



Editorial Foreword

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The inaugural issue of the fourteenth edition of the *Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies* is devoted to perceptions, identity, and alterity, three visible stars in the modern sky. To paraphrase Zygmunt Bauman, who spoke of the unholy trinity of modernity, i.e., uncertainty, unpredictability, and insecurity, we may term our unholy trinity sinful when it is exploited to deprive others of their identity or impose one's dominance over another.

Referencing the British sociologist Gerard Delanty's concept of "boundary and identities of exclusion," the first research article examines the "hard borders" in the Baltic Sea Region between 1917 and 1922, concluding that in every instance in which war and violence were used in the Baltic Sea Region to award borders to one state over another or to settle accounts, the arrangements were not permanent and a cycle of warfare with devastating effects on local populations ensued.

Andreea Dahlquist also examines the scenario of geographically distant states, which can occasionally lead to the same outcomes. In such circumstances, the number of cultural hubs, mass media, and social mediators across societies is limited, and mutual understanding is incomplete and imbalanced. Analyzing Romanian-Swedish ties during the Second World War, the author also draws attention to the discrepancy between the nearly entirely favorable attitude of Romanians in Sweden and the more circumspect attitude of Swedish society toward Romania.

Costel Coroban's research on the Saga of the People of Laxárdalr through the lenses of historical and literary criticism in order to provide an account of how Norwegian kings or queens were

portrayed demonstrates conclusively that perception and representation are social phenomena and play a significant role in shaping the minds of historical figures and their decisions and actions. As in many other similar texts, he finds that the author of the tale either portrays the Norwegian monarchy in an extraordinarily favourable or highly terrible light.

According to Valerii Lastovskyi of the Kyiv National University of Culture and Education, the central question in Polish historiography is why the Rzeczpospolita eventually collapsed. The author examines Polish historical literature in order to explain how the function of the Orthodox Church has been viewed in this regard for the past half millennium and what has changed through time. In addition, Polish historians investigated the inner workings of Ukrainian churches and religious activities.

Finally, Mihaela Mehedinți highlights the simultaneity and interdependence of identity and alterity formation among modern Romanians, demonstrating this vantage point with the perception of the British and the Americans in Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldova. Her conclusions warrant citation and attention from a theoretical and methodological standpoint:

„Despite the cultural and/or geographical distance between Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia, on the one hand, and Great Britain and the United States of America, on the other hand, towards the end of the 19th century average Romanians were able to interweave information gathered from a wide range of sources and to transform it into realistic depictions of these two countries and their inhabitants. This process of defining the Other combined diachronic and synchronous tendencies, fiction and facts, stereotypes and truth.”

The editors hope that the journal's ideas, concepts, and case studies will inspire other academics and readers to reflect once more on perceptions, identity, and difference, and to produce new research for submission to the Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies.