these books and to provide information about the life and work of some of the most important priests, monks, teachers, and noblemen. At the same time, it is an extraordinary thing that we can also read about the 39 historical bindings of this collection. They belong to different Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque bookbinding workshops. I consider this part extremely useful and important because Erzsébet Muckenhaupt is one of the well-known specialists in this area, and her views regarding the historical bindings are always worth considering. The description of the activity of the Şumuleu-Ciuc bookbinding workshop and the identifying of twelve 17th–18th century Transylvanian bindings belonging to workshops from Cluj and Şumuleu-Ciuc have an outstanding cultural value.

The annexed images at the end of the book are all coloured and of very good quality. There are fifty pictures showing title-pages, different illustrations, or bindings of some outstanding prints.

The book itself is a sort of mirror regarding Erzsébet Muckenhaupt's admirable work and it is not just the catalogue that has to be praised but also the complex image of how many aspects can and should be taken into consideration when somebody is working with old books. The more this partial information about the print, the inscriptions, and the binding are viewed together, the more faithfully it reflects the path of books from reader to reader. And through this "voyage" of the prints, the researcher is provided with precious facts not only about the book but the social and cultural atmosphere of different periods.

**Creatures of the Night in Folk Imagination
Mythological Characters in the Oaşul Region. A Corpus of Texts
Volume Edited by Eleonora Sava**
– A Review –

Maria CANDALE
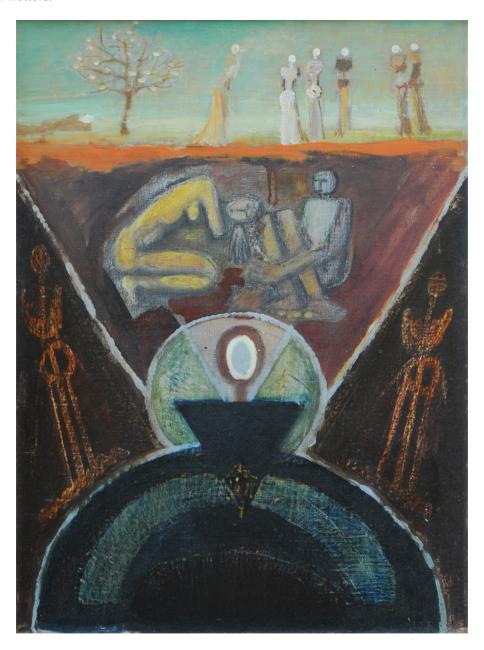*Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj*

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The volume edited by Eleonora Sava and published by the Napoca Star Publisher in Cluj in 2010 (179 pages, ISBN: 978–973–647–748–5) puts together and publishes a corpus of texts, part of the ethno-folkloric documents preserved in the Archives of the Folklore Circle in Cluj, selected according to geographical and subject criteria. The researcher excerpts cards from the Archives, manuscripts referring to mythological creatures in the imagination of the people of Ţara Oaşului (Oaşul region, northern Romania). She proposes "an image over the mythology of Ţara Oaşului, as it is configured by the documents extant […]. The texts were collected

during field-work between 1974 and 1977 by students and professors of the Faculty of Letters."[1]

Octavian Cosman, *Seeds*, 66 x 50 cm, oil on canvas, 1978

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[1] Eleonora Sava, ed., *Ființe ale nopții în imaginarul folcloric. Personaje mitologice din Țara Oașului. Corpus de texte* (Creatures of the night in folk imagination. Mythological characters in the Oașul region. A corpus of texts) (Cluj-Napoca: Napoca Star, 2010), 5.

This book is the second of a series of source publications from the Archives of the Folklore Circle in Cluj, edited by Eleonora Sava, as part of a project of digitization of the archive and the of its "cultural heritage".[1] The first volume of the series, entitled *Unde bea curcubeul apă. Rituri magice din Ţara Oaşului* (Where the rainbow drinks water. Magic rites in the Oaşul region), and published in 2008 by the Napoca Star Publisher, is also a thematic and geographic slice of the archival material: "the excerpts stopped, not accidentally, at the surveys made in the Oaşul region in 1974-1977, more precisely the magic rites".[2]

In the introduction of the first volume of the series the researcher presents the short history of the Scientific Student Circle for Ethnology and Folklore which functioned at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj. The archival documents resulted from field researches of the circle members, coordinated by their professors, beginning with 1958, resulting in "over 12000 documents collected on cards and tapes."[3] Established by Professor Dumitru Pop in 1955 and coordinated successively by Dumitru Pop, Nicolae Bot, and Ion Şeuleanu, the Folklore Circle attracted students of various generations, many of them becoming later specialists of the field. The researcher undertakes a close reading of these ethnological documents, following up the modification of the material on a diachronic level, which brings about her observation of an "important methodological modification":[4] "while in the first 10 years the cards contained more texts and relatively little context",[5] after 1970 the texts are accompanied "more and more frequently by descriptions of the contexts of performance, short notes on the context of recording, informers' cards, personal narrations which not only complete and clarify the documents, but, what's more, also make them coherent and alive."[6] "The archival cards indicate a paradigm shift: the passage from folklore […] to ethnology."[7]

The corpus of texts from the volume *Creatures of the Night in Folk Imagination. Mythological Characters in the Oaşul Region* comprises cards about mythological creatures as their image was verbalized by the inhabitants of the Oaşul region in the 7th decade of the 20th century. Each chapter bears the name of a mythological creature as it appears in the language of the insiders: Borsocoii (the ghost bridegroom, 65 cards), Fata Pădurii (the girl of the forest, 23 cards), Marţolea (an evil spirit, 18 cards), Dracul (the devil, 17 cards), Omul Nopţii (the man of the night, 4 cards), Ursitoarele (creatures similar to the Greek *Moirae*, 3 cards), Ciuma (the plague, 2 cards), Comorile (the treasures, 2 cards), Balaurii (the dragons, 1 card), Şarpele casei (the house snake, 1 card), Vâlvele (a kind of mine ghost, 1 card), Vârcolacii (werewolf, an evil demon, 1 card). The researcher is extremely careful to delimit the insider's vocabulary from the outsider's one, treating the former with

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[1] Eleonora Sava, ed., *Unde bea curcubeul apă. Rituri magice din Ţara Oaşului* (Where the rainbow drinks water. Magic rites in the Oaşul region) (Cluj-Napoca: Napoca Star, 2008), 5.
[2] Ibid., 7.
[3] Eleonora Sava, ed., *Unde bea curcubeul apă,* 5.
[4] Ibid., 6.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

priority over the latter. Thus she considers that the syntagm *Logodnicul strigoi* (the ghost bridegroom) on the card belongs to an outsider, the author of the archive card, while the insider referred to the creature as a *borsocoi*; therefore the card with this title is included into the chapter on *Borsocoii*. Similarly, documents entitled *Duhul rău* (the evil spirit) are included into the chapter on *Dracul* (the devil). This way the chapter titles reflect the local terms used for verbalizing the experiences of meeting the supernatural.

Certain manuscripts from the archive could not be directly associated with one particular chapter, as their content was more complex, and the mythological figures they referred to were multiple: "I have introduced here the answers to questionnaire V of Ion Muşlea, *Credinţe şi povestiri despre duhuri, fiinţe fantastice şi vrăjitoare* (Beliefs and stories about spirits, supernatural creatures, and witches), and another three documents presenting two or more legendary creatures, suggesting the overlapping or interference of their images."[1]

Finally, the volume contains an index of settlements, with an additional index of researchers and interlocutors for each settlement.

In the preface the author puts forth a functional analysis of four of the mythological creatures to which the cards refer, on the basis of descriptive and narrative patterns outlined by the superposition of images constructed by the content of each document. With an eye to details and nuances, the researcher particularizes each document, making reference each time to the call number of the archive card which illustrates a certain aspect, avoiding "wide brush strokes" and "rigid" patterns. The analysis confirms what other researchers observed about narratives with a mythological core in traditional Romanian culture: "controllers, rather than demons in the real sense of the word, these creatures watch over the observance of a whole series of norms: where to travel […], when to work and what, when to abstain from work and why […], how to behave in an erotic relationship; […] how to care for a dead person; what to do after someone close dies, etc."[2] The first grid of reading is applied by the editor herself, primarily by finding a relation among the cards in order to assemble them to form this corpus.

Also in the preface the authoress offers an explicit reading of these texts, applying a criterion for their classification: their degree of fictionality, using the "primary scheme of the degrees of fictionality elaborated by Ileana Benga and Bogdan Neagota."[3] The terms employed by this typology are: *memorata I* (the actor is also a narrator), *memorata II* (the event was heard by the narrator from unknown actors), *memorata III* (texts with general referents), and *memorata IV* (texts with heroic referents).[4] Using this grid of reading, the author remarks that "most narratives in this volume can be included into the fourth category which describes

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[1] Eleonora Sava, ed., *Fiinţe ale nopţii în imaginarul folcloric,* 9.
[2] Otilia Hedeşan, *Pentru o mitologie difuză* (For a diffuse mythology) (Timişoara: Marineasa, 2000), 277-278.
[3] Ileana Benga, *Tradiţia folclorică şi transmiterea ei orală* (Folklore tradition and its oral transmission) (Cluj-Napoca: Ecco, 2005).
[4] Eleonora Sava, ed., *Fiinţe ale nopţii în imaginarul folcloric,* 21.

the mythological creature in a general way, without implying a human witness".[1] The ethnologist stops at this remark, without continuing with an ethnological or anthropological interpretation of the case. Taking into account that the text is a preface to a source publication, studies on the basis of these sources will probably follow in the future. Exemplifying and analyzing the narratives of each type, the researcher makes another interesting remark, namely that "descriptive formulation"[2] is characteristic to the verbalization of the image of mythological creatures for the inhabitants of the Oaşul region in the period of the research.

This corpus of texts continues a tradition in Cluj of using the documents of the Folklore Archives, but Eleonora Sava distances herself to a certain extent from the canons of this tradition, at least as far as the terminology referring to the meta-data of the cards is concerned. That is to say, the researcher exchanges the terms *informer* and *collector* (used in the cards in the years 1974-1978) with the terms *interlocutor* and *researcher*. The editor justifies this by saying: "the grid I used proposes an up-to-date terminology of the roles undertaken during the survey. I preferred the more recent *researcher* over the somewhat outdated *collector* because it expresses in a more accurate and nuanced way the ethnologist's relationship with field-work. The word *interlocutor* replaces the term *informer*, burdened with connotations outside the field of ethnology".[3] Naturally, in a timely reading, in the context in which representation is no longer understood as the duplicate of an outside reality, "le terrain s'organise d'abord et essentiellement comme un travail symbolique de construction de sens dans le cadre d'une interaction discursive, d'une négociation des points de vue entre l'anthropologue et ses informateurs"[4], the expressions "data collection" and "information recording" are inadequate. Secondly, the researcher rendered the cards in a unitary form, by introducing a "technical box" containing the metadata of the documents, and by replacing the missing title of some cards with "a keyword from the text, placed in a title position within square brackets, to signal the addition subsequent to archiving".[5]

This methodology applied in compiling the corpus of texts is, to my mind, an enforcement of the author's idea that these texts are not *cultural acts*, but *constructs* determined by a plethora of factors (researcher, interlocutor, context, etc.). "L'imagination est donc une part importante du processus rhétorique visant la totalité. Sur le terrain, l'anthropologue ne peut comprendre l'action, qu'elle soit verbale ou non verbale, s'il ne construit, souvent en imagination et en collaboration avec ses informateurs, une représentation de la culture des gens qu'il étudie, représentation qui seule peut donner sens à leurs activités"[6]. Moreover, as the researcher noted on various occasions (e.g. the 2010 National Conference of the Association of Ethnological Sciences in Romania), these texts are notations of the researchers, their selections from "the continuous flux of life" on the territories of

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[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid., 22.
[3] Ibid., 25.
[4] Mondher Kilani, "Du terrain au texte*", Communications* 58 (1994): 45-60, 46.
[5] Eleonora Sava, ed., *Fiinţe ale nopţii în imaginarul folcloric*, 25.
[6] Mondher Kilani, "Du terrain au texte", 55.

their field-work, yielding the illusion of a perfect formal coherence;[1] or they are the notations of those who transcribed the texts from tapes to archival cards. Consequently, the traditional act of culture, as it is communicated by the interlocutor and observed by the researcher, and the content of the archival card is disrupted by the successive reshaping of the first form of the oral or visual discourse[2] (participating observation); that is to say, the *constructs* either of the *researcher* (who records creatively and notes selectively: „le terrain est une version de la réalité sociale qui est inséparable d'une représentation textuelle"[3]), or of *the person who transcribes* from the tape to the archival card, or *the person who transposes the content of the card to an electronic format*, while offering a reading (one of many) of the card in a productive, and not reproductive manner.

This way the 100 % accurate transposition of the cards to electronic format is not only an utopian desideratum, but at the same time, to a certain extent, one that fails to take into account the real possibilities of the person who undertakes this task, and the specificities of a text and the act of reading as defined by Umberto Eco in his famous *Opera aperta*.[4] Furthermore, the "completions" of the author (clearly delimited in the transcribed text) render the texts on the cards more coherent and readable. The image of the manuscripts is available in electronic format, the scanned version of the document, to which any interested researcher may have access on the site of the Transylvanian Ethno-Anthropological Database, online Archive.[5] Ultimately, the reason for the transcription of the cards to an electronic format is precisely to make them more accessible for the public.

The transcription of the card content is one reading of the text contained in it, but it is a reading of a specialist in the field, interested in the core of the texts, and not unimportantly, experienced in transcribing archival documents. It is therefore one reading of many possible readings, but a "legitimate" one, necessary to all possible future researchers. Source publications, just like online archives, are instruments of work which spare the researcher from the difficulties of searching, excerpting, or reading out the cards, which is often an overwhelming task to undertake.

In conclusion, the ethnofact is multiply metamorphosed in the process of understanding and making coherent first by the insider, then by the researcher (by direct observation). In the course of its passage from oral culture to written culture there occurs a modification of the discourse which becomes thus atemporal, abstract, and depersonalized.[6] These instances are followed by archiving and the compilation of source collections. The very process of archiving is a productive event, a reading of the material collected during field-work. It displays thus the fragmentariness of the flux of life, of speech, the recorded evidence, in order to render it coherent, to

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[1] Jack Goody, *La raison graphique. La domestication de la pensée sauvage*, edited by Jean Bazin, and Alban Bensa (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979).
[2] I mean the researcher's participating observation.
[3] Mondher Kilani "Du terrain au texte", 50.
[4] Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta* (Milano: Bompiani, 1962).
[5] http://eadt.ro/ro/?page_id=20 (accessed 22 februarie 2011).
[6] Jack Goody*, La raison graphique,* 97.

create the "illusion of totality",[1] cutting out one single excerpt from the whole discourse, usually disrupted from its context of communication, on one particular card. It seems that the subject criterion was a priority in archiving the document, because the data of the cards reveal that certain fragments were cut out from the dialogue between the insider and the outsider and then segmented according to the referents (this referent being related to the scientific terminology of the time of the research): *Demonology. Information on ghosts*; *Beliefs. – the evil spirit. Story*, etc. There are cards with different call numbers but whose content seems to have been communicated by the same interlocutor and in the same context of communication. Part of the cards can be combined, as the researcher notes in the preface of the first corpus of texts in this series, referring to call numbers 7602, 7632, 7635, 7657, 7671, 7720: "As they have different, non-successive registration numbers, they seem as if they have nothing to do with each other. In fact, they are fragments from an interview done by Nicolae Bot in Negreşti Oaş, on 28 December 1974, with Ana Fedorca. The (then) students Viorel Rogoz and Ştefan Borbély also assisted at (parts of) the discussion, and to some of it probably also Ana's husband, Vasile Fedorca. Like in a puzzle, the six documents outline, all of a sudden, a new and coherent image". This methodology of archiving may offer some information about the epistemological concept underlying the original research, namely the importance of the content as opposed to the context of its performance or the context of communication, as long as the question to which the text on the card is the answer was not included on the card. Similarly, the content of the cards displays the fact that the researcher's presence is hidden, invisible, just like the narrator in a realist novel, in accordance with the epistemological paradigm governed by positivist conceptions. "A l'instar de romancier-dieu, l'auteur-anthropologue joue le rôle du démiurge, de l'ordonnateur suprême des personnages et des scènes typiques de la culture qu'il étudie. La monographie construit l'image unifiée d'un anthropologue en symbiose avec une »culture« et des »gens«. Les »gens« sont eux-mêmes configurés dans les limites du texte monographique, tout comme la diversité des formes sociales et culturelles est stabilisée à travers la représentation »standard« (économie, parenté, système politique, religion, etc.) dans laquelle les cultures ont été préalablement découpées."[2] A different kind of modus operandi is that proposed by Rodica Zane, professor of ethnology at the University of Bucharest. She remarks that orality, a feature specific to folklore, imposes the reconsideration of the receiver, because the receiver is active in relation to the emitter, and can interfere with, and influence the latter in its discourse, and because it is capable of communicating and receiving messages by similar, nonverbal codes.[3]

Nevertheless, while accepting that ethnofacts are continuously constructed, and that their life lies exactly in the metamorphosis and reshaping determined by the space, time, and situation of the insider's discourse, the researcher's methodology, and the epistemological concept according to which science is inscribed into various

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[1] Mondher Kilani, "Du terrain au texte", 53.

[2] Mondher Kilani, "Du terrain au texte"*,* 51.

[3] Rodica Zane, *Etnologie la timpul prezent* (Ethnology in present tense) (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2007), 38.

cultural periods, the archival cards are, no doubt, "open texts". The creation of an online archive, as the objective of the project *Placing the ethno-folkloric document into a new perspective. The configuration of cultural identity in its dynamics*, coordinated by the editor of the present volume, Eleonora Sava, completed by a corpus of texts which offer *one* form of organization and *one* reading of these texts is a step, while not easy to achieve, indeed necessary for a timely research.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos

The Time and Age of Paradoxes:
Lajos András Kiss: *Paradoxes of Progress – Introduction*
***in the Philosophy of Extreme Ages*[1]**

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Keywords: absurd, extreme ages, authenticity, *homo sacer*, irrationality and history, exceptional situation, uncommonness, historical paradoxical, testimony, totalitarianism

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Looking into Lajos András Kiss' book, one encounters a peculiar world. The irony of the caricature-like graphics which figure at the head of each of the fourteen chapters already point out the direction on the path of the questions of self-criticism and uncommonness.

This book represents a serious challenge for anyone not only because of its comprehensiveness and various subjects, but also on account of the novel way it raises problems. The word *extreme* figuring in the subtitle suggests that one is going to experience something exceptional, something out of the ordinary here; this, by all means, is thought-provoking for present day readership interested in extreme things.

Kiss' way of writing is characterized by both complexity and simplicity. According to his philosophy, our world is basically characterized by ambivalence; therefore one can think about it only in paradoxes. Kiss considers that the things most important to man often reach beyond the horizon of human reason. For thinking has a dimension where the absolute power of science fails; this is the world of paradoxes and irrational events. To go beyond the boundaries of reason is the condition for the man fallen into the precipice of necessities to find his way in the labyrinth of possibilities. Kiss, together with Hegel, believes that "if the world becomes irrational, one must devise 'irrational instruments' for understanding it."[2]

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[1] Kiss Lajos András, *Haladásparadoxonok – bevezetés az extrém korok filozófiájába* (Budapest: Liget Műhely Alapítvány, 2009), 288 p. (ISBN 963 9363 694)
[2] Ibid., 5.