

ROMANIAN ARCHITECTURE AS SEEN BY NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHERS

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In the early nineteenth century, most of the towns in Wallachia and Moldavia were merely large villages, differing only in the number of houses, churches and lanes from those in the countryside. The urbanism principles and regulations were unknown before the 1830s. However, between 1830 and 1840, foreign architects – mainly Germans, Austrians, Italians and French – were commissioned to design the newly-founded City Halls and other grand scale buildings for public use.

Most of the foreign travelers to the Romanian Principalities were fascinated by Bucharest and Iași, the capital cities of Wallachia and Moldavia respectively, with their straggling streets, lacking any concept of urbanism. Even in the second half of the nineteenth century things hadn't change much.

Photographers were also attracted to the idea of taking cityscapes and documenting their town. Szathmari, Baer, Duschek, Pesky and Spirescu were leading Bucharest photographers who took pictures on the streets or captured old monuments on their wet collodion plates.

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of the towns in the two Romanian Principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia, were merely large villages, with more houses, more churches and more lanes than those in the countryside. The urbanism principles and regulations were unknown before the 1830s. Everybody could build his house wherever he pleased. Most of the houses were surrounded by huge courtyards and always enjoyed a vegetable patch in the backyard. A wealthy lady boasted that a whole regiment could do its daily drills in her yard and still have some spare space. There were few avenues and most of the streets were narrow and winding around. Houses had no numbers and could be identified after the nearest church or after the near-by important public building or even prominent private mansions, in the latter case by mentioning the owner's name. It was only in the early 1840s that houses received numbers and the streets (even the less important ones) got their names. Towns were often scattered on large patches of land.

Architects were unheard-of until the early 1830s: all houses – from the imposing residences of wealthy boyars (noblemen) to the modest dwellings of the middle and lower middle classes – were built by masons and carpenters, more or

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less skilled. Between 1830 and 1840, foreign architects – mainly German, Austrian, Italian, French or Jewish – flocked in and were commissioned to design the newly-founded City Halls and other grand scale buildings for public use.

Most of the foreign travelers to the Romanian Principalities were astonished and at the same time captivated to see Bucharest and Iași, the capital cities of Wallachia and Moldavia respectively, with their straggling streets, running from nowhere to nowhere, lacking any concept of urbanism.

Even in the second half of the nineteenth century things had not changed much. James Oscar Noyes was an American physician who joined the Turkish army in the first year of the Russian-Ottoman War waged on the borders of the Danube (1853–1854). Noyes visited Bucharest in 1854 and noted huge contrasts at the street life level and in the social strata:

The 'City of Peace,' as the name of Bukarest implies,¹ is composed of palaces and hovels. It is merely an aggregation of large villages. Here are beautiful gardens tastefully laid out with paths and flowers, and there morasses submerged every spring, where frogs and lizards hold their uninterrupted concerts. The wretched streets paved with stones, or with logs placed crosswise are deeply covered with mud in winter and dust in summer. In Bukarest legs are a luxury, and carriages, on the contrary, a necessity. (...) The carriage is, in fact, a mark of respectability, for to go on foot in Bukarest is the same as going barefoot elsewhere.²

The streets were picturesque and attractive in spite or maybe because of these contrasts and worthy of being documented with the camera.

In mid-1840 Daguerrean cameras along with the whole set of accessories were brought both in Iași and in Bucharest. At first these devices created a stir and a state of confusion; they were thought to represent means of teaching physics and mathematics. They were bought by each country's Education Ministers and were given to the Saint Sava College in Bucharest and respectively to the Michaelian Academy in Iași. In Bucharest the Library of the Romanian Academy still holds a copy of Daguerre's brochure *Historique et description des procédés de daguerréotypie et du diorama*, stamped with the St. Sava College's seal.

Scholars still debate who used for the first time the Daguerrean camera in Bucharest. In Iași, **Teodor Stamati**, a natural sciences professor, was the first one

¹ The author was wrong in naming București/Bucharest "the City of Peace." Other travelers were more correct in calling the Romanian capital "the City of Pleasure" because Bucur comes from "bucurie," which may be translated as "pleasure, joy, glee."

² James O. Noyes, *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1858), 121.

to use that camera with which he took general views of Iași. Stamati's pictures were exhibited in early October 1840, in the Great Hall of the local Academy.³ Even though the pictures did not survive they are considered the first cityscapes ever taken on Romanian soil.

Almost twenty years passed until other cityscapes and architecture pictures were taken in the Romanian Principalities. During the Crimean War, after the Russians left and the countries were occupied by the Austrian army, **Ludwig Angerer** (1827–1879), a Bucharest based Vienna military assistant chemist, took to photography as his favorite pastime.⁴ In 1856, he roamed through the Wallachian capital and shot pictures of the most iconic places. He pictured the Colțea Tower, now an old ruin, but for more than a century the tallest building towering over Bucharest. To take a few panoramic views, facing west and south, he climbed Dealul Spirii (Spirea's Hill) and the Metropolitan Belfry. Thus he managed to shoot very accurate panoramas of the straggling Wallachian city.

Seen from above, the capital had little to impress the visitor, except the lack of any architectural unity and the eagerness of the well-off to emulate the Western European styles in building their new villas, in a very much otherwise Oriental town. This was obvious to James Henry Skene, who made a humorous description of the way in which new houses were built:

Wallachians do not seem to shine as architects now more than they did a century and a half ago; such tawdry tinsel cornices and plaster pillars adorn their new residences, so inferior in comfort to our English houses with their homely red-brick faces; and such ostentation mingled with untidiness: a Greek peristyle of Corinthian columns may occupy one side of a courtyard, for instance, and opposite it may be a range of stabling, sheds and dunghills; a marble terrace, on which linen is hung out to dry; and a housemaid's broom enjoying a sinecure in the principal lobby, with a duster always hanging over the rosewood banisters of the great staircase. And the Wallachians are fond of building, too. (...) But what appeared to me the most extraordinary was the utter ignorance of all principles of architecture manifested by those amateur builders. They were generally to be seen living in houses, which they had rendered nearly uninhabitable, and which had respectively cost as much as one three times the size would, when built at once, and on a determinate plan. The combinations of rooms, passages, and staircases being unlimited, they were always attempting new ones, and

³ *Albina românească*, no. 79, 6 October 1840.

⁴ Margareta Savin, "Ludwig Angerer, unul din primii fotografi ai Bucureștilor," *Materiale de istorie și muzeografie* 6 (1968): 223–229; Lelia Zamani, "București 1856. O fotografie inedită a lui Ludwig Angerer," *Materiale de istorie și muzeografie* 21 (2007): 357–364; Eadem, *Oameni și locuri din vechiul București* (Bucharest: Vremea, 2008), 125–143.

usually, instead of progressive amelioration, they arrived at inextricable confusion. One old Boyar, in particular, was a most unmitigated old bore in this respect; he was constantly scratching rectangles and parallelograms on scraps of paper, until he became so bewildered that he no longer knew how to get either into his house or out of it.⁵

The Cișmigiu Garden had been recently designed by the Austrian architect Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Meyer and opened for the public in 1852. It soon became the main attraction for both locals and foreigners, and Angerer took a few pictures of its wide alleys lined up with trees and the charming pond in the middle. It was hard to imagine that only a few years before the whole area was a swamp where local sportsmen would hunt duck and mosquitoes would infest the entire neighborhood with malaria. Eugène Jouve, war correspondent for *Courrier de Lyon*, visited Bucharest in late August 1854 and noticed the elegant garden which attracted a lot of people, enjoying the fresh air and a pleasant *passaggiata* (promenade) on its broad, shaded alleys:

Il y a quatre ans à peine, le milieu de cette espèce de vallée, qui en certains endroits a plus d'un quart de lieue de diamètre, était encore un grand marais dans lequel les citadins allaient, en pleine capitale, chasser les bécassines et prendre des fièvres pernicieuses. Un homme de talent [Meyer] a transformé cette infecte grenouillère en un magnifique jardin anglais coupé de lacs et de canaux. C'est le Hyde Park de Bucarest, qui a, près de là, son avenue de Champs Elysées, rendez-vous de tous les innombrables équipages de la noblesse valaque.⁶

Another French journalist, Ulysse de Marsillac, who settled in Bucharest in 1852, was a keen observer of the evolution of the capital city. In his periodical *La Voix de la Roumanie* he made, in 1861, a description, half ironic half serious, of the garden:

Au centre de la ville, sur l'emplacement d'un ancien marais, on a planté le jardin de Cismegiou. (...) Le jardin de Cismegiou est un parc; qui serait délicieux en été et plus encore en automne si le lac qui est au milieu pouvait être un peu nettoyé. Si, au lieu de cette immense flaque d'eau putride, nous avions une nappe limpide et pure, je vous assure que peu de promenades en Europe seraient plus agréables que le jardin de Cismegiou. Pendant les soirs d'été, la musique des régiments vient s'y faire entendre; mais elle n'a pu encore parvenir à étouffer les chants criards des laoutari, musiciens bohémiens. (...) J'incline à croire que cette musique un peu sauvage a besoin d'un

⁵ James Henry Skene, *The Frontier Lands of the Christian and the Turk; Comprising Travels in the Regions of the Lower Danube in 1850 and 1851*, vol. 1 (London: R. Bentley, 1853), 335–337.

⁶ Eugène Jouve, *Guerre d'Orient. Voyage à la suite des armées alliées en Turquie, en Valachie et en Crimée* (Paris: A. Delhomme, 1855), 173.

cadre qui lui aille, et que ses sons se marient mal avec les frôlements des crinolines. J'ai nommé les crinolines! Hélas! Trois fois hélas! Le jardin de Cismegiu est leur paradis, leur purgatoire et leur enfer.⁷

A few years later things improved and Marsillac praised the park: “Le lac se déroule vert comme une émeraude entre ses berges de gazon, taché çà et là par les grandes ailes des cygnes, et par quelques embarcations où se jouent des matelots aux chemises bleues.”⁸ During the cold season, the lake was used for skating: “The lake does come in usefully in winter, when it is the resort of the skaters, whose evolutions are always watched with interest by a large and gaping crowd.”⁹

To take a general view of the garden and its neighborhood, Ludwig Angerer the photographer had to climb on top of the Grand Theatre (the future National Theatre), another newly-built architectural jewel of the capital, dedicated on 31 December 1852.

The desolate borders of the winding Dâmbovița, the muddy rivulet which divided the Wallachian capital and flooded almost every spring, were also pictured by the Austrian chemist turned photographer. He captured the great contrasts between the tanners' workshops and shanties flanking the stream and the stately public buildings which had just been erected in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, Ludwig Angerer is best remembered for his Romanian peasants and folk types; he is one of the first ethnographers to document the Romanian lands and their people.¹⁰

When Angerer left Wallachia, another Bucharest based photographer developed an interest for its architecture and cityscapes, **Carol Szathmari** (1812–1887). Szathmari was already a name in European photography due to the pictures he had taken during the first stages of the Crimean War. But by 1853–1854, when it was being waged on the borders of the Danube, the Crimean War had become just another battle to settle the still unsolved Oriental Question; only this time the actors were the Russian and the Ottoman Empires. By April 1854, Szathmari, who

⁷ Ulysse de Marsillac, “Promenades en Roumanie. Bucarest II,” *La Voix de la Roumanie*, no. 36, 11 October/28 September 1861.

⁸ Idem, “Cismegiu et la Chaussé,” *La Voix de la Roumanie*, no. 33, 6 July 1865.

⁹ J. W. Ozanne, *Three Years in Roumania* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1878), 17.

¹⁰ Anton Holzer, “Im Schatten des Krimkrieges. Ludwig Angerer Fotoexpedition nach Bukarest (1854 bis 1856). Eine wiederentdeckte Fotoserie im Bildarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek,” *Fotogeschichte* 93 (2004): 23–50; Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, “Early Portrait and Genre Photography in Romania,” *History of Photography* 13, no. 4 (1989): 279; Idem, “Începuturile fotografiei etnografice în România,” *Revista muzeelor* 1 (1991): 51–62; Idem, “Fotografie und Folklore. Zur Etnofotografie im Rumänien des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Fotogeschichte* 103 (2007): 47.

already had a studio in Bucharest, filled a van with his cameras, chemicals and glass plates, and went to the battlefield. He took pictures of both parties at Oltenița, and later that year gathered his collection into an elegant album, which in 1855 was exhibited to great acclaim at the Paris Exposition Universelle. Thus, he was *the* first known war photographer in the world.¹¹

Already at the crossroads between the documentary and the art, Szathmari was also a skilled water colorist and engraver who would later travel extensively to sketch folk costumes and the traditional peasant life. Szathmari also developed a taste for old architecture and for documenting the fast changing image of the capital city. In September 1859, when he exhibited for the first time at the *Société française de photographie* in Paris, he offered a print on waxed canvas with the courtyard of the Manuk Inn in Bucharest.¹² James O. Noyes had listed that inn as one of the most interesting edifices of the capital city: “The only buildings in Bukarest worthy of particular mention are the Khan of Manouk Bey, the Hospice of Brancovan and the Hospital of Coltsa with its curious tower built in 1715 by the soldiers of Charles XII, but now falling in ruins.”¹³

On 16 October 1863 Szathmari was showered with honors and became the Court Painter and Photographer of Alexandru Ioan I, Ruling Prince of the United Romanian Principalities. That very year he offered an album to Princess Helen, wife of the Ruling Prince. Elegantly bound, the album has a handwritten title and dedication on the front page: *Souvenir de la Roumanie, dédié à son Altesse Sérénissime Hélène, Princesse Régnante de la Roumanie, par Charles Pop de Szathmari, Peintre et Photographe de la Cour de Son Altesse Sérénissime le Prince Régnant*.¹⁴ Along many peasants, folk types and artisans, who constitute the main

¹¹ C. Săvulescu, “The First War Photographic Reportage,” *Image 1* (March 1973): 13–16; Idem, “The First War Correspondent – Carol Szathmari,” *Interpressgrafik*, 1978, no. 1: 25–29; Idem, *Cronologia ilustrată a fotografiei în România, perioada 1834–1916* (Bucharest: Asociația Artiștilor Fotografi, 1985), 19–27; Idem, “Carol Szathmari – Primul reporter fotograf de război,” *Fotografia*, no. 190 (July–August 1989): 2–3; Lawrence James, *Crimea 1854–56, The War with Russia from Contemporary Photographs* (Thame: Hayes Kennedy, 1981), 9–11; Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, “Early Portrait,” 285; Idem, “Photographs from the Crimean War by Carol Szathmari in American and British Collections,” *Muzeul Național* 10 (1998): 71–82; Idem, *Cruce și semilună* (Bucharest: Editura Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2001), p. 159; Idem, “Szathmari: From a War Photographer to a Ruling Prince’s Court Painter and Photographer,” in *Jubilee – 30 Years ESHPh Congress of Photography in Vienna* (Vienna, 2008), 80–89; Idem, “Carol Szathmari (1812–1887): Pioneer War Photographer during the Danubian War Campaign,” *Centropa* 9, no. 1 (January 2009): 4–16.

¹² Pierre Marc Richard, *La Société française de photographie, Index 1854–1876* (Paris: Éditions du Palmier en Zinc, 1990), 107.

¹³ Noyes, *Roumania*, 121.

¹⁴ Theodor Enescu, “Un album de fotografii al lui Carol Popp de Szathmari cu vederi din București,” *Studii și cercetări de bibliologie* 1 (1955): 291–299.

topic of the *carte-de-visite* pictures, the album contains also two general views of Bucharest, taken from almost the same place as Angerer's, respectively Spirea's Hill and the Metropolitan Hill.

The second one is a real panorama for which he used five plates to cover an angle of 180 degrees. Szathmari identified each monument in the picture by numbering and labeling them on the edge of the image. Besides these two general views there were individual takes of the Metropolitan Church, St. George Church, the tiny Bucur Church near the Radu Vodă Monastery, three views of the Stavropoleos Monastery taken from different angles, a general view of the Cernica Monastery with the lake in the foreground and two images from the inside, the Manuk Inn with its oriental flavor and the 24 January Market on a fair day. The collection was completed with pictures taken at the "Moși,"¹⁵ the most important commercial fair of the year.

Bucharest was a city of many churches and monasteries. "There are so many churches at Bucharest" – stated James Henry Skene in 1853 – "that the devout may pray in a different one every day of the year, even if it be a leap-year; for they number no less than 366. Few of them, however, merit notice."¹⁶ Being unaccustomed to the style of the Greek-Orthodox churches and unacquainted with its rites, Skene was too harsh in his criticism. Marsillac, who spent half of his life among Romanians, and had a better understanding of their religion, made a correct description of the Metropolitan Church:

À l'extrémité de ce vallon délicieux, se dressent sur un mamelon les hautes flèches de l'église métropolitaine. C'est un imposant édifice dans lequel l'architecte a heureusement marié les ornements sévères de l'art byzantin et les grâces un peu plus frivoles du style ogival. Une quadruple allée de tilleuls conduit au porche de l'église et protège de son ombre les promeneurs.¹⁷

The city was pleasantly positioned among beautiful hills and offered a nice panorama to the explorer heading for it. J. W. Ozanne depicts it as a colorful place, worth being visited in spite or because of the great contrasts between splendor and abject poverty:

¹⁵ "Moși" was a term with which the Romanians called the dead of their families. Each year, in spring, there was a great commemoration festival for the dead and, after special religious ceremonies, a great fair was organized, where peasants and merchants from all over the country came to Bucharest to trade their products.

¹⁶ Skene, *Frontier Lands*, 1:335.

¹⁷ Ulysse de Marsillac, "Bucarest en 1973," *Le Journal de Bucarest*, no. 283, 18 May 1873.

The position of the town is somewhat peculiar, for though placed in the midst of a plain of broad expanse, it is surrounded on nearly every side by low hills, which, while they screen it pleasantly in winter from the blasts which sweep down upon it from the frozen steppes of Russia and from the cold Black Sea, render it a perfect oven in the months of July and August, when the temperature is almost tropical. To see Bucharest as it should be seen, the spectator should climb one of the hills on the south side of the city, and look carefully into it from the top. The view is then most charming, for the metal plates which cover the domes of the hundred churches which it contains, reflecting the dazzling rays of the brilliant sun, produce an effect which may well be described as splendid. In the month of May, when the lovely gardens with which the town abounds are bedecked with verdant foliage and graceful flowers, the sight is unusually pleasant. A nearer acquaintance proves, however, somewhat disappointing. Lines upon lines of dirty streets fringed with shabby houses, cottages, and hovels, relieved only here and there by the mansion of some great boyar, do much toward removing the favorable impression already formed. It is not therefore until the centre of the town is reached, that the traveler perceives anything which reminds him of the home he has left.¹⁸

In 1864, Szathmari climbed on top of Colțea Tower to take new panoramic views with a much larger camera. He immortalized the Soutzo Palace in the foreground and the imposing newly-built University in the background. Another image heads south, following the then called Colțea Lane, with shops on each side.

A few years later, in 1867, Szathmari completed a large size album entitled *Episcopia de Curtea de Argeș* (The Episcopal Church of Curtea de Argeș), which was dedicated to the new ruling prince, Carol I of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. That church was the most beautiful medieval monument in Wallachia and the intention of the authorities was to restore it. The photographer took general views and details and produced a comprehensive documentation. His pictures preserved the real façade of the church for, a few years later, it was to be completely demolished and rebuilt on the same base and with the same ornaments. The project and its supervision went to the French architect André Lecomte du Nouÿ, one of Viollet-le-Duc's disciples. Szathmari was awarded an honorary mention for his *Episcopia de Curtea de Argeș* album at the 1867 Paris Exposition Universelle.

In 1869 Szathmari completed another large size album called *România* which contained photographic images of Bucharest and the countryside taken between 1867 and 1869.

Szathmari was not the only photographer to document the capital city and the old monuments of the country. **Franz Duschek** (1830–1884), a Czech photographer who settled in Bucharest in 1852, produced an album with images

¹⁸ Ozanne, *Three Years*, 12–13.

taken at the elegant summer residence of the Oteteleşanu family at Măgurele, near Bucharest. It was one of the most beautiful manor houses built in the early 1850s. The album, produced in 1860, was entitled *Vues de Magourelis*, and showed both the house and its glowing garden.

In 1860, The Ministry of Public Education in Bucharest launched a program to document the monuments of the country, following the example of the French *Mission héliographique* of ten years before.¹⁹ Five commissioners were sent throughout Wallachia to record and file every important monument. While Alexandru Odobescu and Dimitrie Pappasoglu took an artist to draw the monuments worthy of interest, Cesar Bolliac used an unidentified photographer to take pictures of the churches he studied.²⁰ At least one of those pictures with which he illustrated his reports – the picture of the Bucovăț Monastery in Lesser Wallachia (Oltenia) – is still preserved in the Romanian National Archives.

Moritz Benedict Baer (1811–1887) completed in 1870 an album with a carte-de-visite series of pictures with views from Bucharest. He did not have the same large angle lens as Szathmari and was unable to get good general views of monuments and public buildings. Instead he focused on interesting details or some special angles of the same edifice such as the Cotroceni Palace. One point of view was from the front showing the main entrance under the arch of the tower-gate, while another was from the back, picturing the backyard. Other places looked much more imposing than in Szathmari's pictures for they are portrayed from a mounting angle, such as the Bucur Church, New St. George Church, St. Demeter Church, St. Spiridon Church, Bărăția Tower, Radu Vodă and Stavropoleos Monasteries. Stavropoleos, the eighteenth-century church, was a jewel of the city due to its stone carved columns and capitals along with the fully painted walls. Baer also documented the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defense, the Court of Justice, the Military Hospital, the Malmaison Barracks and the Filaret Railway Station. Baer also succeeded in catching various segments of Podul Mogoșoaiei high street on several of his plates: one depicts the exquisite and expensive Hotel Hugues and the hat and gloves shop of Victorine Jobin, another shows the street winding towards the National Theatre; these are followed by two views of the theatre's façade taken from different angles.

Podul Mogoșoaiei was the main street of the capital, lined on both sides with the most elegant private and public buildings and fashionable shops of the day plus the ruling prince's palace. Baer did not picture that palace. Instead he pointed his camera towards its guardhouse and the soldiers aligned in front of it, ready for being

¹⁹ Anne de Mondenard, *La Mission héliographique* (Paris: Éd. du Patrimoine, 2002), 33–42.

²⁰ Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *Artă și document* (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1990), 175–176.

reviewed. The infantrymen are clad in their full regalia. A drummer is placed on the far left, between the sentry-box and the lieutenant who is at the head of his troop.

Andreas D. Reiser took some general views of Bucharest in 1873. His snapshots were not much different from the views taken by Angerer almost two decades before, but the city was not much different either. The description left by Florence Berger is full of minute details concerning the mixture of styles, the poor finishing of the new edifices and the neglect of the old ones, stressing also the causes of this state of affairs:

The architectural structure of the city admits of no classification. The unschooled fancy of the designer, ignorant of even the first rules of aesthetic art, has been carried out by the rude hands of the gipsy mason. Plaster moldings in lavish profusion, blind-windows, and black water-pipes winding their serpentine length down the very front of the houses, are a few of these errors of taste whose name is legion.

Spire churches, capped by the aerial, glittering Greek cross, with gaudy paintings of their white-washed walls, give a general impression of unsubstantial newness, and are thinly spread throughout the town. (...) Most of the houses are built with a light covered-in gallery running all round the upper story, which serves the double purpose of keeping out the heat in summer and the cold in winter, and courtyards where the fig-tree spreads out its broad green fingers, the oleander rises thick in foliage, and the wild dogs turn in from the street to quarrel and fight. Everywhere around the unaccustomed eye is shocked by the most violent of contrasts – the extremes of painful freshness and dull decay; of prodigal splendor and the misery that is beyond shame; of perfect taste and barbaric whimsicality. The flaunting mansion of nouveau riche, whose name was unheard of yesterday, glistening with scarce-dried paint and gay with gilding and plaster-of-Paris ornament, encroaches upon the wild garden and dismantled ruins of some bankrupt boyar's house, one for whose raiment the Jews have long ago cast lots, whose flocks and herds have passed away into the keeping of The Tribes, and whose bones are in all probability moldering at Filaret. The *mahala* of the peasant, that is something between a pigsty, an Irish shanty, and an Esquimaux's hut, creeps up to the very gates of the palace, where sentries stand leaning on their muskets, and great personages go in and out. And the picture of sordid wretchedness, the peasant himself shuffles along in the gutter, narrowly escaping being overturned as the elegant patrician, in his Paris-built Victoria and costly pelisse of Siberian elk, whirls rapidly by, showering down a plentiful cascade of mud from his carriage-wheels.²¹

In 1874 and 1875, Duschek took some pictures of Bucharest, with both old and new monuments such as the Bucur and Stavropoleos Churches, Radu Vodă

²¹ Florence K. Berger, *A Winter in the City of Pleasure or Life on the Lower Danube* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1877), 43–45.

and Zlătari Monasteries, some of the bridges across the Dâmbovița and Casa Apelor (the Water House, an installation to purify the muddy waters of that rivulet), the University and part of the Soutzo Palace seen from the top of the Colțea Tower.

The University – which in the 1870s also housed the Romanian Academy and was more often identified with that scholarly institution – was one of the largest and most imposing buildings in Bucharest. “The Academy,” says Florence Berger, “one of the latest and best of these edifices, built of stone, in a simple and solid style of architecture, is a great improvement upon the unsymmetrical and heterogeneous structures that abound in the city. It contains an embryo library and a museum yet in its infancy. There are also classes organized within its walls, which is a step in the right direction.”²² At that time, the University Palace housed some scientific and artistic institutions such as the already mentioned Academy, its library, the School of Fine Arts, founded in 1864, its paintings gallery called *Pinacothèque* (the future National Museum of Art), the National Museum (i.e. the museum of history and archaeology), and the Museum of Natural History.

In 1878, Duschek took new pictures of the central area of the city. He photographed Michael the Brave’s statue, the work of the French sculptor Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, uncovered in late 1874 in front of the University. On both sides were placed the Turkish guns captured from the Ottoman Army at the siege of Grivița in 1877, during the Oriental War. The Soutzo Palace with its large arched windows and gothic ornaments can be seen on the left.

Eduard Pesky (1835–1909), a painter and photographer, was active in Bucharest in the 1880s and 1890s. He learnt the trade as apprentice in Samuel Herter’s studio in Brașov (Kronstadt in German) and then crossed the Carpathian Mountains and settled in Romania. He began his career in Galați in the 1870s, in partnership with other photographers. Their studio was advertised as *Atelier artistique / E. Pesky, M-e Julie & C-ie / Strada Domnésca / Galatz* (Artistic Studio / E. Pesky, Mrs. Julie & Co / Strada Domnească / Galați). By 1882 he moved to Bucharest and bought Andreas D. Reiser’s studio which he turned into his own. He was a very good portrait-maker and used his pictures to turn them into easel painting portraits when ordered. But he also took some cityscapes of particular interest of the capital city in 1884. He used to offer customers, on cabinet cards, new images of some of the most important streets and buildings in Bucharest such as Calea Victoriei (The Victory Avenue²³), the National Theatre, the

²² *Ibid.*, 47.

²³ The name of Calea Victoriei was given to that avenue after the Oriental War of 1877–1878, when Romania obtained its independence from the Ottoman Empire; the street was formerly known

University, the Mint, and some general views taken from the Colțea Tower, which was to be demolished in 1888 in order to make room for a wider avenue. He used almost the same spot to shoot his images as his photographer colleagues a decade or so before.

Nevertheless the views of Calea Victoriei are different from those taken by Baer and Szathmari before him. It is true that in the meantime new buildings had been added to that important avenue. The photographer placed his camera at the corner of the avenue, facing Hotel Imperial, a coquettish three-stories building adorned with sculptures and stucco ornaments. J. W. Ozanne praised that avenue in his memoirs:

Here is the Podu Mogoșoi, the principal street of the city, and the one in which the best shops are to be found. In it are the large hotels, which have of late years been rising in such profusion, and which are so well and so luxuriously managed. The palace, the residence of the princely family, lies about half-way down this street. The appearance of this building is by no means striking, though the interior atones for many deficiencies. The reception-rooms are large and exquisitely furnished, and Prince Charles has devoted much time and attention to the decoration of his abode. Opposite the grand entrance is a little guard-house, always the scene of much red-tape commotions, as the soldiers appear to be incessantly turning out to perform some ceremony. (...) Many of the public buildings, including the Prefecture of Police, lie in the Podu Mogoșoi, which is, as I have already said, the haunt of the *flâneur*.²⁴

Pesky used a mounting angle to capture the imposing National Theatre, which was the most elegant venue in the city. Both foreign and Romanian actors, opera singers and musicians were competing to perform on this stage for an enthusiastic audience. Ozanne, who saw it during his three-year residence in Bucharest, between 1870 and 1873, described it as follows:

Not far from the [Ruling Prince's] palace is the theatre, a fine edifice, capable of accommodating a very large house. It is one of the most comfortable in Europe, and is consecrated, according to the season, to the opera, the French stage, and the Carnival *bals masqués*. The Prince has of course his own box, and the rest of the rank and fashion regularly patronize the performances. The theatre is intimately bound up with the lives of the Moldo-Wallachians.²⁵

as Podul Mogoșoaiei because it connected the village of Mogoșoaia, where the ruling prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1654–1714) had his summer residence, with his official residence downtown. Being one of the most important streets in Bucharest, it was covered with logs placed crosswise, the first means to pave the muddy and dusty drives of the capital.

²⁴ Ozanne, *Three Years*, 13–15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

A few years later, when Florence Berger spent a winter in what she called The City of Pleasure, the theatre was still attractive both for its exquisite furnishings, for the nice performances and for the elegant society which crowded in. It was the appropriate place to study the upper class, as Berger noted in her memoirs:

It is a pretty little *salle*, this of the *Teatru Nacional*, gay in pale mauve draperies and gilded ornamentation, and one that might successfully vie with others of far greater pretensions in larger cities. It is looking especially brilliant to-night, and flaunts like a vast tulip-bed with the dresses of the ladies, in which red and yellow predominate, and the scarlet and amber uniforms of the men. (...) Anyone who desires to study the ways of society in the capital, must frequent not only the *Chaussée* and the *salon*, but the theatre also. Here, as in Spain, the ladies turn their boxes into little drawing-rooms, where they receive their friends and acquaintances, and many a *grande passion* that startles the world by its intensity had its birth between these walls, sacred to the mask and to the lyre; many an intrigue that awakens ridicule by its long duration is fostered in these dainty satin-hung boudoirs.²⁶

In 1886, **Nestor Heck** the celebrated Iași-based photographer issued an album with 55 large photographs depicting the Metropolitan Church in Iași. Gheorghe Tattarescu, an outstanding painter, co-founder and professor at the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest, was the one who had recently completed the interior painting of the church. Nestor Heck's album was also exhibited at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris and was awarded honorary mention.

Ten years later, in 1896, to honor Emperor Franz Joseph's visit to Romania, the capital city was lavishly decorated. Some of the distinguished photographers in Bucharest, such as Franz Mandy, Ioan Spirescu, Gustav Waber and Franz Duschek Jr., immortalized these decorations. Plaster arches, fountains and sculptures were erected on the main streets and in public places. The Peace Fountain was placed on an empty plot at the intersection of Calea Victoriei and Elizabeth Boulevard, where the Sărindar Monastery demolished in the late 1880s used to lie. The sculpture reminded of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor: the same toga draping the deity, same spiked crown and outstretched arm bearing the torch. There were only few differences, such as the two cherubs at her feet and four other genies on lower pedestals, on both sides of the fountain.

At the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, many Romanian photographers exhibited their works and received important prizes: Franz Duschek Jr. and Franz Mandy were awarded the silver medal, whereas Ioan Niculescu and Ioan Spirescu

²⁶ Berger, *Winter*, 155–157.

were awarded the bronze medal. Some of these medals were rewarding cityscape albums exhibited on that occasion.

Besides their routine studio portraits, most of the nineteenth-century photographers who were active in Romania devoted their time to portraying their hometowns or the historic monuments of the country.