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Reviews

Sânge din sângele lui Dracula. Saga boierilor Florescu, Radu R. Florescu, Matei Cazacu, / Dracula's Bloodline: A Florescu Family Saga, traducere de Carmen Ion, ediție îngrijită de Matei Cazacu. București: Editura Corint, 2016, 480 p. ISBN 978-606-793-032-0

In 1972, a little-known Romanian historian, Radu Florescu, and his collaborator Raymond T. McNally, both professors at Boston College, published *In Search of Dracula: A True History of Dracula and Vampire Legends*, soon to become an international best-seller, a book that turned Dracula from an icon of popular culture into an object of academic research. Although this work has reached a large public audience, being translated into numerous foreign languages and the authors becoming television talk-show guests, both historians emphasized the erudite side of their work, showing how the historical Vlad Dracul, the fifteenth-century prince of Wallachia, inspired the creation of the mythical Count Dracula by Bram Stoker in his gothic vampire novel.

After this huge success other collaborations exploring this both mythical and historical figure followed, including *The Essential Dracula: A Completely Illustrated & Annotated Edition of Bram Stoker's Classic Novel* (1979) and *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces: His Life and His Times* (1989), making the fame of Professor Florescu to grow.

Being aware of the intellectual background of Radu Florescu, the title of the book that we discuss here, *Dracula's Bloodline: A Florescu Family Saga*, is not a surprise. But this time, the main objective is not anymore the historical analysis of a myth, but an elaborate genealogy of one of the oldest Romanian boyars families: the Florescu family. The investigation covers almost 600 years of history, starting with its feudal blood ties linked to the notorious fifteenth-century figure Vlad Tepes, right up to present day.

The book has two parts. The first part follows the Florescu family saga from its origins, far away in time, until the early twentieth century, while the second part can be read as an autobiographical sketch going from Radu Florescu's childhood in Bucharest to the years of exile in England and then, after the Second World War, in the United States.

One of the most exciting things about this book is that it can be read in several different ways. First, the reader is the witness to an interesting exercise in genealogy, exercise that intersects all the cardinal points of Romanian history: the age of the great Voivods, the Phanariot rule, the 1848 Revolution, the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Romania's modernization path under the Hohenzollern Dynasty and, finally, the difficult years of communist dictatorship. Although the narrative is written in a simple, pleasing style the documentation that stands behind the book is, in fact, a very solid work performed mainly by Matei Cazacu, who has excavated an impressive number of original unedited historical documents.

Secondly, this book can be read as a fascinating biography of Professor Radu Florescu, a story encompassing not only some anecdotal facts of life, but also a coming-of-age story, namely process by which the author became one of the most famous “draculists” in the world.

The book can also be approached as a contribution to the history of the Romanian Diaspora, particularly the manner in which the Romanian intellectuals rebuilt their networks of prestige and influence after the Second World War.

Lastly, Radu Florescu and Matei Cazacu elaborate a chapter in the history of Romanian diplomacy. In addition to his researches in Romanian history, Professor Florescu frequently acted as a diplomatic bridge between his native country and the United States. He served as political adviser on Balkan affairs for Senator Edward Kennedy, as a press attaché during the President Nixon’s visit in Romania in 1969 and finally, after 1989, he was appointed honorary consul for New England.

Certainly, every reader will choose the manner in which this book will be apprehended. But, beyond the diversity of these approaches, I think that we must underline the singular lesson of Professor Florescu, namely that history can be as exciting as the myths or legends.

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