

In-text medieval authority reflected in the prefaces of the Romanian patriarchal literature

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Abstract

The concept of collective authority applies to the medieval and pre-modern ages, with writers as spokesmen of the social movements and mentalities. First of all, the medieval and pre-modern man was the member of a group and never ceased to be a member of that group. The prefaces of the books, published under the signature of a typographer, a high priest or the king himself, genuine poetic arts in the past literary centuries, convey a contract between the author and the virtual/real reader, asking for Grice's cooperative principle. The relationship between the author and the reader goes beyond the reading contract, reaching a transfer of authority between the two parties. This study is based on a corpus of prefaces in the Romanian literature of the 16th–18th centuries in order to propose an authority model in critical thinking and literary theory. We claim that literary prefaces were used as authority strategies, becoming argumentative texts specific to a patriarchal literature. The author embodies the father figure, in Kojève's terms, eager to impose his authority upon his reader, as a voice of his master (ruler/king), who is, in turn, the representative of the Divine authority. Our purpose is to follow the evolution of cultural models and mentalities in late Romanian Middle-Ages and early modern times in order to investigate the extent to which authority shaped social relationships and status, religion and monarchy, writing and reading.

Keywords: cognitive; literary theory; narrative; Middle-Ages; writing

1. Introduction

Research in the field of authority has been the privilege of philosophers, within phenomenological and ontological approaches. Discourse analysis offers valuable new insights on this subject with the support of literary history and theory. Every social and cultural phenomenon is ultimately grounded in language; therefore we focus upon old texts during 16th–18th centuries in order to study the authority metamorphosis in the relationship between the author and his readers. Our claim is that prefaces were used in old Romanian writings as authority strategies in times of what we may call 'patriarchal literature', while literature tackled illiteracy.

Several centuries ago, a collective authority prevailed over the individual authority, according to specific values of the medieval and pre-modern man. Understanding his

behaviour and way of thinking we come to a better understanding of the human social and cognitive schemas.

At the origins of a culture, all written texts become literature samples offering testimonies on the identity of a nation. The case of the Romanian literature is quite unique, since the oldest preserved written text in Romanian language dates back in 1521, which is very late, given that evidence shows proof of the forming process of Romanian as distinct written language in the second half of the 13th century (Gheție & Mareș, 1974, pp. 45-50). At the origins of a culture, all written words belong to the literary heritage, even though artistic and aesthetic functions are unintentional. Since reading was not a common practice, the authors of the books, including translators, simple scribes and typographers had to educate a competence.

We argue that the prefaces of the written, printed and copied Romanian books during the 16th–18th centuries did not function only as samples of metadiscourse or paratextuality (Genette, 1979) but as rhetorical cores of the main text. Prefaces would thus provide the *exordium* having a strong educational content, as reading depends on the ability to decode the meaning of the information which is put forward (Velcic-Canivez, 2002, p. 379). Therefore we focus our case study on a corpus of prefaces during the above-mentioned period in the Romanian literature.

2. Methods of exploring authority in the writing - reading context

2.1. The collective authority

Fromm analyzes the human evolution from the individual, impossible to separate from his social group, to the modern man, forced by social constraints to live and adapt on his own in search of his individuality (Fromm, 2021, p. 26). According to Fromm, the medieval man was, above all, a member of a group who could never cease to belong to that group. Therefore a collective authority opposes in medieval and early modern times to an individual authority, which is a modern feature. We aim to follow traces of the collective authority in the selected corpus using the outlook of the philosopher Alexandre Kojève (2012) on the concept of authority. We claim that old Romanian literature emphasizes the authority of the father, allowing us to introduce the term "patriarchal literature".

Max Weber (1978, pp. 215-216) draws a list of three ways of legitimizing power. 1. The authority of "the eternal yesterday" (the traditional authority). 2. The charismatic authority (a man of exceptional qualities is followed by men who trust him). 3. The legal authority (based on observing rules and obligations according to a status). During Middle-Ages, writing becomes an aspect of the legal authority, since it is endowed with a normative function establishing a set of norms and values addressing an ignorant public in order to impose a standard decoding system.

In Kojève's interpretation the authority of the tradition applies to the father figure. The prefaces of the Romanian patriarchal literature illustrate the transfer of authority from father

to son through the analogy if the transfer of authority from the author (the father) to the reader (the son).

Table 1: Father's authority in Romanian patriarchal literature

FATHER	SON
AUTHOR	READER
The elder	The younger
Educated	Uneducated
Knowledge	Ignorance
Bearer of the past	Bearer of the present / future

An author is a father both to his work and to his readers, passing on knowledge as an expression of a collective authority. Unlike power, which can be imposed by means of force, authority summarizes to "the symbolic legitimacy of power through knowledge" (Bilheran, 2021, p. 31). This knowledge always proves to be of collective origin in our body of texts. The author of the prefaces of the manuscripts, copied or printed books is often the writer, the typographer, the king himself or a high priest (bishop) who refrains from mentioning individuals without their belonging to a group or to a higher ranked entity. Coresi in 1561: "With the will of the Holy Father and the help of the Holy Son and the completion of the Holy Spirit, in the days of King John Sigismund, I, Iohannes Benkner [...] I have written these books of knowledge..." (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 31) Meletie in 1638: "I, King Matei Basarab, blessed by God King of the entire country of Wallachia and of the lands beyond the mountains..." (Sacerdoțeanu, p. 72). Anthim the Iberian in 1715: "To the wise, beloved Christian and most exalted King and protector of the entire Wallachia, Ștefan Cantacuzino, peace from God and Church blessing from our humbleness." (Anthim the Iberian, p.409).

2.2. The pyramid of authority

Bilheran describes authority as a set of norms which are imposed, based on a "normative knowledge" and "a symbolic legitimation of power through knowledge". (Bilheran, 2021, p. 31) Writing plays a normative function, while the author identifies himself as an authority. Kojève argues that authority is not open to debate; it does not confront any opposition from those who are targeted (Kojève, 2012, p. 36). Early writings in Romanian prove the undeniable authority of the author over his reader, coming from wisdom grounded on knowledge.

Hierarchy is an undisputed clause of a reading contract (Genette, 1979, 1982, Cornea, 1998), especially when a medieval/pre-modern writer meets his reader. Authority is hierarchical, it is transmitted by those who possess knowledge and recognition to those who don't and who have the chance to learn from gifted people (Kojève, 2012, pp. 25-26). Authority legitimizes power (Goudenhooff, 2014, p. 226) and provides a symbolic order of the world (Kojève, 2012, p. 37).

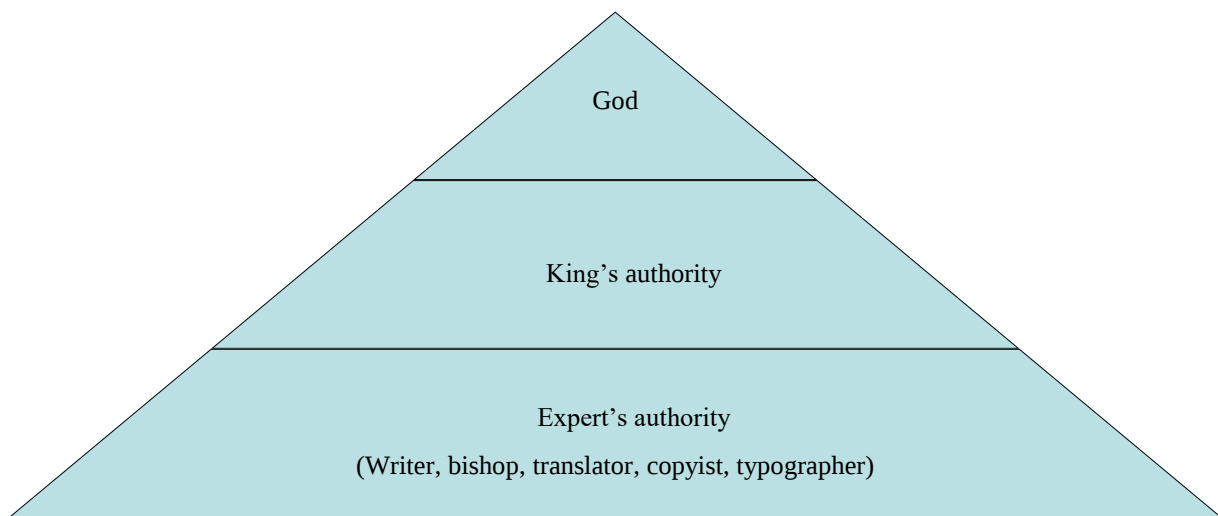


Figure 1: Hierarchy of authority

According to this pyramid of the levels of authority derived from the father's authority, the Divine authority is omnipresent, omnipotent and last, but not least, "eternal" (Kojève's, 2012, p. 42). This hierarchy implies a relationship of inclusion: the Divine authority includes the king's authority which in turn includes the authority of the expert, whose role may be played by the author of a work, by a translator, scribe, editor, typographer or by a representative of the Church (priest or bishop). Writing itself becomes a consecration act and a sacred mission assigned by the Divine. Coresi, 1578: "[...] godly men Damaschin and Joseph, Cozma and Teofan, inspired by the arrival of the Holy Spirit entrusted us with these godly books..." (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 38). Prefaces contain dedications which reinforce the supremacy of the past and the authority of the forefathers, e.g. in Coresi (1570), the author is piously concerned "to ask forgiveness for our ancestors' sins" (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 39). "The Old Testament from Orăștie", 1582: "Therefore read with awaken heart and take the good example from your elders, and beware not to draw God's wrath from bad examples [...]" (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 60)

2.3. Bakhtin's dialogism

Reading patriarchal literature allows the reader to hear several voices. The authors of the prefaces assume the writing at the first person singular, becoming a homodiegetic narrator (Genette, 1979, Lintvelt, 1994) who delivers a message based on his own experience, putting forward personal data and information about the writing. Whenever the author makes self-references (e.g. Coresi, 1580) using the first person singular, he is empowered with the good of the many, he is always in the service of God and his fellow Christians, acting with humility, asking for benevolence in case he makes any mistake. (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 44)

The individual author is a messenger of the Divine and of the king, a simple voice lacking personality, losing himself behind his mission. The voice of the author becomes the voice of the monarch and is not unusual for a preface to be signed by the king himself. Macarie in 1512: "With the command of God, I, Basarab great King [...]" (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 27)

Bakhtin (1982) introduced the concept of *dialogism* which belongs to a dialogue between several points of view. In the prefaces of the texts in old Romanian literature, these points of view never contradict each other. The author agrees to the opinion of a collective authority searching for the reader's approval. Adam approaches all literary texts in terms of polysemy and intertextuality (Adam, 2001, p. 422), but polysemy does not apply to early Romanian literature. Prefaces fight against polysemy, the meaning decoded by the reader is under a strict control, the reception of the message must be synchronized to the primary intended meaning of the author.

The author's standpoint is necessarily the king's standpoint, none other but the Divine instance on Earth. Sometimes, the reader becomes a character included in the line of interpretation. Deviance and opposition are not an option on the field of the patriarchal literature; the relationship between writer and reader becomes brotherhood, establishing an identity of meaning: "Do you see, brothers, what filthy Helen and evil Paris have done..." (Moraru & Velculescu, 1978) The reader becomes a witness in defence of moral principles, who cannot be challenged, since the above mentioned principles preserve the Divine order. The reader is not allowed any liberties, since it is not yet the time for freedom and individuality, which are aspirations of the modern man.

Patriarchal literature commands obedience at every level under the threat of the exclusion from the collective. The king always does God's work, the author is under the command of the king, the reader must comply to the official guideline. The narrative is bivocal, the reader is lead to think alike the author, but also polyvocal, the reader expresses the king's thinking. The writing/reading process seeks the achievement of "consensus" according to the communication theories by Habermas (1979), a consensus founded on understanding and agreement, leading to a singular meaning.

2.3. Intentional writing

Intentionality has been discussed within the phenomenological perspective, and Romanian patriarchal literature supports Ingarden's approach of literary works in favor of intentional acts of both authors and readers (Ingarden, 1931, as cited in Brunlus, 1970). Writing in the national language unavoidably evokes a mission of Divine descent, arguing in favor of the understanding of the same meaning by everybody. In medieval and pre-modern times, the official language of the Romanian Church was not Romanian, but Slavonic, completely inaccessible to the uneducated majority. Coresi in 1564: "It is in Romanian that I wrote this Book of Prayers so that the priest can understand himself, as same as the people who listen, just like other people elsewhere understand." (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 35). The author legitimizes his work dedicating his writing "to someone of greater importance, either

from church or politics", as Anthim was writing in 1701, with the declared purpose of "recommending and defending the book." (Anthim the Iberian, 1972, p. 406)

The act of reading old Romanian prefaces brings to life two main types of readers. (Iser, 1976, Eco, 1984, Cornea, 1998). The first one, the "virtual reader" (Cornea, 1998, p. 61), also named "implicit" (Iser) or "model" (Eco) is supposed to meet all intentions of the author. His aim is to recover the unbiased semantics of the text, as if he were a projection of the author's *alter ego* and a representation of his intended meanings. The virtual reader is thus conceived as an "insider" or an "incorporeal character" who acts as an extension of the author's authority.

Cooperation becomes the main function of the reader (Cornea, 1998, p. 58), with reference to the cooperative developed by Grice (1975). Patriarchal literature cancels any attempt of assessment coming from the reader, ambiguities and polysemy would be misplaced, the group identity must always prevail. Varlaam in 1647: "Pious believers and true sons of our apostolic church, beloved Christians belonging to the same Romanian nation. Everyone in all parts of Transylvania sharing our faith..." (Sacerdoțeanu, p. 116) The maxims of quantity and quality are explicitly presented in the text, turning prefaces of patriarchal literature into samples of *ars poetica* and *ars retorica* (poetic and rhetorical art) (Lazăr Zăvăleanu, 2013, pp. 84-87). Anthim the Iberian in 1697: "Therefore, please receive favourably, illustrious and godly blessed master and benefactor, the present extremely useful spiritual handbook and please assess it not just from its quantity, but especially from its quality..." (Anthim the Iberian, 1972, p. 402)

The second type of omnipresent reader is the "real reader", which is better suited to a sociological approach (Cornea, 1998, p. 65). The author summons him to life in the pages of the prefaces with the authority of a creator. Furthermore, an individual author invokes a collective reader made of a group of virtual readers who come in touch with his written text. It is not unusual in the 16th–18th centuries for prefaces to unveil marks of epistolary genre, with rhetorical formulas specific to letters, e.g. Anthim in 1704: "To all beloved readers fond of teaching, I, Anthim, hieromonk of Iberia and typographer of the royal printing house of Bucharest, [wish you] good health and fulfilment of your wishes.", "Please receive with open heart... ", "Good health to you all. " (Anthim The Iberian, 1972, pp. 408-409)

2.4. Authority discussed beyond literary and reading contexts

Authority is grounded on different levels throughout the prefaces of the Romanian patriarchal literature. In the last years of the 17th century and at the beginning of the 18th century a shift of focus occurs from the collective authority to the individual authority. Bishop Anthim the Iberian addresses his recipients in a text dating 1701, using the first person singular without always mentioning other members of his group: "Since I have no other power to help my fellow man except for my typography occupation... " (Anthim the Iberian, 1972, p. 405) It would be inappropriate to anticipate the birth of the individual author announcing the end of patriarchal literature, but we do witness the birth of the individual consciousness of the author, which can be firstly traced around 1646, when the first important

Romanian chronicle written in the national language was dated, in Moldova, signed by Grigore Ureche (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 111). But Ureche was part of the noblemen collective consciousness, defending the privileges of the class he belonged to, as well as the other historiographers did, likewise, when we mention Anthim the Iberian, we refer to an exponent of the Church institution, bearing another specific collective ideology and agenda. Before the 18th century, Romanian authors cannot be labelled as individuals or independent writers; they are confined by the collective authority of the group they represent. But former translators, copyists, interpreters of the scriptures, chroniclers make way to individual expression. The study of early Romanian literature supports the claim that literature existed prior to the birth of the author according to modern definitions of the author, in which individuality, originality and uniqueness are mandatory.

The roots of authority can be revealed at a higher level, beyond words and texts. The source of inspiration comes from the phenomenological study of consciousness (Kojève, 2012). This ultimate level of approach is cognitive, where mental schemas create social schemas, therefore skills, competences and meanings. We claim that authority is a mental integrative schema of thinking, at crossroads with two primary mental schemas: relationships and hierarchy.

An image-schema, according to Holland & Quinn (1987, p. 24), is based on Lakoff's concept of image-schematic models. These mental schemas or image-schemas of authority become social schemas when readers decode the written text and the background intentions of the author, contributing to the creation of cultural models. Primary imaginative schemas are primary schemas of thought facilitating the creation of the image. Thinking operates with images (Mustățea, 1998, p. 32), while the imaginary is the relationship between images, resulting in imaginative schemas (Mustățea). Therefore, we argue that authority is also a primary schema of thought, based on relationships and hierarchy. The act of reading is the relationship between the mental patterns of the author superposed on the virtual reader's decoding skills throughout an intentional process of authority transfer.

"Cultural models are presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared [...] by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of the world and their behaviour in it." (Holland & Quinn, 1987, p. 4) The old Romanian literature offers the ground for a cognitive-behavioural model shaping an emergent culture, using prefaces as authority strategies, ensuring the authority of the author upon the reader, the authority of the king upon the author and the Divine authority upon the royal authority.

During the 16th century, the imaginary was dominated by the *hero* figure, the defender of the land, given the violent times where anonymous stories were populated by warriors and invaders. Books belonged to the monastery environment, home of most scholars. Stephen the Great, ruler of Moldova between 1457 and 1504, is painted on a miniature kneeling and offering a gospel as a holy offering, testifying for the sacred ranking of books. (Sorohan, 1998, p. 49). According to prefaces (Coresi, 1581), books offered "teachings for Christian people for straightening soul and body." (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 46) In the late decades of the 16th century, prefaces of the books anticipate cultural movements of the following century.

"With God's mercy, I, deacon Coresi, since I saw that almost all languages have God's word in their language, except for us, Romanians, who don't [...]" (Coresi, 1570, pp. 37-38). "It is only us, Romanians, who don't have our own language." (Old Testament from Orăștie, 1582, p. 61)

The 17th century records a wide spreading of books in the Romanian countries, with focus on two directions: 1. historiography and attestation of the Latin origins of Romanian language and people (principles of the Renaissance movement); 2. religious books written in Romanian. The monarch, patron of the arts, and the scholar become the central cultural figures (Sorohan, 1998, p. 50). Meletie in 1638: "I, servant of my over generous master, Jesus Christ. " (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 72) "The Daily teachings" printed in Câmpulung (1642) stated: "All teachings show us how to embellish our souls and to us, Christians, how to behave, if we want to be liked by God who loves and seeks what I say." (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 86)

The national group identity theme is a common place in the prefaces, e.g. in Varlaam's "Answer to Calvin's catechism", 1647: "To all Christians in Transylvania, Orthodox believers and true sons of our saint apostolic Church,, beloved Christians and fellow Romanians. To all those who live in all parts of Transylvania and share our faith...." (Sacerdoțeanu, p. 116). "This book also made its way to us, Romanians in Moldova and Wallachia." (Sacerdoțeanu, 1938, p. 122).

The 18th century literature is written by princes and scholars, both noblemen and high priests. (Bădescu, 2013, p. 18). The printing of books was already depending on the author's "social status" (Bădescu). "This holy book, the godly Gospel, which is dedicated to your highness, beloved and enlightened King..." (Antim the Iberian, 1972, p. 411) The most representative figure of the Church on the edge of the 17th and 18th centuries was Anthim the Iberian, whose style and rhetoric shaped the Romanian literary language and whose intentionality is artistic, argumentative and aesthetic. (Mazilu, 1999).

We notice the evolution of the authority concept during the three above mentioned centuries, correlated with the corpus of prefaces we investigated:

1. In the 16th century, the authority of the Divine prevails.
2. In the 17th century, the authority of the monarch is dominant, imposed by scholars.
3. In the 18th century, the authority of the author is gaining priority.

All three dominant models (Divine, royal, expert) faces of father's authority, supporting the "patriarchal literature" name.

3. Conclusions

Romanian literature during 16th-18th centuries reflects the medieval collective authority, opposed to the modern individual authority. Medieval man is static and rigid (Fromm, 2021, p. 26), while the modern man is separated from these primary structures, but always fearing the freedom he has acquired. In medieval Romanian literature, the reader has no freedom, he is the perfect exponent of an age where society would designate and determine his place (Fromm).

The prefaces of the books belong to the main text body, as chapters guiding the reading. Prefaces become "authority strategies" enhanced by rhetorical and argumentative means. The reader becomes an *alter-ego* of the writer, a virtual model reader, who unconditionally accepts his place in the pyramid of authority, recognizes the father's authority of the author (the addressees are textually named "sons") and is fully aware of the transfer of collective authority through writing and reading.

Prefaces of old Romanian literature are governed by the principle of authority and following Kojève's insights on the father's authority we put forward the term "patriarchal literature". We draw a pyramid of authority which is representative for the early Romanian literature, on three levels: authority of the Divine, authority of the king and authority of the expert (which includes typographers and writers). Patriarchal literature imagines and projects an ideal reader capable to comprehend the exact meaning the author wanted to send to the world, the only accepted response is cooperation. Reading patriarchal literature is redoing the meaning.

Halfway through the 17th century, Romanian patriarchal literature is evolving towards an individual consciousness of the author, although the collective authority is still dominant. Authors belong either to the clergy or to the nobility, either social class with specific agendas.

From a cognitive perspective, authority represents a mental schema transforming into a social schema accessible to the reader whose reading competences have been educated by the author. Prefaces of old Romanian literature engender a cultural model based on the divine authority/royal authority dichotomous model. This model is dynamic and evolutionary, from the domination of God's authority and sacred role of books in the 16th century, to the authority of the monarch primordial in the 17th century, reaching the authority of the author as the main cognitive literary model in early 18th century.

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