

**THE SALIENCY OF THE PAST: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE  
CASE OF ROMANIA**  
**A Farewell lecture, delivered at Georgetown University, Washington DC,  
on 5 May 2020**

Dennis DELETANT\*

This is my second farewell presentation. In June 2011, upon my retirement from University College, London – my *alma mater* – I gave an informal address to staff and students to mark my departure from contractual teaching and administrative duties. In the following month - July 2011 - I was unexpectedly invited by Charles King, with the blessing of Angela Stent, to consider an offer to fill the position of Visiting Ion Rațiu Professor of Romanian Studies at Georgetown for a year, an opportunity that I eagerly seized. What began as a ten-month appointment has extended to the present day. Over my nine years as the occupant of this chair, I have been able to take advantage of its endowment. To Nicolae, Indrei and Pamela Rațiu I extend my heartfelt appreciation of their constant encouragement. Here at Georgetown, my work has been inspired by the leadership of Dr Angela Stent of Ceres and the support of her assistants down the years, Christina Watts, Dr Benjamin Loring, and Wesson Radomsky. My professional experience has also been enriched by the contact that I have had with the many students who have taken my classes.

My involvement in Romanian studies began in the mid-1960s with language and literature and has, by natural progression, come to extend to history and culture as a whole. Detailed study over many years has interacted with experience. My teaching and research has drawn not only upon primary sources but also on my contacts with dissidents, especially poets and critics, who emerged in the later stages of the Ceaușescu regime. Not surprisingly, I became *persona non grata* to the regime in late 1988. After the Revolution of 1989, this moral identification with the society - in the broadest sense – opened to me doors which were closed to most indigenous as well as “western” inquirers. My research into the security apparatus and its connections with the political leadership reflect these experiences. That research has continued during my tenure of the Visiting Professorship.

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\* Emeritus Professor, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College, London, United Kingdom. [ddeletant@gmail.com](mailto:ddeletant@gmail.com)