

VI. Honoured Personality

THE FATHER OF 'OFFENSIVE REALISM', PROFESSOR JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA

*MÉSZÁROS Edina Lilla**

The 25th of October 2018 was a day of great importance for the University of Oradea, as it had the pleasure to welcome Professor John J. Mearsheimer, one of the most prominent exponents of the American School of International Relations, at the invitation of the Department of International Relations and European Studies of the Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Science and Communication Sciences. In order to pay homage to Professor Mearsheimer's pioneering work in the field of political science and international relations, based on the recommendation of the IRES department, the Senate of the University of Oradea had decided to award Mr. Mearsheimer with the title of Doctor Honoris Causa, a title that his Excellency gladly accepted, despite the fact that he is a highly engaged scholar caught in between different activities.



For those who are not familiar with John J. Mearsheimer's professional background, must know that he is the R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, where he has been pursuing teaching activities since 1982. He graduated from West Point in 1970 and then served five years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force. He then started graduate school in political science at Cornell University in 1975. He received his Ph.D. in 1980. He spent the 1979-1980 academic year as a research fellow at the Brookings Institution, and was a post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University's Centre for International Affairs from 1980 to 1982. During the 1998-1999 academic year he was the Whitney H. Shepardson Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Professor Mearsheimer has published several works about security issues and international politics more generally. He has authored six books: *Conventional Deterrence*(1983), which won the Edgar S. Furniss, Jr., Book Award; *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History*(1988); *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001, 2014), which won the Joseph Lepgold Book Prize and has been translated into eight different languages (also in Romanian); *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (with Stephen M. Walt, 2007), which made the *New York Times* best seller list and has been translated into twenty-two different languages; *Why Leaders Lie: The Truth about Lying in International Politics* (2011), which has been translated into ten different languages; and last but not the least, *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* published in 2018, in which he predicts the end of the American liberal hegemony.

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The Emeritus Professor has also written many scientific articles that have appeared in prestigious academic journals like *International Security*, and popular magazines like *Foreign Affairs* and the *London Review of Books*. Furthermore he has authored a number of op-ed pieces for the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, dealing with hot topics like Bosnia, the problem of nuclear proliferation, the American policy towards India, the failure of the Arab-Israeli peace efforts, the folly of invading Iraq and the causes of the Ukrainian crisis etc.

Finally, Professor Mearsheimer has won a number of teaching awards, such as the Clark Award for Distinguished Teaching when he was a graduate student at Cornell in 1977, and he also won the Quantrell Award for Distinguished Teaching at the University of Chicago in 1985. In addition, he was selected as a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar for the 1993-1994 academic year. In that capacity, he gave a series of talks at eight colleges and universities. In order to pay a tribute to his lifetime work and contribution to enriching the IR scholarship, in 2003 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Professor Mearsheimer, with his contribution to the *realist thought* and his useful foreign/domestic policy insights and predictions, inspired and challenged many generations of scholars and students all over the world, among which we also find the academics and the students from Oradea, Romania. The IRES students, understanding the significance of the presence of such a distinguished personality at our University, about whom they have heard only during lessons, or got acquainted with his work through books or the internet, on their own initiative ordered from the publisher Mr. Mearsheimer's books that were translated in Romanian, in order to have copies during the DHC award ceremony. The students wanted the books of Professor Mearsheimer to get to as many people as possible. Furthermore, in the days following the *lectio magistralis* delivered during the award ceremony, to the astonishment of us, teachers, the students from the first year asked information about the tenets of the distinguished scholar (despite the fact, that they were supposed to study IR theories only in the second semester of the academic year), which denotes their eagerness and inexhaustible thirst for knowledge, but also shows the great impact that the lecture had upon their young and beautiful minds.

Professor Mearsheimer was awarded with the title of Doctor Honoris Causa during a solemn ceremony gathering the representatives of the management board of the University of Oradea, of the Oradea City Hall, the media, professors and students, and for his *lectio magistralis* he chose a topic of great timeliness, "The American Foreign Policy in the Age of Trump". During the lecture, Mr. Mearsheimer captured everyone's' attention from the audience due to the insightfulness of his thoughts and the straightforwardness of his presentation mode. The prominent scholar has structured his presentation around three talking points, making a comparative analysis between Trump's foreign policy as a candidate and as a president, also drawing attention to the 'fierce struggle' between Trump and the American foreign policy establishment, nicknamed the 'Blob'. The entire presentation was a summation of the score resulted from the imaginary boxing match between president Trump and the 'blob' on various issues, such as the future of the liberal international order, U.S. Alliances in East Asia & Europe, the problem of nuclear proliferation, potential rivals, the Greater Middle East and the Climate Change, in the end highlighting that in certain points, such as the Middle East and Climate Change, Trump has achieved a decisive victory over the 'blob'.

In the afternoon, following the DHC award ceremony, his Excellency accepted another challenge, to answer some questions within the Workshop entitled *The Future of the World Order: Stability or Disorder?*, this time within a more restrained frame, with

the presence of not more than 50 scholars, professors and representatives of the media. The format of the workshop was more restrained, but it gave the opportunity to eight scholars from the UK, Russia, Hungary and Romania (Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Iasi and obviously Oradea) to ‘bomb’ the distinguished professor with their questions, and after several rounds of Q & A (questions and answers), also delegates from the audience could satisfy their curiosity by putting questions to the honourable guest. Among the debated issues we find hot topics of great actuality, such as: the failure of liberal hegemony in international relations; the situation in the Middle East; the US relations with China, India and Russia; the transatlantic relations; the Ukrainian crisis and, last but not least, recent developments in nuclear weapons and proliferation.

During the two hours debate, Professor Mearsheimer stood firm in front of the wave of critical and many times less indulgent questions and remarks, in the end proving to everyone in the room, that not without avail is he considered one of the most prominent IR specialists in the world. Looking at the current developments on the international scene, Professor Mearsheimer’s words and predictions for the future world order (in which he asserts the end of the liberal hegemony and the rise of China) might seem Nostradamus type of prophecies.

As a final remark, we can only say that the presence of Mr. Mearsheimer at the University of Oradea signified a milestone in the life of the city and of the Oradean academic community, and it is also a proof of the fact that the University of Oradea is becoming an influential research pole both at domestic level, and also at the level of the international scientific community. It shows that if we genuinely want it, and work hard for it, nothing is impossible and we can excel, thus blurring the former East-West divide, banishing it on the dusty pages of history books.

Mr. Mearsheimer we would like to express our gratitude for accepting our invitation and for honouring us with your presence, and as you’ve promised, we are looking forward to welcoming you in Oradea soon.

“Louis, I think this is the beginning
of a beautiful friendship.”

Rick Blaine, *Casablanca*

IN HONOREM PROFESSOR DAN OCTAVIAN CEPRAGA

*Sorin ȘIPOȘ**

*Laura ARDELEAN***

*Federico DONATIELLO****

The University must represent in all times a model of professionalism, honesty and civic spirit. More importantly, in the Centenary Year, these values represented by the universitarian spirit must go beyond the walls of the academic institution, in order to give society positive models and healthy landmarks. It was not accidental that the Doctor Honoris Causa award ceremony was also held to honor our distinguished guest, professor Dan Octavian Cepraga, Romanian by birth, blood and consciousness, who succeeded in a Europe dreamed by those of us who remained at home, in Italy, the land of our ancestors, from where we received the *Seal of Rome*, just when we celebrate 100 years of reunified Romania. Now we can and must enjoy the achievements of the forerunners, but at the same time observe with responsibility the present and the future of the Romanians in the small country, Romania, and the enlarged country, Europe. Consequently, the action, in addition to its academic dimension, also has a sentimental one, that by the high degree offered by our university, we can tie our distinguished guest even more strongly to the Romanian world in which he originates.



The disciple of the well-known philologist and romanist Lorenzo Renzi, Dan Octavian Cepraga was formed within the famous Paduan school, following the philological and literary teaching of Gianfranco Folena, the scholar who, more than other Italian scholars, succeeded in conciliating a broad historical vision comparative with the values of the text, its linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical aspects.

In this way, the scientific interests of Professor Cepraga developed in a double direction: on the one hand, to medieval philology, with studies of Provençal and French poetry, and on the other, to Romanianism, with research on popular poetry, the formation of modern Romanian language and, last but not least, the contemporary Romanian literature.

The variety of interests defines the personality of the scholar, who knows how to combine his various scientific skills with a secured mastery of the instruments of philology, with methodological balance and with broad humanistic horizons. It is a vision of the culture inherited from the highly respected professor and intellectual, master Lorenzo Renzi, whom the University of Oradea awarded the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* five years ago. The fact that his disciple, Mr. Dan Octavian Cepraga, obtains the

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same recognition from the same institution is undoubtedly a sign of a profound continuity of spirit and formation, as well as a strong link between the Paduan school and the Romanian cultural space in general and the Oradean one specifically.

We can not mention Lorenzo Renzi without referring, at least in the field of Romanianism, to Alexandru Niculescu. In fact, the great linguist has marked the researcher destiny of young Cepraga's, initiating his studies in the Romanian language and presenting him, while still a student, to his future professor, Lorenzo Renzi.

Let's mention briefly the main areas of research embraced in his *cursus studiorum* over the years by Dan Octavian Cepraga.

Born in Bucharest on November 4, 1967, he would be transferred with his family to Italy in 1977 to escape a Romania increasingly overwhelmed by the obscurity of Ceaușescu's dictatorship.

He is conducting his first studies in Bologna, first at the “Luigi Galvani” Classic High School, then at the oldest university in Europe, where he first approached the Romance philology, under the guidance of Professor Elio Melli. After his meeting with Professor Renzi, Dan Octavian Cepraga is transferred to Padua, where he takes his degree in Modern Literature with a thesis titled *L'elemento cristiano nelle carolini tradizioni rumene* (studio e testi) (*The Christian Element in Traditional Romanian Cultures*), coordinated by Lorenzo Renzi, a work in which the original interests in the field of Roman philology are intertwined for the first time with Romanianism.

The Romanian folk songs of the winter solstice are in fact studied as a testimony to a secular oral tradition, which has its roots in the common cultural, poetic and narrative substrate of the European Middle Ages. After graduating, Dan Octavian Cepraga continued his specialization in anthropological field with a scholarship at the „École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales” in Paris, studying at the Laboratory of Social Anthropology (Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale) and the Ethnologie du Sud-east européen seminar, under the guidance of Professor Paul Henri Stahl.

Returned to Italy, he obtained the title of Doctor in Romance and Italian Philology at the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, with a thesis titled *Il genere pastorella nei manoscritti: ricerche sulle computational strutture de la canzonieri d'oc e d'oïl*, coordinated by Professor Roberto Antonelli. From the Romanian folklore and the Romanian oral poetry, the pendulum turned again to the great tradition of the Western Middle Ages, that of the French and Provençal French poetry.

After doctoral studies, Professor Cepraga's academic career takes place at the University of Padua. In 2004 he became *Professore associato*, giving classes in Romanian Language, Romanian Literature and, for some years, European Ethnology. Since August 2018 he has been Professore Ordinario of Romanian Language and Literature.

In the field of Romanic philology, Dan Octavian Cepraga mainly dealt with Provençal and old French poetry, studying the manuscript tradition of the poems in the language *d'oïl* and the lyric genres of the medieval Romanic space. In addition, he dedicated himself to the themes of the history of the Romanic metric of the 13th century, investigating in particular the link between the French, Provençal and Italian lyrical traditions.

It is a line of study that continues to persuade the Paduan tradition, identifying in the formal values of the text not a sterile formality, but, on the contrary, a careful approach to the literary text and its constitution. Besides all these, in the study of linguistic and literary interferences, the supranational aspect and the profound European unity that characterizes the studies of Romanic philology are highlighted. In this perspective, for example, the important contributions dedicated to the *pastourelle* genus of troubadours

and truers are integrated. We also mention the translation work of Mr. Cepraga's on medieval texts, an activity that finds his best expression in the volume *Poesie d'amore provenzali (Provençal Love Poetry)*, made in 2006 with his friend and colleague Zeno Verlato. It is an attempt to bring the old medieval poets with metric and poetic versions to Italian, which enjoyed the prestigious Monselice translation award. Therefore, it is not surprising that His Excellency transferred with the same success and profound innovations the textual, formal, and comparative approach in the field of Romanian studies, too.

As a Romanist, Dan Octavian Cepraga first dealt with popular poetry, studying especially the Christian sources of Romanian narrative and ritual songs (carols and old songs). This is an important topic in the studies of medieval philology, as the Romanian folklore represents a fundamental testimony to the study of European civilization. As far as the study of the Romanian folk poetry is concerned, we can not fail to mention the anthology of His Excellency, the *Tongs of the Lord. The Traditional Christian Carol (anthology and study)*, as well as a more recent appearance, the edition of the book *Carols in Bihor, gathered from Voivozi and Cuzapby George Navrea* (introductory study by Sorin Șipos and Dan Octavian Cepraga), published at the Romanian Academy, Center for Transylvanian Studies, proof of scientific and human collaboration between Professor Cepraga and the historian of the University of Oradea, Sorin Șipoș.

To this nucleus is added another Italian volume: *Le Nozze del Sole. Canti vecchi e colinde romene*, written in collaboration with L. Renzi, R. Sperandio. Published in the prestigious Carocci Publishing House (Rome, 2004), it proves to have a great impact on the Italian public. The introduction of this volume into an editorial collection specializing in medieval texts is not at all accidental: in this way, old carols and Romanian songs are found alongside texts such as the troubadours, the medieval French epic or the Scandinavian saga.

Convinced of the profound necessity of a comparative study, Dan Octavian Cepraga passionately dedicated himself to studying the relationship between modern Romanian and Italian literature. A particularly lucrative research line concerns the Romanian literary language and the formation of Romanian poetic language in the 19th century through the contact with the great Western poetic and literary tradition. In the 2015 volume, *Esperimenti Italian. Studi sull'italianismo romeno dell'Ottocento (Italian Experiments, Studies on Romanian Italianism in the 19th Century)*, His Excellence turns his attention to an important and less explored chapter in the history of Romanian language and culture in relations with Italy and Italian culture. In this field of study, the two souls of the scholar - the Romanian and the Italian - are merging convincingly, leading to profoundly innovative results.

Finally, one can not forget the didactic activity of a teacher and a cultured person who always keeps a close eye on the communicative aspect and the training of the students. The undeniable ability to communicate, through which he manages to attract the audience, is joined by organizing numerous activities to promote the Romanian identity in the Italian space. Recently, the Ministry for Romanians Abroad gave Dan Octavian Cepraga the prestigious Centenary Award for his remarkable contribution to the promotion of Romanian values and Romanian culture abroad.

The last dimension of the distinguished guest personality is found in the scientific collaboration from 2009 with the history specialists of the University of Oradea. The collaboration resulted in the realization of scientific meetings on important topics approached interdisciplinary, history and philology, an old research line found in the preoccupations of the historical and philological school of the inter-war Cluj, remarkably honored by Sextil Pușcariu, Silviu Dragomir, Constantin Daicoviciu and others. At these

meetings, specialists from Moldavian State University and from Jules Verne University of Amiens participated from the start as a sign of remarkable intellectual solidarity and friendship.

Among the collaborations of Professor Dan Octavian Cefraga with historians and philologists from the University of Oradea we mention the scientific meetings in the form of colloquia, symposia and conferences in the number of 15, of which we mention: *Textus testis. Valore documentario e dimensioni letterarie del testo storico*, Padua, November 17, 2009; *Istorie. Literatură. Politică (History, Literature, Politics)*, Oradea, November 4-7, 2010; *Un'Idea d'Europa. Prospettive storiche e filologiche da est e da Ovest*, Padua, November 10-11, 2011; *From Periphery to Center. The Image of Europe at the Eastern Border of Europe*, Oradea, June 4-8, 2013; *The Image of Central Europe and the European Union in the Narrations of Foreign Travelers*, Oradea-Chişinău, July 17-26, 2014; *Hermeneutica documentului medieval (Hermeneutics of the Medieval Document)*, Oradea, November 4-7, 2015; *Națiunea imaginată. Concepte și etape în construirea identităților naționale europene (Imagined nation. Concepts and Stages in Building European National Identities)*, Deva, June 16-18, 2016.

The scientific collaboration has strengthened and consolidated in the very hard work of preparing and editing the volumes of conferences and joint projects in the number of 16, works that enjoyed favorable reviews and entered the world's major libraries. All this work, supported by over a decade of collaboration between our institutions, Oradea, Padua, Chişinău, Amiens, has shown us that when it is desired to make performance at all cost, it can be done, and that the interpersonal and personal relationships have a special role in this equation, which are forging themselves into confrontations with bureaucratic complications and lack of vision of state institutions. This exceptional collaboration is our vector and it recommends us, internally and internationally as well.

These are some of the reasons for which the Doctoral School of History and the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies Oradea-Chişinău proposed to the University of Oradea to give to Professor Dan Octavian Cefraga the highest distinction of our university. As can be clearly seen, the distinction is given to Mr. Cefraga not for what he will do in the future, but for what he has done so far for our institution, which is a guarantee that in the future the collaboration will continue at least in the same parameters.

Romania, through the University of Oradea, in the Centenary Year, understands to honor his scientific partner by stretching his branches to symbolically embrace him and showing that from today, we share, besides our roots in the land of our country, our ideals for Romania and United Europe, namely democracy, professionalism, citizens' welfare and honesty. This should be the ideal and the duty of our life as well as the purpose of the university in the Centenary Year, taking over the expression of Vasile Pârvan, uttered at the opening of the Upper Dacia University in Cluj, in the autumn of 1919.