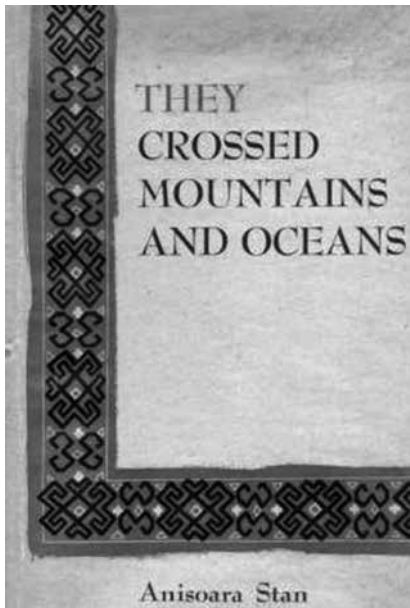

INTERCULTURALISM

The Autobiography of a Romanian-American Dream *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans (1947)* by Anișoara Stan

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IN ORDER to call more attention to the accomplishments of Romanian Americans who left a significant cultural legacy, in 2012, art critic and historian Vladimir Bulat took on the task of recovering the memory of the Romanian emigration to the United States by dedicating an article¹ to Anișoara Stan (1902–1954), a staunch promoter of Romanian folk art in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. In an attempt to fill some of the gaps regarding Stan's life and work, Bulat included fragments from a letter² written in the early 1960s by Constantin Antonovici, a famous Romanian-American sculptor, to Petru Lucaci,³ the then editor of the Romanian-American newspaper *America*. In his letter, Antonovici⁴ expressed his regret that there had been no mention in the newspaper about the newly-established Ethnic Art Museum in Cleveland, Ohio, or about Stan's valuable contribution to its collections, and asked Lucaci to remind the readers of the newspaper of

her sustained efforts to preserve Romanian folk art in the United States. Since the 1960s, Stan's name has been mentioned in a number of studies by Vladimir Wertsman (1975), Vasile Hațegan (1988), George Henderson and Thompson Olasiji (1995), Joanne Bock (1997), Aurel Sasu (2003), and Mircea Răceanu (2005),⁵ either as an ethnographer, folklorist or artist, or as the author of the most comprehensive Romanian cookbook in English (published in 1951). Nevertheless, her autobiography, *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* (1947),⁶ also briefly mentioned in Bulat's article, has received little attention so far.

Stan was born at the beginning of the twentieth century⁷ in Transylvania—a region fraught with complex political, social, and economic issues at the time—and emigrated to the United States in the early 1920s. In her autobiography, she described her life as an immigrant woman through the story of her Romanian-American dream, whose fulfillment was one of the main reasons for her emigration. Therefore, this article proposes an examination of Stan's autobiography in order to uncover the ways in which she strove to create ethnic and cultural bridges between Romania and the United States through Romanian folk art, thus significantly enriching the history of the Romanian-American immigration in the first half of the twentieth century.

Romanian Immigration in the Early Twentieth Century

V WERTSMAN, a well-known scholar who wrote extensively about Romanian immigrants in the United States, points out that there were two main waves of Romanian immigration before World War II, one between 1890 and 1900 and the second one in the 1920s.⁸ The immigrants of the first wave came particularly “from Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina, [and] Moldavia,” “driven by precarious economic, social, and political conditions.”⁹ The great number of immigrants from Transylvania at the time can be explained by the historical context of the region because, between 1867 and 1918, the province of Transylvania was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹⁰ Ramona Fruja Amthor explains that, at the turn of the twentieth century, many Romanians in Transylvania refused to be subjected to the “rigorous process of Magyarization” imposed by the Hungarian rule as it “impacted educational and political freedoms for the Romanians,” and, given the harsh economic conditions at the time, they decided to emigrate to the United States.¹¹ Based on census numbers, historian M. Răceanu states that in 1920, the number of people of Romanian origin was 109,757; 91.4% of these lived in 12 states, with the

highest concentration in New York (39%), Ohio (12.7%), and Pennsylvania (10.9%).¹² According to J. Bock, the Romanians who emigrated at the beginning of the twentieth century,

*fell into two groups. One group consisted of shepherd boys who had come to America either to escape being drafted into the Hungarian army or for adventure. The other, larger group was made up of male peasants who came to the United States seeking employment to earn enough money to return to their villages and buy land from the Hungarian government.*¹³

V. Hațegan, a Romanian-American priest, remarks that most of the “young males of peasant stock” who emigrated before World War I, roughly until 1915, had “little education or job training,”¹⁴ and, as many of them planned to make enough money to return home and buy land, they settled in areas with Romanian communities and worked in factories and plants on the East Coast and in the Midwest.¹⁵ After World War I, the social make-up of the Romanian immigrants changed, as “greater numbers of better educated immigrants arrived,” “students and professionals” who were more eager to adapt and integrate into the American society.¹⁶ One of those literate immigrants was Anișoara Stan, who emigrated from central Transylvania, in the Cluj region, close to the Western Carpathians, in 1922.

Anișoara Stan and the American Immigrant Autobiography

IN THE first decades of the twentieth century, ethnic Americans such as Jacob A. Riis, Mary Antin, Abraham Cahan, Marcus Eli Ravage, Edward Bok, and Louis Adamic,¹⁷ among others, left written testimonies of their immigrant experience in their adopted land. In discussing the genres of life writing, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson point out that “Immigrant narratives and narratives of exile become sites through which formerly marginal or displaced subjects explore the terms of their cultural identities and their diasporic allegiances.”¹⁸ Thus, “The stories narrated in autobiographies” are, according to Ilaria Serra, “moving documents that preserve the simple hopes, dreams, fears, cultural struggles, and quiet individualism that [immigrants] have faced,” suggesting that “they are stories of transformation, survival, and a desire for recognition—however modest their authors’ dreams may be.”¹⁹ Furthermore, Richard Tuerk states that one aspect shared by immigrant autobiographies refers to the

connection between the home country and the United States, with particular focus on the authors' processes of assimilation into the American mainstream.²⁰ Stan's autobiography explores the ways in which she tried to connect her home country and her adopted country through her dream, thereby shaping her cultural identity as a Romanian American. She wrote her autobiography in 1947, after having lived in the United States for about twenty-five years. Similar to other immigrant autobiographies, she mentions significant moments in her life in chronological order, beginning with her life in Transylvania, Romania, at the age of fourteen, when her desire to emigrate to the United States started to take root.

On the other hand, unlike other ethnic autobiographies that foreground the process of assimilation, Stan's autobiography describes in minute detail the two stages she hoped would facilitate the fulfillment of her dream. During her first years in the United States, determined to showcase the beauty and intricacy of Romanian folk art, she travelled tirelessly to various Romanian-American communities, eager to set up exhibitions and offer detailed information wherever she found enthusiastic Romanian-Americans, as well as American supporters of her work. This represented the first step on her journey to accomplish her dream, which entailed the opening of a large outdoor ethnographic museum, where the visitors would not only admire the displayed artifacts but also become aware of the passion, patience, and the craftsmanship reflected in the actual process of creating them. Hence, her autobiography weaves together the threads of her Romanian-American life with the story of her cultural dream, which she believed could become true only in the United States, given its diversity of immigrant groups. To this end, she illustrates how the physical and cultural spaces she inhabited and the people she met (in Transylvania, Romania, and in the United States) shaped her ethnic identity and impacted the pursuit of her dream. She chooses to present her own process of acculturation only as a small part of the larger picture of Romanian immigration in the first half of the twentieth century, and, in this context, the title of her autobiography, *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans*, could refer to the physical, economic, and emotional hardships surmounted by the first-wave Romanian immigrants²¹ in order to get to the United States and to achieve the dream of a better life through hard work. Thus, she narrates her encounters with numerous Romanian immigrants and their families,²² who understood, encouraged, and supported her cultural endeavors, and, by including brief stories about their ethnic background and about their acculturation in the new country, she may have wanted to highlight not only their valuable contribution to the American economy but also their desire to preserve the legacy of their ethnic culture.

Therefore, the folk art Stan displayed in the United States was meant to emphasize the creativity and mastery of the ethnic heritage of the first-generation Romanian immigrants (mostly hard-working peasants) as a valuable intrinsic part of their ethnic identity, and, at the same time, to acquaint the second-generation Romanian Americans²³ with their ethnic culture and foster pride in it. In addition, one of her accomplishments, stressed on many occasions by the Romanian-American visitors of her exhibitions, was also to alleviate the nostalgia of the first-generation immigrants for the cultural and emotional comfort of their home country. On the one hand, Stan may have believed that showcasing the Romanian folk artifacts represented a way of underscoring the value and significance of ethnic art as a visual marker of Romanian identity; on the other hand, she may have hoped to set an example and encourage other ethnic groups to display the cultural markers of their ethnic identities in an outdoor ethnographic museum. Her efforts might have been all the more germane in the early decades of the twentieth century, when the political and social milieu in the United States was marked by anti-immigrant sentiments and the immigration restriction laws in the mid-1920s,²⁴ and then by a growing interest in cultural pluralism in the early 1930s.²⁵

Moreover, having spent about twenty-five years in the United States before writing her autobiography, Stan chose to write her story in English, thus targeting a larger audience, both native-born Americans and an English-literate ethnic audience. Consequently, her autobiography can be read as a means of educating her audience regarding the Romanian folk art, culture, and people, and also as a narrative that captures the ways in which the Romanian immigrants living in different states managed to acculturate or assimilate into American society. Throughout her autobiography, Stan is aware that her ethnic background differentiates her from native-born Americans, and her main goal is to show that this difference should be looked upon as a plus, a valuable addition to American culture, hence her enthusiastic and extensive description of Romania, its history, nature, people, customs, and folk art, in the first part of her autobiography. At the same time, she might have chosen to intersperse numerous Romanian words throughout her story, particularly when describing folk artifacts or traditions, as well as words of folk wisdom or proverbs (some translated into English but also left in Romanian in the text), to show how proud she was of her Romanian heritage, and how important it was for her to preserve that side of her ethnic identity that made her feel special.

They Crossed Mountains and Oceans: Romanian-American Life and Cultural Dream

STAN'S ROMANIAN-American dream guides her readers like a red thread through the twenty chapters of her story. It starts on the day when the seeds of her dream were sown in her heart, 15 August 1916, the day when Romania entered World War I. It was the day when she, at the age of fourteen, was arrested by mistake and sent to a prison camp near Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg).²⁶ During that time, she began to realize that the similarities between the Romanians, Hungarians, and other ethnicities living in Transylvania were more important than the differences between them:

Now that I was leaving, I remembered what I had promised myself so solemnly during the dreary days and nights of my detention. "I, Anisoara Stan, promise in front of our Lord, God, that as long as I live, I will be humane and humble and try to bring people together, so help me God! Because in here, in this most inhumane place, in suffering and in pain, we are all alike. The same mouths, the same functions and the same flesh."²⁷

The experience with the Hungarian regime taught Stan the value of harmony and understanding between ethnicities, as well as the significance of mutual acceptance and respect for the values of minority or ethnic groups, thus fostering the higher ideals she pursued in her Romanian-American cultural dream. Framed by the story of her close ties with family members (her parents, sister, grandmother, uncles and aunts), the first part of her autobiography includes general information about the area that Stan lived in, around Cluj, the regional capital of Transylvania at the time. Upon deciding that she would like to dedicate her life to promoting peace in order to avert the horrors of another war, she realized that she could achieve that by showcasing ethnic folk art, and the best place to do that would be in the United States, a country of immigrants. As a result, Stan meticulously describes the preparations and hardships she encountered in obtaining a visa to emigrate, and, keeping her American audience in mind, she ends her account about her home country by offering a comprehensive overview of Romania.

Stan may have included this chapter on Romanian history, the natural landscape, its people and their folk art so that her audience would have the necessary background to understand both her strong desire to showcase and preserve the Romanian ethnic heritage in the United States and the important role that the Romanian folk art might play in the larger American culture. "I will take you

with me to a Romanian village,” she tells her American audience at the beginning of Chapter Six,

*and when your visit will be over, you will know the peasant as a human being. And knowing him, you will know the people of other nations, too. Maybe then, in spite of the treaties tied with beautiful blue ribbons, we will attain some peace on this earth.*²⁸

She starts with a brief historical overview, focusing on the life of the Romanian peasants since the earliest Dacian times to the turbulent decades of the first half of the twentieth century. As a staunch Transylvanian, Stan depicts in more detail the difficult social, economic, and cultural situation of the Romanians in the province of Transylvania in the nineteenth century, their struggles to maintain a national identity and consciousness when the province was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, up to the Great Union with Romania in 1918, and the complicated situation of the Romanians in Transylvania during the tumultuous years of World War II. Stan also includes a short section on the political parties in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by some geographical facts about Romania.

*No other country in Europe has such a happy balance in its structure. A large central plateau is surrounded by the imposing peaks of the Carpathian mountains and beyond are the undulating foothills which gradually meet her extensive plains,*²⁹

she enthusiastically informs her American audience. The passionate description of the mountains, rivers, and grasslands allows Stan to talk about rural life and the strong ties between the Romanian peasants and nature. The first part of the chapter ends with an extensive description of the Romanian people, family life in the countryside, the roles of parents and children, their beliefs, values, and customs:

*Like the Romanian landscape the people are friendly and welcoming, full of variety and charm;³⁰ it is the land of the peasant, the tiller of the soil. Making up 85 percent of the country, he is both the backbone and the soul of Romania. The peasant is warm-hearted, courteous and hospitable. It was his exceptional vitality and dogged perseverance which sustained him throughout centuries of oppression.*³¹

Her description of various wedding traditions in the Romanian villages creates a transition to the second part of the chapter, which offers a comprehensive de-

scription of a typical peasant household in a Transylvanian village and a detailed account of Romanian folk art, of specific folk costumes, and of peasant folk dances and songs, as significant elements of the collective Romanian identity, intricately related to the Romanian soul. In her in-depth study on the significance of Romanian folk art, Bock suggests that “For Romanian Americans, the manual arts rather than the written word or dance have assumed a prominent place in the preservation of Romanian ethnicity and the Orthodox religious values associated with the Romanian heritage.”³² She further argues that

*Folk art was not simply an indication of the Romanians’ innate love of beauty or talent in expressing their aesthetic sense. They made traditional art, and continue to do so in both Romania and the United States, because it was an outward sign of their link with the eternal. For Romanians, folk art is a religious expression that uses everyday material elements to tell the viewer something about the divine.*³³

Bock emphasizes particularly the significance of sewing for women and wood carving for men as essential “skills . . . necessary for survival in the old country,”³⁴ an argument valid especially for the first-generation immigrants, who may have believed that the preservation of those skills in the United States represented a way of maintaining their emotional connection to Romania. Trying to capture the essence of Romanian folk art, Stan remarks that

*the peasant’s artistic soul found ways to express itself. Their fears and longing and homesickness and love they turned into song, their sense of the motions of nature gave them their dances, and their feeling for color and form made them carve the cudgels used in war, their ploughs, flutes, water jugs, looms and gates.*³⁵

Referring to the craftsmanship of the Romanian peasant women, she points out that

*The women found time to weave, to embroider, to create carpets to decorate their homes and beautiful costumes to adorn their bodies, which they proudly wear even today. To those who can read the language of their work, each stitch or line, each color portrays hope of a new dawn of freedom. It seems that the storms of centuries could not destroy their sense of beauty.*³⁶

At the same time, Stan underscores the strong and close connections between the natural landscape of Romania and its folk art:

The Romanian people take out of their God blessed land, the mountains, dales, fields and plains, the colors and aromas which inspire them to create their beautiful

*arts and crafts. Like the nature around them, with its ever changing scenes, they never produce two pieces alike. Each is full of originality and a delight to the eyes.*³⁷

Having established her ethnic background, Stan goes on to narrate the story of her voyage to the United States, together with her younger sister and a female cousin, their arrival, first impressions, and various encounters with members of the Romanian-American communities on the East Coast. During her first years in the United States, she set out to exhibit her Romanian folk artifacts in the private homes of Romanian-American immigrants and/or in the social halls of various Romanian-American societies, in New York City, Cleveland, Ohio, Detroit, Michigan, in West Virginia, and in Youngstown, Ohio. Furthermore, the exhibitions at the Public Museum in Erie, Pennsylvania, and at the International Institute in Buffalo, New York,³⁸ in 1925, and the one at the Romanian Legation in New York City, in March 1932, represented significant steps in promoting her dream. As mentioned before, interspersed in the journey of her dream is also Stan's, her sister's, and her cousin's experience during the first years in the United States as young women immigrants, including taking classes at evening school, getting jobs, and finding ways of coping with the daily challenges. Halfway through her autobiography, Stan reminisces about her immigrant experience and her dream:

*Our life was not all roses from the day of our arrival in America. We tried so very hard to make good. When I say good, I do not mean money, but to get people interested, to get bigger crowds to come to our exhibitions, to see our peasant arts and to arouse the ambition of the other nationalities to follow us. I wanted people to see the work other nations had produced, to admire it and also observe how similar it is to their own and how much alike people are.*³⁹

Moreover, her fruitful collaboration with members of various ethnic committees in organizing different cultural events in New York City in 1932 further strengthened her belief that her dream could one day become true:

*What we were doing was a very significant thing. We were bringing together people who were brought up each with a different language and culture, making friendships and showing they could work together cooperatively and in peace. Only in America could such a thing occur.*⁴⁰

In the relentless pursuit of her dream, prompted by the success of her exhibitions, Stan returned to Romania several times, mostly to replenish her collection and to do more research, as demonstrated by her trip in 1928:

*I wanted to survey every part of Transylvania and old Romania too, to do research work among the peasants, to study not only their folklore and art accomplishments, their songs and dances, but also how they lived and worked together.*⁴¹

On a more personal note, as she recalls the story of her preparations to return to Romania in order to take back more folk artifacts in 1930, she also mentions her encounters with her future husband, Joseph Rubin, whom she married at the end of the same year. Upon her return from Romania (after an almost year-long stay), eager to continue her work, and with the full support of her husband, in the early 1930s, Stan set off to exhibit Romanian folk art and to deliver lectures on Romanian folk culture on the West Coast, in and around San Francisco, California.

Among all the successful exhibitions and cultural activities Stan organized, the invitation to the White House in the summer of 1933, particularly the encounter with Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady of the United States at the time, was the most significant one, as it marked the ultimate recognition of her assiduous work. While Stan did not dwell too much on her own assimilation into the American mainstream, it was during this important visit that she felt she really belonged to the United States, that she was a true American:

*To come to the White House, where the spirit of George Washington still lives and where Abe Lincoln lived and struggled to hold our great nation together, and to know that some of my own work and that of my beloved family will remain with the family of our great President, can't you see, people of America, what that means to me, the little girl from faraway Transylvania, who came here in search of freedom and a fantastic dream to do something about getting people together, in which all of you can help from the youngest to the oldest . . .*⁴²

Emboldened by her success at the White House, full of enthusiasm, Stan returned to Romania, where she received news that the First Lady had worn a Romanian national costume at a White House celebratory function, an event that Stan interpreted as an endorsement of her cultural endeavors. She traveled again to Romania in 1933, and, as part of her trip, she mentions her timely arrival to participate in the sanctification of the first Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Cluj, and then her trips to different parts of Transylvania: to

*the Fagarash Mountains, then to the whole district of Fagarasiu, to study their costumes and dances which are very much different from ours of the district of Cluj. From here I descended to the Braşov district, then to Sibiu and ended up in the district of Târnava Mare and Târnava Mică, from which I returned to Cluj.*⁴³

During her trip, she noticed that the interest in folk art had decreased in her home country, so, at the end of October 1934, she organized an exhibition in Cluj, “under the auspices of the Cluj Ethnographic Museum,” to help renew the people’s interest “in their own folk culture,”⁴⁴ thus encouraging its preservation in the United States as well.

Throughout her autobiography, Stan recounts her struggles to achieve her dream, often against all odds, as the journey of her dream was peppered with successful highs and disappointing lows. For the most part, Stan’s endeavor was an individual one, driven by an inexhaustible passion for the folk art created in the Romanian villages. Consequently, as she did not act in an official capacity or as part of a public institution, on several occasions, her enthusiasm and determination to exhibit her collection of folk art clashed with the bureaucracy of the officials working either at the Romanian Legation and/or Embassy in Washington, D.C., or in the Romanian administration in Bucharest. For instance, she expressed her deep disappointment at not having been asked to play any part in the World Fair in New York City in 1939, despite her ongoing efforts to promote Romanian folk art in the United States. Still, ever the optimist and enthusiast, she went on organizing exhibitions and lecturing on Romanian folk art, always keeping in mind her initial plan “for a real outdoor museum built by the immigrants which would bring people together through work, dancing, singing and eating each other’s food.”⁴⁵

Having created an interest in ethnic folk art, Stan narrates the story of the second stage of her cultural endeavor, the creation of an outdoor ethnographic museum, in the last part of her autobiography, detailing her tireless and determined work between 1942 and early 1947. She mentions how she finished working on her plan in December 1942,⁴⁶ and how proud she felt when she received the document representing the copyright of her plan: “I hugged the priceless document to my heart. It was the first official move to make a reality out of an inspired idea that came to me as a little girl in an Austro-Hungarian concentration barracks.”⁴⁷ In this part, Stan describes the meetings and promises of support and sponsorship she received from the states of Minnesota and New York regarding possible sites for the museum and the ensuing hope that such a museum would become a reality, as well as the moments of disappointment at discovering that other people had taken credit for her ideas. For instance, while in Minnesota to discuss her plans with the administrative authorities, she also organized meetings with the representatives of various ethnic groups to explain her plan and to encourage them to participate:

to tell them that they themselves would put up the villages that would be authentic replicas of real villages in their native lands, with houses, country churches, inns,

*windmills, folk arts and crafts, with a great amphitheater and assembly hall where large conventions and festivals would take place and with a college and library of folk culture where the precious heritage of these people would be preserved for all time. They responded with great enthusiasm and it gave me courage.*⁴⁸

Throughout the journey of her cultural endeavor, enthusiastic Romanian Americans, Americans, and other ethnic-Americans offered Stan the much-needed emotional support that stimulated her to go on working, arranging exhibitions and cultural events and planning the creation of the ethnographic museum.

Stan chose to end her autobiography on an optimistic and hopeful note, by including various declarations of support and encouragement which she received in reply to the letters she had sent to the diplomats of the member countries of the United Nations in 1946,⁴⁹ although her dream was still only a plan on paper. When Stan, looking back from 1946, described their arrival in New York City in 1922, full of enthusiasm and lofty ideals, she also added that at the beginning of her Romanian-American odyssey they had arrived with “our big trunks and boxes full with the arts and crafts of the whole of Romania,”⁵⁰ but that after twenty-four years of sustained efforts, her collection was still packed in the same trunks, waiting to be displayed in the museum of her cultural dream. “I hope that soon they [the artifacts] will be seen by the good people who make up America,” she had prophesized passionately,

*and I also hope that they will help me to raise the “Statue of Peace” among the crooked little paths that will lead some day from village to village, each one representing not the government but the people of a different nation on this earth, and built exactly like one in the old country by our own immigrant pioneers.*⁵¹

In spite of the setbacks she had experienced in the pursuit of her cultural dream, Stan concludes her autobiography with a call to action, by inviting her readers to join her in dancing the traditional Romanian *Hora Unirii*, “the United Hora,” a round dance that symbolizes not only harmonious living and mutual understanding, but also the steps which her Romanian-American dream had gone through up to that moment:

*One step forward, one step backward, then three steps to the left and five steps to the right, then forward again. And just like the dance, we will make a move forward, only to find temporary defeat and step back a little; we will be battered by forces that will pull us first to the left and then to the right, but finally we will go forward again, on to real understanding of each other, on to peace!*⁵²

Conclusion

STAN DIED in her early fifties, before having had the opportunity to see her dream come true. Nevertheless, the collection of folk objects she had brought from Romania, which she expanded throughout her lifetime, was donated to St. Mary's Romanian Orthodox Church in Cleveland, where the Romanian Ethnic Art Museum (mentioned by Antonovici in his letter to Lucaci) was inaugurated in 1960.⁵³ In the chapter "Individual Contributions in Promoting Culture," Hațegan includes Stan among the significant Romanian-American personalities who contributed to the preservation of Romanian culture. His assertion that anyone who wants to preserve ethnic culture must "believe in it, be proud of it, continuously learn more about it, inspire others to do likewise and sacrifice time, money, and effort to promote it against all odds, in spite of adversity . . . They are few. They are *the leaders*. They are *the innovators* and *the dreamers*"⁵⁴ perfectly captures the essence of Stan's personality and valuable contribution. Besides the dedicated work to preserve the Romanian culture through exhibitions of folk artifacts and comprehensive lectures about it, through her autobiography Stan also succeeded in making her audience more aware of the Transylvanian and Romanian history, culture, and way of life, particularly in the countryside. Like other immigrants before and after her, Stan, a passionate and courageous young woman, crossed physical and emotional "mountains and oceans," determined to follow her high-minded American dream of peace and understanding among people through culture. It might be argued that Stan's cultural legacy is still maintained and further enriched today by the dedicated work of the members of Romanian-American cultural societies and the enthusiastic organizers of Romanian-American festivals that bring together numerous Americans and ethnic-Americans to savor the exquisite flavors of the Romanian cuisine, to admire the colorful national costumes worn by the participants, and to enjoy the melodious tones and rhythms of the Romanian folk songs and dances.

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Notes

1. Vladimir Bulat, "Cine a fost Anișoara Stan?," *Observator cultural* (Bucharest) 13, 40 (655) (20 December 2012–9 January 2013): 24.
2. The information in this article and from other sources written in Romanian has been translated by the author of this article.
3. See Mircea Răceanu, *Cronologie comentată a relațiilor româno-americane: De la începutul cunoașterii reciproce până la prăbușirea regimului communist în România, 1989*

(Bucharest: Silex, 2005): “Petru Lucaci was editor of the Romanian-American newspaper *America* between 1950–1967, 1976–1986, and 1988–1998,” 67. Bulat does not mention the date of the letter, but from its contents, it might be inferred that Antonovici wrote it after 1960, after Stan’s collection was donated to the Romanian Ethnic Art Museum in Cleveland, OH, by her husband, Joseph Rubin.

4. Constantin Antonovici (1911–2002) was a friend of Joseph Rubin, Anișoara Stan’s husband.
5. Vladimir Wertsman, ed., *The Romanians in America 1748–1974: A Chronology & Fact Book* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1975), 9, 10, 11, 17, 19; Vasile Hațegan, *Romanian Culture in America* (Cleveland, OH: Union and League of Romanian Societies of America, 1988), 83; George Henderson and Thompson Olasiji, *Migrants, Immigrants, and Slaves: Racial and Ethnic Groups in America* (Lanham–New York–London: University Press of America, 1995), 145–146; Joanne Bock, *Ethnic Vision: A Romanian American Inheritance* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997), 77–80; Aurel Sasu, *Comunitățile românești din Statele Unite și Canada* (Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2003), 94; Răceanu, 177.
6. Anișoara Stan, *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* (New York: William Frederick Press, 1947).
7. In Bulat’s article, Stan’s birth year appears as 1900, but on page 9 of her autobiography Stan specifies that she was fourteen years old in 1916, which suggests that she was born in 1902.
8. Wertsman, 3–4.
9. *Ibid.*, 8.
10. Romania (consisting of the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, united in 1859) was neutral during the first two years of World War I, and when it entered the war, at the end of August 1916, one of its main priorities was to regain Transylvania, which became a part of Romania after the end of the war, through the Great Union of 1 December 1918.
11. Ramona Fruja Amthor, “Romanians and Romanian Americans, 1870–1940,” in *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration*, vol. 2, 1870–1940, edited by Elliott Robert Barkan (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 575–584.
12. Răceanu, 95–96.
13. Bock, 5.
14. Hațegan, 24.
15. Amthor, 577.
16. *Ibid.*, 583.
17. Jacob A. Riis, *The Making of an American* (New York etc.: The Macmillan Company, 1901); Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston–New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1912); Marcus Eli Ravage, *An American in the Making: The Life Story of an Immigrant* (New York–London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1917); Edward Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy Fifty Years After* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920); Louis Adamic, *My America 1928–1938* (New York–London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938).

18. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 107.
19. Ilaria Serra, *The Value of Worthless Lives: Writing Italian American Immigrant Autobiographies* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 7.
20. Richard Tuerk, "At Home in the Land of Columbus: Americanization in European-American Immigrant Autobiography," in *Multicultural Autobiography: American Lives*, edited by James Robert Payne (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 114. For more detailed information on ethnicity and immigrant autobiography, see William Boelhower, "The Brave New World of Immigrant Autobiography," in *MELUS* 9, 2 (1982): 5–23, and William Boelhower, "The Making of Ethnic Autobiography in the United States," in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, edited by John Paul Eakin (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 123–141.
21. For various types of hardships (economic and other) encountered by Romanian immigrants during their long journey to the United States in the early 1900s, see Hațegan, 24–25.
22. Several of the Romanian Americans or Romanian-American families she mentions also appear in Hațegan's and Bock's books.
23. "The 'first' generation of immigrants [are those] who migrate as adults and the 'second' generation [are] native-born persons of foreign parentage" (Rumbaut, 983). For more information, see Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Generation 1.5, Educational Experiences of," in *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*, vol. 2, edited by James A. Banks (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 983–984, and Nancy Foner, ed., *Across Generations: Immigrant Families in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
24. In the early decades of the twentieth century, immigration restriction laws drastically limited the number of immigrants to the United States, especially through the implementation of the quota systems of 1921 and 1924. For more detailed information on immigration restriction laws, see Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration*, 5th edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Roger Daniels and Otis L. Graham, *Debating American Immigration, 1882—Present*, introduction by James T. Patterson (Lanham—Boulder—New York—Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), and Otis L. Graham Jr., *Unguarded Gates: A History of America's Immigration Crisis* (Lanham—Boulder—New York—Toronto—Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).
25. For more information on cultural pluralism, see Herbert J. Gans, "Toward a Reconciliation of 'Assimilation' and 'Pluralism': The Interplay of Acculturation and Ethnic Retention," *International Migration Review* 31, 4 (1997): 875–892. See also Linda Joyce Brown, *The Literature of Immigration and Racial Formation: Becoming White, Becoming Other, Becoming American in the Late Progressive Era* (New York—London: Routledge, 2004). Brown explains that "Rejection of the melting pot metaphor of assimilation is central to cultural pluralism. Rather than idealize a single culture into which immigrants 'melted,' cultural pluralists called for a recognition and appreciation of multiple cultures in the United States," 95.

26. Stan mentions the circumstances of her arrest in the first chapter but offers more details about her imprisonment and its consequences in the second chapter.
27. Stan, 27.
28. Ibid., 104.
29. Ibid., 110.
30. Ibid., 118.
31. Ibid., 119.
32. Bock, 2.
33. Ibid., 17.
34. Ibid.
35. Stan, 119.
36. Ibid., 120.
37. Ibid.
38. According to information on the website of the International Institute of Buffalo, “the first Institutes,” established after World War I by the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), “were designed to provide social and humanitarian services to immigrants, teach English, and create opportunities for cultural expression. The International Institute of Buffalo was established by the local YWCA in 1918 to work with female immigrants, helping them to integrate and working to prevent their exploitation in domestic settings” (<https://iibuffalo.org/about/#history>). Accessed 15 November 2019.
39. Stan, 207.
40. Ibid., 227.
41. Ibid., 214.
42. Ibid., 231–232, emphasis added.
43. Ibid., 233.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 279.
46. See Library of Congress, Copyright Office, *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, Part 1 [B]. Group 2. Pamphlets, ETC. New Series, p. 50. “Stan (Anisoara). New York. Plan for an ethnographic museum of peasant art. Dec. 29, 1942; AA 418868” (Entry 2620). Accessed 15 November 2019.
47. Stan, 305.
48. Ibid., 307.
49. Stan hoped that the newly formed United Nations and UNESCO (1946) would facilitate the achievement of her dream, strongly believing that they had the same goal: promoting and supporting world peace and understanding through culture and education.
50. Stan, 168.
51. Ibid., emphasis added.
52. Ibid., 386.
53. Hațegan, 85. See also the information on “Romanian Museum”: “The Romanian Ethnic Art Museum became a separate entity from St. Mary’s Church in 1992. It continues to be housed on Church property and continues to have a close working

relationship with its members” (<http://www.clevelandpeople.com/groups/romanian/romanian-museum.htm>). Accessed 15 November 2019.

54. Hațegan, 82–83, emphasis added.

Abstract

The Autobiography of a Romanian-American Dream:

They Crossed Mountains and Oceans (1947) by Anișoara Stan

Anișoara Stan’s autobiography *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* (1947) depicts her Romanian-American experience in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. Stan (1902–1954) describes her assiduous endeavors to showcase the Romanian folk art across her adopted country as a way of promoting the cultural heritage of first-generation Romanian-American immigrants and of fostering ethnic pride in their descendants. Moreover, her goal was to create an ethnographic museum of folk art in order to emphasize the valuable contribution of immigrants to American culture. This article examines Stan’s autobiography with a view to uncovering the ways in which she strove to create ethnic and cultural bridges between Romania and the United States through Romanian folk art, thus contributing significantly to the enrichment of the history of the Romanian-American immigration in the first part of the twentieth century.

Keywords

immigrant autobiography, Romanian-American immigrants, images of Transylvania, ethnic culture, Romanian folk art, women immigrants