

Elena Ene Drăghici-Vasilescu, *Amintiri de călătorie prin viață: întâlniri și întâmplări (prima parte)* [*Memories of journeying through life (the first part)*] Oxford: Vasilescu Academic, 2023, 116p., ISBN 978-1-399-695-1.

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A respected professor at Wolfson College, University of Oxford, and fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Mrs. Elena Ene Drăghici-Vasilescu began her academic journey with the BA in Philosophy and History at the University of Bucharest. She pursued her studies in Ottawa, where she received her MA. She then received her PhD at the University of Oxford. She offers courses in Byzantine and Medieval culture as well as in the history of ideas. She published several monographs, including *Creation and Time. Byzantine and Modern* (Vasilescu Oxford Academic, 2021), *Michelangelo, the Byzantines, and Plato* (Vasilescu Oxford Academic, 2021), *Glimpses into Byzantium. Its Philosophy and Arts* (Vasilescu Oxford Academic, 2021, an anthology of texts published by the author from 2019 until 2021), *Heavenly Sustenance in Patristic Texts and Byzantine Iconography* (Palgrave, 2018), and *Visions of God and Ideas on Deification in Patristic Thought* (co-edited with Mark Edwards, Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2017). She also contributed to collective volumes, such as *The Early Christian World* (edited by Philip Esler, Routledge, 2017), and *Wonderful Things. Byzantium through its Art* (edited by Liz James and Anthony Eastmond, Ashgate, 2013), as well as to the most prestigious journals, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, *Byzantinoslavica*, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, *Studia Patristica*, *The Journal of Early Christian History*, *Akropolis*, and *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*. Her current research focuses on the texts of Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, among others.

Summing up the aforementioned publications and research interests, published in Oxford, at Vasilescu Academic Publishing House, in Romanian, the autobiography of Elena Ene Drăghici-Vasilescu, titled *Memories of journeying through life (the first part)* is a charming confession of the author. Due to its construction, consisting of interweaving reflections on one's own past, explanations pertaining to institutional history, and a presentation of the *cursus honorum* of the author's scholarly

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activity, this book can be listed among the rare illustration of the genre *ego-histoire*.¹ The work was published in Romanian since, throughout the professional journey of the author, especially in the United Kingdom, being an immigrant proved to be an additional challenge for accessing and assessing the academic environment. Many encounters with the well-known scholars of the days proved to be surprising for the author. The book illustrates to the Romanian public the sinuous academic path that an immigrant from Eastern Europe has to face. Besides linguistic and cultural differences, it seems that Romanian women scholars have to face also a discrimination based on gender and on social status, in spite of intellectual performances that are widely acknowledged. Bureaucracy is an even greater obstacle, since the curricular differences between Oxford University and Romanian universities may force a Romanian student to change his / her initial choices for studies. The present volume shows that such a detour could be beneficial for one's academic formation and for one's career. Interdisciplinarity and multiple specialization could prove to be assets not just for an academic institution, but also for the reception of one's work among students of a prestigious university. The author makes a highly significant argument in favour of state scholarships, a practice which has become more and more rare recently. She shows that not only for herself, but also for other students who travelled abroad for studies in the difficult 1990s, obtaining a state scholarship proved to be crucial for their academic becoming. Studying alongside colleagues already immersed in a certain tradition of a university required an effort of adaptation to a new academic environment and of accepting requirements otherwise not imposed to the westerners. Of course, the academic path, besides challenges and obstacles, can provide one with the joy of intellectual discoveries and of meeting prestigious personalities.

When reading this volume, one can feel the philosopher's pen. The background of Mrs Elena Ene Drăghici-Vasilescu in philosophy is remarkable not only in this volume, but also in her other major publications, most of them in Oxford. This volume, which will be probably followed by a second one, could be an eye-opener to any Romanian student aiming at building an academic career abroad, and not being aware of the challenges and the opportunities occurring on the way.

¹ Anna Cole, "«The History That Has Made You.» Ego-Histoire, Autobiography and Postcolonial History," *Life Writing* 16, vol. 4, (2019): 527–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2019.1633249>.