

Andrei Oișteanu, *Sexualitate și societate. Istorie, religie și literatură* [*Sexuality and Society. History, Religion and Literature*], Polirom, Iași, 2016, 664p

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Andrei Oișteanu (b. 1948) is a researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Letters within Bucharest University and president of the Romanian Association for the History of Religions. Similar to other two volumes written by Oișteanu – one dedicated to the image of the Jew in Romanian Culture,¹ and the other to the topic of narcotics in Romanian literature² – this volume is distinguishable through its interdisciplinary approach to the topic as well, so that the present volume confirms Oișteanu's interest in ethnology, cultural anthropology, history of religion and mentalities.

As the author himself confesses, the book has been written not only “as a tribute to sexuality”,³ but also as an attempt to understand “its delicate and mysterious workings” (p. 5). For the accomplishment of such a goal, a comparative approach has been used, a “absolutely normal, if not obligatory” method. The result has been a comparative approach both on the vertical scale of time - from Antiquity up to the present time - and on the horizontal scale of space – from Western Europe to eastern Asia. Again, as the author himself confesses, at the same time the research has been a self-shaping one: “I have written this book just as it has written me. Maybe thus one can explain the relative stylistic heterogeneity of the volume, with a greater degree of freedom” (p. 6).

The book is structured in 35 chapters which differ in length and approach style. From a thematic point of view, one can distinguish thematically the research on *ius primae noctis* or *le droit du seigneur* (p. 7-15) – that is, the right of the lord to go to bed with the brides from his domain on their

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¹ Andrei Oișteanu, *Inventing the Jew: Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures*, Nebraskas 2009; idem, *Konstruktionen des Judenbildes: Rumänische und Ostmitteleuropäische Stereotypen des Antisemitismus*, Berlin 2010.

² Idem, *Rauschgift in der rumänischen Kultur: Geschichte, Religion und Literatur*, Berlin 2013.

³ This, in a way, is a „reparatory act” if we are to consider what Emil Cioran had put down in his diary, when turning 56: „In all I have written, I did not pay sexuality the tribute it deserves...”