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Paul D. Quinlan. *The Playboy King: Carol II of Romania.* Westport, Conn., and London: Greenwood Press, 1995. ii + 264 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-29519-5.

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The King and the Playboy

After the so-called revolution in Romania, new fields of research opened for Romanian as well as non-Romanian historians and political scientists. After a certain period of chaos, archives became accessible again, finally providing not only long-known materials but also new collections. Since the beginning of the 1990s many memoirs, diaries, and other autobiographical works have been published in Romania. There have also been new studies by Romanian as well as Western scholars on the interwar period. While the rehabilitation of Nicolae Titulescu was a long-term goal of historians under the Ceausescu regime[1], we now encounter large numbers of books, compilations, and articles on Ion Antonescu, the Iron Guard, and King Carol II, as well as on the outbreak of World War II and Romania's involvement in it.

Paul Quinlan's book fits into this range of new–or rather, now possible–views of the 1930s. His book presents a traditional factual chronology of the life of Carol of Hohenzollern in eight chapters, explaining his family background and early years as well as his well-known scandalous relations with various women up to his final exile in Portugal. The author introduces the reader to Carol as a child and adolescent (chapter 2), to Carol as womanizer (chapter 3), and to Carol under the influence of Elena Lupescu (chapters 4-6). Some of these chapters have sensational titles that seem more fitting for the better quality yellow press than a serious scholarly study by a professor of history (for example, "And Then There Was Zizi" [chapter 3], covering the interesting period 1918-25–the time when Carol had met the four decisive women in his life: his first wife Zizi Lambrino, his second wife Crown Princess Elena of Greece, and his lifelong mistress Elena Lupescu [the fourth being his mother]). Only the last two chapters, befitting their importance, carry less fanciful titles: "The Royal Dictatorship" (chapter 7) and "Exile Again" (chapter 8). Quinlan closely follows chronological order, providing short introductions to personalities and political issues. However, these explanations pop up somewhat erratically, and not always in the most appropriate place (see pp. 199-200 for an account of the activities of the Union of Royal Cultural Foundations). Apart from a good bibliography–without recent books like Watts on Antonescu[2]–the book also contains fifteen photos and an index (unfortunately not annotated). A short chronology with important dates would have improved the book all the more, as Quinlan is not inclined to insert many dates in the text itself.

While reading the book, one is left with the question: What is new in it? Many details were known before (as shown by the amount of secondary literature used in the footnotes). Almost half of the study is a recollection of dirty, ugly, amoral, and petty details, and Quinlan sways in his sympathy or antipathy toward his central figure accordingly. Sometimes he judges Carol positively (p. 116); at other times he considers this bucolic figure of the interwar period as if he had to test a candidate for the American presidency in the 1996 campaign (p. 125). The author gives too much room to lengthy descriptions of ceremonies, events, or parades. Considering the impact Carol had on the fate of the country he led between 1930 and 1940, one is not really interested in knowing that Carol wore a tuxedo and that Zizi Lambrino was dressed in a handmade gown of crepe-de-chine when they were married in Odessa in 1918 (p. 41).

The book is organized as a traditional biographical study. References enabling the reader to get more than glimpses of these personalities are scattered over 240 pages. This seems to be a missed chance, all the more as Quinlan could have used the now available diaries of Carol to present the scholarly public with a psychological study of Carol and other persons important for his development, like Queen Marie or Elena Lupescu. But we learn more about Carol's ambivalent character from Hannah Pakula's study on Marie[3] than from con-

tradicting judgments by the author of this book. It is easy, and maybe true, to say that Carol was lacking a balanced personality, that he was wax in the hands of lower/middle class women, but throughout the known literature Carol's steadiness once he had chosen his partner is not mentioned. Until now there is no evidence that Carol continued to womanize after his decision for Elena Lupescu. Every now and then Quinlan refers to Carol and his ideas about politics, economics, his son, and other issues, but these references are too seldom and too erratic to constitute a new psychological study.

The study lacks several basic things for historians. It should be normal to present in a substantial introduction the sources used and to put them in relation to each other. Quinlan misses the opportunity to present himself as the–presumably–first serious user of the diaries of Carol II. The originals of these diaries are in Lisbon (Portugal); the State Archives in Bucharest has a microfilm which was not available to researchers until recently. Throughout the book the value of this diary is not presented, not explained, and not compared to other available diaries for this period. Carol's diary runs to more than 2,247 pages (p. 239, note 44) and it is of the utmost interest to know whether it is a political account of events or rather the story of personal thoughts on Carol's mind. An indication that it may be of a more private character could be that Quinlan mentions it in only a handful of notes (24 out of 211 in chapter 7). As long as this diary is not published, it seems especially important to provide as much detail as possible about an entry (especially the correct or at least assumed dates), but Quinlan indicates for all the diary entries he used only the page numbers. It also must be added that he is unable to come to a balanced judgment of Romanian historiography published in the 1970s and 1980s, which he sometimes uses uncritically when it is in line with his ideas.

Within the framework of recent studies on Romania in the 1930s and early 1940s, this book is somewhat disappointing. One can observe two directions in the historiography: "traditional" studies of a given political situation, and new ways of seeing developments and their impact on the political situation. To the first group belong Quinlan's book and Larry Watts's study of Ion Antonescu. A combination of traditional and new approach is a dissertation recently defended in Utrecht on the Iron Guard.[4] In the second group, the book of Irina Livezeanu is most prominent in demonstrating successfully new ways of explaining why Romania turned certain ways in its history.[5] These new approaches are not so much focused on political agents and groups, but rather look at the development of ideas within Romanian society and their spread in politics. In the studies from the first group it is interesting to follow the interaction between the central political figures and groups. According to authors from this group, Carol is a major figure: he is Watts's *bete noire* who renders Antonescu's life miserable, he is responsible for every disadvantage Romania and its later *conducator* suffer. For Quinlan, however, he is more a victim of the situation than a creator of policies with a realistic vision.

Quinlan tried to write a political biography of a sort, but he focused too much on the playboy. The oddities of Carol's scandalous career have long been known, and I hoped to find them in this book no longer as an unassembled puzzle. Instead, we have a rather detailed, and in some cases better documented, account of the 1920s and 1930s, viewed only in the perspective of a member of the royal family of Romania. The moral shudder over a king living in sin again prevented the author from giving a clear picture of this central figure of interwar Romanian history.

Notes

[1]. W. P. van Meurs, "The Rehabilitation of Nicolae Titulescu," "Romanian Civilization_, 4, no. 1 (1995), pp. 101-8.

[2]. Larry L. Watts, *Romanian Cassandra: Ion Antonescu and the Struggle for Reform, 1916-1941* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1993).

[3]. Hannah Pakula, *The Last Romantic: A Biography of Queen Marie of Roumania* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

[4]. Joost Heystek, *De Ijzeren Garde 1927-1938. Het legionen van de aartsengel Michael oder leiding van Corneliu Zelea Codreanu* (Houten: Atalanta, 1996).

[5]. Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); see HABSBURG Reviews 1996/3 (February 7, 1996), <gopher://gopher.ttu.edu:70/00/Pubs/lijpn/HABS/Books/livezeanu>.

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