

One should be aware that certain political discourses and attitudes that accompanied the 1989 regime change in Romania have prompted legitimate criticism. As Bogdan observes: “The presence of performative contradictions integral to the political movements in Romania specifically provokes these accusations” (40). Consequently, the author rightly asserts that performative contradiction is a useful tool for examining both the limits of the Romanian Revolution of 1989 and the internal inconsistencies and specific features of the communist regime in Romania. Performative contradiction can also serve as a tool to explain the perplexing attitude of the many Romanians who continue to believe in communism and in Nicolae Ceaușescu despite the bloody revolution of 1989. As Bogdan states: “What the revolution of 1989 demonstrates is that the overthrow and execution of a dictator operating under the yoke of communist ideology does not amount to the death of communism, nor does it even reflect a break with communist ideology” (101). Equally important, the author contends that gender and class might prove to be performative. Thus, by looking at the “rigid enforcement” of gender and class roles in post-communist Romania one can explain better central issues, such as political instability, economic inequality, or democratic deficit in that country (186).

Within the concluding section of the book, Bogdan demonstrates that performative contradiction, as a conceptual paradigm, proves a “productive and versatile” tool, which can be successfully employed to examine a variety of recent events, ranging from the Arab Spring and the current tensions within the European Union to the ongoing refugee crisis (190). Reading this volume, one becomes more and more aware that performative contradiction is indeed a useful tool, which not only enables new insights into the intricacies of the bloody revolution of 1989 in Romania, but also allows new approaches to worrisome phenomena facing the present day world.

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Vlad der Pfähler–Dracula: Tyrann oder Volkstribun? Ed. Thomas M. Bohn, Rayk Einax, and Stefan Rohdewald. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017. 320 pp. Notes. Illustrations. Figures. Maps. €64.00, hard bound.
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This volume originated in an international conference held September 25–27, 2014, at the Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, on the theme “Vlad Dracula—Tyrant or Champion of the People? Controversial Historical Figures in the Danube-Balkan Region.” It yielded, for this publication, fifteen substantive articles on various themes of *Draculiana* from the times of Vlad the Impaler to our contemporary age of global tourism. Edited by three specialists in east European and Russian studies (Thomas M. Bohn, Rayk Einax, Stefan Rohdewald), it is a handsomely produced book, bearing on its front cover the famous Strasbourg pamphlet woodcut image of Vlad dining among the impaled. Let us consider, now, its contents, providing English translations for the original German sectional headings and titles of articles written in German.

Following an overview introduction by the editors, including remarks on the state of the field, the articles are arranged under four sectional headings. The first is “Southeast Europe in a State of Emergency? The Historical-Geographic Backgrounds,” with papers by Paul Srodecki, Hans-Christian Maner, and Castilia Manea-Grgin, the first two being in German and the last in English. Srodecki carefully traces the

evolving fifteenth and sixteenth century *topoi* of Wallachia and Moldavia, under their most celebrated voievods, as “forewalls” or “bulwarks” of Christianity against the Ottoman threat. Maner explores the political relationship between these same rulers over the period 1457–76 within the wider alliance systems in which they were articulated (Hungary and the Ottomans), highlighting the summer 1462 struggle over possession of Chilia as most exemplary for revealing its operative dynamics. Concluding this section, Manea-Grgin contrasts and compares the demise of these rulers, respectively in 1462 and 1463, at the hands of the Ottomans, and is particularly interesting for its concise summary of recent scholarship on Matthias Corvinus’s controversial posture towards these developments.

The second sectional heading is “Covered Tracks: Vlad Țepeș in the Early Tradition,” with papers by Gabriele Anas, Cora Dietl, and Christof Paulus, all of which are in German. These nicely cohere as fresh investigations into Vlad III Dracula’s transformation from a historic figure into a variety of constructed images, the relationship of which to historic reality is often tenuous at best. Anas’s text is a sensitive and penetrating exegesis of the varying portraits these scholars crafted in, respectively, *Rerum Ungaricorum decades* (Ten Volumes on Hungarian Matters) (before 1498), *Ad Innocentium VIII pontificem maximum de bello Turcis inferendo oratio* (Oration to Pope Innocent VIII on Waging War on the Turks) (1490), and *Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae* (Annals or Chronicles of the Famed Kingdom of Poland) (1455–1480). Additionally, Anas provides transcriptions of the original, relevant Latin passages as appendices. Dietl’s contribution is a remarkable, indeed somewhat startling, deciphering of the underlying intentionality of Beheim’s *Song Poem on Dracula*. In her view, although Beheim superficially crafts the poem as a narrative “history” of Vlad’s horrible deeds, serving the propaganda aims of Matthias Corvinus, he did so with deliberate irony, his true objective being to deploy the poem as a moralizing platform to warn readers that sin, and dissensions between princes and their subjects, enable the coming of the Antichrist and a radical disregard for God and justice (112). Finally, Paulus’s piece sheds new light on a poorly-studied version of the *Geschichte Dracole Waide* text, embedded in a manuscript dating plausibly from the second half of the fifteenth century, written at Tegernsee Abbey in Bavaria and now held in the Munich Staatsbibliothek (Cgm 1586). Substantially in accord with kindred manuscripts and incunabula, it is nonetheless a fascinating find as well as testimony, according to Paulus, to the contemporary obsession with *Türkenfurcht*. The author includes his transcription of the Middle High German original as an appendix.

The third sectional heading is “Genius and Madness: Vlad Țepeș as Visionary and Strategist, in a New Sense,” with papers by Albert Weber, Adrian Gheorghe, Ștefan Andreescu, and David M. Goldfarb, the first of which is in German and the others in English. Weber’s work is a very perceptive interpretation of Vlad III’s political career from 1448 to his death in 1476, tracking throughout its key episodes the voievod’s strategies and attendant shifting alignments to establish himself as a strong ruler on a playing field where he was regarded by the great neighboring powers, and the boyar elites of his own country, as a pawn to be maneuvered. Gheorghe’s contribution is not simply a reconstruction of arguably the most famous military episode of Vlad’s career, but a thoroughgoing rethinking of its key components, in terms of evidence and, more importantly, the plausibility of what the evidence conveys. It stands, in this reviewer’s mind, as the finest current treatment of the subject. In his “Vlad the Impaler and the Bible,” Andreescu speculates that Vlad III’s celebrated night attack on Mehmed II’s camp (June 17/18, 1462) was consciously mimetic of the biblical Gideon’s assault on the Midianites and Amalekites, although of course their outcomes differed. Andreescu reviews three

key sources attesting to the reality of its occurrence (Laonikos Chalkokondyles, Nicholas of Modrussa, and the anonymous *Tevarih-i Sultan Mehmed bin Murad Han ma' zikr-i Sultan Bayezid Han* [The Chronicles of Sultan Mehmed, Son of Murad Khan, together with the Reign of the Sultan Bayezid Khan]). In addition Andreescu argues that Vlad's sense of himself as "athlete of eastern Christendom" can be documented at least to ca. 1459 in the iconography of the silver ducat he issued at that time. Finally, Goldfrank's text is quite a novel endeavor to link themes of kingship and political theory embedded in the German *Geschichte Dracole Waide* pamphlets and the Muscovite *Skazanie o Drakule voivode* with parallel precepts in "Near Eastern/Islamic monarchical thought and wisdom traditions" (213), showing that such texts, in the aggregate, evolved not in isolation, but rather a much broader interconnected Christian-Islamic milieu.

The fourth sectional heading, "Forever 'Bad Fiction'? Reign of Terror, Strict Morality, Vampire Monster," is comprised of papers by Cornelia Soldat, Thomas M. Bohn, Dietmar Müller, and Tuomas Hovi, the first three German and the last English. Soldat's piece explores the demonization of Vlad and his Muscovite "double" Ivan IV surfacing in artistic media of the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—for Dracula, the woodcut frontispieces in the German pamphlets, and the various cryptoportrait paintings—and collates its resonance and popularity with the escalating *Türkenfurcht* of the period. Thomas Bohn then exhaustively delineates the metamorphosis of the German tale wherein Dracula orders the headgear of disrespectful envoys to be nailed to their skulls into a Muscovite recension that echoes deep into the eighteenth century, with cultural meanings distinctive for Old Russia. Moving abruptly to the twentieth century, Müller focuses on Doru Năstase's 1979 film *Vlad Țepeș*, and how the ideological freight it was scripted to bear, and the many official limitations imposed in production, necessarily determined its aesthetic failure. Finally, Tuomas Hovi provides a fascinating overview of how Dracula tourism evolved in Romania from the 1970s, with packages accenting not "the Vlad Țepeș" of history but more typically the Count Vampire construct derived from Bram Stoker.

Concluding the volume is a brilliant, richly textured essay by Daniel Ursprung, in German, on "Power at the End of the Middle Ages: The Myth of the Terrible East." Posing the question "Why did Vlad Dracula become a prototype of the 'terrible tyrant,'" the author meticulously unpacks the concept and its applications in its late medieval/early modern European context, demonstrating that the inscribing of Vlad with these stock characteristics and qualities was not so much a project of arranging him in the ranks of the "oriental despots" but rather within a quite local "pantheon," including the likes of Frederick II, whose increasingly commonplace abuses of power similarly triggered tyrant-stereotyping demonization which not incidentally functioned as a form of social criticism.

In conclusion, the papers in this volume obviously cover a considerable thematic and chronological trajectory. It is best left for readers to judge if they collectively answer the question posed in the book's title: was Dracula a tyrant or champion of the people? In any event (and the matter is admittedly trivial), all the contributions are of high caliber, offering consistently lively and unconventional interpretations. Overall the publication marks a significant advance in Dracula studies, broadly conceived, and is worthy of inclusion in any serious library collecting in this field.

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