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## NATIONAL IMAGES IN THE MEDIA AND IN TRAVEL WRITING

### Abstract

The image that Romania has abroad represents, especially from a journalistic perspective, a more and more fashionable topic, although the westerners' interest in this 'different' country is not that recent. What is recent is the self-awareness that Romanians are starting to develop, with regard to the westerners' opinions, appreciative or deprecatory as they may be. The media play a very important role in the dissemination of national images and are the main provider of clichés and stereotypes. Ethnic groups are stereotyped and 'otherized' on the basis of popular media images. However, travel accounts are the literary works that carry imagological messages *par excellence*. My intention is to illustrate how the media influence the dissemination of images in travel writing and how images in travel writing can be approached through instruments normally used in journalistic discourse analysis.

Key words: images, media, travel writing

### 1. Introduction

Globalization, regarded as a movement toward economic, trade and communication integration implies closer contact between countries and cultures. This context is probably the most favourable for the creation and propagation of images, clichés, stereotypy and even culture shock, as there are few countries (or coherently defined geographical territories) that choose to take the option of resisting the general tendency of adhering to the global network and, thus, having sustained contact with other pieces of this extremely complex system.

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 is due to its having reached a democratic system after the collapse of communism twenty-four years ago. To this historical event, there should be added its (no less historical) adherence to the European Union. Both these factors 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. This self-awareness made the (few) translations into Romanian possible, as the circulation of travel writing among travellers and 'travelees' is an inescapable reality (Polezzi, 2006: 180). We can, thus, speak of the foreigners' heteroimages (representations of the Other) that have started to affect their self-image.

The notion of *image*, as will be considered in this paper, refers to the mental and discursive representation of a person, group, ethnicity or nation (Leerssen, 2007: 342). The concept of *imago* (lat.

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*Imago, imagāre*) refers to a popular, yet often biased and incomplete impression that a person (or a group of persons) has about other nations or cultures (Soenen, 1992: 128). Even the Romanian Explicative Dictionary definition of *image* regards it as *a reflection in the human mind of a sensation or perception*, and words such as “perception” or “sensation” suggest subjectivity<sup>1</sup>. One of Merriam Webster’s definitions of *image* refers to “the idea that people have about someone or something”<sup>2</sup>, while the Oxford dictionary mentions “a mental representation or idea”<sup>3</sup>; Larousse<sup>4</sup> mentions *représentation mentale élaborée d’une perception antérieure* i.e. “a mental representation based on a previous perception”. As a matter of fact, imagologists are very skeptical in what concerns the objectivity of images, while enhancing the damages that they often cause. Beller (2007: 5) mentions that people can only experience empirical reality in part, and, therefore, once textually codified, the partial representation will represent the whole. Moreover, the tendency towards value judgements involves an a priori information deficit, which often engenders negative valorizations or unjustified idealization. In fact, the very emergence of imagology as a critical study of national characterization through literary discourse could, according to Leerssen (2007: 25), only take place after people had abandoned the belief in the realness of (literary) national characters as explanatory models. For, as Soenen (1992:129) notices, stereotyped images of foreign people, as they appear in literature, are hard to kill, although absolutely incomplete and often unjustified. Dysenrinck (2003) is even more critical when it comes to the reality of images and considers notions such as “national character” or “the soul of the people” wrong and irrational. Another critical ‘definition’ is that provided by Cooke (cited in Holliday, Hyde and Kullman, 2004: 98): images are preconceptions built on the weak and resilient foundations of myth and visual image. For Andraş (2003: 16), the *image* represents the literary expression of a significant alienation between two cultural realities.

Thus, the concern for images does not question their credibility, but the way they become visible. Consequently, the questions that are raised are: *who is the author?; to whom is the text addressed?; why is a particular viewpoint being expressed?; how could the political circumstances of the time influence the author’s positioning and/or the text reception; and how does the author intend to convince the readers of the trustworthiness of what is written?*.

## 2. National images in literature and in the media

The media play a very important role in the dissemination of national images and are nowadays the main provider of clichés and stereotypes. Ethnic groups are often stereotyped and ‘otherized’ on the basis of popular media images. The foreign ‘other’ is widely available today on the Internet, on television, radio and in the press, where the specific shows or articles describe people from all over the world. Self-images and sometimes hetero-images are manipulated in the media through advertising in commercial or political purposes. In today’s digital era, the media reach much larger audiences than any books and often influence both the travel writers’ choice and expectations concerning their destination and the readers’ interest and horizon of expectation. For instance, both Murphy (1992) and Hoffmann (1999), as they mention, were exposed to extensive media coverage on Romania (and some resulting negative images). Moreover, Dunlop (2012) confesses that her prolonged stay in Romania had resulted from her father’s reading of an article about Ceauşescu’s execution in the Glasgow Herald. She adds that orphan stories and ‘images of shorn heads and neglect’ (Dunlop, 2012: 7) were widely available.

The study of national images has become a distinctive research direction in media studies, the same as in literature. Although they are studied separately, there is an evident relation between the media and literature in what concerns the dissemination of images, as the examples from above show. Other aspects of this relation involve the way travel books are reviewed in the press, which impacts on their reception. I believe that there is also a certain influence from the media on the rhetoric that travel

<sup>1</sup> DexOnline, <http://dexonline.ro/definitie/imagine>, retrieved on 14.02. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Webster Online Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/image>, retrieved on 10.01. 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Oxford Dictionaries Online, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/image>, retrieved on 11.05. 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Larousse - Dictionnaire en-ligne, <http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/image/41604?q=image#41508>, retrieved on 14.12. 2014.

writers adopt. For instance, in the last ten years, images of Romania were most widely available in the British tabloid media, which suggests that the consumers of such journalistic products are more likely to be interested in a certain type of image. There is a tendency, in the same period, for travel books on Romania to adopt a similar style in terms of content, as the authors probably address the same audience. Moreover, we should bear in mind that travel writers are often also journalists (for example Waldeck, B. Hall, Kaplan, Ormsby or Dunlop).

Moreover, as we know, travel writing exists both in the media and in literature, a fact that caused controversy whether this genre belongs to journalism or literary texts. Many newspapers do publish separate sections devoted to travel. Magazines, television shows and, of course, the Internet, are constant promoters of exotic destinations.

Therefore, it is necessary to compare the way in which images are disseminated in the media and in literature in order to fundament the possibility that instruments commonly used in the analysis of journalistic discourse also be applied in investigating travel writing.

From the multitude of publications dealing with media national images that I studied, I found that the method commonly used to compare different approaches to countries is based on the theory of frames. Frames emphasize some part of information about an event (or object) that is the subject of a communication, and thereby elevate them in salience. Consequently, framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of the perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation of the item described” (Entman, 1993: 52).

I will use the same method to compare selections from media articles and travel books which reflect images of Romania.

I admit that I did not spend much time selecting the media articles to be considered here, because, in my opinion, it is this randomness that better illustrates that every journalistic product is subjected to framing. What I did intend was to investigate a wide variety of media, for the sake of diversity (since all the media have travel sections).

Andrea Anastasakis, an Australian travel blogger, published *The Ultimate Romanian Road Trip* on 3.03.2014<sup>5</sup>. She describes (and provides photographs of) three Romanian castles. At the beginning of her article, she mentioned that she was ‘castled out’ by the multitude of castles, all looking the same, that she had visited in Europe, yet the Romanian ones renewed her interest in such buildings. The blogger, admits that she had a poor idea of Romania at first, expecting that it is ‘more like the Balkans than Central Europe’. This article on Romania is framed as a story of fine looking castles that are worth visiting. Ogden’s *Romania Revisited* (2000) is somehow similar in framing, as the word ‘castle’ is used more than fifteen times. However, the number is incomparable, for instance, to that of the word ‘church’. Andrew Evans, a journalist working for the National Geographic television, provided several updates of his visit to Romania on the Twitter social network, which were cited by the *Gândul* newspaper<sup>6</sup> on 4.10.2014. Evans came to Romania with the purpose of filming a documentary and was supported by the Romanian governmental National Tourism Agency, thus being put in contact with different Romanian celebrities, including the Prime-minister. “I find the Romanians incredibly friendly. A real culture of hospitality”; “I know I could be happy here. You have art, culture, great food and beautiful parks”; “In the mountains, Romanians treasure their animals more than any other property”; “At the edge of the Carpathians, carved wooden houses, picket fences, cows, chickens and deep forests” were some of Evan’s updates. The political substratum of Evan’s accounts, as well as the country being framed as picturesquely preserved, with very hospitable people (recurrent positive clichés of Romania in travel literature), somehow reminds of Sitwell’s *Roumanian Journey* (1938). Travel is not a necessary condition to disseminate images in the media. The British tabloid *The Sun* has started a campaign against the withdrawal of work restrictions for Romanians and

<sup>5</sup> Rear View Mirror Blog, <http://www.rearviewmirror.tv/romania-road-trip/>, retrieved on 14.04. 2015.

<sup>6</sup> *Gandul.info*, <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/un-jurnalist-national-geographic-filmeaza-un-documentar-despre-tara-noastra-romanii-sunt-prietenosi-si-nu-sunt-deloc-timizi-13364989>, retrieved on 11.12. 2014.

Bulgarians in the UK. The following fragment of an article called *Cheeky Beggars*, published on 31.12.2014 is eloquent in what concerns the style and rhetoric of the newspaper<sup>7</sup>:

The first coachload of Romanian migrants left for the UK yesterday — with some boasting of plans to beg and steal from “generous” Brits.  
 Passengers waved their 75 euro tickets and chanted “Anglia, Anglia” as they set off on a three-day 1,400-mile trip across mainland Europe.  
 Among those eager to cross our new open borders were a convicted thief and his “apprentice” son — plus others who claimed they were bent on stealing scrap metal and raking in benefits.

Although I cannot think of a travel book that frames Romania around the perpetration of minor crimes, I am tempted to say that Waldeck’s *Athene Palace* does frame Romania around the motif of corruption. However, it is more accurate to say that, in Waldeck’s novel, Romania is framed as an agitated country at the advent of war threatened by the potential proliferation of Nazism. Statistically, the book has more sequences referring to corruption than other similar books on Romania and, in this respect, we could consider corruption as a frame.

Frames are more easily identifiable in media articles. Because of their shorter length, the message is concentrated and the authors’ attitude is more visible at a lexical level. Travel books are more complex and subtle and show multiple frames (sometimes subordinated to a dominant one — which can be determined statistically). Nevertheless, if comparing travel books on Romania to each other, we notice that frames do apply in travel writing, and that the same topic can be framed differently. It would be interesting to see if translated versions of travel books alter the initial framing.

Although not as visible as in the third example, there are subtler sequences of ethno(euro)centrism in all three examples, such as the reference to the Balkans. This form of rhetoric is visible in the majority of travel books on Romania, in different forms (varying from comparisons with western societies or geographies to attributions of moral features which are said to be specific for certain geographical areas). Both journalists and travel writers often use rhetorical functions of language to exert a certain influence over their public. This influence, or, as McQuail (1999: 149) puts it, the communication between a sender and a receiver that can have a predictable effect on the latter, often expands into different forms of manipulation. The suspicion of manipulation exists within every imagological message, regardless of how important objectivity is claimed to be in journalism, since it can hardly be quantified. Journalists, travel writers and translators alike are different in terms of culture, education, vocation. They are also influenced by the contact with the *travelee*, on the one hand, and their previous (often stereotyped) knowledge, on the other. The number of image distortions, if they are headed towards a constant direction, could serve as a possible instrument of quantifying the degree of manipulation. These rhetorical functions could be detected through instruments such as evaluative semantics or critical discourse analysis.

Headlines and book titles are another aspect of travel writing that deserves attention. In the written media, headlines, according to Valdeon (2006: 409), do not function merely as summaries of the stories, but as “promotional” phrases or clauses, likely to be imbued with ideological implications derived from the choices made by text producers. Headlines tend to show ‘directed action’ processes which imply a subject acting upon a goal. Numerous travel books on Romania between 1960 and 2008 contain the word Balkan, which appeals to a previously shaped opinion among the readers in what concerns certain moral features. In the years after 2000, words such as ‘bazaar’ or ‘whorehouse’<sup>8</sup> found their way into the titles of travel books, thus setting the ‘coordinates’ of the country from the very beginning. These titles are usually chosen by the authors, although in some cases it is the editors or even translators who decide to show the frame of their topic from the start. The ideological substratum of these choices is sometimes explained by the authors or translators in the books’ prefaces or afterwords. According to Valdeon (2006: 415), following headlines, leads are used to introduce the news events properly. Leads have also been referred to as “abstracts”. As a follow-up of the headline, they can clarify the content of the story proper when it remains opaque. Therefore, they can contribute

<sup>7</sup> TheSun.co.uk, <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/5350243/first-coachload-romanian-migrants-head-to-britain.html>, retrieved on 10.05. 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Ormsby’s book (2008) was translated into Romanian as *Grand Bazar România*; the other example refers to Ó Ceallaigh’s *Notes from a Turkish Whorehouse*, 2007.

to set the tone of the article. Some travel books, starting with the 1990s, have subtitles in which additional information is provided in a few words: *A journey through the new Eastern Europe; A journey through history* or *Călător străin updated* [Foreign traveller updated]. Both headlines and leads are approached by Valdeon through the methods facilitated by the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which should normally work in the case of travel writing too.

Through evaluative semantics, media articles are analysed extensively in order to identify their ideological substrata. As we have seen in the examples quoted above, journalists use different figures of speech which appeal to the readers' emotions and encourage them to adopt either a positive or a negative position on the topic. If this is also the case in travel writing (and I do believe it is), similar methods of analysis should prove it.

Therefore, the position of travel writing at the crossroads of journalism and literature does allow us to apply to travel texts methods that are normally used in the analysis of journalistic discourse.

### 3. Manipulation in Sacheverell Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey*

The Cambridge Dictionary defines manipulation as "controlling someone or something to one's own advantage, often unfairly or dishonestly"<sup>9</sup>, while the Oxford Dictionary mentions "clever or unscrupulous control and influence over a person". The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines manipulation as "change by artful or unfair means as to serve one's purpose"<sup>10</sup>, while the Romanian Explanatory Dictionary's definition refers to "influencing, through different means, someone's way of thinking and acting" (translation mine<sup>11</sup>). As we can see, the manner in which change is achieved through manipulation is not necessarily dishonest/unscrupulous (although it might be), and the achievement of change in people's thinking/behaviour prevails. Moreover, communication theory links manipulation to social influencing, an action exerted by a social entity (person, group etc.) aiming at modifying the actions and manifestations of another (Tran & Stanciugelu, 2003:104). As the two communication theorists argue, social influence is related to power relations and persuasion is its main resource. Its impact strongly depends on context; its initiator must possess a fair degree of competence and information and his/her intentions should be considered as benevolent by the receiver. The influencing relation has to be based on a tacit consensus between the entities involved. Manipulation is, according to the two theorists, "a form of social influencing which determines a social actor to think and act in keeping with the initiator's interest using persuasive techniques which distort the truth, often appealing to emotions and false arguments" (Tran&Stanciugelu, 2003: 105, translation mine). The Romanian journalism theorist Sorin Preda defines manipulation as "a culpable form of influencing meant to change ideas, actions and beliefs in a way in which the subjects of manipulation are not aware of the intention" (Preda, 2006: 207, translation mine). Preda mentions that manipulation can take different forms, such as misinformation, mystification or diversion).

According to Tymoczko (2003: 215), the ideology of a translation is determined only partially by the content of the source text, even though this content may itself be overtly political. This statement also means that source texts may very well have overtly political features impacting considerably on translation. Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey* represents an example of such texts which provide sensible political content, and we shall see why.

Despite the numerous travel books on Romania that were published before, the image of the country was still rather obscure for the western reader in the period between the Two World Wars. We could consider in this respect, for instance, Parkinson's confession about how people reacted to her intention of traveling to Romania: "you must be quite mad to think of going so far away to a country of which nobody knows anything at all" (1919: 17). As Deletant (2005:8) shows, "the average British newspaper reader knew two things about Romania – one was oil and the other Mme Lupescu". By checking, for instance, a British broadsheet of the time, such as *The Catholic Herald*, one could grasp the general picture of the country: "The general Western Europe (with the exception of France)

<sup>9</sup> Cambridge online dictionary, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/manipulation>, retrieved on 14.03. 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Webster online dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manipulate>, retrieved on 14.03. 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Dexonline.ro, <http://dexonline.ro/definitie/manipula>, retrieved on 14.02. 2015.

displays little knowledge of or interest in Rumania. It is frequently regarded as a semi-savage and lawless Balkan state with an unhealthy moral tone.” (18.09.1936).

Sir Sacheverell Sitwell’s *Roumanian Journey* (1938) came to fill this knowledge gap, and his work became probably the most famous travel book on Romania, being constantly cited by critics, historians and travel writers (e.g. Kaplan 1993; Ogden 2000 etc.) ever since<sup>12</sup>. It became necessary to grant Romania positive exposure among the British, as the newly founded kingdom was developing significant cultural relations with Britain. Mention should thus be made of the foundation of English departments in Romanian universities, as well as of the setting up of the British Council (1934); of the research activity on British – Romanian relations carried out by N. Iorga or of the translations of Romanian literary works into English. Moreover, economic relations were also developing significantly between Britain and Romania, especially in the form of considerable trade of crops and oil. Nevertheless, it would be legitimate to ask, the way Fawcett&Munday do when referring to translation (2009:137): is all human activity ideologically motivated? When is something ‘ideology’ rather than just ‘culture’? Would Sitwell address his readers’ expectations? To what extent would he want to influence his readers?

The book is the result of a personal arrangement between Sacheverell Sitwell and the Callimachi family of boyars. The author himself 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. The arrangement seems to be an act of Romanian foreign policy (to which it is said that the Government contributed financially, with five hundred pounds (cf. Goldsworthy, 1998:194). Sitwell spent four weeks in Romania, during which time he personally met Queen Marie, an ardent promoter of the Romanian culture. As Jauß shows, “a literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already read, brings the reader to a specific emotional attitude, and with its beginning arouses expectations for the "middle and end", which can then be maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically in the course of the reading according to specific rules of the genre or type of text”. (Jauß, 1982: 23)

If we refer once more to the same article from *The Catholic Herald*, we notice that, despite the lack of knowledge in what concerns Romania, the general picture of the country that was projected on the British reader was not a positive one:

This land of Latin and Roman culture surrounded by Slavs on all sides might be expected to set a high standard. But alas! bribery and corruption are more than usually rife. Minority rights are all too often disregarded. The standard of living is appallingly low. Communications, particularly roads, are very bad. And national finances are chaotic, while the example set by the crown is hardly inspiring. (*The Catholic Herald*, 18.09.1936)

Of course, it is just an article published in a newspaper with a fairly modest circulation to this day, yet we have enough reason to believe in its relevance, on the one hand, as well as in the accuracy of the information presented, on the other. That state of affairs is confirmed by writers like Newman (*That Blue Danube*, 1935), another author from the period, and diachronically by scholars such as Deletant (in Beller&Leerssen, 2007: 223-227). Therefore, it is hardly troublesome to presume what the British readers’ horizon of expectation might be when approaching a text that presents Romania and its people would be that of negative images in the form of poverty, corruption and Oriental exoticism.

We now remember Holliday, Hyde and Kullman’s statement about the ‘demonized Other’ characteristic of literary texts in the early twentieth century, which was perpetuated by the Western

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<sup>12</sup> Quoting previous travel books on the same country is by no means unusual and aim at achieving a more solid authority: “many travellers find themselves saying of an experience in a new country that it wasn’t what they expected, meaning that it wasn’t what a book said it would be. And of course many writers of travel books or guidebooks compose them in order to say that a country *is* like this, or better, that it *is* colourful, expensive, interesting, and so forth. The idea in either case is that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.” (Said, 1977: 93).

press – an extreme form of ‘otherization’. Obviously, Sitwell’s book contradicts the expectations that we assume the British readership would have had. The author tackles almost each of the deficiencies that were mentioned in *The Catholic Herald*, with the exception of the everyday corruption (a topic which Sitwell didn’t even mention in the whole book). I consider that it was precisely Sitwell’s intention, therefore, to engage in intercultural contacts with people belonging to different minorities. Minority rights are thoroughly dealt with, in most favourable terms:

[...] the separate existence, side by side, of so many different races – Roumanian, Saxon, Szeckler and Hungarian – gives a fascinating diversity to the population.” (Sitwell, 1938:32); Roumania, by this time, it must be evident, is most tolerant with its minorities (Sitwell, 1938:93); If they have performed their military service, paid their taxes, more still, if they have married and had children, there seems no valid reason for interfering with the liberty of their lives. It is, at least, the strongest possible argument that Roumania is the land in which minorities are treated with the most consideration and allowed the fullest freedom. (Sitwell, 1938:101)

According to Martin and White’s framework of ideological analysis, we notice that, in these fragments (which will serve as illustrations for subsequent analyses too), the author uses one word which appeals to *affect* – ‘fascinating’, and three words and phrases related to *appreciation* – ‘tolerant’, ‘consideration’, ‘allowed the fullest freedom’, but there are no lexical items referring to *judgement*.

While considering all the ethnic minorities, Sitwell pays special attention to the Gypsies. Although he rightfully acknowledges their musical talents and their handicraft work, he is extremely critical of those who lived outside the social norms and often committed crimes. However, the author appreciates the way in which Romania deals with this particular minority:

Roumania, then, which may suffer in a sense from their presence has, it could be said, a special obligation to the Tzigane population (34); Roumania may claim, perhaps, to be the country the most favourable to Gypsies. (Sitwell, 1938:34)

The rights and integration of Romanian Gypsies has become an extremely controversial topic, especially in the media, both inside and outside Romania, starting with the 1990’s and up to this day. Sitwell’s attitude could well be regarded as an argument that favoured the translation of this particular book. The other argument consists in the idealized image which Romanians have about the history of their country in the period between the Two World Wars. The cited passages also appeal to *affect* – ‘suffer’, and to *appreciation* – ‘favourable’. Another aspect from those above mentioned refers to the Romanians’ living standards. Although the author does not particularly refer to the standards of living of the average Romanian, he does speak of considerable developments in this respect: “Immense progress has been made in every direction. Romania has never before, known such prosperity, and this, it is immediately obvious, is the result of wise rule” (8). The words ‘immense’, ‘progress’ and ‘wise’ relate to *appreciation*. As for the roads, “It is no longer necessary to go by train. The last short stretch of road is nearing completion, or may be finished by the time these lines appear in print, and then there will be uninterrupted road communication between Romania and Western Europe” (5). Of course, the Crown was not forgotten:

Every Romanian will tell you that King Carol is their ideal ruler. ‘He is just the King we want’ was said to me by innumerable persons; his son has been educated, according to a system specially devised by his father, with a group of children taken from every class of the community, including the Hungarian minorities. (Sitwell, 1938:8)

The word ‘ideal’ is, of course, related to appreciation. It is true (and many sources confirm) that, in the 1930s, Romania had reached a standard of living superior to that of the neighbouring countries, and that King Carol II was enjoying, at times, a certain popularity among people. Boia (2012: 47) admits that the years under Carol II’s rule were the best in terms of economic growth and investments, although they were too few. However, he was a controversial figure (an aspect which is repeatedly highlighted, for instance, by R. G. Waldeck in *Athene Palace*, 1942) and Sitwell exaggerates in excessively idealizing this king.

Overall, the book is very appreciative of the Romanian people, its traditions and its urban areas, strikingly contradicting the generally negative image that, ironically, the country still had abroad at a time which is conventionally regarded as one of the most prolific and prosperous in Romanian history. If we refer to theories of journalism, we should be able to notice that there is a difference in the ‘framing’ of Romania – a corrupt and poor country in the quoted newspaper and an enchantingly exotic country in the book. *Romanian Journey* became famous enough to cross the Atlantic, and it was reviewed (in rather negative terms) in the American *Saturday Review of Literature* (vol. XVIII, no. 18, 27 August 1938: 22). The reviewer considers that the photographs are the major attraction of the book, as the text itself contains too many descriptions of rich people’s houses which could not be regarded as ‘typical’ of the country’s general architecture. What is considered to be really interesting are the references to oil wells and Gypsies, a thing which tells a lot about the Americans’ own business-related and ‘exotic’ interests and expectations.

#### 4. Concluding remarks:

Mass-media is very useful in the study of textual representations of a country, due to various reasons. First of all, there are many similarities between the way in which the imagological discourse is established in the media and in travel writing. This is why, at first, it was (and for some still is) hard to disassociate one from the other. The media influence the authors’ schema of knowledge about a country (and his/her decision to visit a particular country), the initial readership’s schema (and, thus, the countries that are to be represented through travel books) or the author’s attitude towards his/her ‘travelees’. Moreover, the media themselves are the main provider and perpetuator of images, clichés and stereotypes.

The media have extensively contributed to the image that Romania has today in the westerners’ perception. There are some widely spread clichés, consistently dealt with by Romanian and foreign scholars, which are very likely to be expressed in travel writing at different times, in different forms. Such clichés are related the Romanians’ oriental characteristics, Latin heritage, Orthodox faith, complex of inferiority, fatalism or hospitality, or to the country’s unaltered, traditional villages. Already knowing the result is very useful in finding out the mechanisms that have led to it during history.

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