

**Author:** Andrei OISTEANU  
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There are a lot of good appreciations about Andrei Oisteanu's *The Image of the Jew in Romanian Culture*; but it is not sure if the book was entirely read by all of the distinguished intellectuals who use to talk about its qualities. For ludicrous and methodological reasons, my presentation is referring *only* to some drawbacks of the book. Probably, the target of my attacks is the Romanian intellectual public, more than the book itself. Politically speaking, this book was (and still is) "urgently necessary" as Andrei Plesu remarks.

The first drawback is the title (especially in Romanian). Because is unacceptable to speak so vague about *image*. Image is *image-for*. There is no image without receptor. And Oisteanu invents two coherent realities that never existed; and there is too much paradox in their relationship. Probably "Jews' Images in Romanian Culture" (a less spectacular title) would be more adequate with the books' content. *In Romanian culture* (if we love the title) we have to do with *visibility*: Visibility of the "Jew" in the *memory* of Romanian *discourse about identity*. For example: 1. Because this kind of problems becomes policy only in cities, important (visible) is the percent of urban Jews. 2. Because there are jobs more visible than other jobs, important is the percent of Jewish merchants or public employees, etc. People working in third sector of economy there are more visible than the others (they are selling *image* as well as other products).

Some of the Oisteanu's Jews (like "the peasant" or "the shepherd") are quite *invisibles* for the consumers of *Romanian culture*. In other words, we are seeing *meaningless* images. Oisteanu paints the "portrait" of the "real Jew" sometime. The self-reflexivity of anthropology (the domain that the author is positioning itself; with public success) would not allowed such an un-carefully mix between description, deconstruction and historical recuperation. In other way, even if the most of the ideas of the book are OK, the book is not. The trouble is in structure & style; and the self-positioning (as anthropologist) in the field of scientific productions.

"The imaginary Jew" has more meaning in "The Image of the Jew in Romanian Culture". In an earlier book, "Mythos & Logos", Oisteanu has made a better distinction between "the real Jew" and "the imaginary Jew". Probably, Oisteanu should re-write his ideas (instead of re-copy it; a Romanian facelift used to get fat books) for a successfully remake. The introduction only can't solve the structural problems of a book.

Usually, researchers are trying to find the TRUTH – the statistic truth. They are trying to describe the facts, neutrally. (Even if "neutrality" in writing is a problematic task) their efforts deserve all the respect. But, usually in "conclusions", their description becomes interpretation – sometimes, politic.

« Pour comprendre le reel historique, il faut parfois ne pas connaitre le fin » is a good advice of Pierre Vidal-Naquet. But we don't have to be so severe. We can use the advantage of knowing the end. We can also be moralists. Or we can have a clear political attitude. But

under the reserve of knowing what *the natives* (the actors of history) didn't know. The TRUTH has to be seen through the *lenses* (specially those glasses the natives didn't know they are wearing) that the *discourse* uses for deforming the memory. To avoid the cheap paradox.