

Discourse and Discursivity in Romanian Premodern Literature. Control, Influence and Pressures

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Abstract: Censorship is a type of control of the information, opinions and ideas. Often, it acts in an indirect way, influencing production of books, freedom of expression, altering or suppressing ideas. In this respect, it is associated with a dictatorial/authoritarian regime. But not only. For example, in the Romanian premodern centuries, the politic regime is an atypical one, as a consequence of political and religious realities. In this respect, it is expected that the control of literary communication could have some particular aspects.

The reasons of censorship were varied, one of them was the protection of people thinking and feeling to keeping them on "the right way". Another reason was the need of political and religious leaders to have the obedience of people, or to protect the basic social institutions. These aspects can be noticed in the premodern Romanian literature.

Keywords: censorship; influence of literary discourse; communication

1. Introduction

Incontestable, all types of control have a negative connotation, regardless of the purpose for which it was used. Ever if it is analysed from a historical perspective, it can be noticed that the control, which can be named censorship, does not be a solution for solve any political, social or cultural problems.

In the premodern Romanian society, the political and religious powers tried to impose a control of the ideas' expression and circulation process, to control all literary discourses. About this issue referring on collaboration between State and Church, like the common force which are interested to control the literary discourses, there are a large historiography. From the theological orthodox perspective, the Church did not intend to be more important than State, because the Church is interested to guide the people to be obedient, consciously, not with fear to be punished (Floca, 1990, 280).

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Also, this situation is explained from European realities perspectives which have influenced the internal realities (Schaffner, 2010). One of them is the political expansion of neighboring states, especially of the Ottoman Empire, Hungary and Habsburg Empire. Other one is the Catholicism expansion and orthodox reactions, all of them affected the Church.

As a consequence, in the premodern centuries of Romanian Principalities prevailed the religious texts, translates in the majority of them, but also local writings for supporting the religious cult, orthodox dogma, or for improving the moral life of people. More than, the typographies and the first schools have functioned around or into churches, first teachers were often clergymen. Any initiative of the Romanian Principe or the higher clergy, in the cultural field, have kept the religious dimension. As well-known that the typographic activity was very intense in the Romanian space; about this mentioned the foreign travellers. Edmund Chishull noticed, in 1702, that in Valachia there are many religious books in the Arabian and Greek languages, part of them he bought it, another part was a gift for him from important Romanian people (cited by Holban, 1983, 198).

2. Premises, Observations, Discussions

This paper starts premise that the discourses of Romanian literary from premodern centuries were influenced by the political and religious power. But it is interested and important to find out all types of influences which acted on the literary creations. In this way, we think it is better understood mentality of Romanian people reflected on the literary texts. On the other hand, it is easier to understand discursivity of premodern texts.

2.1. The Literary Control and Influence as a Type of Social and Religious Protection and Education

Seen as a type of monopole which was exercised on the books production and circulation in the premodern Romanian space, also on access of people to the culture, the censorship action can be connected with the need of political and religious power to protect the Romanian Orthodox Church which could be affected by the religious confrontations. This aspect is not a exceptional tool of political and ideological discourse (Van Dijk, 2006; Mitchell, 1989).

In general, the 17-18th century was presented by historians like a time of religious disputes, implicating especially the Protestants and Catholics. These disputes were focused on the dogmatic field, but often they consisted the social, politic, and cultural domains. This fact was influenced by some important European conflicts like the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), The War for Spanish Crown (1701-1714), The Nordic War (1700-1721). This is why the 17-18th century was named “a complex century”, “one of the most complex time in terms of religious sensibility”

(Baudrillart, 1914, 323; Lebrun, 1967, 347). This period seems to be “an époque of the big tensions” (Villari, 2000, 8), “a time of various crises”, a “tragic”, “long depression”, “black period (...) interrupted by the crisis and disasters” (Mandrou, 1997, 126, 354). François Lebrun named him “a diverse century”, “complex like life itself” (Lebrun, 1967, 347), but also of the “compromises” (Trevor-Roper cited by Elliot, 2005, 31-52). Having this point of view, we can explain the unsure and pessimist feelings of the most of Romanian discourses which were expressed in the European writings, also (Morán & Andrés-Gallego, 2000, 146).

For Romanian space this time was not a happy one. For example, in the memories of foreign travelers, the Romanian realities had generated many fears to them, as can be noticed in texts collected and edited by a collective of historians (Holban, 1972-1983). More that, the internal writings mentioned about the morals which failed rapidly, “too many things are permitted” (Costin, 1958, 272); the Romanian Principalities are “the chain of calamities” (Cernovodeanu & Binder, 1993), and, as a consequence these aspects have left the negative emotion upon the contemporary discourses. However, on this sensitive background, it is expected having some affirmations, ideas like the following: the unstoppable passage of time (“Pass days like a shadow, like a summer shadow”, Costin, 1958, 115), the changing of time, feeling of death, feeling of vanity (“Time I am, not human being”, Costin, 1958, 278), of human weakness, man’s condition in the world and the transitoriness of a man’s faith, miraculous intervention of divinity to punish/recompense human acts, to affirm its power.

Most probably, the Romanian Church, as the representative of believers’ communion, understood that the religious confrontations could not be kept only at dogmatic level, but it will be also transferred at the level of people consciousness. For this reason, the printed books became a very useful tool to sustain a such intention. Addition, it is confirmed this opinion in a contemporary text, that the Church represents its believers and then they must protect their church: “The innovators see the Church as a guide through which the non-religious arguments are being defined”; “by embarrassing it with both hands, they oppose it to the Western Church in the same way as the army puts in the path of the enemy, the gully and the earth wave. Those that compose such doctrines are getting further away from their scope” (Milescu, 1997, 35).

Another important aspect of this problem is related to divine intervention in the world. In the most of premodern literary discourses, the divine intervention in humans’ actions was presented as a guarantee for keeping the order, a corrector of wrong things happened, through punishment or help. The divine, that was expressed on the miraculous natural phenomena, was also present in the most decisions made by the lords, referring not only on the Romanians’ daily lives. Obviously, they were interpreted as signs of appreciation or of disapproval for their actions. One example is the internal chronicles which mentioned about that situation. During the battle

between Matei Basarab, Romanian Principe of Valachia, and Vasile Lupu, Romanian Principe of Moldavia, the chronicler related that “God made a great miracle and has sent a rainy cloud from the South-Vest. And it came pouring over the camps so fast as a stormy wind. It has released all its water as a river much too strong. Moreover, the drops were big and hard as rocks. Where they were dropping, the scoundrels were falling off their horses. And so, their camp filled with water was like a muddy pool” . Another example is about Mihail Cantacuzino Spătarul, an Romanian official who were caught by enemy soldiers: “after making the sign of the cross and after calling God to help”, said the chronicle, he managed to sneak out unseen. As well, another laical writing underlines moralizer effects of human actions. This idea can be notice in the many judicial documents. One of them is the Constantin Brâncoveanu’s “hrisov” (9th September 1707), a charity act of the Wallachian Principe, to The Royal Academy (“Academia Domnească”). This act underscored a propriety for to be used as “students’ food that learn here”, “payment of the teachers’ salaries”.

Another observation is about the Slavonic language. The literal control is like a modality to keep Tradition. The Slavonic language was associated with *Tradition*, and which was kept especially in the religious ceremonial. This fact has stopped the development of the modern forms of culture in the Romanian space, also. The lords, as a political leader were involved in this process, keeping the Slavonic language, even if they had used Romanian language in their decisions, of course only in nonreligious ones. It appears, also, to have been a stoppage tactic to spreading the Protestant learnings in a space which is predominantly Orthodox (Stoicescu, 1988, 83). It is interested that in *A Word Addressed to My Reader* (“*Cuvântul către cititoriu*”), of the *Cazania*, Bishop Varlaam mentions that this book is a “gift of Romanian language”. *Cazania*, said Varlaam, needs to be seen as “a heavenly gift” with a double duty: the remembering and remembrance. That people “should not forget to mention us in their priers” because “the Romanians do not have such books written in their own language” due to “the lack of teachers and of education”. “As a creditor of God, with the gift He gave me, I wrote this so as to pay part of my debt until I will be put to rest next to my ancestors” (Varlaam, 1984, 19).

2.2. The Literal Discourse as a Support of Power Expression

Analyzing the Romanian premodern literature, it can be noticed one other perspective: the mention of the lord’s name in the prefaces of books and the acknowledges for his printing initiatives, alongside with the name of the great bishop or of the place where the book was edited. This notice cannot be considered only a prove of courtesy, it is very possible to be a guarantee for reader that the respective book reflects “the true religion”.

Addition, this fact could be a lord's preoccupation to reconfirm both his political, spiritual, cultural and social authority and his quality of protector of the Orthodox Church. For example, Constantin Brâncoveanu was eulogized by the Mytropolit Antim in "Didahii", the most important known writing of him, like a defender of the true religion: "Who brings kindness/ and with faith ruins the bad" (Ivireanu, 1997, 214).

The mention of political leader in the religious writing may be, also, a form to reconfirm the lord's duty towards his people: praise him who is "the lord of this sacred land and the caretaker of so many believers"; praise him who is "a good sended flower protected through the mercy of God, forever"; "For all people his good deeds done for those from aware and from close by, through his Christian and divine will"; Like a fruitful olive seeded in the house of God, you spread your merciful branches towards all the good deeds, and the light from your Christian soul towards all those that lay in the darkness"; "Your Lordship's kindness gathers all those who need it"; "You have sacrificed your body and soul for the wellbeing of your country, for its education so as people to understand the meaning of the holy books that present the liturgy, the food needed for their eternal life. Without any spare of money, you have allowed the translation of this book from Greek into Romanian (...) so as for all of your people to understand its meaning and to receive it as a holy gift" (Ivireanu, 1997, 215. The most of Antim' preaches eulogize the lord like a *servant of God*, see Ivireanu, 1915, 112u). The same perspective of understanding can be found in the *Preface of Liturghier* ("Duhăscasca liturghie", signed by Mytropolit Dosoftei) which was addressed to all, Romanians and Ioan Duca, the Voivode from Moldavia who is preoccupied on the good of his country, on "the understanding of the holy books, the liturgy" (Gaster, 1891, 239-240).

Therefore, the printed book became both a support of political power for communicate its authority and a base of relationship State – Church. It is possible that the mention of lord name on the printed book to be a prove of the political authority on the literary production, too.

Certainly, the authority of Lord is pointed out not only in the religious discourses, it is expressed in the laic ones, too.

The secular texts mention also the sacredness of the lord. For example, Miron Costin, a well-known chronicler, condemned the murder of Gaspar Grațiani Voivoda with these words: "during all dangers, the lord must be protected because he is sent by God. As the Holy Scripture says: there is no power that was not sent by God" (Costin, 1958, 70). Ion Neculce, another well-known chronicler, warned his contemporaries: "do not say bad words against your lords because they are the masters anointed by God" (Neculce, 1987, 234). Also, "The Laws Cod" of Valachia ("*Îndreptarea legii*") (1652) mentions that the gravity of some moral-religious "mistakes" was considered to be similar to "insulting your lord" (The paragraphs

named “glave” of *Îndreptarea legii*, also, *Condica Marii Logofetii from 1692 to 1714*).

In the Romanian literary construction, the ideal monarch’s figure from premodern centuries, the presence of the religious factor is mandatory: *the good lord* must be chosen, inspired and protected by God. This benevolent attitude of God regarding on lord must have, also, a public dimension. The lord confirms his relationship with the divinity using different gestures and linguistic expressions which were captured by chronicles. In fact, we may consider that the pious gestures of the lords (such as bringing icons and holy relics and worn in all places affected by insects, like the invasion of locusts, or in plague areas, building or reconstructing the churches, etc.), and their belief in the miracles performed by God, are part of their thankfulness for their right to rule. In other literary example, in the same gravity example, which were considered an extreme one, with severe consequences, the salvation came under the form of the relics that were brought by the lord and that miraculously made the locusts leave. In this way had acted Nicolae Voivode Mavrocordat, the first Romanian Phanariot prince, they say he have managed stopping the plaque having “relics of some saints”, especially brought by lord (Popescu, 1987, 247). Also, Constantin Brâncoveanu had sent the locusts away, having Saint Mihai’ head (from Athos Mountain) (Popescu, 1987, 163). The same idea can be found also in the votive representations (Iorga, 1928, 26), the ritualistic commemoration in prayers and during the offerings, the entry in the great diptych of the place of worship, etc.

Usually the Romanian lords have supported the Church because it guaranteed, in great measure, the obedience and the religion of the people. The Church also did not turn away from the Principe. It had to legitimate him by ensuring his blessing, and divine recognition (Cantemir, 1956, 81u). However, it can be noticed some different initiatives that weakening the State-Church relation. Dimitrie Cantemir, in “Descrierea Moldovei” had sharpened underling the primacy of prince in the Romanian society, even over the Church; the lord “must take care and pay attention to the behaviours and learnings of the priests which must suit their beliefs; no one should deviate from the truth and there should be no wolf in sheep skin”. But also “the lord is not allowed to alter the spiritual work”; “if the lord does not honor faith, then there is no law to force him to” (Cantemir, 1956, 240-241).

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that all of these example and notices, religious and laic discourses, prove that the imagine of prince was very important for Romanian society. It is normally if we are thinking about both the presence of prince in every human activity and the him responsibility in relationship with God. In this respect we are expecting that the prince paying attention to people thinking and creating. It is him responsibility. More than, using his sacred imagine, lord can control the

printing books. On the other hand, the Church having responsibility of people' salvation was able to control what the people read, listen and speak. Possibly, that is a good intention, only for correct people' connexion with God.

Finally, it can be noticed that the Church, with help and implication of the lords, has used these forms of control and they have worked as filters for the people's manifestations, or they have monopolized the culture because of the social status held by the clergymen.

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