. It is the mirror reflecting faithfully every image in turn of this old-new border country*", p. 67), she confirms what Deletant [in Beller & Leerssen, 2007: 224-225] believes would represent the main coordinates of Romania's image in (travel) literature: the Latin heritage, on the one hand, and the fatalistic character, on the other, which she expresses in the form of a cliché:

> I find on the whole the Roumanians have an emotional temperament very like the Italians with whom I have come in contact, but their minds, though possessing the logical clearness characteristic of the Latin races, have a strong leaning to mysticism and that fatalistic "laissez-aller" one sees in the Russians and the Turks. They let things go their own way, because "It is destiny" [1920: 66].

Pantazzi deals with Romanians' customs and traditions, and also makes some critical comments on the existence of stray dogs on the streets (p.116), an aspect which, sadly enough, has survived to this day and has become a source of stereotyping. A certain objectiveness is suggested by the title of Pantazzi's book, although the *light* and the *shadow* mark the pre-war period and the war period, respectively. Pantazzi is, in her turn, very supportive of the Romanian cause, as she excitedly praises (p. 279) the fulfillment of " 'Rumania Mare' – Greater Roumania – the national dream of centuries."

Pantazzi is also the one who promoted in America Dorothea Kirke's *Domestic life in Rumania* (1916, published in London and New York), a collection of 31 letters written by Millie Ormonde to her cousin, Edmund Talbot, Squire of Talwood, Devonshire. The title refers to Ormonde's own domestic life, and not to that of the Romanians. The letters are (supposedly) sent from Bucharest and Sinaia, but there are no temporal indications. Besides the personal affairs that are communicated, references to Romania (mostly dealing with the beauty of different landscapes and the kindness of people) are highly positive, with no criticism whatsoever.

Lady Kennard (the daughter of the British Minister to Romania) published her *Roumanian Diary* in 1918, a book which presents a vivid picture of Romania's entrance in the First World War. The war circumstances generate a terrible image characterized by hunger and illness. However, she is also supportive of the Romanian cause, claiming that

> Roumania is deserving of notice and appreciation; we outsiders feel that we want to go home and tell the family of Allies that our little brother Roumania has grown into a man of whom we have reason to be very proud (p.202).

2.2. The Period between the Two World Wars

Both the cultural and political life of Romania and its relations with Western countries took a rather paradoxical turn after the accomplishment of the long standing ideal of Romanian unity in 1918. On the one hand, Romania's cultural relations with Britain developed significantly. Of course, the newly established Romanian territory received a greater attention from the West, yet the average British newspaper reader from the thirties, as Deletant [2005:8] observes, knew two things about Romania – one was oil and the other Mme Lupescu. Only few travelled to Romania and the British public had to rely on folklorists and writers such as Sitwell and Patmore, while a more specialized public was better served by a number of journalists and by Seton – Watson (and Samuelson, we should add). Back to Romania, an English department was set up at the University of Iasi, in 1925, another one at the University of Bucharest in 1936, while in 1934, the British Committee for Relations with Other Countries (called the British Council starting with 1938) began its activity in Romania as a complementary instrument of foreign policy. Anthony Eden, foreign affairs

minister and later Prime Minister [cited by Ursu in Deletant, 2005, p.202] believed that the British Council was an indispensable ally of foreign policy. The establishment of the British Council in Romania was a consequence of the Anglo-Romanian societies which were founded in Cluj (1923) and Bucharest (1927) and strongly supported by the United Kingdom [Deletant, 2005:16]. The Council was paying the salaries of six British professors who were teaching English in Bucharest, Iasi and Chernivtsi [Deletant, 2005: 22]. Translations from Romanian into English continued to be published in Britain in this period. Mention should be made of a collection of *Romanian Stories* (1921) translated by Lucy Byng, which encompasses stories originally written by authors such as Sadoveanu, Slavici, Creangă or Caragiale. Also, Alice Wise translated Rebreanu's *Pădurea spânzuraţilor* (*The Forest of the Hanged*) in 1930. Professor Dragos Protopopescu, head of the English department of the University of Bucharest, had a significant contribution to the reception of the Romanian literature and culture in the Great Britain, he himself providing numerous studies and translations. The reception of the British literature and culture in Romania was facilitated by N. Iorga, who published *A History of Anglo-Romanian Relations* in 1931. On the other hand, British – Romanian economic relations had stagnated. As Deletant [2005: 8] shows, Britain declined to make any but the most generalized commitments towards Eastern Europe after the First World War. Since Romania was an exporter of food and raw materials and an importer of manufactures, its modernization depended largely on foreign loans and investments. However, Britain stopped treating Romania like a privileged trading partner, so Romanian products had to compete with any other sources. The oil that might have interested Britain was quasi-unavailable, due to the law series from 1924 which established Romanian control over all the mineral resources. Foreign involvement was accepted, but 3/5 of the capital and 2/3 of the administration had to be Romanian [Hitchins, 1994:406]. Even so, British investments in the Romanian oil industry were quite significant (to Romanian standards), and between 1929 and 1933 Britain accounted for the most oil exports. Such financial activity was, however, considered modest by the United Kingdom [Hitchins, 1994: 499], who also considered that, politically, Romania was floating in France's orbit.

The period between the two world wars had a significant impact on Romania's rating in the West, and the country brought its own input in this respect. Three widely known travel books on Romania were published in

the thirties: Hall's *Roumanian Furrow* (1933), Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey* (1938) and Patmore's *Invitation to Romania* (1939).

As its title suggests, *Roumanian Furrow* is an autobiographical travel book which relates young English traveler Donald Hall's journey to Romania in search of a rural lifestyle which was gradually evanescing in the West. The motif of the Romanian rural lifestyle which is unaffected by the suffocating modernization has survived to this day and is widely used by tourism companies as well as by the friendly foreign media or statesmen (such as Prince Charles, for example). Nowadays, Romania is investing considerably in the market segment appealing to the so-called "green tourists", and Hall's travel book pretty much meets the same requirements (while also evoking the locals' generosity and hospitality). The author recounts his active participation in the peasant life and is very impressed with the local customs. However, Hall warns that this *terra incognita*, as it is labeled by the *Folklore Journal* (Vol. 47, No. 3, Sep., 1936) is likely to lose its virgin specificity due to the inroad of the western civilization (again, a recurring motif nowadays too). The book was reedited in 2007 and is fairly advertised in England, in a period in which the rescission of work restrictions for Romanians in the United Kingdom is causing much controversy.

The most famous travel book on Romania is most probably Sir Sacheverell Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey* (1938). His enterprise is a result of a private arrangement with the Callimachi family of boyards. He even admits that Romania is one of the least known countries in Europe and assumes that an Englishman's knowledge of the country is limited to Bucharest, Sinaia and the oil wells. This arrangement seems a very wise act of Romanian propaganda (to which it is said that the Government contributed financially, with five hundred pounds, according to Goldsworthy, 1998:194). Sitwell spent four weeks in Romania (during which he personally met Queen Mary, an ardent promoter of the Romanian culture), and shows an idyllic picture of the country in the inter-war period. He combines the attraction for the exotic with scholarly historical references, while also comparing the places he visited with those he found in other countries. His book is often cited by writers who later travelled to Romania. For instance, Ogden (2000) frequently refers to Sitwell's work while sharing his own impressions. Although he spent the four weeks travelling in a high class manner, the writer actively participated in the Romanian everyday life. He was very impressed by the churches and tackles the (still surviving) controversial statute of the Gypsies, whom he

criticizes for their resistance to conform to the lifestyle of the majority and to the legal and social conventions of the Romanian society, although he rightfully acknowledges their musical talents and handy craft work. This opinion is also shared by Newman in *That Blue Danube,* 1935[3]. Sitwell explains that in Romania, minorities are treated with utmost respect and benefit from all applicable liberties, yet it would be legitimate to say that they suffer from many inconveniences because of the Gypsies. Overall, the book is very appreciative of the Romanian people, its traditions and even of Romanian cities (although he himself makes reference to the Eastern influences, Byzantine or Levantine). Sitwell contradicts, based on his personal experience, almost all the negative aspects that were shown in the British media of the time.[4] The book became famous enough to cross the Atlantic, as it was reviewed (rather negatively) in the American *Saturday Review of Literature* (vol. XVIII, no. 18, 27 August 1938, p. 22). The reviewer considers that the photographs are the book's major attraction, as the writing features too many descriptions of private houses which could not be typical of the whole country. What the American reviewer considers as really interesting are the references to oil wells and Gypsies.

Anne Marie Callimachi is also responsible for Derek Patmore's visit to Romania which was followed by yet another book, *Invitation to Roumania* (1939). Patmore's book is different from those by Hall and Sitwell as it concentrates on the upper classes rather than on the rural communities by which the former authors seemed so fascinated. Nevertheless, Patmore also portrays Romanians as being kind and tolerant, qualities which might have caused them problems. Patmore also makes some scholarly references to Romanian literary works and provides an English translation of the *Miorita* ballad.

Tolerance is the leit-motif of the references to Romanians in the travel writings of the 1930's. The constant modernization of the state and its historic accomplishments, as well as the generosity of ordinary people and the beauty of Romanian landscapes (still unaffected by human interference), are other features so frequently referred to, that they became (positive) clichés. In accordance with the unprecedented development of cultural relations between Britain and Romania (although not so much endorsed by economic relations), we could well state that Romania had never benefited from a better coverage in terms of English travel books than in the period between the two World Wars.

Conclusions

As expected, the evolution of Romania's images in Western literature is directly linked to the power relations between states and the cultural links that were subsequently forged at different historical times. Since these relations have been previously presented in detail (although not exhaustively), these conclusions will concentrate solely on the evolution of images. While early travel accounts on Romania, few and sporadic as they were, started, however, to build the first national characteristics that, in time, turned into clichés (such as tolerance, the Christian Orthodox faith and the Latin derivation of the Romanian language),only starting with the nineteenth century, can one speak of organized, consistent travel writing on Romania, and from that moment until the beginning of the Second World War, we find that Romania's image constantly improved, as the Western writers referred more and more frequently to aspects such as the beauty of its rural environment, the constant state of modernization, tolerance and hospitality, patriotism and the will to fight for a noble cause. It is safe to say that Romania had never received a more positive coverage in travel writing than in the period between the two world wars. However, resignation, apathy and indolence are features that are frequently signaled out by the authors in this period and perpetuated as stereotypes. Deletant [in Beller & Leerssen, 2007: 224] argues that self-denigration was already a deeply-rooted Romanian self-image (propagated by foreign writers) in those years, although this is even more obvious in the travel books that have been published after 1990. The difficulty of placing Romania on either one or the other side of an imaginary border between the East and the West is also specific for the nineteenth and early twentieth century travel writing. Even so, the travel books that we analyzed show a rather positive rhetoric in what concerns Romania and its people.

The mystique of the unknown and the perceived authenticity (recurring themes in travel writing on Romania after 1990, which are likely to continue to lure foreigners) were dealt with by the authors from the 1930's as well. Nowadays, both Romanian authorities and private tourism service providers strive, sometimes in joint actions, to promote these characteristics in the foreign media in order to attract visitors. It would probably help if, either the authorities charged with cultural matters or even private initiatives, decided to bring the travel books from the inter-war period back into public attention, given their positive approach and the fact that their addressees were western readers in the first place. Efforts

in improving the foreign public's perception of Romania are necessary not only because of the sustained recent media assaults related to the free movement within the EU, but also given the general European and global framework in which a well-crafted image often favours investments, tourism and service provision.

Though not a source as reliable as chancellery documents, travel writing represents a source of history and will be regarded as such by the Romanian readers. Therefore, there is a need for more translation projects that would facilitate the Romanians' access to such books. This is necessary not only to address the increasing interest that Romanians are having on the topic of their own image in the West for commercial and didactic reasons, but also to provide primary sources for further research on the topic of image building.

Notes

[1] Mention should be made, however, of the efforts madein this respect by the "Sincai" Institute of Socio-Humanities Research in Tirgu Mures.

[2] Of course, this does not mean that strongly negative images were not present in travel literature. Let us just mention the case of James Noyes, an American doctor serving with the Ottoman army, who made his own considerations in his *Roumania: the Borderland of the Christian and the Turk*(1858): "the men are indolent and cowardly, except when it comes to smuggling, plundering and horse-stealing; no woman is seen going about without some work in hand, or is ever by any chance idle; if you ask a peasant for what he wants a wife, he usually answers, "to comb me and keep me clean." Yet, so far as cleanliness goes, she is a bad housewife; I have good reason to believe that the native male peasants of Wallachia are the laziest people in the world." (pp.164-165)

[3] However, Bernard Newman is critical with the way Romania treats other minorities, such as the Bulgarians, and he promises that he will personally make these persecutions known once he returns to England. He also criticizes Romanian authorities and accuses them of alleged bribery. The *Blue Danube* with its landscapes is pretty much the only positive aspect he can think of.

[4] For instance, *Rumania Drops the Pilot*, an eloquent article published in The Catholic Herald on 18th September 1936, criticizes the Romanian infrastructure, law abiding, treatment of minorities, standards of living and even the Crown. One easily notices how Sitwell refutes each of these aspects.

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