

tion du clergé orthodoxe aux démarches entreprises en vue de la réalisation de la Grande Union, ainsi que les contacts des hiérarques avec le milieu académique roumain. La dimension théologique de la mission assumée par l'auteur devient évidente dans la section « Teologie și spiritualitate » (Théologie et spiritualité), qui offre au lecteur la possibilité de connaître des réalités moins familières à l'écrit historique tenant de la dimension profonde de la croyance orthodoxe. Les vecteurs de cette connaissance sont des figures emblématiques de la théologie hésychaste, tels que saint Paisie Velicikovski ou des moines investis d'attributs de la sainteté comme saint Silouane l'Athonite. L'opportunité que l'orthodoxie peut offrir en tant que source de régénération morale est illustrée par des exemples de conversions collectives et des tangences avec des sensibilités similaires rencontrées au sein des autres Églises chrétiennes. Le groupage final, « Peregrini prin țară și peste hotare » (Pèlerins à travers le pays et à l'étranger) passe en revue des aspects de la vie religieuse de quelques communautés orthodoxes locales ou expatriées, tout en mettant en évidence la vitalité de la croyance orthodoxe comme source de normes de vie communautaire.

La collection d'études de l'historien Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan ne propose pas de révolutions interprétatives au sujet des réalités analysées et ne prétend pas avoir le dernier mot en un éventuel débat sur les significations de certains événements de l'histoire confessionnelle. Elle est plutôt une invitation à la méditation sur des sujets que l'écrit historique avait traités avec fatuité, en reprenant des clichés historiographiques tels quels, dans la tentative de récupérer des décalages par rapport à l'historiographie occidentale. La formation théologique de l'auteur se transforme ainsi

en un acte de générosité, offrant aux lecteurs moins familiarisés avec les secrets du métier d'historien des informations utiles qui leur permettent de tirer leurs propres conclusions sur des questions d'actualité, dont les significations étaient difficiles à anticiper quelques décennies auparavant.



FLORIAN DUMITRU SOPORAN

AGOSTON BEREZ

**Empty Signs, Historical Imaginaries:
The Entangled Nationalization of
Names and Naming in a Late Habsburg
Borderland**

New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books,
2020

AGOSTON BEREZ'S book sheds new light on the intricate history of nationalism in Dualist Hungary by shifting the focus on names, a symbol invested with new meanings by the nationalizing elites of the late 19th and early 20th century. Although one might be tempted to simply consider names *empty signs*, it is actually their semantic void that made them prone to "symbolic uses" by nationalists (p. 25). As the author clearly states in the introduction, the book has three ambitions. Firstly, drawing on Berez's previous research, the book aims to further scrutinize Dualist Hungary's policies towards the minorities and the numerous national clashes resulting from their implementation. Secondly, the book attempts to illustrate the potential of names as sources in history writing. Lastly, adopting a "from below" approach, Berez attempts to assess whether nationalist propaganda had an impact on the peasants' way of thinking, mostly by observing

trend changes in the naming of their children. Geographically, the study focuses on an area consisting of “historical Transylvania together with its neighboring counties to the West, excluding Máramaros, but including Temes” (p. 19), a territory inhabited mostly by Romanians, Hungarians, and German-speaking populations.

The book consists of three parts, each of them further subdivided into three different chapters, which successively oscillate between given names, family names, and place names. The first part deals with the peasantry, seen by the author as the repository of a pre-national culture. Therefore, the author explores how peasants related to names before the latter were invested with any symbolic national value. Berecz innovatively uses naming trends among peasants in determining whether rural communities were penetrated by the discourse promoted by the national elites. Naming a child with one of the newly popularized national names (the pagan Latinized ones, in the case of Romanians, for instance) at the expense of the more conservative Christian names indicated the “identification with a national vision of history” (p. 52), argues Berecz. However, his study discovers that this process was unfolding sluggishly, especially in the case of the Romanian peasantry. As for family names, the second chapter navigates the intricate processes of their formation during pre-modern times, while paying specific attention to the way in which the multilingual language contact zone shaped what the author calls a “contact-influenced family name” (p. 81). The third chapter tackles the issue of place names, also from the pre-national perspective of the peasantry. Drawing heavily on a toponymic survey conducted in 1864, the author finds that peasants were mostly unaware

of the historical national grand narratives concerning the origins of their village.

While the first part focused mostly on capturing the peasants’ perspective, the second part, entitled “Nationalisms,” is reserved to the examination of how upper-class elites invested existing or new names with new national meanings. As a result, family names soon came to be seen as indicators of one’s ethnic origin. Hungarian nationalist intellectuals saw the Romanian-speaking peasants bearing Hungarian names as evidence of a perpetual assimilation of Hungarians, therefore feeding what the author calls the myth of a submerged Magyardom. The latter soon found a counterpart in the Romanian intellectuals’ discourse, who claimed that Hungarian names had been forced upon Romanian peasants by their Hungarian landlords. Berecz also documents other national strategies that the upper-class elites resorted to, such as changing one’s family name. He explores the case of the Romanian forty-eighters, who made a case for Latinizing Romanians’ names. The voluntary Magyarization of family names takes center stage in the fifth chapter. Focusing mostly on Romanian and Saxon family-name Magyarizers, the author attempts to determine what driving forces stood behind these decisions. He finds that most of the cases occurred among public employees, a fact that can be attributed to an alleged coercion by superiors. On the other hand, the number of Romanian family-name Magyarizers remained rather low throughout the period, a fact deliberately overlooked by the interwar Romanian political propaganda engaged in “re-Romanization” campaigns” (p. 151). The last chapter of the second part returns to the issue of place names, which gained tremendous importance in

the endless debates regarding historical priority in the land. Next to the scholarly argumentations, daring mountaineers (especially Saxon and Hungarian urban elites) also took on a national mission. By documenting their trips and naming a newly explored place, they were looking to “symbolically appropriate it for the community” (p. 167).

The last part of the book explores the state’s official take on Magyarization. The official regulation of names began with the state’s assumption of birth, marriage and death registers in 1894. At the same time, the Hungarian authorities drew up a list of Hungarian equivalents for most of the ethnic minorities’ first names, to be used when registering a newborn’s name or the names of the newlyweds. Berecz aims to determine whether the rationale behind these new regulations had to do with a deliberate assimilationist strategy or with what the Hungarian governments said to be a need for administrative modernization. He finds that the Hungarian political discourse portrayed modernization and Magyarization “as two closely intertwined goals and saw social, not to mention official, multilingualism as an obstacle to progress” (p. 206). In contrast, state intervention regarding family names was limited to their transcription, an operation usually taking place in the administrative sphere or in Hungarian state schools. Chapter 8 follows the debate stirred among the intellectuals concerning this issue, while at the same time pointing out how such practices “increasingly conveyed a principled dismissal of a Romanian writing system’s right to existence in Hungary” (p. 225). The book’s last and longest chapter is a tour de force on the Hungarian state policies on the Magyarization of settlement names. Berecz firstly investigates the

ideological motives behind this “grand toponymic maneuver.” He finds that Magyarizing settlements’ names was seen as “closely ty[ing] the respective places to the nation’s space” (p. 242). The author then closely examines the slow application of the 1898 Law, seen as the starting point of a long process which concluded around 1910, when most of the renamings took place. In charge of Magyarization was the Communal Registry Board, a heterogeneous body composed of both academics and laymen. By 1910, when the Magyarization of settlement names came to an end, 671 out of the 3,684 localities had had their name Magyarized.

Overall, Ágoston Berecz’s choice for a name-based social history of nationalism in Dualist Hungary proved to be a very fruitful one. Next to the compelling analyses on nationalizing the elites’ discourse and the state regulation of names, I believe that the book’s main breakthrough concerns the examination of the peasants’ nationalism, a social stratum usually neglected by the elite-focused studies dealing with nationalism in this area.

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DRAGOȘ-DUMITRU IANC

RODICA MARIAN**Poezii/Poems**

Translated by MIHAELA MUDURE

Cluj-Napoca: Scriptor, 2021

MORE THAN two centuries ago, John Dryden, in his Preface to *Ovid’s Epistles*, translated by several hands (London: Jacob Tonson, 1680), identified and described three types of translation: metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation. He defined metaphrase as “turning an author word by word,