



Operetta, as well as the effect that certain historical events had on the national consciousness, such as the disastrous year of 1898, when Spain lost the last colonies of its once enormous empire.

While weak national institutions did not stand up, according to Young, to their historical responsibilities, zarzuela provided the national imaginary demanded by the new urban classes to generate social identity. According to the author, 'zarzuela helped the Spanish people to articulate and understand their national identity at a time of rapid social, political and economic change' (176). During the time period studied in the book, cities were receiving large numbers of immigrants from the countryside, particularly Madrid and Barcelona, and zarzuela authors successfully reacted to the social transformation of the urban environment. They provided a symbolic representation where audiences could identify themselves as an articulated community.

According to the author, in spite of the impact of its 'popular nationalism', zarzuela was unable to counterbalance the intrinsic weakness of Spain's political institutions. For Young, while zarzuela authors brilliantly portrayed the new social circumstances of the Spanish people, they could not produce social structures comparable to other European countries by themselves. Young controversially argues that the collapse of the Civil War highlighted the deficit of institutional nation building during the period in question in Spain. As the author puts it, the 'Spanish Civil War would demonstrate the cost of the failure to develop a coherent sense of Spanish national identity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The tensions inherent in the Spanish search for national identity had never been resolved and ultimately broke out into open conflict' (167).

Music Theater and Popular Nationalism in Spain, 1880–1930 allows the reader to gain a coherent understanding of Spanish musical theatre during this time period. Beautifully written and carefully documented, this is a piece of critical scholarship that introduces the discussion of 'popular nationalism' into the bigger picture of the history of zarzuela. Its reading is both enjoyable and enriching.

Francesco Zavatti, *Writing History in a Propaganda Institute: Political Power and Network Dynamics in Communist Romania*. Södertörn Doctoral Dissertations: Stockholm, 2016; 387 pp.; 9789187843457, 253kr (pbk)

Reviewed by: Maria Bucur, *Indiana University, USA*

Francesco Zavatti's *Writing History in a Propaganda Institute: Political Power and Network Dynamics in Communist Romania* represents a rare example among today's historical doctoral dissertations. It is an expansive, comprehensive institutional history that both needed to be written, and deserves to be read by all who seek to understand the history of Romania during the communist period. The fruit of over two years of thorough archival research and oral history interviews with some of the individuals who worked at the Institute for the History of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), the book represents the most complete

narrative to date about the ways in which the historiography about the communist past was crafted between 1948 and 1989. The author's aim is to reconstruct the dynamic power relations that animated the scholarship produced at this Institute, highlighting the ideological, experiential and personal differences that shaped the production of historical knowledge through books, museum curatorship, and other cultural/intellectual products. Zavatti wants us to view this history not as simply an empty façade dominated by monolithic forces at the top of the RCP hierarchy, but rather as the expression of earnest disputes in which all participants had historical agency. The pay-off rests, therefore, in answering not so much the 'why' or 'what' of what happened, but rather the 'how'.

The book is organized in ten chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the research aims, the methods and sources, as well as a broad overview of historical writing in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. It is followed by an excellent overview of previous research, which I found to be extremely up to date, nuanced and earnest in highlighting both strengths and weaknesses. A more detailed discussion of the nature and issues raised by the sources in terms of veracity and utility follows in Chapter 3, probably the one I would have dropped, had I been the editor of the book.

The next five chapters correspond to distinct sub-periods of the communist regime: 1948–1958; 1959–1964; 1965–1968; 1969–1974; and 1975–1989. The author provides closure with a discussion of the afterlife of the Institute and its historians and a conclusion. The chapters are all very clearly organized and build on each other to show important continuities and shifts across these periods in terms of the specific role to be played by: the Institute in relation to the priorities of the RCP; historians from the Institute in relation to the Soviet Union; ideological and experiential differences among historians and apparatchiks in shaping the research agenda; the personal patronage of various leaders, especially Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu.

For this reviewer the most innovative interpretations come in Chapter 5, where the author links the development of the national-communist canon to the late Dej period, prior to Ceaușescu's ascent to the role of Secretary General in 1965. The author shows how the attempt of the RCP to distance Romania from the tight embrace of the Soviet Union provided important resources and especially breathing room for historians at both the Romanian Academy and the Party Institute. Both institutions began to develop a more independent historiographical agenda, to the point of advancing arguments about Romania's past that provided critical assessments of Russian imperialism, along with a decidedly ethno-nationalist turn in discussing everything from the 1848 Revolutions to World War I.

A particularly important moment for this historiographic turn was the discovery of a text by Karl Marx, *Notes about Romanians*, which provided a very friendly assessment of Romanian nationalism. Though not broadly circulated, the *Notes* were used in the Institute, with the explicit approval of the Dej administration, to make a decisively nationalist turn in research and writing. Through this discovery, the author strongly suggests that the narrative about the ultra-nationalist turn of

Romanian communism needs to be revised, casting Dej and not Ceaușescu as the initiator. I would only add that propaganda work by Ceaușescu from the 1950s with military cemeteries and commemorations shows the same nationalist bent, so the larger picture about the regime is a bit more complicated (Bucur, 2009). But in terms of the work done by historians at the Party Institute, Zavatti provides a persuasive argument.

Another interesting and seldom discussed issue concerns the earlier history of the Institute. The author teases out in detail the arguments that developed between the ‘Muscovites’ and the veterans starting in the late 1940s, that is, between those who spent the harshest years of anti-communist oppression in Moscow versus those who spent them underground or in jail in Romania. I was not familiar with the extent and intensity of these debates, and they show that, indeed, the history of historical writing in this Institute was very much a process of negotiation between earnest difference of experience, and not just political power and patronage.

If such lively debates shaped the direction and output of the work done at the Institute before 1964, the latter part of the book, dedicated to the Ceaușescu and the post-communist period, tells a tale about the deadening of internal initiative, fear and the cult of personality that has become familiar to any students of that period. Zavatti’s analysis confirms the valence of that narrative for the production of historical research during that period, and specifically the turn towards military ultra-nationalist history that continues to weigh down research and writing in some history institutes and university departments. The author’s conclusions are also an invitation to further research that will help elucidate other aspects of recent Romanian history. I look forward to finding out what Zavatti has in store for us in the future.

Theodore Zervas, *The Making of a Modern Greek Identity: Education, Nationalism, and the Teaching of a Greek National Past*, Columbia University Press: New York, 2012; 268 pp.; 9780880336932, £38.00 (hbk)

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This study is everything an academic book should be (but that so many are not): well-written, lucid, carefully researched, and cogently argued. It could just as easily be read by someone who knows nothing about Greece as by someone who has spent years studying it; either reader would come away enriched. Zervas treats one of the most significant questions in modern Greek history: why are the Greeks naturally assumed to be the descendants of the classical Hellenes, and, even more significantly, why is modern Greek society so totally suffused with the oft-repeated claim that they are? The notion that the Greeks are the inheritors of antiquity, the founders of western civilization, the inventors of democracy, and so forth – this notion is so ubiquitous and widespread that we hardly notice it as being something that requires interrogation. But of course it does, and Zervas probes the question as